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Christian Cult of Saints: The threat of Rape and the female martyr Saint in the Golden Legend.

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Dedication

I dedicate to work to the Almighty God who made heaven and earth. Father, your favor and mercy brought me this far.

Abstract

The hagiographic narration of popular legends by Jacobus Voragine in the Golden Legend has had a wide readership in the 13th century and onwards. The cult of saints was rooted in the Christian tradition. These venerated saints had their feast days celebrated in the liturgical church season. To portray the legends and traditions of the church, Jacobus writes of historical female saints who met the threat of rape. Although he writes about both the male and female saints, the virginity of the female saint is somehow tied to her martyrdom. In Jacobus' narrative, these virgin martyr saints are of noble birth, beautiful, pious, and desirous. The virginity of these female saints is put online when menaced with rape and their male counterparts never face this horrendous threat. Sexual shaming and physical punishment were related uniquely to the female saint. The sex and gender of the female saint made their martyrdom defer significantly from the male saints though they went through the same magnitude of torture. Particularly only the female saint's virginity was ardently related to their martyrdom.

This research was done using the source-oriented approach and question-oriented approach. It explored Jacobus' narrative of the male and female saints and attempts to understand how virginity was communicated and propagated. Virginity is articulated as being valuable by the Church Fathers who came up with treatises in the 4th century. Some of these Church Fathers significantly influence Jacobus, who was also a member of the Dominican Order. These Church Fathers regarded Mary as the virgin par excellence, and she epitomized virginity. In conclusion, Jacobus' narrative promotes the sanctity of the female saints by showcasing their purity. He depicts virginity as having physical and spiritual attributes but overemphasizes that of the female saint.

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Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

The lives of female saints have been portrayed as chaste, and their virginity held in high esteem. From the perspective of the boarding school, I attended as a student, I encountered girls who would rather die than suffer rape, not necessarily because they understood the value of virginity. These girls would instead idolize these female saints and copy their way of life. I would hear girls say they rather die than lose their virginity and become impure. Students in this boarding school turned to look at the saints as their heroes since they were venerated for their heroic acts. In contemporary times, ancient saints still play a fundamental part in a girl's life, especially in this Catholic boarding school. Hence, I would like to understand the historical foundation for this conviction. Notably, some women are forced to carry out virginity testing or checking for example in Egypt, Indonesia, and South Africa. There is also a culture of virginity and purity in America among Texas teenage virgins.¹ There is a purity pledge ceremony whereby teenagers are asked to sign a document pledging to remain pure until marriage. In Colorado Springs, for example, the purity movement ensures that girls stay virgins until their wedding. Hence, purity balls are organized yearly, and the girls and their fathers make a virginity pledge. This pledge is simply a commitment to a pure life. The girl and her father sign the document called “the purity covering and covenant.” These balls are titled Father-daughter purity balls. The father of the girl pledges to help protect the girl from fulfilling her goal of purity. It is recorded that the virginity pledge movement emerged in the 1990s, and teens and adolescents are encouraged to abstain from sex until marriage. These conservation Christians promote virginity until marriage and say how unhealthy it is for a girl to engage in a sexual relationship before marriage.² They posit that it is relevant for their virginity to be preserved until the day of marriage. Notably before the great Age of Reason and during the Victorian period, there was a prevalence of moral and spiritual definitions of virginity. The early Christians, to avoid sin advocated for virginity before marriage. This idea became widespread, and virginity being historically valued gave it firm ground. Remarkably virginity has been valued for both spiritual and social reasons since Late Antiquity.³ For example, in Southern Baptist Church, over 2.5 million adolescents have publicly taken the virginity pledge.

¹Real Stories. (2017, 8 April) Taxes Teenage Virgins (Virginity Documentary)

<https://youtu.be/SrjFBHa4ABk>

²Free iTune Codes (2018, 21 July) The Virgin Daughters (Celibacy Documentary)

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=HGDOjbug4>

³ Kettrey 2015 p.1

It is worth noticing that the pledge movement has expanded to include hundreds of churches, schools, and college chapters. To affirm the interest in virginity, pledges can be made online by pledgers, and they can equally go to summer camps to meet other pledgers.⁴ Virginity has become popular among conservative Christians. It was worth noticing that not only among Christians is virginity popular, but some cultures encourage virginity testing. The Zulu women queue to get their virginity verified to which they are offered certificates. Purity is declared as the highest value in a young woman's life.⁵ The girl must be validated for being a virgin to her father and a prospective husband and noticeable it is the girl who is prompted to abstain from sex. To some who defend vehemently this practice, they say it is part of their tradition. Furthermore, this tradition encourages girls to have a certificate of virginity from a virginity ceremony to prove their virginity. It is worth noticing that these religious ideas have spread from one continent to another, and from one religious group to another. Amazingly in most Pentecostal churches in Cameroon, the youths are encouraged to maintain their virginity by complete abstinence. They are being told not to defile themselves or compromise by engaging in sexual intercourse. To maintain this purity, they should wait until marriage.

Meanwhile, I observed that virginity has been of far greater significance to the female saints than to their male counterparts. Most female virgin saints that met the threat of rape we turn to find in early Christianity. The affiliation with rape or refusal to have sex was related to the virgin's virginity. Their life stories were disturbed widely in medieval Europe by Jacobus de Voragine. The 13th-century legends of popular female saints like Margaret, Julianna, Agnes, and Agatha, all narrate of a pagan who falls in love with the young girl and future saint. He tries to woo her which finally results in persecution when he is rejected in the narrative. It is, however, observed that the saint's resistance to his sexual advances is of great significance to her legend as per the Golden Legend. In this narrative, these saints were equally noted for their great deeds or meritorious conduct. The perpetrators of the atrocities against them are either the emperor, prefect, judge, father, or suitor. Consequently, these virgin girls were threatened to be thrown into brothels and ravished by several men. Some of them had their breasts chopped off and some pulled or paraded in the streets stark naked. These female saints endured hideous ordeals. However, they choose to preserve their bodies for their heavenly spouse- Jesus Christ. The hagiographic narrative of Jacobus offers a tentative opportunity to perceive how women

⁴ Bearman and Bruckner 2001 p. 860

⁵Journeyman Pictures (2018, 26 Sept). Zulu Women Queue To Get Their Virginity Verified <https://youtu.be/IK9VxWLNQio>

were sexually harassed and their virginity displayed. It is noted that in the 4th century, the church encouraged virginity and gave it prominence over marriage. This study will attempt to understand how the virginites of these women were communicated and propagated in the 13th century and onwards. The Church Fathers as will later be presented in this thesis played a fundamental role. I need to survey an understanding of the Church Fathers' view of female virginity. Secondly, to investigate what role their sexuality played in these narratives. Thirdly to find similarities and differences in these stories concerning being a male or female martyr saint as narrated by Jacobus de Voragine.

1.1 Chronological Framework, Aim, Objectives, and Motivation

This research work does not cover the entire history but defines the period needed. Late antiquity deals with the lives of the saints and when they faced persecution. This is approximately between the 2nd and the 4th century. The 13th century is the collection of the Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine, and these are the narratives of the lives of the saints. The Church Fathers have been prominent in the life of the church. These thinkers were very formative in Christian teaching. This patristic era began around the 1st century around the year 96 to the mid of the 8th century.

This research aims to understand how sexuality, virginity, and rape were interpreted and described by Jacobus Voragine and how virginity or chastity was communicated and propagated in the 13th century and onwards. These attributes are significant because saints still play a prominent role in the church in this modern era. I understand that the lives of saints have been portrayed as chaste, and they are regarded as celestial brides. To be able to get a clear understanding, I looked at the church Fathers to get their understanding of chastity/ virginity or why chastity /virginity came to be so highly valued. Also, to check if there is any bias against gender representation concerning virginity and if there is any significant difference in the presentation of the saint's life in the Golden Legend.

I want to contribute to an apt understanding of virginity by tracing those who pushed passionately for it, especially in the tradition of the church. Remarkably virginity still plays a prominent role in Christian thoughts in contemporary times. If an understanding of something is not known, abuse is inevitable, says Dr. Myles Munroe. I want to come up with a sense of how virginity as a subject is still pushed vehemently in some churches and some parts of the world through the doctrines of the Church Fathers. For example, in Cameroon and Texas in the US, this doctrine is prominent among conservative Christians. Also, to better comprehend their

understanding of sexuality without necessarily being judgemental. A comprehensive understanding of the Church Fathers' thoughts will help identify their motives and theological backing. Additionally, the aspect of rape which still pushes girls to think of suicide should be condemned so that girls will be enlightened to know Christ will not reject them because they are less than worthy.

1.2 The state-of-the-art/ Research History

The cult of Saints is an ongoing discussion among scholars, particularly historians and religious and cultural studies. I consulted different scholarly materials published over the years though my focus was on the Golden Legend. Different scholarly materials and articles were consulted to get an understanding of the whole idea of the cult of saints which either support or disagree with Jacobus' perception of the themes in this study. This research aims to understand how Jacobus interprets sexuality and virginity and how the stories of the saints were treated and incorporated into the church. To get a theoretical base of the themes in this research, I studied other works of literature, which gave me a detailed definition, description, and evaluation since the interest in saints goes back before the compilation of the Golden Legend. To my knowledge, several books on Medieval culture focus on English sources and late Medieval England. Therefore, much research has been done regarding England. Perhaps religion was a tool to hold the English culture. Nonetheless, I arranged the books and articles studied below as per the themes of this study which are saints, martyrdom, virginity, and rape.

Saints is a pocket guide series first published in 2001. It aims at giving a “short account of how and why the imagery of saints evolved: who commissioned pictures of saints, how and by whom they might have been viewed, and how they might have influenced attitudes of images in general⁶.” The chapter ‘The making of Saints: Martyrs and Confessors’ defines saints and martyrs though it does not give an introduction of all the saints as would the narrative of Jacobus. Erika Langmuir says saints are protagonists for God. Saints are not merely regarded as good or pious people, but they are equally blessed with visions and the act of performing miracles. Through a gallery collection of religious images, Langmuir explains the nature of saints and their role which is predominant in the history of painting in Europe. Langmuir notes that the martyrs were viewed as being politically subversive⁷. He however examines the place of saints in the Christian tradition and the imagery of saints in devotional art.

⁶ Langmuir 2001 p. 8, 9

⁷ Langmuir 2001 p.13

Meanwhile looking at the difference between the male and female saints. The book titled, *Virgin Martyrs: Legend of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* gives an elaborate survey from the discussion of the virgin martyr legend from English text from 1200 to 1400 AD. Karen Winstead a professor and director of undergraduate studies says what distinguishes the sanctity of male saints from female saints is gender and sexuality. She also notes that the theme of sexual desire and frustration form the basis of the virgin martyr's persecution.⁸ From Jacobus' narrative of the persecution of the female virgin, its circumferences around rape. Winstead observes a shift in presentation however as audiences changed throughout Medieval England. The similarities of the torture and execution of the beautiful Christian women appeared first in late Antiquity and moved to the Middle Ages. This thematic plot discusses the virgin's heroic act and will guide my discussion chapter when evaluating the differences between the men saint and female saints as per Jacobus' narrative.

Making Saints: How the catholic church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't, and why. This is a book published in 1990. My interest is in chapter two which elaborates on saints and their cults and canonization. This chapter defines a saint, the origin, death, and the lives of saints. It brings to light individuals who were acclaimed because they had witnessed their faith by dying to it. They are termed saints who were reserved exclusively for martyrs or witnesses as is known in Greek. According to Kenneth Woodward, "a saint in the Christian tradition is someone whose holiness is recognized as exceptional by other Christians."⁹ This is relevant to my studies because the cult of saints is an elaborate topic that has over time gained a lot of attention. Woodward points out that the number of saints grew but the way they were categorized remained static throughout the first four centuries and only changed in this century. Saints were therefore regarded as either martyrs or confessors. If confessors were then typologies according to sex and state of life: bishop, priest, or monk for men while for women it was virgin or widow.¹⁰ This typology suggests that in the making of saints, the idea of sanctity played a fundamental role in seeing that renunciation was valuable. The martyr renounces his life rather than deny Christ, the confessor is ready to die, and the virgin renounces the pleasures of life that are sex, and marital affiliation particularly.¹¹ Woodward worked with church documents to show how saint-makers decided who received the honors of sainthood.

⁸ Winstead 1997 p. 5-6

⁹ Woodward 1990 p. 50

¹⁰ Woodward 1990 p. 55

¹¹ Woodward 1990 p. 55

Andre Vauchez's book *Sainthood in the later Middle Ages* published in 1997 observed that in the first centuries of Christianity, the only saints venerated by the church were martyrs coupled with the Virgin, John the Baptist, and the Apostles.¹² Vauchez is a French medievalist. According to him, the saints were not canonized in the first millennium rather their death and perseverance were recognized by the local church to which they belonged. Though their sanctity and public demonstration of faith were noticed no hierarchical intervention was needed at that time. However, by the 3rd century, the local church spontaneously awards the title of saint. Noticeably there was a rapid growth in the liturgical cult of martyrs proceeding with the end of the persecution of Christians. The remains of deceased persons (saints) were exhumed and transferred to worthier and safer tombs.¹³

Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England is a book published in 2001. Corinne Saunders specializes in medieval literature and the history of ideas. Apart from rape, Saunders focuses on why the image of the virgin and martyr is so potent in the Middle Ages and why were they often menaced with rape. According to Saunders, the offense of rape entered Roman law comparatively late. There was no mention of sexual violence in Roman laws. My interest is in chapters One and chapter three of this book. Chapter one: 'Secular Law: Rape and Raptus' discusses the secular perception of rape and ravishment in medieval England. It equally gave me an understanding of the definition of rape in respective to raptus. Chapter three focuses on 'The threat of Rape: Saintry Women' in which Saunders explores the complexity surrounding the hagiographic narrative of sexual violence and virginity. Seeing that the female saint's virginity and holiness intertwined and formed a central discussion in theological discourse. Saunders promotes that though theologians may argue the academic thought that sainthood depended upon virginity, virginity is portrayed as an icon and a physical quality that empowers the woman.¹⁴

Women in Early Christianity is a book published in 2005. P. C. Miller notes that few documents written about women have been preserved however to understand or investigate the history of early Christian women, one must delve into the theologies and religious convictions that characterized Christianity in the first five centuries. To view the culture of the woman in the Graeco-Roman culture, Miller looks at the ancient materials that concern the Christian woman which incorporate practices such as martyrdom, asceticism, and virginity. These texts were

¹² Vauchez 1997 p.13

¹³ Vauchez 1997 p.13

¹⁴ Saunders 2001 p. 121

however written by men and the material was relevant to the study of women in early Christianity. These ranged from official documents, popular narratives, poetic, and theological sources. She brands them into three categories which she uses to establish this volume. In this volume, section one is about women's roles in the church where it expounds on martyrs. Session two is on women and virginity. This session incorporates the major treatises on virginity. According to her the themes of asceticism and virginity are closely intertwined. Furthermore, the idea of chastity was traced by early Christians to passages in the New Testament¹⁵.

Sarah Salih's *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* published in 2001 observed that, historiographical readings have focused on male saints such as Anglo-Saxon kings and bishops and what she terms "political saints." She equally notes that from the late Middle Ages feminist readings however focus on virgin-martyr legends.¹⁶ This study covers the period of the 12th to 15th century. Building on the scope of the study, Salih notes that the medieval woman has been subjected to the curse of Eve according to the book of Genesis. She ponders if virgins who have escaped both heterosexuality and childbirth are included in the category of "women". By exploring this notion, Salih attempts to answer this question by exploring the form of virginity in the later Middle Ages. According to Salih, there is more to virginity than sexual inexperience. Secondly, "virginity may be conceptualized as a gendered identity which can be constituted in culturally significant action."¹⁷ Salih studies the plurality of virginity saying it manifests differently in different conditions. Religious discourses for example posit virginity as an identity seeing that virginity has been of great interest in the life of the woman. Therefore, virginity is gender-related. My interest in this book spans chapters 1, 2, and 4. In her opinion, in or around the 12th-century virginity began to be feminized in which Christ was seen as the spouse of the virgin.¹⁸ She promotes that there is no specific version of hagiographic virginity, she does so by studying the representation of virginity in the early thirteenth-century Katherine Group.¹⁹

Beginning To Read the Fathers was published in 1993, by author Boniface Ramsey. My focus is on chapter seven, martyrdom, and virginity. He traces the Christian narratives or eye-witness

¹⁵ Miller 2005 p 1, 2

¹⁶ Salih 2001 p. 83

¹⁷ Salih 2001 p.1

¹⁸ Salih 2001. p.10

¹⁹ Salih 2001. P41 the Katherine Group consist of Legends of virgin martyrs; Katherine of Alexandria, Margaret of Antioch, and Juliana of Micomedia.

accounts of martyrs. He notes even though they may not be historically accurate, however, reveals the church's mentality. This idea was that a martyr was a privileged individual who bore witness for Christ by dying for Christ. Ramsey expounds on how the church father's viewed martyrdom and virginity. By the end of the third-century virginity was being compared to martyrdom. That is, virginity like martyrdom was of great significance or attractiveness to the church fathers.²⁰ The church fathers came up with treatises on virginity and it was of interest to me to understand their view.

According to Howard R. Bloch, the early church fathers referred to virginity as Adam and Eve before the fall which is because of the absence of sexuality, meaning sexes were equal²¹. *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* is a book that consists of the patristic and medieval text published in 1991. Bloch traces the theme of virginity to the Church Fathers. He contributed to gender studies after 10 centuries of misogyny. He analyses patristic and medieval texts.²² He suggests that there was not a single way that virginity was viewed since it was recognized either as physical or spiritual. Bloch explores the Christian construction of gender. According to this notion, the flesh is feminized and the feminine is aestheticized which is condemned in theological terms. It is of paramount importance for me to understand why the focus was placed on virginity not only in late antiquity but until the 13th century as per Jacobus' narratives.

Elizabeth Castelli's article titled "Virginity and its meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity" observes contrarily that there was a curious fact on the history of women in late antiquity. She observed that women chased asceticism and renunciation in large numbers. Elizabeth Castelli says some feminist scholars explain this paradoxically, according to them, the life of asceticism in early Christian women by renunciation of the world offered the woman the possibility of moving outside the constraints of social and sexual conventional rules²³. Christians were not only fascinated by saints, hermits, confessors, and ascetics but they were also admired or regarded as models.²⁴

Elizabeth A. Clark in her article titled "Sex, Shame, and Rhetoric: En-gendering Early Christian Ethics" declares John Chrysostom says women who practiced self-denial, and men

²⁰ Ramsey 1993 p. 130

²¹ Bloch 1991 p. 97

²² <https://www.coursera.org/instructor/bloch>

²³ Castelli 1986 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25002030>

²⁴ Cazelle 1991 p.2

were grave and chaste. According to John Chrysostom, women, and martyrs had souls of men. Clark says this was used by Chrysostom as a rhetoric of shame to those after the era of Constantine. She notes that female ascetics and martyrs are lavishly praised by the Church Fathers. Clark argues that the Church Fathers attempted to construct a gendered discipline apparatus. This gender code of behavior she argues is affected by sight. According to her, the Church Fathers used the rhetoric of shame as a form of discipline to curb unholy behavior among Christians. This rhetoric of shame in the patristic era according to her enjoyed a brilliant phase.²⁵

Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the second and third centuries a book by Helen Rhee, published in 2005. This book is a comparative and cultural study of how different groups in early Christianity relate to their society specifically the Greco-Roman society and culture. In chapter one, 'Second-Century Christian literature in its Historical-Cultural context', I studied the origin of martyrdom which according to Rhee was a form of the search for self-definition and collective boundaries for Christianity.²⁶ To be able to present the superiority of Christian monotheism and Christian sexuality, for example, Rhee notes that Christians incorporated forms of Greco-Roman societal attributes.

Scholarship has written extensively on saints, virgins, and martyrs but not much has been written on rape. Most of the literature available is in Christian folklore and romance-like stories and may not be considered true though the essence of this study is not to prove if any narrative is true or false.

1.3 Limitation of the study

According to Corine Saunders, there was no awareness of rape in late antiquity.²⁷ The material on rape was quite limited in late antiquity making it rather difficult to have any concrete material during this period. Rape shall be discussed in this thesis and the material gathered shows how limited it was. The understanding of rape was different because Roman law centered exclusively on damage caused by abduction, and it was termed 'raptus'. Since no laws were put in place to govern women during this period, no accounts were kept for women who reported this violent act. This can be seen as such because it was not unlawful as is the case

²⁵ Clark 1990 p.221,226,234

²⁶ Rhee 2005 p.3

²⁷ Saunders 2001 p.34

now. I used secondary literature as my source and not enough literature is available on rape. However, I shall attempt to define rape as depicted by Jacobus in his narratives.

Also, the concept of rape changed with time. According to Corine Sauders, it was not considered a crime if abduction did not occur. Therefore, to look at rape from the preceptive of late antiquity is intrincating to my understanding. Most works of literature on rape account for myths of gods who raped and these stories are mostly used for entertainment. It is worth commenting that there has been an overwhelming study on female virgins, and not much interest has been given to their male counterparts.

1.4 Research questions / statement

I observed from the Golden Legend, that female Christian martyr saints are killed not only for their belief but also because they had sown a vow of celibacy. Some female saints have opted for chastity over marriage and favored the ascetic lifestyle. The continual refusal of these ladies to sacrifice or worship other gods also cumulated to their persecution. There were attempts made to challenge their purity. While reading the narratives of saints by Jacobus, I was able to form a historical question. I equally read other secondary literature which, raised my curiosity. For example, Jo Ann McNamara notes that hagiographers were thrilled with the possibility of an immortal husband and a heavenly kingdom. She, therefore, claims that monastic leaders and missionaries persuaded girls to refuse marriage. They were encouraged to divert their inheritances to the monasteries.²⁸ Meanwhile, Karl D. Uitti declares, that both genders highly regard chastity. Contrarily the motifs of sexual harassment or threat or violence are most prominent in the lives of female saints.²⁹ The main research question of this research is,

- How was virginity/chastity communicated and propagated in the 13th century and onwards in Medieval Europe?

The main research question will form the basis for other sub-research questions:

- How was sexuality described and interpreted in The Golden Legend?
- How significantly different or similar is the story of one martyr saint to another in respect to the threat of rape?

²⁸ McNamara 1991 p. 202

²⁹ Uitti 1991 p. 248

Chapter Two: Methodology

2.0 Introduction

According to John Tosh, students rarely work with historical sources in their original state.³⁰ As a modern researcher, I cannot obtain the manuscripts of Jacobus Voragine, for example, still, his collection is regarded as the most prominent and widely read. The Golden Legend is a thirteen-century work that dates from about 1260. I will therefore be working with the translations of the primary source and other additional secondary sources. The Golden Legend is the work of compiler Jacobus de Voragine. Abbe Rozein's translation identified over 130 sources quotes or referred to the Legend.³¹ He grouped them by centuries from the second to the thirteenth. This is the English translation by William Granger Ryan. Ryan wrote the introductory chapter of this translation. The version I studied is the first complete modern translation in English. This translation is based on the Latin text published in 1845 by Th. Graesse and the second edition was published in 1850. My work, therefore, is based on The Golden Legend, other books, and articles concerning my topic. To my understanding, The Golden Legend can be said to be both a discursive source that is telling about something in the past and a theological text.

I propose to approach this research with the source-oriented approach, which means the content will determine the nature of my inquiry. According to John Tosh, a source-oriented approach uses source material whereby the historian takes a group of sources or just one that falls within her area of interest and pulls out what is valuable or relevant. This allows the source's content found by the historian to determine the nature of her inquiry. The Golden Legend was consulted primarily for this thesis. I had to relate to the saints Jacobus de Voragine wrote about in the Golden Legend. He gave a historical foundation of the saint's life and death. Furthermore, I read secondary literature related to my topic and allowed the literature to guide my research questions.

The question-oriented approach is equally used to form a historical question which is later answered. A problem-oriented approach is a research approach where the historian formulates a specific question which is prompted by a reading of secondary material relevant to her research. This may be an appropriate primary source for the historian seeking to answer the question. John Tosh however commends that there are difficulties that may be encountered in

³⁰ Tosh 2006 p. 57

³¹ Ryan 'Introduction'

using both approaches. The source-oriented approach, he says, “may yield on an incoherent jumble of date.” Whereas for question – oriented approach, he proposes that it is often difficult to tell in advance which sources are relevant.³² Meanwhile, chapter seven of this study will form the main argument. From the material gathered, I will be able to present my observation to other source material.

I have studied twenty-seven female martyrs and twelve male martyrs from the Golden Legend narrated by Jacobus de Voragine. Most of the saints were persecuted before Constantine the Great became emperor. These narratives are found in what I can understand as the primary source since it is a compilation of Christian histories. Le Goff considers the *Legenda Aurea* or Golden Legend as will later be seen in chapter six to sacralize time and space. The eschatological understanding of time as per Jacobus's understanding is set in a calendar format and may not be seen as modern historians see time, but Jacobus' focus is on relation to God's testament. The Golden Legend as noted contains historical information which can be seen as Church doctrines, liturgy, saints, miracles, and heresies. What I worked with is not the *Legenda Aurea* which can be described as the primary source. It was originally written in Latin, but I worked with the translation. I was not privileged to work with the manuscript, but Jacobus compiled the translated version in 1260.

To be able to explain and understand the present-day questions and concerns, I propose to look at the past.³³ I want to be able to understand the past on its terms and not necessarily judge it based on my understanding or perceptions of today. To form a theoretical base for this research, I reviewed, described, and evaluate other related literature by analyzing past studies on this subject. To be able to understand the themes of this work, it is paramount for me to look at them from a historical and cultural context.

2.1 Research Design

This research began as an investigation of an understanding of why saints still have a noticeable impact on girls most especially in this contemporary times. This, however, evolved because many factors crept in. In this thesis, the interest in saints goes way back before the compilation of the Golden Legend. I will attempt to analyze Jacobus's narrative of the saints. This analysis was restricted to what Jacobus narrated about the saints in the Golden Legend.

³² Tosh 2015 p. 99

³³ Tosh 2006 p.23

I started primarily by using the source-oriented approach. I studied the relevant primary source which is the Golden Legend. The content from the Golden Legend guided the nature of my inquiry. Since I started reading Jacobus's narrative on the saints, however, I could not answer the probing questions that ran through my mind, so I consulted other secondary literature. These subsequently helped me to formulate a historical question.³⁴ According to Tosh, though the problem-oriented approach most probably corresponds to most researchers' idea of research, it is difficult to tell in advance which sources are relevant since most sources are found to be illuminating. For example, much has been written on saints, martyrs, and virginity. I had to narrow my sources regarding the fact that these themes above most correlate. Therefore, I used the source-oriented and problem-oriented approaches to this research. Tosh notes that practically, the sources cannot be pursued completely without the exclusion of the other.³⁵ The Golden Legend, as will be seen in chapter six was considered very popular and a collection of legendary lives of saints. Therefore, I treated the primary source as a historical event seeing that the saints are arranged in the church's liturgical calendar.³⁶ I used other secondary sources, which guided me to form a historical question. These sources helped to guide me in attempting to answer the questions conducting this research.

To better understand the themes raised in this research, I needed to study some theories that may apply to the understanding of these themes.

³⁴ Tosh 2015 p.99

³⁵ Tosh 2015 p.100

³⁶ Tosh 2015 p.108

Chapter Three: Theory

3.0 Introduction

The Church Fathers, around the 4th century, wrote some treatises on virginity. I will look at the Church Fathers in more detail in chapter 5. They had a set of ideas that were incorporated into the church, and they are still prominent within the church. On the other hand, the Golden Legend gained prominence in the 13th century. Jacobus narrates the stories of the saints who lived in the earlier centuries and upholds the church's tradition. It will be seen clearly in this work how the Church Fathers greatly influenced Jacobus Voragine. To my understanding, Jacobus based his ideas on the thoughts of the patriarchs. Over time these ideas have not died as can be seen but have, however, been shared. To access how the early church's stories and concept of virginity were commemorated and applied in the 13th century, it is imperative to consider cultural memory.

3.1 Cultural Memory

Aledia and Jan Assmann have been essential contributors to the development of cultural theory in the last 30 years. They have different scholarly backgrounds but speak similarly about cultural memory. According to them, culture and religion are about shared memory. That is, culture and religion are about remembering and forgetting. Aledia Assmann claims culture is inherently related to memory, while Jan Assmann says memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood which is termed identity. Identity is connected to time both on a personal and collective level. Jan Assmann claims on a social level, "memory is a matter of communication and social interaction."³⁷ Aleida Assmann believes that over the years, culture has been related to memory because through culture humans, create a temporal structure that connects the past, present, and future in an individual's life span.³⁸ Consequently, humans don't have to create new knowledge but use and reinterpret that from the old generation.³⁹

Jan Assmann builds on the thought of Maurice Halbwachs, who says memory depends on socialization and communication. His key concept is collective memory. According to Halbwachs, as stipulated by Jan Assmann, "memory enables us to live in groups and communities, thus, living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory".⁴⁰ Building on Halbwachs, the Assmanns took his concept and refine it. They decided to break

³⁷ Assmann, J 2010 p. 109

³⁸ Assmann, A 2010 p.97

³⁹ Assmann, A 2010 p. 99

⁴⁰ Assmann, J 2010 p.109

up his concept into “communicative memory and cultural memory.” According to the Assmanns, they decided to differentiate between Halbwachs’s concept of collective memory and their understanding of cultural memory. Their definition of culture memory is, a “form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by several people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is cultural, identity”.⁴¹ Whereby culture memory has an institutional characteristic and is objectified. This memory can be stored as symbolic heritage, transferred, absorbed, or assimilated from one generation to another.

According to the Assmanns, Halbwachs was careful to exclude traditions, transmission, and transferences from his concept of a collective memory; however, the Assmanns claim to have chosen to subsume them in the term cultural memory.⁴² They observed that the cultural sphere has been excluded from the study of memory. Meanwhile, according to the Assmanns, communicative memory has a limited time depth of approximately eighty years and can be three generations. Also, it is not having an institutional character, so they prefer to rename it communicative memory. However, they recognize what they termed “communication genres” being traditions of communication and reasoning that can bind families, groups, and generations together.⁴³ This shared memory transmitted from person to person could not have been transmitted orally to Jacobus Voragine. He remembered the saints from what someone told him. Therefore, the durability of memory depends on the durability of social bonds and frames, or it will bring about forgetting. Jan Assmann observes that though Halbwachs choose to alienate himself from social interests and power structures that are paramount in shaping an individual memory from his earlier work on collective memory, however, Halbwachs seems to change in his work later as he recognizes that tradition and memory can be strongly affected by theological dogma which is formed by the power structure of the church. Significantly according to Jan Assmann, cultural memory is based on fixed points in the past whereby the past is in symbols that are represented in oral myths or writings, performed in feasts that influence the present.⁴⁴

Jan Assmann suggested that groups and whole societies have whole memory. He claims individual private memory is understood only through a group context. They include churches, nation-states, and these conditions the memory of the individual. Individuals rationally

⁴¹ Assmann, J 2010 p. 110

⁴² Ammann, J 2010 p.110

⁴³ Assmann, J 2010 p. 111

⁴⁴ Assmann, J 2010 p. 112-113

remember memory as understood per group. The group constructs memory and individuals remember, whereby meaning and identity are produced. The relationship between identity and memory is significant since it's a social construct. Memory and identity are mutually connected frameworks. To him, it is expressed in institutions, for example. Therefore, even cultural memory according to Jan Assmann, "is local egocentric, and specific to a group and its values."⁴⁵

The Assmanns differentiate communicative memory into the social and emotional horizons (individuals). Seeing that memory is an open system. The Assmanns introduced communicative memory to differentiate as earlier noted Halbwach's concept of collective memory and their understanding of cultural memory. Instrumentally responding to a specific culture of need. Cultural memory is something more it embraces collective memory, but it transcends it. It is pluralist, and it elaborates, that it connects text, images of the past, and stored and transferred from one generation to another and consists of many memories. Inside cultural memory, we have the collective memory of different groups. They may overlap or not. They may have something in common that interprets things differently but also forget and remember significantly very differently. According to the Assmanns, "things do not have a memory of their own, but they may remind us, may trigger our memory because they carry memories which we may have invested into them..."⁴⁶

To Assmanns, it breaks down to how we think of a memory or the concept of traditions. The two categories turn to merge as one in their terminology. They prefer to talk about "culture" not "traditions". They change the notion of traditions. They open to a more dynamic understanding of cultural memory. Tradition is always understood as a static body of text or rituals which is often received and delivered to the next generation. Cultural memory, on the other hand, indicates an active communitive work, it's selective and dynamic. Some things are remembered and forgotten, and some things are canonized. It is according to them a better model. Aleida Assmann claims that memory is however highly selective, and it is limited by neutral, psychological pressures, and cultural constraints such as bias. She notes equally that on the part of cultural memory, forgetting is part of society. Thus, they believe it is a collective thing for a community to forget. As such old memory is forgotten to make room for a new one.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Assmann, J 2010 p. 113

⁴⁶ Assmann J, 2010 p. 111

⁴⁷ Assmann A, 2010 p 97

Aleida Assmann claims remembering and forgetting have a passive and active side which aids in understanding cultural memory dynamics. In the capacity of the active memory, the past is preserved as the present, for passive memory, the past is preserved as the past.

It is interesting to note that according to Aleida Assmann, the Christian church is an institution of active cultural memory. The cultural memory is kept alive “by traditions, of images, and continuous and periodically repeated liturgical rites and practice” which is something we see clearly illustrated in Golden Legend. Saints are arranged according to their liturgical rites which are celebrated or commemorated throughout the church calendar. By the canonization of martyrs, which makes them saints, saints are remembered not only by their repeatedly told stories, but their names are inscribed in the church calendar and reused by those born on their days of remembrance. According to A. Assmann, there are three core areas of active cultural memory: religion, art, and history.⁴⁸ The Assmanns, however, prefer knowledge since stories are told over time and written in books as can be seen with the commemoration of saints in the liturgy. Therefore, how Jacobus knows is cultural memory which helped me to understand how this transfer of knowledge works. It is worth noticing that there can be a form of manipulation in cultural memory or threat of distortion and reduction when stories are repeatedly told. Cultural memory we see clearly in the Golden Legend is a prevalent resource for both the Saints and their martyrdom.

As previously mentioned, the Assmanns prefer culture to tradition when thinking of memory since tradition is understood as being a static body of text or ritual. Meanwhile, Sissel Undheim observes that scholars have seen virginity as a cultural construction that is under constant evaluation and changing focus.⁴⁹ Consequently, according to the Assmanns, if cultural memory incorporates collective memory, then it is pluralist and quite elaborate and may overlap or not. Meanwhile as will be seen in this work, the Church Fathers have a fundamental role in the church by writing the treatises on virginity. We equally know the emphasis on virginity by Jacobus Voragine in the 13th Century. To further investigate the ideas incorporated by Jacobus Voragine, I propose to get an understanding of virginity in late antiquity.

3.2 Gender theory

The gender theory was developed relatively late and only came into academic high light in the 1970s and 1980s. The concept of gender which originate in social science presupposes that

⁴⁸ Assmann A, 2010 p. 100

⁴⁹ Undheim 2018 p. 4-5

femininity and masculinity are categories based on cultural construction. This concept though stated in social science has been applied in other disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, and psychology. However, Anglo-Saxon scholars use this concept more than their French counterparts.⁵⁰ I observed that though gender theories came later, there was a way the thoughts of the people in Late Antiquity were governed. I chose Sissel Undheim's book titled *Borderline Virginites. Sacred and Secular Virgins in Late Antiquity* to understand how gender and sexuality were understood in early Christianity and late Antiquity. Undheim's theoretical perspective is vital for a historical understanding of virginity in my studies. Undheim notes that throughout the formative and defining period of the Christian church in late Antiquity virginity was highly valued or held in high esteem.

To understand the late Antiquity notion of virginity, according to Sissel Undheim it is good to understand it in the history of sexuality. The pre-Christian understanding of virginity she notes was purely "physical". But time, the Christian cult ideology of virginity moved from physical to spiritual. Undheim's objective is to examine different concepts of virginity that prevailed through Rome in the Latin world in Late Antiquity. My emphasis is not to investigate how the pagan or non-Christians regarded virginity but to understand the concept of gender when Church Fathers viewed virginity. That is how was it represented or understood? The church Fathers for example criticized the pagan virgins (Vestals) and considered them "false" as opposed to the Christian virgins. In a bid to define virginity, Undheim notes that virginity in late Antiquity and Antiquity can be divided into two types; "those that take virginity to be given and self-evident category and those who do not."⁵¹ Undheim notes that recent scholarship has turned to favor the approach whereby virginity is seen as a cultural and social phenomenon. she observed that the notion of virginity was represented between fixed and flexible definitions whereby virginity would be confirmed or denied. To be able to get an understanding, I must present some aspects of virginity from Undheim's perspective because she mentions that gender has been used to represent virginity.

To view the landscape of sacred virginity in late Antiquity, Undheim defines the Roman *Virgo* as a young, unmarried female, who has never been involved in any sexual act. In this case, her virginity is not defined by the sexual experience but by her social status.⁵² In Jacobus's narrative, for example, we see that most of the virgins he describes were of noble birth. The

⁵⁰ Glocer 2008 p. 117

⁵¹ Undheim 2018 p.4-5

⁵² Undheim 2018 p.5-6

probing question that may arise is, can Undheim's evaluation be applicable in the 13th Century when Jacobus wrote the Golden Legend? Seeing that in the case of virgins, Undheim claims it becomes problematic to separate biological sex from the gender that has been culturally constructed. I wondered if these categories Undheim is presenting in Late Antiquity can be applicable in the 13th century. Chapter six of this thesis gives a presentation of the hagiographer. However, in chapter 7, I will discuss elaborately if the concept of virginity in Late Antiquity could be applicable in the 13th century.

Undheim notes that categorizing virginity has occasionally been challenging because it has been done based on gender, age, or social status by groups in Roman society and writers of that epoch. My focus is to see how gender has been used to categorize virgins. According to her, the Latin Church Fathers were inconsistent in their definition of *Virgo*. Tertullian for example had initially argued that virgins represented a sub-category of "women". Ambrose in his exegesis on the description of Mary looks at virgins as species where "sex deals with natures", "virgin with integrity," and "womankind is the sex". Jerome differentiates between a woman and a virgin. A virgin is fundamentally different from a woman whereby not all unmarried virgins, but every virgin is unmarried. These Church Fathers will later be seen in this these to have influenced Jacobus

My investigation does not deal with the hymen as proof or determining factor of virginity even though it was considered in Roman society. According to this society, virginity was physically detected. However, in Sissa's "theory of a hymenless Greek Virginity, she shows that according to the perception of virgins, the Greeks had no physical seal."⁵³ Undheim observes that according to Giulia Sissa's theory and other scholars, virginity could be physically detected. According to her, it is because it was associated with "a particular physical token, or bodily mark of virginity."⁵⁴ She notes that virginity is dual in the sense that on one side there was the notion of virginity being physically detected and that which had to be measured. In essence, it was either seen as a social-cultural notion that could be spiritual or the physical aspect of virginity. Undheim notes that modern scholarship interchange virginity and chastity. Virginity was in essence meaning never to have had sex while chastity is a state of renunciation which did not include the account of past experiences. Meanwhile, Jerome notes that "a virgin had to be chaste to be a convincing virgin, but a woman (and a man) could of course be chaste

⁵³ Undeheim 2018 p. 7-8

⁵⁴ Undeheim 2018 p. 8

without being a virgin.”⁵⁵ Undheim notes that classical law shows that virgins were occasionally grouped under the category of “women”.⁵⁶ In that epoch, Undheim points out that there was a duality of mind and body when it came to virgin ideology. It was such that only in the church could true virgins possess true virginity. By the 4th century, however, the semantics of virginity was explored by Christian writers in which Averil Cameron notes that it has been worked by metaphor and paradox as observed by Undheim.⁵⁷

Undheim urges that scholarship has ignored or understudied male virgins as opposed to female virgins. Undheim's methodological approach to gender perspective focuses on ideas. She notes that there was a culturally constructed gender. This made it difficult to separate it from biological sex. Undheim points to Kathleen Coyne Kelly who argues that through virginity the body has exceeded its physical boundaries. Thus, has a point of transition between body and culture.⁵⁸

The Christian idea of virginity was that of genderless, but the male virgins were scarcely emphasized. Undheim based her source on Latin sources. These sources were referring to epigraphic material from relatives and patrons who have understood the universal genderless Christian ideals of virginity.⁵⁹ However, she points out that the lack of studies on male virgins points to a scarcity of such virgins in Latin sources. But before Christian virgins or sacred virgins came into existence, there were vestal virgins. These vestal virgins were females, which Undheim observed from the definition of *Virgo*; therefore, with Christianity, she proposes this term needs to be redefined. It is clear evidence to see that virginity was constructed and negotiated in the context of late Antiquity Roman and its environs. However, she notes that looking at the theoretical framework in early scholarly studies has surrounded questions on gender and sexuality to understand virgins and virginity in early Christianity and late Antiquity. Undheim observes that according to Jorun Økland, the Anglophone distinction between “gender” and “sex” may not be helpful when approaching texts from Antiquity. She argues that “by attempting to describe sex, one is already producing gender, one has already made sex part of the structures of meaning that inhabit language, and thus sex in a language is always already gendered.”⁶⁰ Økland observes for example the synthesis of “sex” and “gender” in Scandinavian

⁵⁵ Undheim 2018 p. 9

⁵⁶ Undheim 2018 p. 7

⁵⁷ Undheim 2018 p.8, 10

⁵⁸ Undheim 2018 p. 105

⁵⁹ Undheim 2018 p. 23

⁶⁰ Undheim 2018 p. 105

languages and French commensurate with the Greek conceptions. virginity therefore cannot be defined simply based on body parts because there seem to arise semiotics in the understanding of virginity.⁶¹

From Undheim's point, the understanding of feminist studies of Early Christian women is an understanding of the ideal of woman "becoming male" that is when feminists study the understanding of the doctrine of salvation. This conception is that virgins have denied their "femaleness" to becoming male in presenting their sexuality and reproductive roles. Undheim notes however that though many stories of the virgin martyrs emphasized on masculinity virtues of the martyr, their physical beauty was equally focused on. She does not deny the fact that the Christian ideal of virginity was universal regardless of gender; however, the male virgins were not given as much prominence as the female virgins. She urges that the ideal of virginity should have been balanced in Christian teachings and source texts. Some Church Fathers, as represented by some modern scholars see virginity as being asexual and "ungendered".⁶² She notes that according to Ambrose and Jerome, virginity was a soteriological paradigm, it was open to all Christians regardless of gender. This, she noted, was found in Christian writers but in practice, it was the contrary because female virgins were more in the spotlight. The consecrated female virgins get recognition for virginity and Undheim sees this as paradoxical gender ambiguity. She observes that studies have invested in the virginal gender aspect. She notes equally that the Church Fathers had a misogynistic tone in their writing because there was a relationship between a virgin and their virginity in terms of gender.

Undheim observes that terminology can be a factor to consider because scholars, especially modern scholars, seem unable to differentiate virginity from chastity and abstinence. This according to her may be the reason why the representation of male virgins may appear vague. She notes that though the term *virgo* seems to be most often applicable to women, Eunuch, for example, can be equivalent to male virgins. Therefore, men may refer to themselves as eunuchs and not virgins.⁶³ However, Undheim observes some discrepancies between female virgins and eunuchs even the ones who are considered voluntary eunuchs. For example, before castration, one could not be sure they had not been involved in a sexual act even if eunuchs and virgins fall under the same gendered categories.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Undheim 2018 p. 105, 106

⁶² Undheim 2018 p. 107, 108

⁶³ Undheim 2018 p. 110

⁶⁴ Undheim 2018 p. 120

According to Undheim, surprisingly few Church Fathers claim to be virgins themselves or who are described as being virgins even though there was a relentless demand in the 4th century for priests and bishops to be virgins or celibate. From Tertullian texts, he was married, and Gregory of Nyssa mourned his lost virginity and couldn't partake in its blessings. On the other hand, Jerome praises virginity though he makes attention to not being one himself but a voluntary eunuch. Ambrose did not reveal any information about his virginity in his writings.⁶⁵

Christian authors conveyed the idea of genderless virginity, but male virgins were absent in their writings, as previously noted. Undheim observes that the Orthodox Fathers ungendered virginity by emphasizing metaphorical and spiritual reading which was strictly "by the cultural understanding of virginity as a site in a female's sexually untouched body".⁶⁶ The fact that minimal studies are done on male virgins, and secondly not enough sources are available for male saints either as compared to the female virgins, makes me wonder if this was because virginity was geared more quickly towards the female than the male. When looking at Jacobus's narratives, he calls the female saints virgins and makes little or no attention to the male in that regard. This work applies the gender theory as observed by Undheim to establish a theoretical framework on how gender was been portrayed and understood.

The dissertation of Cressida Wilson 2015 is worthy of mentioning in this study. she aims to analyze from a gender perspective the narrative of Jacobus de Voragine. Firstly, she investigated whether the saints Jacobus narrated had impacted the audience he intended to reach. Secondly, if Jacobus intended the audience to emulate the saintly lifestyle and how gender has been used in his narrative. Wilson suggests that the women included in Jacobus' text may have been appealing to him. Though the Virgin Mary is not prominent in my study but Jacobus' narrative, dedicates 3 chapters to her. However, this is how the legends are structured. Many feasts were dedicated to Mary, so it was not his choice, but the liturgical calendar had made the feasts of Mary numerous. Wilson's analysis, suggests the female saints resemble Mary in chastity and miracle, seeing from Jacobus's text that Mary epitomizes female sanctity. As will be seen in this study, scholars have argued it is unclear who Jacobus intended his audience to be, but it cannot be ignored however that his narratives could be captivating to young girls and the 13th-century woman. The *Legenda Aurea* was translated to vernacular languages that could have targeted a broad audience, the poor and rich inclusive. In this work, we will later examine Jacobus's background since he hails from the Dominican Order. The 13th

⁶⁵ Undheim 2018 p. 127, 128

⁶⁶ Undheim 2018 p. 132

century had literate women and the way virginity or chastity was communicated could have appealed to them.

Nonetheless, Wilson examines how the Dominican Order could have perceived women's sexuality. The Dominican Order she claims was aimed at reviving the religious culture of the early apostolic church. She claims women's sexuality was perceived as being dangerous to the friars. To understand this, she further implies that women were always portrayed as "lustful and seductive" throughout medieval readership. To understand the Dominican order and how it perceived religious women, especially nuns, Wilson studied C.H Lawrence's book titled *The Friars: The impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society 1994*. Throughout Dominic's life, the papacy shaped the purpose of the Dominican Order. According to Lawrence, the Dominican Order had attempted to exclude women from their association. His observation is that they believed a woman could not fulfill the requirements of a pious lifestyle. He further articulates that the misogynistic fears of the friars could have created a sense of bias against women.⁶⁷ I mention this because Jacobus's background can build an understanding of how sexuality can be described and interpreted in the Golden Legend. Lawrence promotes that the Dominicans listed women's sexuality as a "very grave fault".⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the mendicant movements were created by men, but the woman was interested in this way of life regardless they were treated in this manner. The friars laid down principles, rules, or standards the women should meet or live by. To shape the lives of these women, the cult of saints was promoted and affiliated with the Order. Wilson readily says Jacobus's narrative of sacred women he compiled may have been to provide an example of how women should live a pious life. Secondly, it may be because of the demand to return to the apostolic way of life as adopted by the church and promoted through mendicant orders. Wilson argues that the religiosity of the mendicant order may have been appealing to religious laywomen because before the 13th century woman had few ways to this religious lifestyle. Wilson however asserts that the sexuality of the female nuns was regulated when it was addressed in the Augustine Rule. I have highlighted a little on the Augustine Rule in chapter 6 of this study. To what extent could this influence Jacobus to encourage women to preserve their sexuality? Wilson noted that the *Legenda Aurea* could be a guidebook to understanding sanctity (with virginity being a central component) as mandated by the papacy.⁶⁹ I, therefore, suggest that Jacobus could have intended how women in the 13th

⁶⁷ Wilson 2015 p. 14-15

⁶⁸ Wilson 2015 p. 17-18

⁶⁹ Wilson 2015 p. 19-21, 31

century should comport themselves which he promotes by emphasizing early Christian female saints. Women mentioned in the Golden Legend have virginity or chastity as a common characteristic. The emphasis places on these themes I studied to show how throughout the 13th century and onwards in Europe, sexuality was of great interest. Sexuality may have been expressed or understood in different ways nonetheless, it was accorded an enormous amount of attentiveness.

I quickly looked at a theoretical perspective on rape. Rape equally has been understudied in Late Antiquity, so I wanted to understand how it was theorized. Edward Shorter a historian of psychiatry in his article “On Writing the History of Rape” criticizes Susan Brownmiller’s book *Against Our Will*. Brownmiller is an American feminist journalist and author. Edward Shorter argues several views of Susan Brownmiller’s which says, “rape amounts to a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear”.⁷⁰ He argues on the generalization of rape seeing that Susan chooses to deal with the history of rape. He further observes that rape, according to Brownmiller was used as an expression of sexual dominion and was being ‘politicized’.⁷¹ He expounds on the idea that says that rape is one of the ways men use it to express their sexual dominance over women. Or a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear. According to Shorter’s observation, Brownmiller promotes rape as a violent act whereby a lunatic male releases his frustration. However, Shorter’s view is that rape should not only be looked at as being ‘political’ because it is a new development. He proposes that the political control of women was already absolute if Brownmiller is dealing with the history of rape. The concept of rape or the culture of rape over time may not necessarily have changed from being political as per Brownmiller to being a sexual frustration as propagated by Shorter.⁷² Rape has not been minimized in this study, but rape according to the Golden Legend was never executed, but attempts were made to defile these saintly women. It cannot also be ignored because it was repeatedly told by Jacobus in his narratives. However, in Jacobus's narrative, he mentions the chopping off breasts which is an action understood by theological writers as parallel to rape. Meanwhile, this thought, or analysis is observed by Corinne Saunders and will be seen in chapter five of this study. Furthermore, I must present the martyr saints as presented by Jacobus in his narrative.

⁷⁰ Shorter 1977 p.471 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/317329>

⁷¹ Shorter 1977 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/317329>

⁷² Shorter 1977 p. 471-472, 477 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/317329>

Chapter Four: Presentation of Saints

4.0 Introduction

Some saints are regarded as patron saints, especially girls who have been raped. The female saint is depicted in terms of her goodness which boils down to her sacrifice and the beauty of her appearance which lures men to erotic violence. Female saints are thus emulated because they lived exemplary lives. According to Jacobus de Voragine, I noticed that Saints like Lucy, Agnes, Marina, Margaret, and Justina were virgins of noble birth. Likewise, according to the catholic doctrine, holy virginity is a form of chastity which is a consecration in service to God. For most of these female martyrs I studied, an attempt was made to defile them. These Saints were either forced to denounce their faith or asked to sacrifice to other gods. If they did not succumb, they were tortured and killed horrifyingly.

4.1 Female Saints

The table below serves as an illustration of some of the Christian female saints narrated by Jacobus. I, however, noticed that during the period of AD 306- 337, Christianity began to transit to a dominant religion, and persecution was not as rampant. Under emperor Constantine the great, there was religious tolerance. There was, however, sporadic persecution of Christians in localized areas for their continual refusal to worship other gods or take part in sacrifices to these gods.

Saints	Born/died/	Persecution Era	Description of the saint and role
Lucy	Syracuse, Sicily 283	310 years of the lord. Threatened to be taken to the brothel to be defiled (sexually abused). Fierce persecution of Diocletian	Virgin, betrothed, wealthy. She possessed the beauty of virginity without corruption.
Anastasia	Roman	287 given to marry against her will.	Noble family, wealthy. Gave her riches to the poor. Dressed as a poor woman
Agnes	AD 245	AD 309/313. Suffered during the reign of	Virgin most sensible and wise, a child in body but aged in spirit.

		Constantine the Great. Stripped naked and taken to a brothel.	Beautiful face and faith. Youth martyr.
Paula	High Roman nobility. AD 347 died 404.		Holy, humble, and venerable. Wealthy and described as a jewel of inestimable price. Mother of 5 and did not sit with any man at the same table after the death of her husband. Stopped conjugal union after the birth of her son.
Agatha	Catania, Sicily	Year of the Lord 253.	Great beauty. Was desired by the consular in Sicily to satisfy his libido. Her breasts were twisted and chopped off.
Juliana		Diocletian Persecution	Betrothed to Eulogius, she refused to become his wife until he accepts Christ. Tortured by the prefect.
Sophia (Faith, Hope, and Charity)		Persecuted by the emperor	Had 3 beautiful daughters who refused to be adopted by the emperor. They were aged 11, 10, and 8 years respectively. They were beaten, breasts torn off, beheaded, and burnt.
Mary of Egypt	Year of the lord 270		The sinner. She renounced the world and lived chastely.
A virgin of Antioch	Antioch	Threatened to be taken to the brothel to be defiled (sexually abused).	Shrank from being seen in public. Guarded her virtue. Fought for her virginity and religion.
Apollonia		Reign of Decius	An admirable virgin, well along in years. Chaste, sobriety, pure, and admired by angels. She is resolute to stay a virgin.

Petronilla	Daughter of Saint Peter. Rome	End of the 1 st century	Virgin. A count was fascinated by her beauty and wanted to marry her.
Julitta	Year of the Lord 270	Emperor Alexander	She was a mother, who watched her son being killed because of his faith.
Marina	Antioch	Roman Prefect	Virgin and an only child. Dressed by her father as male, lived in the monastery as a monk. Great beauty, was desired as a concubine or a wife.
Christina	287, Italy	He father ordered her to be stripped and beaten	Born to parents of the highest rank, very beautiful and many sought to marry her. Her parents did not want to give her to any suitor.
Martha			Royal lineage, she possessed town as an inheritance. No husband is mentioned, nor it is mentioned if she lived intimately with any.
Justina	Antioch AD 280	Diocletian persecution	Daughter of a pagan priest. Forced to marry so that a plague will be averted. She was pursued by a Cyprian man.
Pelagia	Antioch, AD 290		Beautiful in form and possession of wealth. Ostentatious and vain, licentious in mind and body. Adorned her body with gold and silver, precious stones, and perfume. Repented and gave all to the poor

Margaret also known as Pelagius			Very beautiful, rich, and of noble birth. Was evaded by being seen by men. Lived virtuously and was modest in all her ways. Was said to be married but never consummated.
Daria	AD 211		Most decorous virgin, an inviolate spouse, marriage not consummated.
Elizabeth	1231		She had 7 different venerated statuses. She was filled with the splendor of truth, the sweetness of benignity and strength. Illustrious daughter of a king.
Cecilia	AD 223 or 220	Reign of Emperor Alexander or Markus Aurelius.	Heavenly lily by the modesty of her virginity. Born into a noble family. She sought the Lord to preserve her virginity. Her marriage was never consummated.
Catherine	AD 310	Maxentius or Maximinus	Daughter of king Costus. Was 18 years old and living alone with servants. She was bold, eloquent, and knowledgeable. She was an orator, admirable and gracious.
Felicity and Perpetua	AD 256	Emperor Valerian and Gallienus. Hands tied behind their backs and their buttocks bared and dragged along the streets. They were devoured by wild animals.	Perpetua was of noble birth and Felicity was eight months pregnant and gave birth in jail.

The figure above shows that most of the saints were persecuted before Constantine the Great became emperor. These saints are, however, renowned for their beauty and wealth. Most of them are recorded as being from noble families and very few are married with children. Some who got married never consummated the marriage. Saint Catherine for example, is known for her beauty and equally admired for her knowledge and eloquence. She was involved in debates and found unbeatable. I came across Felicity, who was pregnant and gave birth in jail, and Perpetua was a nursing mother.⁷³ There are, however, some saints that did not follow the same pattern noted in the Jacobus narrative. For example, Mary of Egypt, called the Sinner, later renounced the world, and lived chastely. Jacobus considers her to have led the most austere life for forty-seven years in the desert. I equally studied a 13th-century saint, Saint Elizabeth. I would observe if the factor of virginity was discussed in her narrative and if there was any difference in the representation of this saint. This will be discussed in chapter seven of this thesis.

A total of twenty-seven female saints have been illustrated above. They were mostly desired by the man in authority or who had the power to afflict pain and were equally pagans. These women were either very young, some betrothed, a few married and never consummated it, or others who ardently refused to be regarded as sex objects. These stories followed almost the same trend as observed above. They were dedicated to their God and never renounced their faith nor was any raped after several attempts were made to this magnitude.

4.2 Male Saints

The male saints in this study were chosen by the emphasis placed on their martyrdom. In this thesis it will be noticed no emphasis is placed on their virginity, nor were they threatened with rape. According to Jacobus, the church recognized three different classes of martyrs. First, the willed and endured, second willed but not endured, and the third, endured without being willed.⁷⁴ Therefore, the male saints cannot be ignored because they fall under one of the categories listed by the church. The male martyred saints as presented by Jacobus in the Golden Legend.

⁷³ Jacobus 1993 vol II p. 342-343

⁷⁴ Jacobus 1993 vol I p.50

Saints	Born/died/	Persecution Era	Description of the saint and role
Saint Nicholas	Died 343 Citizen of Patena.	Not mentioned	Nicholas taught the people to conquer sin and vice. Born of a rich and pious parent. His parents adopted celibacy after his youth. He inherited great wealth after the death of his parents. He shared his wealth with the poor.
Saint Stephen	1 st Martyr under the New Testament.	1 st Martyrdom	He is described as a norm than an example because he showed others how to suffer for Christ. He was stoned to death.
Saint Felix	Died in Styluses		A schoolteacher was allegedly stabbed by his students to death. He is regarded by the church as a confessor and not a martyr.
Saint Sebastian	Citizen of Milan	Suffered under emperors Diocletian and Maximian.	He was an affiliate of the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian. He was later reported by the prefect as being a Christian. He was tortured and killed.
Saint Vincent	Died AD 287	Under Diocletian and Maximian	He was noble by birth and nobler by faith. He was a deacon to Valerius the bishop. He was held in harsh confinement and set as an example to others.
Saint Blaise	Died 283	Diocletian	He was beheaded. He is described as a powerful example of gentleness and holiness. He was the bishop of Cappodocia. He lived the life of a

			hermit but was later arrested and executed.
Saint Valentine	Died AD 280	Emperor Claudius	He was beheaded. He was a martyr who put down idolatry. He quit his military career after he witnessed the death of Christ.
St Laurence	Spain	Emperor Decius	He was stripped and beaten with clubs to hand over the wealth of King Philip's son in his possession and to deny Christ and worship their gods.
The Four Crowned Martyrs (Severus, Servianus, Carpophonis, and Vortorinus)		Emperor Diocletian	They were beaten to death with leaded scourges.

From the Golden Legend, I studied twelve male saints. From the table illustrated above, I observed that among the twelve male saints, only one male saint was stripped naked according to Jacobus's narrative. The sexuality of these male saints was not in question in this narrative. Their martyrdom was not significantly tied to their sexuality from the above observations. The intriguing question is, why was there no value placed on the sexuality of the male saints? Maybe their virginity was of no significance relative to their female counterparts. The martyred male saints were tortured or persecuted for their beliefs or faith. Though they died violent deaths the belief is that they died for their faith, and it is considered an honor to die.

According to Jacobus de Voragine's collection of saints' lives, saints like Lucy, Agnes, Marina, Margaret, and Justina were virgins and of noble birth. From this historical narrative by Jacobus, Saints were either forced to denounce their faith or asked to sacrifice to other gods. If they did not succumb, they were tortured and killed gruesomely. According to the catholic doctrine, holy virginity is a form of chastity which is a consecration in service to God. For most of these female martyrs I studied, an attempt was made to defile them. If rape should happen, are they

still considered virgins by the catholic doctrine? It is, therefore, said a saint who may be defiled is considered a virgin because it was involuntarily committed against her will since the saint revered her body for a virtuous motive.⁷⁵ However, it is noticed later in this study that according to Boniface Ramsey a scholar,⁷⁶ some Church Fathers applauded those who died rather than would rather have their bodies defiled through rape. I will proceed by shedding some light on the themes raised in this study by studying their historical background or origin.

⁷⁵ Vermeersch 1912

⁷⁶ Ramsey got his information from *De Virginibus. On Holy Virginity; with a brief account of the life of St Ambrose.*

Chapter Five: Historical Background / theological framework (from the Church Fathers and onwards in the Middle Ages)

5.0 Introduction

Since sainthood is still having prominence in these contemporary times, tracing the significance of the cult of saints will be discussed in this chapter. The proceeding discourse provides an inside on virginity, the treatises that were written to govern this notion as per the Church Fathers, and martyrdom and rape. All these themes are an integral component of the life of a saint. Since Jacobus' hagiographic narrative is formulated around these themes, this chapter discusses them to pave an understanding of their belief in late antiquity. It is paramount to trace the happenings from early Christianity to build an awareness of the Cult of Saints in the 13th Century. The earliest period of Christianity is crucial because it lays the foundation for the knowledge of virginity and the treatises. Consequently, we will be able to appreciate the stories of these saints and how they were understood and interpreted by Jacobus. Also, to gain an understanding of the Church Fathers since they had significant influence and long-lasting impact.

5.1 Saints

In early Christianity, in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, saints or 'holy ones' are considered heroes for God; thus, they are not merely pious people or good people as noted by Erika Langmuir. The first Christian saints like John the Baptist and the Apostles were martyrs (witnesses). They were killed because they refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods of the Roman State Religion.⁷⁷ Likewise, Kenneth L. Woodward observed that Christians regarded the New Testament believers that were baptized as saints. He urges that since most were Jews, holiness was regarded as a quality shared by the community and not necessarily "significant to a specific individual." Among the first generation of Christians, some were singled out and acclaimed for their witness to the faith by dying for it. Therefore, by the end of the 1st-century saint was reserved exclusively for martyrs. In the Christian tradition, saints are therefore recognized for their holiness. Woodward notes that sanctity and martyrdom were inseparable in the Christian's consciousness. Considering the life of Christ who was obedient unto death, so saints died for the sake of Christ. Hence, martyrdom is a seal of a saint's total conformity to Christ.⁷⁸ One of the early Christians' beliefs was that of the 'communion of saints.' This is an understanding

⁷⁷ Langmuir 2001 p. 11

⁷⁸ Woodward 1990 p. 52-53

that the witness of saints was termed perfect, and their renunciation was regarded as absolute or total. To this effect, it was believed martyrs were ‘reborn’ at the instance of death into everlasting life.⁷⁹ Therefore, Christians would memorize their martyred heroes not necessarily on their birth day but equally on the day of rebirth. Thus, every community of saints had a heavenly patron through the cult of saints. This understanding was that saints were thought to be brought back to life through the cult of saints and as such legends were given life. As a result, wherever Christianity went, the cult of saints was rooted thus saints were remembered through their stories, relics, and genres and venerated for their holiness.⁸⁰

As earlier mentioned, for the first four centuries of the Christian era, the Christians suffered severe persecution from the Romans. To declare oneself a Christian was a threat and a risk unto martyrdom. The prize to suffer and die for Christ was inexplicable. To be identified as a saint meant one had suffered exceptionally for Christ. According to the Christians of Greco-Roman antiquity, saints were ‘those who had died, or willing to die or pursued a slow death to the world as a way of imitating Christ.’ Woodward observes however that the idea of sanctity extends to the living. More so, the church equally venerates persons because of their exemplary life as well as their deaths.⁸¹

In a modern classic on sainthood, Kenneth Woodward’s *Making of saints*, he claims saints were applauded or venerated not only for their courage to accept martyrdom. These saints were noted for their working marvelous deeds. Miracles (that is after the death of the saint) were regarded as the emergence of God’s kingdom on the earth that was made manifest through the life and death of Christ which is witnessed through the saints. These departed or deceased saints are considered to have in them the power of Christ which was made manifest upon the earth. For the first three centuries, Christians increasingly prayed to their saints for protection or spiritual aid. They believed these martyrs were closer to God thus linking the living with the dead. Meanwhile, martyrdom was believed to be more than just an act of human courage because dying for Christ entailed some supernatural support.⁸² Since the early days of the Christian church, saints were not only considered intercessors between God and man. They were equally a source of comfort, protection, and their working miracles of great significance. Therefore, saints were venerated for their role as patrons and protectors.

⁷⁹ Woodward 1990 p. 55-56

⁸⁰ Woodward 1990 p. 60

⁸¹ Woodward 1990 p. 53-54

⁸² Woodward 1990 p. 55-56, 61

When considering the origin of saints, can be traced to the Latin word ‘sanctus’ or Greek ‘hagios’ which means hallowed or consecrated. For four centuries Christians could be said to seek the martyrs’ crown since Christianity was considered an outlaw religion by the Roman Empire. For the memories of martyrs to be kept alive, Christians vividly preserved them through their cults.⁸³ In her theological reading in hagiography, Katja Ritari claims the life of a saint reflects a Christian ideology regarding sanctified persons. The idea of a sanctified or holy person can be used to shape society since it is a tradition within the church. To adequately express this theological idea, the saint is used as a theological principle to portray holiness and an ideal Christian living.⁸⁴ Ritari argues that medieval hagiographers have been versed in a broad range of Christian writing including theology. Therefore, the hagiographical narrative may reflect the author’s theological background and understanding of spirituality.⁸⁵ The question has been raised whether medieval authors had a clear divide between hagiography and theology.

As earlier noted, the church was under constant persecution in the first three centuries. Between the period of the death of emperor Septimius Severus in 211 and Decius taking over in 249, there was no general persecution of the church. If there was persecution it depended on the mood of the local authorities and their local citizenry, as noted by Boniface Ramsey. Martyrdom came from court reports preserved in Christian narratives or from eyewitness accounts or other accounts. The martyr is seen as privileged because they bore witness to Christ by confirming his suffering in death. As such dying for Christ or wanting to die for Christ as being a witness or a martyr. According to Syrian *Didascalia Apostolorum*, they were perceived as angels of God or god upon the earth or better still spiritually clothed with the Holy Spirit of God.⁸⁶ Martyrdom identifies as being a baptism of blood to those who have never been baptized in water according to (some Church Fathers) Tertullian’s treatise on baptism. Meanwhile, in Origen’s treatise on martyrdom, martyrdom is seen not only as profitable to the martyr alone, but it is an atonement for others. Origen’s treatise daringly compares the death of a martyr and the death of Christ.⁸⁷

Patricia C. Miller concurs that being a Christian was a capital offense under Roman law. Christianity was not regarded as a legal religion until Constantine in 315 (Edict of Milan). The

⁸³ Hallam 1994 p. 96

⁸⁴ Ritari 2009 p. 8

⁸⁵ Ritari 2009 p.8

⁸⁶ Ramsey 1987 pp 122-123

⁸⁷ Ramsey 1987 p. 131

cult of martyrs developed in the 4th century, many women were martyrs of the faith, and their records or stories are preserved in the *acta martyrium*.⁸⁸ Miller's records that according to Brent Shaw, sexual shaming and physical punishment were related to women martyrs.⁸⁹ Concerning Jacobus de Voragine's Golden Legend saints were represented according to the church calendar. It is important to note that the beatification of saints did not start in the 1st century.

Notwithstanding, by the 10th century, appeals were made to the pope. Hence, Ulrich the bishop of Augsburg (who died in 973), was the first to be canonized by Pope John XV at the Lateran Council of 993. By 1227-41 under Gregory IX canonization became general law. It was Pope Alexander III (1159-8) who began to reserve the cases of canonization to the Holy See or the See of Rome (the apostolic episcopal see of the bishop of Rome). Brigitte Cazelles however, observed that it is in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that common people and non-specialists played an important role in the life of the church. This she notes was the period of transition in the church.⁹⁰ These saints or holy people had some characteristics which made them be to be held in high esteem.

5.2 Virginité in early Christianity

By the end of the third century, virginity was compared with martyrdom. The Methodius of Olympus writes that "virgins will be the first to follow in the Lord's train into the kingdom of heaven".⁹¹ The notion of virginity was repeated among the Church Fathers, for example, Ambrose in his comparison equates the relationship between martyrdom and virginity. Ambrose claims virginity is not applauded because it is found in martyrs, but it is what makes the martyr. Virginity, therefore, produces the same effect as martyrdom not necessarily because it involves a comparable struggle. But it equally results in death to self which was perceived as bodily death. According to Ramsey, if virginity is given the same acclamation as martyrdom, then it shows its attractiveness in the early church, holding that martyrs were enchanted by it. Ramsey claims the Church Fathers inevitably demeaned the married state as a matter of course or accorded it faint recognition. It was commonplace for the disadvantage of marriage to be elaborated when writing on virginity.⁹² Marriage was seen by the Church Fathers as a remedy for concupiscence as permitted by Apostle Paul in (1 Corinthians 7:9) which says, "it is better to marry than burn with passion." The impression on marriage given by the Church Fathers

⁸⁸ Miller 2005 p. 40

⁸⁹ Miller 2005 p. 145

⁹⁰ Cazelles 1991 p. 4

⁹¹ Ramsey 1987 p. 136

⁹² Ramsey 1987 p. 136

placed less value on it while virginity was inestimable. Jerome for example illustrated marriage as a gateway to sexual enjoyment since a woman could not be a man equal intellectually or socially.⁹³ To some of the Church Fathers, the original sin and sexual act were intertwined. There was therefore something unclean about the sexual act since its originality is traced back to Adam and Eve, who were expelled from the garden of Eden. They only conceived Cain after their expulsion from the garden.⁹⁴ To fully understand the Church Fathers' notion of virginity, as per Methodius of Olympus (Christian bishop, died c. 311), the word 'virginity' (parthenia) becomes 'nearness to God' (partheia) when one letter is changed from it. Virginity therefore as applied by this notion, makes the divine the one who has it. Meanwhile, Gregory of Nyssa says virginity is uncorrupted since God has a son who was born in an uncorrupted or virginal manner. To this effect, Ramsey classifies virginity as sacred or venerated. He traces the notion of the sacredness of virginity to the pagan Greek heritage, which says through virginity a relationship with divinity is established. Since virginity was portrayed as divinely, the relationship with God became personalized, and virgins identified as brides of Christ. Notably, by the beginning of the 3rd century, Tertullian encouraged virgins to wear veils.⁹⁵

I noticed that virgins were not viewed from one standpoint. There was freedom from physical defilement was put into consideration. This I can understand to mean virgins who were violated were still virgins because they retained their spiritual virginity. However, according to Ramsey, Ambrose suggested that a virgin may kill herself to avoid being sexually abused, thus validating the sacredness of physical virginity. It is noticed that to some of the Church Fathers, virginity encompassed everything; for example, pride, disobedience, or lack of control over food and drink were not encouraging attributes of virgins. According to Ambrose in his treatise on virginity, two prominent virtues accompanied virginity that is love and humility.

Meanwhile according to Gregory of Nyssa in his treatise on virginity, for virginity to be maintained, it hangs on a virtuous life that is harmonized with virtue and passion.⁹⁶ Miller notes that in the early 2nd century, ascetic Christians adopted a form of cohabitation, which was known as 'spiritual marriage'. In this spiritual marriage, a man and a woman take a vow of chastity which is sexual continence. The women in spiritual marriages were called 'virgins subintroductae' (meaning those 'brought in covertly'). This was a way for women to pursue

⁹³ Ramsey 1987 p. 145

⁹⁴ Ramsey 1987 p. 141

⁹⁵ Ramsey 1987 p. 141-142

⁹⁶ Ramsey 1987 p. 146-147

their ascetic lifestyle before the availability of monasteries for women.⁹⁷ Unfolding the ideology of virginity, it is relatively highly complex and intertwined, seeing that it erupted theological arguments. Most arguments by the Church Fathers on virginity focus on Paul's letter, which according to them places virginity above marriage, saying "marriage is good, but virginity is better"⁹⁸ This argument became a cornerstone discourse for patristic discourses. This notion was supported vigorously by John Chrysostom. Meanwhile, the Eustathians because of their understanding of virginity were significantly condemned at the council of Gangra.⁹⁹

Castelli notes that the theme of virginity was portrayed as liberation in the treatises on virginity. This notion paved the way for the celestial marriage with Christ. The assertion vow of virginity was viewed as an irrevocable marriage contract with Christ, the bridegroom. This concept of virginity which urges virgins to be the bride of Christ causes them to live an ascetic life to gain access to the heavenly bridal chamber in which the virgin's body and soul are guarded for Christ. The conscious decision to remain a virgin and to renounce marriage and the world was taken by some virgins because it provided them the means to pursue intellectual and spiritual activities which would have otherwise been impossible.¹⁰⁰ To buttress this fact, Salisbury notes that, women choose various paths of religion in early Christianity because of the desire for independent spiritual life. To illustrate the importance of spiritual life, apocryphal acts praised celibacy as *the sine qua non* which is a kind of woman's position. Therefore, the renunciation of their sexuality that is by preserving their virginity or chastity, was enough to convey to the women some measure of power. This power is over their bodies and their lives to a certain extent. However, in the 2nd century, some women chose the path of asceticism.¹⁰¹ According to Sissel Undenheim, Christian consecrated virgins appeared in Rome in the early 340s because of Athanasius' sojourn and proselytization. It is thought to have inspired many Romans to take on the ascetic life. For example, Marcella an aristocratic woman professed ascetic life.¹⁰²

As a form of ascetic practice, both men and women voluntarily practiced celibacy as early as the 2nd century, as observed equally by Salisbury. In the 4th century, however, virginal asceticism was birth as a lifestyle. The 4th century was equally the period when many

⁹⁷ Miller 2005 p.118

⁹⁸ Castelli 1986 p. 68

⁹⁹ Castelli 1986 p. 68

¹⁰⁰ Castelli 1986 p. 70, 82

¹⁰¹ Salisbury 1991 p. 4

¹⁰² Undenheim 2018 p. 14

theologians wrote treatises on virginity. It was also observed that biographies were written for women around this period who opted for continence during the marriage or even after marriage. Patricia Miller notes that much of what was written by Christian men about Christian women focused on their behavior either as virgins or as wives.

Meanwhile, Miller observed that the virginity of women was a construct. The construe of virginity was so that women saw it as some form of liberation not necessarily from the clutches of marriage and childbearing but from physical passion and materiality. To understand this, it is noted that by the mid of the first century, Apostle Paul portrayed celibate life as an ideal life in 1 Corinthians 7.¹⁰³

In Gangra in 340 or 341, thirteen bishops under the leadership of Eusebius, the bishop of Constantinople, conveyed to the province of Paphlagonia. Their meeting was regarding specific church issues and investigating Eustathius. In this meeting, twenty canons were issued by the assembled Fathers, and a warning letter was sent to Armenia to their colleagues. Eutathius¹⁰⁴ teachings addressed virgins, and his philosophy conflicted with other church authorities.

Canon I by the synod at Gangra stipulates: If anyone should condemn marriage or abominate and condemn a woman who is a believer and devout, and sleeps with her own husband, as though she could not enter the kingdom (of heaven) let him be anathema.

Canon 9: If anyone shall remain virgin, or observe continency, abstaining from marriage because he abhors it and not an account of the beauty and holiness of virginity itself, let him be anathema.

¹⁰³ Miller 2005 p. 78

¹⁰⁴ Eustathius was presumably born around 300 and he was the son of Eulalius. He left home after a conflict with his father at the age of 25. He had been subjected to public penance by this father Eulalius. Though his desire was to become a member of the clergy in Antioch he was never accepted by the local bishop. He, however, became a member of the clergy at Caesarea in Cappadocia in 330. He was officially condemned for the first time by the synod in 339 in Neocaesarea and for the second time in Gangra in 340/341. It was found that the Eutathians had committed many improprieties. According to these bishops, these improprieties raised a great deal of concern as far as the boundaries of Paphlagonia. He is said to be the author of monastic philosophy by the church historian Sozomem (though an account of his philosophy is not found in his words). Eustathius founded the society of monks in Armenia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus.¹⁰⁴

Canon 10: If anyone of those who are living a virgin life for the Lord's sake shall treat arrogantly the married, let him be anathema.¹⁰⁵

Eustathius taught and condemned marriage and caused his followers to abhor it not necessarily because of the beauty and holiness of virginity. The canons above were issued to curb some practices initiated by some influential figures in the Christian society.

In 314, bishops and priests from Galatia, Cappodocia, and Pontus also met in Ancyra which is known today as Turkey and issued several orders or canons. They sat equally to discuss some passed controversies that to them required adjustments. For example, they came up with

canon 19: "Those men and women, who had proclaimed (...) virginity, and revoked their proclamation shall be subjected to the same regulation concerning those who married for a second time (...). We prohibit those, who live together with men (...) as if they were their sisters, from doing so."¹⁰⁶

Earlier in 306, in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain) a region of the Roman Empire, canon 13 was issued by Iberian bishops. This canon made it clear that communion should not be given to virgins on their death bed who had broken their vow of virginity but if they repented and ceased sexual intercourse, they could receive the communion. There was allocated punishment by the Ancyran Fathers and the Elviran Fathers on the allegation of loss of virginity or violation of laid down principles.¹⁰⁷ Regarding these two canons pronounced almost simultaneously in Iberia and Asia Minor, Elm notes that though men dedicated themselves to god, it was most prominent with the women. These women did so through a public profession assuring the maintenance of their virginity; they swore to a life of chastity. These women who had to make a public profession of their commitment renounced carnal marriage and entered a "pact of virginity."¹⁰⁸ For example, Jerome one of the Church Fathers advocated for a public ceremony. Jerome did so in his Letter 130 to Demetrias a Roman of high born who had embraced the vocation of a virgin. He wrote to her, whom he describes as "a virgin of Christ and a lady whose birth and riches make her second to none in the Roman world." Jerome equally says he is aware that, "the bishop has with words of prayer covered her holy head with the virgin's bridal-veil, reciting the while the solemn sentence of the apostles "I wish to present you all as a chaste

¹⁰⁵ Percival 1900

¹⁰⁶ Elm 1996 p. 25

¹⁰⁷ Elm 1996 p. 25-27

¹⁰⁸ Salisbury 1991 p.32

virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2).”¹⁰⁹ Salisbury observes that this public profession was imperative in that the church was able to identify and control the women who desired to dedicate themselves to God.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, Elm compares the punishment virgins got if they went contrarily to their vows by both the Elvirans and the Ancyrans and had this to say; the Ancyra Fathers pronounce judgment while the Elvirian Fathers gave the possibility of repentance. As the Church Fathers viewed the loss of virginity differently.¹¹¹ As previously mentioned in the introduction of this study, public ceremonies are held for daughters who desired to sign the purity pledge. These girls are often accompanied by their fathers. This vow-taking as a tradition can therefore be traced to some of the Church Fathers who advocated for a public ceremony. This goes to buttress the fact that the patriarchs are still influential in the lives of some conservative Christians.

5.2.1 Patristic Treatises on Virginity

Before the virginity treatises were written in the 4th century, by the 3rd century, a symposium spearheaded by Methodius, bishop of Olympus in Lycia, had ten virgins showcase the importance of chaste and virginity vis-a-vis the scriptures. This conference depicted virginity as “marvelous, great, wonderful and glorious.” One of the virgins in the person of Marcella illustrated how according to Matthew 19:2, Jesus promises virgins a straight path into the kingdom of heaven if they should preserve their virginity.¹¹²

Meanwhile, the era of the fathers began around the year 96 and concluded around 750. The patristic period was not made up of a homogeneous group of persons nor did they think or reason alike. The patristic era lasted for 700 years, right from the 1st century. The fathers were passionately interested in theology and their rhetorical training gave them an advantage of persuasion. They were preachers though most of them were not intellectuals. As such, the truth had to be written eloquently and convincingly even if they spoke about it or simply knew it.¹¹³

Gregory of Nyssa was a prominent figure in the treatises on virginity. He was educated in philology, rhetoric, and theology. Around the early 370s, Gregory explained the philosophical and theological foundation of virginity which he attributes as the highest form of the Christian life. Gregory bases his arguments on virginity by delineating the distresses of marriage. He

¹⁰⁹ Fremantle, Lewis, Martley 1893

¹¹⁰ Salisbury 1991 p. 33

¹¹¹ Elm 1996 p. 27

¹¹² Miller 2005 pp. 71,78-79

¹¹³ Ramsey 1987 pp. 7, 12

alludes purity and incorruptibility to virginity and marriage he depicts as burdensome.¹¹⁴ In Gregory's messages, he does not only show how virginity is connected to divinity or how valuable virginity is, but he also quotes scriptures to justify this supposed spiritual marriage. Gregory speaks of a complete separation from pleasure, which is that of the flesh, and chose purity of heart which is undeniably connected to virginity. Gregory's treatise on virginity focuses on doctrinal teachings about virginity and asceticism. He aimed to create a passion for his readers for an extraordinary life, thus pushing for a righteous lifestyle. To him, access to holiness was through virginity or ascetic activity.

Another educated theologian and churchman in the person of John Chrysostom, lived around 347-407 C.E. He served as a bishop of Constantinople (398-404), and he wrote extensively on asceticism. His writings were analogous to Gregory of Nyssa's because they focused on the same themes that are on burdens and anxiety of marriage. John Chrysostom's treatise of virginity is written twenty years after Gregory's treatise on virginity. John's treatise like Nyssa is based on exegesis from Paul's letter to the Corinthians and Genesis 1: 28 but with an ascetic viewpoint. Chrysostom illustrated the superiority of virginity over marriage. According to him, passion does not trouble the virgin. He likens virginity to angels who never marry nor are given into marriage. These virgins are transparent and brilliant, thus totally undisturbed, or unperturbed by the affairs of marriage. If angels stand continuously to serve God so too the virgin is assiduous. According to Apostle Paul, as stipulated by Chrysostom, the virgin is wholly devoted to serving God and has no other cares or worries.¹¹⁵ Virginity is a high virtue to Chrysostom because he speaks so passionately. From the spiritual perspective, a virgin may be physically unattractive but through virginity, she is transformed into an irresistible beauty. Virginity presumably makes the youthful virgin even more radiant. Chrysostom classifies virginity as beautiful because the virgin focuses on serving God and does not worry unnecessarily about frivolities. Not only did Chrysostom write treatises on virginity, but he also illustrated the necessity of guarding virginity.¹¹⁶

Athanasius of Alexandria was the bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. He was considered of the most prominent churchmen of the 4th century. He was known for championing the ascetic lifestyle. He wrote extensively on virginity correlating virgins to 'brides of Christ'. He promoted Mary as a role model virgin worth imitating women. In his first letter to virgins,

¹¹⁴ Miller 2005 p. 94-95

¹¹⁵ Miller 2005 p. 104-106

¹¹⁶ Miller 2005 p. 116-117

Athanasius presented virginity as a virtuous life superior to marriage. According to him, virginity is ‘the image of angelic purity’ and in his second letter, he encouraged virgins on ascetic life. He goes further to provide practical discipline in their ascetic lifestyle.

The ascetic movement began to flourish in the 4th century. However, by the mid-fourth century, in the city of Gangra (as seen above) a group of bishops from Asia Minor and Armenia shared their concern over the extreme asceticism of Eustathius (bishop of Sebaste in Armenia). The ideas of asceticism were gaining large popularity and the canons of the council attempted to control the definition and practice of asceticism. According to the council, the Eustathian position was rigorous because intercourse was rejected, marriage was condemned, and the followers opted for monastic clothing for men and women. The council, however, provided canons that applied specifically to women. After the council’s investigation, they concluded that many things were done unlawfully by Eustathius’s followers. The holy synod convened in Gangra however established some guidelines to be followed and condemned the practices of Eustathians.¹¹⁷

5.2.2 Homily on Virginity

The homily on virginity was written around 314, just two years before Constantine accepted Christianity as an official religion. Homily, like the canon, addressed the offspring of both sexes. Since they are engaged with Christ, it urges them to reflect on the consequences of their decision having dedicated their lives to God.¹¹⁸ An anonymous Greek homily titled “Une Curieuse homélie grecque inédite sur la virginité adressée aux pères de famille.” This homily was published by Amand and Moons in 1953. Though an author’s name of the homily cannot be ascertained, Susanna Elms claims with the evidence from editors it is said to be before the council of Nicaea in 325. The central theme of this homily was marriage and virginity. The main aim of this homily was to persuade parents that children should preserve themselves exclusively pure for Christ. John Chrysostom for example in 393/394 entreated parents on how to teach their sons and daughters. He wrote an entire treatise (*De inani Gloria et de educandis a parentibus liberis*) devoted to the parents.¹¹⁹ In the homily, however, fathers most especially had a tremendous role to play in the lives of these children who wished to be brides of Christ. If a child desired to practice virginity either as a son or a daughter or even a servant or maid,

¹¹⁷ Miller 2005 p. 150

¹¹⁸ Elm 1996 p.37

¹¹⁹ Elm 1996 p. 43

they should not be impeded.¹²⁰ Though the homily did not discourage marriage, however, it can be traced to the fact that virginity was to be encouraged by parents if their child showed the faintest hint to preserve it. Fathers most particularly had to rejoice if their child had intentions of cultivating virginity. As a role, the father is regarded as the ‘priest of the high temple’ which is noticeably a heavy task. The father’s duty as a priest of the high temple was to make sure “nothing evil approaches the pure temple.”¹²¹ The assignment as the priest of the high temple goes beyond ensuring the daughter’s capacity to lead the life of a virgin of God. The father, first and foremost, must be confident of the daughter’s abilities, that is her comportment. He controls her movement and ensures she is respectful and conscious of her thoughts. Some qualities which the father must watch out for are her love for humanity and divine matters, fasting capabilities, and charitable works. The father goes further to keep her in seclusion, guarding her against men even to the extent of guarding her temperament, laughter, and anger.¹²² Meanwhile, the life of virginity is a period of preparation (being a betrothed of Jesus Christ); the virgin anticipates the night with the heavenly bridegroom. The virgins had some models to imitate, which were the five wise virgins in the Gospel of Mathew, Mary, and Thecla in the apocryphal Acts of Paul.¹²³

The homily made it clear that fathers had enormous benefits from this pursuit. He is considered “now the guardian of a heavenly bride, a pure temple, a prize possession.”¹²⁴ As a father, he is no longer preoccupied with dowry issues, nor is he worried about class distinction, and most especially the girl is no longer favored because of her beauty or lack thereof. Elm observes that the homily encourages sons to dedicate their lives as virgins, and the son’s father is compared to Abraham who is willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. Therefore, it is more of a sacrifice to the son than being engaged to Christ.¹²⁵

Elizabeth Castelli notes that treatises and homilies on virginity and renunciation can be traced back to the 3rd century and were favored by writers in the 4th century. Miller notes that virginal asceticism as a lifestyle rose prominently around the 4th century.¹²⁶ However, Castelli notes that the root of asceticism has been the very heart of Christian tradition. The life of Jesus radically encourages discipleship and Paul’s advice to follow his example of celibate life gave

¹²⁰ Elm 1996 p. 34-35

¹²¹ Elm 1996 p. 35

¹²² Elm 1996 p. 35-36

¹²³ Elm 1996 p. 37

¹²⁴ Elm 1996 p. 37

¹²⁵ Elm 1996 p. 37

¹²⁶ Miller 2005 p. 78

grounds for some to promote the life of asceticism. This results in not being distracted in the preparation for the coming of God's kingdom. According to Castelli's hypothesis to understand why the ascetic ideal flourished exponentially, she says it was because of the response to the end of persecution of Christians in the early 4th century.¹²⁷ The growth of asceticism she observed was because of a shift in cultural marginality to hegemony. The transition played an essential role in the evolutionary development of asceticism. Hence, the ideology of asceticism and virginity developed parallelly in the 4th century even though virgins were already asserted in the 1st century of Christianity.¹²⁸

5.3 The ascetic Tradition

The ascetic tradition stemmed from the holy land, west to the Syrian desert and Egypt. This tradition was one in which people attained spiritual powers through their complete separation from society by physical renunciation.¹²⁹ The ascetic practice advocated strongly for virginity and chastity as its primacy. It, therefore, separated potentially holy people from society. The stress on virginity spread to various parts in the 2nd century. The ascetic tradition for men was however different from women, and this was because of gender preconception, as noted by Joyce Salisbury. That is to say; male ascetics can advocate for independence from ecclesiastical authority, but the female ascetic cannot. However, in the early centuries of Christianity, women obtained some measure of power by renouncing their sexuality and preserving their virginity. This was in a bid to attain an individual spiritual life.¹³⁰ However, as early as (ca 160-215) Clement of Alexandria expounded on the ascetic vision and by the 4th century, it was elaborated. Miller observes that most of what this man of culture and wide learning wrote is observed as heralding the ideal ascetic life for women. He wrote concerning women's behavior and self-control. Clement's advice was on how Christian women should comport in society.¹³¹

Furthermore, the Church Fathers based their theological arguments on Paul's writing, who advocated for celibacy. They had enough backing against the flesh from scriptures thus strongly supporting virginity. Church Fathers like Ambrose and Jerome defer from Tertullian because they focus on the church on the earth. Tertullian, in the 2nd century in North Africa, urged the faithful to trust the spirit over authority thereby breaking free from their pagan past. Meanwhile, Ambrose and Jerome, great influential thinkers incorporated the idea of Eastern

¹²⁷ Castelli 1986 p. 65-66

¹²⁸ Castelli 1986 p. 167

¹²⁹ Salisbury 1991 p. 2

¹³⁰ Salisbury 1991 p. 3

¹³¹ Miller 2005 p. 71

asceticism and chastity into the West. They are equally compelling in articulating the same values for Christian virginity.¹³² The first four fathers in the persons of Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome, shared a fundamental view on sexuality. They opted to reject the Roman acceptance of carnality by establishing a new Christian vision of sex. According to these Church Fathers, sex was the center of the flesh. They explained the carnal, sexual world in connection to physical sensuality. By their conception, all things physical steer sexuality.¹³³ However, there was no fixed age at which girls could devote their chastity to God. Some women decided to follow the ascetic life in their later years while young girls also dedicated themselves to the ascetic life. Girls during the Roman period were considered eligible for marriage as early as twelve they may not however be regarded as capable of making decisions for themselves when it came to renouncing the world and guarding one's virginity. The decision to remain a virgin was not often met with encouragement from the girl's parents or her family members. Subsequently, parental opposition to ascetic practice by girls or young widows provoked much rhetoric on the part of the patristic.¹³⁴ According to Ambrose, if the girls can be allowed to choose their husbands, then they can equally choose God. On the other hand, Jerome asked the mothers why they want to hinder their daughters. He considered it a significant advantage to the mothers since they would be the mother-in-law of God.¹³⁵ Paradoxically women of affluence could pursue asceticism and virginity. They did so by a total renunciation of their wealth though still having complete control of it. Cyprian, for example, in the 3rd century is noted for encouraging a group of virgins to be generous with their wealth.¹³⁶ According to Salisbury, the Christian church in the west was shaped by the ideas of some men who she terms theological giants. They built the Christian thought which she classifies as complex and highly structured. These ideas, however, dominated the medieval world. These theologians (Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome) did not always agree on certain Christian doctrines and practices. They were noted to refer to each other and build on each other's thoughts while disagreeing but together they created the central thought for Christian understanding. Hence, these ideas are said to shape Christian society.¹³⁷ As earlier mentioned in this work, Jerome's letter to Demetrias lays down rules and guidelines in her

¹³² Salisbury 1991 pp. 5, 11

¹³³ Salisbury 1991 pp. 11, 12, 18

¹³⁴ Castelli 1986 p. 81-82

¹³⁵ Castelli 1986 p. 82

¹³⁶ Castelli 1986 p. 83

¹³⁷ Salisbury 1991 p. 11, 12

vocation of virginity around 414 AD. This is a guideline to an ascetic life in the form of duties of prayers, fasting, obedience, giving up money to Christ, and being industrious.¹³⁸

Moreover, monasticism is regarded as a ‘higher evolution’ of asceticism by Elm. While asceticism has a moderate physical life, it is however observed that within the family of monasticism, stress was laid on order, work, prayer, obedience, and stability. The monastic family located chiefly in the countryside is said to be organized in communities of nuns or monks. They followed these allocated rules under the guidance of an abbot or abbess. Like asceticism, monasticism has founding fathers in the person of “Pachomius, Basil of Caesarea, Augustine of Hippo, Benedict of Nursia, and later Father Francis of Assisi”. Elm notes that when theological concepts were ferociously argued, monasticism was used as a marshal to either legitimize or dismantle a rival doctrinal position.¹³⁹ Mentioning monasticism here is imperative because, in chapter six, the life of Jacobus Voragine will feature his affiliation with monasticism.

5.4 Rape

Rape as an offense, according to Corinne Saunders entered Roman law relatively late. Saunders tries to elucidate the difference between the definition of the modern definition of rape and the medieval one, but she takes into consideration medieval cultural attitudes. She observed that rape and abduction are intertwined whereby rape in the Middle Ages cannot be understood aside from abduction. This misconception was because it was impossible to differentiate in the medieval discourse the difference between crime, raped, or abduction. Therefore, rape as a theme in medieval writing is often linked to ravishment.¹⁴⁰ The early Roman law focused exclusively on damage caused by abduction which is termed *raptus*. *Raptus* was punishable by death rather than marrying the abductee. However, if the woman consented to *raptus*, she was also subjected to the death penalty. Unmarried women, widows, or nuns, if raped or abducted were seen as being devalued.

However, sexual violence was not mentioned in Roman law until the 6th century under the decrees of Justinian. In the Justinian code, sexual violence against women was extended as a definition of *raptus*.¹⁴¹ Hagiographical narratives focus on sexual violence or menace which results in a threat or pollution of the woman’s body and loss of her virginity. This is also done

¹³⁸Fremantle, Lewis, Mantley 1893

¹³⁹ Elm 1996 p. 2-3

¹⁴⁰ Saunders 2001 pp. 4, 20

¹⁴¹ Saunders 2001 p. 34

against the woman's will or desire. Meanwhile, the book, *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds* noticeably shows that medieval writers got their examples from tales of rape committed by gods offered by classical literature. Medieval rape law was constructed around the notion of theft, not violating the woman's body and rights. The medieval law was as such as the Roman law on rape, seeing that the Roman law shaped the medieval law on rape. Also, sexuality and conception further complicated the attitude of theologians and legal minds. "Theological and medical treatises presented the nature of the women as inherently sexual: women were thus likely to incline towards desire in rape."¹⁴² To understand this concept, Saunders says it is traced back to the woman's role in the fall, where her natural ability over her intellect is questioned. Though theologians argue that a woman retains her virginity after rape, it cannot be ascertained if authors of secular literature and readers share this view. Clerical ideas in the narratives of hagiographic texts were widely read in the Middle Ages, and the life of the virgin martyrs in these texts was exemplified as icons. These stories were spread illustrating the several threat and escapes of rape though there was difficult to convey the message of spiritual chastity after rape.¹⁴³

According to Nghiem L. Nguyen, the concept of rape in Roman society cannot be adequately studied academically if the woman's position is not understood. The woman in Roman society like in Greek was in the house as part of a family having protection under a male guardian. Though under the Romans, rape and other related sexual violence were treated as a criminal, legal charges were sometimes deferred. In this case, class distinction and being a freeborn Roman woman had great significance.¹⁴⁴

More than any other genre, hagiography has brought to light the question of the sanctity of the raped virgin according to Saunders. In the lives of these female saints, there is an enormous connection between their virginity and holiness. The threat of rape is very symbolic in the cult of virginity since their holiness intersects with their virginity. Saunders argues that sainthood depends on virginity irrespective of the academic arguments presented by theologians. Virginity she expounds is portrayed "as an icon, a physical quality that empowers the woman."¹⁴⁵ Both the man and woman proved their assertion of asceticism over sin by their denial of the worldly self. The male saint proved his spirituality by interacting with others, but

¹⁴² Saunders 2002 pp. 243-244,246

¹⁴³ Saunders 2002 p. 247

¹⁴⁴ Nguyen 2006 pp. 76, 83

¹⁴⁵ Saunders 2001 p. 121

the female did hers specifically by her virginity. Men rarely defended their virtue, but the woman had to publicly or privately push off the sexual violence meted at her.

The female saint in the hagiographic narrative is threatened with rape, but it may never be enacted upon her but Saunders notes that the chopping of breasts is an action considered by theological writers parallel to rape. This is so because raped cannot occur without their source of holiness being threatened. Though rape may not be executed, the hagiographic narratives paint a powerful attribute to the physical aspects of virginity. Although Saunders observed that *raptus* as a medieval legal term could not directly be equated to rape as a modern concept, she notes that *raptus* incorporates two concepts that are abduction and *coitus*.¹⁴⁶ As aforementioned, in Jacobus' narrative, the female saint was threatened with rape and physical punishment was meted upon her.

5.5 Martyrdom

Martyrs, like saints, are regarded as heroes of the church. Their unflinching death is of profound significance as the witness of their allegiance to Christ. Helen Rhee notes that to the contemporary pagan or the mass or the elites, the Christian death and enthusiasm for martyrdom were the best-known features of Christianity. Martyrdom was a public spectacle with numerous people and an overly charged, emotionally charged environment. The martyr acts have been traditionally divided into two literary types as indicated by Rhee, the 'passiones' or 'martyria' and the 'acta' or 'gesta'. The latter is the accounts of the eyewitnesses, and the former gives the descriptive accounts of the last events and death of the martyr.¹⁴⁷ According to Boniface Ramsey, what is known of martyr came from courts reports. These reports were eye-witness accounts, and they were preserved in Christian narratives. The historical accuracy may not be proven, but it goes to reveal the church's mentality. This is to say, the martyr was indeed a privilege individual indeed and merited veneration both in life and death.¹⁴⁸

The Roman authority arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and brutally executed Christians who denied worshipping their gods and held fast to their Christian faith. These martyrs were recognized as haven partook in the suffering of Christ and imitators of his death. The earliest record of the cult of a martyr date to 156AD, which records a letter from the Christians of

¹⁴⁶ Saunders 2001 p. 134-136

¹⁴⁷ Rhee 2005 p. 39

¹⁴⁸ Ramsey 1993 p. 123

Smyrna whereby they described the martyrdom of their bishop: bishop Polycarp. It is recorded that after his body was burnt by his persecutors, the Christians collected his bones which they described as ‘more precious than jewels’ and buried them in a safe place where they will be later collected to celebrate the feast day of his martyrdom. This celebration is regarded as a joyful one because martyrs’ death marks victory over death which is an assurance of immortality in heaven and proximity to God’s throne.¹⁴⁹

Tracing the origin of martyrdom, Rhee looks at W. H. C. Frend who traces it to the Jewish tradition saying it began in the deutero-Isaiah and the prophetic tradition. This was followed by the Maccabean tradition which became a direct predecessor of Christian martyrdom. The Christians continued this tradition thought they superseded the idea with the death of Jesus and other Jews of the faith. However, Rhee holds that this idea is contested by Glen Bowersock who thinks that martyrdom was alien to both Greeks and Jews and was new with the rise of Christianity.¹⁵⁰ Rhee, however, notes that according to Bowersock in his book *Martyrdom and Rome* (1995), Christian martyrdom is because of the structure of the Roman empire, that is the Graeco- Roman world, its traditions, languages, and cultural taste. In Rhee’s view, she expounds that Christian martyrdom came into being under the auspices of both Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions of noble death and cultural systems. She terms it a continuation of the idea.¹⁵¹ To trace this idea and connect these traditions as an already existing idea she looks at the example of the Roman tradition of military and gladiatorial acts as a way of redeeming lost honor, mainly through heroic self-destruction. Also, she expounds that the Roman system used the death of martyrs or criminals as a form of entertainment whereby amphitheatres and public execution arenas had a dramatic display of public executions. Hence, there was a pre-existing order in these societies which could have formed the Christian martyrdom seeing that the Christians would either refuse to pay allegiance to the gods and emperors or refuse to partake in their pagan rituals.¹⁵² In this capacity, therefore, Rhee holds that the fact cannot be doubted that martyrdom was a positive practical exhibition of religious truth that resulted in a “theological thrust of witnessing to God over and against pagan gods.”¹⁵³ These martyrs were

¹⁴⁹ Langmuir 2001 p. 11

¹⁵⁰ Rhee 2005 p. 42

¹⁵¹ Rhee 2005 p.44

¹⁵² Rhee 2005 p.45

¹⁵³ Rhee 2005 p.46

witnesses of their Christian faith, honored for being imitators of Christ who is said to have died a gruesome death because of God's love for humanity.¹⁵⁴

After having established this, I needed to know who Jacobus de Voragine was and what or who could have influenced him. The next chapter is to understand the author of the Golden Legend to get a comprehensive understanding of his narrative without being judgmental.

¹⁵⁴ Langmuir 2001 p.11

Chapter Six: Presentation of the Hagiographer (Thirteenth century; the context of The Golden Legend, issues of readership and audiences...)

6.0 Introduction

This chapter is a survey of Jacobus de Voragine of the Dominican order. Jacobus de Voragine, the author of the Golden Legend, constitutes this research's background. Jacobus also known as Blessed, was a medieval hagiologist. He was the archbishop of Genoa from 1292. He was born in 1230 in Varazze in Italy. Jacobus entered the Dominican order in 1244. He was a preacher and a teacher from the age of 22. He is regarded as a peacemaker and the father to the poor. He died in July 1298 in Genoa in Italy and his beatification was in the year 1816 by Pope Pius VII. He is venerated as a saint by the Dominican Order and the city and province of Genoa as per the Golden Legend. He was famous for his piety, learning, and zeal in the care of souls. He preached from illustrious pulpits and his fame spread throughout Italy. The people considered the Golden Legend was considered in that epoch worth its weight in gold.¹⁵⁵

Jacobus was a significant figure and his book gained prominence in the 13th century. According to W. G. Ryan, this 13th-century work can be dated as far back as 1260. To better understand his collections of hagiographies, it is important to know his background and the era in which this book was compiled. The audience he addresses is also imperative. After the Bible, the Golden Legend was probably the most widely read book, according to Jacques Le Goff. He equally observed that it was second only to the Bible in its circulation in the 13th century.¹⁵⁶ William Granger Ryan concurs that the Bible was the most widely read book in the late Middle Ages.¹⁵⁷

Jacobus aimed to captivate, encourage, and edify the adherents or faithful while simultaneously portraying the legends and traditions of the church. He did so by feeding the devotees (clerics) with vast knowledge. Eamon Duffy also considers the Golden legend as one of the most influential books of the late Middle Ages. He notes that Jacobus intended the book for busy priests and preachers. The Golden Legend was used as a source of anecdote, edification to their sermons and catechesis.¹⁵⁸ However, W. G Ryan records that scholars neither agree on

¹⁵⁵ Ott 1910

¹⁵⁶ Le Goff 2014 p. ix

¹⁵⁷ William Granger Ryan 'Introduction' in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, Vol 1. trans p. xiii

¹⁵⁸Duffy 2012

Jacobus's purpose for composing the Golden Legend nor on the audience he had in mind for this work. Ryan, however, claims that the audiences Jacobus had in mind were clerics and teachers of preaching as his primary audience. To concretize this assumption, he notes that Jacobus was a "Friar Preacher." Although Ryan remarks this is contested, some scholars agree it was for preaching. This has been questioned notwithstanding but for my purpose, I believe it was for preaching and teaching. Jacobus's work was first written in Latin. Though it is unclear the exact audience Jacobus was targeting, I observed that his work was to serve as material for preaching and teaching, particularly in the Dominican Order. Michael Ott says it was viewed as a composed book of devotion to Catholics since it was adapted to enhance their love and respect towards God and to foster devotion towards His saints.¹⁵⁹

As maintained by W. Ryan, notes that Emile Male in *The Gothic Image* remarks that The Golden Legend provides information on medieval literature, and it is one of the most interesting books of its time. This is to say it provides a study on "myth and legend, of hagiography and folklore of medieval history, literature, art, and religion" though it is first and foremost a religious work. The saints Jacobus writes about are those regarded by the church as worthy of veneration during his epoch. The saints have their feast day celebrated in the church's liturgy. The liturgical church season is Advents, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and then Pentecost. Advent is seen as the coming of the Lord. It is a fourfold one and therefore celebrated for four weeks. Significantly the Lord came in the flesh, into the heart of the people, he will come at death and as a judge. Jacobus, however, notes that the fourth week is seldomly completed because of the glory of the saints. This joy of the saints will never end since it will be conferred at the last coming. Though the coming of the Lord is fourfold, the church memorializes two, the coming in the flesh and the last judgment. The Advent as much as it is rejoicing the Lord's coming, is also a reminder of the last judgment.¹⁶⁰ Secondly, Lent or the period of the Passion of the Lord. The passion Jacobus looks at is in five kinds. For example, shameful where it happened in Calvary is a place of shame, painful which signifies that what was done to the Lord was done by his friends and hearing signified that his truth was denied. The passion was not only painful, it was scornful seeing that he was mocked severely.¹⁶¹ Thirdly, Easter is the resurrection of the Lord. This took place three days after his passion and death on the cross. Lastly, Pentecost signifies Christ ascending to heaven forty days after his resurrection. On the day of Pentecost,

¹⁵⁹ Ott 1910

¹⁶⁰ Jacobus 1993 vol I p. 4

¹⁶¹ Jacobus 1993 vol I p. 203-204

when the Lord had departed, the holy ghost was sent to the Apostles in tongues of fire as per the testimony of the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁶² Jacobus, therefore, apportions the readings of the saints according to their feast days as per the church's liturgical year.¹⁶³ These saints were already publicly venerated and officially declared saints by the church and their feast days were celebrated. Jacobus from his source added new material to the existing martyrologies and legends¹⁶⁴. Jacobus's purpose can be seen not only to narrate the saints' lives but to create a firm emphasis on their sainthood. Throughout the church season in the liturgical year, the adherents constantly heard readings. Jacobus had beliefs that could have been inspired or motivated by his affiliation with certain groups. I proceeded to look at the Dominican order because he was a friar.

6.1 The Dominican Order

In the 13th century, an apostolic life appeared in the form of orders of mendicant preachers. The founders of the Orders of mendicant friars were St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi (who founded the Franciscan Order in 1210). St Dominic, also known as Santo Domingo de Guzmán, was born in Spain in the year 1170. St Dominic was a priest of the Spanish diocese of Osma. He died on August 6, 1221. He was canonized on July 3, 1234. He is the founder of the Order of Friars Preachers (Dominicans). The Dominican Order is a mendicant Order. This is a Roman Catholic religious Order with clerics who have assumed the vow of poverty. It is also a mendicant religious Order having a universal mission of preaching. The Order has a centralized organization and government with an eminent emphasis on scholarship. Though founded in 1212, it is one of the four great mendicant Orders of the Roman Catholic church.¹⁶⁵ The members of this Order include friars, nuns, active sisters, and lay Dominicans. The Dominican Order is noted for its intellectual tradition. Many prominent theologians and philosophers emerged from this Order in the 13th century. This order was formed because of the desperate need for informed preachers.

The Dominican friars, during the first century of its existence, served under the auspices of preachers, inquisitors, canon lawyers, theologians, and teachers who taught at intellectual and

¹⁶² Jacobus 1993 Vol I pp. 291, 299

¹⁶³ Ryan 'Introduction' p. xiii-xviii

St Dominic borrowed the idea of poverty from St. Francis who no doubt had this rooted conviction.

Jacobus was appointed in 1288 by Pope Nicolas IV to absolve the people of Genoa because they had aided the Sicilians against Charles II.

¹⁶⁴ Ryan 'Introduction' p. xiii-xviii

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/saint-Dominic>

spiritual centers in places like Paris, Bologna, Rome, and Orvieto. Although the principal motivation of the Dominican friars was to live together harmoniously with others while seeking God with one mind and heart, they also had regular observance. This mainly included involvement in evangelical counsel, the celebration of the liturgy, and private prayers, and they were meticulous in their studies and apostolic work.¹⁶⁶ This is in a bid to understand the background of Jacobus since he belonged to this Order. As mentioned above, Jacobus was a Friar Preacher in the Dominican Order. The completion of his work was used as material for preachers and teachers of preachers in the house of study in the Dominican Order.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, Jacobus's work was very prominent in the Dominican Order and will form the foundation of thought of the preachers from the Dominican Order.

It is presumed Dominic died around his fifties. His order had existed barely six years before his death, but its final shape was put in place two years before his demise. After his demise, there was no formal body of spiritual doctrine, be it oral or written, left by him to guide the order. There is an exception to a constitutional document that was written by great early theologians like St. Thomas. According to Dam Knowles, Dominic had a unique gift from others, be it supernatural or natural. He adopted the Augustinian Rule¹⁶⁸ and the discipline of Premonstratensians. Knowles terms Dominic as one of the most remarkable and impressively great men among four Spaniards who influence the religious life of the church. Dominic was privileged to pass through schools of men of his caliber and age to acquire intellectual and spiritual information.¹⁶⁹ To understand Jacobus concretely, I had to establish this foundation. Moreover, I needed to know where and who influenced him.

¹⁶⁶ dominicanfriars.org/about/history-dominican-friars

¹⁶⁷ Ryan 'Introduction' Vol. I p. xvii

This was as a result to fight heresy which denied the dignity of humanity. Saint Dominic trained a group of preachers who would shed light on this effect. They will not only serve the church but will affirm the world as a place where Christ is discovered. This stemmed from the fact that, Dominic while on this journey in Southern France encountered heresy while travelling. He wanted desperately to preach the true faith. He began his preaching ministry thereafter. He first established a monastic community made up of women-converts. This community has a special task to pray for Dominic and his companions. The Order was formally approved by Pope Honorius III on December 22, 1216.

¹⁶⁸ a document serving as an outline for religious life developed by Augustine of Hippo (354-430). It governs chastity, poverty obedience, detachment from the world. This document could have been seen to be a form of policing the lifestyle of its members.

¹⁶⁹ Knowles 1950 p. 147

6.2 The Golden Legend

The Golden Legend was one of the earliest popular books in the 13th century. The original work of the Golden Legend is referred to as 'Legenda Aurea'. It is a collection of legendary lives of saints in the medieval church. According to Le Goff, the collection of hagiographies is regarded as close to an encyclopedia. Jacques Le Golf claims that the Golden Legend is a veritable encyclopedia as per scholars to which he proposes that the 13th century was "an encyclopedic century." Le Goff notes that encyclopedias were composed by Dominicans and Franciscans. Terming the Golden Legend as an encyclopedia is not because Jacobus mentions animals or nature though they may be an interest of his; Jacobus talks inevitably about time. Le Goff observes that Jacobus links time to the rhythm of the season, and according to him it was rarely done in the Middle Ages. The times which catch Le Goff's interest as mentioned by Jacobus.

- The time of the Christian liturgy (cyclical).
- The time of the succession of the lives of the saints (linear).
- Eschatological time (judgment).

As a result, Le Golf claims, Jacobus attributes times to saints, and they are the markers of time.¹⁷⁰ As such time is a crucial factor in Jacobus's writing of the Golden Legend. As earlier mentioned, the saints' readings were distributed according to Church's liturgical year. Their feast days were within several seasons in the Church calendar.

To reiterate, the Golden Legend was written in Latin and later translated to other languages. With the advent of printing in the 1450s, some one thousand manuscripts of the Legend survived, and as such there was a multiplication of editions both in the original Latin and every European language. To attempt to understand the popularity of the Golden Legend, Jacques Le Goff says the Golden legend benefited from historical circumstances that are with the development of the printing press. Also, it was prominent among printed books because it was translated into vernacular languages, and even the layman had started reading at the time of its circulation. This means therefore that it could have targeted a wide audience the learned and uneducated. It is noted that Abbe Roze identified 130 sources quoted in the Legend. He grouped them by centuries from the second to the thirteenth. The list included Latin anthologies and encyclopedias like Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Le Goff 2014 p. xii-xiii

¹⁷¹ Ryan 'Introduction' p. xiii-xiv

It is a compendium of saints' lives and liturgical and doctrinal instructions.¹⁷² The Golden Legend, however, has been read because of its stories in its days. To some scholars as aforementioned, it is unclear if Jacobus meant the compendium of saintly lore for sermons and preaching or for entertainment. The Golden Legend has also been an aid for busy priests and preachers who need a handy source for sermons and catechesis. It is unclear why these priests were considered busy, but the Golden legend acted as a source of narrative, instructions, and edification for their sermons and catecheses.¹⁷³ It has been considered a devotional book and not necessarily a collection of biographies. The Golden Legend has been very popular even until the reformation and is referred to as a manual of the lives of saints. Emile Male (the historian of medieval art) notes that it had a great influence on medieval literature for the spirit of the age.¹⁷⁴ Le Goff further articulates that Jacobus de Voragine was famous because he was prominent within a religious order. A religious order "that made liberal use of both the written and the spoken word and, for another, because he, despite his humility, was quite sensitive to chronology, which is an expression of time". This is because Jacobus's autobiographical information of documents relating to the history of the Dominican order and the last period of his life has been preserved.¹⁷⁵

This narrative focuses on saints venerated around the time of its compilation. The Golden Legend is arranged according to the liturgical year as seen earlier. G.W. Ryan notes that the Golden Legend provides fields of study in "myth and legend, of hagiography and folklore, of medieval history, literature, art, and religion." This emphasizes how the Golden Legend was viewed and will establish an understanding of the 13th century.

According to Le Goff, although Jacobus de Voragine barely indicates the 'source' of his works as most medieval authors. However, G. W. Ryan says some of Jacobus's sources were apocryphal and not trustworthy as purposed by Jacobus, but he goes ahead to repeat some of their statements and stories.¹⁷⁶ Le Goff notes that he had illustrious men who influenced him that are superior minds whom he derived the truth from. Some predecessors who influenced his work were equally significant sources of inspiration to him. Men like Saint Augustine are celebrated in the Christian liturgical period. In the calendar of saints throughout the year, I find some prominent Church Fathers who developed theories on virginity. This can be seen in

¹⁷² Duffy 2012 p. xi-xx

¹⁷³ Duffy 2012 p. xi-xx

¹⁷⁴ Ryan 'Introduction' p. xv

¹⁷⁵ Le Goff 2014 p. 2

¹⁷⁶ Ryan 'Introduction' p. xiv

chapter five of this study. In this succeeding subchapter, let us, therefore, see how Jacobus presents them since they also had their feast days in the church calendar.

6.3 Virginité and Chastité according to the Church Fathers in the Golden

Legend

In the Golden Legend, Jacobus perceived Saint Augustine as a man filled with knowledge and impeccable wisdom. According to Jacobus, he surpassed all the doctors of the church. Jacobus writes extensively about Saint Augustine.¹⁷⁷ In the Golden Legend, Jacobus made it clear that Augustine would have no woman, even his sisters or brother's daughters living in his house. He, however, did not fear suspicion but understood that females need a companion.¹⁷⁸ To say the least, Augustine's narratives in the confessions and his doctrinal authority were of profound interest to Jacobus. Jacobus compares Augustine to the sun and classifies him as a man with a shining light of wisdom.¹⁷⁹

Another predecessor he greatly admires is Ambrose though his praises of Ambrose come from the quotation of Saint Augustine. As far as his narrative of Saint Ambrose, he writes extensively about him in the Golden Legend. My illustration here is to stress that these church Fathers are the founders of Christian spirituality and culture. According to Jacobus, Saint Ambrose sets an example through his numerous virtues. He was a generous man; all he had belonged to the poor. Jacobus notes that among his virtues, he was 'spotless and pure'. He was a virgin and Jerome remarked that Ambrose said, "we not only praise virginity, but we also practice it". Ambrose is a man said to be firm in his faith and a model of perseverance in prayers.¹⁸⁰ In Jacobus's narratives, he notes that Jerome, in his writings (*De XII Doctoribus*), notes Ambrose for the purity of his doctrine, meaning his doctrine was firm and solid. Jerome equally quotes what Augustine says about Ambrose in his book *On Marriage and Contract*, saying Ambrose's work had "beauty and elegance". As earlier noted, Jacobus does not hide his admiration for his predecessors. Not only does he devote a chapter to writing about them or writes extensively about them, he equally shows how they admire each other's writings. For example, Jerome remarks about Ambrose and says, "All his sentences are firm pillars of the faith of the church, and every virtue".¹⁸¹ Also, in Milan for example, Ambrose made the "rules for chant and the

¹⁷⁷ Le Goff 2014 p. 9-11

Allain Boureau notes a chapter is dedicated to Saint Augustine as commented by Le Goff 2014

¹⁷⁸ Jacobus Vol. II p. 125

¹⁷⁹ Le Goff 2014 p. 11

¹⁸⁰ Jacobus 1993 Vol. I p. 234

¹⁸¹ Jacobus 1993 Vol. I p. 237

liturgy to be followed in the Church of Milan”.¹⁸² These were men of great admiration and power in the church. They are considered doctors of the church (Church Fathers).

Also, Saint Jerome is another of his admirers, according to Jacobus, he was a creator of Christian liturgy. In his narrative, Jerome was asked to organize the ecclesiastical office. In Jacobus’s narrative, he talks about Jerome as a man who lived in the desert and solitude. While in the desert, if he felt the presence of pretty girls and the fire of lust burned in him, he starved his rebellious flesh for being weak and wept continually. Jacobus notes he was still a virgin at the end of his life. Jerome wrote about himself to Pammachias saying, “I hold virginity as high as heaven- not that I have it.”¹⁸³ Jerome was tasked with bringing order to the liturgy since, in earlier times, there was no uniformity in the church offices or the chant. Jerome being an expert in Greek and Latin and being supreme in all kinds of knowledge was conferred this great task.¹⁸⁴ These fathers of the church had a great influence on the church as seen in chapter five of this thesis. Another Church Father is Saint John Chrysostom, in the narrative of Jacobus, he emphasizes the fact that he was “Golden-mouthed” which however is the meaning of his name. Earlier in his life, Saint John studied philosophy but gave it up to focus on sacred writings. Jacobus looks at him as being blunt rather than gentle since he is considered too severe for his view and zeal for chastity. He was an excellent teacher according to Jacobus though some could consider him arrogant in conversation. Chrysostom was considered loved by the people because of the sermons he gave in church since he was remarkable for his ability to expound and clarify his teachings. He was peerless in upholding strict morality.¹⁸⁵ Jacobus attests that John was universally admired, and he flourished in his teachings.¹⁸⁶

To be able to understand Jacobus's perspective, it is phenomenal to know the people who influenced him and those he got inspiration from. For example, Le Goff notes that, like most medieval thinkers, Jacobus places great importance on the etymology of the names of the saints. Jacobus was not only influenced by these great fathers of the church. Goff notes historians like Petrus Comestor in the second half of the twelfth century influenced him, John Beleth, a liturgist at the end of the seventh century, and Isidore of Seville, an intellectual of the Middle Ages. Le Goff claims Jacobus had other “modern” inspiration, a university man, a student of Peter Lombard’s in Paris (he wrote the *Historia Scholastica*, known as a manual of

¹⁸² Jacobus 1993 Vol. I p.231

¹⁸³ Jacobus 1993 Vol II. p. 231

¹⁸⁴ Jacobus 1993 Vol II p. 215

¹⁸⁵ Jacobus 1993Vol II pp 173-174

¹⁸⁶ Jacobus 1993 Vol II p. 176

biblical history at the end of the twelfth century), and Saint Bernard known as the great Cistercian saint of the twelfth century.¹⁸⁷ Jacobus was, therefore, not only influenced by the Church Fathers, but he had a blend of both worlds. Though I can argue that the Church Fathers substantially influence him when we read his narrative in the Golden Legend.

6.4 The thirteen-century context

As earlier noted, in the 13th century, the Golden Legend was of great interest to many, and it was considered widely read as the Bible. I bring in the context of the 13th century to see what made it so, why people were interested in the Golden legend, and what prompted the vast interest in this book. Since my focus is on virginity, it is imperative to know how virginity was viewed in this period since it was borne from the early centuries.

The church strengthened in the 13th century with a firm conviction of converting both the enemy within and exterior, be it the Jews or Muslims. A great interreligious polemic or conversion rose through missions. The mendicant movement was predominately trained to meet this purpose. The mendicants used a scholastic approach to facilitate the conversion.¹⁸⁸ Presumably, before the 13th century, men (clergy) who were trusted to point the way of salvation to women had from their youth been wholly cut off from women. These clergies had clerical responsibilities as an assignment to ensure women of their occupation in divinity. The clergy during this period can be classified chiefly as literate, influential, and prolific men. These clergies were entrusted with the nature of mankind, the society, and the church as a responsibility mandated by the church towards the people they oversaw. They were persuasive on how their members could attend to perfection at any rate. The clergy, as pointed above, from very tender ages, were, however, completely cut off from women's lives, and they worked in an exclusively male-dominated atmosphere (in school and theological facilities). As previously noted, the Golden legend has been widely read though it cannot be ascertained if it was meant as a handy source for sermons or entertainment.

Jacques Dalarun observed that from the eleventh century, clerics who oversaw the society lived as monks yet these monks from their tender ages had been separated from their mothers and the world, which they were accustomed to and kept in monasteries. He notes these clerics who strictly observed celibacy knew nothing about women. These monks tended to have misogynist thoughts since women were presented as “a distant, strange, and frightening figure of profound

¹⁸⁷ Le Goff 2014 pp. 12-13

¹⁸⁸ Hamas 1995 p. 75

contradictory nature.”¹⁸⁹ He puts forth his evidence to support this claim by saying much evidence can be drawn from texts and most learned treatises, Latin poems, proverbs, and scriptural analysis. Dalarun mentions that the twelfth century is the period where the seed planted (Marian devotion) in the eleventh century begins to flourish. For example, the twelfth century is said to be the peak of the Marian devotion and the flourish of the Cathedral building of Notre Dame. This century was the phenomenal age of Notre Dame. During this period, prominent people started to pray fervently to the Virgin Mother Mary to whom they could confess their sins and dedicate poems. It was important to note that Mary was regarded as a role model worth emulating. Contrarily it is around the eleventh century that the debate erupted concerning Mary’s Immaculate conception meanwhile, the eighth century had witnessed debate about her Assumption. Mary’s Immaculate Conception became a church doctrine around 1854 and by 1950 her Assumption.¹⁹⁰ The Church Fathers never questioned the perpetual virginity of Mary as aforementioned in chapter five of this thesis. The concept of virginity was still admired right up to the 13th century even though there were some debates on how Mary’s Immaculate Conception was viewed. In Jacobus's narratives, however, he notes that Mary was a virgin both before and after giving birth and he assures this by five proofs which will not be elaborated on in this thesis.¹⁹¹ Jacobus's narrative being paramount in the 13th century may seem to cement this concept of Mary’s immaculate virginity he pushes forth. The 13th century showed the collection of the Golden Legend, and the narrative had a strong influence over the adherents. Saints, as aforementioned, were theological principles to portray holiness in an ideal Christian living. Virginity in the 13th century was seen as a female category and could be noted as tied to salvation since it was firmly associated with spirituality. Though the treatises on virginity came at an earlier, they still had a strong impact in the 13th century. This foundation that was laid cannot be quickly ignored though over time; it became relaxed. Sarah Salih concurs with this. According to her, in or around the 12th century, virginity began to be feminized and Christ was the husband of the virgin. Also, the emphasis on virginity being associated with the body can be looked at as being directed to God such that the feminization of virginity can be equated to the spiritualization of virginity. Most often virginity is argued to be gender-neutral, but it is more often used on a woman than a man. Seeing clearly that the patristic virgin theory rarely discusses the male virgin.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Dalarun 1992 pp. 15-16

¹⁹⁰ Dalarun 1992 pp. 24-25

¹⁹¹ Jacobus 1993 vol I p. 37

¹⁹² Salih 2001 p.10

Brigitte Cazelles identifies the 12th century to the 13th century as a time of transition. This is a period where laymen played a more important role in the life of the church. There was a spiritual and political transition between the clerics and lay people which began in the 10th century but by the 12th century, commoners began to be recognized as saints. Therefore, active life was rehabilitated, and monastic life was not a requirement for sainthood in the 13th century.¹⁹³ The 13th century has been termed the most creative epoch in the Middle Ages. It has been seen as the “greatest” or the most “creative”. This is not necessarily because this century saw the creation of the Notre Dame and La Sainte Chapelle in Paris, still, it is noted that this century saw St. Francis of Assisi giving a new form and beauty to the Christian life.¹⁹⁴ St Francis who as earlier noted founded the Franciscan Order, and St Dominic borrowed the idea of poverty. The 13th century was, therefore, referred to as the high point of the Middle Ages since this period featured issues like the papacy reaching its most incredible power and scholastic philosophy being expounded. Though this period saw the emergence of apostolic life and monastic community for women, monastic life was not a requirement for sainthood. This was because medieval hagiographers were opportune to distinguish between male and female spirituality.¹⁹⁵ The probing question is whether virginity is a socio-cultural construct. Has it been used to control the bodies of women or girls?

6.5 The 13th-Century Woman

My focus in this session is to see how the woman was regarded in the 13th century. It is worth questioning if the concept of virginity still played a prominent role in this period and if it is particular to the woman. The the13th century welcomed a period of scholastic and philosophical prowess. We previously noted that the 13th century equally saw a layman having their opinions considered.

The Mendicant Orders in the 13th century were Mary’s admirers which are both the Dominicans and Franciscans. The concept of Mary is pointed out here because she was taught to be an exceptional woman (a role model), not like Eve, who brought sin into the world. It is phenomenal to note that monks were great admirers of Mary. It is worth commenting that Dominicans and Franciscans claim their focus is not on the virginity of Mary but on Mary as a mother. The earlier dogma of the Catholic church had brought controversy between Catholics, Arians, Gnostics, and Others around the 2nd to the 5th century. Mary was regarded as “the

¹⁹³ Cazelles 1991 p. 4-5

¹⁹⁴ Knowles 1950 p. 7

¹⁹⁵ Cazelles 1991 p. 4-5, 10

mother of God” since she conceived Christ who was fully man and divine. Mary’s virginal conception led five mendicant friars to investigate this theological truth since faculties of theology extensively debated such dogmas. These men were Franciscans and Dominicans; Alexander of Hales (died 1245), Bonaventure (died 1274) and Duns Scotus (died 1308), Thomas Aquinas (died 1274), and Albertus Magnus (died 1280). They came out with concepts that cannot be elaborated on in this thesis, but it should be known that “within half a century these men laid the theoretical groundwork for two last important articles of faith concerning the Virgin”.¹⁹⁶ This however showed how prominent the virginity of Mary was considered. It has been used as a tool to satisfy certain religious dogma. To be able to understand this thought in the medieval age, it is important to trace the understanding of the clerics during that period.

The medieval clerics could be said to have a view on women. Their thought can be seen far back as the encounter with the serpent and Eve in the garden of Eden. The thought is that through Eve sin or evil came into the world, whereas life came through Mary, who was an exceptional woman.¹⁹⁷ Nonetheless, by the end of the Middle Ages, the perception of women changed in two ways. Firstly, women had been cast as allies of the serpent in propaganda to preserve monks and priests from the enticement of the flesh. Around the middle of the twelfth century, a broader audience was targeted. The warning appeared in texts on canon law, ethics, and manuals. Secondly, the woman was classified as gossip and took a thematic turn from the previous observation. This aspect of gossip was traced from the Old Testament, classical antiquity, and early patristic texts such as the writing of John Chrysostom. This escalated in the Middle Ages when men like Thomas Aquinas sternly reprimanded women from speaking publicly. By the thirteen century, however, things changed because development was taking place outside the church. The voices of others besides the priest began to be heard loudly.¹⁹⁸ For example, in Medieval England, women played a surprisingly significant role in the prosecution of crimes. This is surprising because the law, custom, and *magna carta* tried to restrict this possibility. Daniel Klerman, a Professor of Law and History notes that by the thirteen century more than a third of all private prosecutors were women, irrespective of the fact that prominent thirteen-century philosophers taught women as mentally inferior. At the same time, men are superior, and women are subordinates.¹⁹⁹ The subordinate position was justified by philosophy and theology in this epoch. As earlier mentioned, Thomas Aquinas, one

¹⁹⁶ Dalarun 1992 p. 38-39

¹⁹⁷ Dalarun 1992 p. 23

¹⁹⁸ Dalarun 1992 pp. 40, 42

¹⁹⁹ Klerman 2002 pp. 271, 273

of the most prominent philosophers and theologians of the 13th century had an Aristotelian view of women. According to Aquinas' view, women were inferior to men since "the active power of the seed of the male tends to produce something like itself, perfect in masculinity, but the procreation of a female is the result of either of the debility of the active power or some unsuitability of the material..."²⁰⁰ This seems to justify the fact that women are born inferior to men who are perfect in masculinity. Since the power of structure of the woman was relegated to a passive role, women used sanctity as an alternative avenue to power in the Middle Ages.²⁰¹ Aquinas had a cultural influence and equally could make information powerfully resonate with his thinking. Coupled with this Aristotelian worldview, women are considered subjects to men.

The 13th century as earlier said portrayed a period where the layman had some contributions to make, but we can observe that the learned or scholarly still had an influential role in how women were viewed. This period did not see the sexuality of the woman being regarded differently. Those who held prominent positions had their minds influenced from centuries back because they voiced the same opinions in the 13th century as Thomas Aquinas. Moreover, men were clergies who were in charge of overseeing the women. They were educated and influential in pointing the way to salvation. The compilation of the Golden Legend and the fact that it became increasingly popular during this period also greatly influenced the way sexuality was viewed. Virginitly and purity were still highly prized in this century. Jacobus as aforementioned was influenced by great Fathers of the Church. We can comprehensively say that the Church Fathers not only had cultural competency, but they equally had a powerful platform to push forward the prominence of virginitly. Hence, with the consciousness that is pushed forward here, we can plausibly say men dominated the public sphere in the 13th century.

In the next chapter, I will dive into analyzing everything found above to be able to answer the research questions raised at the beginning of this study.

²⁰⁰ Klerman 2002 p. 276

²⁰¹ McNamara 1991 p. 199

Chapter Seven: Analysis/ Interpretation of Data

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapters of this study, I have presented the Jacobus narrative of saintly men and women as per the Golden Legend. I did a historical background on the themes that were raised in this study. This was to get a historical understanding of virginity, sainthood, rape, and martyrdom. I needed to trace the background of these themes to be able to analyze Jacobus's narratives of these saints concerning their sexuality. In this chapter, therefore, I will discuss the findings obtained from the Jacobus narrative, the literature available on this study, and whether the concept of gender and virginity, which was discussed in chapter 3, can be applied in the 13th century. Jacobus narrates historical and contemporary saints, but the emphasis of this study is mainly on the historical saints he describes. However, there is one saint, Mary of Egypt which I studied, she was called the sinner. she is unique because she does not follow the same pattern as the other female saints. I started up by looking at female martyr saints Jacobus presents and realized their virginity was a common characteristic. I observed that no emphasis was placed on their virginity in the male saints he narrated. This prompted the question, how was virginity communicated and propagated in the 13th century and onwards in Medieval Europe? This study will demonstrate a correlation between virginity and female saints. It will also suggest that Jacobus had applied cultural memory to be able to get the stories of the saints he narrates in the Golden Legend. It will also mean that, if modern scholars interchanged virginity and chastity then, sexuality cannot be determined by simply being physical, but the spiritual aspect must be considered from the observation of Jacobus's narrative.

7.1 Presentation of similarities and differences between the female saints and male saints

In this study, I observed that women had been affected by sexual violence and humiliation. The prevalence of the sexual harassment described by Jacobus was rather among the female martyr saints than their male counterparts. In chapter 4 of this study, I presented the female and male martyr saints as per the narrative of Jacobus. These saints were venerated in the 3rd century, especially in Western Europe. The male and female martyr saints were known for their perfection, especially because they endured violence and trial of their faith. The phenomena of rape, sexual violence, harassment, or violent assault were symbolic of the female saint. The fact that it was a male in authority may have been the reason why the male saints were never

threatened with rape. Jacobus does not narrate about men's attraction to men. There is no narration where he talks about the desire of the man in authority toward the male saints. My suggestion is that maybe the church did not acknowledge that kind of desire.

The ages of the female virgin saints ranged from eight years. This was something remarkable about the female saints. They were young and very desirable. For example, the 8-year-old described by Jacobus is one of the daughters of saint Sophie, Charity. We saw these saints in chapter 4 of this study. Jacobus describes Charity as a young child the emperor ordered to be executed. She was not spared in this narrative because her limbs were broken by being stretched on a rack, she was beaten with clubs, scourged with lashes, and lastly burnt and stabbed. Though he does not talk about the virginity of these three saints in his narrative the mere fact that they were eight years, ten and eleven paints a clear picture of their virginity.²⁰² However, the emperor did not desire them because of their virginity but their beauty charmed him, and he wanted to adopt them as his daughters. Meanwhile, it is not recounted among the male martyr saints if there are as many as young as these three female saints above. However, in Jacobus's narrative, he does not state that the young girl was considered a virgin because she had not reached puberty. The fact that she had no affiliation with sex, was consequently related to her virginity.

Saints like Lucy, Agnes, Agatha, Virgin of Antioch, and Marina (also known as Marinus, she dressed as a man to remain firm in her resolution), had on the title of their narrative, the word virgin beside their names. Meanwhile, there is no male martyr saint narrated by Jacobus who had the title of virgin added to their name. Corinne Saunders as seen in chapter 5 of this study argues that the sanctity of the raped virgin is the center of the theological discussion as far as hagiography is concerned. For example, in Jacobus narratives, the attempt of rape was made but none was carried out. Saunders argues that virginity has not only been portrayed as an icon but a physical quality that empowers the woman since female sexuality and its correlation to holiness forms a central discussion in the narrative of saintly women. Meanwhile, I agree with Saunders that the holiness and virginity of saintly women are intertwined.²⁰³ Jacobus recounts the female saint's devotion to virginity. He narrates elaborately the seduction attempt by the men in charge to get them into the sexual act and never fails to say how these saintly women maintained their conviction. Saunders argues that in the cult of virginity, the virginity and

²⁰² Jacobus Vol 1 p. 184-186

²⁰³ Saunders 2001 p. 120-121

holiness of the saintly women form an intersection, and it is symbolic of female sainthood.²⁰⁴ The emphasis on the virginity of these saintly women is noted in Jacobus's narrative though he does not specify if it is in terms of spiritual or physical virginity. However, if the sexuality of some of these female saints, as narrated by Jacobus, was related to their holiness, I noticed that he represented sexuality differently between the male and female saints. Virginity will emphasize a physical quality he uses to highlight the sainthood of the female saints. It is, however, not clear according to Jacobus's narrative if the sexuality of the female saints was tied to their fragility. Meanwhile, Saunders notes that virginity empowered the female within the context of gender stereotypes. It also makes it possible for the female to overcome the frailty and sexuality that were attributed to them.²⁰⁵

I also observed that sexuality was seen as some sort of pollution in his narrative. Maybe not only physical pollution but spiritual as well. Hence, physical will mostly be inclined to the female saints and spiritual to the male saint since there was never any emphasis on physical pollution. For example, the life of Mary of Egypt, which I initially stated did not follow the same pattern as the other female saints mentioned in this study. Mary of Egypt's life was that of some sort of conversion. She was a prostitute who later renounced the world and lived a chaste life. Her initial polluted life which, was attached to her sexuality is some sort of erased when she repudiates the world. Saint Mary of Egypt identifies herself as a sinful woman but rebukes the priest who thought her to be an unclean spirit. When adjured to talk about herself, she makes it known that her words could contaminate the priest's ears and pollute the air with filth. After living in the desert, she was able to conquer the temptation of the flesh.²⁰⁶ Also, Saint Lucy was identified in Jacobus's narrative as having "the beauty of virginity without a trace of corruption..."²⁰⁷ Lucy asked for her dowry to be sold and given to the poor and her betrothed infuriated by this gesture accused her to the consul of being a Christian. The consul threatened to have her body defiled by being taken to a brothel. She adamantly claimed that even if her body is ravished against her will, her chastity will be doubled because her body is not polluted since her mind did not consent.²⁰⁸ Lucy was never defiled as per this narrative because of divine intervention as is common in Jacobus narratives. This aspect of physical pollution is related to the female saint and sexual desire. Similarly, Saint Agnes is threatened

²⁰⁴ Saunders 2001 p. 121

²⁰⁵ Saunders 2001 p. 122

²⁰⁶ Jacobus Vol I p. 227-228

²⁰⁷ Jacobus Vol I p. 27

²⁰⁸ Jacobus Vol I p. 28-29

by the emperor to be handled the way harlots are handled since her virginity meant so much to her. Agnes had initially refused the proposal of the prefect's son saying she was pledged to Christ.²⁰⁹

Furthermore, among the female saints I studied, Margret (also known as Pelagius), Daria, and Cecilia are female saints Jacobus narrates were married but never consummated their marriage. According to Saunders though theologians refuse to accept the fact that virginity was tied to sainthood but the emphasis they laid on the miraculous rescue of the attempted raped virgin and her martyrdom moved the ability of a religious woman to choose a religious life over marriage.²¹⁰ This development or thought resonates with Jacobus's narrative because these three saints he mentions refused to consummate their marriages and opted for a devoted life or lived virtuously and modestly. I observed that in Jacobus's native, one martyr male saint was married and did not consummate his marriage. Saint Cecilia according to Jacobus' narrative was an illustrious virgin of noble birth who was a heavenly lily by the modesty of her virginity. She prayed night and day and sought the Lord to preserve her virginity. Her husband Valerian became a believer, and their marriage was never consummated.²¹¹ Also, Jacobus talked about saint Nicholas, it was rather his parents who adopted celibacy after his youth.

The 13th-century saint I studied was to understand if there was a difference in narrative or if the same pattern was followed. She is recent from Jacobus' point of view because she was one generation before he writes. In Jacobus' narrative, Saint Elizabeth, or the blessed Elizabeth lived seven different states of life: virginity, marriage, widowhood, active state, contemplative, consecrated religious life, and state of glory. According to this narrative, she was of noble birth though simple, and she avoided worldly success and prosperity. She chose the Blessed Virgin Mary as her patroness and advocate, and her guardian of chastity was Saint John the Evangelist. She was noted to pray daily to fulfill her promise to her "heavenly spouse". Jacobus when describing her virginity said she lived a state of virginity "prudently and innocently". She was, however, compelled to marry by her father, and to this, he said: "she consented to conjugal intercourse, not out of libidinous desire but out of respect for her father..." Though she was bound by the law of the conjugal bed, she was not bound to find pleasure from it. Jacobus addedly noted that she would avoid her husband's bed so she could pray, and most of although

²⁰⁹ Jacobus 1993 Vol I p. 102

²¹⁰ Saunders 2001 p. 120-121

²¹¹ Jacobus 1993 Vol II p. 318-320

she had a high dignifying position, she shared poverty with the poor.²¹² Jacobus is seen to follow the same pattern of noble birth in this narrative and emphasis is placed on virginity though Elizabeth is married. She did not marry out of her choice but was technically forced or imposed by her father. Saint Elizabeth was not martyred but mentioning her in this study facilitated my understanding of how virginity, purity, or cleanliness transcended generations. According to Jacobus's narrative, Elizabeth's "cleanness and purity were made manifest by the sweet odor that came from her body; since in her lifetime her body shone with cleanness and chastity, in death it gave out a fragrant aroma." This is in a bid to illustrate according to Jacobus the saint's sanctity that she had achieved.²¹³

Furthermore, it was paramount throughout Jacobus's hagiographic narrative of the female saints that, the female saints were mostly stripped naked and paraded stark naked. Out of the male saints I studied, only one in the person of Saint Laurence was stripped and beaten. Jacobus describes Laurence's martyrdom as glorious. He suffered under Decius. Blessed Laurence, as was called in this narrative was stripped, tortured, and heated iron pitchforks were pressed to his body. Like the other narratives, he was asked to perform pagan sacrifice though primarily, the interest of Decius was to make him relinquish the wealth entrusted to him for safekeeping. Even though Laurence was beaten with scorpions and stripped by herdsman, he never succumbed. This narrative seems to follow the same standardized pattern of humiliation that the female saints endured.²¹⁴

7.3 A twist in the pattern; Mary of Egypt and Marinus

I observed that only the female saints would rather die to defend their virginity and not the male saints. They were always saved miraculously and were never raped. However, a female saint mentioned earlier did not follow the same pattern as the other female saints. Mary of Egypt was called the Sinner. She was a lady who according to Jacobus's narrative, never refused her body to any man, she was a public woman and traded her body at a certain point in her life. She renounced the world and opted for a chaste life. She lived for forty-seven years in the desert and led what Jacobus chose to call an "austere life".²¹⁵ According to this observation, Mary of Egypt can be seen as physically polluted but spiritually clean since she had renounced her old ways and adopted purity. Her holiness, as per the Jacobus narrative, was tied to

²¹² Jacobus 1993 Vol II p. 302-305

²¹³ Jacobus 1993 Vol II p. 313

²¹⁴ Jacobus 1993 Vol II p. 63-66

²¹⁵ Jacobus 1993 vol I p. 227-228

sexuality. The image Mary of Egypt encountered when she went to worship the holy cross in Jerusalem was the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to Jacobus's narrative. Throughout Jacobus's narration, he advocates for chastity or virginity but was rather careful to be specific. He emphasizes virginity but at the same time does not shy away from the fact that the saints were worshippers of their God and did not succumb to any pagan sacrifice. I equally observed that Mary of Egypt regarded the Virgin Mary as her role model in Jacobus's narrative. The Virgin Mary is mentioned in this study though not intricately, but it cannot be denied that Jacobus greatly admired her. She epitomizes virginity, and this saintly woman will want to be like her.

Saint Marina or Marinus is equally an exciting twist to the familiar pattern. There is a pattern-breaking here that will be discussed concerning gender. According to Jacobus's narrative, Mariana was dressed as a man by her father to conceal her sexuality. She was accepted as a monk in the abbey and was called Brother Marinus by all. She was accused of impregnating a girl, but she never revealed her identity. Her father had encouraged her to remain firm in her resolution and she lived a religious life in the monastery. It was only after her death that her womanliness was discovered.²¹⁶ My focus, however, is the fact that Jacobus narrates of her femininity being hidden and masculinity preferred. My suggestion to this may be she could not serve in the monastery as a female since there wasn't the possibility for her to purpose a religious life as a female. Secondly may be because of the dominance of the male gender her father preferred her, to be a man to gain acceptance. The possibility that a male is more valuable than a female could have been another reason to consider here. Maybe Marinus' father may have understood this cultural barrier, and the change of clothing or disguise could have been a way for her to conceal her identity and gain acceptance into the monastery. Jacobus in his narrative does not elaborate if it was customary for women to dress as men to conceal their feminine identity completely. Such impersonation could have been for various reasons. Maybe the society Marina grew up in was not as tolerant to the females as it was to the male or maybe there was a fear of being female and being confident in protecting her virginity. In the book *Cross Dressing, Sex and Gender*, Vern L. and Bonnie Bullough note that Christianity imitates the Jewish tradition in terms of cross-dressing. The Jewish tradition shuns cross-dressing, which was seen as an abomination before their God. The female gender was not allowed to dress like the male and vice versa. However, there were exemptions in the Jewish tradition, for example, a woman traveling in an all-male caravan could dress as a male and play or act a

²¹⁶ Jacobus 1993 Vol I p. 324-325

man's role. However, they observed that developing Christian culture was hostile towards cross-dressing. It is noted that before 341, the Church Council in Gangra condemned pious men or women who decided to join male ascetic and monastic life by opting to disguise themselves as the opposite sex to gain entrance into the communities. However, holy women who disguised as a man were greatly admired, especially if their identity was uncovered after their death or when they were being prepared for burial. Throughout their studies, there were various cross-dressing saints and they had different reasons for doing what they did. Marinus, even after suffering false accusations and ostracism did not reveal her identity. Regardless of the reason, it cannot be ignored that some women cross-dressed to gain higher status. Vern and Bonnie Bullough insinuate that Marinus, like the other cross-dressing legends, did so maybe to preserve their virginity and be closer to God.²¹⁷

7.4 Presenting the themes per the theory

The Golden Legend, as previously observed in this study, was very popular, and its popularity was classified alongside the Bible. It cannot, therefore, be argued that it did not have a wide readership. However, scholars have argued about the audience Jacobus was targeting but according to this study, I choose to take a stand that his writing was meant for preaching and teaching. In his hagiographic narrative, I have previously stated how Jacobus emphasizes the virginity of the female saints more than their male counterparts. For example, it is worth commenting that, alongside some of the female saints the title virgin is added to their names. All of these provoked the sub-question of, how was sexuality described and interpreted in the Golden Legend?

Though the narratives of Jacobus focus on the threat of rape of these desirous young virgins, there was never any narrative that indicated that rape was executed. I have, however, understood in this study that rape in early Christianity cannot be seen as the same in the modern era. The mere fact that these female virgins were threatened with rape could have been enough for Jacobus to emphasize it. As previously argued by Saunders, the possibility of rape is central to the holiness of the female saint. This threat of rape repeatedly recounted by Jacobus shows a firm denial by these female saints to compromise their holiness. The sexuality Jacobus portrays here is that of a physical attribute than spiritual.

The stories of the saints were told repetitively and could have changed before the time of the compilation of the Golden Legend. However, my observation is not to emphasize the credibility

²¹⁷ Bullough 1993 p. 39,51-57

of this narrative. However, I observed that Jacobus may not have directly created any new knowledge because the stories of the martyr saints existed even before his era. The Assmanns, as seen in this study, on cultural memory, when I apply their theoretical category, though Jacobus may have built on old information that existed before his era, by repeating or organizing or narrating these stories, and by telling these life events of the saints, Jacobus is creating something new. The stories told by him were shared and retold in Christendom. Jacobus remembered the saints from what someone told him. He was not present when these saints were killed by their persecutors, nor can he vouch for the virginity of female saints. According to the understanding of the Assmanns' cultural memory, Jacobus could not have had an individual private memory, but he understood through a group or a whole society's memory. The predictable pattern or the characteristic of his narrative is like that of a fairy tale or a fable. However, the stories have been told and retold in the church context, which makes them easy to remember. This may explain as to why the stories as earlier said followed a similar pattern.

The Church Fathers who form the background of this study have equally established that some Church Fathers greatly influenced Jacobus. I observed that he emphasizes the virginity of the female saints because his predecessors wrote treatises on virginity. These same Church Fathers had advocated for the prominence of virginity over marriage. Jacobus in his writing endorsed the claims of the Church Fathers. Meanwhile, Cultural memory promoted by the Assmanns can be allocated to Jacobus's narrative because he based his writing on concepts or traditions of the church. Also, Jacobus did not pick who he wanted to write about, his writing was composed to follow the liturgical calendar of the church. In chapter 6 of this study, we saw the liturgical church seasons. Saints were arranged according to the church calendar and their feast days were allocated throughout the year.

The Church Fathers had laid down principles that governed the church, and it is seen in this study that Jacobus is not going contrary to their views. He has instead adopted them in his narratives by seemingly encouraging virginity. Ambrose for example in this study chapter 5.2, claims virginity makes the martyr not because it is found in the martyr. Virginity right from the Church Fathers was showcased as being attractive, and it seems not to have changed in the 13th century and onwards in Europe. If virginity is classified as inestimable, it could have carried that same value in the 13th century, and Jacobus readily places value on it. Though some of the Church Fathers did not define virginity regarding sexual intercourse, however, Methodius, a Bishop, described it as being near God. This could have prompted the attraction of virginity even to Jacobus. If virginity is related to divinity or portrayed as uncorrupted, it

could be tantalizing to anyone privileged to read the Golden Legend. Because virginity is sacred and somehow venerated, its sacredness of it makes it even more attractive.

If the Church Fathers promoted that virginity was an irrevocable marriage with Christ, this celestial marriage could have appealed to Jacobus. It has been observed in this study by Miller 2005, that most Christian men who wrote about Christian women, based their writing only on their virginity and the aspect of being a wife. Jacobus is not excluded from this observation because he focuses on the virginity of the female saints and not on the male saints. Though Jacobus does not clearly define virginity as per the hymen, he portrays it more on the physical side than the spiritual. Miller argued that the behavior of Christian men could be seen to classify virginity as physical and material. If celibacy life was applauded by Apostle Paul (whom most of the Church Fathers quoted) as ideal, then it was based on physical passion. Also, the narrative of Jacobus is that in which most of the female saints met with the threat of rape, and it was very symbolic in his narrative. Moreover, the female saints in the Jacobus narrative seemed to follow the same pattern. They were often described as young and virgins of noble birth. The correlation between virginity and material status was seen in most of the narratives.

Moreover, canon 13 (mentioned in chapter 5) issued by the Iberian bishops cannot be ignored in this study. It is noted that they wrote that, communion should not be served on the death beds of virgins who have broken their vows through sexual intercourse unless they repent. If this is the case, then sexuality in this context can be understood as physical passion. Undheim in her study has shown that only in the church could true virgins possess true virginity. She claims there was a duality of mind and body when it comes to virgin ideology. If this is the case, I suggest that Jacobus has not shifted from this thought. If Jacobus had a genderless idea of virginity, he, however, did not emphasize the virginity of the male saints. He narrates of female saints who swore to maintain their virginity than allow themselves to be defiled by the emperors in charge during the era of their persecution. Also, virginity was promoted as pure and incorruptible and connected to divinity. In chapter 5.2.1, Chrysostom, one of the patriarchs (greatly admired by Jacobus) who equally wrote the treatise on virginity as earlier seen in this study, claimed how physically a woman may not be attractive, but her virginity nonetheless makes her irresistible in beauty from a spiritual perspective. Jacobus promotes that the martyr virgins were physically beautiful and greatly admired. Therefore, sexuality was measured in the beauty or physical attractiveness of these female saints. If we refer to chapter 5 of this study, Gregory of Nyassa, John Chrysostom, and Athanasius of Alexandria who wrote the treatise on virginity seem to see virginity on the scope of purity and incorruptibility. These were prominent

men in the Church who laid down the doctrine of the church. Jacobus does not seem to go contrary to their shared ideas.

In this study, it is mentioned in chapter 5 that in the 4th century, there was extreme asceticism whereby sexual intercourse was discouraged. This was, however, frowned upon by some bishops, but throughout Jacobus's narrative, he does not stop emphasizing the virginity of the female martyr saints. Saunders points out that “sexual relations, as we have seen, were viewed with deep suspicion, as a potential source of pollution of the spirit.”²¹⁸ The virginity of these female saints and their chastity was a force on their sexuality. Therefore because of the love for spiritual purity, men like Jacobus could easily advocate for chastity and virginity whereby virginity is physical. Meanwhile, according to Kenneth Woodward, throughout the history of Roman Catholicism, “the church has placed a higher value on virginity than on marriage, even though marriage has the status of sacrament while virginity does not.”²¹⁹ Woodward further articulates that sanctity has been identified with virginity and sexuality is associated with sin. The Church views marriage as being of a far less calling than perpetual virginity.²²⁰ It is paramount to note that the Church Fathers identified sanctity with virginity although Woodward notes that there is an uncertainty in the representation of human sexuality by Roman Catholicism. Tracing this Woodward says this defensiveness goes back to the New Testament. Woodward points out that the Church Fathers from the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries in their writings have been blamed for establishing a tradition where sexuality is associated with sin. He notes there is a hint of truth in it because some of the Christian Fathers were misogynistic. Woodward goes further to point out that Tertullian thought of women as “the Devil’s gateway” and St. Augustine later taught that through sexual intercourse, the original sin was transmitted through generations. However, to understand the Church Fathers’ thought of associating sex with sin, Woodward said Peter Brown and other scholars have understood this from a perspective of a Greco-Roman Culture. Whereby the socio-economic attitude is such that there was a correlation between “the body and society”, that is the body was rejected alongside material reality. Conspicuously the church asserted the orthodox view and accepted the marriage, but marriage is of a lesser calling than perpetual virginity. Hence, the Church Fathers identified saintliness with virginity.²²¹

²¹⁸ Saunders 2001 p. 122

²¹⁹ Woodward 1990 p. 337

²²⁰ Woodward 1990 p. 337

²²¹ Woodward 1990 p. 337

Also, if the homily on virginity encouraged followers of Christ to keep their virginity and remain pure for Christ, then Jacobus, by not emphasizing the virginity of men means the homily, like the treaties of virginity may have been applicable on paper for both male and female but in practice, it was only for females. The father, as earlier seen in chapter 5.2.2, had the duty of watching over the temple, and here the temple is the virgin daughter. The homily made it clear fathers will benefit enormously if their daughters remain pure. The homily did not discourage marriage but the advantages of staying pure for Christ outweigh being married. In the homily, the son is not engaged to Christ, but the daughter is a heavenly bride if she had the idea of cultivating virginity.

Moreover, the Christian tradition goes far back to the discipleship of Jesus, Apostle Paul's advice, and he equally encourages a celibacy lifestyle. If the Church Fathers based their ideas on Paul's writing, then it can be said to be a community of shared memory. The cultural memory was incorporated by Jacobus and propagated in the 13th century. As previously seen in chapter 5.3, Joyce Salisbury 1991, argues that men like Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome had ideas that dominated the medieval world, and the Christian church in the west was shaped by these ideas. These patristic thoughts were paved by the application of metaphors. For example, metaphorically, virgins were seen as Christ's chaste bride. These theologians built on each other ideas and can be seen to influence Jacobus's narrative.

Jacobus does not state that he is following the laid down principles of the Church Fathers, but after studying female virgin saints, I can see Jacobus places great emphasis on their virginity which meet the threat of rape. Therefore, is virginity in his narrative seen as a physical allegory? According to Salisbury though many historians and theologians have written extensively on virginity in the early centuries of Christianity, they have considered virginity unrelated to the attributes of sexuality. This has resulted in inadequate comprehension of the idea of virginity. Secondly, it may have led to the rejection of the Early Fathers as a misogynist. She promotes that the Church Fathers had a dualistic view of sexuality. That is to mean that the carnality was spiritual and physical. According to her, the focus should be on the understanding opinions and fears that shaped their declaration. She promotes, therefore, that the Church Fathers understood that men were primarily spiritual and women carnal. She, however, thinks it is logical for these Church Fathers to consider it natural for men to achieve a spiritual life easily. Therefore, when men exhibited characteristics of spirituality, they were considered holy. Since by nature women were considered carnal, they had to renounce things that defined their femininity to achieve spirituality. Consequently, by renouncing their sexuality, they have, in a way, rejected things

that define their gender. So, therefore, the women who took the vow of chastity were considered superior to married women.²²² Jacobus could have built on these, seeing where he stems from, that is, the Dominican order which could see to promote the ascetic lifestyle and the pursuit of holiness. Although there may be a controversial approach or understanding of the Church Fathers towards their representation of virginity and gender, it cannot still excuse the fact that there was a total aspect of male dominance in the Church. They influenced how gender was constructed and how holiness was viewed.

Furthermore, rape is a characteristic that seemed relatively common among the female virgin saints. Rape as a concept is seen in this study though not enormously elaborated because as noted entered Roman law rather late. However, according to Corinne Saunders in chapter 5.3 of this study, if an unmarried woman was raped, she, was considered devalued. If purity is therefore allocated to virginity, then Jacobus could have been pushing forward the aspect of purity in his narrative. By pushing forward, this claim could have made virginity very appetizing to the 13th-century woman. Besides, Jacobus's hagiographic text had a wide readership, and the saints he narrates were exemplified as icons. Jacobus does not mention any female saint who was raped but his narrative talks of breasts torn off, girls paraded stark naked and can be understood under the auspices of sexual violence. Undoubtedly, Jacobus does not emphasize the male virginity; this to my understanding goes to support Saunders' claim that sainthood depended on the virginity of the female saint. If theologian writers such as Saunders see the chopping of the female breasts as parallel to rape, then Jacobus is not far from the same view or thought. Jacobus, therefore, has presented virginity as a physical aspect in most of the lives of these female saints than spiritual.

²²² Salisbury 1991 p.26, 31

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

In these contemporary times, the emphasis on virginity in certain cultural and religious environmental and contemporary groups motivated my investigation. As earlier mentioned in the introduction of this study not only my personal experience triggered this investigation, but the fact that some women are forced to carry out virginity tests in Egypt, the culture of virginity and purity in America among the Texas teenage virgins, and the fact that Zulu women queue to get their virginity verified.²²³ To crown it all, it was some sort of proof of virginity to parents and future husbands where certificates are issued to make it official. The certificate of chastity is being promoted and quite prominent among the girls. Investigating this gave me a deeper understanding of these that triggered my interest. I came to understand that the concept of virginity has a deeply religious or cultural background and meaning. As earlier mentioned in chapter five of this work, Jerome advocated for a public ceremony of vow-taking by virgins. I have traced the historical background of virginity, saints, martyrdom, and rape, which has given me an understanding of these themes used in this study. I have focused on the 13th century and the 13th-century reflection of text on this topic. This shows that they did not just appear in the 13th century when Jacobus compiled the Golden Legend but have long existed before. Hence, Jacobus wrote about traditions, beliefs, or practices that have been in the church and observed by the people for centuries.

I have, through this study, observed from Jacobus's narrative that virginity historically has been held in high esteem. I studied twenty-seven female martyrs and twelve male martyrs from the Golden Legend narrated by Jacobus de Voragine. If we recall, most of the saints were persecuted before Constantine the Great became emperor. As depicted by Jacobus, the female saints are mainly desired by men in authority or who had the power to afflict pain and were equally pagans. These women were either very young, some betrothed, a few married and never consummated, or others who ardently refused to be regarded as sex objects. It is paramount to note that emphasis is not laid on the sexuality of the male martyrs. However, it is recorded that one male saint was stripped and beaten. Hence, martyrdom was acknowledged as a privileged death for being a witness to Christ unto death.

From my writing and reflection on virginity, the Church Fathers who were very influential became a powerful platform. They were in a way a powerful platform for priests like Jacobus and other theologians later. These Church Fathers had the cultural competency may be to

²²³ See introduction (chapter one)

understand what is essential and drove home this fact in various ways. They were primarily respected and had the cultural proficiency to make their information heard and approved. Moreover, virginity or chastity was influenced by the culture of that time. These Church Fathers wrote treatises on virginity which were the very backbone of Christian thought. The Medieval Catholic Church and the Church Fathers referred to Apostle Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 7-9. They were greatly influenced by Paul who preferred the celibate state, and their theoretical backing was based on his writings. Also, the homely, encouraged parents to persuade their children to live a chaste life. Hence virginity was encouraged though the marriage was not discouraged. The father was regarded as the priest who oversaw that the daughter preserved her virginity as "a pure temple".

In this study, I understood that many shades of interpretation were available with different meanings of virginity. Virginity may have been seen in the physical or spiritual sense, but interestingly it was phenomenal to the female saint. Additionally, many references to 'virgin' convey Jacobus's admiration. Besides the fact that an oath of virginity has been taken and supervised by some churches, even in modern times still shows a fundamental interest in virginity or chastity. Moreover, Jacobus's narrative has shown a standardized pattern followed by the church over the period because virginity from the first century is still given providence in his narrative in the 13th century when we see the example of Saint Elizabeth. The virginity of the woman is over-emphasized. Furthermore, cultural memory was used in this study to see if it will be applicable in the 13th. The memory Jacobus applied was shared over time and the stories of the saints were repeatedly told. There was no great significant difference noticed in the narratives of the female martyr saints by Jacobus. The similarities of the torture and execution of the Christian female saints started in late Antiquity and moved to the Middle Ages. The stories seem to carry the same trend of presentation.

In addition, this whole admiration of chastity has been taken care of by monastic institutions. This kind of life that people choose to be chaste is a big tradition. These ascetic traditions advocated strongly for virginity and chastity though there was a significant difference between males and females. There have been countless fanciful interpretations of virginity, but in this study, sexuality has been seen to have a physical connotation. Interestingly virginity or chastity is important in different conservative denominations. Virginity was associated with divinity and made to seem priceless. Moreover, it seemed to measure the worth of the female saints seeing that virginity was so beautifully articulated. In my understanding, virginity was a construct, especially for the female saints. According to Patricia Miller 2005, virginity was

either associated with materiality or physical passion. Since virginity and holiness are interrelated, virginity was seen to make the female saint physically beautiful or irresistible. Miller thinks the study focus on Christian women by Christian men mostly centred on the fact that they were virgins or wives, which has been mentioned in chapter 5.2 of this study.

Referring to my introduction, I asked, how was virginity/chastity communicated and propagated in the 13th century and onwards in Medieval Europe? This further gave me two sub-questions; how was sexuality described and interpreted in *The Golden Legend*? Secondly, how significantly different, or similar is the story of one martyr saint to another in respect to the threat of rape?

To tentatively answer these research questions I asked, I was buffeted to discover that throughout this study, the virginity of the woman has been a central point of interest from the beginning. The treatises on virginity may have been laid down early by the Church Fathers but the importance of virginity in the 13th century is still remarkable. Scholars over time have attempted to understand this interest without necessarily being biased, but it cannot be ignored that the virginity of the martyr female saint is still attached to her sainthood and martyrdom. It is worth mentioning again that there is no record in Jacobus's narrative of a female saint being raped, but they were constantly threatened. The male martyr saints on the other hand were never threatened with rape. Without any exaggeration, virginity has been sacralized and there is a segregation of gender when virginity is presented in Jacobus' narrative. Hence, Jacobus writing amplified virginity, chastity, and purity in the Middle Ages.

Nonetheless, I came up with some tentative answers to my research questions. Firstly, virginity has been given some heavenly attribution or significance which makes anything less appear unholy or impure. Secondly, the virginity of a female saint is given more prominence than its male counterparts. Moreover, physically violated girls are ignored in these narratives because they are no longer considered pure nor fit to be brides of Christ. Furthermore, Jacobus de Voragine praises the meritorious acts of resisting until death, and martyrdom is achieved if the saint's purity is undefiled.

To my understanding, this study has shed light on some historical roots which can in a way explain some modern phenomena of virginity vow and testing. Also, tracing the concept of virginity to the saints and onward to the 13th century has given me a better perspective. The impact of these saintly women from long ago that is from the Medial Latin church, Europe, and the Mediterranean era has influenced parts of the world that are distanced from time and

space. This is because someone recounted their stories, and the Roman Catholic church still venerates them. In conclusion, the idea of a holy or sanctified person may have been used to shape the church and elevate spirituality through vow taking, public ceremonies, or preaching the importance of holiness or chastity.

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