

Pious vs. Holy: The Relationships and Differences Between the Lives of Laywomen and the Lives of Female Saints That Depict the Evolution of Sanctity in Byzantium

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Those holy women who came to be revered in Byzantium demonstrate that there were many paths to sanctity in the Christian East. Sanctification¹ was a possibility not just for consecrated virgins, but for wives and mothers, and even for former prostitutes.

— Alice-Mary Talbot, "Women"

"The arena of virtue...is open to women no less than to men, and God the prize-giver generously grants the rewards and victory crowns to both sexes equally. Neither sex, nor fortune, nor weakness of the body, nor differences in station, nor anything else is an obstacle for entering the contests to those who desire to do so...nor does the master of the games accept those who have chosen celibacy over those who bear the yoke of marriage."² This quote, from the *vita* of Saint Mary the Younger, addresses the question of what constituted sanctity in Byzantium, especially, what constituted *female* sanctity. Estimated to have been written after 1025 A.D., the *vita* of St. Mary the Younger provides historians with an essential key to unlocking this mystery.³ Earlier Christian women saints were either martyrs, ascetics, or at least celibate; however, St. Mary the Younger achieved sainthood even though she was a married laywoman with children.⁴ What brought about this change in the requirements of sanctification for women? I propose that a combination of several factors, which will be elaborated on later, led to the *reluctant* sanctification of a handful of married women. The change in the characteristics necessary for female sanctity from asceticism to simply the requirement of living a good secular life, which can be seen in the selection of *vitae* used in this study, along with the lack of more laywomen saints like St. Mary, aid the argument that the change in what constituted female sanctity in Byzantium was a reluctant experiment, one that the church deemed unnecessary to continue further. To prove this, it is necessary to examine the *vitae* of several female saints who can be representative of differing reasons for sanctity. Additionally, it is important to illustrate how these women, who became the models of Christian ideals, reflected or molded the societal values that affected the lives and religious commitment of laywomen in Byzantium.

The evolution of the characteristics of sainthood can be examined somewhat

chronologically through the lives of St. Synlectica, a 'desert mother' of early Byzantium and through the changes in female sanctity that appear in the *vitae* of St. Mary the Younger and St. Thomaïs of Lesbos, two married laywomen that achieve sanctity although they remained married, lived in the secular world, and in St. Mary's case, bore children, whose *vitae* were written around the tenth century. It is also imperative that, while studying what made these women "holy" in the eyes of the Byzantine Orthodoxy, one also must investigate the relationships between the values present in the *vitae* and those that affected laywomen of the time. It is important, however, to restrict analysis of this topic to urban women because the few existing primary sources concerning women seem to revolve exclusively around city life. This study will utilize the *vitae* of the female saints mentioned above, along with several other primary sources, in an effort to elaborate on the changes in reasons for female sanctity, in order to draw connections between these religious changes and what was occurring at the time in Byzantine secular society. Furthermore, the focus of this work is on the changes in the characteristics of female sanctity, which occurred between the ninth and eleventh centuries A.D.; nevertheless, to fully examine the reasons for this change, earlier periods in Byzantine history must also be studied to some extent.

The first female saints were martyrs to the persecution of the Christian faith. These women martyrs were able to achieve sanctity along with men because only "under persecution could women realize an equality with men; neither the imperial authorities nor Christians themselves recognized any difference of sex in this context of suffering."⁵ However, martyrdom as a method for achieving sanctity ended with the decline of the persecution of Christians in the fourth century.⁶ From then on, prevalent in *vitae* of female saints is the necessity of having "male" characteristics to make oneself holy. Most female saints were martyrs, ascetics, or hermits, like Synlectica, a 'desert mother.' She lived as a hermit in the Jordanian Desert during the early period of Byzantium, and when discovered by Silas, she appears to be a man, or a eunuch, but not a woman, so dedicated to asceticism she had been.⁷ "The ideal for saintly women was to deny their femininity and emulate men; some female ascetics [like Synlectica] ate so little that their breasts shriveled up and their menstrual periods ceased."⁸ Thus, through starvation, they made their bodies into as "male" a vessel as possible, and they did this to combat the negativity associated with being female in the quest for sanctity. Neophytos the Recluse, the creator of the monastery of the Enkleistra near Paphos in Cyprus, was considered a "Cypriot holy man," and he wrote a good deal on women and sanctity in the twelfth century.⁹ "Saintly women require not only a denial of sexuality (as is the case with male saints), but a denial of their very sex. In the light of which it is justified to conclude that Neophytos' 'good women' are 'good' precisely because they have ceased to be 'women'."¹⁰ He also removes femininity from those women he deemed "good" by neutralizing their sexuality through emphasis on their virginity, old age, or unmarried status.¹¹ If that which gives woman her sexuality is removed, then she "has been rendered powerless—therefore good."¹² Furthermore, for Neophytos, the preservation of virginity in women became the defining characteristic of those virgin women who achieved sainthood. "Even though other means of achieving sanctity are acknowledged, virginity is by far their most often praised qualification, placed higher

than even female saint's faith or martyrdom."¹³ Taking on the characteristics of a man or an un-gendered person, was a reoccurring task that early Byzantine female saints had to accomplish to achieve sanctity.

The rejection of female sexuality that was essential to female saints like Syncletica became a model for Byzantine women who sought a alternative to marriage. "Christianity certainly offered women some scope for involvement in the life of their community. In particular, they found a role in the ascetic life... 'Christianity became a liberating force in the lives of women' via the search for God through renunciation."¹⁴ The church supported women who chose virginity and a life committed to God over marriage. "The threat of marriage and ensuing procreation frequently prompted women to assert their spiritual vocation. Since celibacy was still held to be superior to the exercise of sexuality, they continued to commit their virginity to Christ in a ceremony that established the spiritual equivalent of marriage...the expression of a strong religious commitment could transform the regular pattern of female existence."¹⁵ Additionally, it was not uncommon for women to have been married, had children, and once their children had grown, then become celibate and enter a convent to devote themselves to Christ through an ascetic existence.¹⁶ Although asceticism became a model for women in Byzantium, the majority of women were by no means encouraged to venture forth into the desert like Syncletica, for not only could they endanger themselves, they could also disrupt the hermitages of male monks and become a sexual temptation; instead, women "were urged to create their own 'desert', a place free from the demands of the world, within their own home or in a house shared with other women."¹⁷ Therefore, ascetic women most often entered convents or at least lived with other ascetic women. These female groups formed a sort of replacement for the family these women had to renounce because of their ascetic form of religious commitment, which separated them from the majority of women who lived as wives and mothers.¹⁸

Piety, however, was a unifying ideal characteristic for Byzantine women, whether they were nuns or wives, because it was a socially acceptable form of religious commitment. Piety, as understood in this study, is a characteristic that was highly valued in Byzantium and was displayed through Christian acts, such as prayer and charity. Charity was the most common means of displaying piety in women. "Charity was an activity that everyone was supposed to perform in imitation of Christ and his saints, and...giving to the poor (or to the church) amounted to giving to Christ."¹⁹ Additionally, because hagiography consistently depicted charity as an important saintly characteristic, people were compelled to emulate saints through philanthropic activities.²⁰ Though men did partake in charitable activities, it was women, especially, who were known for it; Angeliki E. Laiou, in her article, "Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women," states that "the blend of pragmatism and piety is, I think, particularly striking in the case of women."²¹ Laiou then sees pious acts as an integral and rather socially required of "good women." This was probably true because charity was one of few socially acceptable reasons for women to leave the home and enter the public realm so that they could interact with people outside their families.²² Charity was also acceptable for women because it was a religious activity, which seems to be the only reason that well-bred women, in particular, were allowed to intermingle with their community, though

most women of means gave charity in the form of donations of funds.²³ Furthermore, "Christian women...inherited a tradition of service dedicated towards the relief of poverty and illness, creating forms of a more private religious expression..."²⁴ That women's religious commitment occurred increasingly in the private and domestic realm was a product of the limitations that men and the church placed on women's ability to hold official, public positions in the church.

The only official position that women were able to hold in the church was that of deaconess, which was developed in the early days of Christian Byzantium. The church held that deaconesses had to be over the age of sixty (or later, forty) and have been known as extremely pious women.²⁵ Thus, the women who were allowed to partake in this official role in the church had been sufficiently desexualized by old age and menopause. Originally, when the Byzantine Empire was first Christianizing, women were needed to baptize adult women through triple immersion because modesty and decency dictated that male priests could not do this.²⁶ However, once infant baptism became the norm, deaconesses were no longer needed to fulfill this capacity. They then became simply a group of women who were known as nurses, givers of charity, in effect, social workers, and they survived as an order until the twelfth century.²⁷ It is important to understand that the order of deaconesses was small, and that most Byzantine women performed charity within their domestic role as wife and mother.

As discussed, piety in women was most commonly expressed through charity, a rather private form of religious commitment. Piety in Byzantine women increasingly occurred in the domestic realm, thus reflecting the change in the tenth century in what was considered "holy" according to the hagiographical texts concerning female saints. At this time, a handful of female saints, especially St. Mary the Younger who lived in the tenth century, found sanctity through living good "female" lives in the domestic realm of society. Charity and pious activities, such as church attendance and prayer became defining *saintly* characteristics for these elevated women. That women such as St. Mary the Younger and St. Thomaïs of Lesbos were elevated to sainthood is especially important because they were *married* women who remained married and were still seen as able to become saints. Because this was such a departure from the traditional ideas of female sanctity, such as the need for virginity, or at least chastity, and asceticism, the *vitae* of these married women who became saints are extremely valuable to the historian seeking to discover the ideals that Byzantine society held for women. At least locally, these pious housewives, inspired cults. St. Mary and St. Thomaïs "provided attractive role models for the secluded women of the Byzantine Empire. Asceticism in remote hermitages or even retirement to a convent was not an option for many women, but most could identify with Thomaïs and Mary, emulate their piety and charity, and if necessary, bear with fortitude the miserable existence of a 'battered wife.'²⁸ This is especially mentioned in the *vita* of St. Mary when all the women of Vizye came to her deathbed.²⁹ Obviously, charity and prayer are among the most pious activities that these women partook in, but beyond that, their *vitae* depict them as good *secular* women, as good wives and mothers, even though they were beaten by their husbands. "The cases of St. Mary and St. Thomaïs showed that it was possible to achieve sanctity outside the confines of a hermitage or convent, through unusual devotion to the poor as well as patient endurance of adversity."³⁰

Additionally, the *vitae* depict the domesticity of St. Mary the Younger and St. Thomaïs of Lesbos. St. Mary is described as, "the image of meekness, the pillar of moderation, the exemplar of love of God, the model of charity, the paradigm of piety for everyone."³¹ While also portrayed as "flushed with the proper modesty with regard to all," St. Mary is the image of a good wife because of "her good housekeeping, her industriousness, the plainness and simplicity of her dress, her temperance at the table, and all other artless <aspects of her life>."³² St. Thomaïs was known for her skill at weaving and for withstanding the beatings of her husband well.³³ These two women, St. Mary the Younger in particular, are portrayed as saints whom could most likely be emulated by other women. They display the valued characteristics of piety and modesty, among other qualities, that Byzantine laywomen could aspire to. Unlike many other female saints, St. Mary lived a good secular life; it would be much more realistic for other women to seek to imitate her charity toward others and her devotion to her husband than it would be to leave their lives behind and try to live like Syncretica as a desert ascetic. However, true as this may be, the *vita* of St. Mary the Younger does make mention of the worth of fasting, though nowhere near the extent that the ascetics took it. "As for her diet, when her husband was with her, she observed only the forty-day fasts. But when he was away on campaign, she abstained from meat at all times, pretending it was because of her husband's absence, but in truth because of the benefits of fasting."³⁴ This is an example of how she, and St. Thomaïs as well, endeavored to live a "semi-monastic" life within their domestic and secular lives.³⁵ Although the *vitae* of St. Mary and St. Thomaïs, demonstrate these traits of the former standard of asceticism, they are not the focus and are not cited as the reason these pious housewives were sainted. No, these women were sainted because they were the image of holinesses and piety within the realm in which society dictated they should exist. "Despite everything [beatings] they uphold the ideal of Christian marriage. Their example gave spiritual value to a woman's role in marriage, which, if not lacking, was underplayed...this model of the good wife replaced that of the female ascetic as the ideal of female sanctity."³⁶ For this reason, it follows that women and the family were becoming increasingly important in Byzantine society.

Perhaps the characteristics that constituted female sanctity did not change; rather, they were created. If early female saints only achieved sanctity by denying their very gender, their femininity, then can it not be considered that they became saints because they ceased to be women? The church saw fit to elevated them to sainthood because they had cleansed themselves of both their femininity and very womanness, in other words, what made them unfit for sainthood, and in their quest for holiness, they became, in essence, men. Therefore, when the church elevated married and rather youthful women who were also mothers in the tenth and eleventh centuries to sainthood, it can be interpreted that they were, for the first time, deeming that women could achieve sanctity as women and not only as women emulating men. However, this change in dogma was reluctant, and though it occurred with the sainthood of St. Mary the Younger and St. Thomaïs of Lesbos, few, if any, other women achieved sainthood under similar circumstances. Additionally, St. Mary the Younger and St. Thomaïs of Lesbos, the married women saints, never gained much popularity among the women of Byzantium, their cults remained local, their Lives

only survive in one or two copies, and few, if any, icons of them are known.³⁷ Perhaps the sainthood of St. Mary the Younger does not represent the church's changing ideas on women's ability to achieve sanctity as many historians believe, for it is evident in the *vita* of St. Mary that the ecclesiastical authorities had extreme reservations about the sanctity of St. Mary. "For," said the archbishop, "we know this woman to have been good and her life to have been virtuous; but we cannot believe that she has been found worthy of such grace. God has granted the ability to perform miracles to chaste men, holy monks, and martyrs. She, on the other hand, lived with a man, and did not change her mode of life, nor did she ever do any great or extraordinary things. Whence her power to perform miracles?"³⁸ Instead, could it be possible that the church made her a saint to combat the adverse effects that the former ideal of female holiness through virginity and chastity had on the patriarchal society of the Byzantine Empire? Perhaps the religious ideal of asceticism led to problems within the secular realm of Byzantine society, problems that the church may have later sought to resolve through a new model for female sanctity.

The earlier Byzantine religious ideal of asceticism, when practiced by women, defined a good and pious woman as one who rejected family, marriage, and even femininity itself. This ideal was perpetuated in the *vitae* of female ascetic saints, which became a vehicle for spreading the stereotype of the holy ascetic woman as the only route to sanctity for women. This was especially evident in the fourth and fifth century hagiographical texts. "Christian authors emphasized the ideal of virginity or, failing that, chastity within marriage..."³⁹ The focus of what was holy for women was the renunciation of what made a woman a woman in Byzantium: her sexuality, her role as a wife, and her role as a mother. At this time, even the charitable acts that laywomen partook in as a socially acceptable pious activity, were far beneath the renunciation of femaleness in the characteristics of sanctity. "But in fourth- and fifth-century texts, the focus is more often on the self-denial and endurance of the ascetic hero than on her or his good works. Ministering to the sick attracted less praise than patient endurance of one's own, perhaps revolting, illness."⁴⁰ Another problem that arose from idealizing the ascetic woman is that if a woman's role in society was to marry, produce children, and run a household and if the very definition of holiness for women demanded the rejection of all of these things, what did their role become? The answer lies in these women's revocation of their gender as and their metamorphosis into a being that was "socially invisible as a woman."⁴¹ This contradiction is explained quite well by Gillian Clark in her essay, "Women in Asceticism in Late Antiquity: The Refusal of Status and Gender." "There were few opportunities for a woman to be a hero. The denial of gender can be read as a simple refusal to believe that femaleness has anything going for it. As a bishop once said to his deacon, who had asked about the remarkable woman Olympias, 'Do not say 'woman': say 'what a remarkable human being,' for she is a man despite her outward appearance.' If you live in a culture which has no role models for women except the virtuous wife and the temptress, it is not surprising for you to reject identity as a woman to aim for identity as a hero."⁴² So if these holy ascetic women were, in effect, not women any longer, they gained power and independence, which were unintended consequences of the ascetic ideal. "In their Christian commitment one can get an impression of female force, and in the way this was handled by society one

senses a male appreciation of something with potentially dangerous proportions.⁴³ Independence in women, though found through religious commitment, was not something that Byzantine society would have wanted to foster. Nevertheless, the church supported female asceticism wholeheartedly, and in some ways set out to present marriage as a "spiritually inferior form of life," as Jerome said, which was a result of elevating asceticism. "Over there the babies are prattling, the children hang on her for kisses, the accounts are being added up, and the money got ready for payment. Here a posse of cooks, girded for action, is pounding meat, and a crowd of weaving-women chattering. Then a message comes that her husband has brought his friends home. She circles the rooms like a swallow: is the couch smooth? Have they swept the floor? Are the cups properly set out? Is dinner ready? Tell me, where in all this is the thought of God? (*Against Helvidius* 20, PL 23. 214)."⁴⁴ Although this woman is certainly the model of a good wife in Byzantium, she is inferior because she is married. Furthermore the church "supported the establishment of convents, the devotion of young girls and widows to celibacy against the social pressures of marriage, and the practice of the spiritual marriage... These developments gave women new possibilities for expressing female sanctity within society and even within marriage, possibilities which were quickly exploited."⁴⁵ And as we will see, these possibilities were most certainly exploited by women. Women gained some forms of independence in their rejection of pressures to marry using the excuse of devoting themselves to a celibate existence. In some social classes, such as the elite class of Constantinople, this caused a demographic crisis because there were too few marriageable women of high birth because too many had been committed to virginity and a religious life.⁴⁶ In Byzantine society, female independence and the ability for women to refuse pressure to marriage were not things that the patriarchal society valued or wanted to perpetuate; perhaps these secular consequences of the ascetic religious ideal, were reasons for changing paths to female sanctification.

As the ascetic religious ideal for women lived on, the adverse effects discussed above influenced the church to take action to rework its concepts of the holy and pious woman. Eventually, it took steps to reverse the idea that marriage (and the sexual intercourse that ensued) was inferior. The legal valorization of marriage occurred with the publication of the *Ecloga*, a law code, in 741, which identified the family as the most important social institution.⁴⁷ Additionally, marriage was valorized in the eyes of the church in the eighth century as well, and with this the church recognized "marriage not only as a necessary institution (a recognition that came rather early) but also as the proper and blessed state for a woman."⁴⁸ This gave women's role recognition and began "the evolution of a model that gives women a positive role within the institution of marriage, an evolution that may most easily be seen in the changing concept of female holiness."⁴⁹ Additionally, because of the need to instill faith in women that their role was indeed a good and proper one, one can surmise that the church sought to achieve this by invoking the power of hagiography; this experiment was undertaken with the elevation of married laywomen, like St. Mary the Younger, to sainthood. However, the change began with the sanctification of women like St. Matrona, who was married and had a child, but was able to achieve sanctity later in life after she had left these things behind.⁵⁰ As stated above, this phenomenon came to a climax with the sanctification of St. Mary the Younger and St.

Thomaïs of Lesbos. St. Mary's *vita*, especially, seems to have been written with the motive of proving that "charity was a prime virtue; extreme abstemiousness and asceticism in a married woman were not..." because "the whole story revolves around the idea that a married woman may nonetheless achieve sanctity, and that marriage is not only the normal way of life, but also a good state to be in."⁵¹ However, this left the church contradicting itself in the characteristics necessary for female sanctity.

In Byzantium, contradictory positions in church teachings were prevalent throughout the Empire's existence. The church's position concerning women taught that the Virgin Mary, a mother and married woman, was the most holy of women, but at the same time, it only allowed women who had renounced that role and their very "womanness" to be elevated to sainthood and deemed holy. "There was always a tension in Byzantium between the Christian acetic ideal of virginity and celibacy, and the promotion of marriage, which provided a legitimated outlet for sexual relations and the procreation of children, indispensable for the perpetuation of the population. Marriage was, after all, a sacrament of the church, and the family was the basic unit of society. The most important role of women was to bear children, and it as mothers that they are most often praised."⁵² The new form of female sanctification that the church recognized, with the elevation of St. Mary the Younger to sainthood, represents not a total revolution in the characteristics of sanctity in women, but instead, an experiment in it. This would serve to combat the trend of women retaining virginity, which the church had always supported, in order to gain independence, something that the Byzantine patriarchal society could not condone. St. Mary the Younger represents the long valued *secular* characteristics of a good woman, and she is sainted in hope that, by giving women the model of a saintly mother and wife, they would no longer seek to break out of this role for religious reasons.

One may argue that this line of reasoning is flawed, that women already had a holy model of motherhood to emulate in the Virgin Mary. The cult of the Virgin Mary developed in the fifth century; the church depicted Mary, the *Theotokos*, as "an indisputably good woman as well as a mother..." which "inspired a model of maternal and familial Christian dedication."⁵³ Additionally, the *Theotokos* became an extremely important model for Byzantine women; hence, the many images, such as icons of her displaying motherhood through the depiction of Jesus in her arms, that survive today.⁵⁴ However, women could not truly aspire to be *like* the Virgin Mary, for she was a part of the holy family and above all people. However, women *could* aspire to be like a saint like St. Mary the Younger. The hagiographer depicts St. Mary the Younger as the incarnation the Virgin Mary in many ways. As the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, St. Mary the Younger also gave birth to holy sons, Stephen who changed his name to Symeon, an ascetic monk and later priest, and Vannes, who became St. Marinos. "It was indeed meet and proper that such sons should have been born to such <a mother>, holy ones from the holy one, admirable ones from the admirable one, kind ones from the kind one, sainted sons from the sainted <mother>, for they have been dedicated to God at birth, or rather even before birth, since their mother had dedicated herself to God ever since she was a baby, out of her own free will, and had become a dwelling place for all the virtues that delight the Lord of all."⁵⁵ Additionally, St. Mary is likened to the Virgin Mary in her *vita*, and like the Virgin Mary, she is described as one who can intervene on the behalf of people. She is

referred to as "revered mother Mary," which is an extremely strong similarity with how the Virgin Mary is referred to.⁵⁶ However, St. Mary the Younger was a married woman, and unlike the Virgin Mary, partook in all which that state entailed, including sexual intercourse. This seems to be the most difficult aspect of St. Mary's life for the church to deem saintly. Her hagiographer makes this evident in the *vita*. An archbishop and a monk speak out against naming Mary a saint. The monk is quoted stating, "It is not possible for someone who lives a secular life, eats meat, and enjoys the pleasures of marriage to receive from God the grace of working miracles, while monks, who deprive themselves of every pleasure, who are mortified and distressed in everything, who, on top of that, devote themselves to singing hymns day and night, are not deemed worthy of such grace."⁵⁷ This contradicts with the opening statements in the *vita*: "Although she was a woman, although she was married and bore children, nothing hindered her in any way from finding favor with God: neither the weakness of <female> nature, nor the annoyances of wedlock, nor the needs and cares of childrearing. To the contrary, it was these things which gave her the occasion to find favor <with God>, and thus proved that those who believe and claim that such things form an obstacle to virtue are foolish and create *pretexts for sins*."⁵⁸ The *vita* of St. Mary the Younger exists as a document of the contradiction between the traditional views of the church and the "experimental" ones that, according to the hagiographer, allow a woman such as Mary to become a saint. Additionally, because this phenomenon never became widespread, it can be assumed that the church did not want people who partook in sexual intercourse, even in the most respected of ways, to become saints.

However, an interesting connection can be made from this discussion to the lack of new women saints after those that were made saints around the same time as St. Mary the Younger. "There were very few new female saints in Byzantium after the mid-tenth century, although male saints continued to proliferate, especially in the Palaiologan period. Instead, there is much praise of the good wife and mother, the pious laywoman who engages in charitable works... The model for a woman's life very clearly had become that of a good wife and mother. This evolution was possible because the church had accepted fully, since at least the ninth century, both marriage and the sexual relations it entails."⁵⁹ The church's acceptance of marriage and "the sexual relations it entails" can be seen in the *vita* of St. Mary the Younger. Her Life is a reflection of the church's changed views on women, the importance of motherhood, and the valorization of marriage, which would be consistently preached for years to come; however, that St. Mary the Younger achieved sanctity for those same characteristics would not be widely publicized, thus her cult remained local, few, if any, images remain of her, and her *vita* only survives in one manuscript. Similarly, the *vita* of St. Thomaïs of Lesbos, who is the other prime example of a married woman who becomes a saint while remaining married, survives in only two manuscripts.⁶⁰ However, that these two married women achieve sanctity no matter what the circumstances behind their elevation is an important occurrence in women's Christian history.

Because the trends toward keeping women in the home, the increased value in Byzantine society of the family, and the great importance placed on motherhood all correspond to the changing definition of what was saintly and holy in Byzantine

female saints, it can be believed that the relationship between the lives of holy women and the ideals that laywomen tried to emulate in their own lives is a close one indeed. As discussed, however, this different type of sanctity in Byzantine women did not simply occur because it was a reflection of the ideal role for most women; church dogma does not change that drastically without a more concrete meaning. The suggestion that the concept of female sanctity within marriage emerged as an experiment to give women a more socially acceptable model of piety and holiness to emulate seems to explain the sanctification of married women like St. Mary the Younger. St. Mary the Younger and St. Thomaïs of Lesbos were sainted even though they did not embody the long-held religious ideal of asceticism that was so essential to the sanctity of earlier women. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the clergy were against the sanctification of these women, which is why their elevation to sainthood can only have been a reluctant change, one that may have only occurred because of demographic crisis and societal worries over the independence that women found in ascetic religious commitment. Additionally, the theory that the sanctification of St. Mary and St. Thomaïs was part of a reluctant experiment provides some explanation for the lack of new female saints in Byzantium that fit this model, as well as the lack of new female saints in general; the church discovered that it no longer needed to give women a saintly example to follow in order to foster the ideal of the good Christian woman.

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Endnotes

¹ For this study, sanctification is defined as the process through which one becomes a saint.

² Angeliki E. Laiou, trans. and intro., "Life of St. Mary the Younger," in *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), 254.

³ *Ibid.*, 245.

- ⁴ Alice-Mary Talbot, "Byzantine Women, Saints' Lives, and Social Welfare," in *Through the Eye of a Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare*, eds. Emily Albu Hanawalt and Carter Lindberg (Kirksville, Missouri: The Thomas Jefferson University Press at Northeast Missouri State University, 1994), 110.
- ⁵ Judith Herrin, "Public and Private Forms of Religious Commitment among Byzantine Women," in *Women in Ancient Societies: 'An Illusion of the Night'*, eds. Leonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler, and Maria Wyke (New York: Routledge, 1994), 182.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Tim Vivian, trans. and intro., "A Narrative About Syncretica Who Lived in the Jordanian Desert," in *Journeying into God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 47.
- ⁸ Alice-Mary Talbot, "Women" in *The Byzantines*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 118.
- ⁹ Catia S. Galatariotou, "Holy Women and Witches: Aspects of Byzantine Conceptions of Gender," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 9 (1984/85): 57.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 82.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 84.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Julia M. H. Smith, "Did Women Have a Transformation of the Roman World?," *Gender and History* 12.3 (November 2000): 557.
- ¹⁵ Herrin, *Forms of Religious Commitment*, 188.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.
- ¹⁷ Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 101-102.
- ¹⁸ Alice-Mary Talbot, "Female Sanctity in Byzantium," in *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), 8.
- ¹⁹ Alexander Kazhdan, "Byzantium and Social Welfare," in *Through the Eye of a Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare*, eds. Emily Albu Hanawalt and Carter Lindberg (Kirksville, Missouri: The Thomas Jefferson University Press at Northeast Missouri State University, 1994), 81.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.
- ²¹ Angeliki E. Laiou, "Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985): 65.
- ²² Angeliki E. Laiou, "Women in Byzantine Society," in *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, ed. Linda E. Mitchell (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 89.
- ²³ Talbot, "Saints' Lives and Social Welfare," 106 and 109.
- ²⁴ Herrin, "Forms of Religious Commitment," 186.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*

- ²⁷ Talbot, "Women," 183-184.
- ²⁸ Talbot, "Saints' Lives and Social Welfare," 118.
- ²⁹ Laiou, "Life of St. Mary the Younger," 266.
- ³⁰ Talbot, "Saints' Lives and Social Welfare," 109-110.
- ³¹ Laiou, "Life of St. Mary the Younger," 257.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Paul Halsall, trans. and intro., "Life of St. Thomas of Lesbos," in *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), 303, 306.
- ³⁴ Laiou, "Life of St. Mary the Younger," 261.
- ³⁵ Talbot, "Female Sanctity in Byzantium," 12.
- ³⁶ Michael Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium Under the Comneni, 1081-1261* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 434.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 15.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 268.
- ³⁹ Smith, "Transformation of Roman World," 559.
- ⁴⁰ Gillian Clark, "Women in Asceticism in Late Antiquity: The Refusal of Status and Gender," in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 37.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 40.
- ⁴² Ibid., 43.
- ⁴³ Judith Herrin, "In Search of Byzantine Women," in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 179.
- ⁴⁴ Clark, "Women in Late Antiquity," 99.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Clark, "Women in Late Antiquity," 53, 56.
- ⁴⁷ Laiou, "Women in Byzantine Society," 86.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 88.
- ⁵⁰ Symeon Metaphrates, *The Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, trans. Khalifa Ben Nasser, *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, December 1997: Available from <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/matrona.html>> Accessed on 22 October 2003.
- ⁵¹ Laiou, "Life of St. Mary the Younger," 250.
- ⁵² Talbot, "Women," 118.
- ⁵³ Herrin, *Forms of Religious Commitment*, 185.

⁵⁴ Ioli Kalavrezou and others, *Byzantine Women and Their World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 114, 121, 123, 207.

⁵⁵ Laiou, "The Life of St. Mary the Younger," 286-287.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁵⁹ Laiou, "Women in Byzantine Society," 89-90.

⁶⁰ Halsall, "Life of St. Thomas of Lesbos," 291.