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# *Paradigmatic Piety: Liturgy in the Life of Martha, Mother of Symeon Stylites the Younger*

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LUCY PARKER

The *Life of Martha*, the mother of the sixth-century stylite Symeon the Younger, has been almost completely neglected in modern scholarship. Yet the text possesses considerable historical interest as evidence for the contested development of a cult, as a literary composition with a unique structure, and as the Life of a holy woman who was neither a martyr nor a nun. Martha's hagiographer eschews most traditional emphases of the Lives of female saints, such as celibacy and asceticism, presenting instead an original, inclusive vision of piety focused on participation in liturgy and the sacraments.

The career of the stylite Symeon the Younger crossed most of the sixth century: he is said to have ascended his first column at the age of seven (c. 528), and continued his ascetic struggle for almost seventy years until his death in 592.<sup>1</sup> Most of his life was spent on the "Wonderful Mountain" near Antioch, from where, according to his hagiographer, he witnessed many of the century's most dramatic events, including earthquakes, incursions by the Persians and their Arab clients, recurrent outbreaks of plague, and Justinian's anti-pagan persecutions. His hagiographer claims that he formed close relationships with important figures in Antioch and the whole empire, including the Antiochene patriarch Ephraim, the Constantinopolitan patriarch John Scholasticus, and the emperor Justin II.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Phil Booth, for all his help with my work on Symeon and Martha; Derek Krueger and the anonymous readers for *J ECS* for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this article; and the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding my doctoral research.

1. For the chronology of Symeon's life, see Paul Van den Ven, ed., *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592)*, 2 vols., SH 32 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962–1970), 1:124\*–30\*.

Yet despite the considerable historical interest of his life, the abundant extant evidence relating to the saint and his cult has been little studied. This evidence includes the aforementioned, lengthy saint's *Life*, whose oldest extant manuscripts date from the ninth to eleventh centuries, but which is undoubtedly earlier as it was quoted twice in the eighth century, by John of Damascus and at the Second Council of Nicaea of 787.<sup>2</sup> It was probably composed by a member of Symeon's monastery on the "Wonderful Mountain" soon after Symeon's death, as it contains much detailed information, including about internal tensions within the monastery, that would have been of little interest to a significantly later hagiographer. Vincent Déroche has argued that it dates from the reign of Phocas (602–10) because it omits all reference to the emperor Maurice, whom Phocas had overthrown, and whose relations with Symeon are attested elsewhere;<sup>3</sup> this suggestion is plausible, if not provable. The *Life* is in many respects a conventional saint's Life—it narrates key episodes of Symeon's life from his conception and birth until his death, interspersed with accounts of miracles—but it is distinguished by its unusual length (it contains over 250 chapters), which is caused largely by the exceptional volume of miracle stories in the work.<sup>4</sup> Some stories in the *Life* are repeated in slightly different forms, which has led to the suggestion that the author of the text as we have it must have been using at least two pre-existing written sources.<sup>5</sup> We also have thirty sermons attributed to Symeon, which Paul Van den Ven has shown through close analysis of their manuscript tradition and

2. Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:12\*–19\*, 32\*–33\*. Van den Ven edits the *Life of Symeon* in *Vie ancienne*, 1:1–224. He also edits the *Life of Martha* in *Vie ancienne*, 2:253–314. Henceforth I cite the two texts as *Life of Symeon* and chapter number (Van den Ven, page number) and *Life of Martha* and chapter number (Van den Ven, page number) respectively. Translations from both texts are my own.

3. Vincent Déroche, "Quelques interrogations à propos de la *Vie de Syméon Stylite le Jeune*," *Eranos* 94 (1996): 73–74.

4. Déroche and Efthymiadis have both argued that because of the vast quantity of miracle stories in the work, the *Life of Symeon* could be considered a miracle collection rather than a saint's Life: Déroche, "Interrogations," 70; Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Collections of Miracles (Fifth-Fifteenth Centuries)," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 2, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 117.

5. Déroche, "Interrogations," 68–73. For a comparable text from the late sixth century which also contains doublets (as well as other indicators that it is a clumsy compilation, including the sudden interruption of various episodes in the middle of a narrative) and seems to have been composed in a similar way, see Ihor Ševčenko and Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, eds., *The Life of St. Nicholas of Sion*, The Archbishop Iakovos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources 10 (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1984), discussion of the doublets at 15.

comparisons with the *Life* probably to be reworded versions of the saint's original sermons.<sup>6</sup> Other contemporary or near-contemporary evidence includes references to Symeon in the works of Evagrius Scholasticus<sup>7</sup> and John Moschus,<sup>8</sup> and in the Georgian *Life of Abibo* (in a reflection of the strong connections established between Symeon's cult and Iberia),<sup>9</sup> a letter apparently written by Symeon to the emperor Justin II and preserved in the acts of the Second Council of Nicaea,<sup>10</sup> and the physical remains of his monastery<sup>11</sup> and of various pilgrim tokens.<sup>12</sup>

We also possess a *Life* of Symeon's mother, Martha, which has been almost totally neglected in modern scholarship. This work, edited but not translated by Van den Ven in his fine two-volume edition and translation of the *Life of Symeon the Younger*, was seemingly also written by one of the monks of Symeon's monastery.<sup>13</sup> Van den Ven expressed a negative (and

6. Sermons 1–4 are edited and discussed by Paul Van den Ven, “Les écrits de S. Syméon le Jeune avec trois sermons inédits,” *Mus* 70 (1957): 1–55; sermons 4–30 are edited by Angelo Mai, *Patrum nova bibliotheca*, vol. 8, pt. 3 (Rome: Typis Sacri Consilii Propagando Christiano Nomini, 1871), 4–156.

7. Evagrius Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London: Methuen, 1898), 217, 238–40.

8. John Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale* (PG 87.3:2953–56, 2981–84).

9. The *Life of Abibo*, trans. Bernadette Martin-Hisard, “Les ‘treize saints pères’: Formation et évolution d’une tradition hagiographique géorgienne (VIe–XIIe siècles),” pt. 1, appendix, *Revue des Études Géorgiennes et Caucasiennes* 2 (1986): 77–78. For the probable seventh-century date of the *Life*, see Martin-Hisard, “Treize saints pères,” pt. 1, *Revue des Études Géorgiennes et Caucasiennes* 1 (1985): 164–65. For discussion of links between Symeon's cult and Iberia, see Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:53\*–71\*, 160\*–61\*, and Bernadette Martin-Hisard, “La ‘Vie de Georges l’Hagiorite (1009/1010–29 juin 1065),” *REB* 64–65 (2006–2007): 128–29, 159–61. Iberians play a prominent role in the later part of the *Life of Martha* 54–70 (Van den Ven, 2:298–312). Paul Peeters argued that the *Life of Martha* was actually written in Georgian rather than Greek (several manuscripts of a Georgian version of the text survive) in *Le tréfonds oriental de l’hagiographie byzantine*, SH 26 [Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1950], 161–62, but this is highly implausible, as argued by Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:68\*–77\*, 2:250\*–51\*.

10. Symeon Stylites the Younger, “Letter to Justin II” (PG 86.2:3216–330).

11. Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques dans la région d’Antioche: Recherches sur le monastère et sur l’iconographie de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune*, Bibliothèque de Byzantion 4 (Brussels: Éditions de Byzantion, 1967), 67–135.

12. See in particular Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques*, 140–58, 169–96; Gary Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium,” *DOP* 38 (1984): 67–74; Wolfgang F. Volbach, “Zur Ikonographie des Styliten Symeon des Jüngeren,” in *Tortulae: Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten*, ed. Walter N. Schumacher, Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte: Supplementheft 30 (Rome: Herder, 1966), 293–99.

13. Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:78\*.

doubtless accurate) view of the work's historical reliability, commenting, "s'il existe des faits réels au fond de ce roman historique, de caractère très artificiel, il est impossible de les découvrir."<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, as evidence for the development of a cult, as a literary composition containing a distinctive vision of piety, and as a hagiographic account of a holy woman who was neither a martyr nor a nun, the text possesses considerable historical interest. Unfortunately, there is no secure evidence to provide a precise dating for the *Life*. Van den Ven has shown that, although it contains some strange inconsistencies in chronology when compared to the *Life of Symeon the Younger*,<sup>15</sup> its author undoubtedly knew of the latter work (probably, as suggested above, dating from the early seventh century). The earliest manuscript containing the entirety of the *Life of Martha* dates from the tenth/eleventh century, but there is a late ninth-century manuscript containing a part of the text,<sup>16</sup> which leaves a window of approximately two and a half centuries in which the work could have been produced. Van den Ven has argued that it probably dates from the seventh century and is not much later than the *Life* of the stylite, as its style and language are very similar to that of the longer *Life*, as is its picture of the community on the "Wonderful Mountain"; he notes too that its author understands the meaning of obscure phrases such as "καμασίνη μλωτή" (the covering which sheltered Symeon on his column) which were misunderstood by later adapters of Symeon's *Life*.<sup>17</sup> There are no obvious anachronisms suggestive of a later date; for example, there is a reference in the *Life* to a visitor taking "the tokens of his image formed from the earth" from Symeon's monastery<sup>18</sup>—archaeological evidence suggests that the shrine on the "Wonderful Mountain" produced such clay tokens in the sixth and seventh centuries, but lead tokens in the Middle Byzantine period.<sup>19</sup> The *Life* also refers to opponents of Symeon from his lifetime (including the monk Angoulas, who also appears as an adversary of the saint in the *Life*

14. Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:92\*.

15. Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:89\*–90\*.

16. Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:67\*–78\*. The *Life of Martha* has survived in four manuscripts, all of which transmit almost identical versions of the text. All four manuscripts also contain the *Life of Symeon* (which also survives in several additional manuscripts that do not contain Martha's *Life*). For detailed description of the manuscripts, see Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:12\*–19\*.

17. Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:78\*.

18. *Life of Martha* 54 (Van den Ven, 2:298): Τὰς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἐκτετυπωμένας ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνοσ αὐτοῦ σφραγίδας.

19. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires archéologiques*, 146–47; Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic," 73–74.

of *Symeon*),<sup>20</sup> and appears keen to avert criticism of his decision to build an oratory for himself and Martha, which seems most likely to have been a contentious issue relatively close to Symeon's life.<sup>21</sup> It thus appears probable that the *Life* dates to the seventh century; certainly, as we will see, many of its themes resonate with other works from that period.

The *Life of Martha* is very unusual both in subject matter and in structure. Although several late antique saints' Lives feature the holy men's mothers as pious auxiliary characters,<sup>22</sup> the *Life of Martha* is, to my knowledge, unique in taking as its central figure the mother of a famous holy man. A comparison of Martha's roles in the *Life of Symeon the Younger* and in her own biography demonstrates the difference between these approaches. In the former work, the stylite's mother features as an important, yet occasional, character.<sup>23</sup> She is most active at the start of

20. In the *Life of Martha*, Angoulas attempts to prevent Martha's oratory from being built according to divinely revealed plans: *Life of Martha* 50 (Van den Ven, 2:293–94). In the *Life of Symeon*, he repeatedly tries to undermine the stylite's authority: *Life of Symeon* 123, 128, 168, 240 (Van den Ven, 1:103–4, 1:116, 1:150–51, 1:215–16). For discussion see Déroche, "Interrogations," 75. While the *Life of Martha* continues the *Life of Symeon's* attacks on Angoulas, it does not discuss many of the other opponents of the saint who feature in the earlier work; most notably, it abandons the polemic against Antiochene pagans/nobles which is a prominent theme of her son's *Life*.

21. Two passages, in particular, suggest that Symeon (or his hagiographer) anticipated criticism of his decision to revere Martha: in the first we are told that when Symeon saw his brethren failing to respect Martha's coffin and to light the candle on it, he did not command them to do so, in part "so that it would not be thought by unbelieving people and those having weaker power of reasoning that he himself was requiring and demanding the rites performed for her honor" (*Life of Martha* 39 [Van den Ven, 2:282]). In another passage, explicitly relating to Symeon's construction of a new oratory for Martha's body, the hagiographer claims that even after Martha had appeared to Symeon and the other brothers demanding the building of the oratory, Symeon held back from beginning the building, in part "so that certain of the more simple and unbelieving should not be put to the test, inventing vain thoughts in themselves and speaking impiety against the just man" (*Life of Martha* 46 [Van den Ven, 2:288], emphasis mine). Both passages imply a concern that Symeon would be accused of self-aggrandizement by promoting his mother's cult.

22. See, for example, the *Life of Symeon Stylites the Elder* attributed to Antony, ed. Hans Lietzmann, "Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites," *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 32.3 (1908): 36–38, and the *Life of Alypius the Stylite*, ed. Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les Saints Stylites*, SH 14 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1923), 148–49, 151–52, 160–61. For an argument that the author of the former drew upon the story of Martha and Symeon the Younger, see Robin Lane-Fox, "The *Life of Daniel*," in *Portraits: Biographical Representations in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, ed. M. J. Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 184–85.

23. See Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:87\*.

the *Life*, which recounts the story of her (reluctant) marriage to Symeon's father John, her success in converting John to a more pious way of life, her vision of John the Baptist proclaiming her imminent conception of a holy son, and her nurturing of Symeon until, at the age of six, he was led by a white-robed man to the monastic community where he spent the rest of his life.<sup>24</sup> After this, her appearances in the *Life* are far less frequent, but nonetheless hint at her importance: both John, the head of the monastery which Symeon joined, and Ephraim, patriarch of Antioch, supposedly mentioned Martha on their deathbeds,<sup>25</sup> while she is involved in some of the most dramatic episodes in the saint's adult life, including his response to one of the worst earthquakes to hit Antioch,<sup>26</sup> the procession celebrating his elevation to the column in the center of the new church complex on the "Wonderful Mountain,"<sup>27</sup> and his resurrection of his disciple Conon after his death from the plague.<sup>28</sup> In these episodes, however, she plays only a supporting role, and her own life is paid little attention; we only learn of her death by chance, as a service held in her memory is the setting for one of Symeon's miracles.<sup>29</sup> Although she sometimes intercedes with Symeon,<sup>30</sup> she never intercedes directly with God, and there is no suggestion that she can perform miracles.

The picture is very different in the *Life of Martha*. Here, Martha is presented as a miracle-worker and intercessor with God in her own right, particularly after her death. Indeed, the *Life of Martha* is something of a misnomer, since the saint's death and posthumous activities are accorded considerably more attention than her life.<sup>31</sup> The structure of the work is unusual and worth outlining briefly. The first ten chapters consist of an outline of Martha's pious *politeia*, with very little specific information about her life. Then, over twenty chapters (11–33) are devoted to an extended account of her death, from a series of premonitory visions until her initial burial in Daphne and subsequent reburial on the "Wonderful Mountain." The next ten chapters (34–44) recount her posthumous healing miracles, and are followed by six chapters (45–51) relating to the building of a new oratory, and the translation of Martha's body to this

24. *Life of Symeon* 36 (Van den Ven, 1:2–11); for his age, see *Life of Symeon* 12 (Van den Ven, 1:11).

25. *Life of Symeon* 36, 71 (Van den Ven, 1:35, 1:61).

26. *Life of Symeon* 105–7 (Van den Ven, 1:85–88).

27. *Life of Symeon* 113 (Van den Ven, 1:93).

28. *Life of Symeon* 129 (Van den Ven, 1:118).

29. *Life of Symeon* 221 (Van den Ven, 1:190).

30. See for example *Life of Symeon* 101, 127 (Van den Ven, 1:79, 1:127).

31. See Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:71\*.

shrine. The final lengthy section (52–70), perhaps the most isolated part of the *Life*, consists of a series of visions, miracles, and letter exchanges relating to Symeon's acquisition of a relic of the True Cross from Jerusalem for his monastery; Martha is noticeably less present in this part of the text. The *Life* finishes with the report of two more healing miracles and a conventional conclusion, stressing her continued performance of miracles and intercession with Christ (71–73). The work has no clear narrative arch like a typical holy biography, and it seems possible that it was not originally conceived as a whole; in particular, the awkwardly phrased transition into the section describing Symeon's acquisition of a relic of the True Cross, as well as the different tone of this section from the rest of the *Life*, suggests that it may have been added after the original account of Martha's life and miracles.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, as we will see, certain themes do run throughout the entire work. In order to understand better the structure and contents of the *Life*, we need to consider its hagiographer's aims and ideals. At their most basic level, most saints' Lives were concerned with cult promotion, and the *Life of Martha* is no different. Yet, given that this ambition underlies most traditional saints' Lives, it cannot explain the distinctive features of Martha's *Life*. The unusual structure of the work—in particular, the combination of a short, generic biographical section with an extended death scene and a selection of posthumous miracles—and the choice of a non-monastic protagonist require further examination. A comparison with other Lives of holy women only serves to highlight the originality of Martha's portrayal. Gender does not seem to provide the key to interpreting the *Life*; rather, the fundamental theme connecting all parts of the text is liturgy and the sacraments.

## HOLY WOMEN

One possible explanation for the distinctiveness of the *Life of Martha* might lie in its hero's gender: do holy women perform different roles, and inspire different narratives, from holy men?<sup>33</sup> Yet when we compare the depiction of Martha in her *Life* to early hagiographic portrayals of holy women, we find that our text has no obvious precedents. Three dominant

32. *Life of Martha* 51 (Van den Ven, 2:295–96).

33. As argued by Stavroula Constantinou, "Subgenre and Gender in Saints' Lives," in *Les vies des saints à Byzance: Genre littéraire ou biographie historique?*, ed. Paolo Odorico and Panagiotis A. Agapitos, *Dossiers Byzantines* 4 (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, 2004), 411–23; Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances: Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women*, *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* 9 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2005).



“models” of female holiness have been identified within late antique hagiography, none of which are applicable to Martha: the “harlot-saint,” the “patrician philanthropist,” and “the cloistered nun.”<sup>34</sup> This concept of three “models” for female holiness may be too schematic, failing to appreciate the diversity of late antique hagiography.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, there are characteristics of many biographies of holy women that are noticeably absent from Martha’s *Life*, including, most strikingly, an emphasis on the body, celibacy, and asceticism.<sup>36</sup> Apart from a solitary comment that Martha often fasted, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays,<sup>37</sup> the author of Martha’s *Life* makes no reference to Martha mortifying her body or shunning fine clothes and jewelry, despite these being dominant themes in much hagiography about women;<sup>38</sup> nor does he attempt to excuse her for not maintaining her virginity by stressing either her reluctance to marry or her later adoption of a celibate lifestyle.<sup>39</sup> It has been argued that the *Lives* of women provided more powerfully than the biographies of holy men the hope of redemption for all humankind, since if a woman, a descendant of Eve, could overcome her inherently sinful body and become holy then so could anyone.<sup>40</sup> The *Life of Martha*, however,

34. Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), xxii; for a similar triad see Alice-Mary Talbot, “Female Sanctity in Byzantium (Article 6),” in *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium*, Variorum Collected Studies (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 2.

35. Constantinou has identified a wider range of “roles” performed by female saints in hagiography: she focuses on six that she regards as particularly common, “the martyr, the penitent, the cross-dresser, the nun, the abbess and the pious wife,” but states that several others existed, including “the virgin,” “the defender of images,” and the “mother of a saint” in *Female Corporeal Performances*, 17–18. Yet given that, as she acknowledges, there are only one or two examples of these last three categories (e.g., the *Life of Martha* is the only example she finds of the “mother of a saint”), I would question whether the term “role” in this schematic sense is useful here.

36. For the the prominent role of the body and associated themes in female hagiography, see Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances*, who argues that “holy women achieve sanctity almost exclusively through their bodies” (16). Although I cannot agree that this applies to the mothers of saints; Martha’s hagiographer is uninterested in the bodily implications of motherhood, as in other aspects of Martha’s body.

37. *Life of Martha* 2 (Van den Ven, 2:254).

38. See Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 31–41.

39. The *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger* takes a more conventional approach by claiming that Martha was very reluctant to marry but eventually yielded to marriage because of the need to obey her parents’ wishes and because of divine instruction: *Life of Symeon* 1 (Van den Ven, 1:3).

40. Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, xvii, 77, 94; Susan A. Harvey, “Women in Early Byzantine Hagiography: Reversing the Story,” in *That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity*, ed. Lynda L. Coon, Katherine J. Haldane, and Elisabeth W. Sommer (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 45–46.

does not fit into this pattern, given its lack of interest in its subject's body and sexuality. It is also, unusually, uninterested in Martha's family life: while her son Symeon features frequently, there is no mention of any of her other blood relations and only one passing reference to her husband John (who died in Symeon's youth, according to the *Life of Symeon the Younger*);<sup>41</sup> shortly before her death she urges Symeon, "bring relief also to John, your father in the flesh."<sup>42</sup>

This is not to suggest, however, that the *Life of Martha* has nothing in common with other Lives of holy women. Martha's hagiographer draws on certain biblical models of women which were popular in late antique hagiography, in particular the humble, serving, and ministering woman exemplified by Martha, sister of Lazarus, in the Gospel of Luke.<sup>43</sup> This theme of ministration is extremely prominent in Martha's *Life*: she is depicted, for example, providing garments for the children of the poor at baptism, tending to the sick and supplying food and clothing for the poor, provisioning the funerals of dying strangers, tending to demoniacs, and taking care of the pilgrims and brothers at her son's monastery.<sup>44</sup> On occasion her ministrations are described in explicitly biblical terms: thus it is reported, "She admired the priests, honoring them in many ways according to what is written. For, like Martha before the Lord, she performed much service of care to them and offering olive oil with Mary she poured it on their feet, continuously doing this and in everything refreshing them."<sup>45</sup> She is also stated to have obeyed Christ's injunction to be humble, like "Mary Magdalen and Salome, Susanna and Joanna, and the other Mary and the remaining female disciples."<sup>46</sup> Her humility is stressed throughout: in the prologue to the work, we are told that Martha had gained three pearls (faith, hope and love), "which, wishing to reveal them to God alone, she took trouble to conceal from men, shunning vainglorious thoughts,

41. *Life of Symeon* 7 (Van den Ven, 1:8).

42. *Life of Martha* 22 (Van den Ven, 2:269): Ἀνάπαυε δὲ καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν σαρκικὸν πατέρα σου.

43. See Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 41–44. For depictions of the biblical Martha in early Christianity more generally, see Allie M. Ernst, *Martha from the Margins: The Authority of Martha in Early Christian Tradition*, Vigiliae Christianae Supplements 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

44. *Life of Martha* 4–5, 7–8 (Van den Ven, 2:256–57, 2:258–59).

45. *Life of Martha* 7 (Van den Ven, 2:258): Τοὺς δὲ ἱερεῖς ἐθαύμαζεν, κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον τιμῶσα τούτους πολυτρόπως· καὶ γάρ, ὡς Μάρθα ἐπὶ τοῦ Κυρίου, περὶ πολλὴν διακονίαν τῆς εἰς ἐκείνους θεραπείας περιεσπᾶτο καὶ ἔλαιον μετὰ Μαρίας προσφέρουσα ἐξέχεεν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτῶν, συνεχῶς τοῦτο ποιοῦσα καὶ διὰ πάντων αὐτοὺς ἀναψύχουσα.

46. *Life of Martha* 10 (Van den Ven, 2:260–61): Ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία καὶ Σαλώμη, Σουσάννα τε καὶ Ἰωάννα καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ μαθήτριαι.

so that no one knew any of the deeds of her industry and philosophy.”<sup>47</sup> Her *Life* thus utilizes elements of the conventional portrayal of female holiness without itself being entirely conventional, strongly emphasizing Martha’s devoted care for the religious and for the poor at the expense of discussing her asceticism and chastity. This stress on her ministration, and her ministration to the priests and monks of Symeon’s monastery in particular, is at the heart of the text, as we shall see.

The most famous holy woman—and indeed holy mother—was, of course, the Virgin Mary. In the *Life of Symeon the Younger*, Martha is occasionally assimilated to Mary: John the Baptist proclaims to her in a vision before Symeon’s conception, “you will bear a son and you will call his name Symeon,”<sup>48</sup> clearly recalling Gabriel’s pronouncement to Mary, “you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.”<sup>49</sup> The *Life* also claims that she gave birth to Symeon “without any pains at all being inflicted upon her”;<sup>50</sup> a painless birth was again associated with Mary’s delivery of Christ.<sup>51</sup> Yet it is probable that Martha is only linked to Mary in this scene in order to highlight Symeon’s identification with Christ, one of the main themes of the work as of much hagiography.<sup>52</sup> In other places, she is depicted as less virtuous in order to highlight her son’s piety;<sup>53</sup> her presentation in Symeon’s *Life* is therefore chameleonic, changing in order to fit the hagiographer’s immediate needs.

The situation is still more complex in the *Life of Martha*. Martha seems to have a connection to the Virgin Mary: before her death, one of the brothers at Symeon’s monastery had a vision of her standing before Mary,<sup>54</sup> while she herself had a vision of heaven in which Mary was her

47. *Life of Martha* 1 (Van den Ven, 2:254): Ἄς Θεῷ μόνῳ φανεροῦσθαι βουλομένη ἔσπευδε λανθάνειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, φεύγουσα τὸν κενόδοξον λογισμόν, ὥστε μηδένα γινώσκειν τί τῶν τῆς φιλοπονίας καὶ φιλοσοφίας αὐτῆς ἔργων.

48. *Life of Symeon* 3 (Van den Ven, 1:5): Συλλήψῃ υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Συμεών.

49. Luke 1.31 (NRSV).

50. *Life of Symeon* 3 (Van den Ven, 1:6): Οὐ πάνυ τῶν ἀλγυδόνων αὐτῇ ἐπιτιθεμένων.

51. Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 2:9n5.

52. For the holy man as image of Christ, see for example Han J. W. Drijvers, “Hellenistic and Oriental Origins,” in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. Sergei Hackel, Studies Supplementary to Sobornost 5 (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1981), 27–28.

53. See for example *Life of Symeon* 6 (Van den Ven, 1:7), in which Symeon refuses to drink his mother’s milk when she had partaken of κρεῶν θύτου, and 4 (Van den Ven, 1:6–7), in which she ignored John the Baptist’s injunction not to give Symeon her left breast to feed from and it shrivelled up as a result.

54. *Life of Martha* 12 (Van den Ven, 2:262–63).

guide.<sup>55</sup> Yet she is not only associated with Mary; she also had a close relationship with John the Baptist,<sup>56</sup> and on occasion seems to be envisioned in christomimetic terms; in his aforementioned vision of Martha before Mary, the monk reported that “the great mistress [Martha] held out her hands in the form of a cross, and she became wholly metamorphosed like a cross from gold and silver and flashed rays of light like the sun, and only her face was recognizable above the cross,”<sup>57</sup> a transformation apparently associating her with Christ’s crucifixion. There is thus no simple connection drawn between Martha and Mary as holy mothers of even more holy sons; Martha is linked to a variety of important biblical figures, both female and male.

This last point, that Martha was associated with men and women, is significant, as it is notable that there is no sign that she was promoted as a saint particularly for women.<sup>58</sup> None of the specified beneficiaries of her miracles in the text are female:<sup>59</sup> they are either monks of Symeon’s monastery,<sup>60</sup> local villagers,<sup>61</sup> or foreign visitors,<sup>62</sup> all male.<sup>63</sup> It is also noteworthy that, in contrast to some saints’ Lives and miracle collections which focus

55. *Life of Martha* 17–18 (Van den Ven, 2:265–67).

56. *Life of Martha* 2, 8, 26 (Van den Ven, 2:254, 2:259, 2:272). This connection between Martha and the Baptist is also made in the *Life of Symeon* 1–3 (Van den Ven, 1:3–6).

57. *Life of Martha* 12 (Van den Ven, 2:262–63): Ἐξέτεινε τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῆς ἡ κυρία ἡ μεγάλη ἐν σχήματι σταυροῦ, καὶ ἐγένετο ὅλη ὥσει σταυρὸς ἐκ χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργυροῦ μεταμορφουμένη καὶ ἀπαστράπτουσα ἀκτῖνας φωτὸς ὡς ὁ ἥλιος· μόνον δὲ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς ὑπεράνω τοῦ σταυροῦ ἐγνωρίζετο.

58. Claudia Rapp has argued that hagiography about female saints was read by both genders in “Figures of Female Sanctity: Byzantine Edifying Manuscripts and Their Audience,” *DOP* 50 (1996): 321–25 and *passim*.

59. Although some of her miracles are performed for groups which may include women, including the villagers of Charandama (*Life of Martha* 35 [Van den Ven, 2:279]) and Gandigorōn (*Life of Martha* 37 [Van den Ven, 2:281]).

60. For example, *Life of Martha* 39, 43, 44 (Van den Ven, 2:282–83, 2:285–86, 2:286–87).

61. For example, Sergius son of Antoninus the procurator, from the village of Charandama (*Life of Martha* 35 [Van den Ven, 2:279–80]), and John Lector, from the village of Gandigorōn (*Life of Martha* 38 [Van den Ven, 2:281–82]).

62. For example, a man from Lycaonia (*Life of Martha* 41 [Van den Ven, 2:283–84]), a soldier from Hierapolis (42 [Van den Ven, 2:284–85]), Neon, a builder (and almost certainly an Isaurian) working at the monastery (50 [Van den Ven, 2:293]), and two brothers from Phrygia, Proairesios and Hilarion (71–72 [Van den Ven, 2:312–14]).

63. Although the majority of the specified beneficiaries of the miracles in *The Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger* are male, it does feature many female beneficiaries as well as generic references to kinds of miracles which he frequently performed for women (such as the miraculous production of breast milk); the cult was already, therefore, presented as gender inclusive.

on aristocratic and high-status suppliants,<sup>64</sup> almost all of the specified beneficiaries of Martha's miracles appear to come from relatively humble social backgrounds.<sup>65</sup> Her biographer thus presents Martha as approachable and accessible to "ordinary" suppliants such as local villagers; he is far less exclusive and elitist than many hagiographers. This is very significant, because arguably the most distinctive feature of the text is that it presents an inclusive, achievable vision of piety, based not on dramatic material renunciations or on bodily mortification, but on participation in the liturgy and the sacraments, and devotion to Martha's shrine.

## LITURGY AND RITUAL PRACTICE

Liturgy and ritual suffuse the *Life of Martha*, linking the different, and sometimes apparently disparate, sections of the work. In the first part of the text, as mentioned above, she is not depicted as an ascetic; rather her life is marked by pious attendance to priests and monks, and she is presented as a devoted participant in various liturgical rituals: "she took care of the proffering of many lights and incense,"<sup>66</sup> while:

In all her days she did not miss the lamplight and dawn services, being especially eager for the night watches which happened in memory of the holy martyrs. For being the first at church and in no way being hindered by any care she partook of our salvific life, the body and blood of the son of God . . . in all the holy and divine liturgy she gave incense to the priests, asking them to join with her in her requests to God.<sup>67</sup>

64. Examples include the *Miracles of Thekla*, ed. Gilbert Dagron, *Vie et miracles de Sainte Thècle*, SH 62 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1978), and the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, ed. Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la Recherche scientifique, 1979–81); for discussion of the aristocratic focus of the former, see Scott F. Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study*, Hellenic Studies 13 (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2006), 155–56, 170.

65. The sole exception is one Sergius, described as the son of the procurator Antoninus (*Life of Martha* 35 [Van den Ven, 2:279]).

66. *Life of Martha* 2 (Van den Ven, 2:254): Ἐπεμελεῖτο φώτων πολλῶν καὶ θυμιαμάτων προσαγωγῆς.

67. *Life of Martha* 3 (Van den Ven, 2:255): Ἐν ὅλοις δὲ τοῖς χρόνοις αὐτῆς λυχνικῶν καὶ ἑωθινῶν οὐκ ἀπελμπάνετο, σπεύδουσα μάλιστα εἰς τὰς νυκτερινὰς διαγρηγορήσεις τὰς γινομένας ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων μνήμαις. Συναγομένη δὲ πρώτη ἐν τῷ κυριακῷ καὶ μεθ' αὐτῆς ὑπὸ τινος φροντίδος καλωμένη μετελάμβανε τὴν σωτήριον ζωὴν ἡμῶν, τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ . . . ἐν ὅλῃ δὲ τῇ ἁγίᾳ καὶ θεῇ λειτουργίᾳ ἐπεδίδου τὸ θυμίαμα τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν, αἰτοῦσα καὶ αὐτοὺς συνεργῆσαι αὐτῇ ἐν ταῖς πρὸς Θεὸν δεήσεσιν αὐτῆς.

A monk urged her to sit down in church, but she rebuked him respectfully, saying that sitting during the liturgy was contemptuous of God.<sup>68</sup> As seen above, she is said to have anointed and refreshed the priests. Even her charity seems to have taken place in a sacramental context: she provided cloths for farmers who were baptizing their children (and, at her request, was buried wrapped in some of these cloths),<sup>69</sup> as well as taking care of the dead.<sup>70</sup> Martha's *Life* is far from the first hagiographic work to emphasize its subject's participation in church rituals. As we have seen, however, its author neglects other tropes of female piety such as asceticism and dutiful wifeness, with the effect that liturgical participation is presented as the key element in Martha's holiness.

Liturgy is still more important in the next section of the *Life*, which concerns Martha's death. She prepares for death by participating in the sacraments and the liturgy: she takes the Eucharist in Symeon's monastery,<sup>71</sup> and goes down to the church of John the Baptist to pray, "since a service was being conducted."<sup>72</sup> She tells Symeon in one of her last addresses to him that "in every liturgy and before every altar with incessant incense I have offered tears to God for your survival, and journeying frequently to every holy house I have zealously asked the holy martyrs of Christ our God to shield and help you. I have honored every holy man, carrying off prayers for you [?]."<sup>73</sup> This is especially noteworthy, as it suggests that not only Martha herself but also Symeon was in need of ritual supplications before God and the intercession of martyrs and holy men. The mention of the holy men, in particular, is striking, since in the *Life of Symeon the Younger*, there is no reference to holy men other than the stylite himself (perhaps to avoid cult competition); here, however, the desire to emphasize Symeon's surpassing holiness seems to be subordinated to the need to stress the importance of liturgical participation and reverence of martyrs and monks.

To some extent, an emphasis on liturgical preparations for death is conventional, and must reflect actual practice as well as the hagiographer's

68. *Life of Martha* 4 (Van den Ven, 2:255–56).

69. *Life of Martha* 4, 28 (Van den Ven, 2:256, 2:274).

70. *Life of Martha* 5 (Van den Ven, 2:256–57).

71. *Life of Martha* 19 (Van den Ven, 2:267).

72. *Life of Martha* 26 (Van den Ven, 2:272): Τηνικαῦτα συνάξεως ἐπιτελουμένης.

73. *Life of Martha* 20 (Van den Ven, 2:268): Ἐν πάσῃ λειτουργίᾳ καὶ ἀπέναντι παντὸς θυσιαστηρίου μετὰ θυμιάματος ἀκαταπαύστου ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπομονῆς σου δάκρυα προσέφερον τῷ Θεῷ καὶ εἰς πάντα οἶκον ἅγιον πορευομένη συχνῶς, ἔκτενῶς ἐδεόμην τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν ὑπερασπίσαι σου καὶ ἀντιλάβεσθαι. Πάντα ὅσιον ἄνδρα ἐτίμησα, συλήσασα σοι προσευχάς.

interest.<sup>74</sup> Yet the hagiographer of the *Life of Martha* goes further than most earlier hagiography in stating explicitly that it was Martha's devotion to church and participation in rituals and sacraments that achieved her salvation. While it is true that her palace in heaven, seen by her in a vision before her death, was supposedly built by Symeon, the Virgin Mary says to her, "look, this honor has been given to you, and stay here, in exchange for the fact that you feared the Lord and *honored the church of God*."<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, Martha herself emphasizes before her death that salvation is achieved through the Eucharist, saying in a prayer to God, "I have had confidence, trusting to be saved by the salvific participation of your life-giving body and blood, given to us by you for the forgiveness of slips, that you will remove my transgressions and purify my sins."<sup>76</sup>

After her death, too, the importance of appropriate funerary rites for salvation is stressed: after John Lector, a local villager, has a vision of a chariot of cherubim over Martha's tomb, Symeon tells him, "glorify the Lord, child. For you have found grace to see as you went the holy beasts of the cherubim carried on the chariot, [the cherubim who] arrived in response to the prayer of the hymnody and sanctified her dormition in the relic of death [?], because even I and she, captured in sins, needed release by him, although standing in the halls of the house of God."<sup>77</sup> Symeon's claim that

74. Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina* is a particularly noteworthy example of an earlier hagiographic text that emphasizes the heroine's liturgical life and provides an extended, liturgically-focused account of her death. For a reading of the *Life* which draws out its full liturgical implications, arguing not only that Macrina's own mode of life was a "living liturgy" (487) but also that Gregory's text "itself takes on a liturgical character" (501), see Derek Krueger, "Writing and the Liturgy of Memory in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina*," *J ECS* 8 (2000): 484–510. Macrina is, of course, a very different figure from Martha: Gregory presents her as an aristocratic, philosophical, beautiful, and (moderately) ascetic virgin who maintained strong connections to many of her family members. The liturgical focus of Gregory's text is also very different from that of the *Life of Martha*, as it lacks the strong cultic dimension of the latter: whereas Gregory's focus is on prayer and thanksgiving, Martha's hagiographer also emphasizes the importance of the rituals associated with the shrines of the saints (see below, p. 116–24).

75. *Life of Martha* 17 (Van den Ven, 2:266): Ἰδοὺ δεδωρήται σοι ἡ τιμὴ αὐτῆς, καὶ κατὰ μενε ἐνθάδε, ἀνθ' ὧν ἐφοβήθης τὸν Κύριον καὶ ἐτίμησας τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ (emphasis mine).

76. *Life of Martha* 23 (Van den Ven, 2:270): Τετόλημκα τῇ σωτηρίῳ μεταλήψει τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ σου σώματος καὶ αἵματος πιστεύουσα σωθῆναι τῇ δεδωρημένῃ ἡμῖν παρὰ σοῦ εἰς συγχώρησιν παραπτωμάτων, ὅπως ἀφέλῃς τὰς ἀνομίας μου καὶ τὰς ἁμαρτίας μου καθαρίσῃς.

77. *Life of Martha* 33 (Van den Ven, 2:278–79): Δόξαζε, τέκνον, τὸν Κύριον· χάριν γὰρ ἡῦρες θεάσασθαι καθὼς ἐχώρεις τὰ ἁγιαστικά ζῶα τοῦ ἐπιβεβηκότος ἐπὶ ἄρματος χερουβὶμ παραγενομένου ἐν τῇ ἐπικλήσει τῆς ὑμνωδίας καὶ ἀγιάσαντος ἐν τῷ λειψάνῳ τοῦ θανάτου τὴν κοίμησιν, καθότι καὶ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὴ ἐν ἁμαρτίαις συλληφθέντες ἐχρῆζομεν τῆς παρ' αὐτοῦ ἀφέσεως, ἐν αὐλαῖς οἴκου Κυρίου ἱστάμενοι.



not only Martha, but he himself, needs a heavenly visitation in response to the hymnody to assure salvation, is particularly striking. Although liturgy is undoubtedly a key motif of the *Life of Symeon the Younger*—this text is suffused with mentions of incense, with elaborate descriptions of liturgical processions, and with references to the Eucharist—there is less sense that participation in ecclesiastical rites was the key requirement for salvation.<sup>78</sup> Rather, the focus on liturgy in the text has been interpreted as an attempt to emphasize the stylite's "integration" within ecclesial worship.<sup>79</sup> The *Life of Martha* thus accords an even more important role to liturgy and the sacraments; the hagiographer uses her brief life and her lengthy death scene to present an inclusive vision of salvation, focusing on dedication to ecclesial rituals, participation in the Eucharist, and proper funeral rites.

In part, this reflects a growing tendency in seventh-century hagiography to emphasize the importance of participation in the sacraments and church rituals.<sup>80</sup> Leontius of Neapolis, in the *Life of John the Almsgiver*, recounts the story of a clergyman who never went to church and was jealous of his neighbor's—another priest's—prosperity, until discovering that the remedy was regular church attendance.<sup>81</sup> Leontius is still more explicit in his *Life of Symeon the Holy Fool*, making his hero include the failure to take communion among a list of heinous crimes: "While the saint was there (in Emesa), he cried out against many because of the Holy Spirit, and reproached thieves and fornicators. Some he faulted, *crying out that they had not taken communion often*, and others he reproached for perjury, so

78. There is one incident in the stylite's youth in which the Eucharist is presented in soteriological terms; he is given it in a dream by a priest to save him after Satan has been afflicting him with sexual dreams (*Life of Symeon* 35 [Van den Ven, 1:34]). Yet usually, even where the Eucharist features, it is not explicitly connected with salvation; even the section in which Symeon is made a priest seems uninterested in the salvific properties of the Eucharist (132–35 [Van den Ven, 1:124–27]). In Symeon's lectures to the brothers on the behaviour necessary for salvation he makes no mention of the sacraments (e.g., 24, 113, 171 [Van den Ven, 1:20–21, 1:92, 1:152–53]), nor do they feature in the various accounts of the deaths of holy men (e.g., 36, 109, 257 [Van den Ven, 1:34–36, 1:88–89, 1:223]).

79. Susan A. Harvey, "The Stylite's Liturgy: Ritual and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity," *J ECS* 6 (1998): 523–39; Phil Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 52 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) 34–37.

80. For the growing importance of liturgy and the sacraments in hagiography across late antiquity and, in particular, in the seventh century, see Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 7–43 and *passim*.

81. Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver*, ed. André-Jean Festugière and Lennart Rydén, *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 95 (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1974), 401–2.



that through his inventiveness he nearly put an end to sinning in the whole city.”<sup>82</sup> George, the author of the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, attributes a long speech to his holy man that emphasizes the importance of church attendance and participation in the liturgy, after his servants have failed to wake him for the night service out of concern for his health:

For if, in the presence of a mortal king, not only the healthy, but even the mutilated and the sick hasten to praise him, how much more ought we run together zealously, by night and day, at all times, to praise and laud the heavenly and immortal king of glory, Christ our God, not only those of us who are in good bodily health, but also those who are ill should display enthusiasm, so that he may both destroy our illnesses, if he knows that this would benefit us, and purify our souls from wicked deeds and considerations, and, like a debtor, pay to us the wages for our praises, wages which are not earthly but celestial? And just as one of the poorer people, if he is suddenly brought into the imperial halls and becomes a familiar and unhindered companion to the emperor, desires to have more and longer conversations with him, how much more ought we to render closer our dialogue of prayer and praise with the heavenly emperor, and to linger desirously in church, and not to hasten to fling off quickly the office of prayer, as if it were a very heavy burden and not something which brings a wage, and not to hasten, at devilish prompting, to depart from church as if from a prison, which is a great abomination? For we should always have this in mind, that, when we enter into the house of the Lord, we climb to heaven itself and we find the heavenly emperor seated on his throne of glory, surrounded by cherubim and seraphim . . . and that, although all those attend him with fear, we are allowed to speak to him confidently through ourselves and not through an interpreter, and to praise him and to ask for what we want; but when we leave from there [i.e., church] . . . we descend to the earthly and material world, bound by our wicked thoughts and preoccupations.”<sup>83</sup>

82. Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of Symeon the Holy Fool*, ed. Festugière and Rydén, *Syméon et Jean*, 96; trans., Derek Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's Life and the Late Antique City*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 25 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 165 (emphasis mine).

83. George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* (ed. André-Jean Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, SH 48, 2 vols. [Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1970], 1:150–51; translation my own): Εἰ γὰρ ἐπὶ φθαρτοῦ βασιλέως οὐ μόνον οἱ ὑγιαίνοντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ἡκρωτηριασμένοι καὶ οἱ ἐν ἀσθενείαις εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐπείγονται εὐφημίαν, πόσω μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς εἰς τὴν τοῦ ἐπουρανίου καὶ ἀθανάτου βασιλέως τῆς δόξης Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν εὐφημίαν καὶ δοξολογίαν ὀφειλομένῃ σπουδαίως συντρέχειν νυκτός τε καὶ ἡμέρας κατὰ πᾶσαν ὥραν οὐ μόνον οἱ τῷ σώματι ἐρρωμένοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ νοσοῦντες τὸ εὐπρόθυμον συνεισφέρειν, ἵνα καὶ τὰς νόσους ἡμῶν, ἐὰν γνῶ συμφέρειν ἡμῖν, ἀπελάσῃ καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καθάρῃ τῶν πονηρῶν πράξεων τε καὶ ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ τοὺς μισθοὺς τῶν εὐφημιῶν οὐ γητίνους, ἀλλ' οὐρανίους ἡμῖν ὥς χρεώστης ἀποδώσῃ· καὶ ὥσπερ τις τῶν μετριωτέρων,

George's attention is focused very much on the practical (albeit often delayed) benefits of church attendance: if we praise God, we are owed a heavenly reward; if we speak to him in church, we can ask for whatever we want. We may even be healed of our diseases if he judges that this is in our best interests. It is thus, in a sense, a pragmatic rather than spiritual message, and might be thought to be aimed at a wide, not exclusively monastic audience. The act of attending church is made a key constitutive element of salvation.

Martha's hagiographer is thus far from unique in his interest in ecclesial rituals and the sacraments; in general, seventh-century hagiography was increasingly oriented towards the liturgical. He does, however, go further than most of his contemporaries, in choosing as his hero a figure who bears no resemblance to the traditional ascetic, monastic subjects of hagiography. Whereas in the *Lives* of Theodore of Sykeon, John the Almsgiver and Symeon the Holy Fool, as in other contemporary examples, the new emphasis on liturgy is balanced by a more conventional interest in asceticism, in the *Life of Martha* liturgy predominates. This is not to suggest that Martha's hagiographer completely rejected the traditional model of the holy man: indeed, in the *Life* we find occasional references to Symeon's performance of large-scale miracles.<sup>84</sup> Yet his choice not to focus on Symeon but on a holy figure presented in very different terms suggests that, even more than many of his contemporaries, he was interested in exploring a different view of piety and salvation; salvation is clearly attainable for even an ordinary Christian layperson, as long as he or she is devoted to the rituals of both church and saint's cult.

How comprehensive, however, is the vision of Martha's hagiographer? Is he genuinely concerned to encourage devotion to ecclesial and cultic

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ἐὰν ἐν βασιλικαῖς αὐλαῖς ἄφνω εἰσαχθεῖς γνώριμος τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ συνόμιλος ἀκολούτως γένηται, πλείονα καὶ μακροτέραν τὴν μετ' αὐτοῦ συντυχίαν γίνεσθαι ἐπιποθεῖ . . . πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν πλείονα τὴν πρὸς τὸν ἐπουράνιον βασιλέα ἡμῶν διάλεξιν τῆς εὐχῆς καὶ δοξολογίας ποιεῖσθαι καὶ ἐγγρονίζεῖν ποθεῖν ὧς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ μὴ σπεύδειν ὡς τι βαρύτερον φορτίον καὶ οὐχ ὡς μισθοφόρον τὸν τῆς εὐχῆς κανόνα τάχιον ἀπορρίψαι καὶ ἐπείεσθαι ἐκ διαβολικῆς ἐνεργείας ὡς ἐκ φρουρᾶς τινος ἐξίέναι τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ὅπερ ἐστὶν μεγάλη παρανομία. Ἐν νῷ γὰρ ὀφείλομεν ἔχειν τοῦτο, ὅτι ἐν τῷ εἰσέρχεσθαι ἡμᾶς εἰς τὸν κυριακὸν οἶκον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν αὐτὸν ἀνερχόμεθα καὶ τὸν οὐράνιον βασιλέα εὐρίσκομεν καθήμενον ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου τῆς δόξης, κυκλούμενον ὑπὸ τῶν χερουβὶμ καὶ σεραφίμ . . . καὶ ὅτι πάντων ἐκείνων μετὰ φόβου παρεστώτων ἡμεῖς συγχωρούμεθα αὐτῷ τεταρρηκότες δι' ἑαυτῶν καὶ οὐ δι' ἐρμηνέως διαλέγεσθαι καὶ εὐφημεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ αἰτεῖν ἅπερ ἂν θέλωμεν· ὅταν δὲ πάλιν ἐξερχόμεθα ἐκείθεν, λογίζεσθαι ἡμᾶς χρῆ ὅτι . . . εἰς τὸν ἐπίγειον καὶ ὑλῶδη κόσμον καταβαίνομεν δεσμούμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν πονηρῶν λογισμῶν καὶ φροντίδων.

84. *Life of Martha* 9, 16, 34 (Van den Ven, 2:260, 2:265, 2:279).

rituals in general, or is his intention solely to promote participation in the cults of Symeon and his mother on the “Wonderful Mountain”? The answer, arguably, is twofold. In the first part of the *Life*, that which deals with Martha’s lifestyle and her death, it does seem that the author presents a general model for salvation. His descriptions, discussed above, of Martha’s devotion to services in honor of the martyrs, her care for priests, and her visits to “every holy house” and “every holy man,” as well as his emphasis on the salvific powers of the Eucharist and the funeral hymnody, do not appear to be tied to a particular cult (although her devotion to Symeon is repeatedly stressed).<sup>85</sup> After the narrative of her death, however, the hagiographer’s focus changes; he is still preoccupied with liturgy and ritual, but now almost exclusively gives center stage to the ceremonies at Martha’s shrine. In other words, his ambitions appear to shift from providing a general paradigm for the ideal worshipper to reinforcing the importance of participation in the cultic community on the “Wonderful Mountain.”

This new focus emerges very shortly after Martha’s death in the descriptions of her funeral rites. The hagiographer recounts, in some detail, the series of liturgical acts performed in her honor: her initial burial in Daphne and the transfer of her body from Daphne to Symeon’s monastery are accompanied by psalms, hymns, and incense,<sup>86</sup> when she is brought to the monastery an all-night vigil is performed before her tomb is dug, and in the morning a crowd of clergy and laymen gather, who bury Martha and perform the Eucharist and funeral ceremony.<sup>87</sup> After the Eucharist, villagers from Gandigorōn come to the monastery and perform another all-night vigil, “so that they also might gather the fruits of the prayers of the blessed woman,”<sup>88</sup> implying that participation in her liturgical remembrance was necessary in order to benefit from her intercession. The hagiographer’s desire to encourage dedication to and participation in the rites at her shrine becomes still clearer in the next section of the *Life*, that which deals with Martha’s posthumous miracles. Many of the miracles take place in a liturgical or ritual context: for example, a man from Lycaonia who had been afflicted by demons for thirty years, so that he could not hear the divine liturgy, was healed during the nocturnal odes, having being dragged

85. See for example *Life of Martha* 2, 3, 6, 8–9 (Van den Ven, 2:254, 2:255, 2:258, 2:259–60).

86. *Life of Martha* 28, 30 (Van den Ven, 2:274, 2:275).

87. *Life of Martha* 32 (Van den Ven, 2:277).

88. *Life of Martha* 33 (Van den Ven, 2:278): Ὅπως καὶ αὐτοὶ τοὺς καρποὺς τῶν εὐχῶν τῆς ὁσίας τρυγήσωσιν.

by an invisible power to Martha's tomb.<sup>89</sup> Sergius son of Antoninus, from the village of Charandam, was cured of a severe fever at the rites for the thirtieth day after Martha's funeral.<sup>90</sup> The lamps from her all-night vigils also had healing properties: John Lector, "having found a good moment and unbeknownst to everyone, lifted the wicks of the lamps being burnt for the night vigil,"<sup>91</sup> he took them to his village where he used them to heal the sick and drive out demons. By connecting Martha's performance of miracles with the liturgical ceremonies at her shrine, the hagiographer seems to be encouraging attendance at these services.

He also, more specifically, encourages proper ritual practice, in particular by cautionary tales involving those who neglected their duties. Sergius son of Antoninus, mentioned above, fell prey to a severe fever because "he refused to go near to any corpse, thinking this an abomination. Having done the same thing to the relic of the blessed woman he did not draw near, nor did he put his shoulder underneath it."<sup>92</sup> The connection between his refusal to honor Martha's corpse and the disease is stressed in his later confession: "I neglected to handle the honorable relic of the mother of saint Symeon and because of this these terrible judgements have befallen me."<sup>93</sup> One of the brothers of the monastery fell severely ill with chills and fever because "having drawn near to the honored coffin of the blessed woman to light the lamp, having been seized by an impulse of contempt and disbelief he rather quenched it and with grumbling withdrew, not recognizing that the mistake was in himself."<sup>94</sup> In a third example, Symeon is said to have held back from rebuking his monks for neglecting the lamp on Martha's coffin, both out of fear that he would seem to be insisting on her adoration,<sup>95</sup> and, importantly, "as a way of teaching his brothers

89. *Life of Martha* 41 (Van den Ven, 2:283–84). So too, as mentioned above, Sergius son of Antoninus was healed at the rites for the thirtieth day after Martha's funeral (*Life of Martha* 35–36 [Van den Ven, 2:279–81]).

90. *Life of Martha* 35–36 (Van den Ven, 2:279–81).

91. *Life of Martha* 37 (Van den Ven, 2:281): Εὐρηκὼς καιρὸν καὶ λαθὼν πάντας ἐπῆρε τὼν εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγρυπνίαν καιομένων κανδηλῶν τὰ ἐνλύχνια.

92. *Life of Martha* 35 (Van den Ven, 2:280): Παρητεῖτο παντὶ νεκρῷ πλησιάσαι, βδελυκτὸν τοῦτο λογιζόμενος. Τοῦτο δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ λειψάνου τῆς ὁσίας πεποικῶς οὐ προσήγγισεν, οὐδὲ τὸν ὅμον ὑπέθηκεν.

93. *Life of Martha* 35 (Van den Ven, 2:280): Ἀπεστράφην βαστάσαι τὸ τίμιον λείψανον τῆς μητρὸς τοῦ ἁγίου Συμεὼν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μοι τὰ δεινὰ ταῦτα ἐπέστησαν κριτήρια.

94. *Life of Martha* 43 (Van den Ven, 2:285): Προσεγγίσας . . . τῇ τιμίᾳ σορῷ τῆς ὁσίας ἐπὶ τὸ ἅγιον τὴν κανδήλαν, περιφρονήσεως καὶ ἀπιστίας λογισμῷ κατασχεθεὶς ἔσβεσεν μᾶλλον καὶ μετὰ γογγυσμοῦ ἀνεχώρει, μὴ διακρίνας ἐν ἑαυτῷ πταῖσμα εἶναι τοῦτο.

95. For discussion of this, see above n.21.

and wishing them to be taught through experience to offer willingly and not with compulsion the honors due to the saints.”<sup>96</sup> The outcome of this incident was much the same as in the other cases of negligence: one of the remiss brothers, the monastery’s manager, fell severely ill. When he was on the brink of death, Martha appeared to him with a reproach: “What were you thinking when you did not light my lamp? Don’t you know that I am a sharer in the heavenly light and I do not need any of such things, unless for the sake of your salvation?”<sup>97</sup> This makes clear that ritual care for the saint was not intended to glorify the saint—who was already dwelling in glory—but to benefit the soul of the worshipper. The manager was cured after Martha brought the Eucharistic bread forward to his stomach, and thenceforth was diligent in lighting her lamp. These miracles where disease is caused by failure to carry out the appropriate rituals are clearly intended to emphasize the importance of attending to the saint’s tomb, and the danger to both body and soul of failing to do so.

Indeed, it is arguable that one of the primary functions of the work is to teach the audience how to be a good worshipper. The composite (and unusual) nature of the work, consisting of a short Life followed by an extended account of miracles, facilitates this. Whereas a traditional holy Life, with its emphasis on worldly renunciation and on asceticism, does not provide a realistic role model for most worshippers,<sup>98</sup> the *Life of Martha* is particularly effective as a didactic work: it combines a paradigmatic life, stripped of extraneous biographical detail, whose protagonist is essentially depicted as an ideal devotee of shrines and holy men, with miracles, which by their structure are very much focused on what a suppliant should do in order to gain divine assistance. This is not to deny earlier saints’ Lives any didactic role: clearly, they were often intended at least in part to be instructive, and they too contained warnings against those who did not put their faith in the holy men. Some saints’ Lives, including the *Life of Symeon the Younger*, contain numerous accounts of miracles performed

96. *Life of Martha* 39 (Van den Ven, 2:282): Καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς παιδεύων καὶ διὰ τῆς πείρας διδασθῆναι βουλόμενος ἐκουσίως καὶ οὐκ ἀναγκαστῶς προσαγαγεῖν τὰς ὀφειλομένας τιμὰς τοῖς ἁγίοις.

97. *Life of Martha* 39 (Van den Ven, 2:283): Τί διαλογιζόμενοι οὐχ ἤψατέ μου κανδήλαν ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι τοῦ ἐπουρανίου φωτός εἰμι κοινωνὸς ἐγὼ καὶ οὐ προσδέομαι τινοσ τῶν τοιούτων, εἰ μὴ διὰ τὴν ὑμῶν σωτηρίαν;

98. Peter Brown has argued (focusing on Western Europe but implicitly extending his arguments across the Christian world) that the “notion of imitable sanctity is a theme as vivid and colourful, but as superficial, as a growth of lichen across an ancient rock,” and that, in general, saints were sacred by virtue of their inimitability in “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity,” *Early Medieval Europe* 9.2 (2000): 22.

by the holy men, which could themselves contain guidance for potential suppliants at the shrine. Yet saints' Lives are oriented on the whole towards the perspective of the saint, whereas in the independent miracle collections of deceased saints the suppliant takes the primary role; we perceive the saint through their eyes. The focus is thus on the experience of the suppliant, making them a particularly effective didactic medium for teaching proper cultic practice.

This is evident from a wide range of miracle collections, not only from the *Life of Martha*. Even pre-Christian miracle collections are clearly in part didactic: the *stelai* from the cult of Asclepius at Epidaurus, bearing records of miraculous *iamata*, probably from the late fourth century B.C.E., contain clear warnings encouraging belief in the god and payment of the ritual dues.<sup>99</sup> One account records, for example, that Hermon of Thasus was cured of blindness, but, because he failed to offer gifts of thanksgiving, Asclepius brought back his blindness; he had to return to the shrine to be cured.<sup>100</sup> Christian miracle collections, which saw a particular boom in the last half of the sixth century and the seventh century, are equally didactic.<sup>101</sup> The authors (or compilers) of these collections conveyed their messages in a variety of ways, including through cautionary tales, exemplary models, and direct exhortations to the audience. We can find examples of all three of these techniques in the compilation of several miracle collections attached to the cult of the doctor-martyrs Cosmas and Damian.<sup>102</sup> In one

99. Matthew P. J. Dillon, "The Didactic Nature of the Epidaurian *Iamata*," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 101 (1994): 239–60. André-Jean Festugière has demonstrated the existence of parallels between some of the miracles recounted in the *Life of Symeon the Younger* and the miracles ascribed to Asclepius at Epidaurus in "Types épidauriens de miracles dans la vie de Syméon Stylite le Jeune," *JHS* 93 (1973): 70–73.

100. Stele II.22, ed. Emma J. Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 225.

101. See Pierre Maraval, "Fonction pédagogique de la littérature hagiographique d'un lieu de pèlerinage: L'exemple des Miracles de Cyr et Jean," in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés IVe–XIIe siècles* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1981), 383–97.

102. The text is edited by Ludwig Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian: Texte und Einleitung* (Leipzig: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1907). The first three "series" of miracles can be dated to the sixth/early seventh century because references to several are found in the *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, written by Sophronius of Jerusalem (d.638); see André-Jean Festugière, *Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien, Saints Cyr et Jean (Extraits), Saint Georges* (Paris: A. and J. Picard, 1971), 88–89; Phil Booth, "Orthodox and Heretic in the Early Byzantine Cult(s) of Saints Cosmas and Damian," in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, ed. Peter Sarris, Matthew Dal Santo, and Phil Booth, Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 116–17. Besides the Chalcedonian collections edited

cautionary account, a man suffering from a severe lung condition came to the saints' shrine to seek a cure. Initially, however, his disease continued and "he was, according to his nature, angry and feather-brained and rash, and was proffering unsuitable blasphemies through his mouth."<sup>103</sup> Cosmas and Damian appeared to another man in the night, instructing him to tell the angry man that he would only be cured if he stopped blaspheming and stopped eating bird-flesh in their shrine during Lent. When this message was conveyed to him, the man desisted from his undesirable behavior and was subsequently cured. The story seems to warn its audience that aggressive and impious behavior was a barrier to healing and total obedience to the saints was required.

The next account in the collection provides, in contrast, a paradigm for the correct way to approach the martyrs. A woman who was both deaf and dumb came to the shrine, asking Cosmas and Damian, "with tears and with faith,"<sup>104</sup> if she could die, as her disability was making life unbearable. "Since she had lamented because of all these things and had remained in this supplication with faith towards the saints," God's help, we are told, came to her through the saints' mediation: yet rather than granting her request to die, he healed her completely.<sup>105</sup> Her humility, faith, and patience were thus rewarded through the conferring of a boon greater than her original demand. In both of these examples, the stories' morals have been only implicit, if clear. Sometimes, however, the didactic messages of the accounts are openly expounded. In the third collection of Cosmas and Damian's miracles, for example, the hagiographer reports that one of the beneficiaries of the saints' miracles had helped him greatly by recounting his story, "for he taught that it is necessary to approach God with faith, because faith is the mediator of the blessings that come from God to us."<sup>106</sup> Hagiographers thus had various ways, some more subtle than others, of instructing their audiences in their particular messages, which ranged from the cult-promoting, to the moralistic, to the doctrinal. The *Miracles of Artemius*, which probably dates from late seventh-century

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by Deubner, a Miaphysite collection also survives, ed. Ernst Rupperecht, *Cosmae et Damiani sanctorum medicorum vitam et miracula e codice londinensi* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1935).

103. Τούτου . . . κατὰ φύσιν ὀργίλου καὶ κεφροῦ καὶ προπετοῦς ὑπάρχοντος καὶ ἀπρεπεῖς διὰ τῆς γλώσσης βλασφημίας προφέροντος (Deubner, 110; translations are my own).

104. Μετὰ δακρύων καὶ πίστεως (Deubner, 111).

105. Διὰ πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ὀλοφυρομένης καὶ τῇ τοιαύτῃ ἱκετηρίᾳ μετὰ πίστεως πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους ἐπιμενούσης (Deubner, 112).

106. Ἐδίδασκεν γὰρ ὡς δεῖ μετὰ πίστεως θεῷ προσίειναι, ὅτι ἡ πίστις τῶν ἐκ θεοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς διαβαίνοντων ἀγαθῶν μεσίτης ἐστίν (Deubner, 162).



Constantinople, is perhaps most similar to the *Life of Martha*, in that its hagiographer was also particularly interested in ritual and liturgy: night-vigils held in memory of the saint are the setting for many miracles in both texts.<sup>107</sup> The unusual feature of the *Life of Martha* is the combination, within a single work, of these instructive miracle stories with the short life of the saint herself: the text's audience is therefore presented first with the exemplary paradigm of the life of the perfect worshipper, and subsequently with miracle stories that warn against the dangerous consequences of improper ritual practice. The work also differs notably from most contemporary miracle collections, in that it relates to a recently deceased saint, whereas the majority of the late-sixth and seventh-century miracle collections concern long-established cults of early Christian martyrs (including Cosmas and Damian, Cyrus and John, Artemius, and Demetrius). This highlights, again, Martha's exceptional relatability: she was a near-contemporary figure who had died an ordinary death, rather than a famous, martyred hero from an era of Christian history which had gained legendary status.

The liturgical and ritual themes of the *Life* come to a crescendo in its final sections, as the hagiographer completes his portrayal of the sacred origins of the ceremonies at Martha's shrine. The penultimate major section of the *Life*, that which deals with the construction of an oratory for Martha and Symeon's bodies, is suffused with images of incense, prayer and processions. The series of visions witnessed by the brothers of the monastery encouraging the construction of the shrine were highly liturgical: Symeon had a vision of the shrine being built, the tomb being moved, "and fair boys circling around the coffin and singing very beautiful and pleasing things to God and pouring out the alleluia to one another";<sup>108</sup> one of the brothers saw Martha outlining the shape of the oratory, and her tomb surrounded by candelabras and shining lights and people singing psalms and alleluias;<sup>109</sup> while Symeon again, in a passage which is lengthy but worth quoting, saw Martha performing a divine doxology which affected his own liturgical practice:

He saw the blessed woman . . . with much sweetness sending a melodious and pleasant angelic speech on high and saying three times, 'Glory to you, God, glory to you, alleluia,' and the whole mandra sounded-together as if giving voice, and her body in the tomb was shaken by the doxology. And

107. For discussion of the *Miracles of Artemius* see Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 82–84.

108. *Life of Martha* 45 (Van den Ven, 2:287): Παῖδάς τε ὠραίους περικυκλοῦντας τὴν σορὸν καὶ καλὰ λίαν καὶ τερπνὰ ὑμνοῦντας τὸν Θεὸν καὶ ὑπηχοῦντας ἀλλήλοις τὸ ἀλληλούϊα.

109. *Life of Martha* 46–47 (Van den Ven, 2:288–89).



held by fear and joy at such grace of God which he had given to his slave woman, he remembered divine scripture saying, 'the humbled bones will rejoice.' Then he remained guarding in his heart that song of the doxology towards God, and from joy of soul he rejoiced in the holy spirit and also himself sang the heavenly doxology. When the time for the nightly hymns summoned, the brothers were gathered to him according to custom, and having learnt from him they sang along as well that God-given hymn until the Sabbath dawned. And henceforth in the lamplight service of the Sabbath and holy Sunday and every evening he commanded this to happen, with one brother saying before the tomb three times such a hymn and everyone psalming back three times.<sup>110</sup>

Here Symeon's visionary experience directly affected the liturgy practiced at the monastery; the chant he heard in his vision was apparently incorporated into the lamplight services. The hagiographer thus presents the origins of the current rituals at the shrine as supernatural, thereby sacralising both the rites themselves and, by implication, their participants. Even the planning of the shrine was sanctified by ritual; Symeon, on Sunday, ordered the plan for oratory to be drawn, "throwing incense."<sup>111</sup> When Martha's body was transferred to the completed shrine, priests and faithful laymen gathered, with further psalming and hymning, and miracles were performed.<sup>112</sup> Every stage of the construction of the oratory, from preliminary inspiration, to practical planning, and its culmination in the translation of Martha's body, was thus marked and sanctified by liturgical rituals.

The final section of the *Life*, the account of Symeon's acquisition of a relic of the true cross, seems to stand apart from the rest of the *Life* and, as suggested above, may not have been a part of the work as originally conceived and written. Martha is noticeably less active here: of the eighteen

110. *Life of Martha* 48 (Van den Ven, 2:289–90): Εἶδε τὴν μακαρίαν . . . μετὰ ἡδύτητος πολλῆς εὐμελῆ καὶ τερπνὴν ἀγγελικὴν εἰς ὕψος ἀναπέμπουσας φωνὴν καὶ λέγουσαν ἐκ τρίτου· 'Δόξα σοι, ὁ Θεός, δόξα σοι, ἀλληλοῦϊα,' καὶ συνήχει ἡ μάνδρα ὅλη ὥσπερ φωνὴν διδοῦσα, καὶ τὸ λείψανον αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ θέσει ἐδονεῖτο τῇ δοξολογίᾳ. Καὶ τρόμφ καὶ χαρᾷ συσχεθεὶς ἐπὶ τῇ τοσαύτῃ χάριτι τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ δέδωκε τῇ δούλῃ αὐτοῦ, ὑπόμνησιν ἔλαβε τῆς θείας γραφῆς λεγουσῆς· 'Ἀγαλλιάσονται ὅστέα τεταπεινωμένα.' Τότε ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἔμεινεν διαφυλάττων τὸ μέρος ἐκεῖνο τῆς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν δοξολογίας, καὶ ἐκ τῆς χαρᾶς τῆς ψυχῆς ἡγαλλιάσατο ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι καὶ συνυπήχει καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν οὐράνιον δοξολογίαν. Τοῦ δὲ καιροῦ καλοῦντος διὰ τὰς νυκτερινὰς ὑμνωδίας, συνήχθησαν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἀδελφοί, καὶ μαθόντες παρ' αὐτοῦ συνυπήχουν καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν θεόσδοτον ἐκείνην ὑμνωδίαν ἕως πρωῒ ἐπιφωσκοῦντος σαββάτου. Λοιπὸν οὖν καὶ ἐν τῷ λυχνικῷ τοῦ τε σαββάτου καὶ τῆς ἁγίας κυριακῆς καὶ κατὰ πᾶσαν δὲ ἐσπέραν τοῦτο ἐπέτρεψε γίνεσθαι, ἐνὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἔμπροσθεν τῆς σοροῦ τρίτον λέγοντος τὸν τοιοῦτον ὕμνον καὶ πάντων τρίτον ὑποψαλλόντων.

111. *Life of Martha* 49 (Van den Ven, 2:290): Βαλὼν θυμίαμα.

112. *Life of Martha* 51 (Van den Ven, 2:295).

chapters (52–70), she is mentioned in only seven, usually briefly, and never speaks. The only miracles are performed through Symeon, not Martha. The lengthy exchange of elaborate letters between Symeon and the staurophylax Thomas has no parallels in other parts of the work. Nonetheless, this section is thematically linked to the rest of the *Life* through, again, the liturgy.<sup>113</sup> Symeon asks God for a piece of the cross, “for the memorial of your slave whom you took, in return for the fact that you made known to her faithful soul how to handle in her hands your life-giving cross, when I ascended from power to power to this elevation, and she went ahead in a flood of tears saying the song, ‘Save us, son of God, who was crucified for us, alleluia.’”<sup>114</sup> Martha is thus associated with the cross through past ritual; she carried a cross in the procession in which Symeon moved to his column in the new monastery.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, it becomes clear that the relic of the True Cross, once attained by Symeon, will be connected to Martha through liturgy: he tells the priest Paul, envoy of the staurophylax, that he wants the relic of the cross “for venerating on the day in which his [God’s] philanthropy consented to sanctify my mother’s dormition.”<sup>116</sup> The *Life* claims that the relic of the cross was brought to Symeon’s monastery on the one-year anniversary of his ascent to the column—although other chronological indicators suggest that this was impossible<sup>117</sup>—highlighting the author’s desire to associate the arrival of the cross with important ceremonies at the monastery. The section concludes with a detailed description of the memorial service held on the first anniversary of Martha’s death:

When a time of twelve months had been fulfilled, the first memorial of the dormition of the blessed Martha took place, and although the brothers had said nothing to anyone, great crowds of men and women by the grace of God came together with waxes and lamps to conduct her memorial service. And having made an all-night vigil, just before dawn, when the life-giving cross had been put forward, all those who had come together worshipped it with hymns, crying, ‘we revere your cross, master, and we glorify your holy resurrection.’ After the proskynesis, when the priest Antonius had taken the

113. See Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 1:88\*–89\*.

114. *Life of Martha* 52 (Van den Ven, 2:297): Εἰς ἀνάμνησιν ἧς προσελάβου δούλης σου, ἀνθ’ ὧν ἐγνώρισας τῇ πιστῇ αὐτῆς ψυχῇ βαστάσαι ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ τὸν ζωοποιόν σου σταυρόν, μεταίροντός μου ἐκ δυνάμεως εἰς δύναμιν ἐπὶ ταύτην τὴν ἀνάβασιν, προπορευομένης αὐτῆς ἐν πλήθει δακρύων καὶ τότε τὸ ἄσμα λεγούσης· ‘Σῶσον ἡμᾶς, υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι’ ἡμᾶς, ἁλληλούϊα.’

115. *Life of Symeon* 113 (Van den Ven, 1:93).

116. *Life of Martha* 60 (Van den Ven 2:304): Ἐπὶ τὸ προσκυνεῖσθαι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐν ᾗ ἠδδόκησεν ἡ αὐτοῦ φιλάνθρωπία τῆς ἐμῆς μητρὸς ἀγιάσαι τὴν κοίμησιν.

117. Van den Ven, *Vie ancienne*, 2:309n2.

cross, while the deacons were escorting in procession with fans and censers and psalming, ‘save us, son of God, who was crucified for us, alleluia,’ he put it down in the treasury. And after a series of readings they performed a perfect service, with the slave of God performing the divine mystery.<sup>118</sup>

This scene firmly places the relic of the True Cross within the ritual context of the whole *Life*; again we see waxes, lamps, an all-night vigil, psalming and the Eucharist, all in honor of Martha’s memory. The hagiographer, by emphasizing the unparalleled value of the Cross—he describes Symeon requesting “something more precious than every relic of the saints, than every treasure, a visible and venerable part of the unblemished lordly and salvific wood”—implies that its acquisition conferred still greater status and power on the memorial ceremonies on the “Wonderful Mountain.”<sup>119</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the liturgical rhythms of the shrine, and in particular the memorial services for Martha’s death, provide the main unifying theme across the entire *Life of Martha*. At one level, this has a pragmatic function: to encourage participation in these memorial services and thereby to promote the cult of the shrine on the “Wonderful Mountain.” The text also, however, more generally seems to instruct its audience in how to live a good, liturgical, and sacramental life as a devotee of the saints, more comprehensively than would be possible in a traditional *Life* of an ascetic holy man; Martha is a direct model for her own worshippers in a way which her son Symeon could not be. This is not to say that the *Life of Martha* rejects the old model of the holy man—Symeon still appears to possess the same powers in the work, although they are the focus of less attention—but it does seem to be exploring newer, and in some ways more

118. *Life of Martha* 70 (Van den Ven, 2:311–12): Πληρωθέντος δὲ τοῦ δωδεκαμηνιαίου χρόνου, ἐνέστη ἡ πρώτη μνεία τῆς κοιμήσεως τῆς μακαρίας Μάρθας, καὶ μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἰρηκότων τῶν ἀδελφῶν, συνήλθον τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ χάριτι ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν πλήθῃ πολλὰ μετὰ κηρῶν τε καὶ λαμπάδων, ὥστε τὴν σὺναξιν τῆς μνείας αὐτῆς ἐπιτελέσαι· καὶ πάννυχον ἀγρυπνίαν ποιήσαντες, ὄρθρου λοιπὸν βαθέως, προτεθέντος τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ προσεκύνησαν πάντες οἱ συνελθόντες μεθ’ ὕμνων βοῶντες ‘Τὸν σταυρὸν σου προσκυνοῦμεν, δέσποτα, καὶ τὴν ἁγίαν σου ἀνάστασιν δοξάζομεν.’ Μετὰ δὲ τὴν προσκύνησιν λαβὼν ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἀντώνιος τὸν σταυρὸν, διακόνων ὀψικευόντων μετὰ ῥιπιδίων καὶ θυμιατηρίων καὶ ψαλλόντων· ‘Σῶσον ἡμᾶς, υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι’ ἡμᾶς, ἀλληλοῦῖα,’ ἀπέθετο αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ κειμηλαρχίῳ. Καὶ γενομένης ἀκολουθίας τῶν ἀναγνωσμάτων ἐπετέλεσαν τελείαν σὺναξιν, τοῦ δούλου τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν θεῖαν μυσταγωγίαν ἱερουργήσαντος.’

119. *Life of Martha* 60 (Van den Ven, 2:304): Τίνα παντὸς λειψάνου ἁγίου, παντὸς δὲ θησαυροῦ τιμωτέραν, ἐμφανῇ καὶ σεβασμίαν μερίδα τοῦ ἀχράντου δεσποτικοῦ καὶ σωτηρίου ξύλου.

practical, models for holiness. The text is in many respects less ambitious in scope than Symeon's *Life*: no emperors or great nobles appear as devotees of the saint; there are few mass miracles; and the miracles are almost exclusively healing miracles. This might be because its subject is a woman, and in some respects only an adjunct to her more powerful son. It is more likely, however, given the period in which it seems to have been produced, that its character in fact reflects wider developments in attitudes toward the holy; in the late sixth and seventh centuries many miracle collections of male saints were produced which showed similar tendencies towards less ambitious, predominantly medical, miracles, and in which the Lives of holy figures were diversifying, as traditional, extravagantly ascetic, monastic miracle workers lost their dominant hold over hagiographers' imaginations. In this sense, it can be argued that the changed interests of the *Life of Martha* compared to the *Life of Symeon the Younger* reflect a wider development from a holy landscape dominated by living, individual ascetics who performed remarkable feats for the wider community to one where posthumous miracle cults came to be particularly important, and where the paradigmatic life recommended to suppliants was quite different from that of the traditional holy person. Hagiographers increasingly emphasized personal piety, and in particular ritual behavior and participation in the sacraments, rather than encouraging reliance on the salvific powers of holy men.

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