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Mali Meidenhad and Other Virginity Treatises

Dissertation

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CHAPTER I

THE TRADITION BEHIND HALI MEIDENHAD

Aside from the Ancrene Riwle, the so-called Katherine group is perhaps the best known of the prose writings of the thirteenth century. This group includes three saints' lives—Saint Katherine, Saint Margaret, and Saint Juliana—and two religious treatises, Hali Meidenhad and Sawles Warde. All these works except Sawles Warde are concerned primarily with virginity.

Scholars have not overlooked the Katherine group; nearly every literary survey includes brief summaries of both the legends and treatises. Unfortunately, however, one finds only scant comment about Hali Meidenhad and this generally limited to what scholars regard as interesting and uncharacteristic earthiness. Indeed, anyone who has read Hali Meidenhad will be surprised by the shockingly candid and sometimes humorous portrayals of married life. The degradation of sexual intercourse, the horrors of pregnancy, and the domestic trials of marriage are all used as arguments in favor of virginity.
Therefore, several unanswered and important questions remain. To what degree was the author dependent upon the Church Fathers as a source for the opinions which he expressed on virginity? Does *Hali Meidenhad* have any artistic merit, or is it merely a cento-like reproduction of Ambrose's famous treatise, as has been suggested by at least one scholar? What can be determined about the personality of the *Hali Meidenhad* author and the influence of his times? Certainly if one is to attempt to answer these questions, he should become familiar with the background of the virginity treatise.

And in order to understand that background, one must turn to the Fathers from whom the tradition and the convention of the virginity treatise evolved, for neither the form nor the content which one finds in *Hali Meidenhad* is unique to the period of its composition. By looking closely at the evolution of the virginity treatise and also at the shifts in tone and emphasis as the subject of virginity was considered by these Fathers, one can gain better perspective on both the intent and the intensity of *Hali Meidenhad*.

When the doctrine of a future life, with its emphasis upon rewards and punishments, became known among the Semitic races, the subordination and the rejection of
earthly life were natural consequences, and a turn to asceticism was to be expected. Among the early Christian ascetics of the time of Christ, two groups, the Essenes and the Pharisees, are perhaps most significant. A group of mystics, the Essenes were the more austere; they withdrew from the world, dwelt as anchorites, abstained from marriage, and praised virginity. The Pharisees, a more active group, are best remembered for one of their most famous members, the Apostle Paul, founder of the Church of the Gentiles.²

It is to Saint Paul to whom one must turn if he is to find the foundation for one of the most rigorous arguments offered by later ascetics, the plea for continence. Saint Paul laid this foundation when he wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians, in which, according to Alfred Plummer, he reproduces the life of a Gentile-Christian community, "seething with the interaction of the new life, and the inherited character, with the beginnings of that age-long warfare of man's higher and lower self which forms the under-current of Christian history in all ages."³ This "interaction" manifesting itself in the well-known conflict between the spirit and the flesh permeates much of the writings of Paul; however, Chapter vii of First Corinthians is of greatest importance to the evolution of
the virginity treatise, for it is there that Paul answers the Corinthians' questions regarding marriage and celibacy and there that the Church Fathers looked for support of their treatises as they dealt with this crucial issue.

That Paul's words in Chapter VII should be interpreted in a variety of ways by the Fathers in order to support or in order to condemn marriage is not surprising. Paul had said, for example, that continence was excellent; yet he had added that he recognized that it was not for everyone. He had suggested that married persons observe continence for periods of time in order that they might be effective in their prayers; nevertheless, he advised them to avoid continence to the extent that it might make them susceptible to Satan's temptations and to ruin. Addressing himself to questions of the Corinthians regarding the unmarried and the widowed, Paul suggested that he would prefer that all men remain single as he, himself, is single; however, he added that it is better for men to marry than to burn. He said that those who marry do not sin; but he said, likewise, that those who do marry will suffer trials of the flesh which he refused to discuss in greater detail. Moreover, according to Paul, continence is preferable to marriage because the married woman is concerned more with worldly interests and ways in which she
might please her husband than she is about the interests of the Lord and ways in which she might please Him. Although he maintains that the father who gives his daughter in marriage does well, he adds that he who does not give his daughter in marriage does better. It is obvious that there was some reason for the variety of application and interpretation of Paul's words on marriage and virginity.

The earliest of the Fathers of the Church in the West to express his commitment to the ideal of virginity is Tertullian, a man remarkable for his scholarship and one who has been called with Augustine one of the two great original thinkers among the Fathers. Certainly, he knew the writings of Saint Paul well. He was able, for example, in On Baptism to attack those who would use the text of the Acti Pauli to sanction the right of women to teach and to baptize. According to Tertullian the Acti Pauli "go wrongly under Paul's name"; therefore Thecla's example should not be considered sufficient support. "How credible would it seem, that he who has not permitted a woman even to learn with overboldness should give a female the power of teaching and baptising," says Tertullian. And he quotes Paul to support his assertion: "Let them be silent and at home consult their
own husbands." The interest that Tertullian displayed in the rôle and behavior of women in *On Baptism*, written about 200 A.D., can be seen in greater detail in three other treatises, *de Cultu Feminarum*, *de Exhortatione Castitatis*, and *de Virginibus velandis*, three extremely important treatises for any study of the background of Medieval virginity treatises. The first sentence of *de Cultu Feminarum* shows clearly the extent to which the asceticism of early Christianity had implanted itself within Tertullian:

If there dwelt upon earth a faith as great as is the reward of faith which is expected in the heavens, no one of you at all, best beloved sisters, from the time that she had first "known the Lord," and learned (the truth) concerning her own (that is, woman's) condition, would have desired too gladsome (not to say too ostentatious) a style of dress; so as that rather to go about in humble garb, and rather to affect meanness of appearance, walking about as Eve mourning and repentent, in order that by every garb of penitence she might the more fully expiate that which she derives from Eve,—the ignominy, I mean, of the first sin, and the odium (attaching to her as the cause) of human perdition.

One sees in the very first passage of Tertullian's *de Cultu Feminarum* three of the vital motifs to be used by later writers of the virginity treatise--the promise
of heavenly reward, the necessity for humility, and the doctrine of original sin consequent in the Fall.

The appeal for modesty of dress in the beginning section of this treatise is logical. Because it was Eve who was responsible for woman's having to bear her children in pain and anxiety and to be inclined to a husband who is her master, and because it was Eve who caused woman to be regarded as "the devil's gateway," "unsealer of that (forbidden) tree," the destroyer of man, and the cause of Jesus' death, all Christian women should ask themselves whether they are wise to adorn themselves. "Eve expelled from paradise, (Eve) already dead," would have wanted to be adorned. Therefore, she who desires to live again certainly should avoid coveting those things which the dead Eve would covet. These adornments, according to Tertullian, are "all the baggage of woman in her condemned and dead state, instituted as if to swell the pomp of her funeral." Likewise, because the precious metals and jewels with which women adorn themselves were introduced into the world by fallen angels, there is further reason that such adornments should be rejected.

It is indeed significant that throughout this important early treatise Tertullian is not content to base his appeal entirely upon the promise of a heavenly
reward. He is very much aware of things of the world, for example, as he discusses the ornaments that were introduced by the fallen angels. The instruments of ostentation which he points to are "radiances of jewels wherewith necklaces are variegated, and the circlets of gold wherewith the arms are compressed, and the medicaments of orchil with which wools are coloured, and the black powder itself wherewith the eyelids and eyelashes are made prominent."9

He is equally concerned with credibility as he attempts to convince the Jews that the fallen angels are in fact responsible for bringing woman the arts and substances of ornamentation. His appeal at this point is a practical one:

I am aware that the Scripture of Enoch, which has assigned this order (of action) to angels, is not received by some, because it is not admitted into the Jewish canon either. I suppose they did not think that, having been published before the deluge, it could have safely survived that worldwide calamity, the abolisher of all things. If that is the reason (for rejecting it), let them recall to their memory that Noah, the survivor of the deluge, was the great-grandson of Enoch himself; and he, of course, had heard and remembered, from domestic renown and hereditary tradition, concerning his own great-grandfather's "grace in the sight of God," and
concerning all his preachings; since Enoch had given no other charge to Methuselah than that he should hand on the knowledge of them to his posterity. Noah therefore, no doubt, might have succeeded in the trusteeship of (his) preaching; or, had the case been otherwise, he would not have been silent alike concerning the disposition (of things) made by God, his Preserver, and concerning the particular glory of his own house.10

Not totally convinced that this explanation would be accepted, he offers still another one, considered to be even more convincing to his Jewish audience. Should Noah not have been able to conserve the teachings and words of his great-grandfather, says Tertullian, "he could equally have renewed it, under the Spirit's inspiration, after the destruction, after it had been destroyed by the violence of the deluge, as, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian storming of it, every document of the Jewish literature is generally agreed to have been restored through Ezra."11

Finally Tertullian suggests, by an appeal to the practical mind, that the question of authors and source be put aside and that the things of ornamentation be considered for their own worth. Gold and silver are less functional than iron or brass. "Neither is the field tilled by means of gold, nor the ship fastened
together by strength of silver. No mattock plunges a
golden edge into the ground; no nail drives a silver
point into planks."\(^{12}\) The precious stones "which vie with
gold in Haughtiness" likewise are non-functional. One
is not able to use them to build. "The only edifice which
they know how to rear is this silly pride of women."\(^{13}\)

A great portion of Tertullian's argument in the
first book of *de Cultu Feminarum* is an attempt to show
that the objects of adornment are in fact unnatural. Gold
and silver are "tearfully wrought by penal labour in the
deadly laboratories of accursed mines, and there left its
name of 'earth' in the fire behind it."\(^{14}\) The pearl, he
says, is a product of a conch that "suffers from some
internal pustule, that ought to be regarded rather as its
defect than its glory." He opposes dyeing clothes for the
same reason. And "what legitimate honor can garments derive
from adulteration with illegitimate colours? That which He
Himself has not produced is not pleasing to God, unless
He was unable to order sheep to be born with purple and
sky-blue fleeces!" Therefore, those things which are not
from "God, the author of nature," should be avoided. Other
things are from the devil, "the corrupter of nature."\(^{15}\)

As can be seen, Tertullian has used a number of
varied rhetorical appeals to convince his readers that
women should avoid adornment. He concludes Book I of *de Cultu Feminarum* with an important statement of the purpose of his admonishment. He opposes adornment because it is the result of concupiscence and because it leads to two vices to be shunned by the Christian woman. The first is immoderate living—which causes her often to use to excess even those things which God has put before her. The second is ambition—a grand desire for glory, a desire so great that she is led to value that which is "recommended neither by nature nor by truth, but by a vicious passion of the mind,--(namely,) concupiscence." 

Book II goes even further in establishing rules of dress and conduct for Christian women. The theme of this book is modesty as a means to salvation. However, modesty consists of much more, says Tertullian, than the mere "integrity of the flesh" or the turning away from fornication. It consists also of avoiding too much attention to "arrangement of dress and ornament, the studied graces of form and brilliance" or in "wearing in their gait the self-same appearance as the women of the nations [I.e., heathen], from whom the sense of true modesty is absent." The modest woman, likewise, will avoid dressing in a way that will make her the object of carnal appetite.

Although there is a long line of commentators whose
thought lay behind the concept of medieval formalizing of habits of nuns and monks, Tertullian's advice to Christian women is the earliest of such commentary to be found in Latin in the West. He suggests that they bear in mind their responsibility toward their neighbors as well as the responsibility toward themselves. They should not be "the cause of perdition to some other." They should not be "the sword which destroys him." Therefore, they should reject "the pageantry of fictitious and elaborate beauty," and they should see that "even the natural grace must be obliterated by concealment and negligence, as equally dangerous to the glances of (the beholder's) eyes."¹⁸

Once again the argument favoring such conduct of dress is supported by a blend of scriptural authority and secular example. Comeliness is to be feared, notes Tertullian, for "even the father of the faith, Abraham, greatly feared in regard of his own wife's grace; and Isaac, by falsely representing Rebecca as his sister, purchased safety by insult!"¹⁹ And "when a robbery has been committed on some man's estate, the (actual) crime indeed will not be laid to the owner's charge, while yet the domain is branded with ignominy, (and) the owner himself aspersed with the infamy."²⁰

Although he deplores dyeing the hair on scriptural grounds (did not the Lord ask, "Which of you can make a
white hair black, or out of a black a white"?), nevertheless he appeals also to his audience's sense of patriotism and physical well being. "I see some (women)," he says, "turn (the colour of) their hair with saffron. They are ashamed even of their own nation, (ashamed) that their procreation did not assign them to Germany and to Gaul: thus, as it is, they transfer their hair (thither)!" And showing himself a good, if somewhat cynical, judge of human tendencies, he suggests further that "the force of the cosmetics burns ruin into the hair; and the constant application of even any undrugged moisture lays up a store of harm for the head; while the sun's warmth, too, so desirable for imparting to the hair at once growth and dryness, is hurtful." In his plea for modesty, Tertullian offers some important specific guidelines. He would not suggest that women become wild in their appearance or that they become slovenly; rather they should seek what he calls "the limit and norm and just measure of cultivation of the person." Therefore, they should not imitate those "who rub their skin with medicaments, stain their cheeks with rouge, make their eyes prominent with antimony." Surely, many must have felt the sting of his attack on excessive dressing of the hair:
Of the scriptural verses used by Tertullian, however, it should be noted particularly that his appeal for modesty and humility and indeed for rejection of the world is supported by I Corinthians VII and Matthew XXIX.12. Directing his attention to those women who have riches or nobility that would cause them to feel compelled to appear in public gorgeously arrayed, he says that he does not oppose their using what is their own. However, he reminds them to use their riches "in accordance with the apostle, who warns us 'to use this world as if we abuse it not; for the fashion of this world is passing away.'" He
continues, "And, 'they who buy are so to act if they possessed not.'" Certainly, Tertullian suggests, the apostle Paul, who "shows plainly that even wives themselves are so to be had as if they be not had," would indeed oppose ornamentation and worldly glorification. And quoting a verse that appears in nearly every treatise dealing with the subject of virginity down to the time of Hali Meidenhad, he observes that there are those who "seal themselves up to eunuchhood for the sake of the kingdom of God, spontaneously relinquishing a pleasure so honorable, and (as we know) permitted." In an attempt to convince his readers that God has put the objects of destruction at man's disposal for the purpose of testing him, he reminds of Saint Paul's warning that "all things are lawful, but not all are expedient."  

Yet another reason given for moderation or restraint in the dress of Christian women is that their duties would give them no cause to appear in public in fine array. Instead, they should be easily distinguishable by the simplicity of their dress. The question that is next put to his readers is important, for it sounds a flesh versus spirit theme that likewise will be used often in later treatises on virginity. "Will you fear to appear poorer, from the time that you have been made more wealthy; and
fouler, from the time when you have been made more clean?"26

There is no doubt that Tertullian was addressing himself to Christian women in general; the closing words of de Cultu Feminarum, however, might well have been addressed to consecrated virgins. It is advice that will be echoed often in later virginity treatises.

Do you go forth (to meet them) already arrayed in the cosmetics and ornaments of prophets and apostles; drawing your whiteness from simplicity, your ruddy hue from modesty; painting your eyes with bashfulness, and your mouth with silence; implanting in your ears the words of God; fitting on your necks the yoke of Christ. Submit your head to your husbands, and you will be enough adorned. Busy your hands with spinning; keep your feet at home; and you will "please" better than (by arraying yourselves) in gold. Clothe yourselves with the silk of uprightness, the fine lines of holiness, the purple of modesty. Thus painted, you will have God as your Lover!27

The concern for modesty which Tertullian exhibits in de Cultu Feminarum caused him to include in his comments about the way that hair should be worn the statement, "God bids you 'be veiled.'" This concern for veiling was obviously great, for to that subject he devoted an entire treatise, de Virginibus velandis. Although it echoes many of the points about the conduct of Christian women made in de Cultu Feminarum, it, likewise, provides much
that is new and important in the evolution of the virginity treatise that we see in the thirteenth century, much, in fact, that is at the core of those treatises.

Virgins should be veiled to prevent an upsurge of lust. "For the custom which belies virgins while it exhibits them, would never have been approved by any except by some men who must have been similar in character to the virgins themselves. Such eyes will wish that a virgin be seen as has the virgin who shall wish to be seen. The same kinds of eyes reciprocally crave after each other. Seeing and being seen belong to the self-same lust."^®

Nevertheless, Tertullian apparently recognized that there would be opposition to veiling virgins on grounds that veiling violated custom. There were women, he observed, who would argue that they would be "scandalized" if "others walk otherwise." "Chaste virgins," however, should not be "dragged into church, blushing at being recognized in public, quaking at being unveiled, as if they had been invited as it were to rape" for the benefit of the "marketable creatures" who might cry that they were being "scandalized."^®

Others, he adds, might oppose the veiling of virgins on scriptural grounds, arguing that the apostle Paul made no mention of virgins in his words about veiling but that
he names only "women." Paul, Tertullian argues, made no distinction because none was necessary here. Rather he considered virgins a part of woman the universal. He recalls Paul's distinction. "'The unmarried,' that is the virgin, 'is anxious about those (things) which are the Lord's, that is she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but the married,' that is, the not-virgin, 'is anxious about how she may please her husband.'"^30 According to Tertullian, the Corinthians, whom Paul taught, had no difficulty understanding his meaning. In fact, he continues, they veil their virgins.

Tertullian's picture of contemporary life is once again vivid as he expresses his concern for those young girls who cast aside the dress of virginity as soon as they become of age. Laying aside their former selves, he says, they "dye their hair; and fasten their hair with more wanton pin; professing manifest womanhood with their hair parted from the front. The next thing is, they consult the looking glass to aid their beauty, and thin down their over-exacting face with washing, perhaps withal vamp it up with cosmetics, toss their mantle about them with an air, fit tightly the multiform shoe, carry down more ample appliances to the baths."^31

It is his fear of this loss of modesty that causes
him to stress strongly the need for veiling virgins. His appeal is again to human nature as he directs his remarks to the unwilling virgin, the worldly young girl, and he presents a picture so effectively realistic that every young girl could surely identify with it. When the non-concealed young girl becomes concerned with the art of pleasing men, her powers of resistance escape her.

Let her strive as much as you please with an honest mind; she must necessarily be imperilled by the public exhibition of herself, while she is penetrated by the gaze of untrustworthy and multitudinous eyes, while she is tickled by pointing fingers, while she is too well loved, while she feels a warmth creep over her amid assiduous embraces and kisses. Thus the forehead hardens; thus the sense of shame wears away; thus it relaxes, thus is learned the desire of pleasing in another way.32

And in a more spiritually abstract and more personal appeal, Tertullian again alludes to Paul. The virgin is reminded that she is wedded to Christ, that she has surrendered her flesh to him. Therefore, she should walk in accordance with the will of her Espoused. "Christ is He who bids the espoused and wives of others veil themselves; (and) of course, much more His own."33

Only an appeal to married women "not to outgrow so
far the discipline of the veil" remains in Tertullian's *de Virginibus velandis*. Nevertheless, in light of the evolution of central themes in the virginity treatise, one should not overlook this section because in Tertullian's opening comment to the married women is a suggestion of grades of chastity. They are "women of the second (degree of) modesty, who have fallen into wedlock." Thus, again we see a preference for the unmarried state and the tremendous influence of Saint Paul.

He is considerably less tolerant in *de Exhortatione castitatis*, however; there one can see that Tertullian in his leaning to Montanism is much more an opponent of marriage than he had been previously. In *Ad uxorum* he had praised marriage, and although he objected to his wife's remarrying, he did not forbid it. Rather, he merely requested that she marry a Christian if she did decide to marry. In *de Exhortatione castitatis*, in which he addresses himself to a friend whose wife has died, he is less sympathetic to marriage.

Although he is considering the practice of second marriages, Tertullian launches his argument on the idea of marriage itself, and he approaches this problem, as he has before and as others will in the future, by supporting his views on marriage with the words of Saint Paul. Tertullian
argues that Paul's indulgences to marriage come from his own judgment and not from divine precept. He suggests that Paul's official declaration to the wedded in I Corinthians vii.10, in which he says, "But to the wedded I make official declaration—not indeed I, but the Lord," indicates a clear shift in point of view from the Apostle's own to the Lord's. Therefore, continues Tertullian, the words which precede this remark are clearly marked as the apostle Paul's opinion and not necessarily the Lord's precept.

From this point his argument follows what is to become a familiar pattern by those who later deal with the words of Paul as they denounce marriage. Tertullian asserts that the "better" in "better to marry than to burn" should not be thought to mean "good." "Good," says Tertullian, "is worthy of the name if it continue to keep that name without comparison...not with evil, but even with some second good; so that even if it is compared to some other good, and is by some other cast into the shade, it does nevertheless remain in possession of the name 'good.' If, however, it is the nature of an evil which is the means which compels the predicating 'good,' it is not so much 'good' as a species of inferior evil which by being obscured by a superior evil is driven to the name of good." And obvious-
ly, according to Tertullian, marriage (at least at this point of his life) was not to be considered a good. Paul's famous words, he says, should be regarded in the same way as "better it is to lack one eye than two." This is one of the strongest attacks that he has written against marriage.

To advise his friend, however, that he should not remarry, Tertullian refers to Genesis and the example offered there in support of man's having only one wife. Seeing that Adam needed a "peer," God borrowed one of Adam's ribs and made him one woman, says Tertullian. And He made him only one woman even though He had the power and the substance to have made more had He so desired. Thus, according to Tertullian, the precedent for one marriage was established.

Tertullian considers still another question that is to be mentioned in many of the later treatises, the significance of the command found in Genesis, "Grow and multiply." His interpretation of this verse is quite similar to that found in the treatises of other writers. And reflecting more clearly the Montanist view, he argues that God indeed did send forth a sowing of the race and that He was indulgent until the world was replenished. Now, however, that goal has been accomplished, and God has recalled the indul-
Tertullian enforces his attack against second marriages even more by showing repeatedly how wrong first marriages are; therefore, second marriages would necessarily be worse. Woman, he asserts, is attracted to man initially because man has "seen her with a view to concupiscence." This is the view that leads to marriage. The means through which woman becomes a married woman is no other than the same means through which she becomes an adulteress. Even first marriages, he says, "consist of that which is the essence of fornication. Accordingly, the best thing for a man is not to touch a woman; and accordingly, the virgin's is the principal sanctity, because it is free from fornication." Consequently, those who have married even once have "fallen back...from that highest grade of immaculate virginity." 34

Yet another argument offered by Tertullian that is continued by many later writers is that marriage interferes with the spirit of sanctity. Therefore, the widowhood which has been thrust upon his friend is essentially an advantage, for he has ceased, thereby, being a debtor. He is capable now of savouring spirituality and of being nearer to heaven while he is making prayer. If the spiritual faculties are dulled by a first marriage, surely a second
marriage dulls those faculties even more.

As Tertullian nears the end of his exhortation to chastity, his appeal is a mild version of the kind that the Hali Meidenhad author will later use, an appeal not to the spirit but to the knowledge of the tribulations of the flesh (It is, in fact, the kind of appeal that Augustine de-emphasizes). "Let the well-known burdensomeness of children—especially in our case—suffice to counsel widowhood: (children) whom men are compelled by laws to undertake (the charge of); because no wise man would ever willingly have desired sons!" The actual birth of children is another reason to be considered. "I think to us it is no more lawful to hurt (a child) in the process of birth, than one (already) born," he continues. And concerning pregnancy, he says, "But perhaps at that time of your wife's pregnancy you will have the hardihood to beg from God a remedy for so grave a solici­ tude, which when it lay in your own power, you refused." And even though one might think that he is safe because he is marrying an older woman—should he choose to marry, he cannot be sure. "In fine," says Tertullian, "we know a case among our brethren, in which one of them took a barren woman in second marriage for his daughter's sake, and became as well for the second time a father as for the
second time a husband."  

Following the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian's *De Habitu feminarum* is probably the most important contribution to the evolution of the virginity treatise. Written about 249, this work contains many of the guidelines that are found throughout the writings of Tertullian and presents them with more control, more restraint, and more unity. Anyone who has read Cyprian after having read Tertullian will recognize immediately that Cyprian's debt to Tertullian is indeed great. In fact, Saint Jerome speaks of this debt in his *Lives of Illustrious Men*. "I myself," says Jerome, "have seen a certain Paul, an old man of Concordia, a town of Italy, who, while he himself was a very young man, had been secretary to the blessed Cyprian who was already advanced in age. He said that he himself had seen how Cyprian was accustomed never to pass a day without reading Tertullian, and that he frequently said to him, 'Give me the master,' meaning by this Tertullian."  

Although Cyprian has focused upon rules of conduct and dress put forth by Tertullian in *De Virginibus velandis*, *De Exhortatione castitatis*, and *De Cultu Feminarum*, his debt is greatest, as the title of his own work on virginity would suggest, to the last of these treatises. A compari-
son of passages from de Cultu Feminarum with passages from Cyprian's de Habitu virginum will reveal not only the influence of Tertullian but also the extent to which Cyprian is more restrained. Both men advise against wearing bright, colorful clothes and against adornment with gold and jewelry. Tertullian says sarcastically:

It was God, no doubt, who showed the way to dye wools with the juices of herbs and the humours of conchs! It had escaped Him, when He was bidding the universe to come into being, to issue a command for (the production of) purple and scarlet sheep! It was God, too, who devised by careful thought the manufactures of those very garments which, light and thin (in themselves), were to be heavy in price alone; God who produced such grand implements of gold for confining or parting the hair; God who introduced (the fashion of) finely-cut wounds for the ears, and set so high a value upon the tormenting of His own work and the tortures of innocent infancy, learning to suffer with its earliest breath, in order that from those scars of the body--born for the steel! should hang I know not what (precious) grains, which, as we may plainly see, the Parthians insert, in place of studs upon their very shoes.39

Cyprian uses this passage from Tertullian to introduce Chapter XIV of de Habitu virginum; the tone, however, is less caustic.
For God has not made sheep scarlet or purple, nor has He taught how to tint and color with the juices of herbs and with shell fish, nor has He made necklaces of precious stones set in gold, or of pearls arranged in chains with numerous joinings, wherewith to hide the neck which He has made so that what God has created in man may be covered, and what the devil has invented may be exposed to view. Has God wished that wounds be inflicted on the ears, by which childhood still innocent and without knowledge of the evil of the world may be tortured, so that later from the incisions and holes in the ears precious stones may hang—heavy, although not by their own weight but by their high prices?  

The change in tone is again apparent in another passage in which both writers attempt to show that excessive adornment shound be shunned. Tertullian is less inclined than is Cyprian to let the scripture carry the major weight of the argument. A modest woman, Tertullian contends, should dress modestly.  

And yet, even the scriptures suggest (to us the reflection), that meretricious attractiveness of form are invariably conjoined with and appropriate to bodily prostitution. That powerful state which presides over the seven mountains and very many waters, has merited from the Lord the appellation of a prostitute. But what kind of garb is the instrumental mean of her comparison with that appellation? She sits, to be sure "in purple, and scarlet, and gold, and precious stone."
How accursed are the things without (the aid of) which an accursed prostitute could not have been described! It was the fact that Thamar "had painted out and adorned herself" that led Judah to regard her as a harlot,--he judged (her to be one) and addressed and bargained with (her as such). Whence we gather an additional confirmation of the lesson, that provision must be made in every way against all immodest associations and suspicions.41

Using this passage from Tertullian as the source for Chapter XII of his de Habitu virginum, Cyprian says:

Showy adornments and clothing and the allurements of beauty are not becoming in any except prostitutes and shameless women, and of none, almost, is the dress most costly than those whose modesty is cheap. Thus in holy Scripture, by which the Lord has wished us to be instructed and admonished, a harlot city is described, beautifully attired and adorned, and with her adornments, and rather because of those very adornments, destined to perish. "And there came," it says, "one of the seven angels having vials, and addressed me saying: Come, I will show thee the condemnation of the great harlot, who sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication. And he led me away in spirit, and I saw a woman sitting upon a beast; and the woman was clothed in a cloak of purple and scarlet, and was adorned with gold, and precious stones, and pears, having a golden cup in her hand full of malediction, filthiness, and fornication of the whole earth." Let chaste and modest virgins shun the attire of the unchaste, the clothing
of the immodest, the insignia of brothels, the adornments of harlots.42

A reading of the entire treatise will indicate that Cyprian was concerned not only with the dress of virgins, but also with convincing those who were already consecrated virgins of the value of their chosen way. A synopsis of de Habitu virginum should be valuable to illustrate this point. Cyprian begins his treatise by suggesting that discipline is the bond of hope and the guide to the way of salvation. Therefore, discipline should be pursued in order that the virgin be able to stand unshaken in the storms of the world. Discipline will enable her to keep her body pure and spotless so that Christ may be born in it. Next follows an exaltation of virgins. "They are the flower of the tree that is the Church, the beauty and adornment of spiritual grace, the image of God reflecting the holiness of the Lord, the more illustrious part of Christ's flock."

Because continence follows Christ, and because virginity is destined for the kingdom of God, the virgin should have nothing to do with worldly dress. A virgin should not think on worldly things, nor should she dress in a worldly fashion. She should look like a virgin; therefore, she should not go about in public adorned or
with her hair dressed as if she were looking for a hus-
band.

A virgin should avoid glorifying in the appearance of
her flesh. She should remember that "all flesh is grass." If
she should glory in the flesh, however, she should
glory when she is suffering torture, enduring fire, the
cross, the sword, or the attacks of beasts that she may be
crowned. For "these are the precious jewels of the flesh;
these are the better ornaments of the body." 43

The virgin should not be concerned about displaying
her possessions, and the argument that she should use the
blessings that are hers is invalid. Rather she should
seek after eternal or divine things, for all that is in
the world is concupiscence. The virgin should try to
emulate Christ. She should not use her wealth immoderately.
If Saint Paul advises married women to keep within the
bounds of scrupulous observance, certainly the obligation
of the virgin is even greater. Her wealth should not
courage her to adorn herself so that she draws the sighs
of young men nor to foster concupiscence. When she does
so, she ruins others, and she, having become the object
of sensual love, should not be any longer numbered among
the virgins of Christ. She should not brag pridefully
about her wealth; rather she is advised to "let the poor
feel that you are rich; let the needy feel that you are wealthy." God did not intend that the wealth that he has given be enjoyed without thoughts of salvation.

Showy adornments are not characteristic of virgins but of prostitutes. A virgin should shun the attire of the unchaste, the clothing of the immodest, the insignia of brothels, the adornment of harlots. Especially, she should not attempt to improve upon what God has made by decorating her body. Therefore, the clothing should not be dyed, the neck should not be covered up with necklaces or with pearls, and the ears should not be pierced. Neither should she paint the eyes or tinge the cheeks. These arts were brought to woman by the fallen angels. This advice, says Cyprian, should be heeded by married women also. She who changes herself with cosmetics should fear that the Lord might not recognize her on the judgment day.

The virgin should also avoid going to places that are hostile to her continence. She should avoid weddings where she is likely to be subjected to wanton discourse and drunken feasts, where the flame of passion is kindled, where the bride is incited to tolerate, and where the bridegroom is emboldened with lust. The virgin must remain a virgin by her eyes, ears, and tongue as well as
by her body and mind if she is to retain her purity. She also should stay away from the common baths where she might prostitute to eyes devoted to lust, for the virgin's modesty is decreased by her nakedness at public baths. The virgin should avoid all that is conducive to her downfall because her position in the order of perfection is an important one. She is second only to the martyrs. The martyr is the hundred-fold fruit; she is the sixty-fold.

If the virgin can persevere, she will have freedom from the pains of childbirth and from the dominance of a husband. She will be able to pass through this world without the pollution of the world. God, however, says Cyprian, does not order women to be virgins; he merely prefers it. When Christ says that in the Father's house there are many mansions, He points to the homes of better habitation which are to be the homes of the virgins. By observing this advice, the virgin will be able to instruct those younger than she. Also she will be able to serve as an example for women her own age and to share experiences with other virgins.

Although Cyprian was influenced by Tertullian, he, too, was extremely influential. That Cyprian's treatise on the dress of virgins influenced writers of later virginity treatises is well known. Yet, if one is to see
the significance of this work as a model for later writings, he must note those elements in the treatise that are found most frequently in later treatises.

Of those seminal verses that Cyprian uses, the following are particularly important. Cyprian quotes Christ in order to illustrate the significance of the virgin's choice to dedicate herself to the Lord and of the promise of reward for that dedication; "All men take not this word but those to whom it is given; for there are eunuchs who were born so from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves for the kingdom of heaven." And Cyprian quotes Saint Paul in order to illustrate the advantage of remaining a virgin; "The unmarried man thinketh on the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. So the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh of the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit."

Cyprian argues with those who defend a rich woman's right to adorn herself by again quoting Paul. He says, "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful, but all things do not edify." But perhaps the most significant use of scripture found in Cyprian's de Habitu virginum is his reference to the parable of the sower and the seed. His placing martyrs
in first position is an interesting result of the influence of the time of persecution in which Cyprian lived. Telling the virgins of their greatness, he says, "The first fruit, that of a hundred-fold, belong to martyrs; the second, sixty-fold is yours."46

The subject of persecution and self effacement led Cyprian to another major point in his discussion. One should observe that throughout de Habitu virginum an important distinction is made between those things that are of fleshly value and those things that are of spiritual value. This distinction is likewise central to many later appeals to virgins. The virgin, says Cyprian, should know first of all "that she is wealthy who is wealthy in Christ; that those things are blessings which are spiritual, divine, heavenly, which lead us to God, which remain with us in everlasting possession with God."47

Scorning riches and those virgins who boast of their wealth, he reminds us that "Peter also, to whom the Lord commends his sheep to be fed and guarded, upon whom He established and founded His Church, says that gold, in truth, and silver he has not, but that he is wealthy in His faith and power, wherewith he possessed in abundance spiritual blessing unto the reward of glory."48

Cyprian is especially effective with this device
when he speaks about adornment. He explains the meaning of Isaiah's words to the daughters of Sion. Concludes Cyprian, "He declares that they have been defiled; by this they have departed from the true adornment that merited disgrace and shame. Having put on the silk and purple, they cannot put on Christ; adorned with gold and pearls and necklaces, they have lost the adornments of the heart and soul."50

Finally, in his warning against public baths, Cyprian attacks those virgins who would say, "As for me, my only concern is to refresh and bathe my poor little body." This excuse, according to Cyprian, does not justify bathing in public, nor does it excuse the sin of wantonness. "Such a bath sullies; it does not purify and it does not cleanse the limbs, but stains them."51

There are yet two other standard appeals to be noted in Cyprian's treatise—the appeal on the basis of reward and the appeal on the basis of freedom for the virgin. One should note that the appeal to reward throughout Cyprian's treatise is much more restrained than one might expect. One finds very little description or elaboration of heaven. There is no mention of gates of pearl or streets lined with gold. Cyprian speaks, for example, of the virgin whose continence
follows Christ, and whose virginity is "destined for the kingdom of God." For those who keep pace with Christ, he notes merely that "a reward is given." Peter possessed in abundance spiritual blessing "unto the reward of glory." A virgin should not be so heavily made up and adorned that Christ might not recognize her when he comes to offer "His rewards and promises." Virgins, destined for "wonderful rewards," can expect great punishment for lost virginity. But if the virgin considers the "promised reward," she will not regret that which she must endure. "Immortality is given to the one who perseveres; everlasting life is offered; the Lord promises His kingdom."

Finally to those who do persevere, Cyprian says, "great recompense is reserved for you, a glorious prize for virtue, a most excellent reward for purity." Later virginity treatises will discuss rewards with much greater elaboration.

It is obvious, however, that Cyprian was aware even during the very early days of Christianity that the appeal of a heavenly reward alone might not be sufficient; therefore, he chose to appeal also to the human desire for "freedom." The appeal is not extensive; nevertheless it should be noted, for it is the strongest attack on marriage found in the treatise, and it is an important early use of
an appeal that will be much more thoroughly developed later. Cyprian has placed this appeal very near the end of his treatise, thereby gaining maximum effect. Again he speaks of a "reward for purity" as he speaks of freedom.

Do you wish to know from what misery the virtue of continence is free, what advantage it possesses? "I will multiply," said God to the woman, "thy sorrows and thy groans, and in sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall have dominion over thee." You are free from this sentence; you do not fear the sorrows of women and their groans; you have no fear about the birth of children, nor is your husband your master, but your Master and Head is Christ, in the likeness of and in place of the man; your lot and condition are in common. This is the voice of the Lord that says: "The children of this world beget and are begotten; but they who shall be accounted worthy of that world, and of the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither will they die any more, for they are equal to the angels of God since they are the children of the resurrection."

The examination of Cyprian's *de Habitum virginum* has shown a pattern beginning to emerge. Drawing upon Tertullian, Cyprian has provided a model upon which both Jerome and Augustine will base much of their own writings
about virginity. Cyprian has provided the form. Here are the praise of discipline, the exaltation of virgins, by one who emphasizes his humility, the condemnation of worldly pleasures and worldly adornments, the rebuttal to arguments given in support of things of the world, the code of conduct for virgins, and the promise of both spiritual reward and freedom from the trials of marriage and childbirth.

Although the influence of Tertullian and Cyprian upon the evolution of the virginity treatise was undoubtedly great, it has been suggested that one of the most effective and most persuasive champions of virginity among the early Fathers, Saint Ambrose, knew the writings of neither. Ambrose's *De Virginibus*, written about 377, is addressed to his sister Marcellina, who previously had taken the veil. In light of the development of the virginity treatise, this tract is of interest primarily because of its generally mild tone and because it differs rather significantly in style from those previously discussed.

The first of the three books of *De Virginibus* begins much like other virginity treatises; it has the usual professions of the writer's humility as he directs his remarks to so noble an audience as the virgins. "So
distrusting indeed my own ability," says Ambrose, "but encouraged by the instances of divine mercy, I venture to compose and address, for when God willed even the ass spoke. And I will open my mouth long dumb, that the angel may assist me also, engaged in the burdens of this world, for He can do away with the hindrances of unskillfulness, Who in the ass did away those of nature."62

One likewise observes the characteristic exaltation of the virgin. "Virginity has brought from heaven that which it may imitate on earth," says Ambrose. The virgin has "sought her manner of life from heaven," and she "has found for herself a Spouse in heaven. She, passing beyond the clouds, air, angels, and stars, has found the word of God in the very bosom of the Father, and has drawn Him into herself with her whole heart."63 Thus, virginity is a state that few would be likely to give up, concludes Ambrose. Furthermore, he reminds, virgins are to be compared to angels in heaven; therefore, they are following a mode of life that was begun in heaven.

Despite the rather traditional humility and praise, however, one notes a considerable difference in the style of Ambrose. Most obvious is his greater use of abstract and figurative language. Ambrose's reference to the holy Church as a virgin, for example, is unlike any
found in the treatises previously considered.

So the holy Church, ignorant of wedlock, but fertile in bearing, is in chastity a virgin, yet a mother in offspring. She, a virgin, bears us her children, not by a human father, but by the Spirit. She bears us not with pain, but with the rejoicings of angels. She, a virgin, feeds us not with the milk of the body, but with that of the Apostle, wherewith he fed the tender age of the people who were still children. For what bride has more children than holy Church, who is a virgin in her sacraments and a mother to her people, whose fertility even holy Scripture attests, saying, "For many more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath a husband"? She has not an husband, but she has a Bridegroom, inasmuch as she, whether as the Church amongst nations, or as the soul in individuals, without any loss of modesty, she weds the Word of God as her eternal Spouse, free from all injury, full of reason.

And while comparing virgins to bees, he notes that the bee, which feeds on dew, and which "knows no marriage couch," is also laborious, modest, and continent. "The virgin's dew," says Ambrose, "is the divine word, for the words of God descend like the dew. The virgin's modesty is unstained nature. The virgin's produce is the fruit of the lips, without bitterness, abounding in sweetness. They work in common, and their fruit is in common."
In yet another passage, Ambrose speaks of the flower of virginity in a way reminiscent of Guillaume de Lorris' Roman de la Rose. He says of this flower:

It loves to grow in gardens, in which Susanna, while walking, found it, and was ready to die rather than it should be violated. But what is meant by the gardens He himself points out saying: "A garden enclosed is My sister, my spouse, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed", because in gardens of this kind the water of the pure fountain shines, reflecting the features of the image of God, lest its streams mingle with mud from the wallowing places of spiritual wild beast should be polluted. For this reason, too, that modesty of virgins fenced in by the wall of the Spirit is enclosed lest it should lie open to be plundered. And so as a garden inaccessible from without smells of the violet, is scented with the olive, and is resplendent with the rose, that religion may increase in the vine, peace in the olive, and the modesty of consecrated virginity in the rose.

Having praised the virgin in such figurative terms, Ambrose moves then to another view of marriage. Ambrose is much milder and much more receptive toward marriage than is Tertullian, Jerome, or even Augustine. Ambrose says in Chapter vii of Book I of de Virginibus that he is not discouraging marriage but enlarging upon the advantages of virginity. And he interprets rather
literally the often quoted verse from Saint Paul, "He who giveth his virgin in marriage doeth well, and he who giveth her not doeth better." Thus, says Ambrose, "the one sins not if she marries, the other, if she marries not it is for eternity." In contrast to Tertullian, Ambrose says in comparing marriage and virginity, "I am comparing good things with good things, that it may be clear which is the more excellent." It is worth noting here that the position of Ambrose (like that of Gregory) became the orthodox position of the Catholic Church.

Like other writers of virginity treatises, Ambrose, too, refers to the difficulties of bearing and rearing children and to the troubles of married life in an attempt to convince young women of the advantages of the virgin life. Nevertheless, he is noticeably restrained as he discusses these subjects. Comparing the advantages of marriage with its disadvantages, he suggests that trouble far outweighs gain; however, he does not elaborate extensively. "Why speak of the troubles of nursing, training, and marrying," he says. "Consider, my sister, how hard it must be to bear what one must not speak of," he continues. Throughout this entire section in which Ambrose could have been much more specific and much more detailed,
we find him continuing his argument with restraint. Concerning the wife's duties to the husband, he (in a pattern characteristic of a great diplomat and lawyer) seems especially mild when his writing is compared to that of Tertullian, Jerome, and later the Hali Meidenhad author. Following another question, "Why should I further speak of the painful ministrations and services due to their husbands from wives, to whom before slaves God gave the command to serve," is a mild discussion of the need for wives to paint and to adorn themselves in order to please their husbands.71

When Ambrose finishes his glorification of virginity and his discussion of the advantages of the virgin state over marriage, he then provides rules of conduct for those who have chosen virginity. In one respect Ambrose is like Cyprian. Although he does not place martyrdom above virginity, he definitely respects it. He says, for example, in his praise of virgins, that "virginity is not praiseworthy because it is found in martyrs, but because itself makes martyrs."72 In fact, he begins his treatise on the birthday of a virgin martyr, Saint Agnes.

The extent to which Ambrose is concerned with instructing by examples rather than by precepts provides
yet another interesting distinction for his treatise. He writes an account of the life of Mary in order to illustrate the importance of the virgin's ardour for learning, chastity, humility, modesty, concern for the lowly and needy, and her ability to fast, and he describes her meeting with virgins in heaven in order to suggest the reward which awaits the faithful. Although Ambrose seldom refers to the reward, the effectiveness of such a descriptive passage as the following is evident:

What a procession shall that be, what joy of applauding angels when she is found worthy of dwelling in Heaven who lived on earth a heavenly life! Then too Mary, taking her timbrel, shall stir up the choirs of virgins, singing to the Lord because they have passed through the sea of this world without suffering from the waves of this world. Then each shall rejoice, saying: "I will go to the altar of God, to God Who maketh youth glad"; and "I will offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay my vows unto the Most High."73

The remaining portion of Book II contains more examples upon which virgins might model their conduct. As Holy Mary was an example of the discipline to be followed, Thecla and a virgin at Antioch serve as models from whom the virgins can learn how to die. According to Saint Ambrose, Thecla had been condemned to die
because of her refusal to have sexual intercourse with her husband, and he describes the scene in which she willingly presented herself to the lion that refused to take her life. "The beast was to be seen lying on the ground, licking her feet, showing without a sound that it could not injure the sacred body of the virgin. So the beast reverenced his prey, and forgetful of his own nature put on that nature which men had lost."74

The virgin at Antioch knew how to die also. Refusing to renounce her religion or to surrender her chastity, she was sentenced to a house of prostitution. Ambrose tells of a great rush of men standing outside the house contending over who will be first to attack the virgin. The virgin, whose faith was strong, was spared, however, by the sudden appearance of a soldier who changed clothes with her and enabled her to escape. Yet, says Ambrose, as he continues to insist that virginity is praiseworthy because it makes martyrs, "Not only a virgin but a martyr came forth from the house of ill-fame," when the account of her would-be rescue was made known to her attackers. Furthermore, it is reported, Ambrose adds, that the virgin ran straight to the place of punishment where she and the captured soldier contended for the privilege of dying and where
both gained the victory of holy martyrdom. 75

As Ambrose adds one more example of valor in the face of death, he continues the early Fathers' attempts to emphasize the superiority of Christianity over paganism. He recounts the story of two Pythagorean friends, philosophers Damon and Pythias, who offered a sacrifice much like that of the virgin and the soldier of Antioch. Having been condemned to death by a tyrant, one of the philosophers (Ambrose does not specify which one) asked that he be given time to set his affairs in order. The tyrant granted this request on the condition that a bondsman be found to die in the place of the condemned man should he not return at the prescribed time. The other philosopher, bound by his friendship, offered himself as the bondsman, and as he was being led to execution, the friend for whom he was prepared to die returned and offered himself. The tyrant was moved sufficiently by such a strong display of friendship that he spared their lives and sought to be their friend.

Though this incident, says Ambrose, is praiseworthy, it is inferior to the one involving the Christian and virgin martyrs, and he explains his assertion.

For those two were men, with us one was a virgin, who had first to
be superior to her sex; those were friends, these were unknown to each other; those offered themselves to one tyrant, these to many tyrants; and these more cruel, for in the former case the tyrant spared them, these slew them; with the former one was bound by necessity, with these the will of each was free. In this, too, the latter were the wiser, that with those the end of their zeal was the pleasure of friendship, with these the crown of martyrdom, for they strove for men, these for God.™

Book III of de Virginibus, however, does provide precepts for the conduct of the virgin's life, precepts set forth by Liberius, the Bishop of Rome (352-366), who gave the veil to Marcellina. Recalling the Christmas day on which Marcellina was veiled, Ambrose recounts Liberius' advice. Liberius had suggested that wine should be used only sparingly. Even though faith is strong, "youth is not trusted," he observed. Furthermore, wine would increase the body's weakness for pleasurable excitement. Fasting also was essential; "one should sparingly eat all kinds of food which cause lead to the limbs, for flesh drags down even eagles as they fly."™

Moreover, the virgin is advised also to avoid excessive visiting, "for modesty is worn away by intercourse, and boldness breaks forth, laughter creeps in, and bashfulness is lessened, whilst politeness is studied."™
Having summarized the major points of Liberius, Ambrose next directs his comments specifically to Marcellina, and he tells her that she has not only obeyed the rules of conduct that have been set up for her but that she has exceeded them with her zeal. She has fasted longer than the single days that were prescribed; in fact, Marcellina becomes yet another model for conduct of virgins. She is described as having passed untold days without food. "And if ever requested to partake of some," says Ambrose, "and to lay aside your book a little while, you at once answer: 'Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every work of God.' Your very meals consisted but of what food came to hand, so that fasting is to be preferred to eating what was repugnant; your drink is from the spring, your weeping and prayer combine, your sleep is on your book."80

Ambrose's strongest appeal accompanies his last point, in which he, like Tertullian and Cyprian before him, cautions virgins against attending "unrestrained feasts, or nuptial concerts" and other places where excessive dancing accompanies the festivities. As he reminds that it was a dancer who caused the beheading of John the Baptist, his elaboration upon the few verses in Mark that describe the event is sufficient to evoke contempt not only for dancers but also for the lavishness of the feast. The
following passages, directed to parents of young daughters, are Ambrose's most powerful.

Who would not think when he saw some one running from the banquet to the prison, that orders had been given to set the prophet free? Who, I say, having heard that it was Herod's birthday, and of the state banquet, and the choice given to the damsel of choosing whatever she wished, would not think that the man was sent to set John free? What has cruelty in comparison with delicacies? What have death and pleasure in common? The prophet is hurried to suffer at festal time by a festal order, by which he would even wish to be set free; he is slain by the sword, and his head is brought on a platter. This dish was well suited to their cruelty, in order that their insatiate savageness might be feasted.

Look, most savage king, at the sights worthy of thy feast. Stretch forth thy right hand, that nothing be wanting to thy cruelty, that streams of holy blood may pour down between thy fingers. And since the hunger for such unheard-of cruelty could not be satisfied by banquets, nor the thirst by goblets, drink the blood pouring from the still flowing veins of the cut-off head. Behold those eyes, even in death, the witnesses of thy crime, turning away from the sight of the delicacies. The eyes are closing, not so much owing to death, as to the horror of luxury. That bloodless golden mouth, whose sentence thou couldst not endure, is silent, and yet thou fearest. Yet the tongue, which even after death is wont to observe its duty as when living, condemned, though with trembling motion, the incest. This head is born
to Herodias: she rejoices, she exults as though she had escaped from the crime, because she has slain her judge.81

The advice concerning the conduct of virgins ends with this passage. There remains but one more chapter in which Ambrose attempts to answer Marcellina's question regarding suicide by virgins in order to prevent their falling into the hands of persecutors. Ambrose answers his sister's question by citing the example of Saint Pelagia, who is said to have lived at Antioch. According to Ambrose, the virgin dressed herself in a bridal gown and took her own life rather than be violated. And when her would-be persecutors discovered that they had lost their prey, they are said to have sought out the virgin's mother and sisters who likewise escaped by taking their own lives. With these two examples and yet one more concerning the martyrdom of Sotheris, an ancestor of Ambrose and Marcellina, Ambrose ends the third book of de Virginibus.

Saint Ambrose's de Virginibus provides no striking shifts in content from the writings of either Tertullian or Cyprian. He praises the virgin and emphasizes his preference for the virgin state over marriage. He refers to the trials of marriage and the difficulties of bearing and rearing children. Likewise, he stresses the necessity of modesty. It is rather his style and emphasis which dis-
tinguish him from Tertullian and Cyprian. With Ambrose there is relatively slight attention given to reward as an incentive, and with the exception of a scant reference to the virgins living together in Bononia who attain "their common chastity to the number of twenty, and the fruit to an hundredfold," there is no hint of ranking the virgin on a scale of merit. There is considerably more emphasis upon martyrdom, and excluding the John the Baptist passage, the tone is much milder than that to be observed in Tertullian, Jerome, or even Augustine. By the time of Ambrose, the format of the virginity treatise appears to be becoming fixed; the interest that succeeding writers provide, consequently, lies in style, tone, and emphasis.

In 384 Jerome wrote his most famous letter on the subject of virginity to Eustochium, one of a group of Roman ladies who had given themselves over to the furtherance of asceticism and to the study of scriptures. This letter contains Jerome's views on the preservation of virginity and his advice concerning the conduct of virgins. It should be considered a continuation and an embellishment of the tradition that had sprung from Tertullian. In fact, Jerome speaks of his familiarity with the writings of those Fathers that have been treated thus far. Concerning freedom (a popular theme in virginity treatises),
Jerome says, "If you want to know from how many vexations a virgin is free and by how many a wife is fettered, you should read Tertullian 'to a philosophic friend,' and his other treatises on virginity, the blessed Cyprian's noble volume...and the treatises recently written for his sister by our own Ambrose."  

The pattern that Jerome follows is a familiar one. He begins by suggesting that she who leaves her own people and her father's house as suggested in Psalms xlv.10-11 is to be rewarded. And following the introductory remarks is a statement in which Jerome shows his familiarity with the pattern that has become established as the virginity treatise has evolved. "I write to you thus, Lady Eustochium (I am bound to call my Lord's bride 'lady'), to show you by my opening words that my object is not to praise the virginity which you follow, and of which you have proved the value or yet to recount the drawbacks of marriage, such as pregnancy, the crying of infants, the torture caused by a rival, the cares of household management, and all those fancied blessings which death at last cuts short."  

Despite this claim, however, Jerome, while attempting to convince Eustochium that she should take warning by Lot's wife and that she should refuse to go back or to
give up her virginity, frequently contrasts virginity with marriage. One should note, however, that Jerome is considerably less severe in this treatment of marriage in his letter to Eustochium than he is in his Adversus Jovinianum. He laments that Eustochium's sister, Blaesilla, had become a widow only seven months after her marriage, thereby losing at once the crown of virginity and the pleasures of wedlock and reducing herself to the second degree of chastity. Guarding against appearing to oppose marriage, he denies that he would detract from that state blessed by God. "I do not detract from wedlock," he says, "when I set virginity before it. No one compares a bad thing with a good. Wedded women may congratulate themselves that they come next to virgins. 'Be fruitful,' God says, 'and multiply, and replenish the earth.' He who desires to replenish the earth may increase and multiply if he will." Later Jerome supports the concept of choice for those who would marry by explaining the meaning of Paul's "concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord" (I Corinthians vii.25). Paul had no commandment, Jerome contends, "because what is freely offered is worth more than what is extorted by force, and to command virginity would have been to abrogate wedlock. It would have been a hard enactment to compel opposition to nature
and to expect from men the angelic life; and not only so, it would have been to condemn what is a divine ordinance.  

The scriptural support for the preference of the virgin state is likewise familiar to those who have read earlier treatises of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Ambrose. The virgin is better than the married woman, and she should be constantly aware that she is. Therefore, she should avoid "those who are widows from necessity and not from choice." Here he offers a variation on the verse to be found in Matthew xviv.11-12, which he later approximates when he says, "Some people may be eunuchs from necessity; I am one of free will." Citing another reason for his preference for virginity, Jerome quotes the often quoted verse from I Corinthians vii.32-34, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world how he may please his wife. There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married careth for the things of the world how she may please her husband." And while comparing virgins to married women, Jerome alludes to the familiar passage from Matthew xiii.8. "The fruit which is an hundredfold \(\cap\) virginity and that which is sixtyfold
Marriage both spring from one seed, and that seed is chastity.\footnote{59} Living in an age in which persecution was less likely, he (unlike Tertullian and Cyprian) has moved virginity to the place which martyrdom formerly occupied. And while advising virgins on their conduct while in the presence of other virgins who might be weak, Jerome asks that Eustochium comfort and caress the weak one. "But if a girl pretends to have a vocation simply because she desires to escape from service," he continues, "read aloud to her the words of the apostle: 'It is better to marry than to burn.'"

Although the verses with which Jerome supports his argument are familiar, one observes that the gold so severely condemned by Tertullian in his discussion of ornaments and adornment serves for Jerome a different rhetorical function. Cautioning against a fall from the virgin state, he reminds that of those who fall it once was said, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in a vesture of gold wrought about with divers colours."\footnote{90} He advises that a virgin should not expose herself to public gazes. Her body is like a vessel in the Lord's temple. "And assuredly no gold or silver vessel was ever so dear to God as is the temple of a virgin's body."\footnote{91} "Like the ark of the covenant," Jerome says, "Christ's spouse should be overlaid with gold
Yet, Jerome in his letter to Eustochium, does not fail to express his disgust with those who would praise adornment. He assumes that Eustochium has "ceased to court attention in garments of gold." He appears rather to be concerned that the virgin in shunning gold for adornment not be boastful and pretentiously self-righteous. Though she should "cease to court attention in garments of gold," she should not be too humble. She should not, for example, come into a room filled with her brothers and sisters and plead that she is not worthy of a footstool. "Do not sit in too low a place," says Jerome. And should the virgin follow too rigorously the paths of the severely ascetic, she might learn to despise "not only gold and silver in general, but earth itself and heaven."94

The rules for conduct that Jerome sets forth in his letter to Eustochium are specific guides for the virgin to follow in order to protect her virginity. She should never listen to words of mischief, says Jerome. There are flatterers and evil men who would "make trial of a virgin's steadfastness." She should be like Mary and prefer the food of the soul to that of the body. She should avoid travel, and she should let the privacy of her chamber guard her. "Let your dress be neither too neat
nor too slovenly," says Jerome. Neither should she be too boastful, and she must avoid the sin of covetousness.

Although Jerome's famous letter to Eustochium is sometimes considered strong and fanatical, it is indeed mild when one compares it with his very long and virulent attack upon Jovinian. The cause of Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* is well known. Jerome is replying to the *Commentarioli*, in which Jovinian had said that there should be no distinction made between virgins, widows, and married women after baptism, provided that their good works were of equal merit; that abstinence is not to be preferred to the taking of food with thanksgiving; that one baptized with the spirit as well as with water cannot sin; that all sins are regarded equal; and that there is but one degree of reward and one degree of punishment.

While considering the violent tone of Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, one must note that although Jerome is treating the same subjects he discusses in his letter to Eustochium, in *Adversus Jovinianum* he is reacting to what he obviously considered a threat to a doctrine and way of life to which he had dedicated himself and to which he had encouraged others to dedicate themselves. Jovinian's books were sent to him, for example, by Pammachius,
the son-in-law of Paula, the mother of Eustochium. Not only was Paula given to the ascetic way of life, but also she had left her home to head a convent for women in Bethlehem. Jerome describes her at the time of her death as one who has "left her palace glittering with gold to dwell in a mud cabin."

That Jerome should react to Jovinian's comments is to be expected. He considered Jovinian a threat to his doctrine and to that which he had considered best for the Church. In fact, he reveals the seriousness of that threat in Book II of his Adversus Jovinianum. It is near the very end of his argument that he speaks of Jovinian's influence:

Since you published your views, and set the mark of your approval on baths in which the sexes bathe together, the impatience which once threw over burning lust the semblance of modesty has been laid bare and exposed. What was once hidden is now open to the gaze of all. You have revealed your disciples, such as they are, not made them. One result of your teaching is that sin is no longer even repented of. Your virgins whom, with a depth of wisdom never found before in speech or writing, you have taught the apostle's maxim that it is better to marry than to burn, have turned secret adulterers into acknowledged husbands.
Later Jerome discusses what he regards as the results of Jovinian's influence:

But the very women, unhappy creatures! though they deserve no pity, who chant the words of their instructor (for what does God require of them but to become mothers?), have lost not only their chastity, but all sense of shame, and defend their licentious practices with an access of impudence. You have, moreover, in your army many subalterns, you have your guardsmen and your skirmishers at the outposts, the round-bellied, the well-dressed, the exquisites, and noisy orators, to defend you with tooth and nail, the noble make way for you, the wealthy print kisses on your face. For unless you had come, the drunkard and the glutton could not have entered paradise. All honor to your virtue, or rather to your vices! You have in your camp even Amazons with uncovered breasts, bare arms and knees, who challenge the men who come against them to a battle of lust. Your household is a large one, and so in your aviaries not only turtle doves, but hoopoes are fed, which may wing their flight over the whole field of rank debauchery. Pull me to pieces and scatter me to the winds; tax me with what offenses you please; accuse me of luxurious and delicate living: you would like me better if I were guilty, for I should belong to your herd.101

The tone which Jerome uses in these passages is characteristic of his attack on Jovinian. In the beginning of his argument he says of Jovinian, "At one moment he is
all bombast, at another he grovels; from time to time he
lifts himself up and then like a wounded snake finds his
own effort too much for him. Referring to Jovinian's
rhetoric, Jerome says that Jovinian "has discharged him-
self like a sot after a night's debauch." He asks
whether the reader might not think that Jovinian "was
in a feverish dream, or that he was seized with madness
in a feverish dream, or that he was seized with madness
and ought to be put into the straight jacket which
Hippocrates prescribed." Having given a brief summary
of Jovinian's argument, Jerome replies that "this is the
hissing of the old serpent." And in yet another
passage illustrating Jovinian's misreading and
misinterpretation of Isaiah xxxviii.19, Jerome refers to
Jovinian's "wonted stupidity." Those portions of Jerome's Adversus Jovinianum that
are significant for the evolution of the virginity treatise
are Book I, in which Jerome devotes in its entirety to refu-
ting the first proposition, and the last part of Book II,
in which Jerome attempts to refute Jovinian's fourth
proposition. The questions and issues that Jerome deals
with have been discussed before, and the biblical verses
have been used previously—even by Jerome; nevertheless,
the severity of tone and the extent to which he opposes

marriage in this reaction to Jovinian's propositions are
worthy of note.

One sees from the outset Jerome's use of familiar biblical texts. Attempting to refute Jovinian's statement that virgins, widows, and married women are all equal so long as they have been baptized, Jerome elaborates upon the hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold fruit passage so frequently used by other writers to indicate the order of perfection.

The thirty-fold has reference to marriage. The very way the fingers are combined--see how they seem to embrace, tenderly kiss and pledge their troth either to other--is a picture of husband and wife. The sixty-fold applies to widows, because they are placed in a position of difficulty and distress. Hence the upper finger signifies their depression, and the greater the difficulty in resisting the allurements of pleasure once experienced, the greater the reward. Moreover (give good heed, my reader), to denote a hundred, the right hand instead of the left: a circle is made with the same fingers which on the left hand represented widowhood, and thus the crown of virginity is expressed.107

Likewise Jerome uses Saint Paul's words "for it is better to marry than to burn"; however, he is careful to point out that Paul was not comparing degrees of good with those words. Paul also said, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." And Jerome continues, "If it is
good not to touch a woman, it is bad to touch one; for there is no opposite to goodness but badness." Jerome explains that Paul permits marriage only because he fears that something worse might come if marriage is not permitted. Therefore a thing which is permitted under such conditions cannot have but only a slight degree of goodness, according to Jerome. "It is good to feed on wheaten bread, and to eat the finest wheat flour,' and yet to prevent a person pressed by hunger from devouring cow-dung, I may allow him to eat barley. Does it follow that the wheat will not have its peculiar purity, because one prefers barley to excrement?" 108

Jerome suggests also that marriage interferes with prayer, and he reminds that the Apostle Paul commands that we pray also. Consequently, if the wife and the husband are to render each other the debt that is due because neither has power over his own body, it follows, contends Jerome, that neither can honor Paul's command to pray. 109 "If we are to pray always," says Jerome, "it follows that we must never be in the bondage of wedlock, for as often as I render my wife her due, I cannot pray." 110 Likewise, says Jerome, when Paul said that it was better to marry than to burn, he was emphasizing the word better. "The word better always implies a comparison with something
worse, not a thing absolutely good and incapable of comparison.”111 And, he continues, "I suspect the goodness of that thing which is forced into the position of being only the lesser of two evils. What I want is not a smaller evil, but a thing absolutely good."112

Giving even more biblical support for his argument in favor of virginity over marriage, Jerome focuses upon still more verses that are central to the arguments so frequently advanced by writers of virginity treatises. He interprets Paul's "he that giveth his own virgin in marriage doeth well; and he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better" (I Corinthians vii.38). Here is a verse that would seem to nullify the statement that he had made regarding the significance of the word better in "better to marry than to burn"; Jerome attempts to explain this seeming contradiction in his argument by saying that Paul "detracts from this seeming good [in marriage] and puts it in the shade by comparing it with another, and saying 'and he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.'" Therefore, "the difference...between marriage and virginity is as great as that between not sinning and doing well; nay rather, to speak less harshly, as great as between good and better."113

Because Jerome is so intent upon succeeding in his
argument and in proving to his readers that virginity is to be preferred to marriage and that it will be rewarded more fully, he is not content to let his support be merely scriptural, despite the extent of his exegesis. It is important to note that Jerome is doing thus what others will do when the threat to their doctrine is great and especially when that threat seems to come from secular foes. Jerome makes this point clear as he begins Chapter xli, Book I.

I have given enough and more than enough illustrations from the divine writings of Christian chastity and angelic virginity. But as I understand that our opponent in his commentaries summons us to the tribunal of worldly wisdom, and we are told that views of this kind are never accepted in the world, and that our religion has invented a dogma against nature, I will quickly run through Greek and Roman and Foreign History, and will show that virginity ever took the lead of chastity.114

After a seemingly endless list of examples to support his assertions, Jerome moves even to a discussion of famous non-Christians who, like Christ, were said to be of virgin birth. Among those mentioned are Buddha, who was said to have been born through the side of a virgin, Minerva, who supposedly sprang from the head of Jove,
Bacchus, from Jove's thigh, and Plato, said to have been conceived when Perictione was "violated by an apparition of Apollo." Thus, says Jerome, "mighty Rome cannot taunt us as though we had invented the story of the birth of our Lord and Saviour from a virgin; for the Romans believe that the founders of their city and race were the offspring of the virgin Ilia and Mars."\textsuperscript{115}

Jerome ends his Book I with some advice to those who would want to have second or third marriages. Yet, this portion of his discussion is still most essential to the evolution of the virginity treatise and especially essential if we are to appreciate the technique used by the Halie Meidenhad author. Advising against second or third marriages, Jerome summarizes an argument said to have been written by one Theophrastus in \textit{On Marriage}. In essence, it is the culmination of an argument that has depended upon both scriptural and secular support. In summarizing Theophrastus,\textsuperscript{116} Jerome uses a practical and personal appeal, an appeal by which many of the less faithful could be won. Although Jerome's examples are directed toward men in this passage, it is nevertheless worth quoting at length. He discusses the wisdom of marriage.
A wise man therefore must not take a wife. For in the first place his study of philosophy will be hindered, and it is impossible for anyone to attend to his books and his wife. Matrons want many things, costly dresses, gold, jewels, great outlay, maid-servants, all kinds of furniture, litters and gilded coaches. Then come curtain-lectures the livelong night: she complains that one lady goes out better dressed than she: that another is looked up to by all.... There may be in some neighboring city the wisest of teachers; but if we have a wife we can neither leave her behind, nor take the burden with us. To support a poor wife, is hard: to put up with a rich one, is torture. Notice, too, that in the case of a wife you cannot pick and choose: you must take her as you find her. If she has a blemish, or is proud, or has bad breath, whatever her fault may be—all this we learn after marriage.... Our gaze must always be directed to her face, and we must always praise her beauty: if you look at another woman, she thinks that she is out of favour. She must be called my lady, her birth-day must be kept, we must swear by her health and wish that she may survive us, respect must be paid to the nurse, to the nursemaid, to the father's slave, to the foster-child, to the handsome hanger-on, to the curled darling who manages her affairs, and to the eunuch who ministers to the sole indulgence of her lust: names which are only a cloak for adultry.117

Jerome ends his summary by refuting two arguments with which the Hali Meidenhad author later will be concerned—that marriage offers companionship and that marriage offers offspring who will be able to help their
parents in later years. Jerome says:

Men marry, indeed, so as to get a manager for the house, to solace weariness, to banish solitude; but a faithful slave is a far better manager, more submissive to the master, more observant to his ways, than a wife who thinks she proves herself mistress if she acts in opposition to her husband, that is, if she does what pleases her, not what she is commanded. But friends, and servants who are under the obligation of benefits received are better able to wait upon us in sickness than a wife who makes us responsible for her tears (she will sell you enough to make a deluge for the hope of legacy); who boasts of her anxiety, yet drives her sick husband to the distraction of despair. But if she herself is poorly, we must fall sick with her and never leave her bedside. Or if she be a good and agreeable wife (how rare a bird she is!), we have to share her groans in childbirth, and suffer torture when she is in danger. A wise man can never be alone. He has with him the good men of all times, and turns his mind freely wherever he chooses.... Then again to marry for the sake of children, so that our name may not perish, or that we may have support in old age, and leave our property without dispute, is the height of stupidity. For what is it to us when we are leaving the world if another bears our name, when even a son does not all at once take his father's title, and there are countless others who are called by the same name. Or what support in old age is he whom you bring up, and who may die before you, or turn out a reprobate? Or at all events when he
reaches mature age, you may seem to him long in dying. Friends and relatives whom you can judiciously love are better and safer heirs than those whom you must make your heirs whether you like it or not. 118

In Book II of Adversus Jovinianum Jerome considers another question that is of equal significance to writers of virginity treatises—whether or not there is a degree of reward. Jovinian regarded all sins equal and, therefore, did not believe that there would be any distinction made. Jerome attacks this proposition of Jovinian’s in Chapters xviii through xxxix of Book II. He considers each of Jovinian’s assertions separately in an attempt to refute the evidence that Jovinian provides. Chapters xviii through xx are a summary of those assertions and of Jovinian’s support.

Having shown his anger and disgust by a name-calling attack on Jovinian in Chapter xxi, Jerome begins his refutation in Chapter xxii. First, he attacks a sheep and goats passage in which Jovinian had suggested that there is no division or degree in goodness sufficient to merit degrees of reward. According to Jerome, Ezekiel clearly points out that there are degrees of goodness as he says, “Behold I judge between cattle and cattle, and between rams and the he-goats, and between the fat cattle
and the lean." Ezekiel, Jerome continues, has supported the concept of degrees of goodness by stating, "Ye are my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men." Jerome next alludes to the different animals taken on Noah's ark, Joseph's coat of many colors, the good and bad fish contained in the gospel net, and the queen of heaven who stands on the Lord's right hand in a vesture of gold.

Jerome continues in this second book to lean heavily upon Saint Paul. He reminds his readers of Paul's words:

All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one flesh of men and another of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial but the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.

Paul also said, Jerome adds, that "he who soweth sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." And certainly, concludes Jerome, "he who sows more and he who sows less are both on the right side."

Jerome's attack on Jovinian is even more interesting because Jovinian had in many instances used for sup-
port of his thesis the very scriptural passages that were used by the writers who asserted that there were indeed degrees of reward. He attacked, consequently, the foundation of their argument. According to Jerome, Jovinian had said that the hundred-fold, sixty-fold, thirty-fold fruit in the parable of the sower did not mean that there were degrees of reward. Also, Jovinian had suggested that the Lord’s promise of a hundred-fold in one gospel and of seven-fold in another should indicate that the seven and hundred-fold mean the same. That the evangelist Mark should give the inverse order—thirty-fold, sixty-fold, hundred-fold, likewise, should indicate that no distinction should be made.121

Jovinian’s attack at this point becomes, therefore, an attack not merely upon a scriptural interpretation, but upon an interpretation that had been used to support the concept of degrees of reward since the writings of Tertullian. And again Jerome’s tone as he reacts to Jovinian’s interpretation is harsh. Jerome refers to Jovinian’s "impudence," and he feels compelled to respond that Jovinian may not triumph in a lie; he quotes the instance of the apostles by way of discrediting the hundred-fold, sixty-fold, and thirty-fold. Jovinian, Jerome says, is "convicted of either forgery, or of
ignorance," for there is absolutely no instance in the Gospels of a hundred standing for seven. Attempting to refute Jovinian further, he explains that his own interpretation "is not prejudiced by the fact that in one Gospel the enumeration begins at a hundred, in another at thirty, since it is a rule that all scripture, and especially with the older writings, to put the lowest number first and so to ascend by degrees to the higher."122

Jovinian's writings also had challenged the traditional interpretations of two more scriptural passages worthy of attention, the "many mansions" passage (John xiv.2-3) and the parable of the vineyard. As one would expect Jerome opposes Jovinian's contention that "the house of many mansions" refers to the churches scattered throughout the world. Jerome, therefore, sets out to illustrate that "the place and the mansions which Christ says He would prepare for the apostles are of course in the Father's house, that is, in the kingdom of heaven, not on earth, where for the present He was leading the apostles."123

According to Jerome, Jovinian was equally wrong in his interpretation of the parable of the vineyard. Those laborers who came during the first, third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours and who each received a penny
for his labors, says Jerome, "do not belong to one time or to one age, but from the beginning of the world to the end of it there are different calls and a special meaning attached to each. Abel and Seth were called at the first hour: Enoch and Noah at the third: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the sixth: Moses and the prophets at the ninth: and at the eleventh the Gentiles, to whom the recompense was first given because they believed on the crucified Lord, and inasmuch as it was hard for them to believe they earned a great reward." 124

Thus, one sees in Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* as well as in his famous letter to Eustochium much that is relevant in the evolution of the virginity treatise. Here are an extensive exaltation of the virgin state, scorn of marriage on the bases of both scripture and secular evidence, advice concerning conduct of virgins, and the promise of a special reward for those who honor their vows.

As one looks ahead to the thirteenth century and especially to *Hali Meidenhad*, Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* becomes even more significant. Both treatises are reactions to that which would threaten the foundations and traditions upon which their authors based their faith and their conduct. And, more important, both are reactions
to a threat that would undermine the Church's influence upon society. The closing lines of Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* reveal the motivation that will be a significant impetus for the writing of the later treatise. Jerome says:

Beware of the name of Jovinianus. It is derived from that of an idol. The capitol is in ruins: the temples of Jove with their ceremonies have perished. Why should his name and vices flourish now in the midst of you, when even in the time of Numa Pompilius, even under the sway of kings, your ancestors gave a heartier welcome to the self restraint of Pythagoras than they did under the consuls to the debauchery of Epicurus.

The threat that Jovinian's teachings had posed was not entirely quelled, however, by Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*; consecrated virgins continued to give up their vows in favor of marriage. Saint Augustine observed in his *Retractions* that Jovinian had been "so influential in the city of Rome that even some nuns about whose continence there had been no suspicion, heretofore, were precipitated into marriage." According to Augustine, the Jovinian argument continued to survive while no one dared speak out against it. Also, says Augustine, many were saying that Jovinian could not be answered by praising marriage, but by censuring it. Thus, Augustine
was faced with a dilemma from the outset of his attempt to answer Jovinian. He would need to defend marriage, which Jerome in his zeal had seemed to question, and he would also have to be sufficiently forceful to persuade those women who had pledged themselves to remain virgins who might otherwise renounce their vows.

Augustine's answer to Jovinian was written in 401, and it is contained in two treatises, *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta virginitate*. In *De bono coniugali*, Augustine has organized his argument around three central points. Marriage is good because it is the state from which children are precreated; marriage is good because it brings fidelity to those who are married; and marriage is good because of the sanctity of its sacrament.

The extent to which Augustine was attempting to defend the Christian teachings against the charge of Manichaeanism, brought on by Jerome's reaction to Jovinian, is indeed obvious from the significant shift in tone and emphasis between the *Adversus Jovinianum* and *De bono coniugali*. Augustine has used, for example, the same biblical verses to support his contention that marriage is good that Jerome used to explain his apparent scorn of marriage. Augustine considers the verse from Genesis
i.28, "Be fruitful and multiply," and he summarizes the varying opinions about its proper interpretations. Finally, he concludes that "according to the present condition of birth and death, which we know and in which we were created, the marriage of male and female is something good."126

Speaking of the debt that marriage partners owe each other, Augustine says that "even if they demand its payment somewhat intemperately and incontinently," it is the source of fidelity to which "the Apostle has attributed so much right that he called it power, when he said: 'The wife has not authority over her body, but the husband; the husband likewise has not authority over his body but the wife.'"127

Augustine admits that Paul encourages virginity when he says, "For I would that you all were as I am myself," or when he says, "He who is unmarried thinks about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. Whereas he who is married thinks about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin, who is unmarried, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in body and in spirit. Whereas she who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may
please her husband." And finally, Augustine agrees that
Paul's words "But if they do not have self control, let
them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn" seem
to indicate that only those who do not restrain them­
selves ought to marry.

Nevertheless, Augustine recognizes the necessity
to show that the Church does not regard marriage a sin,
despite Paul's words, which have been used frequently to
suggest that it does. His defense of marriage in the face
of Paul's often quoted words illustrates not only his
skill as a rhetorician, but also the degree to which he
is concerned with Jerome's previous approach to Corin­
thians vii. Following his quoting the "better to marry
than to burn" passage, he says:

Such marriage is not a sin. If
it were chosen in preference to forni­
cation, it would be a lesser sin than
fornication, but still a sin. But now
what are we to say in answer to that
very clear statement of the Apostle
when he says: "let him do what he will;
he does not sin if he should marry"
and "But if thou takest a wife, thou
has not sinned. And if a virgin marries,
she does not sin." Certainly from this
it is not right to doubt that marriage
is not a sin. And so it is not the
marriage that the Apostle grants as a
pardon--for who would doubt that it is
most absurd to say that they have not
sinned to whom a pardon is granted--
but it is that sexual intercourse that
comes about through incontinence, not for the sake of procreation and at the time with no thought of procreation, that he grants as a pardon. 128

Thus, Augustine has shifted the emphasis from the marriage versus virginity argument to a consideration of the difference between marriage with sexual intercourse for the purpose of procreating children and marriage with sexual intercourse for the purpose of satisfying concupiscence. Augustine concludes that even intercourse which does satisfy concupiscence is only a venial sin. Indeed, a great portion of De bono coniugali is concerned with the question of sexual intercourse as it pertains to marriage, and its milder tone helps us to see better the degree to which the Hali Meidenhad author was harsh and uncompromising.

Recalling Jerome's remarks about sexual intercourse and marriage as a mere substitute for fornication, one can likewise appreciate Augustine's different emphasis. Even that sexual intercourse which obeys passion rather than reason, says Augustine, when rendered to a spouse might prevent him from sinning mortally by fornication. At one point Augustine speaks directly to Jerome's assertion that marriage should not be preferred because the sexual intercourse which is a part of marriage prevents
one from praying as he should. "If they do not turn themselves away from the mercy of God, either by not abstaining on certain days so as to be free for prayers, and by this abstinence as by their fasts they put their prayers in a favorable light," says Augustine, the married do not encourage concupiscence. 129

Again Augustine addresses himself to Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* as he speaks of the purification required after marital intercourse. Purification, he says, does not indicate that marital intercourse is a sin; "if it is not that intercourse which is granted as a concession, which, also, being intemperate, impedes prayers." 130 Augustine's explanation of the practice of purification is both clear and frank.

But, just as the Law placed many things in mysteries and in the shadows of things to come, a certain material shapelessness, as it were, in the seed, which when it is formed will produce the body of a man, is placed as a sign of life shapeless and uninstructed; so since it is fitting that men be cleansed for this shapelessness by the form and learning of doctrine, as a sign of this, purification after the loss of seed has been ordered.

Nor is loss of seed in sleep a result of sin; yet in this case, also, purification is prescribed. Or, if anyone considers this a sin, thinking that it does not happen except from some desire
of this sort—which, without a doubt, is false—are, then, the cycle menstruations of women sin? However, the same Old Law ordered that the women be purified from them only because of the material shapelessness which, when conception takes place, is added, as it were, for the purpose of developing the body. And on this account, since there is a formless flow, the Law wished that by this the mind without the force of discipline, unseemly fluid and dissipated, be understood; it shows that the mind must be formed, when it orders such a flow of the body to be purified.131

Even though Augustine goes to great lengths to convince his readers that marriage is not a sin, he is careful to reject the argument that marriage is as good as virginity. His scale of perfection is more complex than has been offered in the past, however. It is the believer who is important in Augustine's ranking. "As the meals of the just are better than the fastings of the sacrilegious, so the marriage of the faithful is placed above the virginity of the unbeliever." Nevertheless, says Augustine, "neither is a meal preferable to fasting in the one case, but just to sacrilege; nor in the second case is marriage preferred to virginity, but faith to unbelief."132 He makes even clearer distinction as he speaks of Mary and Martha. "That was good which Martha did when occupied with ministering to holy souls, yet that was better which Mary her sister did,
who 'seated herself at the Lord's feet and listened to his words'; so we praise the good of Susanna in married chastity, yet we praise the good of the widow Anna and much more so that of the Virgin Mary."\(^{133}\)

Augustine has been skillful in dealing with the dilemma with which he was faced. He is careful throughout his *De bono coniugali* to praise marriage, but to remind his readers that marriage is subordinate to virginity; by inserting the conditions of belief and behavior, he is able to answer both the Manichaeans and those who are influenced by the writings of Jovinian. Never in his argument does he imply that he is comparing a good to an evil; rather he consistently states that he is comparing a good to a good. On this point he is in direct contrast to Jerome.

If we compare the things in themselves, in no way can it be doubted that the chastity of continence is better than the chastity of marriage. Although both, indeed, are a good, when we compare the men, the one who has the greater good than the other is the better. Moreover, he who has the greater good of the same kind has also that which is less; however, he who has only what is less certainly does not have what is greater.\(^{134}\)

And alluding to the verse most frequently used in comparison of the levels of chastity, he reminds that
"thirty is contained in sixty, but not sixty in thirty."^135

Other examples of Augustine's preference of virginity to marriage are voiced in his discussion of the patriarchs whom he praises even though they were said to have had several wives. He defends the married patriarchs because their multiple marriages, he says, were not contracted from lust but from duty. In the times of the patriarchs "when the mystery of our salvation was still veiled in prophetic signs, even those who were of this nature before marriage [continent] were accustomed to marry because of the obligation of procreation, not overcome by passion, but motivated by piety."^136 Their willingness to fulfill this obligation, their sense of obedience, according to Augustine, makes these patriarchs indeed superior in goodness to those of his own day who are free from sexual intercourse but less obedient.

Perhaps the greatest evidence of Augustine's rhetorical skill to be found in De bono coniugali lies in his ability to address himself to what appeared to be a dilemma and to avoid the contradictions which seemed inevitable. He has strongly defended marriage; nevertheless, he has subtly and surely recommended virginity. While praising those patriarchs who needed to replenish the earth, he never lets the reader forget that the time during which he is
writing is different. There is less need for marriage than there was in the past. He notes that then "especially to propagate the people of God, through whom the Prince and Saviour of all peoples might make both be prophesied and be born, the saints were obliged to make use of this good of marriage, to be sought not for its own sake but as necessary for something else." Yet, he adds, "now, since the opportunity for spiritual relationship abounds on all sides and for all peoples for entering into a holy and pure association, even they who wish to contract marriage only to have children are to be admonished that they practice the greater good of continence." 137

Thus, as Augustine continues his De bono coniugali, he appears to be looking toward De sancta virginitate. He has praised marriage strongly from the beginning; nevertheless, as he comes more and more to the defense of the patriarchs, he suggests more and more strongly that there is less reason for marriage during the time in which he is writing. He begins De sancta virginitate on this same note. The final paragraph in his first chapter outlines the points to be developed in what is essentially a continuation of De bono coniugali. "At the present time, however," says Augustine, "those to whom it is said: 'If they do not have self-control, let them marry,' are not
to be exhorted, but consoled; but those to whom it is said: 'Let him accept it who can,' are to be exhorted lest they be frightened, and to be frightened lest they be proud. Therefore, virginity must not only be praised that it may be loved, but also admonished that it may not be puffed up."138

Using the same moderate and restrained tone, he continues to develop the theses that he already has stated about the faithful and obedient and about the diminishing need for marriage. Mary, for example, is praised more highly for accepting the faith of Christ than for conceiving the flesh of Christ. Augustine says that even Mary's maternal relationship would have done her no good "unless she had borne Christ more happily in her heart than in her flesh."139 Marriage, nevertheless, is not strongly encouraged. "In former times, it is true, carnal generation in a certain numerous and prophetic nation was itself necessary for the coming of Christ in the flesh. Now, however, since the members of Christ can be gathered from every race of men and from all nations into the people of God and the city of the kingdom of heaven, 'let her accept it who can' accept holy virginity, and let only her who does not have self-control marry."140 And echoing the goods found in marriage that he mentions in De bono coniugali,
Augustine suggests that spouses be blessed not because they beget children, but because they beget them honorably and chastely for society and because they bring them up wholesomely; because they keep conjugal fidelity, and because they do not desecrate the sacrament of matrimony.\(^{141}\)

Although Augustine clearly shows his preference for virginity over marriage, his appeal to the virgin on the basis of reward is significantly different. He is especially careful to emphasize that continence is necessary because of a reward in the kingdom of heaven. Those who think that continence is to be preferred "because of the present life, that is, because married people are distraught by so many urgent worldly cares, while virgins and celibates are freed from such affliction; as though it were better not to marry for this reason alone, that the cares of this life may be lightened," are foolish, says Augustine. The apostle Paul, he adds, did not condemn marriage when he said, "Yet such will have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you that." Rather, says Augustine (and this interpretation is important in light of the tone and emphasis of both *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta virginitate*), he was "discouraging a little from marriage moderately, indeed not as from something evil and illicit, but as from something burdensome and difficult."\(^{142}\)
Augustine's restraint and subtlety in dealing with what was obviously an effectively persuasive appeal are masterful. His words are a defense against those who would accuse him of Manichaeism, a rejection of Jovinian, and also, by understatement, a skillful plea to the consecrated virgin that she be sufficiently wise to reject marriage. Continuing to explain Paul's words, he says:

When, he remarks, however, that he is sparing those who he says will have tribulation of the flesh, nothing seems more certain to me than that he was unwilling to reveal and explain in words that same tribulation of the flesh which he had predicted for those who choose marriage, in the suspicions of marital jealousy, in the bearing and raising of children, in the fears and anguish of bereavement. For, what man is there who, when he has bound himself by the bonds of wedlock, is not torn and harassed by these emotions? Yet, we must not exaggerate them, lest we might fail to spare those who the Apostle thought ought to be spared.143

Nevertheless, at no time does Augustine stop condemning those who would attack marriage. He maintains that the true teaching of the Apostle would recommend choosing the greater gifts as not to condemn the lesser. The virgin, he says, should "be confident that a palm of greater glory has been prepared for her who did not fear to be condemned if she marry, but who aspired to be more
honorably crowned for not marrying."\textsuperscript{144} The grades of chastity are acknowledged; however, marriage is never regarded as sinful. He admonished those who would act as if "the blessing of Susanna were an humiliation of Mary, or Mary's greater blessing ought to be a condemnation of Susanna."\textsuperscript{145}

The concept of special rewards based upon the grades of chastity, which has been observed in all other virginity treatises examined thus far, receives much attention in De sancta virginitate. Bearing in mind that Augustine is answering Jovinian, one would expect such discussion. The support is based on biblical texts, and the verses used are all rather standard by 401. Augustine explains, for example, the familiar verses from Isaiah 1vi. 4-5: "For there are eunuchs who were born so from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made so by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Let him accept it who can." And as would be expected, the reward of those eunuchs who, as Augustine says, have refrained from marriage because of "a resolution of conscience" are rewarded more favorably than those who are eunuchs in the flesh only.\textsuperscript{146}

That Augustine is concerned with answering the
followers of Jovinian is certain in his discussion of the parable of the vineyard. Augustine says that men ask whether the denarius of the parable of the vineyard "signifies something which all shall have in common, such as eternal life itself, the very kingdom of heaven where all shall dwell whom God has predestined, called, justified, and glorified." His answer to this question is rather standard as one can see who has read the other Fathers thus far examined. "Because eternal life itself is given to all, but, because in that eternal life the splendor of merits will present a varied luster, 'there are many mansions' with the Father. Therefore, in the equality of the denarius, one will not live longer than another, but, in the many mansions, one will be honored with greater glory than another." Thus, as it has from the time of Tertullian, the special reward available to the virgin continues to be important in the appeal to virgins. Only the virgin will be able to follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

With his discussion of rewards, Augustine moves forth into a more standard and traditional approach to the virginity treatise. He takes up the issue of humility as he begins to give more direct advice to virgins. He cautions those who have the most excellent and sublime of gifts to recognize humility as the safeguard of that
gift. Humility and his fear that the virgin might give way to pride are so important to Augustine that he devotes the major portion of the remainder of the essay to discussing it. He cites examples of the centurion whose faith was said to be the greatest of all Israel because he said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof" (Matthew viii.5-10). He refers to the Canaanite woman whose humble confession that she was not worthy to eat the crumbs from her Lord's table merited her a reward that her pleading could not get. He recalls the story of the pharisee and the publican, the latter of whom was exalted for his humility when he said, "O God, be merciful to me, the sinner." 149 And he mentions among other examples the famous passage from Matthew xviii.3, "Unless you become like this child, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven." 150

As he continues his discussion of pride and the necessity of humility, Augustine again is subtle and controlled. In Tertullian or in Jerome one sees a much more direct approach to the same rules that are implicit in the following passages. Augustine is not concerned, he says, with imposing rules upon those so far removed from consecrated virgins as drunkards or misers, and he adds significantly:
Neither am I concerned with those in whom there is a certain inclination to attract admiration, either by a more elegant dress than the necessity of their kind of profession demands, or by an unusual headdress, whether by protruding knots of hair, or by veils so thin that the little braids set underneath show through. Admonitions are not yet to be given to these on humility, but on chastity itself, or on the perfection of modesty.

Give me someone professing perpetual continence, and free from these and all similar vices and blemishes of conduct. For her I fear pride; for her I dread the swelling of self-conceit from so great a blessing. The more there is in her which she finds self-complacency, the more I fear lest by pleasing herself she will displease Him who "resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."151

It is Augustine's concern that the virgin not be prideful that brings him to discuss another of the major concerns of all writers of virginity treatises--the subject of degrees of merit or of grades of chastity. He advises the virgin not to be overly proud because she has been compared to the hundred-fold fruit. And insisting that he would prefer to leave the investigation of the distinction of fruitfulness to "those who understand these things better than we do," Augustine comments upon the various theories that we have seen unfolding in the course of our examination of virginity treatises from the time of Ter-
tullian to his own time. Others, he says, can tell

whether the virginal life is found
in the hundred fold fruit, widow-
hood in the sixty fold, and conjugal
life in the thirty fold; or whether
the hundred fold fruitfulness is rather
attributed to martyrdom, the sixty
fold to continence, and the thirty fold
to marriage; or whether virginity,
together with martyrdom, constitutes the
hundred fold fruit, virginity alone is
discovered in the sixty fold, but
spouses who bear the thirty fold,
advance to the sixty fold if they become
martyrs; or whether (and this seems more
probable to me), since the gifts of
divine grace are manifold, and one is
greater and better than another (whence
the Apostle says: "Strive for the
greater gifts") it must be understood
that they are too numerous to be
divided into three categories.152

Augustine contends, therefore, that the virgin
should not be "puffed up" because of the esteem with which
she is customarily regarded. "No one, in my opinion," he
says, "could have dared prefer virginity to martyrdom,
and no one could have doubted that this gift is hidden if
the test of suffering is lacking."153 Aside from one brief
passage in which he notes by way of subtle suggestion that
virgins already abstain not only from grave errors such as
murder, lying, drunken reveling, sacrifice to devils,
extravagance and avarice, irreverence, and such, but also
from even those things considered less grave, such as
unbridled tongues, coquettish smiles, indecent jests, unbecoming dress, and haughty or undignified carriage, Augustine has devoted nearly half of his *De sancta virginitate* to stressing the need for humility. And ever capable of anticipating possible objections, he says that there will be some who will say, "But this is not to write on virginity, but on humility." To those he responds, "The greater I see this blessing to be, the more do I fear pride in it, lest it perish in the hereafter."154

In Augustine's *De sancta virginitate*, one can see a suitable stopping place in the study of background for Hali Meidenhad. Tertullian has provided the fire and the various ingredients for the virginity treatise; Cyprian has taken those ingredients and molded them into a form; Ambrose has shown the powerful persuasive device which the virginity treatise can be, and he has shown a particular flair for embellishment by his use of examples; Jerome has shown what the virginity treatise can become in the hands of one who is reacting passionately to a threat like Jovinian; and finally, Augustine, the greatest influence on the Middle Ages of all these Fathers, considering and weighing the virginity treatises of his predecessors, has shown what the virginity treatise is when the issues that it poses are treated with restraint,
moderation, and balance.

We have seen, therefore, emerging from the writings of Tertullian a format for the virginity treatise. Now familiar to us are the praise of virgins by self-effacing and humble writers, the emphasis on the three grades of chastity, the rejection of the flesh in favor of the spirit, the special reward promised to the virgin, the establishment of codes of dress and conduct for the virgin, and, finally, the admonishment against pride.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I


6. On Baptism, Chapter XVII. This quotation and subsequent quotations from Tertullian are taken from vols. III and IV of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, 1885).

7. Book I, Chapter i.

8. Book I, Chapter i.

9. Book I, Chapter ii.

10. Book I, Chapter iii.

11. Book I, Chapter iii.

12. Book I, Chapter v.
13 Book I, Chapter vi.
14 Book I, Chapter v.
15 Book I, Chapter viii.
16 Book I, Chapter ix.
17 Book II, Chapter i.
18 Book II, Chapter ii.
19 Book II, Chapter ii.
20 Book II, Chapter ii.
21 Book II, Chapter vi.
22 Book II, Chapter v.
23 Book II, Chapter vii.
24 Book II, Chapter ix.
25 Book II, Chapter x.
26 Book II, Chapter xi.
27 Book II, Chapter viii.
28 On the Veiling of Virgins, Chapter II.
29 Chapter III.
30 Chapter IV.
31 Chapter XII.
32 Chapter IV.
Chapter XVI.

See Chapters III, IV, V, VI, and IX.

Chapter IX.

Chapter XII.

Chapter XII.


41 Chapter XII. The Latin text follows: quanquam lenocinia formae munquam non prostituto corpori conjuncta et debita etiam Scripturae suggerunt. Ille civitas valida, quae super septem montes et plurimas aquas praesidet, cum prostitutae appellationem a Domino meruisset, quali habitu appellationi suae comparata est? Sedet certe in purpura et coccino et auro et lapide pretioso. Quam maledicta sunt, sine quibus non potuit maledicta et prostituta describi! Thamar illa, quia se expinxerat et ornaverat, idcirco Judae suspicione visa est quaeestui sedere; adeo, quia sub velamento latebat, habitus qualitate quaestuariam mentiente, et fecit, ut quaestuariam et voluit et compellavit et pactus est. Unde addiscimus adversus congressus etiam et suspiciones impudicas providendum omni modo esse. from vol. I of Patrologiae, p. 1446.

42 Chapter XII. The Latin text follows: Ornamentorum ac vestium insignia et lenocinia formarum non nisi prostitutis et impudicis feminis congruunt, et nullarum fere pretiosior cultus est quam quorum pudor vilis est. Sic in Scripturis sanctis, quibus nos instrui Dominus voluit et moneri, descriptur civitas meretrix, compta pulchrius et ornata, et cum ornamentis suis ac propter ipsa potius ornamenta peritura. Et venit, inquit, unus ex septem Angelis habentibus phialas septem, et aggressus est me dicens: Veni, ostendam tibi damnationem meretricis magna sedentis super aquas multas, cum qua fornicati sunt reges terrae. Et duxit me in spiritu. Et vidi mulierem sedentem super bestiam; et mulier illa amicta erat pallio purpureo et coccineo, et adornata erat auro et lapidibus pretiosis et margaritis, tenens poculum in manu sua plenum execrationum et immunditiae et fornicationis totius terrae. Fugiant castae virgines et pudicae incestarum cultus, habitus impudicarum, lupanarium insignia, ornamenta meretricum. from vol. IV of Patrologiae, pp. 462-463.

43 Chapter VI.

44 Chapter XI.
45 See, for example, Jerome, Letters XXII.22 and CVII.4 and Augustine's de Doctrina Christiana, IV.xlviii-xlix.

46 Chapter XXI.

47 Chapter VII.

48 Chapter X.

49 See Isaiah iii.16-24.

50 Chapter XIII.

51 Chapter XIX.

52 Chapter V.

53 Chapter VII.

54 Chapter X.

55 Chapter XVII.

56 Chapter XX.

57 Chapter XXI.

58 Chapter XXII.

59 Genesis iii.16.

60 Saint Luke xx.34-36. de Habitu virginum, Chapter XXII.


63 Book I, Chapter iii, Verse 11.

64 Isaiah liv.1.

65 Book I, Chapter vi, Verse 31.

66 Book I, Chapter viii, Verse 40.

67 from Canto IV.xii.

68 Book I, Chapter ix, Verse 45.

69 Book I, Chapter vi, Verse 24.

70 Book I, Chapter vii, Verse 35.

71 See Book I, Chapter vi, Verses 26-27.

72 Book I, Chapter iii, Verse 10.

73 Book II, Chapter ii, Verse 17.

74 Book II, Chapter iii, Verses 19-20.

75 See Book II, Chapter iv, Verses 22-33.

76 Book II, Chapter v, Verse 35.

77 See Book III, Chapter ii, Verses 5-8.

78 Book III, Chapter iii, Verse 9.

79 Book III, Chapter iii, Verse 13.

80 Book III, Chapter iv, Verse 15.
31 Book III, Chapter vi, Verses 29-30.

32 Letter XXII, Chapter xxii.

33 Letter XXII, Chapter ii.

34 Chapter xix.

35 Chapter xx.

36 Chapter xvi.

37 Chapter xix.

38 Chapter xxi.

39 Chapter xv.

40 Chapter vi.

41 Chapter xxiii.

42 Chapter xxiv.

43 Chapter xxvii.

44 Chapters xxvii and xxxvi.


46 See Pierre de Labriolle, pp. 364ff

47 de Labriolle, p. 364.

Jerome takes this position on the basis of Paul's words in I Corinthians vii.1-5. Most important here, however, is verse 5: "Defraud ye not one the other except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency."
116. Theophrastus was the Greek philosopher to whom Augustine left his library and the originals of his writings. Theophrastus died 287 B.C.

117. Book I, Chapter xlvii.

118. Book I, Chapter xlvii.

119. Book II, Chapter xxii.

120. Book II, Chapter xxiii.

121. Book II, Chapter xix.

122. Book II, Chapter xvi.

123. Book II, Chapter xxviii.


126. De bono coniugali, Chapter III.

127. Chapter IV.

128. Chapter X.

129. Chapter X.

130. Chapter X.

131. Chapter XX.

132. Chapter VIII.

133. Chapter VIII.
Chapter XLVI.

Chapter LI.
Although Saint Augustine's great influence upon the Middle Ages is well known, his words were not entirely heeded by one writer of early Middle English prose. The Hali Meidenhad author obviously disregarded Augustine's suggestion that the tribulations of the flesh, about which Saint Paul refused to elaborate, not be exaggerated. One recalls that in De Sancta Virginitate Augustine had admonished those who think that continence is to be preferred "because of the present life, that is, because married people are distraught by so many urgent worldly cares, while virgins and celibates are freed from such affliction." Unlike Augustine, but like the majority of his predecessors, the author of Hali Meidenhad uses the tribulations of the flesh to provide a major portion of the foundation of his argument.

Despite Hali Meidenhad's seeming lack of decorum, however, it is a mistake to assume as Professor Baugh did
that "vehemence and strong conviction make up for the absence of a logical plan" and that "there is little or no progression" in this controversial treatise. Indeed, the Hali Meidenhad author shares with other literary artists of the Middle Ages a clear concern for both structural and thematic unity. From the outset a glorification of virginity and a denunciation of marriage, the treatise repeatedly emphasizes that the spirit is ever superior to the flesh. Structurally and thematically the work is unified by an allegorical device in which Satan repeatedly attacks the tower of virginity, by a carefully planned series of contrasts, and by conscious repetition of key words.

It is interesting that the Hali Meidenhad author should use the same biblical text to begin his discourse that Jerome had used in his famous letter to Eustochium, "Hearken, O Daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Psalm xliiv.11); in a tone similar to that of the Hali Meidenhad author Jerome, likewise, interpreted the words of David to mean that the flesh should be scorned. As the Hali Meidenhad author explains these same words, the purpose and the organization of the treatise are established.
Thus, the Hali Meidenhad author sets out to attack that "Gederinge inwido be of fleschliche bohtes" and the idea that marriage can in any way be considered worthy of the consecrated virgin's attention. Set in a conspicuous, allegorical frame, the argument that follows is a series of carefully structured and balanced contrasts, all of which are part of an unmistakable plan.

The virgin is praised and compared to "be hehe tur of Ierusalem" that rises high above all widows and wedded women. Although she dwells in body on earth, she is, nevertheless, "be hehe tur of hevene, freo ouer alle fram alle worldliche weanen" (1. 36). This high tower, however, is constantly threatened by "flesches lustes, t feondes
eggunge" that weorreð ðat warpeð eauer towart tis tur, forte kasten hit adun, ðat drahen into ðeodom ðat stond se hehe ðer-in, ðis icleopeð for-ði 'syones dohter'" (11. 36-39).
The virgin is God's spouse, the bride of Christ, "ðe lauerdes leofmon," before whom "alle kinges buheð" (11. 43-44). And alluding to a familiar verse (I Corinthians vii.9), the Hali Meidenhad author reminds us that the virgin is "se freo of hire self, ðat ha nawiht ne þarf of oðer þing þenchen bute an of hire leofman, wið treowe luue cwemen" (11. 47-48).

Should the fleshly thoughts and the devil who continuously war against the tower of virginity be successful, in contrast the virgin would be cast down and "in-to þeowdom idrahen, ðat fran se muchel hehseipe ð seli freodom, sehal lihte se hale in-to a monnes þeowdom swa ðat ha haue nawt freo of hire seluen, ð trunkie, for a mon of lam, ðe heuencliche lauerd" (11. 51-54). She would "bicumeð þeow under mon, ð his þrel, to don al ð drehen ðat him likeð, no sitte hit hire se uuele" (11. 57-58).

In addition, says the Hali Meidenhad author, there will be "heuencliche luren," surpassing all others. Serve your Lord, he continues, "swuch swetnesse þe schalt ifinden in his luue ð in his seruise, ð habbe se muche murhðe þrof, ð likinge i þin heorte, ðat tu naldes
chaungen þat tu liuest in, for to beo cwen icrunet" (11. 71-74). When they are filled with the spirit of God, "tah hit þunche ðre æn þat ha drehen harde, hit ne gre-uddæ ham nawt, ah þuncheð ham softe; þ habbede mare delit þrin þen anie ðre habbed i likinge of þe worlde" (11. 76-79).

Shifting again to a description of the life of one who chooses not to serve God but to serve the flesh, the Hali Meidenhad author offers another contrast. He shows the life of one on the "oðer halff," the world, the life of one who has chosen to serve "þis fikele world þe frakele" (1. 85). She will be oppressed by the world, and she will become "as hire þral." Unlike the virgin who would not trade her life with Christ if she were to be crowned a queen, the married woman "se ofte beon imaket arm of an eðeliche mon þat" she "list under, for noht oðer nohtune" (11. 88-39). She will not have the satisfactions in the world that the virgin will have; rather she shall loathe her life and regret that she put herself into "swuch þeowdom for worldliche wunne" (11. 89-90). The life of the married woman is in direct contrast to that of the virgin. Although the virgin seems to many to be suffering hardship, she has "mare delit þrin þen anie oðer habbe in likinge of þe worlde." The married
woman, however, under a show of happiness, often has hell in place of joy. Also "bes riche cuntasses, bes modie lafdis of hare liflade," do not have such good lives as one might think. Instead they "licked huni of bornes" (11. 96-98).

Only the virgin in mortal life can "scheawe in hire estat of be blisse undeadlich" (1. 164). Though her physical presence is in a "lond of unlicnesse," she "athalt hire burcfe i licnesse of heauenliche cunde" (1. 167). In a passage that follows, the author provides another carefully planned, striking contrast between the virgin and the married woman. In the "licnesse of heauenliche cunde" the virgin endures.

As tat swote smirles, t deorest of oldre, bat is icleopet basme, wit bat deade licome bat if ter-wid ismittet, from rotunge, alswa deo meidenhad meidenes cwike flesch, wiute wemuninge halt alle hire limen t hire wittes, sithc t heringe, smecchunge t smeal-lunge, t euch limen felunge; bat ha ne merren, ne forme-alten, burh licom-lische listes i flesches fuloe. bat godd hauco, burh his grace, se muche luue vnned, bat ha ne beo of ba iliche, bi hwan hit is iritten bus burh be prophete, bat ha in hare wurounge as eaueres forroteden. (11. 171-179)

The married woman, who has given her life to the
flesh and to her husband is not preserved with the sweet unguent of the virgin. The picture of married life is vastly different; nevertheless, the married are not totally condemned as are the unmarried who "i bat like fule wurginge" wallow. The married do not rot therein, "3if ha hare wedlac laheliche halden" (11. 101-182). The unwedded who wallow, however, "beoð be deueles eaueres, bat rit ham t spiured ham to don al bat he wile." Worse than the married, these fornicators "forrote þrin" (11. 183-186).

The allegorical motif is continued immediately following this passage, and the devil is again seen warring against the exalted virgin in an attempt to bring her down from her height. "Pe ondfule deuel," the author warns, has his eyes on the maiden who stands high toward heaven. Likewise, he tells the maiden, the devil, having lost dominion over mankind because of the Virgin Mary, "to-swolled of grome," and "schoteð niht ð dai hise 'earewen, idrencete of an attri haliwei, toward tin heorte, to wundi þe wið wac wil, ð makien to fallen, as crist to forbede." Not only are the devil and the virgin a distinct contrast, but this contrast is heightened if the maiden should attempt to resist the devil. "And eauer se þu strongluker stondest again him, se he o tene ð o grome, wodeluker weorreð, for swa muchel þe hokerlucher him þuncheð to beon ouercumen;
bat þing se feble as flesch is, t nomeliche of wummon, schal him ouerstihen" (11. 193-204).

All the fleshly thoughts or lusts that arise in the heart are arrows of the fiend ("Feondes flan"). But the writer encourages the maiden that such an arrow does not wound unless it stays long enough to force the will to submit ("ti wil were i-broht to werke"). The allegory at this point in the treatise is an echo of lines 133-139, in which the author says that though maidenhood wither "mid misliche ðohtes," it will nevertheless grow green again because it was not "fulliche forcoruen."

In earlier lines in Hali Meidenhad, the author has suggested merely that a thing so priceless as maidenhood should be protected against the fiend. As he continues this later allegorical discourse, he offers some specific advice for that important protection. He reminds the maiden that her "wit" (intelligence) is a shield against the arrows of the fiend. "Hwil þi wit atstond, t chastieð þi wil, þat ti lust ne beore þe to þat te læf were, ne harmed hit te nawiht, ne suleð þi fawle" (11. 208-209). If the shield remains whole ("te wisdom of þi wit") so that it does not "breke ne beie," "he feondes flan fleod ðaweì aìain on him scleun" (see 11. 211-213). Thus, says the author, "wit is godes dohter," and it is able to defeat
lust ("feondes foster").

The tactics must be changed, however, in the battle against "leccherie, þat is deoueles streon," for Lechery's support is great. First, Lechery has sight. If a maiden looks intently upon a man, she causes Lechery to prepare to make war on her virginity. Speech is Lechery's " oðer help." If a maiden talks foolishly to a man, Lechery is further aroused, and he shames maidenhood and threatens to do greater harm and to shame even more. The kiss that follows, says the author, is the fulfillment of that threat. And after this kiss, Lechery spits in Maidenhood's face in order to shame and to insult her.

Yet, there is another support of Lechery in his attempt to mar maidenhood. This support is indecent feeling ("unhende felunge"). If the maiden should handle herself improperly, then Lechery is able to smite virginity and to destroy it. In order to contrast proper behavior with improper behavior and to illustrate the effects of that behavior further, the author adds that when the virgin is overthrown, "þe engles beoð isweamed," while the "deoueles hoppen þ kenchinde beaten hondes to-gederes" (11. 234-236). Against lechery the maiden cannot stand up and fight; rather she must retreat if she is to overcome him.

Likewise, in the manner of earlier writers of
virginity treatises, he discusses the reward of the virgin and the lesser rewards of widows and married women. The contrast between the "muchele mede" and the tribulations of the flesh is emphasized so that the maiden who thinks about and looks toward that reward will reject the flesh. The description of this reward is quite familiar to anyone who has read the virginity treatises of the Fathers. The maidens will be able to sing "bat swote song Æbat englene dream" that not even saints may sing. Also, they may follow God Almighty "hwider se he eauer wendeð." No other's crown or beauty or clothing will compare with those of the virgin in brightness or in sheen (see 11. 256-264).

Again in a rather conventional format, the Hali Meidenhad author continues with an interpretation of the also familiar Matthew xix.12 and I Corinthians vii.26. By quoting Christ's words, he recalls that it is written that marriage is not to be condemned. "Not all receive this word. Whosoever can receive it let him receive it, I counsel him." And he quotes Paul's "It is well for them who may keep themselves." This interpretation, however, even at this early stage in the treatise suggests a scorn of marriage far in excess of anything that Augustine said in his De Sancta virginitate. Marriage is legalized by
the Church in order that the "seke" and the "unstronge"
who are unable to stand on the high hill of virginity might
have a bed on which to fall and halt in wedlock as they
rush downward during their fall (see 11. 281-289).

In addition, the author considers the ranking
process of the three grades of chastity by noting that the
widows "bifore þe iweddede singen in heuene," the widows
"bat ha hefden ifondet flesches fulðe" (11. 304, 306).
In light of the geoconcentric concept of the universe that
receives such great attention from writers in the Middle
Ages, it is understandable that the Hali Meidenhad author
would distinguish the grades of merit by assigning maidens,
widows, and married women different "rings," and, of course,
the maiden's "ring" is finest, for "in heore ring þer is
godd self; þis his deore moder, þe deorewurðe meiden, þe
heuenliche cwen" (11. 309-310). Also maidens have an even
greater reward. Although all who go to heaven are crowned,
the maiden's crown is greater. Hers is "a gerlaundesche
schinende schenre þen þe sunne: 'Auriole' ihaten o latines
ledene" (11. 325-326). The ranking process is completed
in this section as the Hali Meidenhad author considers the
extent to which the maiden surpasses all others. As many
others have done, he notes that "wedlac haue hir frut
britti-fald in heauene; widewehad, sixti fald; Maidenhad
wid hundred fald, ouer-gead baðe" (11. 333-334). Yet,
the author is not content with this ranking without empha­
sizing the great contrast between the married and the
virgin states. The virgin is, he adds, a hundred degrees
elevated toward heaven while she maintains her virginity;
however, when she "leaped in-to wedlac," she descends to
the thirtieth, "ouer þrie twenti þ et ma bi tene" (11. 337-
338). But although he observes that this is "at an chere,
a muche lupe duneward" (1. 339), he concedes that "godd
haue ilahed hit"; otherwise the fallen would go deep into
hell and their names would be "i crepte ut of liues writ
in heuene" (11. 333-334).

The transition from the discussion of heavenly
reward and of the degrees of chastity is a natural pro­
gression, and the contrast is logical. The Hali Meidenhad
author again effectively uses the device of contrast.
Having shown "þe muthæ þ te menske in heuene, þat muð ne
mai nummnen" (11. 347-348), he moves forward to a discus­
sion of the degradation of marriage and "hwat drehen þe
iweddede" (11. 345-346). She who had descended from being
"of englènè ilinesse" from "ihesu criste leofmon," and from
being a "leafdi in heuene," is reduced to the "flesche
fulðe, in-to beastes liflade, in-to monnes þæowdom" (11. 349-
The description and discussion of the degradation of the flesh which follows is perhaps one of the clearest indications of the conscious attempts of the writer to achieve structural and thematic unity. His use of the words beastes and wit should be noted carefully. Referring to the temporary pleasure of sexual intercourse ("imeane"), the author emphasizes that although the foul delight of lust is ended with filth, the "laðliche beast" remains and continues to last. Because copulation is too "laðluker" to tell of, only great immorality could "ke it loved among "beastliche men." And it is this immorality that "bereð as beastes to al ðat ham lusted" as if they did not have "wit in ham ne tweire schead as mon haued" between good and evil (see 11. 357-367). Actually, he contends, they have less power than do beasts("without wit þah na beon"). For man "þat schulde haue wit," follows filth in every season. This emphasis upon beasts provides an effective rhetorical contrast to an earlier passage in the treatise in which the maiden is told that lust will not overtake her so long as her "wit atstond, þe chastieð" the will. Also she has been reminded that "wit is hire scheld under godes grace" and that while the shield is whole, "þat is, te wisdom of þi wit," the fiend's arrows fly
away upon himself. This is explained by noting that while the body's lust is the fiend's fosterchild, "wit is godes dohter" (see 11. 208-214). Thus, the image of "witlesse beasts dumbe ð broke-rugget, ibuhe toward te eorde" provides a good contrast and an effective illustration of the decadent state to which one "þat art i wit iwhræ to godes ilicnesse, ð i riht, ba bodi up ð heaued toward heuene" (11. 373-375).

The section of the treatise that follows this advice (11. 375-381) is even more clearly planned. Beginning with line 375, the Hali Meidenhad author anticipates and answers some objections that might be raised to his argument by his readers or listeners. First, he says, a maiden might say that "fulðe, ni nawt; An monnes elne is muche wur" and that a man will be able to help her in "fluttunge ð to fode" (11. 333-384). Second, maidens might suggest that "of wif ð weres gederinge, weorlides wele awakened, ð streon of feire children, þat gladien muchel þe ealdren" (11. 336-387). And finally, he anticipates that the maiden will say that "muche confort haucë wife of hire were, þat beod ð wel igedered, ð eider i alles weis ipaied of oðer" (11. 396-397). Thus, the author sets out in the section that follows to show that falsehood has caused the maiden to make these consid-
erations and that this assumed pleasure "to deore hit beoth aboht" (l. 389). Also he will show that the pleasure that a wife is supposed to have with her husband on earth seldom occurs.

In answering these objections that might be raised by maidens, the author again uses the technique of contrast, and in all answers he is concerned with the important distinction between the flesh and the spirit. He consoles the maiden, who is the spiritual bride of Christ, by reminding her that she need not care about her own "liuened"; she is "his deore leofman þat is alre þinge lauerd" (ll. 414-415). And this Lord of all things is able to find all that a maiden has need of. Should she have to suffer, however, and should she have distress, says the author, she should not be dismayed, for the suffering is permitted for her welfare in order "to fonde þe hwedder þu beo treowe" (ll. 418-419). If she is found to be true, her reward in heaven will be greater.

The married woman, who is "under mannes help," has a much less pleasant existence. She must lie awake "i moni care," for others as well as for herself. Also she must worry more than any servant in the house. Unlike the maiden, who is "i se swote eise"(l. 425), and who is "riche þe weolefule iwio i þe herte"(l. 431), the married
woman soon discovers that "al þe eise is her as þe oðre beð godlesse ð ignahene" (1. 432). She who has possessions is seldom happy because she is ever afraid of losing them. In her distress, moreover, she covets much more. Her struggle for possessions is indeed difficult. "Wið earðe biwinned hit, wið fearlac biwiteð hit, forleofen hit wið sorhe" (11. 434-435).

Those who seek after riches are never free of worry. They are concerned about thieves who steal from them, moths that fret clothing, and plagues that slay the cattle. As the quest continues, there is no satisfaction. The more that one is able to acquire, the more there is to waste. And in order to ensure that the reader be able to consider the treatise as a unit, the Hali Meidenhad author explains that the foregoing remarks were made "bat tu seides þruppe, þat ter walde wakenen of wif ðe weres somnunge, richesce ð worldes weole" (11. 445-446).

At this point the author addresses himself further to the maiden's hope that the husband will provide goods for her. And unlike Augustine, the Hali Meidenhad author makes little attempt to shield the maiden from hearing at length of the tribulations of the flesh. It is possible, he suggests, that the maiden who marries will discover that she may have neither "wil" nor "weole" with her husband
and that she may indeed have to breed her offspring while she wants for bread. There is also the possibility that she might have to "liggen under lastest mon" who could turn what wealth she had to sorrow. Riches and servants are of little significance, he adds, if the husband were "wrad" and "la&" (see 11. 450-458).

The passage with which the Hali Meidenhad author continues to address himself to objections that maidens might have is one of the most memorable in the entire treatise. By presenting a depressing portrayal of domestic life and a frightening account of sexual intercourse, he attempts to prove a point that he had made earlier—"hwat weole oder hwat wunne se ber cauer of cume, to deore hit beo& aboht" (11. 383-389). One finds few more thorough descriptions of the tribulations of the flesh than in the following passage.

Hwen he &her husband^ beo& ute,
hauest again his ham-cume, far,
care, t eie. Hwil he bi& at hame.
alle bine wide wanes bunched he
to ware; His lokinge on be agasted be;
His ladliche muro& t his untohe
bere made he to aagisen. Chit te t
cheved he, t schent te schomeliche;
tuke he t to bismere, as huler his hore;
Beated he t busted he, as his ibohte
brei t his ec&el heowe. Bine banes
ake& he, t ti flesch smerte&,
in-wid he swelled of far grome, t ti
neb ute-wid tendred ut of tene. Hwach
sclial beo pe sommunge bituhhen
ow bedde? Ne theo that best luuie, ha
perof na semblaund ne makien inne
marhen; t ofte moni nohtunge, ne luuien
ha ham neauer swa, bitterliche bi ham
self teonec eider oider. Ha schal his
wil, muchel hire unwil, drehen, ne luue
ha him neauer swa wel, wið muche weane
ofte. Alle hise fulitoeschipes t hise
unhende gomenes—ne beon ha neauer swa
sið fulde bifunden, nomelic he i bedde—
ha schal, wulle ha, nulle ha, ðolien
ham alle. (11. 458-473)

Nevertheless, despite this vivid account of domestic strife
and the horrors of sexual intercourse, the author does not
miss the opportunity to frighten the maidens even further
by suggesting that the "fulitoeschipes" and "unhende
gomenes" are much more horrifying than he has shown them
to be. He would hope, he says, that Christ would shield
each maiden from asking or from wishing to know what they
be, for those persons who do know sexual intercourse hate
it and consider fortunate those maidens who do not know
its unpleasantness (see 11. 474-477).

And concluding his attack on any anticipated
happiness in marriage, the author adds that once woman
has become mired in this "leuuen," horrible though it is,
there is no possible escape, and he assures her further that
she is fixed in servitude and that she must stay with her
husband whether he be "cangun or er crupel." There is no
possibility for happiness under these conditions. If she is fair and if she cheerfully greets those whom she sees, she will ever be a victim of slander and blame. On the other hand, if she is of no particular esteem and given to wrath, she might be regarded even less favorably. Also it is possible that her great love for him may not be returned after which she will become grieved and possibly despondent enough to poison her husband. Such a picture of the burdens of married life would seem sufficient to cause any maiden to weigh heavily her decision to leave the convent for marriage (see 11. 479-487).

Nevertheless, one more terrifying description of the tribulations of the flesh is yet to come as the author directs himself to the maiden's hope for "weorldes wele" or for "streon of feire children, þat gladien muchel þe ealdren" (11. 385-386). Certainly, this is one of the sections that have caused Mali Meidenhad to be considered an anomaly among virginity treatises.

The section begins with a startling account of conception, pregnancy, birth, and care for children, all of which point to the thesis that the price is indeed too great to pay. The author tells the maiden that in begetting a child, "hire flesch wið þat fulde ituked" (1. 498). In the "burberne" is heaviness and hard pain every hour.
In the birth the pains are strongest, and death sometimes occurs. And in the child's nourishing are many difficult times. The mother is never free from worry, for if the child is deformed ("misborn"), as frequently happens, or if it is without any of its limbs, it is a source of much sorrow to the mother, a cause of shame to its relatives, and a reason for reproach and talk among all. However, if the child should be "wel iboren" and likely to survive, the mother lives in constant fear of losing it. Nevertheless, there is no assurance of satisfaction even though the child should live, for often it does not fulfill the parent's expectations. Thus, for her "flesches halschipe," the maiden should have avoided man (see 11. 496-514).

What follows is an amazingly vivid amplification of pregnancy, childbirth, and child care. Certainly the words "ga we nu forôre" would suggest that the author was conscious of progression within his work. Again there is an echo of the lines in which he anticipates the objections of the maidens to his advice, specifically that line in which he says that he will show that whatever "weal or wunne" that comes with having offspring is bought at a price that is far too great. After the "now we go further" there is a sardonic plea to the maiden to consider that "wunne" arises from the gestation of children, when the
offspring comes to life and grows within her body.

Despite what one might think about the propriety of appealing to consecrated virgins with a vivid description of pregnancy, it is likely that the following passage must have made considerable impact upon young women whose possible objections the author was attempting to answer. He discusses the "moni earmen" that confront the expectant mother.

Next is another amplification of lines 496-514.
The author is concerned with showing in greater detail that as soon as the child comes into this life, "mare hit bringed wið him care þen blisse" (l. 502). Again the description is bold. After a child is born, the mother must concern herself with the "wanunge ðep wepunge," that will awaken her about midnight. She is never free from anxiety. Again the author refers to a mother's worries for a late growing or slowly thriving child. She is never free from her fears that her child will perish. These miseries and others, says the author, that marriage causes ("awakened") are comprehended by Saint Paul in a few words: tribulationes carnes. The author's concern with organization is once more obvious as this section on the difficulties of conception, birth, and care of children is concluded. There remains, beginning with line 559, a short summary of the trials that have been discussed: "Lutel wat meiden of al þis ilke weane of wiues wa, wið hire were; ne of hare were se wilateful þat ha imeane wurchen; ne of þat far ne of þat suti i þe burderne of bearn, ð his ibornesse; of nurices wecches, ne of hire wasides of þat fode fostrunge; hu muchel ha schule at eanes in muð famplen, nowðer to muchel ne to lutele" (11. 559-563).

Characteristically, however, the Wali Meidenhad author is seldom ready to conclude any section when he
appears to be. Thus, he adds as a seeming afterthought another of his most memorable passages. "And hwat zif iche aski yet, þah hit þunche egede, hu þat wif stonde, þat ihere, hwen ha cumed in, hire bearn screamen, Seoð þe cat at te flicke, þe te hund at te huide? Hire cake bearmed o þe stan, ð hire calf suked; þe croh eorneð in þe fur, ð he cheorl chided. Þah hit be egede safe, hit ah, meiden, to eggi þe swidre perframward, for nawt ne þunche hit hire egede þat hit fondeð" (11. 566-572).

Finally, the section on the tribulations of the flesh of married women ends with the author's clearly stating that he has answered the anticipated objections of maidens who might be leaning toward marriage. He has kept his promise, he says, that he would show that the happiness and sweetness that many thought to accompany marriage, whether those married be rich or poor, whether they loathe or love each other, are false. Likewise, he says, he has shown that the "weane eihwer passeð þe winne" (see 11. 576-581).

Beginning with line 582, the next section moves forth to provide a striking contrast between the fleshly marriage with man and the spiritual marriage with Christ. Again the author begins with the text of David with which he had begun the treatise. "'Forȝet ti folc,'" he says,
and again in order that the meaning of David's words be understood, he adds, "bat beode hine bohtes, bat swikelich leded he toward alle weane" (11. 584-585). With Christ, the spiritual husband, unlike the husband of the flesh, the maiden will enjoy "worlde buten ende, heuenrichic winnen." This spiritual bride whose maidenhood is unspoiled, when Christ begets on her, "ne swinke ne ne pine" and her offspring will be immortal. By this husband, whose beauty is so great that the sun and the moon are astonished, so great that the angels cannot look upon Him enough to be satisfied, the maiden shall conceive and bring forth "dohtren sunen of gastliche teames, bat neauer ne deiene mahan, ah schulen ai before be pleien in heuene" (11. 597-605). Earlier, the author has pointed out that man's begetting "al bat fule delit is wid fulde aleid, as tu turnest bin hond" (11. 356-357). However, he tells the maiden that Christ "streone in be purh his swete grace." The offspring of the maiden are different also. For Christ begets "rihtwisnesse warschipe aghines unheawes; Mesure mete, gastliche strengde to wistonde be feond, aghain sunne; Simplete of semblaunt, buhsumnesse stilde, polemodnesse reowfulnesse of euch monnes sorhe; Gladschipe i be hali gast, bes i bi breoste of onde of wradde, of jiscinge of euch
Moving from the discussion of the joys of the spiritual bridegroom, Christ, the Hali Meidenhad author warns the maiden that she must avoid fornication with "he unwiht of helle." Such fornication is possible, he says, when the maiden, though intact of body, has within her heart "prude, onde, oðer wradðe, jiscinge, oðer wac wil." These evils were begotten by the devil (see 11. 616-619). The function of this section is two-fold; first, the author has established another contrast by which the maiden's marriage to Christ can be glorified. Second, however, he has enabled himself to follow closely a format established by the Fathers. To mention but one example, Augustine's De Sancta virginitate (particularly the last section) treats at considerable length the subject of pride and its destructive powers. Again, one must conclude that the author of Hali Meidenhad was very much aware of the plan that he was following.

Perhaps a review of some of Augustine's major points concerning the virgin and pride will be helpful
at this point in order to illustrate clearly the pattern that the Hali Meidenhad author was following. In Augustine's De Sancta virginitate, a work of fifty-six chapters, we find the discussion of pride and the guards against it beginning as early as Chapter XXXI. Augustine says there that he is compelled to say something not only about the exceeding glory of chastity, but also about its safeguard, humility, and he reminds us that it is written in the scriptures, "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God." This humility, says Augustine, is given to each person from the measure of his greatness, against which pride is ever a menace. This pride lays snares to those of a superior station. Therefore, he adds, "virginity is a thing so great that it must be especially warned against pride."

Augustine's advice concerning pride is indeed relevant to the Hali Meidenhad treatise, for Augustine, too, opposed a maiden's scorning those of inferior stations. It is possible, he contends, that one who possesses real virtues might be condemned because of the vice of pride if in his superiority he despises the other sinners. Augustine is afraid that the virgin who glories that she will follow the Lamb wherever He goes will not be
able to follow Him through the narrow places because of swollen pride. Furthermore, the virgin should remember that Christ's dwelling place is a humble heart. Those who have fallen from the virgin state should not be scorned; rather they should serve to increase the virgin's fear, by which she might crush pride.

Augustine is especially fearful that the virgin might lose herself to pride by becoming "puffed up" and exalting herself above others. He suggests that the virgin consider that the married woman might be able to suffer greater torment for Christ, should she be called to do so, than the untried virgin. Perhaps, he says, the married might be able to suffer disembowelment and the shedding of their blood while those who have been continent from childhood, or those who have been "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake," might be unable to undergo such torment even for chastity itself. Moreover, Augustine is soon to point out that virginity alone is not sufficient to maintain the utmost esteem, and he says that "humble spouses follow the Lamb, although not wherever He goes, certainly as far as they are able more easily than proud virgins. The theme is repeated often throughout the last part of De Sancta virginitate. The greater one is the more she should humble herself in all things. She who fails to
do so may discover that God may humble her. As Augustine concludes his virginity treatise, he voices his hope that the virgins to whom he is addressing his words take care "not to be deceived by pride, in proportion as something more holy is professed."^6

Considering the pattern of Christian thought about the sin of pride and the special dangers of pride to the religious, this last section of Hali Meidenhad is entirely logical—indeed, it is as necessary as it is predictable. The author begins his major section on pride by informing the virgin that Pride is the devil's daughter and that she was responsible for casting her father out of heaven. Thus, says the author, if God doomed the archangel for begetting Pride in heaven, He is certain to have severe punishment for the earthly mother who gives birth to her. If God is to dwell in the Maiden's heart, she must have "meokelec 't mildschipe." If, on the other hand, she should have "ouerhohe" or "prude," God will leave, for He cannot dwell with pride. Consequently, the maiden must sacrifice her heavenly reward for a reward of eternal condemnation in hell (see 11. 625-643).

The advice with which we are most familiar in our study of virginity treatises is that which begins with line 649. It is very clearly an echo of Augustine as the
Hali Meidenhad author says to the maiden:

Sone so ḫu telles te betere ḫen an oðer--beo hit hwer-fore se hit eauer beo,--t hauest of eni ouerhohe, t hunched hofes t hoker of ewt ḫat mon seĩ ḫe oðer deo ȝette, ḫu marres ti meidenhad, t brekes ti wedlac toward godd, t of his fa temes.

Ne telle ḫu nawt edelich, al beo ḫu meiden, to widewen ne to iweddede; for, alswa as a charbucle is betere ḫen a iacinct i ḫe euene of hare cunde, t tah is betere a briht iacinct ḫen a charbucle won, Alswa passed meiden, onont te milte of meidenhad, widewen t iweddede; t tah is betere, a milde wīf oðer a meoke widewe, ḫen a prud meiden; for ḫeos, for hore sunnen ḫat ha i flesches fulde folhen, leoten ham t edeliche, t beoð fare offercd of godes ludere eie. (11. 649-660).

Maidens are further warned against thinking that their maidenhood without humility is sufficient. The author says, "Ne beo ḫu nawt to trusti ane to be meidenhad, wið-uten oðer God ḫawfule nihtes, ḫouer al, miltschipe ḫ meokeschipe of heorte" (11. 668-670).

In order to emphasize the necessity for meekness and mildness in addition to virginity, the author alludes to a familiar passage in which the Virgin Mary learns that she is to be the mother of Christ. He asks maidens to "loke hu lah ha ȝette hire" when she was brought the news of Christ's conception by the archangel Gabriel. She was
not proud; rather she said, "Low, her mi lauerdes þralle! After þi word." And "tah ha ful were of all gode þeawes," says the author, only with "mekelec" did she say to Elizabeth that the Lord had rewarded her; therefore all people would call her blessed. Again in keeping with the view expressed by Augustine in *De sancta virginitate*, the Hali Meidenhad author emphasizes that Mary was convinced that "mare for hire mekelec þen for hire meidenhad" was she chosen by God. The Hali Meidenhad author appears to be less subtle than does Augustine, however. Although Augustine insisted that virginity without mildness and meekness was not sufficient to make the virgin esteemed above all others, he did not go so far as to say that "meidenhad, wiðuten hit is eðeliche þe unwurð" (1. 681).

After this important and traditional section on pride, the author, as did earlier writers of virginity treatises, provides some more examples of esteemed virgins whose conduct might well serve as models for maidens. He suggests that virgins think of Saint Katherine, Saint Margaret, Saint Agnes, Saint Juliana, Saint Lucy, Saint Cecilia, and others who suffered strong pains rather than accept kings' sons and earls, despite the promise of worldly wealth and joys. One should recall at this point that Augustine, also, as he was about to bring his discus-
sion of pride to a close, was stressing the need for the virgin to recognize that a virgin untested should avoid being puffed up. As he considers the value of virginity, Augustine leaves no doubt that he, likewise, would have revered the models that the Hali Meidenhad writer mentions. "No one, in my opinion," says Augustine, "could have dared to prefer virginity to martyrdom, and no one could have doubted that this gift is hidden if the test of suffering is lacking." 8

The closing lines of Hali Meidenhad are an effective conclusion in which the author has reviewed and repeated the warnings and admonitions that have been offered throughout the treatise. Indeed, it is another example of his conscious attempts at unity. He repeats, for example, the allegorical motif as he encourages maidens to scorn the "false feond" who leads her toward fleshly filth. Yet, he suggests that she should not be dismayed if she should not be able to drive this fiend away forever with her first attempts. In fact, she may benefit from these repeated attacks that he makes. The Apostle Paul had said that God permits the evil one to assail in order that those who are able to resist him might earn "crune upo crune" in heaven. She who takes refuge under "godes wenges" will receive this reward. And finally, looking again back to what was said
earlier, the author ends with a plea that Jesus Christ may protect maidens, those who leave "luue of lami mon," and that He enable them to keep their hearts for Him, though they encounter "flesches eggunge" or the "feondes fondunge." He asks also that they be protected from war against the "heorte wit," earlier referred to as a shield against the fiend's arrows (see 11. 210-211). With this protection, the maiden will be able to reach heaven where her spiritual marriage will endure eternally with the "seli brudgume" (see 11. 710-730).

In addition to the devices previously mentioned, one should consider another artistic technique employed by the Hali Meidenhad author to achieve structural and thematic unity. Always focusing upon the superiority of the virgin state to marriage, he carefully repeats words that he believes will unify the treatise and that will accent the necessary distinction between marriage and virginity. The most strikingly obvious of these words are those which refer to the married woman's enslavement (generally a form of beowdom) and those which indicate the freedom of the maiden (generally a form of freedom). From the outset of the treatise, one has observed what were obviously careful attempts by the author to establish unity. As early as line twenty-five, he suggests, as he
interprets Psalm xlv.11, that the people of Babylon were trying to lead the Daughter of Sion into "be worldes þeowdom." The high tower of Jerusalem, representing the high state of virginity, stands above the wedded women and widows who as "flesches þralles beo in worldes þeowdom" (11. 30-31). On the other hand, the virgin, reigning high, is "free over all from alle worldly weanen" (1. 36). Should she be tempted and lured down from the tower, she, too, will be "in-to þeowdom idrahen" (1. 41). And using words which would have been significant indeed in the beginning of the thirteenth century, the author observes that it would be especially bad for one to fall who had been "þe lauerdes leofmon" before whom all kings bowed, "of alle þe world lauedi, as he is of al lauerd" (11. 43-44).

As he alludes to the familiar verses from I Corinthians vii.22-24, which state that an unmarried woman thinks about the things of the Lord and how she may please Him, the Hali Meidenhad author notes that the maiden is "se free of hire self" that she need not think of anything other than her leofmon" and how she may please him (11. 47-48). Again, the author emphasizes the great misfortune for such a fortunate one to be cast down and "in-to þeowdom idrahen," that one from "se seli freedom" should descend into "monnes þeowdom" where she will have "nawt
freo of hire seluen." Should she abandon her heavenly Lord for a man of clay, she will lessen "hire lafdischipe," and she will no longer be God's bride and his "freo dohter"; rather she shall become "þeow under mon, ð his þreli" (see 11. 50-57). Is this punishment which is to be expected if the maiden should be cast down "þeowdom inoh, again þat ilke freolaic" that she enjoyed when she was Sion's daughter?

Should the maiden continue to "serue Godd ane," she will be "free fram alle worldliche weanen" (1. 68). Unlike the married woman who has been depicted consistently as man's thrall, the maidens of the Lord, "in his seruise," find "muche confort is in his grace" (11. 72, 75). The Hali Meidenhad author is never without fears, however, that the maiden will fall; therefore, the major portion of his argument is devoted to showing what she who falls is to expect. Again he warns that she who does not serve God serves this fickle and frail world and will be oppressed under it "a hire þral," in a thousand ways (11. 84-86). She who chooses man and the fickle world will regret that she ever put herself "into swuch þeowdom" (11. 88-89). If the maiden should be poor, as most "gentile wimmen" are, and unable to buy herself a bridegroom of her own rank, she shall have to give herself "in-to þeowdom of an
Although marriage does not need to be as enslaving as it is, contends the author, it was made such by Adam and Eve, who turned to sin and marred man's nature. Unfortunately, since that time, it has "aU to muchel lauerd-dom Æ neistrie" in it, and the lust of lechery "rixleð" there (see 11. 116-123). With God's help, however, the maiden can overcome the weakness that "draheð into þeowdom" (1. 128). Then, he adds, continuing the motif, "be king of alle kinages" will desire her. When the maiden hears later of the married woman "þat i hire were þral" (1. 180), rotting with her husband like boars, the virgin state appears even more attractive.

Upon completion of a rather long section in which the author discusses ways in which the maiden might defend herself against the formidable foe that lechery is and describes the glorious reward that awaits her in heaven if she is successful in that defense, he again continues the slavery-freedom motifs. And again he uses them to mark the distinction between the married and the unmarried. The maiden is further reminded that she who marries descends from being a "leafdi in heuene" into "monnes þeowdom" (11. 349-351). The miseries of marriage are severe, indeed, for the husband beats and mauls his wife "as his ibohte
The author regrets that his description of the woes of wives is unpleasant; nevertheless, they are necessary, for they show "i hwuch þeowdom wiues been" and in the case of maidens "i hwuch fredom, þat freo beð fram ham alle" (11. 565-566). The wise maiden who has taken herself "ut of þulich þeowdom, ase godes fre dohter" (1. 573), does not need to suffer the pains that a married woman must endure.

As he brings his important discussion of pride to a close, he quotes what are thought to be the words of the Virgin Mary to emphasize her humility. When the archangel Gabriel greeted her with the news that she had been chosen, she answered, says the author, "Low, her mi lauerdes þrale!...mote me iwurðen!" (11. 673-674). And as he brings the treatise to an end, he asks that the maidens model their conduct on that of martyred maidens who demonstrated the important difference between the flesh and the spirit by refusing "kinges sunnes þ eorles" (11. 690-691), martyrs who now have bliss between God's arms as "cwenes of heuene" (11. 693-694).
Although _beowdom_ and _freedom_ and their variations are the most frequently used and most conspicuous of the often repeated words in the Hali Meidenhad author's attempts to achieve structural and thematic unity, there are other words that contribute equally toward this end. One observes upon close reading that consistently he has used _filth_ and _bitter_ in his discussion of marriage, thereby contributing to the theme by establishing a sustained tone throughout. Early in the treatise he explains the meaning of "forjet ti folc." He reminds the maiden that she should reject thoughts that encourage her to give way to "fleschliche fulðen" (1. 110). Her trust in God and in his help will enable her to avoid being cast "in-to fulðe fennuliche" (1. 128). She must ever keep in mind, he warns, that flesh is our foe and that it "us fulèð" (1. 155). Surely she would not want her "cwike flesch" to spoil through carnal lusts "i flesches fulðe." For once she "hefden ifondet flesches fulðe" (11. 306-307), only shrift and penance will heal her and make her whole again.

Once the author begins his discussion of the horrors of sexual intercourse, the word _filth_ appears even more frequently. The maiden who has fallen from her state of being "ihesu cristes leofmon" "in-to flesches
fulde" will cool her lust only "ved fulde of bi licome" (1. 353). It is a loathsome thing to speake of sexual intercourse, says the author; all of "bat fulde delit is wio fulde aleid" (11. 356-357). And that one should "folhe bat fulde in cauer-euch time" is lamentable. Certainly, the maiden should consider carefully before she subjects herself "for se ful fulde as is ischeawet bruppe" (1. 381).

Despite the warning, the author knows that there are some who might say, "For bat fulde, nis hit nawt" (1. 383). Those who would think that there are comfort and delight in marriage should be made aware that the pleasures they anticipate are "bute i flesches fulde" and worldly vanity. Likewise, they need to know that they will have to endure all their husbands' "fulitoheschipes" and all their indecent playings, "ne beon ha neauer swa wid fulde bifunden, nomeliclie i bedde" (11. 471-473). A married woman would be better off had she learned to avoid her man, for the sin that she commits with him, says the Hali Meidenhad author, "fulde hi flesch" (1. 518). And should she become pregnant and bear her child, she will be confronted with even more filth. Not only will she need to feed the child frequently, she also will need to tend to the "cader fulden" (1. 547). Admonishing the maiden
against pride, however, the author says that a mild wife or a meek widow is preferable to a proud maiden, for those who are married or those who have been married fear God's anger because of the sin that they follow "i flesches fulöe" (1. 658). And as the author comes to the end of his treatise, he makes one last plea that the maiden guard herself against the body's lust that leads her "toward fleschliche fulöe" (1. 695).

The Hali Neidenhad author made every possible attempt to associate marriage and sexual intercourse with all that was distasteful and unpleasant. Less frequently used than the word filth, but nevertheless, obviously used in the same consistent way is the word bitter. The false folk who attempt to convince maidens that marriage brings both offspring and riches are careful to conceal "al þat bitter bale þat ter liø under" (1. 22). In fact, he adds, if the rich countesses and proud ladies were asked to tell the truth about their marriages, they would be forced to admit that they "buggen al þat swete wið twa dałe of bittre" (11. 98-99).

Like filth, the word bitter is used most consistently in the author's discussion of fallen maidens who delight in sexual intercourse. Those who have sexual intercourse unlawfully are doomed to hell where they must
suffer endless pain unless they abandon their practice and "under schrift bitterliche beten" (1. 361). The married woman will soon discover that her welfare is not always considered by her husband. She will learn that she has as many cares as any of the hired servants and that she must look out for her own portion, which is often "bitterliche abuggen" (11. 424-425). Moreover, neither does the marriage bed bring the delight that the maiden might think. Because of the many slights that married people experience there, "bitterlich bi ham self teoned eider o더." Even the offspring that is most loved and "iboht bitterlikest" often sorrows his parents.

One can readily see that the consistent use of words like bitter and filth does indeed unify the structure and theme as they are woven through the fabric of Hali Meidenhad. Running counter to those words, however, as did freedom to thralldom, and providing both a structural contrast and a consistent image of the bliss of the virgin state is the word sweet and its variations. A few examples of the pattern that this word follows should be sufficient to illustrate this point. The maiden who serves God rather than man, says the author early in the treatise, will find "swuch sweetnesse" (1. 71) in His love. We recall from the earlier discussion in this chapter on structural contrasts
that maidenhood is a balm that as "swote smiles" (1. 171) preserves the body that rots in marriage. The maiden will be rewarded, and unlike those who lament bitterly, she will sing "bat swote song ṭ bat englene dream" (1. 258). Even the songs are sweet that those sing who have tried the filth of the flesh but who have atoned for their sins. "Swote beost þeos songes," says the author. She who chooses Christ for her bridegroom will discover that "he underfoot bliðeliche, ñ biciupped swoteluche" (1. 602). Also "he streonéd in þe þurh his swete grace... swotnesse of heorte, ñat limped alre þinge be ð to neidenhades míhte" (see 11. 607-613).

The zeal with which the Hali Meidenhad author encouraged young women to recognize the blessing of being brides of Christ and of remaining faithful to their bridegroom confirms at least part of Professor Baugh's assertion about Hali Meidenhad. There is indeed evidence of strong conviction. The author is convinced that the spirit is superior to the flesh; he is convinced that the flesh is gaining in strength and popularity; and, perhaps more significantly, he is convinced that the tradition and the institution to which he has dedicated his own life is being threatened while those who should serve and be served by that tradition and that institution might be lost. Never-
theless, the conventional format, the allegorical framework, the carefully planned and balanced contrasts, and the skillful weaving of key words, all of which contribute to structural and thematic unity, clearly indicate that the fervor and conviction of the writer as man did not negate the dedication and purpose of the writer as artist.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1. Augustine, Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects in The Fathers of the Church, XXVII (New York, 1955), p. 135. In making the leap from Augustine's De virginitate to Hali Meidenhad I am not oblivious to the fact that other virginity treatises were written during the long interval. The writings of Fulgentius, Aldhelm, and Guibert of Nogent, for example, are of great interest. Nevertheless, I have chosen to stop the discussion of background of Hali Meidenhad with Augustine because the format that the Hali Meidenhad author follows is clearly established by that time.


3. See Jerome, Letter XXII.


5. See 11. 205-207.

6. See Augustine, Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects, pp. 178-212.

7. See Luke i.38.


9. The technique used by the Hali Meidenhad author is one that will be familiar to all who have read Chaucer carefully. One might look, for example, at Chaucer's use of the word dette in The Shipman's Tale to understand more clearly the technique that the Hali Meidenhad author is using.

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CHAPTER III
HALI MEIDENHAD AND TOPICAL RELEVANCE

The conventional format of virginity treatises, derived from the writings of the Church Fathers, demonstrates their influence upon Hali Meidenhad. However, in assessing that influence, one should not assume that the author was wholly dependent upon the Fathers. One should be skeptical, for example, when J. M. Campbell says that "patristic sources were so dominant in certain works of pre-Conquest and Norman England that if the thought and phraseology, undoubtedly patristic (and biblical as interpreted by the Fathers), were subtracted there would be nothing of importance left." And when he continues by referring to those "whole treatises being made up, cento-like, almost solely of transliterations from the Fathers, as in the case of Hali Meidenhad," such an assertion denies the obvious artistry of Hali Meidenhad, and equally significant, it denies the particular flavoring of the times in which the treatise was written. That there was a very definite secular influence upon the
author as well as a religious influence can be illustrated.

Consider, for example, the author's choice of the tower-fiend motif that was discussed as a unifying device in the last chapter. Although there are many instances of towers being used throughout Christian literature, it is indeed appropriate that the Hali Meidenhad author should choose the tower motif to emphasize the elevated state of virginity from which on high the maiden could observe those who had not attained such greatness. With the Norman conquest and the rise of feudalism in England came the castle, which, says A. L. Poole, symbolized lordship and gave it material expression. And as a vital part of the castle came the tower, "the most characteristic pattern of fortified residence from the conquest to the time of the loss of Normandy." These towers were known for their strength, and many of them were capable of resisting not only the attacks to which they were sometimes subjected, but also the wearing of time. In the twelfth century, they became even stronger because they were being constructed of stone.

Therefore, when the Hali Meidenhad author says that the maiden stands in the tower of Jerusalem "nawt of lah on eorde, ah of hehe in heouene," he could be assured that those who read or heard his words would
find his image contemporary. By the time of Hali Meidenhad all of England was familiar with the famous motte and bailey structures, and even more elaborate structures. Concerned about defense, those who constructed these castles sought natural hills, or they built mounds on which to place their fortresses. At about 1130 Jean de Colmieu described such construction in Calais. "It is the custom of the nobles of that neighborhood to make a mound of earth as high as they can and dig a ditch about it as wide and deep as possible. The space on the top of the mound is enclosed by a palisade of very strong hewn logs, strengthened at intervals by as many towers as their means can provide. Inside the enclosure is a citadel, or keep, which commands the whole circuit of the defences." Therefore, by referring to the married as "be unstronge, þat ne mahten nawt stonden in be hehe huþ, ðe se neh heuene" (1. 289), the Hali Meidenhad author would have been using an image that had as much immediacy to an early thirteenth-century audience as did his very realistic descriptions of pregnancy and childbirth.

The strength of these towers with which the Hali Meidenhad author is sure to have been familiar perhaps can be best estimated by noting the elaborate preparations made by those who sought to conquer them. King John's
attempts to capture Rochester Castle in 1215 after it had fallen into the hands of the barons is a case in point. The assault began with the king's forces attacking with powerful siege engines, which proved insufficient to destroy the walls before the barons drove them into retreat. Despite the abundance of weapons, which the king's men used in the assault, the walls and the keep proved impregnable to all until miners finally dug their way under the walls and eventually into the keep. Even then the barons were able to maintain their fortress for three months until they were starved into surrender.\textsuperscript{5} Although considerably earlier than Hali Meidenhad, a siege such as that depicted on the Bayeux tapestry in which Duke William's soldiers are shown attacking the castle of Dinan is of special interest in light of the tower-fiend motif in Hali Meidenhad. See Illustration I.

That one of the most widely read works of the thirteenth century, Le Roman de la Rose, should use the popular tower motif is also significant. Guillaume de Lorris's depiction of Reason reminds us greatly of the description of the exalted virgin given in Hali Meidenhad. The lover lingers awhile as "la dame de la haute garde/ Qui de sa tour aval regard" descends from her tower and makes her way to him (11. 2881-2882). Illustrating the
ILLUSTRATION I

exegetical tendency toward allegory which flourished during the thirteenth century as greatly as it had earlier, the Malt Meidenhad author says: "Syon was sum hwile iclepet þe hehe tur of Ierusalem; And seið syon, ase muchel on englisches leoden, ase heh sihde. And bitacned þis tur, þe hehship of meidenhad, þat bihald, as of heh, alle widwen under hire, ð weddede bade.... Ah heo of þe hehe tur in heoune. þat is bitacned þurh þis. Of þat syon ha bihalt al þe world under hire" (11. 27-33).

The tower motif and its special meanings continue their popularity 150 years later in one of the landmarks of Middle English poetry, Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Professor Bloomfield has said that Langland's tower might have been the product of the monkish concept of the tower as a symbol of the Church. One should add, however, that this symbol was enhanced and was given even greater dimension because of the ever growing presence of towers in England during the period in which both writers were living. Will, one remembers, wonders what the mountain, the dark dale, and the field full of folk mean, and the lovely lady explains that "the toure on the toft" (the kind of tower most common in England) has truth therein.

In addition, the image of the fiend attacking the tower, who would "weorred and warped eauer toward tis tur"
(11. 38-39) using "niht and dai hise earewen, idrencte of an attri haliewi" (1. 199), would also have had great topical relevance during the time in which the treatise was written. The archer, whose importance during the Norman invasion is well known, became even more important in the thirteenth century. It was he who began the fighting at a distance much as the artilleryman does in modern warfare. Edward L. Cutts in his Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages has described woodcuts depicting archers standing in front of men-at-arms and shooting up at the towers. Moreover, if contemporary accounts of these bowmen are accurate, the archers of the Middle Ages possessed considerable skill. Cutts quotes Richard of Devises, who tells of the siege of Messina, in which the Sicilians were forced to leave their walls unmanned "because no one could look abroad but he would have an arrow in his eye before he could shut it."8

I do not suggest, however, that the use of arrows in allegorical portrayals was distinctive or exclusive in the Middle Ages. The arrows of love or of lust were common long before the thirteenth century. Certainly the well-known story of Cupid and Psyche had considerable impact in establishing the idea of "darts of love." Nevertheless, in choosing the tower-fiend motif and in referring to the
"feondes flan" the author was using images which would be intimately and universally appreciated during his time. One finds, for example, evidence to indicate that women as well as men would have been extremely receptive to the arrow image. Medieval manuscripts have shows in numerous illustrations that the ladies must have put much emphasis upon their own skills with the bow and arrow. That they were skillful enough to shoot birds and that they were discriminating enough to choose arrowheads specifically for the kind of game they were hunting would suggest that they had attained some mastery of their sport. The author of the Menagier de Paris, writing some time later for the instruction of female members of his family, says that ladies who know how to use the bolt may kill blackbirds taking shelter in the brush.

The Church, likewise, had shown concern for archery, specifically for the crossbow, because it had become so deadly in its use as a weapon. The crossbow, which had come into prominence in Europe early in the twelfth century, was considered so brutal by the Church that its use was proscribed by the Lateran Council of 1139. Its wounds were considered to be much too barbarous.

It is likewise probable that the writer was fully aware of the secular as well as the
The religious impact of his attack on marriage, which focuses upon the enslavement of women, when he made his appeal to the nuns for whom he was writing. During the reigns of both Richard I and John, women might well have been referred to as men's thralls. They were under the constant guardianship of men until they reached the age of twenty-one, and by the time that many of them had reached this age, already they had been passed from father to Lord to husband. Seldom, indeed, did a woman get out of guardianship, at least if she possessed property, until she became a widow, and even then she might well be under the management of a son or a son-in-law. Perhaps the legal language of the times provides some of the better examples of the extent to which the woman was subjugated. She was "under the rod" or "under the power" of her husband. Also she was cautioned that she "could not gainsay" her husband even though he might be selling land which she had inherited from her father. Justices who were hearing court cases at Northampton in 1202 suggested that "since the wife in her husband's lifetime has nothing of her own nor can she make any purchase with her own money, let Peter and Maud have their seisin of that land which Gerard, whose heir Maud is, bought with his own money."12

One must admit also that the author's attack on
marriage is even more justifiable when he recalls that the nun was most frequently drawn from nobility or from the landed gentry. Consequently, the convent and marriage were ordinarily the only choices available to her. Certainly, many other outlets were available to other young women. A daughter of a man of lesser station might work in the fields with her father, or she might spin or brew at home in order to supplement the family's income. Other young women might be apprenticed to a trade. The woman of the station from which nuns were most frequently drawn, however, did not have these opportunities. A gentle woman could not work at such tasks. Therefore, says Eileen Power, the father who was unable to support a large family, especially if his daughters were unable to contribute to their support, generally sought either marriage or the convent as a solution to his problems. ¹³

Despite these conditions, Miss Power objects to the Hali Meidenhad author's great emphasis upon the discomforts of marriage and upon the enslavement of woman. "No girl of moderate strength of character, good sense and idealism," she says, "would shirk marriage solely for the material reasons set down by the author. One cannot but wonder at the lack of spiritual imagination which can display convent life as the easy, comfortable, leisured
existence, the primrose path which a harassed wife and mother cannot hope to follow, thus inevitably securing for the brides of Christ all who are too lazy and too cowardly to undertake an earthly marriage. The Hali Meidenhad author is in her opinion a "misguided realist."

One wonders, however, whether this "realist" was so misguided, indeed. Miss Power has said elsewhere in her important work that married women with children sometimes entered the convent because of strong religious devotion or because of "excessive weariness." And citing the Calendar of Papal Letters, she notes that "as early as 1197 there is a case at Aukerwyke, where a nun who had been fifteen years professed returned to the world and claimed a share of her father's property, on the ground that she had been forced into the monastery by a guardian, who wished to secure the whole inheritance." If women would choose to either enter or leave the convent for reasons such as those that Miss Power has cited, at least some were also likely to be receptive to the kind of "materialistic" attack that the Hali Meidenhad author was making.

Making marriage even less attractive during the reigns of both Richard I and John were the many abuses from which widows and wards suffered. Widows, who were
legally entitled to dowries, were forced to pay the King for assignment of those dowries. Then they were forced into marriage against their wills. The wardship or marriage of minor heirs was given or sold to John's friends without considering the well being of the wards.17

Doris Stenton has cited a specific example of the kinds of forced marriages that were common during the early years of the thirteenth century. "One of the greatest ladies in the land, Hawisa, in her own right countess of Aumale, and widow of the earl of Essex, was married by Richard I to a Poitevin, William de Forz. She tried to refuse him, but was obliged to give in because the king ordered her goods to be seized into his hand."18

William Sharp McKechnie adds further evidence of the abuses to which wards and widows were vulnerable in his Magna Carta, the standard work on the Charter.

John made regular traffic in the sale of wards—maids of fourteen and widows alike. The Pipe Roll of John's first year records how the chattels of Alice Bertram were sold because she refused "to come to marry herself" at the King's summons. Only two expedients were open to those who objected to mate with the men to whom John sold them. They might take the veil, become dead in law; or they might outbid objectional suitors.... Sometimes John varied his practice by selling not the woman herself but
the right to sell her. In 1203 Bartholomew de Muleton bought for four hundred marks the wardship of the lands and heir of a certain Lambert, along with the widow, to be married to whom he would. Yet so that she should not be disparaged.

Great stress was placed on "disparagement"—that is, forced marriage with one not an equal.19

When one considers a document so comprehensive as the Magna Carta, he might wonder, nevertheless, whether the problem of disparagement was really as much in the forefront as I have suggested thus far. If one is to place any value in our chief contemporary source of information about the value of the Charter (a troubadour who visited England with Robert of Bethune, an associate of the King), he must conclude that disparagement was indeed a major concern. This troubadour has provided a chronicle in which he recorded three grievances that had been corrected by the Charter. Among these three he thought worthy of mention is included on dealing with disparagement of heiresses.20

The passage to which the troubadour was referring is found in Chapter Six of the Magna Cartá. "Heredes maritentur absque disparagacione, ita tamen quod, antequam contrahatur matrimonium, ostendatur propinquis de
consanguinitate ipsius heredis" (Heirs shall be married without disparagement, yet so that before the marriage takes place the nearest in blood to the heir shall have notice). 21

Bearing in mind the seriousness of disparagement in the early years of the thirteenth century, one can see great relevance in the Hali Meidenhad author's words as he asks his daughters, "Hwæt wenest tu of the poure, þat beð wacliche iæouen and bæst ðuæele, as gentille þimmen mest æle nu o worlde, þat nabbeð hwer-wið bugge ham brudgumæ onont ham, þæcæuðæ ham into þecwedom of an eðelicher mon, wið æl þat ha habbeð. Weilawæl ihesu godd! Hwæçch unwurðe chaffere!" (11. 102-106).

Indeed, one finds many other instances of the Hali Meidenhad author's using objects and conditions of topical relevance in his rhetorical appeal. When the author refers to "þat wædææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææææae

notable emphasis upon covering the sides with balustrade to the extent that one often had only a very small opening through which to enter. Likewise, and more significant in terms of the Mali Weidenhad author's description, is the introduction at that time of testors or canopies which were hung from the ceiling. Bed curtains hanging on metal rails were very much in use.22

According to Thomas Wright, having a bed furnished with handsome curtains and coverings became a matter of status. And he notes further that curtains hanging from the ceiling were so characteristic of the period that the expression "being under the curtain" had come to mean being in bed. One suspects that the bed to which the author refers is one that would have been familiar to Gawain, who feigned sleep "withinne þe comly cortynes, on þe colde morne" as the Green Knight's lady prepared to tempt him.23

Surely, the author must have been aware again of the contrast that the "wedlakes heueld bed" would have been to the beds upon which those who were consecrated virgins slept. Professor William S. Davis has described this thirteenth-century bed that was the ambition of every feudal household. "It stands under a great canopy, with heavy curtains of blue taffeta. The bed itself, a great
mass of feather mattresses and gorgeously embroidered coverlets, projects its intricately carved footboard far into the room. The whole structure is set upon a platform. When the baron and baroness have retired, their attendants will pull the thick curtains and practically inclose them in their own secluded bedroom." Viollet-Le-Duc has reproduced drawings of such a thirteenth-century bed from a manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale. See Illustrations II and III below.

Likewise, Hali Meidenhad's audience would have been receptive to the warning that their worldly weal might be taken from them by natural forces. If thieves did not steal their possessions and if their superior lords did not punish them, there remained the possibility that "mohthe fret te clathes, and cwalm slath that ahte" (11. 438-439). Working with crude tools and often relying upon his superstition, the Medieval farmer was much at the mercy of his fate, a fact that the author recognized when he notes with his remarks about plagues that "tis worldes hweol warped ham abuten" (1. 437).

The word cwalm (plague) is sometimes confusing to the modern reader, who frequently restricts its meaning to "disease" and fails to recognize the much wider meaning that the word held for the Medieval audience. There
ILLUSTRATION II
Interior of a Thirteenth-Century Apartment

From the restoration by Viollet-Le-Duc. At the left the chair where sits the seigneur, the bed separated by a screen from the rest of the hall; at the back, between the two windows, a cupboard; opposite the fireplace, a large table. Tapestries ornament the walls. Davis, Life on a Mediaeval Barony, p. 36.
ILLUSTRATION III
A Thirteenth-Century Bed

Reconstructed by Viollet-Le-Duc, from a manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale. Drawing reproduced from Davis, p. 39.
were, for example, plagues of grasshoppers, locusts, caterpillers, and moths in the Middle Ages. Rats were a plague, and in houses made entirely of wood or thatch, the farmer found himself nearly defenseless against them. Wolves, too, were pests that ever plagued the farmer, and in winter when they sought their food in the open, cattle and sheep were in serious danger.

The Medieval farmer found himself equally defenseless against insects. Once they had settled upon his crops, he had no way to get rid of them; therefore, his superstition and faith led him to the Church. Consequently, we find country priests attempting to help rid the land of pestilence and plague. Two interesting examples of such maledictions are cited by Professor James Thompson. First from a bishop in the area of Troyes:

In the name of God, Amen. Complaint having been made by the inhabitants of Villenoce in the diocese of Troyes against the locusts and caterpillars and other such animals that have laid waste the vineyards of that place for several years and continue to do so, to the great detriment of the inhabitants of that and neighboring localities; and their request having been considered that the aforesaid animals should be warned by us /the bishop of Troyes/ and compelled by threats of ecclesiastical punishment to depart from the territory of the said town.
Now, therefore, we, by the authority which we exercise in this diocese warn the aforesaid locusts, caterpillars, and other animals, under whatsoever name, by these presents, under the threat of curses and malediction, to depart from the vineyards and lands of the said town of Villenoce by virtue of this sentence, within six days from the publication of this warning, and to do no further damage either there or elsewhere in the diocese of Troyes. But, if the above mentioned animals do not implicitly obey this our warning within the specified time, then at the expiration of the six days, by virtue of our said authority we will maledict them through this document, and curse them by the same. 25

The danger of economic loss for farmers in the thirteenth century is significantly illustrated by another interesting treatise of that time, Walter of Henley's Husbandry. There is in fact an echo of the ever present dangers that the Hali Meidenhad author expresses. Instructing his readers on the tillage of land and on the care of cattle, Walter reminds them to think on Christ and to keep God's commandments. And "with regard to the world," he says, "think of the wheel of fortune, how man mounts little by little to wealth, and when he is at the top of the wheel, then by mishap he falls little by little into poverty, and then into wretchedness." Therefore, Walter suggests, "if you can approve your lands by tillage or cattle or other means beyond the extent, but the surplus
in reserve, for if corn fail, or cattle die, or fire
befall you, or other mishap, then what you have saved will
help you. ¹²⁶

In light of the Hali Meidenhad author's appeal,
two sections of Walter of Henley's treatise are especially
interesting, for they show clearly the very difficult task
of maintaining livestock and the dire necessity of main­
taining them. Walter's advice in the following sections
indicates further that the fear of losing cattle discussed
by the Hali Meidenhad author was as vital a concern during
the times of Hali Meidenhad as it has been for preceding
and succeeding generations. First Walter tells how to
inspect cattle.

Sort out your cattle once a year
between Easter and Whitsuntide—that
is to say, oxen, cows, and herds—and
let those that are not to be kept be
put to fatten; if you lay out money
to fatten them with grass, you will
gain. And know for truth that bad
beasts cost more than good. Why?
I will tell you. If it be a draught
beast he must be more thought of than
the other and more spared, and because
he is spared and others are burdened
for his lack. And if you must buy
cattle, buy then between Easter and
Whitsuntide, for then beasts are spare
and cheap. And change your horses
before they are too old and worn out
or maimed, for with little money
you can rear good and young ones, if you sell and buy in season. It is well to know how one ought to keep cattle to teach your people, for when they see that you understand it they will take the more pains to do well.

In the following section he discusses how the Medieval farmer ought to keep his plough animals.

You must keep your plough beasts so that they have enough food to do their work, and that they be not too much overwrought when they come from the plough, for you shall be put to too great an expense to replace them; besides, your tillage shall be behindhand. Do not put them in houses in wet weather, for inflammation arises between the skin and the hair and between the skin and the wool, which will turn to the harm of the beasts. And if your cattle are accustomed to have food, let it be given at midday by one of the messers or the provost, and mixed with little barley, because it is too bearded and hurts the horses' mouths. And why shall you give it them before some one and with chaff? I will tell you. Because it often happens that the oxherds steal the provender, and horses will eat more chaff for food and grow fat and drink more. And do not let the fodder for oxen be given them in a great quantity at a time, but little and often, and then they will eat and waste little. And when there is a great quantity before them they eat their fill and then lie down and ruminate, and by the blowing of their breath they begin to dislike the fodder and it is wasted. And let the cattle be bathed, and when they are dry curry them, for that will do
them much good. And let the oxen be curried with a wisp of straw every day, and thereby they will lick themselves more. And let your cows have enough food, that the milk may not be lessened. And when the male calf is calved, let it have all the milk for a month; at the end of the month take away a teat, and from week to week a teat, and then it will have sucked eight weeks, and put food before it, that it may learn to eat. And the female calf shall have all the milk for three weeks, and take from it the teats as with the male. And let them have water in dry weather within the houses and without, for many die on the ground of a disease of the lungs for lack of water. Further, if there be any beast which begins to fall ill, lay out money to better it, for it is said in the proverb, "Blessed is the penny that saves two." 28

Although this passage is intended to illustrate the concern of the Medieval farmer for his livestock, it demonstrates also the great degree to which the female living in the Middle Ages was degraded. There is no reason to believe that a good heifer requires less milk than does a young bull.

The concept of a special reward for those who have remained chaste is well established by the time that the Mali Meidenhad treatise appears, and certainly no one could say that the author of Mali Meidenhad is not following convention when he emphasizes that reward. However, the substance of that reward is important, for
it illustrates clearly a particular kinship with the times during which the treatise was written.

Writers from all ages have sought to appeal to their audiences by regarding a heavenly reward in terms of the particular objects and practices that are most treasured and most needed by that audience during its moment in history. Those of us who have lived in impoverished areas of rural America among Christian fundamentalists have heard often of that great day when we will go through those heavenly gates to mansions on streets lined with gold. The Halí Meidenbad writer was equally aware of the tastes of his own audience when he told it of a reward in heaven.

A good example of this technique is his typically Medieval description of the crown that the maiden will wear in heaven. Crowns are commonplace throughout Christian literature; however, this crown is not common. "Le flurs þat beðo idrahe þron, ne þe þimstanes þrin, te tellen of hære euene, ne is na monnes speche" (ll. 327-328). The crown here described is one that would have been extremely appealing to a thirteenth-century maiden. Sketches on manuscripts of that period often depict women gathering flowers and making garlands and chaplets of flowers. See Illustration IV. Although this drawing is placed in the early part of the fourteenth century, there is little
ILLUSTRATION IV

reason to believe that a custom that had prevailed since Anglo Saxon times would not have been practiced during the early part of the thirteenth century.

Even more interesting in terms of thirteenth-century dress is William Davis's discussion in Life on a Mediaeval Barony. Davis is describing conditions on a barony in northern France at about A.D. 1220; nevertheless, "not many matters have been mentioned," says the author, "which were not more or less common to contemporaneous England." Headdresses were popular among both men and women. Whether citizens were attending state occasions or merely walking in their own houses, they might be wearing "a chaplet of flowers, or even a thin gold wreath of floreated design." The popularity of such headdresses during the Middle Ages would indicate that the young women to whom the author was directing his remarks would have been favorably impressed by the promise of flowers "idrahe bron." One can assume also that the maidens are likely to have been familiar with a wreath like that in Illustration V. And that garlands of flowers were rewards commonly given to those who were successful at games would make the phrase "kempene crune," which the author uses to refer to the heavenly crown, even more meaningful to a thirteenth-century reader. Thomas Wright has reproduced a scene in...
his Womankind in Western Europe illustrating the presentation of such rewards to winners of tournaments. According to Wright, such scenes as those like the one in Illustration VI were frequently portrayed upon ornamental objects which were part of the ladies' toilette, and especially upon the covers of mirrors, usually made of ivory. The difference in the size of the two rings held by the lady on the top right and on the lower left seems to bear out the view that the rewards were sometimes in the form of a collar.

ILLUSTRATION V

Wreath made of metal flowers sewed on braid, thirteenth century. Wright, A History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England During the Middle Ages, p. 91f.
ILLUSTRATION VI

Distributing the Prizes of the Tournament
Wright, Womankind in Western Europe, p. 165.
When the **Hali Meidenhad** author says that those who boast of their worldly goods live in misery because of their fear of losing that which they have struggled so hard to acquire, he again bases his argument on conditions that would have been extremely relevant to a thirteenth-century audience. First, he notes that "heoues hit stelen ham. Reaueres hit robbed" (11. 437-438). Travel was slow and hazardous in Medieval England, and extensive preparations were necessary to ensure protection against robbers and bandits. Travelers were safe only if they travelled in large groups. Perhaps it was partially the threat of attack that caused Giraldus Cambrensis to spend many days traveling from Powisland to Haughmond Abbey, near Shrewsbury, at the end of the twelfth century.\(^{31}\)

In fact, one can find considerable evidence to indicate that the danger that "heoues" and "reaueres" posed continued throughout the entire period during which **Hali Meidenhad** would have been written. Professor James Thompson in his *Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages* discusses the seriousness of the threat that robbers presented. "From the twelfth century on," says Professor Thompson, "we find many instances of the activity of governmental authority in behalf of road improvement. In 1135, Henry I of England issued an order that all highways
should be broad enough for two wagons to pass each other, or for sixteen soldiers to ride abreast. In 1285, a statute ordered that highways connecting the market towns should be cleared of woods and bushes for two hundred feet back on either side, that robbers might not find lurking places along the way. It is significant that the opening passage of Havelok the Dane, a work probably contemporary with Hali Meidenhad, contains a description of a King of England who was a good king because he rid the land of robbers. Unfortunately, the ranks of the robbers became a refuge for the desperate and dejected from all walks of life. Not only were fleeing criminals among their bands but mercenary soldiers who became brigands upon their release from the service.

That the Hali Meidenhad author would refer to lust engaged in a conflict with the intellect (God's daughter) with the phrase "feondes foster" shows again the topical relevance of the treatise. The idea of Lust as Satan's foster child would have been particularly meaningful to a thirteenth-century reader. Under the system of fosterage, Lust would have been strengthened by her attachment to the fiend, for not only was the Lord's household strengthened whenever a foster child came into his house, but also the foster child would have gained from the alliance. During
the Middle Ages men frequently sought to find overlords or men of great wealth and of high rank from whom their sons could learn refinement that they could not learn in their own homes. And it is significant indeed that the foster child's personal attachment and sense of duty to the foster father were often greater than they were to his natural father.  

Marc Bloch has said in his *Feudal Society* that it was rare for the son of a knight to be reared in his own father's house. Custom decreed that the father entrust his son to a lord in whose house the child could get instructions in the arts of war and hunting while performing the duties of a page. Furthermore, the child could learn courtly manners. Bloch has quoted from a legend of Garnier of Nanteuil, who served Charlemagne, in order to illustrate the practice of fosterage. "When to the woods the King repairs, the child goes too; Sometimes his bow he bears, sometimes his stirrup holds. If wildfowl lure the King, Garnier is by his side. Oft on his wrist the hawk or keen-eyed falcon sits. And when to rest the king retires, Garnier is there, beguiling him with song and old heroic lays."  

There is also in *Hali Meidenhad* an appeal to young women's revulsion toward physical deformities and
mental illness. And it is an appeal to which the nun of the thirteenth century is likely to have been receptive. The Hali Meidenhad author stresses that the knot of wedlock is binding and that the married woman cannot escape it though her husband be "cangun other crupel" (l. 480); moreover, he adds, the offspring of marriage might be deformed, "jif hit is misbornn, as hit ilone limpeth, and wont eni of his limen" (11. 503-504).

One finds some evidence to suggest not only that nuns frequently were exposed to deformed and half-witted persons but also, as one would suspect, that they resented having the handicapped forced into their care. In the convent one could conveniently leave daughters who suffered physical deformities and who were not wanted by their parents. Eileen Power has shown that the practice was common and that nuns were not always sympathetic toward the deformed or half-witted left in their care. "One of the reasons urged by the obstinate inmates of Stratford against receiving little Isabel Bret was that she was deformed in her person," notes Miss Power. And she points out that complaints about the presence of idiots were also numerous. "It is easy to understand the exasperation of Thetford," she says, "over the case of Dorthy Sturges, when one finds Dame Katherine Mitford complaining at the
It is probable also that there were other opportunities for the young ladies who inhabited convents to have encountered deformed persons. One suspects that prior to their entering the convent they had seen many deformed persons who performed as jugglers, a lower and more ribald class of entertainers than the minstrels. In addition to all their skills in story telling and singing, many of these men had physical deformities which made them even more distinctive.

Thomas Wright's account of John de Raumpaygne, a man who posed as a juggler in order to gain entry to the house of an enemy of his employer, includes an interesting description of the pretender's preparations. "He crushed an herb, and put it into his mouth, and his face began immediately to swell, and became so discolored, that his companions hardly knew him; and he dressed himself in poor clothes, and 'took his box with his instruments of joglery and a great staff in his hand and thus he went to Whittington and presented himself at the castle, and said that he was a jongleur."

One notes a topical flavor again in Hali Heidenhad as the author refers to the practice of witchcraft in
solving marriage problems. He notes that marriage does not bring happiness, but that once married, the woman must remain with her husband. Should she love her husband and he not return that love, she is sometimes tempted to resort to the extreme measures that woman had used for centuries to gain that love, measures that had become of some concern to the Church in the Middle Ages. She "medi wicchen, t forsaken, for to drahen his luue toward hire, crist t hire cristendom, t rihte bileaue" (11. 488-489). G. G. Coulton has included in his A Medieval Garner a document condemning superstitions that were condemned in the Poenitentiale of Bartholomew Iscanus, Bishop of Exeter, 1161-1186. Last among the beliefs and the magical practices which the bishop criticizes is one like that to which the Hali Meidenhad author was referring. "The priest," he says, "must enquire whether there be any woman who professeth to be able to change men's minds by sorcery and enchantments, as from hate to love or from love to hate...." If such a woman is found, he adds, she should "be chastised with birchen twigs and cast forth from the parish."38

Among the most interesting scenes reflecting the contemporary spirit of Hali Meidenhad, however, are those in which the author gives us glimpses of domestic life
in the thirteenth century. One of the most memorable of these scenes is one which is intended to show the trials of domestic life in order to discourage his readers from marriage. He speaks of the wife who is faced with the unnerving reality of hearing her child scream, of seeing the cat at the flitch, and the hound at the hide while her cake is burning on the fire, while the calf is sucking, the pot spilling into the fire (ll. 568-570). Such a portrayal illustrates once again the author's concern with appealing to his readers by using the detail which is familiar to them.

According to Thomas Wright, the particular combination described here in what must have been a cooking area strongly suggests Norman influence, and the sketch in Illustration VII below, though attributed to a slightly later date than Hali Meidenhad, is characteristic of that influence. It is likely similar to the scene the Hali Meidenhad author had in mind. Here one sees in a stylized drawing two flitches hanging, which would have been an overwhelming temptation to any cat, a pot which could have easily boiled over if unattended, and a dog which might well have been tugging at a hide were one available.

Perhaps the strikingly caustic tone, however,
ILLUSTRATION VII

Indications of Cold Weather

Reproduction taken from a carved stall in Worcester Cathedral. Wright, A History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England During the Middle Ages, p. 106.
prevents us from recognizing the kinship of Hali Meidenhad with other milder works on the same theme. Therefore, in order to see this kinship, which is based upon a similar use of material of topical relevance, one might look at two other works, "Luuv Ron" and "Of Clene Maydenhod," which focus upon similar subjects but which are not included in the Katherine group. If one looks closely at a poem written approximately a generation later than Hali Meidenhad, Thomas de Hales's "A Luuv Ron," he can see a work by a writer who likewise knew the effectiveness of appealing to contemporary interests and values. Moreover, "A Luuv Ron" illustrates that a most broad difference in tone does not deter its author from focusing upon those interests.

Like Hali Meidenhad, "A Luuv Ron" also stresses the superiority of the spirit over the flesh, and it, too, compares the merits of the heavenly "leofmon" with the faults of the earthly lover. The contemporary nature of Thomas de Hales's appeal is evident in the fourth stanza of his poem. Pointing to the transience of earthly life and earthly love, he says that every man must die despite his riches and despite his freedom. "Ne may hit neuer his waraunt beo./gold. ne seoluer. vouh, ne gray" (11. 27-28). To recognize, however, that this line is of
topical significance, one must note that Thomas de Males is using the same literary technique as is the Hali Meidenhad author. Thus, a comparison of the fourth stanza with the thirteenth and fourteenth makes one readily aware that the poet is alluding to conditions with which a young woman in the thirteenth century would be concerned. After describing Christ, the spiritual lover, in terms that would be especially attractive to the poet's female contemporaries,

He is richest non of londe
So wide so mon speketh, with muth.
Alle heo beoth to his honde.
est. and west. north. and suth.
Henri king of engelonde.
of hym he half. and to hym buhth.
Maybe to the he send his schonde.
   and wilneth for to be the cuth.

he adds,

Ne byt he with be lond ne ieode.
vouh. ne gray. ne rehcyan.
Naueth he bher-to. none ncode.
   he is riche and wel [I man].
If thu him woldest luue beode.
   and by-cumen his leouemon.
He brouhte the to suche wede.
   that naueth king ne kayser non.40
   (11. 97-112)

The Christ presented in the above stanzas has the same supreme sovereignty as that Christ which one finds
in Hali Meidenhad. Thomas de Hales has shown his readers a Christ before whom even King Henry would stop and bow. Using the same appeal, the Hali Meidenhad author writes of a Christ "that alle Kinges buheth" (11. 43-44) and who will enable his bride to become "of all the world lauedi, as he is of al lauerd" (1. 44). Moreover, that this Lord of Lords, this King of Kings that Thomas de Hales describes would require no dowry would be another meaningful incentive to thirteenth-century women. "Ne byt he with the lond he leode./ vouh. ne gra. ne rencyan" (11. 105-106). Again here is the same appeal that the Hali Meidenhad author makes when he refers to "be poure, bat beoð wacliche ʒeouen and biset uuele, as gentille wimmen mest alle nu o worlde, that nabbed hwer-wið buggen ham brudgume onont ham, and ʒeoueo into beowdom of an eʒelicher mon, wið al ʒat ha habbed" (11. 102-106).

Thomas de Hales again appeals to contemporary conditions as does the Hali Meidenhad author when he discusses the firm foundation on which Christ's dwelling stands. Not only is it fairer than any temple that Solomon wrought; it rests more firmly on the firmest of foundations. The earlier discussion of the tower-fiend motif and of the war tactics used by those who would attack the mighty towers of the Middle Ages becomes even
more relevant as we read in "A Luuv Ron" that "Hit stont vpon a treowe note/ thar hit neuer truke ne schal./ Ne may no Mynur hire vnderwrote./ ne neuer false thene grundwal" (11. 121-124). In addition, while emphasizing the impermanence of the flesh, he chooses a simile that likewise reflects the impact that archery had made upon the English people. And echoing the ubi sunt theme so meaningful throughout the Middle Ages, he observes that the greatest of men and women have passed away; Paris, Helen, Amadas, Tristan, Iseult, Hector, and Caesar, "beoth iglyden vt of the reyne./ so the scheft is of the cleo" (11. 72-72). Heaven, too, as described in "A Luuv Ron" likewise would have had much appeal to a thirteenth-century audience nurtured on feudalism. It is a place where one "ne non fur-leosen his iryhte" (1. 130). And the Christ whose dwelling has the strongest of foundations is the worthiest of lovers. "Nere he, maybe ful sealy./ that myhte wunye myd such a knyhte" (11. 143-144).

Although "A Luuv Ron" does not permit the full development that a treatise permits, nevertheless, it does remind one of the substance of the Hall Meidenhad argument as Thomas de Hales scorns those who would seek to lay up treasures on earth. "If mon is riche of worldes weole./ hit maketh his heorte smerte and ake./ If he dret
that me him stelo" (11. 57-59). Maidenhood is by far the greatest of treasures, and because it is greater than gold, it must be guarded against "theoves, riverers, and lechers" (1. 49). That the people of Medieval England lived in a very great fear of robbers and reivers has been discussed earlier in this chapter. And it was the awareness of both Thomas de Hales and the Hali Meidenhad writer of this threat that caused them to recognize the rhetorical value of appealing to these fears. We recall the Hali Meidenhad author's warning that those who toil to acquire earthly possessions watch over them in fear and worry constantly that "beoues hit stelen ham. Reaueres hit robbed" (11. 437-433).

One could scarcely find a stanza anywhere, however, that illustrates more completely the Christian writer's attempt to blend the religious with the secular than the one in which Thomas de Hales praises virginity, which he compares to a gemstone. "Mande, al so ich the tolde./ the ymston of thi bur./ He is betere an hundred folde./ than alle theos in heore cultur./ He is idon in heouene golde./ and is ful of fyn amur" (11. 177-182).

"Of Clene Maydenhod," too, treats the same theme as does Hali Meidenhad and "A Luuv Ron," and one finds a similar attempt to blend material of secular interest
with that of religious interest. Christ, for example, is again cast as a rival of the fleshly lover, and He is praised in terms that we have seen in Hali Meidenhad and "A Luuv Ron." Lines seventy-three through eighty-eight show both Christ's supreme sovereignty and His extreme generosity. And again virgins are reminded that the brides of this Lord of Lords need no dowry.

And certainly, one should not overlook the appropriateness of the word honey used by the author of "Of Clene Maydenhod." Like the author of Hali Meidenhad, he uses the word honey to represent the ultimate of sweetness or perfection. No more is anything comparable to Christ, says the author of "Of Clene Maydenhod," "then

Is non founden here in londe
That is so Riche Mon of ffee,
ffor more good he hath in honde
then herte may thinke of eise mai see;
Nis kyng, kniht, sweyn ne bonde
That heo to him bote Boxum be.
He hath I-send a derne sound
And desyreth to haue the Ioue of the.

He asketh with the mouther lond ne leode,
Gold ne seluer ne precious stone--
To such thinges hath he no neode,
Al that is good is with hyn one.
$j$if thou with him thi lyf wollt lede
And grante to ben his owne lenmon,
I wot full wel what worth thi meede:

fforsote, then heuene-riche won.41
(11. 73-88)
Galle is to the honystreme" (1. 62). The maiden, he continues, "that is clene of thouȝt" (1. 104) "non hony-Com that renned on streme/ Was neuer aet so swete wrouht" (11. 100-101). Referring to those who have told the maidens that they might find happiness in married life, the Hali Meidenhad author says that they "licked huni of þornes" (1. 98). Although the word honey is not so distinctly thirteenth century as the canopied or curtained bed, it is, nevertheless appropriate and effective for that time. It was, after all, at the time of the composition of both works still the major source of sweetener, and it was utterly essential. Professor Davis has said that there was a substance known as sugar in the thirteenth century; however, it was much too expensive to be used frequently in cooking and most likely too expensive to have been used by many persons. Consequently, he adds, the most common sweetener of the times was honey,\textsuperscript{42} supplied often by well-kept hives belonging to monasteries.

Doris Stenton has suggested also that it is unlikely that sugar was used by many persons during the early years of the thirteenth century. Although Henry II bought thirty-four pounds of sugar at the rate of nine pence a pound in 1176, and John spent three pounds on sugar and other spices in 1206, says Lady Stenton, such purchases were
G. G. Coulton has observed that honey was included in the tithes given to monks. And in his excellent study of the Domesday book Adolphus Ballard shows the extent to which honey was an essential commodity in Medieval England. Records of payments to sheriffs, for example, out of which were discarded duties to the king, frequently show honey among the goods to be taken as payment. "Edward the Sheriff of Wiltshire has the pence which pertain to the shrievalty, 120 pigs, and 32 bacons; 2 modii and 3 sextars of wheat, and as much malt; 5 modii and 4 sextars of oats; 16 sextars of honey, or 16s. in lieu thereof." Among the reasons for the value placed upon woods in the Middle Ages was that they were capable of producing honey. From the wood at Eling three sextars of honey were given to the lord, and from his wood at Malvern the Bishop of Worcester had hunting and honey, and whatever thence issued, and also 10s. The rents of the shrievalty of Wiltshire, says Ballard, included sixteen sextars of honey as a part of its payment.

When the authors of "Of Clene Maydenhod" and Hali Meidenhad use the word "honey" to refer to the sweetness of Christ or to the ultimate pleasure and advantage to be sought in marriage, they are indicating clearly that the
world in which they lived was acknowledged indeed and that they, as intensely Christian writers, recognized the rhetorical effectiveness to be gained by appealing to their readers' familiarity with the things of that world. No one should doubt that the Fathers' writings on virginity were a major influence upon the Mali Meidenhad author; they gave him his format, and they provided much of the scriptural exegesis which he used. Nevertheless, theirs was not the only influence. Towers, tactics of war, abuse of women, revulsion at physical deformities, canopied beds, diseases of cattle, robbers, garlands, fosterage, witchcraft, and honey, all very much a real part of thirteenth-century life, played an equally important rôle in his attempt to persuade consecrated virgins to honor their marriage to Christ.


3 I am referring to Bodley 34 for these lines, 30-31, because MS Titus D.18 is illegible at this point.


5 Ibid., pp. 149-150.


10 Ibid., p. 310.

11 Toy, p. 141.

13Eileen Power, Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 to 1535 (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 5-6.

14Ibid., p. 527.

15Ibid., p. 41.

16Ibid., pp. 34-35.

17See Kate Norgate, John Lackland (London, 1914).

18Stenton, p. 74.


21Both Latin and English from McKechnie, Magna Carta, p. 212.


25James Westfall Thompson, An Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages (New York, 1928), pp. 759-760.


27Ibid., p. 23.
28 Ibid., p. 25.

29 See Davis, Preface.

30 Ibid., p. 91.

31 Wright, A History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England During the Middle Ages, p. 326.

32 p. 571.

33 Ibid. It should be pointed out that behind the entire passage (II. 432-439), which discusses the threat of thieves, moths, and plagues, probably lies the famous passage from the sermon on the mount (Matthew vi. 19-20, possibly Luke x. 30, and John x. 7-12). Once again we have further evidence of the Halli Meidenhad author's ability to recognize the topical relevance of traditionally used scriptural passages.

34 Wright, A History of Domestic Manners..., p. 268.


36 Power, p. 33.

37 Wright, A History of Domestic Manners..., p. 179.


42 Davis, p. 119.
43 Stenton, p. 28.


46 Ibid., p. 204.
One observes in Hali Meidenhad what might appear to be abnormal contempt for the world manifesting itself in a caustic and vitriolic tone. In fact, the author of this interesting treatise has been referred to by his most distinguished editor, F. J. Furnivall, as a "ranter." The sharpness and ranting, however, are to be expected, for the Hali Meidenhad author was reacting to the spirit of his age, a spirit that emerged in the twelfth century with the rise of the universities, improved commerce, and the flourishing of courtly love literature. It was a worldly spirit, and it threatened the kind of Christian life that the Hali Meidenhad author was encouraging. As Willard Farnham has noted, it was "an age which was impulsively shifting its realm of values from Heaven to earth." It was, therefore, an age that forced the Hali Meidenhad author to ask that the consecrated virgin "penches til binaldest on heh to-war'd te muchele mede bat
neidenhad abided" (11. 243-244).

Apparently, there was good reason for these words, for contemporary with the rush of secular activity was a relaxation of morals within monasteries in England. The end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth century saw a growing spirit of sexual freedom which not only gained an unfavorable reputation for the clergy and nuns in England but which also called for reform. One can cite numerous examples of the breakdown of Church discipline, sufficient to encourage strong reforms by the Church leadership. In 1171, for example, Alexander III ordered the Bishops of Exeter and Worcester and the Abbot of Feversham to look into reports of misconduct on the part of Clarembald, abbot-elect of St. Augustine's of Canterbury. And their report verified suspicions. It showed that Clarembald had been brazen about his misconduct and that he had fathered seventeen bastards in one village. One recalls, likewise, that the wife of Chaucer's Miller is the daughter of "the person of the town" and that "she was yfostred in a nonnerye." Papal interference was needed at the nunnery of Avesbury in order to quell the scandalous conduct of the abbess there, who had borne three children. As if this scandal were not enough, it was reported that the
nuns were worse than the abbess.3

Yet there is further evidence of the general corruption of the monasteries. In the midst of this breakdown in discipline, the focaria (a person who shared a priest's quarters but who was not recognized as a lawful wife) was very much in vogue. And when King John sought to prevent Giraldus Cambrensis from being elected to the see of St. David's, he did not hesitate to seize the women of the cathedral who supported the election of Giraldus. Later, following the interdict that Innocent III had imposed upon John's kingdom, the king used this same method as a means of getting money from churchmen who were forced to buy their women back.4

Eventually, a greater problem resulted because the parish priests in England and Wales had arranged to have their benefices passed to their sons and their daughters married to the sons of other priests. Thus, in 1202 the Bishop of Exeter complained to Innocent III about the sons of parish priests seizing churches and claiming a right to hold them. Innocent responded by ordering the sons of the priests to be removed and to be disciplined without appeal.5 Such was the challenge to celibacy and such were the times during which the Hall Meidenhad author wrote.
In order to appreciate even better the tone and the reactionary spirit that lies behind Hali Meidenhad, one should consider another work which in many respects bears great similarities to Mali Meidenhad, Innocent III's De miseria humane conditionis, a work which Professor Donald R. Howard has said "may represent a backlash of religious sentiment, a warning which all must have felt against these worldly activities."6

Especially in Book I, which treats man's entrance into the human condition, one notes that the tone of De miseria humane conditionis frequently is similar to that of Mali Meidenhad. "Man was formed of dust slime, and ashes; what is even more vile, of the filthiest seed," says Innocent. "He was conceived from the itch of the flesh, in the heat of passion and the stench of lust, and worse yet, with the taint of sin."7 In Hali Meidenhad, the author explains the meaning of "thy father" from Psalm xiv.11, which asks that the virgin forget her own people and her father's house. "Thy father," he says, is "bat unheaw bat streonde he of bi moder, bat ilke unhende flesches brune, bat bearninde 3ede of bat lichomliche lust, bifohe bat wiatese werc, bat beaste-liche oederinge, bat schomelese somnunge, bat fulde of fulde stinkende t untohe cede" (11. 111-115).
In fact, throughout Hali Meidenhad, there are many examples of this same emphasis upon the foulness and filthiness of sexual intercourse. When a maiden loses control of her wits (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and feeling), she is susceptible to the "flesches fulde"; therefore, she should not be like those wives who "in bare wurðunge as eaueres forroteden" or those who "i þat ilke fule wurðinge, unweddeded, walewið, beoð þe deueles eaueres" (see 11. 174-183). Beastly copulation, he adds later, "for to kele þi lust wið fulde of þi licome" is nauseous (1. 353). And "al þat fule delit is wið fulde aleid, as tu turnest þin hond" (11. 356-357). Furthermore, he warns that she who begets a child must suffer, for "i þe streonunge þrof, is on earst hire flesch wið þat fulde ituked" (11. 497-498).

The frankness with which the Hali Meidenhad author discusses copulation is not new to Christian writers. Augustine, one of the greatest of all influences upon the Middle Ages, is equally candid. In De Civitate Dei, for example, in an attempt to refute the argument that the gods should be worshipped for the sake of eternal life, he ridicules the special offices of the gods. According to Augustine, the many gods who perform their many functions are more representative of buffoonery than they are
of divine majesty. And one example that best illustrates the validity of this assertion is his description of the first sexual union between a husband and his virgin wife.

So many gods are involved in the consummation, says Augustine, that they appear likely to get in each other's way. After Jugatinus presides over the marriage, after Domidicus ensures that the woman be brought home, and after Manturnae determines that the woman shall remain with her husband, the bride and groom are ready for the bed-chamber. Even after the groomsmen have departed, however, a crowd of deities remains in the bed-chamber to assist in the consummation; their presence supposedly will help the frightened woman more easily surrender her virginity.

There are the goddess Virginiensis, and the godfather Subigus, and the goddess-mother Prena, and the goddess Pertunda, and Venus and Priapus. What is this? If it was absolutely necessary that a man, labouring at this work, should be helped by the gods, might not some one god or goddess have been sufficient? Was Venus not sufficient alone, who even said to be named from this, that without her power a woman does not cease to be a virgin? If there is any shame in men, which is not in deities, is it not the case that, when the married couple believe that so many gods of either sex are present, and busy at this work, they are so much affected with shame, that the man is less moved, and the woman more reluctant? And certainly, if the goddess Virginiensis
is present to loose the virgin's zone, if the god Subigus is present that the virgin may be got under the man, if the goddess Irena is present that, having been got under him, she may be kept down, and may not move herself, what has the goddess Pertunda to do there? Let her blush; let her go forth. Let the husband himself do something. It is disgraceful that any one but himself should do that from which she gets her name. But perhaps she is tolerated because she is said to be a goddess, and not a god. For if she were believed to be a male, and were called Pertundus, the husband would demand more help against him for the chastity of his wife than the newly-delivered woman against Wilvanus. But why am I saying this when Priapus, too, is there, a male to excess, upon whose immense and most unsightly member the newly-married bride is commanded to sit, according to the most honorable and most religious custom of matrons?®

Scarcely can one imagine seeing anywhere, however, a stronger manifestation of the de contemptu mundi tone than that passage in which Innocent speaks of the food on which the child is nourished in the womb; it is a passage that clearly demonstrates the denigration of women.

Hear now on what food the child is fed in the womb: actually on menstrual blood, which ceases in the female after conception so that the child in her womb will be nourished by it. And this blood is reckoned so detestable and impure that on contact with it fruits will fail to sprout, orchards go dry, herbs wither, the very trees let go
their fruit: if a dog eat of it, he goes mad. When a child is conceived, he contracts the defect of the seed, so that lepers and monsters are born of this corruption. Wherefore according to the Mosaic law a woman during her monthly period is considered unclean, and if anyone approach a menstruous woman it is commanded that he be put to death. Because of this uncleanness it is further commanded that a woman keep away from the entrance to the temple for forty days if she bear a male child but for eighty days if she bear a female.9

Although there is no specific mention of menstrual blood in Hali Meidenhad, its tone is equally strong. When one reads the author's description of the physical anguish which woman must bear during her pregnancy and during the birth of a child, he will note great similarity in tone between the two works. The following passage from Hali Meidenhad is a refutation of any assertion that a woman might make concerning the joy of children. According to the author, the price one pays is much too great.

Ga we nu forōre! loke we hwuch wunne arisē berafter i burōrne of bearne, hwen ët streon i ët awakened ët waxēg. Hu moni earnōn anan awakened ër-wið, ët wurchēd ët wa inoh, fehteō ët bi seleu flesch, ët weorēd wið fele weanen ëo bin ahne cunde. Ëi rudic neb schal leanan, ët as gres grenen, ëin ehnen schulen doskin, ët under ëon wonnen; ët of ëi breines turnunge ëin heaued ake sere. Inwið ëi wombe, swelin ëhe bitte,
Among the more substantive similarities between Hali Meidenhad and De miseria humane conditionis, however, are those sections in which both writers speak of the possible disappointments that lie ahead for parents after their children are born. Innocent writes that many children would have been better off had they never been born. "Many are born with dwarfed limbs or without all their senses, a sorrow to friends, a disgrace to parents, an embarrassment to relatives," he says. And the Hali Meidenhad author writes that as soon as the child appears in life it brings more trouble to its mother than it does pleasure, "for jif hit is misborn, as hit ilome limpeð, and wont eni of his limen, oþer sun misfare, hit is sorhe to hire, and to al his cun schome, vpbrud in
uel mวด, tale bimong alle" (11. 503-505). And though the child should be born well, the mother is not even then free from worry "for nis ha neauer wiıtute care lest hit ne mis-feare, a dat owër of ham twa ear lose oër" (11. 506-508). Innocent has remarked that the mother "conceives the child with uncleanness and stench, bears him with sorrow and pain, nourishes him with toil and trouble, and watches over him without ceasing, always in fear."11

Because both Innocent III and the Hali Meidenhad author were expressing their contempt for a world that tended to emphasize the significance of material possessions, one is not surprised to find both authors condemning this practice. The likeness in content of those attacks is surprising, however. Writing on the miseries of the rich and the poor, Innocent regrets that persons are valued according to their wealth and that this system of evaluation causes the rich man to become tainted by his own wealth. "Toil in acquiring, fear in possessing, and sorrow in losing make him weary, distraught, always uneasy."12 The Hali Meidenhad author is also concerned about his reader's desire for worldly wealth. Even though men fear losing their possessions, they, nevertheless, covet more, "wido earmde biwinned hit, wido fearlac biwiteo
De Miseria de humane conditionis and Hali Meidenhad offer the same advice concerning lust and lechery. The Hali Meidenhad author says, "Wið ðære unþeawes, men mai stondinde fehten; Ah again lecchery, þu most turne þe rug ðif þu wult ouercumen, and wið fluht fehten" (11. 241-242). And Innocent's suggestion for defending against lust is the same. "Lust is never put to flight except by flight."13 Likewise, pointing to the corruption in monasteries, Innocent adds that lust attacks both young and old, "even priests, who embrace Venus at night and then worship the Virgin at dawn."14

Because of the severity of the tone in the writings of both Innocent III and the Hali Meidenhad author and because of their scorn of marriage and sexual intercourse, one might assume we are a thousand miles as well as two centuries removed from Chaucer's immortal Wife of Bath. She was indeed antithetical to the kind of woman that the Hali Meidenhad author was encouraging his readers to be. But it is this very antithesis that makes her relevant to a discussion of these two treatises. Her famous Prologue and Tale are masterful secular reactions to the writings on virginity that evolve from the Church
And certainly the voice of the Wife of Bath, like those of Innocent III and the Hali Meidenhad author, can be termed accurately a voice in reaction. She is a reaction to them.

We know that Chaucer knew well a great body of anti-marriage literature. Anyone who has read the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women can see something of the extent of that knowledge and can, in fact, discern evidence of Chaucer's familiarity with Innocent's De Miseria humae conditionis. There one reads that Chaucer "hath in prose translated Boece,/ And of the Wreched Engendrynge of Mankynde,/ As man may in pope Innocent yfynde" (11. 413-415). And one need not look far into the writings of those who encouraged women to remain virgin to see that the Wife of Bath is certainly justified when she says, "For trusteth wel, it is an impossible/ That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,/ But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,/ Ne of noon oother womman never the mo" (11. 688-691).

In great measure the Wife of Bath's Prologue is an affirmation of the tribulationes carnis (the Hali Meidenhad author emphasis them, too) and a parody of the traditional argument used by the writers of virginity treatises. Early in the Prologue the Wife leaves no
doubt that previous experiences have enabled her "to speke of wo that is in mariage" (1. 3). Thus, she believes that she is qualified to speak about that aspect of marriage most frequently stressed by many writers to encourage their readers to reject marriage.

As we follow the Wife's famous Prologue, we soon recognize that she was indeed familiar with the structure and traditional arguments of virginity treatises. One finds in her argument, for example, the very scriptural verses which had been of central concern in the treatises. The Wife, therefore, can well agree that "God bad us for to wexe and multiplye" (1. 28), the verse from Genesis i.28, which Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory were forced to explain or to rationalize. Following the command to wax and multiply is a reference to the famous advice of St. Paul from I Corinthians vii, in which Paul says that marriage is not for everyone; "every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (verse 7), but if one cannot contain himself and remain unmarried (as Paul), then he should marry, "for it is better to marry than to burn" (verse 9). The Wife wisely includes in her own defense, likewise, the statement that the Apostle Paul had no precept from the Lord concerning virgins. "He seyed that precept thereof had
he noon" (1. 21). Adding further support to her argument, she emphasizes that "poul dorst not commanden, ate leeste,/ A thyng of which his maister yaf noon heeste" (1. 74), and she reassures us that "this word is not taken of every wight" (1. 77).

The Wife, who is, of course, among those who do not take this word, for "nat every vessel al of gold" (1. 100), blends verses from I Corinthians vii and verses from Matthew xix, another chapter frequently cited in virginity treatises, to defend her conduct even further. Again it should be pointed out that the verses which she chooses are those which the writers of virginity treatises inevitably feel called upon to explain.

God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,
And everich hath of God a proper yifte,
Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte
Virginitee is greet perfeccion.
And continence eek with devocioun,
But Crist, that of perfeccion is welle,
Bad nat every wight he sholde go selle
Al that he hadde, and gyve it to the poore
And in swich wise folwe hym and his foore.
He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly;
And Jordynges, by youre leve, that am not I.
I wol bistowe the flour of al myn age
In the actes and in fruyt of mariage.
(11. 102-114)

The Wife's fruit of marriage is to be the Husband's chaff, however, and she leaves no doubt that the tribula-
tiones carnis, which in virginity treatises refer to the woman's plight, are to be suffered by her husband.
Indeed, her words sound very much like an echo of Hali Meidenhad as she says that he "shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,;/ And have his tribulacion withal;/ Upon his flesh, whil that I am his wyf;/ I have the power durynge al my lyf;/ Upon his propre body, and nought he" (11. 155-159).

The pattern is completely reversed from what we have seen in the writings on virginity, which show men profiting from their wives' dowries. According to the Wife of Bath, the husbands "had me yeven hir lond and hir tresoor" (1. 204). But we remember the Hali Meidenhad author's remarks about "the poure, þat beoð wacliche izeouen and biset uuele...þat nabbeð hwer-wið buggen ham brudgume anont ham" (11. 102-104). And alluding to man's sovereignty, Thomas de Hales had praised Christ who "ne but wiþ þe lond ne leode/ vouh. ne gray. ne rencygan" (11. 105-106). The author of "Of Clene Maydenhod" had given the same view of Christ. "He asketh wiþ þe nouper lond ne leode./ Gold ne seluer ne precious stone--" (11. 81-82).

Advising other wives how to nag their husbands, the Wife shows herself to be the very kind of woman to
whom Jerome refers as he summarizes the contents of *De Nuptis* (attributed by Jerome to Theophrastus). She recalls his own attack on her husband. "Sire olde kaynard, is this thyn array?/ Why is my neighbores wyf so gay?/ She is honoured ouer al ther she gooth;/ I sitte at hoom, I have no thrifty clooth./ What dostow at my neighbores hous?/ Is she so fair? artow so amorous?/ What rowne ye with oure mayde? Benedicite" (11. 235-241). A portion of Jerome's summary reads, "She a nagging wife/complains that one lady goes out better dressed than she: that another is looked up to by all: 'I am a poor despised nobody at the ladies assemblies.' 'Why did you ogle that creature next door?' 'Why were you talking to the maid?""

As she continues her instructions to other wives who may be listening, she reflects still more of Jerome's summary of Theophrastus' *De Nuptis*. Showing her anger at her husband's accusations and reflecting the popular tower metaphor, she says, "And if that she be fair, thou verray knave,/ Thou seyst that every holour wol hire have.... Thou seyst men may nat kepe a castel wal./ It may so longe assailed been over al./ And if that she be foul, thou seist that she/ For as a spaynel she wol on hym lepe, Til that she fynde son man hire to chepe" (see 11. 253-269). "Thou seist," she adds, "that oxen, asses, hors,
and houndes./ They been assayed at diverse stoundes;/ Bacyns, lavours, er that men hem bye,/ Spoones and stooles, and al swich housbondrye,/ And so been pottes, clothes, and array;/ Til they be wedded; olde dotard shrewe" (11. 285-291)! This entire section is taken nearly word for word from Jerome. The charges, of course, are dismissed by the Wife as coming from an "olde barel-ful of lyes" (1. 302)!

Neither can the Wife of Bath accept the many chastisements of women who have not dressed themselves according to the advice given in I Timothy ii.9, which warns women, she notes, against appearing "in tressed heer and gay peree,/ As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche" (11. 343-344). We recall that Tertullian had made a very strong point against elaborate dressing of the hair in De Cultu Feminarum\(^\text{17}\) and that Cyprian in De Habitu Feminarum had rebuked the daughters of Sion who were defiled by their hair adornments and elaborate head dresses.\(^\text{18}\) Despite the authority and the chastisement, however, the Wife of Bath replies to "thise wordes in the Apostles name" (1. 341). "After thy text, ne after thy rubriche," she says, "I woi nat wirche as muchel as a gnat" (11. 346-347).

The Wife of Bath also differs from those who would
follow the advice given by clerics to use wit (intellect) to overcome the temptations of the devil. Hali Meidenhad, we recall, had suggested that each maiden be reminded that "wit is hire scheld, under godes grace" and that "hwil be scheld is hal, bat is, te wisdom of bi wit," lust would not harm her. Wit, the author adds, is God's daughter; lust, however, is the fiend's foster child (see 11. 209-214). The Wife of Bath, too, is blessed with wit, and she is able because of this wit to convince her husband that she took her nightly walks merely to keep check on his wenches. "Al swich wit is yeven us in oure byrthe" (1. 400), she says. Her wit, of course, is not a shield; rather it enables her to force her husband to promise that he will pay ransom to her before she will permit him to "do his nycetee" (1. 412). "For wynnyng" she has endured his lust and feigned an appetite. "I broghte it so aboute by my wit" (1. 426), she adds.

The husband who chooses to have the Wife's "bele chose" must pay, however, and the Wife leaves no doubt that the choice has been his. All that she has has been for sale, and it for all who choose to buy, "wynne whoso may" (1. 414). Anyone so familiar with the traditional marriage-virginity arguments as was the Wife of Bath surely would have been familiar with one of the most frequently
debated of all scriptural verses used in these arguments, Matthew xix.12. Cyprian had used it in his De Habitu Virginum, Jerome in Adversus Jovinianum, and Augustine in De Sancta Virginitate. And in a restrained moment, the Hali Meidenhad author admits, "For wel wiste ure lauerd, bat alle ne nihten nawt halden i be hehe of maidenhades nihte: ah seide, ba he spec brof, 'Non omnes capiant uerbum: Ne underneomeo nawt,' quod he, 'his ilke word alle. Qui potest capere, capiat. Hwase hit me underneomen, underneome, ich reade,' quod he" (11. 270-274).

This Wife who so greatly emphasizes that Saint Paul gave no precept for virginity and suggests that he gave advice only, likewise rejects the traditional concept of the flower of virginity. The Hali Meidenhad author had praised maidenhood as "te biosme, bat, be ha canes fulliche forcoruen, ne sprute ha neauer cft" (11. 137-138). The Wife of Bath, who probably could not remember her own maidenhood anyway, rejects completely such pronouncements. Her flower is eternal. "If I woulde selle my bele chose, I koulde walke as fressh as is a rose" (11. 447-448).

Recalling her life with her fourth husband, the Wife has no feelings of guilt or regret, and once again she delights in showing that she has been influenced in no way by the advice frequently given for the protection of
women from vices. She has enjoyed wine precisely for the very reasons that others warned against it. Jerome, for example, had advised Eustochium that she should avoid wine as one should avoid poison because wine was "the first weapon used by demons against the young." From other vices one can escape, he says, "but this enemy is shut up within us, and wherever we go we carry him with us. Wine and youth between them kindle the fire of sensual pleasure. Why do we throw oil on the flame--why do we add fresh fuel to a miserable body which is already ablaze?" Cyprian similarly had counseled against the "drunken feast, by which the flame of passion is enkindled." The Wife, however, has only pleasant memories of her drinking days. "How koude I daunce to an harpe smale,/ And synge, iwis, as any nyghtyngale,/ Whan 1 had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn!" Therefore, she is furious to think that Metellius had struck down his wife because she drank wine. Had she been his wife, she would not have been stopped from drinking. Indeed, she relishes the effects of wine and demonstrates the truth of Jerome's observations. "And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke,/ For al so siker as cold engendreth hayl,/ A likerous mouth most han a likerous tayl./ In womnen vinolent is no defence,--/
This knownen lecchours by experience" (see 11. 457-468).
She is equally at odds with the advice frequently given to those who are encouraged to remain virgins by visiting sparingly. The Wife, in fact, boasts about making many visits throughout the countryside. Saint Ambrose had encouraged virgins to avoid visits, "for modesty is worn away by intercourse, and boldness breaks forth, laughter creeps in, and bashfulness is lessened, whilst politeness is studied." Silence, he adds, commends the virgin's modesty. Likewise, he asks that virgins abstain from "groans, cries, coughing, and laughter at the Mystery." Modesty should keep the virgin's mouth closed. Cyprian, too, had asked that virgins refrain from visits or from attending functions that might cause them to be tempted. Some virgins, he says, "are not ashamed to attend weddings and, in the freedom of the wanton discourse there, to take part in the unchaste conversation, to hear what is unbecoming, to say what is not allowed, to look on and to be present in the midst of disgraceful talk and drunken feasts, by which the flame of passion is enkindled, and the bride is incited to tolerate and the bridegroom to become emboldened in lust." The Wife of Bath has shown no such restraint as either Ambrose or Cyprian suggested. In fact, she goes to these forbidden places for the very reasons that virgins
are asked to stay away from them.

So often tynes I to my gossyb wente,
For evere yet I loved to be gay,
And for to walke in March, Averill, and May,
Pro hous to hous, to heere sondry tayls—
That Jankyn clerk, and my gossyb dame Alys,
And I myself, into the feeldes wente.
Myn housbonde was at Londoun al that Lente;
I hadde the bettre leyser for to playe,
And for to se, and eek for to be seye
Of lusty folk. What wiste I whet my grace
Was shapen for to be, or in what place?
Therfore I made my visitaciouns
To vigilies and to processiouns,
To prechyng eek, and to thise pilgrimages,
To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages,
And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.
Thise wormes, ne thise morrhes, ne thise mytes,
Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel;
And wostow why? for they were used weel.
(11. 544-562)

If Tertullian's writings on the dress of women were in Jankyn's famous book, the Wife of Bath might well have seen both her conduct and her dress condemned. Frowning upon those Christian women who dress extravagantly for the purpose of being seen in crowds, Tertullian says, "It is for the sake of all these public gatherings, and of much seeing and being seen, that all poms (of dress) are exhibited before the public eye; either for the purpose of transacting the trade of voluptuousness, or else of inflating the 'glory.'" Furthermore, Tertullian has advised Christian women that the powerful city presiding over the
seven mountains and many waters is referred to as a prostitute, and that it is compared to that one who is said in the book of Revelations to sit "in purple, and scarlet, and gold." 25

It is not surprising that one showing as much familiarity with and as much contempt for the arguments put forth by those who condemned marriage and praised virginity should tell a tale not only about woman's sovereignty but also a tale that would to some degree mock and refute those arguments. And the exemplum that she offers her listeners leaves no doubt that her contempt is great for the holy friars who continue to expound the tradition which she deplores. She resents the friars' having undercut the courtly spirit of romance that flourished "in th' olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour," a spirit which has been supplanted by "grete charitee and prayers/ Of lymtours and othere hooly freres." It is they, she knows, who are responsible for the present "safety" that women know. "Wommen may go now saufly up and doun./ In every bush or under every tree/ Ther is noon oother incubus but he,/ And he (like his forebearers) ne wol doon hem but dishonour" (11. 378-381).

The Wife prefers that older time when such conditions did not prevail. Thus, she tells of a young knight
from the house of King Arthur who robbed a maiden of her maidenhead despite her pleas and who, therefore, finds himself totally dependent upon women for his very life. And the knight's attempts to save his life by finding what women desire most provide a much wanted opportunity for the Wife to admit candidly and unregretfully to some of the accusations made against women by the Fathers who wrote on the subject of virginity. When "somme said" that women's hearts are most eased when they are flattered and pleased, the Wife concurs. "He gooth ful ny the sothe, I wol nat lye./ A man shal wynne us best with flaterye;/ And with attendance, and with bisynesse,/ Been we ylymed, both moore and lesse" (11. 931-934). We recall again at this point Jerome's paraphrase of Theophrastus, which one suspects would have been ample reason to incite the Wife of Bath to tear at least three pages from Jankyn's book. Likewise, the Wife does not refute the testimony of those who say that women love riches, honor, or rich array (see 11. 925-927). And it is likely that her admission, "trewely ther is noon of us alle./ If any wight wol clawe us on the galle/ That we nel kike" (11. 939-941), is directed toward those who will speak no good of wives.

As the knight returns with the answer that the "olde wyf gave him," many are assembled there to hear that
answer, and the Wife's account of that assemblage is especially significant. It is important to note that they are not merely women waiting; rather they are "ful many a noble wif, and many a mayde,/ and many a wydwe, for that they been wise" (11. 1026-1027). Furthermore, when the knight announces that "wommen desiren to have sovereynetee,/ As wel over hir housbond as hir love,/ And for to been in maistrie hym above" (11. 1038-1039), we are told that "in al the court/ Ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,/ Ne wydwe, that contraried that he sayde,/ But seyden he was worthy han his lyf" (11. 1043-1045).

Again, familiar with the writings of those who constantly proposed that virginity was superior to marriage in the scale of perfection, the Wife of Bath would have been well aware of the significance of having wives, maidens, and widows hear the knight's response. We remember, for example, that the grades of chastity were a major concern of the writers of virginity treatises and that these writers frequently assigned virgins, widows, and wives to categories which they labeled "hundred-fold, sixty-fold, thirty-fold fruit." Jerome regarded virgins as hundred-fold, widows as sixty-fold, and wives as thirty-fold; Cyprian chose martyrs as hundred-fold while relegating virgins to the sixty-fold category; Augustine will admit
to the possibility of the ranking orders of both Jerome
and Cyprian; and the Mali Meidenhad author is certain that
"wedlac haued hire frut britti-fald in heuene; widewehad,
sixti-fald; Maidenhad, wid hundred fald, ouer-gead bade"
(11. 333-334).

Bearing in mind this ranking procedure, we are
perhaps better able to appreciate the sting of the Wife's
calculated insult by placing "many a noble wif, and many a
mayde,/ And many a widwe" in the assemblage which awaited
the knight's answer. That the Wife should in both instances
place wives first in the order of the three groups could
hardly be construed as merely coincidental; moreover, we
should not miss noting that it is the wife in the group
who is "noble." Finally, when the Wife of Bath says that
the three groups all agreed in unison upon the correctness
of the knight's answer, she has dealt her opponents the
most severe blow of all. She has linked three groups,
which the Church and its spokesmen traditionally had placed
in distinctive categories, by suggesting that all women
are actually alike when sovereignty is a concern. And by
suggesting that they are so bound together, she surely has
lent support to Jovinian, her own chief offender's foe,
who opposed the concepts of grades of perfection and de-
grees of heavenly rewards.
Later as the old wife lies in bed with the knight awaiting his advances, we are reminded again of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and her boasts that her wit (unlike the *Halie Meidenhad* wit that shields against lust) has enabled her to yield to lust in order to exact ransom out of her husbands. Thus, when the knight in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* refuses to turn toward the old wife, but rather "walweth" and "turneth to and fro" (1. 1085), we should not be surprised to hear the old wife say to the young knight, "Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit" (1. 1095).

The most memorable passage in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, however, is the famous gentillesse speech, which is essentially a putting into practice of the technique which the *Wife* touches upon only briefly in the *Prologue*. When she tells how she managed to convince her first three husbands "that they must yeve it up, as for the beste,/ Or elles hadde we nevere been in reste" (11. 427-428), she is parodying another argument that is characteristic of the virginity treatise. Those who encouraged women to remain virgins sought frequently to show that the virgin life, which seemed to many to be poor and difficult, was actually rich and rewarding.

The *Halie Meidenhad* author is no exception to this practice, as we observe, when he points to the distinction
between the flesh and the spirit. "Se hende is ure lauerd, 
\[ \hat{b}at \ nule \ nawt \ \hat{b}at \ hise \ icoren \ beon \ \hat{w}i\&ute \ mede \ her. \ for \ se \ mu\&che \ confort \ is \ in \ his \ grace, \ \hat{b}at \ al \ ham \ fit, \ \hat{b}at \ ha \ feo\&; \ And \ tah \ hit \ \&unche \ \o\&re \ men \ \hat{b}at \ ha \ drehen \ harde, \ hit \ ne \ greue\& \ ham \ nawt, \ al \ \&uncheo \ ham \ softe; \ and \ habbe\& \ mare \ delit \ \&rin \ \o\&en \ anie \ \o\&re \ habbe\& \ i \ likinge \ of \ the \ world" 
(11. 74-79). Consequently, the spouses of Christ are free of the world's troubles because they are in the service of Christ. They have no needs, despite what others may think. They are content with that which God provides for them. The misfortune of the world cannot do them harm, "for ha beo\&e \ riche \ and \ weolefule \ inw\& \ in \ the \ herte" (see 11. 425-431). Those who have the world's riches have nothing "bute ha poure beon \&rin, with halinesse \ of \ heorte."

The Wife of Bath was familiar with this technique; and when she attempts in the Prologue to convince her husbands that "they must yeve it up, as for the best," she is parodying the conventional sufferance argument. Her words have a familiar (and blasphemous) ring.

Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke!  
Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,  
And han a sweete spiccd conscience,  
Sith you so preche of Jobes pacience.  
Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche;  
And but ye do, certain we shal yow teche  
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees  
Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees;
And sith a man is moore resonable
Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable.
What eyleth you to grucche thus and grone?
(11. 433-442)

It is the complaining and the groaning of the young knight that precedes the hag's gentillesse speech. The knight, who cannot bear to pay his marriage debt to one "so loothly, and so oold" and "of so lough a kynde," proves himself in need of and eventually vulnerable to an argument stressing the disparity between the appearance of earthly merits and the reality of true worth of those who might be outwardly poor but spiritually rich in God's grace. Innocent has emphasized this point several times in De miseria de humane conditionis. Writing on the miseries of the rich and the poor, he shows disappointment that "a person is valued according to his wealth, when wealth should be valued according to the person: a man is thought as good as he is rich, and as bad as he is poor." Rather, he adds, "we should think him as rich as he is good, and as poor as he is bad."26

Again he discusses the same point as he speaks of the injustice so often born by the poor. He rebukes those who "pay no attention to the value of a case, but to the value of a person; not to laws but to bribes."27 According to Innocent, pride causes man to become blind
to the true meaning of good, for as soon as he gains fame, he regards himself as better than others. "Yet," he says, "it is not rank but virtue that makes a man good; not office but character." 28

Innocent's remarks on judging human beings sound very much like those of the old wife, and when she gives her gentillessesse speech, she is reflecting a vital part of the tradition that grew out of the writings of the Fathers. She is pointing to the important difference between the spirit and the flesh, and she is showing, as does Mål Meidenhad, that those who appear to be poorest in earthly riches are often richest in Christ. She begins her speech by pointing to pride, and she notes that gentillessesse does not come from earthly riches; instead "crist wole we clayne of hym oure gentillesse/ Nat of oure eldres for hire old richesse" (11. 1117-1118). And in lines that remind us greatly of Mål Meidenhad and the appeal to women who might have feared disparagement at a time during which King John was selling wards, the Wife adds, "Foe thogh they ēlde∑e yeve us al hir heritage,/ For which we clayne to been of heigh parage,/ Yet may they nat biquethe, for no thyng,/ To noon of us hir vertuous lyvyng" (11. 1119-1122).

That which Christ bequeathes endures, the old wife
observes, and she further emphasizes the familiar distinction between the spirit and the flesh by saying, "That of hym we clayme oure gentillesse;/ For of oure eldres may we no thyng clayme/ But temporel thyng, that man may hurte and mayme" (11. 1131-1132). And when the old hag discusses poverty and patience, she once more echoes lines 433-442 of the Prologue and uses a traditional argument. She stresses that she should not be scorned because she is poor. "The hye God, on whom that we bileeve,/ In wilful povertte chees to lyve his lyf," and certainly, she says, Jesus would not choose a vicious life. Therefore, she suggests, "Glad povertte is an honest thyng, certeyne" (see 11. 1177-1183). The hag is following the same technique that the Wife followed; she is attempting to make the knight believe that he should "yeve it up, as for the beste" (1. 427), and she is using nearly the same words. To a knight who "wol nat been amenden nevere mo" (1. 1099), she says that poverty is "a greet amendere eek of sapience/ To hym that taketh it in pacience" (11. 1196-1197).

Following the famous gentillesse speech, the old wife not only repeats the Wife of Bath's Prologue regarding the dangers of being married to a fair woman, but she likewise shows how the very argument of Theophrastus with slight alteration can be used to woman's advantage. "Now
ther ye seye that I am foul and old,/ Than drede you nought to been a cokewold;/ For filthe and eelde, also moot I thee,/ Been grete wardeyns upon chastitee" (11. 1213-1216). The knight has been forced to choose between having a wife who is foul and old, "or elles," as the hag says, "ye wol han me yong and fair,/ And take youre aventure of the repair/ That shal be to youre house by cause of me,/ Or in som oother place may wel be" (11. 1123-1126).

Viewed together, the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale*, Innocent III's *De nisleria de humane conditionis*, and *Hali Meidenhad* provide yet more evidence of the timelessness of man's passions. Bound by a tradition which grew out of the writings of the Church Fathers, sustained by the personality and craft of its author, and intensified by a tone of reaction, *Hali Meidenhad* can contribute to every man's better understanding of the folly and tragedy of his own conduct as he struggles to interpret the meaning of his existence in that grand scheme which we call the human condition.
FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV


4Ibid., p. 344.

5Ibid., p. 347.


7Book I, Chapter i. All subsequent English quotations of Innocent III are from Howard's edition; the Latin is quoted from Michelle Maccarrone's edition of De Miseria Humane Conditionis (Rome, 1955). The Latin text: Conceptus in pruritu carnis, in fervore libidinis, in fetore luxurie: quodque deterius est in labe peccati.


9Book I, Chapter iv.

10Book I, Chapter v.

11Book I, Chapter vi.

12Book I, Chapter xv.

13Book II, Chapter xxii.
Book II, Chapter xxii.


Book I, Chapter xlvii.

Book II, Chapter vii.

Chapter VI.

See Cyprian, Chapter IV; Jerome, Book I, Chapter xii; Augustine, Chapter I.

Letter XXII, Chapter viii.

De Habitu virginitum, Chapter XVIII.

Concerning Virgins, Book III, Chapters ix and xiii.

De Habitu virginitum, Chapter XVIII.

De Cultu Feminarum, Book II, Chapter xi.

De Cultu Feminarum, Book II, Chapter xii. Cyprian makes this same point in De Habitu Virginitum, Chapter XII.

Book I, Chapter xv.

Book II, Chapter iv.

Book II, Chapter xxx.