

This is an extract from:

*Holy Women of Byzantium:
Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*

edited by Alice-Mary Talbot

No. 1 in the series Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation

Published by

*Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection
Washington, D.C.*

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Trustees for Harvard University

Washington, D.C.

Printed in the United States of America

www.doaks.org/etexts.html

8. LIFE OF ST. MARY THE YOUNGER

translated by Angeliki E. Laiou

Introduction

St. Mary the Younger¹ (d. ca. 903) was a woman of Armenian origins, whose family migrated to Constantinople during the reign of Basil I (867–886). Her father was a military man, as were her husband, Nikephoros; her brother-in-law; and one of her sons. Upon her marriage, she moved to her husband's household in a small town in eastern Thrace, and eventually to the city of Vizye,² where Nikephoros was stationed after having fought valiantly against the Bulgarians. She and her husband had four sons, of whom the first two died while still very young, while the last two, a pair of twins, were born with signs on their bodies foretelling that one of them would become a soldier and the other a monk.

According to her *vita*, Mary was a very pious woman, whose piety was expressed both in private ways, that is, through her constant attendance of church or praying at home, and in social ways, through almsgiving and philanthropy. She is also praised for more homely virtues, for example, the fact that she treated her servants not as slaves but as fellow human beings. It was indeed her excessive philanthropy that proved her downfall. Her husband's brother and sister accused her of squandering the household property and of adultery with a slave—a heinous crime. Despite her heated denials, and her statement that her almsgiving would procure salvation for her husband as well, she was placed under guard in her bedroom. One day, her husband, incensed at some words of hers that were misrepresented by one of her enemies, beat her, and as she tried to escape she hurt her head and died after a few days.

Four months after her death, a miracle occurred at her tomb, which was

¹ She was evidently called “the Younger” (ἡ Νεώ) to distinguish her from the earlier Mary of Egypt.

² Vizye is modern Vize, in eastern Turkish Thrace.

housed in the cathedral church of Hagia Sophia.³ The bishop of Vizye did not believe that a woman, who had lived and died in a married state, could perform miracles which were, for him, reserved to pure men and holy monks and martyrs (Chap. 12; cf. also Chap. 19). The miracles belied this assertion. Nevertheless, when, a short time later, her husband decided to move her body into a chapel he had built for her, members of the clergy tried, unsuccessfully, to block the operation. Posthumous miracles continued, and among the miraculous happenings was the execution of a painting of her by a painter from another city (Raideostos) who had never laid eyes on her (Chap. 18).

The *vita* discusses the occupation of Vizye by the Bulgarians, under the tsar Symeon (893–927), after a five-year blockade.⁴ The inhabitants fled, and Symeon ordered the city razed, turning the churches into barns and warehouses, with the exception of the church that housed the saint's body, where a flame burst out and frightened him. The saint eventually performed miracles for the Bulgarians as well. Twenty-five years after her death, when peace had been made with the Bulgarians, her body, which had remained intact, was reburied in a marble tomb. Her sons gave property to her church, founding a monastery. The last part of the *vita* contains information about her sons and praises for her.

The geographic area in which the events narrated in this *vita* take place is restricted to eastern Thrace and Constantinople; the boundaries are Medeia in the northeast, Arkadioupolis (modern Luleburgaz) in the west, Raideostos in the south, and Constantinople in the east. For the rest, there is passing mention of Mt. Olympos in Bithynia, where one of her sons engaged in ascetic practices, and of Mt. Kyminas, but the latter reference is garbled, as will be explained below. There are also people from Bulgaria who came to the saint's grave to be cured (Chap. 14; cf. also Chap. 25). This is, then, a local saint, in whose sanctification her family played a primary role. Nothing is known for certain of the cult of Mary the Younger after the mid-tenth century. Her absence from the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* suggests that her cult remained

³ Mango, "Byzantine Church," 12–13.

⁴ For general discussion of Byzantine-Bulgarian relations under Symeon, see S. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London, 1930), 133–77; idem, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign* (Cambridge, 1929), 38 f, 46 f, 50 f, 81–101; R. Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria* (Berkeley-Los Angeles, Calif., 1975), 56–67; J. V. A. Fine, Jr., *The Early Medieval Balkans* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1983), 132–58.

localized in Vizye and its environs. On the other hand, her commemoration up to the time of the fall of the empire is indicated by the two surviving manuscripts of her *vita*, which date to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Her feastday is celebrated by the Orthodox Church on 16 February.

The chronology of the saint can be established fairly reasonably, if not precisely. The main and firm point of reference is the Byzantine-Bulgarian treaty of October 927 (see Chap. 27). Soon after its conclusion Mary's remains were transferred; she had been dead for twenty-five years. Her son Stephen/Symeon was instrumental in the transfer, and as he journeyed from Constantinople, it is unlikely that the event took place before the spring of 928, fall and winter being ill suited to travel. Therefore, she died ca. 903. The year of her birth can be established, *grosso modo*, from internal evidence. She and her husband moved to Vizye after the death of Basil I (867), and after a Bulgarian campaign that had resulted in "great slaughter" (Chap. 5). This may refer to Symeon's campaign that started in 893, but most probably refers to the great Byzantine defeat at Boulgarophygon, in 896. At that time she had already had one son who had died at the age of five, and another child, Vardanes. Assuming that in 896 Vardanes was one year old, and allowing one year's interval between the birth of the two children, she would have been married in 888. She was very young when she married, and the youngest age of marriage for girls was thirteen, or over twelve;⁵ so she may have been born in 875.⁶ In that case, she died before the age of thirty. The rest of the internal chronology is quite consistent; thus, at the time of her death her twin sons would have been approximately one year old (Chap. 9), and her son Vaanes would have reached the rank of *droungarios* in his very early twenties, a not unlikely story.

⁵ *Ecloga* 2.1, ed. L. Burgmann, *Ecloga. Das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos' V.* (Frankfurt, 1983), 170; *Eisagoge* (issued in 886), 16.2, ed. Zepos, *Jus* 2:275.

⁶ In his introduction to his edition of her *vita* (in *AASS*, Nov. 4:690–91), P. Peeters thinks that she must have moved to Vizye in 893, and thus have been married in 886 or earlier. He concludes from that that she must have been born in Armenia, since her father came to the Byzantine Empire during the reign of Basil I. I do not see that this follows, unless one assumes that she was married at an age considerably older than thirteen. But we know that girls married very early; see Laiou, *Marriage*, 16 ff. Although the examples in this book are drawn from a later period, girls married very young in the 9th century as well. There is no information as to whether Mary was born in Armenia or in Constantinople, and no basis for even a reasonable guess.

A more complex issue is the date of composition of the *vita*, which is preserved only in two late manuscripts, Vat. gr. 800 (fourteenth or fifteenth century) and Athos, Laura K. 81 (fourteenth century). Some scholars have argued for a composition soon after her death,⁷ or in the second half of the tenth century,⁸ while others suggest a date after 1025. The arguments for a tenth-century date may be summarized as follows. The death of her son Stephen/Symeon is not mentioned, so he must be assumed to have been still alive at the time of the composition. The references to “our generation” (Chaps. 1, 19, and 33) have been interpreted to mean that the author was a near-contemporary. The vividness of the narration has been taken to indicate immediacy in time. The reference to invasions in Thrace (Chap. 33) is thought to apply to Pecheneg and Hungarian invasions of the tenth century.⁹

All these arguments can be disputed. As regards Stephen/Symeon, the *vita* mentions earlier written texts (Chap. 27, 31). Whether these are writings about him or about a translation of the saint’s relics or earlier versions of the *vita* is not explicit. But the last hypothesis seems to me the most probable, in which case the existing text would be a later recension, making use of earlier writings. “Our generation” (ἡ καθ’ ἡμᾶς γενεά) may well mean not “our generation” in biological terms, but rather our nation or our epoch.¹⁰ As to the narration, the most vivid elements in the story are the dialogues, which may very well be a literary exercise.¹¹ The invasions of Thrace might just as easily be the Pecheneg invasions of 1047 or of the 1090s.

The most firm argument for a date of composition in the eleventh century or later is the reference to the emperor Basil II (Chap. 2). This would be conclusive, were it not for the possibility of an interpolation. I do not, myself, believe in a tenth-century date, but I am well aware that most of my reasons

⁷ E. g., Beck, *Kirche*, 565, but this is excluded because of the subsequent events narrated in the *vita*, which take us well beyond that date.

⁸ G. Balascev, “Novye dannye dlja istorii greko-bolgarskich vojn pri Simeone,” *IR-AIK* 4 (1899), 205.

⁹ See Peeters, *AASS*, Nov. 4:691.

¹⁰ On this see Demetrakos, *Lexikon*, s.v. γενεά, with impeccable ancient Greek antecedents.

¹¹ Peeters, in presenting the arguments for an 11th-century date, also mentions that while some of the miracles are quite detailed, others are presented in the dull and dry fashion of events that happened long ago (*AASS*, Nov. 4:691).

are soft. Nevertheless, I think they are worth considering. First, it is interesting that there is no mention of living people who could bear witness to the saint's life or the miracles;¹² nor is there any mention of surviving members of her family, very strange in a *vita* written within living memory of the saint. Second, there is the explicit differentiation between town and city, with Vizye figuring as a populous city (Chap. 5); this does not sound like the tenth century, but such arguments run the risk of being circular. Then, there is the curious contempt for monks (Chap. 19), including, if my translation is accurate, a statement that monks are people who have failed in their first profession. Since we know relatively little of tenth-century attitudes toward these matters, such a date cannot be excluded by a negative argument. On the other hand, it is in the eleventh century, and in the twelfth, that we find such irreverent attitudes toward monks, in the writings of Psellos, for example.¹³ And the closest parallel I can find is that in the funeral oration of Anna Komnene by George Tornikios, where he stresses that it was not ugliness (and therefore, I add, failure in matters secular) that drove her to the virtuous life, as had been the case with others.¹⁴ The celebration of secular life dedicated to God, presented with extraordinary force (Chap. 19), brings to mind the theology of Symeon the New Theologian (ca. 949–1022), who also saw a devout life in this world as a path to God. For him, many saints pass their lives in the things of this world, but choose holiness; it is possible for laymen, he says, not only for monks, to achieve perfect virtue. Those who, living in the world, purify their senses and their hearts from all evil desire are blessed; but the hermits and anchorites, if they lust after lands or after glory among men, are to be despised, and will be treated as adulterers by God.¹⁵ Clearly, the author of our *vita* was very close to such sentiments.

¹² By contrast, see the *vita* of Michael Maleinos, a near-contemporary of Mary's son Symeon, ed. L. Petit, "Vie de Saint Michel Maleinos suivie du traite ascetique de Basile Maleinos," *ROC* 7 (1902), 543–68.

¹³ For 12th-century examples, see P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 316 ff, 388 ff.

¹⁴ J. Darrouzes, *Georges et Demetrios Tornikes, Lettres et Discours* (Paris, 1970), 247–49.

¹⁵ *Symeon le Nouveau Theologien, Catecheses*, ed. B. Krivocheine, trans. J. Paramelle, I (Paris, 1963), 386–88, 442–44; *Symeon le Nouveau Theologien. Chapitres theologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, ed. J. Darrouzes (Paris, 1957), cent. 3, chap. 69, p. 100. An anonymous referee points out, however, that "the notion that the lay person could

One final piece of evidence seems to me to argue conclusively for a late rather than an early redaction. This is connected with the life of Stephen/Symeon, Mary's son who became a monk. According to the *vita*, he had first gone to Constantinople to enter imperial service, and became quite successful at it (Chap. 31). Before 927 he had already become a monk at Mt. Olympos in Bithynia (Chaps. 24 and 27). Around 927 he went from Mt. Olympos to Constantinople on business, then visited Vizye (928), and then went "to the mountain called Kyminas, at the borders of Paphlagonia, near Plousias" (Chap. 27). The part about Mt. Olympos does not concern us here. But the mention of Mt. Kyminas is interesting in that it is garbled.¹⁶ Mt. Kyminas was not at the borders of Paphlagonia but on the river Gallos, in Bithynia; however, there was a monastery in Prousius, in the theme of Boukellarion, called Xerolimne. The author has simply conflated the two. In fact, there is a very important link between the two monastic centers, namely, St. Michael Maleinos, who established the foundation at Xerolimne in 921, and in 925 went to Mt. Kyminas where he built a great monastery, so that Mt. Kyminas was closely associated with him. There is no doubt that Stephen/Symeon was a disciple of Michael Maleinos; but why does our *vita* never mention the name? If it had been written in the tenth century, when the Maleinoi were powerful and Mt. Kyminas was flourishing, the connection would certainly have been made; but after the fall of the house of Maleinoi under Basil II, silence is easier to understand. The most powerful argument against a tenth-century redaction, however, is the confusion about the location of Mt. Kyminas. The foundation of St. Michael Maleinos fared very well under the emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (920–944), and as late as Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969); then it seems to disappear. I think it unlikely that a well-informed individual, living in the late tenth century, with Mt. Kyminas enjoying imperial favor, should have been ignorant about its location. On the other hand, someone writing much later, after the monastery had declined or even been abandoned, may have easily misunderstood two references to two monasteries,

achieve equal and even greater sanctity than the monastic is already present in Late Antiquity," and refers to the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Collection (trans. B. Ward, *The Desert Christian: Sayings of the Desert Fathers* [New York, 1975]), Anthony 8, 24, and Eucharistus the Secular; John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, trans. C. P. Roth and D. Anderson (Crestwood, N. Y., 1986), e.g., Homily 21, pp. 69 ff; S. P. Brock, "Ephrem's Letter to Publius," *Le Museon* 89 (1976), 286–87, among others. I wish to thank this colleague for several helpful suggestions.

¹⁶ See below, note 132.

quite different in fact but equally unknown to him, and combined them into a single reference.¹⁷

All of this evidence, hard and soft, leads me to suggest a date of composition after 1025, and quite considerably after, since Basil II is not commemorated as recently dead, nor is there living memory of Mt. Kyminas. The author undoubtedly made use of earlier writings, some of which may well have been composed during the reign of Romanos I, the last emperor during whose reign specific events are mentioned.

The author of the *vita* remains unknown.¹⁸ He seems to have been from Vizye (cf. Chap. 33), although not necessarily living there. He was in all probability a layman, and very learned. His Greek is correct and at times elegant; there is at least one reference to Homer, a possible allusion to Plato, use of the dual (Chap. 25), the use of rare words such as *ερωμαι* instead of the more usual *ἐρωτάω* for “to ask” (Chap. 25: *η̅ρετο*, 2d aorist), the employment of terms which were perfectly correct but much more common in ancient than in Byzantine Greek (*νεωκοπος*, Chap. 20). Some constructions are both learned and vivid, such as the beginning of the saint’s *apologia* (Chap. 7). The author employs references to acting and miming as well as to music very comfortably, expecting his audience to have a familiarity with these allusions. He also uses wordplay and rhetorical figures that show his linguistic agility without reaching the point of hyperbole or showing off. A few examples include alliteration and paronomasia,¹⁹ synonymia,²⁰ anaphora,²¹

¹⁷ What the hagiographer may have read in an earlier text is anyone’s guess. I suppose that Symeon may have gone first to Xerolimne and then to Mt. Kyminas; or that he may already have been a monk at Xerolimne before 927, followed St. Michael to Kyminas in 925, and in 927 was at Constantinople on some business connected with the monastic communities of Mt. Olympos. In any case, the connection of this scion of a provincial military family with the family of the magnates Maleinoi is interesting in itself.

¹⁸ Although there is no absolute proof that the hagiographer was male, I am making this assumption because of the extreme rarity of female hagiographers in Byzantium; cf. the remarks of A.-M. Talbot in the general introduction to this volume, p. xiv and note 26.

¹⁹ See *συνήθεια-συνεκράθημεν-συνεδέθημεν-συνδεσώμεθα-συγγένεια* (p. 692E); *παρελθοιμι-παραδραμοιμι-δρομον* (693B); *κατεστησεν-ἐπεστησε-ἐπεστη* (696A); the two uses of *ἀκολουθία* (704B); *τοπον-τροπον* (694A). For his help with rhetorical figures, I thank Lee Sherry.

²⁰ See *εἰκὼν-ὑποδειγμα-τυπος-παραδειγμα* (693A); *παρελθοιμι-παραδραμοιμι* (693B).

²¹ See the parallel structures starting with *πὼς ἂν* and *οὐ* (693B).

zeugma,²² and more complex figures such as a use of synonymia and paronomasia together.²³ In a couple of places, the hagiographer speaks of “audience” literally, that is, as though he expected the text to be heard rather than read, which would make the rhetorical affectations even more effective.

All of this suggests not only a good sense of language but also something of a sense of humor, evident, for example, in the curious phrase that Vaanes “reached Constantinople together with his illness” (τὴν Κωνσταντινίου . . . μετὰ τῆς νόσου κατέλαβεν, Chap. 31). There is, in fact, an interesting combination of the humorous and the serious, an intriguing use of paradox, both in the language and in the story. For one thing, the relationship between Mary’s future husband and her brother-in-law, as well as the relationship between her son, Vaanes, and his superior in the military hierarchy (Chaps. 2 and 30) are somewhat curious. In both cases, while the strongest relationship is between men, women are only a means of cementing the male bond, or lending it respectability. In Chapter 30, Vaanes’ wife is dismissed in a few stock words regarding her high birth, while his relationship to his friend Theodore is described in some detail, and in ambiguous language, with the use of terms denoting marriage and sexual relationships.²⁴ This may be seen as paradoxical in a text that claims to celebrate the achievements of women. The sense of paradox emerges rather strongly in the description of the behavior of Vaanes and Stephen/Symeon, Mary’s twin sons. Stephen/Symeon is the monk, but nothing concrete is said about his ascetic exploits; instead, the issue is relegated to “holy men” who should decide whether he merits sainthood. But Vaanes, the active soldier, is credited with a list of devotions that would be very arduous for a monk and quite impossible for a man living in the world and holding down a job (Chap. 30).²⁵ Certainly, the hagiographer’s audience, who had a much more immediate understanding of such matters than we do, would have grasped the paradox immediately, and perhaps been aware of its

²² See συναπλήθε τοῖς ῥήμασιν (696E), τὴν Κωνσταντινίου . . . μετὰ τῆς νόσου κατέλαβεν (704B), πενιὰ συνεζήσεν (700B).

²³ ἰδεῖν-περιδεῖν, θεασασθαι-παριδεῖν (696F–697A).

²⁴ On the question, see J. Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York, 1994), esp. his annotated translation of “The Passion of SS. Serge and Bacchus” at pp. 375–90.

²⁵ This juxtaposition points up the paradoxical presentation of the polity of the two brothers; does the paradox incorporate yet another subtle criticism of monks?

subtlety: unusual events are to be expected in the life of a saint, but the ascetic discipline ascribed to her son verges on parody. It would surely have evoked a knowing smile among the audience. Is there also a subtle irony in the juxtaposition of St. Mary's specialization in curing demoniacs, and the fact that her husband is obliquely presented as possessed by Satan when he believed his wife's accusers (Chap. 9)? As for the transfer of Mary's relics into her husband's luxury tomb, and the relegation of his body outside the chapel (Chap. 27), is that presented seriously or half-jokingly, as suggested by Symeon's statement that he did not wish to look upon the nakedness of his father, dead these four years? The simultaneous presence of seriousness and humor, the underlying irreverence, is certainly a characteristic of Byzantine writing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which is, in my view, the most likely dating for the composition of the extant text of this *vita*.²⁶

As I have already suggested, the *vita* is written in an interesting style. The author clearly has literary pretensions, not without cause. His use of dialogue is felicitous, making for a lively narration. The interest of the reader is kept up through rhetorical questions such as "what happened next?" and with questions addressed to the audience. The main characters, especially the saint and her husband, are well drawn, and the picture of Nikephoros, acting the tough as he tries to pry the truth from a terrified slave-girl, has some power (Chap. 8). Indeed, some of the most powerful scenes give an impression of people in an almost theatrical setting. Nikephoros is explicitly said to have assumed on purpose a fierce countenance in the scene with the slave girl;²⁷ in the description of his fatal attack on his wife, which takes place in the inner chambers of the house, the author takes pains to tell us about the lighting and Mary's exact posture; in the first miracle, the possessed man is accused of acting, and the bishop and Nikephoros play out their roles, each trying to expose the ruse (Chap. 12). In short, this is a good story well told. The author is often paradoxical or ironic, which makes one wonder how much of the straight story he believed.

This, of course, creates a problem when we try to evaluate the historical

²⁶ On 12th-century literature, see A. Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), and P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 355–56, 395–99.

²⁷ By contrast, the husband of St. Thomas of Lesbos was dour and harsh without feigning it; cf. *Life of Thomas*, below, Chaps. 6–9, 15–16.

evidence given in the *vita*. The problem is perhaps not very grave with regard to political or military events, which are in all probability drawn from earlier texts. Scholars have found the *vita* a valuable source of information for the Thracian campaigns of Symeon, which began in earnest after the battle of Anchialos (917), and especially after 919.²⁸ Surely no one would argue for the historical accuracy of the dialogue between the Bulgarian general and Mary's son, the *droungarios* Vaanes (Chap. 25). Scholars have also disputed the likelihood of a five-year siege of Vizye, preferring to think of a blockade of the city.²⁹ On the other hand, the savagery of the war in Thrace, the destruction of cities first by their fleeing inhabitants—surely an act of despair—and then by the Bulgarians, the search for refuge in safer places (the inhabitants of Vizye fled to Medeia), the bitterness against the Bulgarians who, although Christians, waged a terrible war (this last attitude being corroborated by other sources),³⁰ are too vivid and too circumstantial to be ignored. Similarly, we learn interesting details about Symeon's administration of the captured cities: he may have settled some Bulgarian civilians; he certainly installed garrisons, but routinely replaced the heads of the garrison after a time (Chaps. 24–25). The soldiers returning to Bulgaria considered it a right of war to plunder the territory before going home. Some fraternization may have taken place between Bulgarians and Byzantines.

The date of the fall of Vizye to the Bulgarians, which is mentioned by the *vita*, cannot, unfortunately, be established with certainty.³¹ There are two internal pieces of information: first, Nikephoros, Mary's husband, died during the siege and was buried in a marble tomb; when the tomb was opened, in 928, he had been in the ground for four years, which would place his death in 924, but we do not know whether that was at the beginning or at the end of the blockade.³² Second, the blockade lasted for five years before the inhabit-

²⁸ See, in particular, Balascev, "Novye dannye," and F. Dvornik, "Quelques données sur les Slaves extraites du Tome IV Novembris des *Acta Sanctorum*," *ByzSlav* 1 (1929), 39–43.

²⁹ See below, note 118.

³⁰ See below, p. 276 note 119.

³¹ Balascev, "Novye dannye," 209, estimates it at a little after 925; the blockade would have begun ca. 920. Dvornik, "Quelques données," 42, following Zlatarski, prefers the date 922 for the fall of the city.

³² Peeters (*AASS*, Nov. 4:691) argues that it is not likely that a great marble tomb would have been erected toward the end of the blockade, and thus Nikephoros must have died closer to the beginning. He thinks the city fell in 925.

ants fled and the city was taken. If the information concerning Nikephoros is admitted as accurate, then the city cannot have fallen before 924. On these grounds, the date 925 for the fall of Vizye, proposed by Balascev, seems a reasonable possibility; it would allow Symeon time to place a garrison in Vizye, and also to change it during one of the two campaign seasons between 925 and the treaty of October 927 (spring-summer 926, spring-summer 927). On historical grounds, one would prefer earlier dates, since the great push in Thrace occurred in 917, 919, 921, 922, 923 (fall of Adrianople), and 924.³³ But these dates, with the exception of the last one, would not accommodate the date of Nikephoros' death. Therefore, the autumn of 924 or 925 (at the time of sowing) seems the best guess, with the siege beginning in 919–920.

The *vita* also contains data of considerable importance for social history and for what might be called *histoire des mentalités*, specifically in regard to attitudes toward the family, women, and female sanctity. For example, it has long been recognized that Mary is representative of a new type of female sanctity: the woman who remains married throughout her lifetime, never becomes a nun, but nevertheless attains sanctity through pious living.³⁴ This has been taken as a new affirmation of marriage as part of the stable structures of the Middle Ages. And, indeed, it is true that there is a small cluster of married female saints, who died within some thirty years of one another: Theophano, wife of Leo VI (who died in 895–896); Mary the Younger (died ca. 903); and Thomas of Lesbos (died ca. 930).³⁵ But the model, if model it was, enjoyed a very brief season, disappearing thereafter.³⁶ Given the small number of cases involved, each one carries a good deal of weight. Therefore, the late date of

³³ Runciman, *Emperor Romanus Lecapenus*, 86 ff. Runciman thinks Vizye fell in 923; cf. idem, *First Bulgarian Empire*, 166 n. 5. The meeting between Romanos I and Symeon, on 11 November 924, was not followed by peace; see R. J. H. Jenkins and L. G. Westerink, *Nicholas I, Patriarch of Constantinople, Letters* (Washington, D. C., 1973), letters 30 (with commentary) and 31. Consult also the redating of Nicholas' letters by A. P. Kazhdan, "Bolgáro-vizantijskie otnosenija v 912–925 gg. po perepiske Nikolaja Mistika," *EtBalk*, n. s. 12, no. 3 (1976), 92–107.

³⁴ Patlagean, "La femme deguisee," 620–23.

³⁵ For further discussion of the chronology of Thomas, see *Life of Thomas*, below, pp. 291–92 and note 3.

³⁶ For this, and most of what follows, see Laiou, "Historia henos gamou," 237–51. In this article, I accepted an early 11th-century date for the *vita* of St. Mary, a position which I have since revised. The rest of my discussion stands, with the caveats introduced here.

composition of the *vita* of St. Mary the Younger (the other two *vitae* were written either immediately after the death of the saint they celebrate or within a generation thereof) and the literary interests of the author should caution against attributing eleventh-century attitudes to the late ninth or early tenth century. One way out of this dilemma is to retain what is securely attributable to the ninth or tenth centuries on the basis of other sources, and to note those elements unique to this *vita*. With regard to attitudes toward marriage, the elements to be accepted as contemporary to the life of St. Mary are those which can be found in other *vitae* of female saints. The highly quotable dialogues in the *vita* of St. Mary owe more to the eleventh-century author than to whatever sources the author was using.

The description of Mary's everyday life may, I think, be retained. The fact that the wife had the management of the household property is attested by the *vita* of St. Thomas among other witnesses. The involvement of the extended family in the couple's affairs is described particularly powerfully here, but it is not unlikely. The statement that her marriage was arranged is commonplace. The sentiments expressed about the proper love between husband and wife, the fact that sexual relations could be part of a virtuous life, and the parental love toward the children can be found variously in the *vita* of St. Theophano and in other tenth-century texts, those connected with the tetragamy of Leo VI and even those of the saints' Lives by Symeon Metaphrastes. Most important, the social virtue of charity as a way to sanctification may be found in the *vita* of St. Theophano and in that of St. Thomas who, like Mary, was accused by her husband of squandering the property of the household. Thus, charity was a prime virtue; extreme abstemiousness and asceticism in a married woman were not. I think this is, indeed, an early tenth-century phenomenon, and the text is genuine as far as this matter is concerned. On the other hand, as I have indicated above, the forceful juxtaposition of a good secular life and a bad monastic one is more redolent of the eleventh century. The *vita* of St. Thomas also provides a parallel to the wife-beating that we see in the *Life* of St. Mary; although in the former case it plays a more important ideological role, since Thomas is likened to a martyr because of what she suffered at the hands of her husband (which did not include death).

This brings us to attitudes toward marriage, where nuances are necessary. Doubtless, the whole story revolves around the idea that a married woman may nonetheless achieve sanctity, and that marriage is not only the normal way of life, but also a good state to be in. Still, the ambivalence is clear, for if

St. Mary achieved sainthood *despite* her married state, she also found suffering and death *because* of it. Such an ambivalence imbues also the *Life* of St. Thomais, although there the hagiographer explicitly develops the themes to which the *Life* of St. Mary merely alludes, that is, that the saint would have eschewed sexual relations (in this text) or even marriage itself (in the *Life* of St. Thomais) if she could; Theophano actually stopped having sexual relations with her imperial husband. The convergence of the three texts on this issue suggests that it was indeed a theme of the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Similarly, the objections of clergy and monks (including Arethas of Caesarea) to the idea that a married woman, living with her husband, could be worthy of sanctity, appear in all three texts. On the other hand, the vocal opposition to monks, expressed by the author of the *Life* of St. Mary, and implicit in his treatment of her son Symeon, is absent in the other texts; it seems to me to embody an eleventh-century attitude. Similarly, the exceptional vindictiveness of the saint toward her accusers, including the scene of the eviction of the remains of her husband from his tomb, sounds as if it owes a lot to the imagination of the author.

Finally, the humor and irony that we find in the *Life* of St. Mary are absent from the other two texts. To what do we owe them? Possibly to the fact that the author himself found the story a little far-fetched, and that he too had his doubts about the process that had made St. Mary a saint. If so, he was not alone.³⁷ He wrote a good story nevertheless, and any doubts he had he wove into his language and into the paradoxes, thus producing a saint's *Life* with a markedly literary character.

This discussion of attitudes toward marriage rests on two assumptions: first, that the *vita* of St. Thomais was composed in the mid-tenth century, and second, that this text and the *vita* of St. Mary the Younger are independent of each other. The first assumption is in dispute, as may be seen in the introduction to the *vita* of St. Thomais in this volume. As far as I am concerned, the reference to Romanos "born in the purple" is not to be easily bypassed; not the greatest stretch of the imagination nor the wildest flattery could make a *porphyrogennetos* out of Romanos III or Romanos IV.³⁸ The other arguments

³⁷ See Laiou, "Historia henos gamou," 247–48, for the doubts expressed by the author of the *Life* of St. Theophano and by Nikephoros Gregoras, who rewrote her *vita* in the 14th century.

³⁸ A *porphyrogennetos* ("purple-born") is a son or daughter born to a reigning emperor; cf. *ODB* 3:1701. Neither Romanos III nor Romanos IV qualify.

advanced for an eleventh-century date (or later) also seem disputable.³⁹ Much more treacherous is the question of the relationship between the two *vitae*. If they are independent of one another, there are two witnesses, of debatable date to be sure, on the issue of sanctity within marriage, with St. Theophano (whose *vita* incorporates very traditional attitudes) as a third witness of firm date. If, however, the *vitae* of Thomais and Mary the Younger are not independent of each other, one is led to a troubling conclusion.⁴⁰ For in that case we have only one example of the married female who becomes a saint without becoming a nun. If that is so, there is no new model of the female saint, just a fine story. And we are left, as far as late ninth-century attitudes go, with the traditional virtues of Theophano: charity, asceticism, abstinence from sex; and with the constant suspicion of the possibility of sainthood for a woman whose life is spent in a married state. The next task will be to investigate in depth the relationship between the *vitae* of St. Thomais and St. Mary the Younger.

³⁹ For example, the fact that a monastery of Angourios is not attested before the 11th century is an argument *e silentio*. For a *patrikios* Angourios, of debatable morals but of good family, lived in the 9th century, at the time of Photios (cf. PG 102:937), and a quarter of that name existed in Constantinople in the 11th century. I cannot believe that there can have been many families of that peculiar name. The argument about the Hodegetria is also one where the terminus ante, not the terminus post is known.

⁴⁰ As far as I can see, there is no reason to suppose that the *Life* of St. Thomais was modeled on that of St. Mary simply because it is a much less detailed account. It is not unusual for a more detailed story to develop out of a simpler one, so that, if a dependence is admitted, it could just as easily run the other way: the *vita* of St. Mary would then be a more detailed and more literary version of the plot in the *vita* of Thomais.

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[p. 692]

LIFE, DEEDS, AND PARTIAL ACCOUNT OF THE MIRACLES
OF THE BLESSED AND CELEBRATED MARY THE YOUNGER

1. Only men are called to compete in secular contests and prove their bodily strength. The arena of virtue, however, is open to women no less than to men, and God the prize-giver generously grants the rewards and victory crowns to both sexes equally.⁴¹ Neither sex,⁴² nor fortune, nor weakness of the body, nor differences in station, nor anything else is an obstacle for entering the contests, to those who desire to do so. Here [i.e., in the arena of virtue] women are not sent away while men are accepted, nor are the slaves and the poor deemed unworthy and rejected while the masters and the wealthy are considered worthy of the contest; those who are young and minors are not disqualified, while the one who is fully of age and already a man is admitted; nor does the master of the games accept those who have chosen celibacy over those who bear the yoke of marriage. On the contrary, all sexes, offices, ages, and walks of life are called to this good fight: *kings of the earth, and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth; young men and virgins, old men with youths*.⁴³ So also with the blessed Mary, the wonder of our generation, who is the subject of our discourse. Although she was a woman, although she was married and bore children, nothing hindered her in any way from finding favor with God: neither the weakness⁴⁴ of <female> nature, nor the annoyances of wedlock, nor the needs and cares of child-rearing. To the contrary, it was these things which gave her the occasion to find favor <with God>, and thus proved that those who believe and claim that such things form an obstacle to virtue are foolish and create *pretexts for sins*.⁴⁵ But let us start the narration about the blessed woman from the beginning, as is proper.

⁴¹ The comparison of the saint's polity to athletic contests is a hagiographic commonplace.

⁴² Γένος can also mean "race" or "family"; here, the meaning "sex, gender" is preferable.

⁴³ Ps. 148:11–12.

⁴⁴ Ἀσθενεία means both weakness and, in law, incapacity; cf. J. Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme a Byzance (4e–7e siecle), I, Le droit imperial* (Paris, 1990), 11–16.

⁴⁵ Ps. 140 (141):4.

2. The imperial scepter was being held by Basil; not the one born in the purple, but the Macedonian, the one who from horse-groom had become emperor, after having killed Michael.⁴⁶ During Michael's reign, the insolence of the iconoclasts was put to an end, while the orthodox doctrine began to flourish anew.⁴⁷ History identifies <Michael> as the son of Theophilos, last of the iconoclasts, but his excessive wine-drinking has made him an object of ridicule, causing him to be called "the Drunkard."⁴⁸ It was after killing this man, then, that Basil acceded to the throne. During his reign, it happened that some of the very powerful men of Greater Armenia came to the great city of Constantinople and appeared before the emperor Basil. He received them gladly, rewarded them with presents, raised them to high positions, and held them in the greatest honor.⁴⁹ Among them was the father of the revered Mary. To him were born two sons and three daughters; two of the latter were given in marriage while the father was still alive, while Mary, the one praised here, being the last of the children, was left to live with her mother and be raised by her, after the father's death.

The <husband> of Mary's sister, named Vardas Vratzes, had in Thracian Messene a *proasteion*, which is called "tou Vratze" after him even today.⁵⁰ Var-

⁴⁶ Basil the "Macedonian" is Basil I (867–886), who had succeeded Michael III (842–867). Basil II (976–1025) was, indeed, born in the purple. The reference to him is taken by some to establish the year of his death as the terminus post quem of the writing of the *vita*. On Basil I, see A. Vogt, *Basile Ier, empereur de Byzance (867–886), et la civilisation byzantine a la fin du IXe siecle* (Paris, 1908).

⁴⁷ The reference is to the restoration of icon veneration by Theodora, Michael III's mother and regent, in 843.

⁴⁸ On the reigns of Theophilos and Michael III, see, in the last instance, W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988).

⁴⁹ There is a sudden change of subject in the sentence if one retains the verb in the passive form ἐδοξασθη. The simplest solution is to emend to ἐδοξασεν. On the very considerable role of the Armenians in Byzantium of this period, see P. Charanis, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire* (Lisbon, [1963]). Basil was himself of Armenian origin.

⁵⁰ The death of the father before one or more of his children had reached the age of puberty was not uncommon in this period. Messene, in eastern Thrace, is the ancient Druzipara. The name Vratzes is an Armenian rendering of the word "Iberian," meaning Georgian, that is, possibly, an Armenian of Chalcedonian persuasion. Bartikian tentatively links him with the attested Byzantine family of Iberitzes. See Peeters, *Recherches* 1:129–35, and Hr. M. Bartikian, "Razmyslenija o zitii sv. Marii Novoj," *Moyen Age bulgare, Recueil I. Dujcev* (Sofia, 1980), 62–64. The sentence referring to Vratzes has

das would often go out to this small property, and he became a friend and companion of a certain Nikephoros, a *droungarios* who hailed from a village named Kamarai.⁵¹ As, with time, their friendship grew greater and stronger, Vardas was eager to make it even closer; so he devised a firm and unbreakable bond. Once, as he was talking with Nikephoros, he said, "Since, O dearest of men, we have been connected and bound together so intimately,⁵² I think it proper to make this bond of love more forceful and more perfect, by adding to it the ties of marriage alliance, so that we may be twice bound, adducing kinship to our acquaintance." And then he began to recount to him the following: "My wife has a sister, a virgin⁵³ most beautiful both in appearance and in soul, so that her inner beauty is reflected in the beauty of her body. Take her for your wife, if it please God, and thereafter we shall preserve our love unbroken. It will be my affair to persuade the girl's mother to assent to the marriage of her daughter." Nikephoros heard these words with pleasure, and without further ado they went to Constantinople and discussed the matter with the girl's mother. She was persuaded, and married her daughter off to Nikephoros; thus, the most excellent Mary followed her husband when he set out for home.⁵⁴ [p. 693]

3. *Ointment poured forth*⁵⁵ cannot go unnoticed even if it is very well hidden, for it is proclaimed by its fragrance, nor is it possible for active virtue <to escape notice>, for it is heralded by its works. Similarly, Mary, most revered of women, could not escape notice, for she was fervent of spirit and served

one word missing, undoubtedly the word ἀνδρῖ, "husband." A *proasteion* is a rural or suburban holding.

⁵¹ A *droungarios* is a commander of a regiment, a *moira*; see Oikonomides, *Listes*, 341, and J. B. Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century* (London, 1911), 41–43. Kamarai is not identifiable.

⁵² Ἐκ συνηθείας, "from long habit, habitual intercourse." The word also means sexual intercourse.

⁵³ "Parthenos" means both a virgin and a young girl.

⁵⁴ In Byzantium the consent of the parents, along with that of the prospective spouses, was a necessary precondition of a valid marriage. Marriage alliances were arranged when the girls were very young, and with the interests of both families in mind; see Laiou, *Marriage*. The affair as recounted here is a rare testimony of the involvement of the girl's relatives by marriage. The case is all the more interesting because it refers to families of a fairly low-level provincial aristocracy, for which information is not ample, especially in this period.

⁵⁵ Emend κινουμένων to κενουμένων, following Song of Sol. 1:3.

the Lord. Those who lived near her marveled at her, and all spoke of her. Of what kind were her praises? She was the image of meekness, the pillar of moderation, the exemplar of love of God, the model of charity, the paradigm of piety for everyone. No one saw her become even mildly angry, nor strike a servant, nor speak insults. She loved the holy churches greatly, so that she could say, with David, “*Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house, and the place of the tabernacle of Thy glory.*”⁵⁶ She would never suffer to send away sad or empty-handed anyone in need; rather, whoever came to her received whatever he wanted. She honored priests exceedingly, as servants of God and stewards of the awesome and great mysteries; she considered the monks as fathers, and was flushed with the proper glow of modesty with regard to all. I leave aside her good housekeeping, her industriousness, the plainness and simplicity of her dress, her temperance at the table, and all the other artless <aspects of her life>.

But how can I pass over her zeal in frequenting the holy churches? How can I pass over the straight road <she trod>? How can I keep silent about the harmonious and sober manner in which she sang hymns to God? There was no private chapel in her house, but she would go to the main church of the town⁵⁷ every evening and morning, at the time of the service. Nothing checked her eagerness, not the unstable weather or the change of seasons; not the heat of summer or the cold of winter; neither rain nor snow; neither the length of the road, which was more than one *stadion*,⁵⁸ nor the river that she had to cross daily—for, along with everything else, it was not possible to keep to dry land, but rather it was necessary to wade through water. She who carried a manly soul in a female body never weakened because of any of these things and never abandoned her good journey, unless she was hindered by serious illness. When she attended church, she was not satisfied simply with getting there, but she would secretly seek out a hidden spot in the church and there would genuflect and would not stop until her weariness was proved by the abundant perspiration that dripped upon the earth. This may serve as proof of her great love of God.

⁵⁶ Ps. 25 (26):8.

⁵⁷ The distinction is made here between the εὐκτήριος οἶκος (a private chapel, of a monastery or of individuals) and a καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία, a church open to the public and more directly dependent on a bishop. For the distinction, see G. Dagron, “Le christianisme dans la ville byzantine,” *DOP* 31 (1977), 9 n. 31.

⁵⁸ About 600 feet.

As for the sympathy and philanthropy with which she behaved toward her fellow men, it will be shown by the following story. Once the tax collector, who is customarily called *dioiketes*,⁵⁹ arrived, and arrested the inhabitants of the town who could not pay their dues, putting them in jail and under torture. What did this compassionate soul do? She was pained when she heard of it and could not bear for the inhabitants of the town to suffer in this manner. So she looked to her property, but could not find enough of her own gold to free the afflicted. Some friends lent her what was needed and, receiving the loan, she sent it through a good man to the tax collector and freed the prisoners.⁶⁰ As for them, instead of each returning to his own house when he was released from jail, they all went to their deliverer full of joy and praise for her, heralding her beneficence. Such was this event, and let it serve as one proof among many, and in place of many, of her philanthropy early in life. But what about crises and temptations? Did she basely collapse and weaken, or, on the contrary, did she bear them bravely and become stronger?⁶¹ Or is it perhaps impossible to find in her any aspect that is bereft of philosophy,⁶² impossible for the pious woman to be overcome by calamities? The following will make the matter clear.

4. Her marriage bore fruit in a male child, whom she named Orestes. When the child was five years old, it was cut down by the scythe of death, before its time. The others wept disconsolately and mourned in a disorderly fashion. As for her, her mother's heart was broken and torn asunder, as one would expect; but she kept to herself, sighing and openly weeping, without, however, displaying unseemly behavior. She did not tear out her hair, nor did she disfigure her cheeks with her hands, nor did she rend her clothes, nor did she throw ashes on her head, nor did she utter blasphemous words. She almost

⁵⁹ The *dioiketes* collects the land tax of a theme or a city; cf. Oikonomides, *Listes*, 313. The use of this title in the text does not help place the redaction chronologically, for the *dioiketes* appears in all periods after the time of Leo III, even though with greater frequency in the 9th–11th centuries. See F. Dolger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1927), 70 ff.

⁶⁰ I do not see in this story a case of Mary paying the tax ἀλλήλεγγυός, i.e., having the obligation to pay the tax of indigent members of her community, as does P. Peeters, "Bulletin des publications hagiographiques," *AnalBoll* 46 (1928), 393–94.

⁶¹ The strict meaning of the verb ἀνδρίζομαι is "to become manly."

⁶² Here ἀφιλοσοφός denotes someone who does not reflect upon life, who does not stoically accept misfortune.

conquered nature and, weeping just enough to show she was a mother, gave thanks to the guardian of our souls and, bringing to mind Job's troubles, cried out in a calm voice with greatness of soul, "*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; as it seemed good to the Lord, so has it come to pass; blessed be the name of the Lord* for ever and ever."⁶³ In this manner she bore what happened with patience and thanksgiving. And if she could accept with such courage the death of her only son, what other grief would she not bear with ease and equanimity?

5. What happened after that? Mary had a second son, whom she named Vardanes.⁶⁴ She subsequently set forth for Vizye,⁶⁵ the reason for her change of abode being the following. After <the death of> the emperor Basil, his sons, Leo the Wise and Alexander, [p. 694] succeeded him.⁶⁶ At that time, Symeon, the ruler of the Bulgarians, in name a Christian but fully a *bloody man*,⁶⁷ campaigned against the Romans and wrought great slaughter.⁶⁸ On that occasion, Mary's husband, Nikephoros, displayed great prowess in the fight against the Bulgarians and, by imperial decision, he was sent to the *tourma* of Vizye.⁶⁹ So he went to that city along with his wife and children.⁷⁰ Here Mary changed place, having moved from a town to a city, but did not change her ways,⁷¹ holding firm to the same purpose as before. She helped widows, orphans, and

⁶³ Job 1:21.

⁶⁴ An Armenian name. Peeters (*Recherches* 1:133) has commented on the alternation of Greek and Armenian names in Mary's offspring.

⁶⁵ On Vizye, see note 2, above.

⁶⁶ Alexander and Leo VI were co-emperors from 879, before the death of their father. They reigned as co-emperors after Basil I's death from 30 August 886, until Leo VI's death on 11 May 912. Their relations were far from cordial.

⁶⁷ 2 Ki. [2 Sam.] 16:7.

⁶⁸ Symeon's campaigns began in 893; the date on which they ended is disputed by scholars, some of whom have argued for 897, others for 899, and others for 904; see I. Bozilov, "A propos des rapports bulgaro-byzantins sous le Tzar Symeon (893–912)," *Byzantino-Bulgarica* 6 (1980), 73–81. Our text excludes the possibility of constant hostilities until 904; Mary died in 903, and her life in Vizye seems to have been spent in relative peace. She followed her husband to that city probably after the Byzantine defeat at Boulgarophygon, in 896.

⁶⁹ He became *tourmarches*, commander of a brigade, thus receiving a promotion; cf. Oikonomides, *Listes*, 341; Bury, *Administrative System*, 41.

⁷⁰ The text mentions children, although only one, Vardanes, was living at the time.

⁷¹ Note the wordplay in *τοπον-τροπον*.

monks; she gave provisions to those who immure themselves in caves or small houses; and, through a priest who was close to her, she took care of the adornment of the churches in the vicinity. In one matter only she changed: instead of going to church every day as before, she said her prayers at home, prostrating herself before an icon of the Mother of God and chanting the appropriate prayers, along with the book of Psalms, which she understood perfectly. The change was due neither to indolence nor to sloth, but to a prudent reticence, and, since she was in a populous city, to a reluctance to come into the sight of one and all, native and foreign. This, then, we note as the single novelty, while in all other matters she retained with precision the harmony, as though they followed each other in a series.⁷² For the celebrated woman heeded the voice of the Savior, saying, "*Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,*" and was eager to have *their angels*⁷³ as witnesses of her care for the little ones. And, indeed, if another man's slave came to her, who had either lost something of his master's or had broken a vessel, he would receive from her what he had lost and would return to his master joyfully, fearing neither blows nor the whip. Her own male and female servants she did not consider as slaves, but rather took care of them as if they were part of her own body, wisely discerning all that comes from God, taking into account that we are equal by nature and also that we use slaves as we do our hands and feet, and frequently we accomplish the hardest and basest services through them, while we ourselves take our ease. For these reasons she did not like to beat them, but was eager to feed and comfort them.

She did not shut her gate to the foreigners who found themselves there, but welcomed them with open doors and, having given them generous hospitality, sent them away happy. If any monks came by, what honor, what kindness <she showed>! She received them as if they were God's angels coming from above, bringing blessings, carrying heavenly gifts; thus she honored them, thus gladly she embraced them.

In such a fashion she behaved toward others, while she neglected her own self, considering that the <best> ornament was its absence, and she rejected adorning⁷⁴ herself with gold and <costly> array, following the wise exhortation of the holy Paul.⁷⁵ Through the hands of the poor, she deposited to her soul's

⁷² A musical reference.

⁷³ Cf. Mt. 18:10.

⁷⁴ Emend κομῆσθαι to κοσμεῖσθαι.

⁷⁵ Cf. 1 Tim. 2:9.

<benefit> gold and translucent precious stones and bright garments. For whatever she had as her own inheritance,⁷⁶ all of it she deposited to the treasure house in heaven, leaving nothing for her children. But she never touched any of her husband's property, so that her actions not occasion opprobrium, and that she not give cause for accusations of squandering <his property>, and creating tumult in the household. As for her diet, when her husband was with her, she observed only the forty-day fasts.⁷⁷ But when he was away on campaign, she abstained from meat at all times, pretending it was because of her husband's absence, but in truth because of the benefits of fasting. As for wine, she was by nature averse to it because of some physical propensity and idiosyncrasy, so that she had not tasted it from childhood.

6. Such were the achievements of the blessed one; such were the good qualities of this wonderful woman, to the wonder of those who heard or saw them and to the glory of God. When her second child died, she bore the suffering with thanksgiving. Not long afterwards, she conceived again and gave birth to twins. Immediately, something strange occurred with regard to the children. The first one, called Vaanes,⁷⁸ had a belt, so to speak, extending diagonally from his right shoulder to his left side, while the one born after him, who was named Stephen, had around him a sort of girdle, vertically from his head to his loins. To their father and mother the sight seemed not without meaning, and they wondered what it portended. The mother prophesied that one would become a soldier and the other a monk. The father said that he, too, wanted to enlist the first-born in the army, and to give the second one over to a teacher so that he would become expert in letters and join those who live at the imperial court. The blessed woman said, "Let it be as God wishes; as for myself, whichever of the two possibilities is realized, I will not see it; for I believe I will depart hence before these things occur." The sequence of the narration will show that her prophecy was fulfilled, and one of her sons became a soldier while the other became a monk.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ The word κληρος has both the specific meaning of inheritance and the more general meaning of property. In this case, if we assume that Mary's family followed the law and the general practice, the property she spent must have come to her from her family, but cannot have been dowry property, because the husband held usufructuary rights over the dowry, while the woman retained the right of ownership.

⁷⁷ These are the forty days before Christmas and the Great Lent, before Easter.

⁷⁸ Vahan, an Armenian name.

⁷⁹ In fact, Stephen first entered imperial service and then became a monk; see Chap. 31, below.

7. While she was living in this manner, and was praised by all, he who sought the surrender first of Job and then of Peter, he who *watches against our heel* [i.e., Satan],⁸⁰ and who, above all, watches for the end of our life's journey, tried also, it seems, the blessed woman and sought to upset her God-fearing life, to divert her steps and to disturb her straight path. [p. 695] He finally brought such a trial upon this most revered of women, that she ended her life through it, and was translated to eternal life. Behold the wickedness of the tempter, and his shrewdness, and how he brought the greatest and most unbearable temptation not at the beginning but at the end. This is the fashion of his art and his wiles: to save the harshest and most powerful trials until the end, and then to bring them on with every machination, so that, when one is exhausted by his earlier tricks, he then brings forth the most powerful one, and emerges victorious and wins <the victim> over to himself. Such is he, nor will he ever forgo his knavery. But the Lord of hosts knows His own and causes them to trample upon the full might of the enemy, placing it under the foot of those who have been strengthened by the greatness of His power. It is a marvel that even tender women mock him who boasts that he defeats the whole earth.

Thus it happened with this perfect dove, who was wholly moved by the spirit, so that, flying over the snares of the wily one, she was not caught by temptation. The temptation was a most terrible calumny, from which, as the proverb goes, even men are brought low,⁸¹ which even the miserable Job did not suffer easily, though in his case it was of a different kind. Who contrived <the calumny>? Not strangers, but the siblings of Mary's husband, whose names were Helena and Alexios. They accused the chaste one to him, <as>, they say, the Egyptian woman <had done with> Joseph,⁸² that she had denuded the household and that she had consorted with Demetrios, her slave.⁸³ Her husband gave ear to the slander, believing it to be true, and from that time on he could not be reconciled to his wife. Calling her to him in private, he said, "Wife, the rumor I hear of you is not good." When she asked what he had

⁸⁰ Gen. 3:16.

⁸¹ Cf. Eccl. 7:8.

⁸² The incident of Potiphar's wife; cf. Gen. 39:14–19.

⁸³ A woman's adultery with a slave was punished severely by Roman and Byzantine law; cf. *Procheiros Nomos* 39.43 (ed. Zepos, *Jus* 2:221), *Eisagoge* 40.49 (ed. Zepos, *Jus* 2:364), *Basilics* 60.37.72 (ed. Scheltema et al., 2995).

heard and from whom, he replied, "My siblings have told me, and they speak of the plundering of the household, and what is worse, your adultery with the slave, Demetrios." The revered woman heard these most shameful words and, sighing deeply and passionately, and with eyes full of tears, said, "Alas, faith has departed from mankind. If <only> you would believe me today when I speak in my defense regarding the accusations, if <only> you have not given both ears to my accusers but will lend just one to me! I have no knowledge of these things about which such words were fabricated. I have known no man's bed but yours, O sweetest husband, to whom I was lawfully wedded, to whom I was given by my mother, and with whom alone I have had intercourse. I would happily have abstained even from that if it had been possible and if divine law had permitted it. But I know that I am not mistress of my body, but that you are my head, even if you do not think so.⁸⁴ This is my response to the slanderous accusation, and I call the all-seeing eye as my witness that I never shamed myself nor did I wrong your bed. As for the accusation that I have squandered what was in the house, let my accusers say what I spent, where, and for whom. If they can say that I squandered these things wantonly, stupidly or for luxuries, and if they can produce clear and certain proof, then you must punish me, and I will also receive the divine and inescapable retribution on the day of judgment. But if I *distributed* them *to the necessities of saints*,⁸⁵ if I fed the hungry and comforted the poor, then I have negotiated our joint salvation, for our life too is joint. Should we reckon this distribution as a loss, or rather as profit and as seed that will yield much fruit?"

8. To this, Nikephoros answered, "I, too, do not wish to hamper your generosity toward the needy; you know that I have never checked your eagerness. What I complain about is excessive liberality and high-mindedness, for I fear that by ministering to the needs of others so generously we might ourselves come to abject poverty." After these things were said and heard, he stopped consorting with her, having sided with the accusers rather than with his wife. Therefore, he set guards to his wife's bedchamber, and subjected to meticulous examination all matters pertaining to her. Once, he ordered to be brought to him the handmaiden who was most devoted to her and served her,

⁸⁴ Eph. 5:23; cf. John of Damascus, *Sacra Parallela*, PG 96:244–45, and Laiou, *Mariage*, 100 ff.

⁸⁵ Rom. 12:13.

and, having set a gloomy brow, narrowing⁸⁶ his eyes and making his voice harsh, he questioned her, with fierce looks and speech, about her mistress, threatening to kill her if she did not divulge the identity of the adulterer. She, although a slave by fortune, was not slavish in character, but had a free soul, and thus did not become a traitor to the truth out of cowardice, nor out of fear did she lie concerning her mistress, but spoke brave words to her master. She said, "My lord, this day you hold in your hands my life and death, and I will suffer anything you wish. But I know nothing shabby about my mistress, nor have I heard such from others." He was filled with rage at this, and, having the slave stretched out on the ground, ordered her to be beaten mightily. Learning nothing more from her, even though she was whipped a good deal, he grudgingly allowed her to go free. The blessed <Mary>, seeing these things and knowing that the devil raged against her, sent to the nuns and monks whom she had helped <in the past> and, concealing the state of her affairs, sought their blessing, for the love of God. She herself, being armed against temptation by prayer and supplication, said tearfully to Him Who could rescue her: "*Draw nigh, O God, to my help; make haste to help me, O Lord.*"⁸⁷ She prayed for her slanderers, asking that their sin be forgiven.

She then acquired another prosecutor, Drosos by name, [p. 696] established in the household by her empty-headed husband, who was easily swayed by others, like an empty vessel. He set the man up as a guard on his wife, ordering him to watch her carefully, along with a slave girl, to whom he entrusted the storeroom. He ordered both of them to cause every sort of distress to the blessed woman, not allowing her to take anything if she so desired, nor giving her anything if she asked. To these griefs was added sickness of the body, and her stomach illness, from which she suffered greatly and constantly, worsened. She endured pains and nausea, and when the time of her death came near, she was suffering from her stomach disease. Then something else happened as well.

9. It was the Sunday on which Christians abstain from meat, in preparation for Lent.⁸⁸ That implacable man did not deign to eat together with his wife even on such a day; instead, he ate and drank alone with his brothers and

⁸⁶ Lee Sherry has suggested two emendations here: ἐπισκύνιον for ἐπισκῆνιον, and λοξευσας for λοξησας.

⁸⁷ Ps. 69 (70):2.

⁸⁸ This is Great Lent. The Sunday in question is called ἀποκρεώσιμος Κυριακή.

other relatives. The blessed woman was saddened, and spoke thus to the women who were with her: "See, the days of temperance are upon us, during which we purify ourselves, through repentance, from all the defilements that have touched us. But how can my husband's fasting and prayer be accepted as long as he bears this irreconcilable hostility and steadfastly maintains his fruitless enmity? Woe is you, Satan, evil and envious one, enemy of our salvation and alienated from God! Yours is this work, you who harden the hearts <of men>."

These words fell upon the ears of a malicious man, who ran and reported them to Nikephoros not as he had heard them but in such a way as to provoke him and fuel his anger. He said, "Your wife does not regard you as a Christian, nor does she think that you can have any good hope <of salvation>, as long as you are not reconciled to her; rather, she openly calls you Satan, the one who from the beginning was a killer of mankind and an enemy of God." When <Nikephoros> heard these things, he was roused against her, but he held himself back on that day, out of respect for those who were present and who restrained his impulse. But the next day, at dawn, he took a whip and entered her bedroom. He looked—the lamp of the holy icon of the Virgin, which happened to be burning, pierced the darkness of the house and made the interior visible—and saw the blessed woman lying on the bed, holding her baby in her arms. Grabbing her by the hair, he dragged her and beat her mercilessly, until one of the servants who was present ran and told those outside; some of them came in and, with difficulty, managed to tear him away from her.

10. She, having escaped from his hands and rushing toward another part of the house, stumbled and tripped over her feet and injured her head. Thus, with the conjunction of three causes, her illness and her sorrow and her wounds, she became feverish, and took to her bed. On the tenth day, as the illness became mightier, she sent her husband this message: "If, my lord, you want to see my miserable self still alive, come, and we will see each other." When he came she said, "I am now departing, and the Lord has manifested this to me in my sleep, for He sent my two children who grasped my hands and promised to lead me to the King <of all> Who was calling me."⁸⁹ Upon hearing this, he began to cry, and she spoke again, saying, "Lo, I am dying of this illness as the Lord has ordained, and I am going to our common master.

⁸⁹ The premonition of death is common for saints. Mary saw her two children who had already died.

As for you, even if you did not believe me before, do so now, for I speak the truth. You were badly misled by my slanderers and accepted an empty rumor. The Lord is my witness, into Whose hands I shall deliver my soul; I do not know that evil word;⁹⁰ I was questioned about things of which I had no knowledge; expel the unworthy suspicion from your heart, and fare well and keep safe with our children.” Thus she spoke, and taking her cloak from her shoulders, and calling one of her household, ordered that it be sold to pay the debts for debtors, stating both the names of the creditors and how much was owed to each.⁹¹ Her husband said, “Let the children have your cloak, and I will repay the entire debt to the creditors,” which he did, immediately. When the distinguished women of the city learned of her imminent death, they all came, and she, having seen them and kissed them, and spoken with them for a short while, at last said: “Lo, the heavens are opening, and I see an ineffable light and a suspended crown.” And she departed with these words.

11. Then there broke forth great weeping and wailing, raised by both her husband and the women. When the lament quieted down, they prepared the funeral bath.⁹² But before this could be brought to the corpse of the blessed one, a sweet fragrance arose from the body and filled the entire place, so that the women who had come to help marveled, and pronounced the departed one to be a *chosen vessel*.⁹³ When the bath was brought, and it was necessary to find the burial dress, then did the husband know his wife’s limitless compassion, who had left nothing to herself except this last garment.⁹⁴ For a young slave, named Marina, came to him and said that she had nothing, neither a shift nor a linen sheet,⁹⁵ for the blessed one to be buried in. When he queried, in amazement, what happened to all of these things and where they had gone,

⁹⁰ She is referring to the accusation of adultery. Byzantine law punished the husband who accused his wife of adultery without proof; cf. *Procheiros Nomos* 11.17 (ed. Zepos, *Jus* 2:148), *Eisagoge* 21.6 (ed. Zepos, *Jus* 2:305), and *Basilics* 28.7.1 (ed. Scheltema et al., 1359).

⁹¹ Cf. Chap. 11, below.

⁹² On the customs surrounding death and burial, see Koukoules, *Bios*, 4:154 ff.

⁹³ Acts 9:15.

⁹⁴ That is, the garment put on her after the bath.

⁹⁵ Χιτωνίσκον ἢ ὀθόνιον τι. The ὀθόνιον would be a linen sheet that would be cut into strips for swaddling the body. Then the body would be covered by a shroud or winding sheet (cf. below, Chap. 16), and then dressed in a sumptuous dress; see Koukoules, *Bios*, 4:154 ff.

the girl's eyes watered at his words and she said, "O master, are you puzzled at this, and wonder that my mistress has no other garment except the one in which we dressed her after having bathed her? She could not find it in her compassionate soul to see anyone going naked and overlook him, nor could she look at a poor person and [p. 697] disregard him. To them were her many things expended, to them were they dissipated. And you, who ask me for linen cloth and garments, how is it that you do not search for the more precious things? I am speaking of gold and silver and the other valuable belongings that you will not find, however hard you may look. For nothing escaped her right hand, there is nothing she did not divide up among the poor." Having heard this, he made no further investigation, but ordered one of his own garments to be altered into a feminine one, and for the blessed woman to be buried in it. When her hallowed body was placed upon the bed, there were present the archbishop Euthymios, the *oikonomos*⁹⁶ Anthimos, and almost the entire population of the city. Then Anthimos, who knew everything about the blessed one, having served her, described it all, enumerating the widows and orphans and recounting the other needy people, none of whom had gone away empty-handed, all of whom had had their needs attended to. As he spoke of these things he was moved to tears, and moved the others as well. When the entire clergy had sung the funeral hymns, they took her to the episcopal church and placed her hallowed body in hallowed ground.⁹⁷

After a few days, as his mourning abated, the husband opened her coffers and looked for the effects of the deceased. Finding <the coffers> empty, he ordered the young slave girl to be brought to him, and asked her where her mistress's ornaments were, the earrings of pearls and precious stones, the gold rings, the multicolored silk dresses. She answered, "With some she freed captives, with others she redeemed the debts of those who could not pay, with others still she fed the poor, and her garments she gave to the churches, some to cover the holy altars and others to adorn the rest of the church buildings." Only then did he recognize the virtue of his wife, and he blamed himself, and blamed those who had accused her, for they had sinned and had made him

⁹⁶ The person responsible for the administrative and financial affairs of a see, usually a priest.

⁹⁷ See Mango, "Byzantine Church," 12–13. He identifies the church of Hagia Sophia of Vizeye as the episcopal church, the *καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία*. In Chap. 17, I have translated this term as "cathedral church," for variety.

partner in their crime by deceiving him; he called them wretched, and himself more so.

12. Not many days went by, not even four months, when a man named Strategios who was possessed by a demon arrived at the church and called by name Mary, the wife of the *tourmarches*. At his crying out, the entire city assembled to see the afflicted man. When, finally, the demon stopped his disorderly shouts and excited movements, the archbishop called in the man and asked who he was and from where, and who had persuaded him to pretend to be possessed and whether he was not ashamed to perform and shout such things. “For,” said the archbishop, “we know this woman to have been good, and her life to have been virtuous; but we cannot believe that she has been found worthy of such grace. God has granted the ability to perform miracles to chaste men, holy monks, and martyrs. She, on the other hand, lived with a man, and did not change her mode of life, nor did she ever do any great or extraordinary things. Whence her power to perform miracles? Who proposed this pretense to you? Was it the husband of the deceased or another relative of hers? If you do not cease⁹⁸ your acting, it will be up to the scourge to expose this performance and teach you prudence.”⁹⁹ At this, the man blamed his own sins as the reason for which he had been delivered to the demon, and maintained that his frenzy was no deceit but a true derangement of the mind. But he also said that he would find his cure here, and that he would be delivered from the demon who drove him. If this did not happen, he said, they could do with him as they saw fit. The archbishop was not persuaded by these words, and he threatened the man even as he let him go.

Then Mary’s husband took the man over, imprisoning him, interrogating him, torturing him, and asking him who it was who prompted him. “Where did you learn my wife’s name, to call upon her?” he said. “Perhaps your doings were prompted by her relatives. You will derive no benefit from this venture, and if you do not leave here at once, you will <have cause to> blame those who put you up to this.” To this the man replied, “I never came into your wife’s sight; I don’t know her relatives, for whose sake I should pretend to be possessed as you say. A fierce demon leads me wherever he likes, and I have come here driven by him. So do not threaten me, but wait a short while and you will see the glory of God. Not only will demons be driven away here, but

⁹⁸ Emend *παῦσαι* to *παύσῃ*.

⁹⁹ The references to the theater, and earlier (chap. 5) to music, are noteworthy.

many different illnesses will be cured and God will be glorified through me first. If, in a short while, you don't all see events coming to pass in accordance with my statements, then I am ready to suffer whatever you see fit." Thus he spoke, and Nikephoros, astounded, kept his peace, unable either to believe firmly or to disbelieve, and standing midway between belief and disbelief, waiting to see what would eventuate.

What then? For many days, the possessed man, driven, went to the grave of the saint. Once, on a Sunday, when the morning prayers were being sung and almost the entire city was assembled, the man was suffering at the demon's pleasure; then he approached the tomb of the blessed one, and tried to raise the stone that lay on top of it, calling others to help, for the saint wanted the tomb to be opened and the man to be rid of the demon. The husband of the blessed woman having allowed people to help, the stone was raised and the possessed man tore off the cover of the coffin and threw it far away.¹⁰⁰ Then, bending over the remains of the blessed one, he brought her right hand to his lips, whence he was made to vomit, and, apparently spitting out a stream of blood, he also, invisibly, spat out the demon who was troubling him. All were astounded at the miracle, including the archbishop Euthymios. Stooping to look into the tomb, they saw the blessed woman lying intact, and smelled the fragrance that issued forth. Observing [p. 698] more intently, they saw blood on her face. One of the priests, thinking that the possessed man had spat it out, tried to wipe it with the saint's winding sheet, but the blood was vital blood and issued forth from her nostrils. They tearfully glorified God Who had revealed a great blessing to the city.

After this miracle, the man, freed from the evil spirit, returned home. He did not keep silent, but bore witness to the miracle and proclaimed the beneficence of the blessed woman. In consequence, a large mass of sick people

¹⁰⁰ The word *θυρα* normally means "door." It has here been translated as "cover," because one cannot easily imagine a door to a coffin. Alice-Mary Talbot has brought to my attention a passage from the *vita* of St. Theodora of Thessalonike, where the word *θυρίς* describes an opening in the coffin left at the position of the head, with a wooden cover that could be easily opened and closed; cf. Paschalides, *Theodora*, 198.9–12 (= Chap. 4 of her *Translation and Miracles*). In this case, it cannot have been a small opening, because later (Chap. 18) the coffin is opened and a woman touches the big toe of the saint, S. Kissas, "Ὁ βίος τῆς Ἁγίας Μαρίας τῆς Νέας ὡς πηγή γιὰ τὴν ἀρχαιολογία καὶ ἱστορία τῆς τέχνης," *ByzF* 14.1 (1989), 259, speaks of a wooden coffin "with cover" inside a stone sarcophagus.

streamed to her tomb and returned home healed: the blind recovered their sight, the deaf their hearing, those who had lost their mind returned to normality, those who suffered from evil spirits (they were innumerable) were delivered from their tormentor. Since it is impossible to enumerate everything, I will describe only a few of the many miracles, to illustrate the grace that was bestowed on the blessed woman.

13. There was a woman whose whole life was anchored on her daughter; seeing the girl so demented that she gathered and ate stinking dung and her own excrement, the woman did not know what to do. Rather, she did everything that seemed reasonable, but nothing worked. Finally she despaired of all these <remedies> and, giving up on the doctors, she found refuge, along with her daughter, with the saint. There she took oil from the lamp on the tomb, anointed her demented daughter, and after a little while carried her away sane, and, along with her daughter, kept offering sensible praise to the saint's God.

Similarly, a blind man who had arrived led by the hand, left with his sight, having simply anointed himself with oil. Thereafter, he would go to the tomb of the blessed woman every year, giving thanks to God and to her.

14. A woman possessed by a demon was brought to the saint's coffin, where she was delivered from the evil spirit that disturbed her. Similar was the case of a priest who could just barely be restrained by chains and shackles, driven as he was by the demon; he, too, was delivered from the <spirit> that possessed him when he came here. And the same happened later with a nun who was brought from Bulgaria by the evil spirit that drove her, and she too was sent away by the saint, freed of the possessing <spirit>.

15. What then? Shall we say that those possessed by demons found relief here, while others, needing different kinds of help, did not find grace? Far from it. Indeed, report of the blessed one spreading everywhere, a woman came to her tomb from Karavizye.¹⁰¹ Her nipples were hardened so that she could not feed her infant; she asked for the flow of her milk, received what she sought, and returned home overjoyed. Another woman asked for the same kindness and was given it, but when, after her departure, she was galled at something, her breasts again became dry and desiccated, as they had been before.

¹⁰¹ Karavizye is mentioned as an archiepiscopal see dependent on Constantinople in H. Gelzer, *Georgii Cyprii Descriptio orbis Romani* (Leipzig, 1890), 60. Cf. *AASS*, Nov. 4:698 n. 1.

Two paralytics were brought to her tomb in a single day, and on that day they were restored to perfect health.

A blind woman came, anointed her eyes with the holy oil from the lamp of the tomb, and recovered her sight.

Another woman came to the tomb of the blessed woman carrying in her arms a nursling who was possessed and terribly tormented by a demon. She threw the child at the <blessed woman's> feet, shedding tears of fervent faith, and received it back pure of the spirit that had troubled it. Countless such prodigies took place every day.

16. <Word of> the miracles reached Arkadioupolis and a certain pious woman, the superior of the nunnery at Kachlakine, desired to visit the tomb of the blessed woman and see some of the things that were rumored.¹⁰² So, taking two of her disciples, she set out on the road to Vizye, and in her wake came a cleric who was being bothered by a demon. At first the woman lodged at the house of Nikephoros, the blessed woman's husband. On the next day, she came to the tomb where, while the divine liturgy was being celebrated, five possessed men converged, as if at a signal, uttering meaningless, mad words, and opened the tomb. One brought to his mouth her hand, the other her foot, yet another one of her funerary garments, and all were immediately stilled and became sane. The woman marveled at this and, bending in faith to kiss the hallowed body, she saw that the headcloth was stuck to the other cheek. As she took hold of it and tried to pull it apart, a drop of blood flowed. This woman thus enhanced the miracle, and she shouted, "Truly the saints live!" She wiped up the blood in a rag, showing it around in Arkadioupolis and proclaiming the miracle to those who were ignorant of it.

17. At that time, the blessed one appeared to her husband in his sleep and urged him to build for her a house of prayer and there to transfer her relics "so that," as she said, "I can watch those dearest to me." He, considering the matter to be but a dream, disregarded it. After a brief time, he suffered a most just punishment; for, even though his eyes were open, he could not see. Because of this he came into awareness and understood the reason [p. 699] for his suffering to be no other than his disobedience. So, having brought together a large number of people, he ordered them to dig in the neighboring hill and

¹⁰² Arkadioupolis, ancient Bergoule, is a Thracian town between Herakleia and Vizye (modern Luleburgaz). The mention of the monastery of Kachlakine would seem to be unique; cf. M. Gedeon, *Βυζαντινὸν Ἑορτολόγιον* (Istanbul, 1899), 296.

take out square blocks.¹⁰³ When the quarrying began, he started to see again, dimly; as the digging continued, so his sight became clearer, and when the work reached its peak, his sight was totally restored. From that moment on, he pursued the work most earnestly. When the church was completed and consecrated by the archbishop, and it was time for the translation of her body, Nikephoros and his people arrived at the cathedral church for this purpose. But some among the clergy disliked this proposition, and they attacked the archbishop Euthymios. Nikephoros, afraid of sedition and its attendant evils, kept quiet for a while. But he looked out for a time when the archbishop would be away, and, taking about forty men with him, and also a few clerics who did not dare to oppose <this effort>, he carried out the translation.¹⁰⁴

18. When the relics were placed in the church, a woman possessed by an evil spirit opened the coffin and pressed the holy woman's big toe; from it flowed blood, and the woman, having rolled about on the earth for a short while, arose sane, and went away free of evil.

At this time, she appeared in a dream to a painter in Raideostos¹⁰⁵ who lived as a recluse;¹⁰⁶ she was wearing a white garment and a red headdress, and holding in her right hand a burning lamp on which was written, "The light of charity." She was preceded by two graceful and very handsome boys, and was followed by a good-looking girl. When she drew near, he asked her who she was, and why she had come to him. She replied to him in a cheerful and smiling voice, saying, "I am Mary from the city of Vizye, about whom you have heard much but whom you have never seen until now. Paint my picture as you have just seen me, with my children, Orestes and Vardanes, and my handmaiden, Agathe, and send it to the city of Vizye." The old man, waking up and realizing that this was the wish of the blessed woman, painted the picture gladly, as he had seen it in his sleep, and sent it from Raideostos to Vizye, to the church built by her husband. Those who had seen her when she

¹⁰³ An interesting reference to quarrying. Was there a well-known quarry on these hills?

¹⁰⁴ As Cyril Mango has noted, the clergy undoubtedly did not want to give up profitable relics; cf. his "Byzantine Church," 12. This was the first and most important translation of St. Mary's relics. For the sequence, see Chap. 27.

¹⁰⁵ Modern Tekirdag in eastern Thrace.

¹⁰⁶ *Εγκλειστος*, a man who lives shut up in a cave or a cell.

was still alive, when they looked at the icon were filled with amazement and testified that it was, indeed, her likeness and that of her children.

19. Thereupon some monks, moved not by zeal but by envy at the miracles, said, "It is not possible for someone who lives a secular life, eats meat, and enjoys the pleasures of marriage to receive from God the grace of working miracles, while monks, who deprive themselves of every pleasure, who are mortified and distressed in everything, who, on top of that, devote themselves to singing hymns day and night, are not deemed worthy of such grace." Thus they spoke, not knowing that when one accomplishes fully what he has promised, he is worthy of his gift.¹⁰⁷ But he who has not carried out <his promises> not only loses the bounty but also makes himself subject to condemnation inasmuch as he has deceived the person to whom he made the promise. The blessed Mary, the wonder of our generation, preserved unadulterated to the end the promise she made at the moment of holy baptism. That was perfection in things secular, to which she added virtues of many other kinds, among them charity which exalts man more than any other virtue, being the fruit of love that so pleases God that He Himself wishes to be called by the name of Love.¹⁰⁸ As for him who, having chosen one vocation,¹⁰⁹ is false to it, then tries another and is even more false to it, how can he get a reward from God's gift? But this is not the time for such philosophizing.

20. The sickness of doubt also afflicted Stephen, the bishop of Vrysis,¹¹⁰ who reasoned that the marvelous things that were said about the saint were a delusion, considering that her marriage, her wealth, and her glory in the world were obstacles¹¹¹ to <attaining> the height of sanctity. So, what happened to free the man of his doubt? There was a woman named Zoe, who was possessed

¹⁰⁷ The pronoun is a masculine one, but refers to both men and women.

¹⁰⁸ 1 John 4:16.

¹⁰⁹ I have translated the noun ἐπάγγελμα as "vocation," even though the verb ἐπαγγελλομαι in the same paragraph was translated as "to promise." The reason is that the phrase απομαι ἐπαγγελματος describes a vocation better than a promise.

¹¹⁰ Vrysis is to the west of Vizye; Bishop Stephen does not seem to be otherwise attested; cf. M. LeQuien, *Oriens Christianus*, I (Paris, 1740), 1187–88. For the bishopric of Vrysis in the 11th century, when it was subject to the metropolitan of Adrianople, see Gelzer, *Georgii Cyprii*, 80.

¹¹¹ I have adopted Alice-Mary Talbot's suggestion to emend καλύμματα to κωλύματα.

by demons. For seven years she had stood around the church, watching others being healed while she remained without a cure. But she never gave up her true hope. Once, while the holy liturgy was being celebrated, the woman, standing away from the coffin, grasped the bishop, and, pointing at the coffin, begged him to open it, for thus had the blessed one ordered, so that <the woman> could be cured of the troublesome demon. The bishop marveled at this, and the sexton¹¹² and the others who were present also implored the <bishop>, asking him to get the key to the coffin from the blessed woman's husband. This was done. Then the possessed woman, having shaken out the cloth that covered the coffin, threw it to one of the priests. Then, the coffin having been opened, she took the saint's right hand into her mouth, and was cured by vomiting. The bishop said that the miracle was performed on his account, so that he should shed his doubts. Having kissed the holy relics, and found them to be whole and fragrant, he went away amazed. But the woman who had been cured, since she did not lead a decent life after her cure, but drifted into wantonness and drunkenness and the attendant licentiousness, within a year was again possessed by the demon. *And the last state of <the woman> was worse than the first,*¹¹³ a cure being no longer possible. [p. 700]

21. The blessed one's detractors were not destined to escape the eye of justice, nor were they to go unpunished. Either God <wished to> honor her by punishing them, or she herself, knowing that those who slandered her must suffer in some way, judged it best to have them chastised, nay, punished, on this earth, so that they would not have to render an account of their conduct in heaven. What then was the punishment? To run the household, Nikephoros had brought in his sister, Helena, along with her daughter Sophia. Once the blessed woman came to the girl in a dream, seeming to complain that Helena thought she could lord it over her household, and she ordered Helena to leave, unless she wanted to be evicted willy-nilly. The girl related her vision to her mother, who paid no attention. After a few days, the girl said that a sudden sharp pain struck the back of her neck, and from there extended to her heart;

¹¹² The word νεώκοπος refers to a man in the lowest rank of ecclesiastical office, who takes care of the church building, makes sure it is clean, etc. In the *vita* of St. Niketas of Medikion (*AASS*, Apr. 1:xix, chaps. 5–7 [at end of volume]), the νεώκοποι seem to be very young. Here, one does not get the impression that the νεώκοπος was a youth.

¹¹³ Mt. 12:45.

three days later, she died in pain.¹¹⁴ Helena had two other daughters who had also raved against the blessed one and participated in the mother's calumnies. They were troubled to the point of death by demons.¹¹⁵ As for Drosos, who was also among the saint's slanderers, as we have seen, having been thrown out by Nikephoros, at first he lived in such abject poverty that he could not even find his daily food, and later died of pleurisy. Alexios, the brother of Nikephoros, spent his days in such extreme poverty that he did not own a second garment and died a bad death. Nor did Nikephoros himself escape retribution. He was out hunting when a hare leapt out from somewhere. He rode on hard, along with many others. Then his horse tripped, carrying him down with it, and his right shoulder came out of its socket, so that from that time on his right arm was entirely useless.

22. Because large numbers of people streamed from many places¹¹⁶ to the revered tomb of the blessed one, and from there received cures aplenty, I don't know in what direction to turn in the matter of the narration of her miracles. On the one hand, it would be impossible for me to describe every one, while to omit all of them would not only bring loss to the God-loving ones who should hear them, but also to me, who would incur God's great displeasure. For it is right that God's works should be proclaimed. Thus, I will narrate a few out of many, and bring the story to a close.

A man named Sefhronas was driven mightily by an impure spirit. He thrashed about in a disorderly fashion, rolled his eyes, ate his own flesh, could not bear any clothes to cover his nakedness. His head was spiky because, being unwashed for so long, the hair stood up. One might say that he was filled with countless ills. His relatives brought him by force to the grave of the blessed one and there, having been anointed with oil on the forehead—<praised be> Thy works, immortal King, Thou Who knowest how to glorify those who serve Thee with ardent faith!—the man was seen to be healthy, and as sane as if he had never suffered any of these things, for the evil spirit was completely driven away from him.

Furthermore, a woman who was held totally immobile by paralysis and

¹¹⁴ Emend ἐπανεβίω to ἀπεβίω.

¹¹⁵ Ἀγχομεναι μεχρι θανατου διεμειναν. A possible translation is "were choked to death." It is not preferred, because of the verb διεμειναν.

¹¹⁶ Πολλαχου should be emended to πολλαχοθεν.

suffered sharp pain in all her limbs was brought <by her relatives> in a wagon to the tomb of the saint. They then got her back free of all pain, and brought her home on her own two feet.

23. It is appropriate to add the following to what has already been said. Symeon, the ruler of Bulgaria, a savage man, having campaigned against the Romans, plundered the entire area of Thrace, laying waste to everything up to the very walls of Constantinople and razing most of the cities to the ground.¹¹⁷ For this reason the inhabitants of Vizye, unable to remain any longer in their city, which had been besieged for five long years,¹¹⁸ found an opportune time and abandoned it, after burning all the houses to the ground. A certain captive, escaping from the hands of the enemy, walked a long way and, of an evening, reached Vizye. Finding it entirely empty of people and buildings, he sought refuge in the blessed woman's church, to spend the night there. Before he could fall asleep, he heard mournful voices coming out of the tomb of the saint; they were complaints and lamentations. "Why," she said, "did the inhabitants of the city, although Christian, abandon the city and leave, while I still reside at the same place? If they wanted to do this, why did they not take me with them, but left me here, among the nations?"¹¹⁹ The man, terrified at this, spent the night and then reached Medeia,¹²⁰ where he made the matter known to all. Among those present was a priest named Niketas Kannakes, who had celebrated the holy liturgy at the church of the saint dur-

¹¹⁷ See above, pp. 248–49.

¹¹⁸ From 919/920 to 924/925. Scholars find it difficult to believe that Vizye could survive a true siege for five years, and that its inhabitants could break through in the end. They thus speak of a five-year blockade of Vizye and Thrace; cf. F. Dvornik, "Quelques donnees . . . des *Acta Sanctorum*," *ByzSlav* 1 (1929), 42.

¹¹⁹ Dvornik has noted the surprising opposition of Christians-pagans, at a time when the Bulgarians had been Christian for more than two generations ("Quelques donnees," 41). A. Kolia-Dermitzaki (Ὁ βυζαντινὸς "ἱερός πόλεμος" [Athens, 1991], 307) mentions religious preparations before the battle of Anchialos (917), but stresses that the letters to Symeon, composed by Nicholas Mystikos and Theodore Daphnopates at the time of the peace treaty of 927, insist on Symeon's Christianity to point out his unseemly behavior. At the same time, Symeon is likened to the pharaoh and Goliath, as opposed to the comparison of Romanos I with Moses and David; *ibid.*, 307–10. Of course, the term εἰθνεῖς might be translated as "barbarians" instead of "nations"; cf. Oikonomides, *Listes*, 177.29–30, which counts among the ἐθνικοὶ the Pharganoi, Khazars, Arabs, and Franks. The text dates from 899.

¹²⁰ Medeia is modern Kiyikoy, on the western Black Sea coast of Turkey.

ing the entire siege, and who, having recently left with the <rest of the> inhabitants, was now in Medeia. When he heard these things from the captive, he recalled the miracles wrought by the blessed woman and could not restrain himself from going to Vizye to prostrate himself before the saint, even though the enemy was in the city. For the above-mentioned Symeon, having meanwhile seized Vizye and found it empty of people and buildings, ordered the remaining walls, which had not been consumed by fire, to be razed to the ground, and the earth to be plowed and sown. This was done, since it was the right season.¹²¹

24. It would not be right to pass over in silence the events that took place during the time of this Symeon. [p. 701] When he entered Vizye and found that only the churches had survived the fire, he went to look around and ordered some to be turned into granaries, others into houses, and others still into stables. He reached the saint's church and, casting his eyes on the sarcophagus, asked those who were around whose it was. They explained and told him of the miracles worked by the woman who lay inside it, and so he ordered it to be opened. As soon as it was opened, a flame shot forth and terrified everybody. Seeing this, <Symeon> ordered his men not to touch the church at all and allowed the priests to celebrate the liturgy every day. Having populated the city with some of his own men, and established as head of the garrison a certain Voulias,¹²² he left to establish similar <garrisons> in the other Thracian cities. The priest Kannakes, of whom we spoke earlier, prompted by the words of the captive to go to Vizye, as we have said, hastened to fulfill his desire. When he came close to the fort, he was held by the Bulgarians and was asked who he was and how he dared come here. He, being a truthful man who had learned to tell the truth, confessed who he was and why he had come. When these things reached the ears of Voulias, he ordered the man to be brought before his eyes as well. And when the man came, Voulias behaved deferentially to him, called him "father," received him with great honor, and demanded to be told of the life of the saint and her miracles. The priest, shedding tears of joy, described freely everything about her: how she

¹²¹ This would place the conquest of Vizye in the *fall* of 924 or 925; the best time for sowing was considered to be early November; cf. A. Laiou, "The Provisioning of Constantinople During the Winter of 1306–1307," *Byzantion* 37 (1967), 101.

¹²² Voulias is probably an old Bulgarian title, which the Byzantines used as a name; cf. Dvornik, "Quelques donnees," 42 n. 3, *contra* Balascev, "Novye dannye," 219.

was from Constantinople, the daughter of noble and glorious parents, and how she married a brave man, Nikephoros by name, a general, who became *tourmarches* in this city. He spoke of how at first she had two boys who had paid the common debt¹²³ during her and her husband's lifetime, and what courage she displayed at their death; and how after that she bore two other boys, twins, and about the signs attending their birth, and how all that the mother had prophesied regarding them had come to pass. For the first-born, whose name was Vaanes, having been enrolled as a soldier, was the commander of the Roman army then in Selyvria,¹²⁴ while Stephen, born after him, chose the way of monks and, dwelling somewhere around Mt. Olympus,¹²⁵ lived only with himself and God. The priest narrated to Voulias in detail all the other matters pertaining to the blessed one: the unfeigned love she had for everyone; the measureless charity; her sympathetic attitude; her peace, forbearance, clemency; her kindness; her love for the poor; her night-long prayers; her tears; her patience; her frequent visits, full of pleasure, to the holy churches; the perspiration she shed there because of her constant genuflections; the love and diligence she showed for the beautification of the holy churches. Then <he spoke about> the machinations devised against her through the prompting of Satan, her husband's hostility, the blows, her death, and the countless miracles that followed it, both the ones that have been already mentioned here and the ones that have been omitted for the sake of brevity. He spoke of the retribution suffered by those who slandered her, and how her husband, Nikephoros, died during the siege of Vizye and was buried on the left side of the chapel he had built for the blessed one. Hearing all that, Voulias was filled with amazement and wonder and, along with the others present, praised God on high, while he said <to the priest>, "O honorable father, how could you bear to abandon such a treasure if, because of the disasters of war, you stood to suffer such damage? But now all is forgiven you, and you may, if you wish, celebrate a liturgy. Please stay and live with us, and we will meet your every need unfailingly." He responded, "I cannot do the latter, because I desire to live with mine own, in Medeia; but I hope I may achieve

¹²³ I.e., died.

¹²⁴ Modern Silivri, about 70 km from Constantinople, on the coast of the Sea of Marmara.

¹²⁵ In Bithynia. A holy mountain and important monastic center in the 8th–10th centuries; cf. *ODB* 3:1525.

the thing I *can* do: you should order that I may come and celebrate the liturgy in the church of the saint without hindrance from anyone.” <Voulias> agreed to this very happily, and furthermore he demanded that the priest not procrastinate, but that he do this frequently.

25. The above-mentioned Symeon used to change the heads of garrisons of the conquered cities after a while, recalling them to himself and replacing them with others. So he also recalled Voulias from Vizye, sending in his place another man to guard the city. Those who quit the garrison considered that it was a right of war to return home laden with spoils; so they overran what remained <of the territory> of the Romans, and, having amassed much plunder, they took the road home. Voulias, too, when he left Vizye to his successor, in line with the same law <of war>, went out to collect booty as well. Thereupon, he came to Selyvria where he met the Roman army that was commanded by Vaanes, as we have said. Having found out that Vaanes was with this army, he settled his men, and he alone, by himself, went out with peaceful intent. He summoned someone from the Roman camp and inquired about Vaanes, whether he was present at the camp. When he learned that Vaanes was indeed present, he asked to see him. The message reached Vaanes, who came to Voulias armed, just as he was. <Voulias> immediately asked him, “Are you my revered Vaanes, the son of the sainted Mary of Vizye?” He answered, “Yes, I am he; but who are you, and how do you know my name and that of my mother, and why are you well disposed toward me?” To that Voulias [p. 702] answered, “I am a man, a sinner. I was not able to see the holy relics of your mother, because, when the precious receptacle in which she reposes was opened so that we could view her, a flame shot forth and almost consumed us. So we no longer dared open it and look at her—for this reason, I desired to see you instead, so that I might have the benefit of the grace of her <relics> through you. I learned your name and your whereabouts from men we took captive; from them I have also learned of her miracles. I received even more certain knowledge of all these things from a priest who used to serve the church built by your father. But there was also such <a miracle> among ourselves. Once, our soldiers were on guard at the walls of Vizye. They were talking about this and that, and also began to speak about the saint’s miracles, and all were amazed. But one man, seized by the sickness of doubt, said that these things were not true: “for if she had been truly a saint, she would have saved from us this city, in which she lies.” Before he had even finished speaking, he was seized by an evil spirit and fell down, rolling his eyes, gnashing his

teeth, spitting saliva from his mouth, frequently beating his head with his two hands, and shouting mightily. Thus he was tormented for a long time. Then he barely managed to rise, on trembling knees, and went to your holy mother's grave where, after having been tormented for many days, he <finally> received a cure. All of us, frightened at the sight, greatly praised God, Who glorifies His true servants, and sent the healed man to Bulgaria. We informed people there of what had happened to him, and we summoned a priest who, to this day, performs the divine liturgy in her church." Having conversed thus, Voulias and Vaanes parted peacefully.¹²⁶

26. After a while, when the miserable soul of the aforementioned Symeon was torn away <from him>, his son Peter succeeded him.¹²⁷ Behaving in an even more barbaric fashion, he destroyed to the ground the Thracian cities captured by his father, recalling the Bulgarians who were in them. He dealt in this manner with Vizye, among other <cities>. When Vaanes learned this, he came to Vizye with some priests and some of the soldiers under his command. With his men, he entered the holy church of his sainted mother and, after they had made the appropriate prayers and given thanks, they kissed her precious and holy relics. When the divine and holy liturgy began, there was a mighty creaking in the sarcophagus that frightened everyone so much that they almost left the church. After quite a while it stopped, and they began to wonder what was the meaning of this sign. Her son Vaanes said, "Just as, when we left Vizye, she was vexed and gave out mournful cries, as the captive told us, so does she leap about in exultation at our presence." Having performed the divine liturgy and given thanks for what happened, they returned again to Selvyria.

27. When Romanos took hold of the scepter of the Romans, and made marriage alliances with the Bulgarians, there was peace between them and the Romans.¹²⁸ As a result, everyone got together and rushed back each to his own country, without fear. Vaanes, too, with his people, came back to Vizye

¹²⁶ A wordplay: the Greek reads ἀλλήλοις συνομιλήσαντες, εἰρηνικῶς διεζεύχθησαν. Συνομιλῶ and διαζευγνυμι have also the meaning "keeping company" and "divorcing," respectively.

¹²⁷ Peter of Bulgaria, Symeon's son, reigned from 927 to 969. He made peace with the Byzantines in October 927. Symeon died in May 927.

¹²⁸ The reference is to Romanos I Lekapenos (920–944), whose granddaughter Maria married Peter in 927. It is curious that in our text the reign of Romanos, who had already been crowned emperor in 919, seems to follow Symeon's death, at some distance.

from Selyvria. At that time, it happened that his aforementioned brother Stephen went to Constantinople from Mt. Olympos, on some business. He was no longer called Stephen but Symeon, having changed his name when he became a monk. This Symeon then arrived in Vizye, happy at the peaceful state of affairs, and also desirous of seeing his country and meeting his brother, and, above all, of venerating and kissing the holy relics of his mother and receiving grace from them. Having come to the church, and having carried out his prayer and thanksgiving as he desired, he also met his brother Vaanes. Thereupon, they both communicated their thoughts to each other, and, leaving their share of the inheritance¹²⁹ to the church of their sainted mother, they made it into a monastery. Symeon wanted at this point to move the relics as well. So, having made a tomb outside the church, he placed his father's <remains> into it. As for his holy mother, he laid her down where his father had lain, in a <tomb> made of marble. Symeon did not effect this translation himself, but by means of others. The reason is given as follows by those <texts> which relate this.¹³⁰ "I am frightened by the example of Ham and therefore did not wish to look upon the nakedness of my parents."¹³¹ For this reason he entrusted the translation to others. Those who carried it out say that of Nikephoros' remains, which had been in the soil for four years, only bones and some joints could be distinguished. But the saint's holy relics they avowed to be whole and complete, and to have suffered no deterioration at all, even though they had lain there for twenty-five years. This can be seen even now, when many years have gone by, and the body has suffered no corruption at all. Thus they fulfilled these <duties> as they should, and performed the proper actions. Symeon then left Vizye to go to the mountain called Kyminas [p. 703] at the borders of Paphlagonia, near Plousias,¹³² continuing to labor at the ascetic life he had chosen.

¹²⁹ The term ἀδελφική μερίς denotes the share of each brother from the property of their parents. If their parents had died intestate, the two brothers would share the property equally between them.

¹³⁰ Note the author's reference to older texts, either of the *vita* or of the translation; since this translation itself is a minimal affair (indeed, it is not a translation at all, merely a transfer of the relics to a more prestigious tomb inside the same chapel), it is more likely that the reference is to older texts of the *vita*.

¹³¹ Allusion to Gen. 9:18–27.

¹³² Plousias is Prousius on the Hypios, in the theme of Boukellarion. Mt. Kyminas was a monastic center on the river Gallos, in Bithynia. The author is conflating this foundation, associated with St. Michael Maleinos who built a large monastery there in

28. Since many miracles took place subsequently, our discourse should move on to them, not wishing to leave untold anything that happened. A certain woman from the town¹³³ of Medeia, seized by an evil¹³⁴ spirit, was led by her relatives in shackles to the tomb of the saint. There she received back her health and returned home happy. A certain man named David fell victim to a cruel illness, which held him until his limbs were deadened by paralysis. The normal structure <of his body> was weakened, and was closed to food and drink. If he ever brought anything to his mouth, it went down as far as the pharynx and then, projected by the force of this internal affliction, came out the way it had gone in. Nor were his internal organs in order, so that they could digest food necessary for life, according to the laws of nature. For this reason he, too, was brought to the storehouse of cures, to the treasury that was never empty. He, too, was set down close to the tomb, and there he spent the day, petitioning to be relieved from his illness. He got his request that same day, but was not quite cleansed, perhaps¹³⁵ because the blessed one foresaw the occurrence of something more miraculous still. Indeed, the immobilized man stood up and found that his feet, which had been insensible before, were now cured and capable of carrying out their proper function; so he walked on his own <two feet> and went off to his house without being led or supported by anyone. But after a short while, being mildly distressed by some remnant of the disease, he forgot the source of his cure and where he had found deliverance from those violent and unbearable pains, and called in a sorceress, a woman who worked false wonders under the influence of evil spirits, thinking, like a madman, that he would receive perfect health from her. As the wretched man had recourse to sorceries and incantations¹³⁶ and frequent use of potions,

925, with the small monastery of Xerolimne in Prousias, founded by the same man in 921. The monastic center at Mt. Kyminas profited greatly from the patronage of Romanos I Lekapenos and Nikephoros II Phokas; it seems to have declined thereafter; cf. Janin, *EglisesCentres*, 110, 116–17. Undoubtedly our Symeon was a disciple of Michael Maleinos, who was a near-contemporary (894–961). The significance of the conflation for establishing the chronology of the composition of the *vita* is discussed above in the introduction, pp. 244–45.

¹³³ The Greek term is *καστρον*.

¹³⁴ Emend *μονηρῶ* to *πονηρῶ*.

¹³⁵ Emend *ισος* to *ισως*.

¹³⁶ *Μαγγανειαις* και *ἐπωδαῖς*: cf. Plato, *Leges* 933a.

not only did he not at all improve his health but rather his calamities worsened, and *the last state was worse for him than the first*, as it is written.¹³⁷ Again <he suffered> violent pains and paralysis of his limbs and misfortune filled with a thousand evils. But Satan was not to rejoice for long, for the man, realizing the deceit, called upon the compassionate Mary with hot tears and asked his relatives to bring <him> to her divine church. They brought him on a bed, and put him down before the saint's coffin. The sick man looked toward the doctor [i.e., Mary's relics] and, sighing profoundly and mournfully, said with panting voice and breath, "You, O blessed one, having taken pity on my wretched self, freed me from the disease that was killing me. But we repaid your gift with unworthy rewards. We did not entrust to you, as to a good doctor, the slight remnants of our illness, you who of your own will had healed us of that many faceted disease, but we behaved in a reckless manner, foolishly through Satan's prompting, and turned our affairs over to a deadly, evil woman. Do you <now>, with your customary philanthropy, extricate me from the double danger. For if I regain bodily health, I will surely know that I will also be granted forgiveness for the sins I have sinned miserably and unforgivably, having openly committed impiety." Such words and other similar ones he uttered pitifully; and the blessed one, the disciple of the Philanthropous One,¹³⁸ she who during her lifetime, and even after her death, distributed mercy freely, relented and granted the man complete healing.

29. And again, another woman, captured and oppressed by a demon, was brought to the saint's tomb and healed. And her son-in-law, possessed by a similar demon, also achieved health in the same manner. A certain priest had been rendered dumb and insensible by an illness; the blessed one gave him back his speech and his senses. To a child that had suffered such benumbing of the body that he could not even open his mouth, she made a present of his health when he was brought to her tomb. Another man, named Isaakios, had lost his mind because of satanic attack. He stamped over the plains like a horse¹³⁹ and traversed the crags of mountains and impassable roads, tearing off his bonds. Only with difficulty were his relatives able to restrain him and

¹³⁷ Mt. 12:45.

¹³⁸ I.e., Christ. Φιλανθρωπία, love of mankind, was an important attribute of God, and a virtue expected of emperors as well as saints.

¹³⁹ Homer, *Il.* 6:507: θειη πεδίοιο κροαινών. The passage in the *vita* is κατά πεδίων ὥσπερ ἵππος ἐκροαίνε.

bring him, tied up, to the tomb of the saint, whence he received a perfect cure. Add to this another man, who was brought because he was troubled by a demon and who also obtained a complete cure and went back home with his relatives, in exultation.

30. I will omit willingly the majority of the miracles wrought by the blessed one, because of the length of the narrative. But it is natural for attentive listeners to feel the loss, since they would like to learn about the saint's children, how and in what condition they met their death; so, let the discourse leave room for a few words to be said about this as well. Vaanes, having grown up under his father's authority¹⁴⁰ and become a man, was married to a woman of distinguished family. Even though he achieved the rank of *droungarios*,¹⁴¹ he did not become conceited because of any of the honors of this world, but rather, emulating his mother in all things, remained gentle, quiet, cheerful, fair, and kind, surpassing everyone in expert military achievements. For he was courageous in body, but much more courageous in his soul and predisposition. Being above material things and <the desire of> [p. 704] profit, he always conceded the spoils to his fellow soldiers, and as a result he was much loved by them, and highly reputed, and spoken about by everybody. As his associate and helper in all <his> excellent exploits he had a certain Theodore, who succeeded his [Vaanes'] father as *tourmarches*, a man brave and robust in military matters but braver still in the ways of God. Vaanes was yoked to him,¹⁴² like a pedigreed, powerful young bull, and together they plowed in themselves as though in fertile land, and they sowed the seeds of virtue like the best of farmers. In due season they cheerfully harvested, depositing the ripe fruit with God and in the divine vats, and received therefrom eternal joy.

More than any other virtue Vaanes embraced charity, in emulation and imitation of his mother. Nor did this excellent lover of divine and eternal

¹⁴⁰ I take this construction, ὑπο τῷ πατρὶ ἀνέξηθείς, to refer to the legal relationship between Vaanes and his father before the young man reached his majority, i.e., while he was under *patria potestas*, not emancipated. On emancipation, see M.-Th. Fögen, "Muttergut und Kindesvermögen bei Konstantin dem Großen, Justinian und Eustathios Rhomaïos," in *Eherecht und Familiengut in Antike und Mittelalter*, ed. D. Simon (Munich, 1992), 22–26.

¹⁴¹ On this rank, which his father also held, see note 51, above.

¹⁴² The word συζευχθείς, rendered here as "yoked," is commonly used to describe the marriage relationship.

things neglect the divine office;¹⁴³ every day, along with the *akolouthia* of twelve hours, he recited the entire psalter, and every evening, before going to sleep and after compline, he would make a *paraklesis* in honor of the ever-virgin Mother of our God through forty canons, not ever using a book.¹⁴⁴ And he never omitted anything from the rest of the divine office.

31. When he was summoned to the heavenly dwelling places, the Lord ordered this to take place through a natural sequence <of events>.¹⁴⁵ He suffered an ailment of the bowels and went to Constantinople, ostensibly to find a cure but in truth because of the disposition of divine providence for the better. For, on the same day that Vaanes, together with his illness, reached Constantinople, there arrived also his brother Symeon from Mt. Kyminas where, as we have already said, was located the workshop of his virtue. They met each other unexpectedly outside the door of the house in which Vaanes meant to take up residence, an event <that seemed of> divine origin to those who saw it then and those who hear it now. Here they embraced each other and spoke together of the appropriate things and rendered thanks to God. Vaanes received the divine and angelic habit from the hands of his brother

¹⁴³ An *akolouthia* is a liturgical rite of the Orthodox church. Here it refers to the monastic *akolouthiai*, based on a twelve-hour system, in which a prayer is recited twelve times during the daytime (and twelve times at night, but Vaanes seems to have observed the daytime office only). This monastic office rests on the idea of perpetual prayer. See *ODB* 1:46–47; 2:952–53, s.v. *Akolouthia* and *Hours*, liturgical, and R. F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West* (Collegeville, Minn., 1986), esp. pp. 72, 202. The passage concerning Vaanes' devotions is difficult. I am deeply grateful to Father Taft for his authoritative advice, which informs this note and the next one; if I have misconstrued his statements, I alone am responsible. My thanks are also due to Father Miguel Arranz.

¹⁴⁴ A *paraklesis* is an occasional office, in this case in honor of the Virgin. The *paraklesis* has at its core a canon (see *ODB* 2:1102, s.v. *Kanon*). The meaning of forty canons is quite unclear since, according to Father Taft, there is no evidence of the existence of forty *paraklesis* canons. He also tells me that it would be quite impossible for anyone to recite forty canons in one night. Father Arranz suggests the possibility that the pertinent passage might be translated as "going through forty canons," i.e., Vaanes had memorized forty canons and was reciting from among them. The passage remains enigmatic, at least insofar as the forty canons are concerned. Cf. introduction, pp. 246–47.

¹⁴⁵ There is a wordplay with ἀκολουθία here and at the end of Chap. 30.

Symeon,¹⁴⁶ changing his name to Marinos, and he was transferred to the divine abode, on the second day of June. His venerable and honored remains were buried in the monastery of the Virgin called “ta Korones,” near Aspar’s cistern.¹⁴⁷ This, then, was the manner of his death.

As for Symeon, our discourse will leave it to holy men to contemplate whether he is to be numbered among the saints because of the things about him which have been mentioned many times.¹⁴⁸ He became expert in letters and was assigned to live in the imperial palace, as has been said. His manner caused him to advance among the powerful. But he was conquered by love for things divine, and chose the *good part*, in the words of the Gospel.¹⁴⁹ He abandoned earthly honors of his own free will, and since he decided to live only with God, gave himself over to ascetic toil, and, passing from mountain to mountain, exchanging one place for another, and culling the best of virtues as bees do from flowers, made himself into a vessel for true sweetness and, cleansed of all earthly bitterness, became a house of God. He also received the priesthood, but despite himself, and persuaded only by obedience to his superior.¹⁵⁰

32. It was indeed meet and proper that such sons should have been born to such <a mother>, holy ones from the holy one, admirable ones from the admirable one, kind ones from the kind one, sainted sons from the sainted <mother>, for they had been dedicated to God at birth, or rather even before birth, since their mother had dedicated herself to God ever since she was a

¹⁴⁶ I.e., he was made a monk.

¹⁴⁷ M. Gedeon, Βυζαντινὸν Ἑορτολόγιον (Constantinople, 1899), 295, thinks that this monastery is near modern Salma-Tobruk. Aspar’s cistern was probably located on the fifth hill of Constantinople, near the site of the Constantinian wall; cf. Janin, *CP byz.*, 204–5. Janin (*EglisesCP*, 191) notes that the only mention of the monastery is in this *vita*. The monastery of Chrysobalanton was also located near Aspar’s cistern; cf. Janin, *EglisesCP*, 540–41.

¹⁴⁸ The words πολλὰχού τοῦ λόγου would seem, at first glance, to refer to this narrative. But the narrative has not, up to this point, provided information that would justify Symeon’s inclusion among the saints. Either this is subtly ironic or the reference is to other narratives.

¹⁴⁹ Lk. 10:42.

¹⁵⁰ A hagiographic commonplace denoting humility. See, for example, the Life of St. Daniel the Stylite, in Dawes and Baynes, *Three Byz. Saints*, chaps. 42–43.

baby, out of her own free will, and had become a dwelling place for all the virtues that delight the Lord of all. Who could possibly describe the nobility of her spirit; the appropriateness of her prudence; the great beauty of her intelligence; the pleasantness, friendliness, and charm <she displayed> toward everybody; her gentleness; her sympathetic nature; her fairness and moderation to one and all; her kindness and philanthropy toward all in need, wherefrom she embraced and fulfilled boundless mercy, saving nothing for herself and furnishing everything to the poor? How many girls do you think she gave away in marriage, providing dowries from her own property? How many young men did she restore who had been ruined by being orphaned? How many widows enjoyed consolation from her generous donations? How many were the hungry whom she fed? The naked whom she clothed? The thirsty whom she filled full of sweetest drink? The poor breathed her rather than air,¹⁵¹ those who suffered from the ice and froze from the cold were warmed by her clothes. Those who could not even obtain water because of the paralysis of their limbs found her a constant supplier of their needs. About her it is fitting to say what was said by Job, that her door was open to all comers.¹⁵² As for her journeys to holy churches, and her care and attention for their adornment, her night-long prayers, her all-night standing vigils, her untold genuflections and the sweat that, resulting from this, flowed from her like rivers, the continuous and constant tears, who could have the power to relate them? Who would not be astonished and marvel at her fortitude in the face of temptation, her bravery in the face of slander and calumnies, a bravery proffered by constancy of mind, her unyielding and unfeigned patience in the face of adversity and sorrow? In addition, what words could recount the good deeds she wrought for everyone after her death, the healings, the miracles, those that were done and those that are still being done [p. 705] and granted to people in need, who approach her holy tomb with sincere faith? Indeed, how could she not continue to help¹⁵³ the needy after her death, when she acquired even greater

¹⁵¹ An anonymous referee has pointed out that the expression is used by Gregory of Nazianzos in a letter to Basil of Caesarea, and that he/she, has not encountered this expression in other hagiographic works. Cf. P. Gallay, *St. Gregoire de Nazianze, Lettres*, I (Paris, 1964), ep. 6, para. 8: "I would rather breathe you than air."

¹⁵² Cf. Job 31:32.

¹⁵³ Ἐπαρχεῖν should be emended to ἐπαρκεῖν.

power, having shed any remaining thickness of the flesh, being able to converse directly with God in purity of spirit, and having the fortune to be counted among the children of God, in grace?

33. But O venerable Mary, the ornament of all women who live a good life in this world,¹⁵⁴ the delight of the righteous,¹⁵⁵ and the sweetest relish of the blessed,¹⁵⁶ the receptacle of virtue, the vessel of the graces, the inexhaustible treasury of healings, the storehouse of the gifts of the divine and holy Spirit, you who, with the precious choir of your children, stand before the blessed and holy Trinity and cry out boldly, “O Lord, *behold me and the children Thou hast given me!*”¹⁵⁷ <O venerable Mary,> bring upon us unworthy ones the mercy of the forgiving, forbearing, and patient Lord, having as your fellow intercessors and assistants the multitudes of the blessed, the communities of martyrs, the brigades of the righteous, the choirs of angels, the array of the apostles, the assemblage of prophets, and the battalion of the Fathers. For I know that they all intercede together on our behalf, carrying in themselves the form of philanthropy, like true disciples of the Philanthropous One.¹⁵⁸ Together with all of them and above them all, you have the willing intercessor of our race, the mistress and lady of all, the Theotokos, the ever-virgin mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, who always entreats on our account and never abandons her intercession on our behalf. Thus being propitiated by all, the benevolent Lord, Who always, through His goodness and love of mankind, conquers our many transgressions, might be persuaded as is His wont, might relent and look upon us with benevolence, and turn away from us His wrath and vexation, giving us His mercy only because of His ineffable kindness and philanthropy, that we might be freed from the pains that are afflicting us and the unbearable misfortunes, and that we might witness the destruction of the terrible enemies and their entire race who have been inflicted upon us, who are attacking us like wild beasts, and destroying the flock of Christ, the chosen people, whom He bought off from the <ancestral> curse

¹⁵⁴ I.e., a secular life. An anonymous referee comments that the titles for Mary the Younger are reminiscent of the Akathistos Hymn and other Marian hymns; cf., e.g., Cyril of Alexandria, PG 77:1032–36.

¹⁵⁵ I.e., the saints of the Old Testament.

¹⁵⁶ I.e., the saints.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Is. 8:18; Heb. 2:13.

¹⁵⁸ I.e., Christ.

with His own blood.¹⁵⁹ O revered mother Mary, marvel of our generation,¹⁶⁰ do not cease to beg for us Christians profound peace and the blessings that come from God, asking that our emperors who have been ordained by God to rule over us on earth be granted great victories against all our enemies, and asking also for the Church of Christ growth, tranquillity, and unbroken union. And may you remain the protector of this best of <all> cities, Vizye, to which God has granted your most sacred and holy body to be the succor of all its inhabitants, to defend them and avert all manner of disease and the enemies who oppose them openly or in secret. May you grant salvation and deliverance from all illness to the archbishop and the entire clergy and all those who honor you every year—to the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the all-holy and transcendent Trinity, the one and only God and king, to Whom is due glory, power, honor, and worship, to the ages of ages. Amen.

¹⁵⁹ The Byzantines as chosen people; the enemy here has been thought to be the Hungarians and Pechenegs who invaded Thrace in the years 934–967; cf. Balascev, “Novye dannye,” and *AASS*, Nov. 4:691. This is plausible only if one assumes that the *vita* was written in the 10th century; see introduction, above, p. 242.

¹⁶⁰ A phrase that has been taken to indicate that the author was writing relatively close to the time of her death, i.e., in the early to mid-10th century. See introduction, p. 242, and Chap. 1.