

Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?

YOU CAN ALMOST HEAR MEDIEVALIST palms slap medievalist foreheads in despair: trying to describe premodern religious belief, a North American philosopher of uncommon learning conjures an enchanted world where spirits and demons were part of life as lived (“it wasn’t possible to entertain seriously the idea that they might be unreal”), where what we would call ideas were encountered as realities (“no . . . distinction, between experience and its construal, arose”), and where possession, mystical union, the presence of God, must “be seen as a fact of *experience*, not a matter of ‘theory,’ or ‘belief,’” “a fact of [their] world.”¹ Medieval studies thought it had stricken such notions from respectable academic discourse: one of its most confident boasts is that it dashed the notion of an “age of faith.” And to be sure, the “turns” taken by history these last decades threw their weight hard against assumptions long entrenched in the study of Christianity. There was a cultural turn, when the study of premodern religion took an anthropological stance, tracing strategic local rationalities with which “faith” seemed a property too gross and unwieldy to keep up; formerly taken with theology, devotion, and episcopal administration, scholars turned to sexuality, grief and arousal, food and medicine and pain, the violent and the rational energies of crowds, families and anger—above all, to local cultures and to the body.² Later came a rhetorical turn when, worried that sources it had embraced in these pursuits had designs of their own, history found itself in a more truculent mood, suspicious of the interests those religious sources served; now “faith” looked, not too large and slow, but too filmy and opportunistic, to trouble with.³

Through these turns, the abandon with which scholarship embraced medieval miracles was one nail driven into faith’s coffin. This is a paradox, but

ABSTRACT For all the proud accomplishments of its last decades, the study of premodern Christianity continues to bruise its shins against the problem of “belief.” New categorical explanations of religious belief repeatedly and inadvertently prove identical with old explanations; more oddly, so do categorical refusals to explain it. The fallacy lies in thinking that belief can be categorically identified in the first place. But recognition of the fallacy does not leave us stymied. A short theoretical discussion of St. Thomas Aquinas and a longer reading of the *Life of Christina of Markyate* suggest how belief may be historically discussed without being unhistorically cartooned. / REPRESENTATIONS 103. Summer 2008 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734–6018, electronic ISSN 1533–855X, pages 1–29. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at <http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintinfo.asp>.DOI:10.1525/rep.2008.103.1.1.

an easy one. By a simple device, the miracle story, which earlier historians had blushed at (we will encounter a blush or two shortly), became a nearly bottomless resource of metaphor and metonym, first for discovering demotic consensus and then for unmasking its hidden coercions. All you had to do was shift attention from the truth of a miracle story, or your source's investment in that truth, to its meaning. "I 'bracket' the question of cause, either natural or supernatural, for such [miraculous] events. I am interested in what medieval people experienced": thus one of the finest among the new cultural histories announced that it would take its stories as it found them.⁴ That great book made moderate and sensible use of this choice; others allowed themselves more latitude. Its effect is visible in one literary device that historians and literary critics deployed with increasing frequency: they began narrating miracles straight, in a poker-faced indicative: the saint "cursed laundry girls, so that their long tresses floated down the river like autumn leaves. He cursed a Persian judge who had given an unjust judgment, so that a boulder exploded beside him. From the toppling walls of Nisibis, he cursed the army of the King of Kings himself";⁵ "The dead saint . . . pulled back her dress 'with vigilant indignation.'"⁶ Nothing could be less like the empiricist fussiness of earlier days than elegant *faux*-factual narrations like these. They comprised not history explained "as it really was," but symptomatic fictions laid out for diagnosis, which required neither belief nor disbelief from their authors and audiences, but served as an entrée into their experience and the structures that organized it.⁷ One way to explode an "age of faith" is systematically to ignore the act of faith.

A great distance separates Caroline Bynum's delicate excavations of medieval experiences believing in God from Charles Taylor's charming assumption that medieval belief was experience of God, but the road between them runs straight: Taylor's picture witnesses not the failure, but the consequences, of historical and cultural studies that treat religious belief as a black box. Looking back, we can see the signs along that road more clearly: if the field were as confident in its demystification as its self-congratulations like to sound, it would not need so often to repeat them. We have been disavowing the "age of faith" with the same didactic importunacy for four decades, conjuring its specter so that time and again we may deride it as spectral.⁸ And like other compulsions of assurance (so my argument will begin), scholarship keeps asserting its freedom from these illusions because it needs them: despite a whole field's best efforts to make it something else, the operative picture of medieval religiousness remains much what it always was. Treating belief as a historically distinct sort of cognitive experience enforces on medieval subjects the immediacy to faith that the "age of faith" dreamed of; this scholarly device, far from expelling an exoticized middle ages, swallows it whole.

These historiographical claims occupy the first part of the essay. The second turns to history. There is something unfinished, not to say freakishly incurious, about any account that primly excludes the questions anyone wants to ask when reading medieval saints' lives and miracle stories, and prophecies and prodigies and visions, when feeling along the turns of biblical exegesis or theological argument: Did medieval people really believe all this? How did they believe it, in what sense, by what mechanisms, and with what degrees and forms of self-awareness? What sorts of "truth" were apprehended in the putatively true reports of miracle? This second section will sketch how these might be approached, and will claim that medieval sources not only anticipate modern accounts of their belief but suppose a conceptually more supple and forceful account of their own.⁹

It is easy to see how older conventions for treating miracle stories lost their appeal. The ambition to "distinguish a core of authentic material from the moralizing and embellishing accretions expected of hagiographers" is strangely dispiriting:¹⁰ that "core of authentic material" sounds like something hard and very small, less appealing and less alive than the exuberant, richly suggestive "accretions" this author would discard. And yet the historians and literary scholars who dug for that core at least confronted the difficult encounter between mind and world, tried to think their way into the thoughts of their sources. The problem they confronted was real: so many sources offer precious testimony to facts otherwise unavailable, but disconcertingly include, as facts, signs and wonders that no historian could credit. For example, to study figures like Ailred of Rievaulx and Christina of Markyate—fascinating in themselves, and important to the history of monasticism and religious sensibility in twelfth-century England—we have *vitae* written by contemporaries who knew them well. Walter Daniel, one of Ailred's monks, wrote this saint's biography soon after he died. Christina's unnamed biographer, a monk nearby at St. Albans, was one of her disciples; he interviewed her and her intimates and wrote while she was still alive.¹¹ No fantastic and distant legends, these reports can often be verified by, or can explain or be explained by, contemporary documentary evidence: just the kind of sources you want. And yet they tell us in plain terms that a mere wave of Ailred's pastoral staff straightened a deformed arm (32); that Ailred's principled displeasure caused the sudden and miraculous death of a contumacious abbot (44–45); that water which Christina had blessed cured a chronic case of falling-sickness (118–20); that Christina read secret thoughts and foretold events (for example, 134–36; 144; 146–48); that Christ miraculously appeared to her and her companions, and as miraculously disappeared (182–88).

Since I am about to pillory the solutions that twentieth-century scholars habitually proposed for problems like these, I want to emphasize that these

were honorable men and women about an honorable task, trying to save their sources' good faith and good sense without surrendering their own. R. G. Collingwood, discussing the analogous problem in New Testament scholarship, explained the dilemma: if we say that our authors reported miracles "because they were unscientific, imaginative, credulous people," then "that fact vitiates not only their testimony to the miracles but all their other testimony as well."¹² How to excise the tumor without killing the patient?

A solution widely practiced, though rarely described, was to posit a distorting but systematically describable medieval subjectivity—the distortion accounting for its habit of seeing things no modern would accept, the systematicity rendering this habit predictable and therefore containable. Walter Daniel's editor, Maurice Powicke, acknowledged that the historian "cannot measure the varying degree of suggestion or hallucination, of folk-lore or falsehood" in these miracle stories, but asserted that he could limit the corrosion of their credit by considering the "spiritual circumstances" that produced them:

Prepared to see everywhere traces of the direct intervention of God, their senses were deadened to the commonplace and unusually aware of strange or peculiar circumstances. A presentiment, a coincidence, a flicker of sunlight in an unusual place, might suggest a miracle for which there were a dozen parallels. They would nudge each other with significant looks. . . . The story would be complete, the witnesses ready, within the hour (lxxviii).

In this little fantasia we can see the outlines of two informal "accounts" explaining the medieval penchant for the miraculous, accounts rarely articulated systematically and in full, but pervasive in scholarship of the last century. The first I call the "didactic" account, which claims that miracle stories were offered more as meaningful object-lessons than as facts: "Miracle stories in histories were, then, primarily meant to be edifying. . . . [They] were part of a general world view and belonged to an essentially subjective kind of truth."¹³ Before being so crisply formulated, it was the grounds for many small tactical interventions to preserve the historical utility of sources. On this account, stories of miracles take historical form without actually making historical claims. So, for example, when Bede reports that St. Cuthbert's mere command could reduce birds to remorse and obedience, he really asserts not a fact but a truth, the truth that sanctity gained in ascetic struggle can recover a prelapsarian dominion over creation.¹⁴ Hagiographic authors often draw their morals explicitly: "It should not be surprising if all creation obeys the prayers and commands of one who faithfully and with his whole heart serves the creator of all," Bede says.¹⁵ Walter Daniel reports that the abbot of a daughter-house of Rievaulx angrily resisted Ailred's authority; the saint prayed for an end to the man's malice; returning

home, the abbot abruptly collapsed and died; the abbot's sudden death shows us, Walter says, that "the words of saints do not fail" (45).

Also implied in Powicke's imagined scene is a second strategy, which I call the "perceptual account." This assumes that medieval sources spontaneously misperceived natural events as supernatural ones—from ideological predisposition or from lack of better (scientific or medical) explanations—and reported them as such. This account often is uncontroversial: a prayer was offered, a fever broke; uninformed about self-limiting viral infections, those who saw it saw a miracle. And it is often useful: we can suppose that Ailred might have cursed that obnoxious abbot, and that the abbot might have died, without feeling ourselves obliged to suppose that God killed him at Ailred's prayer. Christina of Markyate could predict when a sick man would recover, what policy the king would adopt, when a friend would arrive unannounced. Her contemporaries saw a prophetic gift. We may conclude that her information derived from a combination of "common sense," "imagination," and "gossip"; at least Christopher Holdsworth concludes thus, and says that the author attributes these talents to special revelations because "in the twelfth century such percipience seemed miraculous."¹⁶

But, useful as these explanations can be, even those miracles that most handily illustrate them slip their leash. Prefaced to Walter Daniel's *Life* of Ailred, as we now have it, is a grudging and polemical letter. On the work's initial release, Walter says, two "prelates" questioned the miracles it reported and sought the names of witnesses. Ill-humoredly he accedes to the request, supplying witnesses for all the miracles—save one, which he now more cautiously calls "a miracle, or maybe the likeness of a miracle." The exception is the story of the angry abbot's death, which he retracts. "I will not name witnesses" for that one, he says; "it is not fitting, since it may have happened that the cause of the abbot's death was not what it seemed—although it did turn out for him as it is written in the book" (68). Notice that he does not abandon his report of the facts: "it did turn out for him as it is written," which clearly means that Ailred did utter the curse and the abbot did die. What he abandons is the assertion that they are causally related. Pressed, he can explain the coincidence of Ailred's curse with the abbot's sudden death without supposing any miraculous connection between them; such connection therefore is not integral to his perception of the event, but an interpretation separable from it. If the "perceptual" explanation really explained his initial report of the miracle, recantation should have been impossible. But if the "didactic" explanation really explained it, recantation should have been unnecessary. As I said, Walter does moralize the miracle: "the words of saints do not fail." But if this moralization of the miracle constituted his belief in it, as the "didactic" account would claim—if the story asserted only that general principle, without asserting that Ailred's curse had really killed the

abbot—he could simply have suggested that the two prelates learn to recognize metaphor.

One way of putting the problem is that one can only with difficulty describe the activity narrated in either of these accounts as “belief.” The “didactic” account, when it works, explains not how or why authors might have believed their miracle stories, but why they might have told them, which is not the same thing. If it explained belief—that is, if medieval assertions that certain miracles happened really were assertions not that those miracles happened but that their stories were edifying—then the discovery that an edifying miracle had not in fact happened should not in any sense have discredited it, should indeed have seemed airily irrelevant. By the same token, it would be hard to imagine why anyone would trouble to dispute a miracle story on this account, unless it was thought to teach an unfitting lesson. Nor does the second, “perceptual,” account—the notion that miracles were simply seen, “experienced” as a spontaneous and unreflective aspect of events—describe belief, any more than I could be said to “believe” that I am typing as I write this. (It would be odd to say “I believe I have two hands,” except in certain unusual circumstances—if the possibility of amputation had been broached, say.)¹⁷ If claiming that medieval people believed in miracles were identical to claiming that medieval people *saw* miracles, then in the normal course of things it should have been strictly impossible for anyone to change his mind about whether he had witnessed a miracle, at least without coming to doubt that he had really seen what he thought he had seen. Nor should it have been possible to argue about whether an event was a miracle, but only about whether it had transpired.

That is, these accounts could only explain belief in miracles under conditions that would make controversy over miracles, and change in evaluation of them, either otiose or impossible. But controversy was pandemic in the population of medieval miracles. Even that “modern” miracle best documented and most fortified by papal authorization, St. Francis’s reception of the stigmata, had to make its way through decades of articulate and responsible skepticism.¹⁸ This alone would suggest that this pair of accounts is ill fitted to the conceptual problem it is meant to solve.

It is also spectacularly at odds with facts known perfectly well to those who deployed the accounts. Doubt and controversy not only attended miracles, but were actively cultivated in defining them. Procedures of canonization, developed across the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, presupposed the commonsense recognition that some events emerged in natural processes and others did not.¹⁹ Investigations *in partibus*, “on-site” inquiries into alleged miracles, took careful depositions elicited with minimal prompting from their witnesses; to the results, the questions were put both whether the events plausibly happened and, if so, whether they were natural or miraculous. When

Peter of Morrone (briefly Pope Celestine V) was advanced for canonization, one miracle attributed to him said that prayers had been offered to Peter on behalf of a sick boy who then got better; Cardinal James of Colonna asked how long that “then” was, since the answer would distinguish the suddenness of a miracle from a gradual and natural recovery.²⁰ It has sometimes been suggested that the skeptical procedures of the canonization *processus* reflect a clarity about the difference between natural and supernatural causes that was both new and specific to the lettered class. But the testimonies of quite ordinary people—artisans, housewives, peasants—examined on these miracles shows that the distinction was available to them without labor of reflection.²¹ And of course it would have to be. The perceptual account is sometimes encoded in the assertion that for the middle ages or some part of the middle ages (or for some other premodern or unmodernized culture), there simply was no boundary perceived between the natural and the miraculous, that “all of creation was one great miracle”;²² this seems to be Charles Taylor’s notion. But as Hume recognized, “There must . . . be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation”;²³ calling something a miracle implies its singularity. If all of creation really was one great miracle, miracles would by definition have been inconceivable. The very frequent cases of double recourse for illness (seeking cure from both saints and physicians),²⁴ obviously instance the recognition that two different procedures, two different sets of causes, might be involved in healing, and that a miraculous cure was different from a medical one. The scandal of faked miracle, a concern to both clerical and popular audiences from late antiquity through the middle ages and beyond,²⁵ assumed that audiences could recognize the imposture of claiming supernatural causes for an appearance brought about through natural means. Similarly, were the didactic account really true, and medieval people “believed” in miracles only to the extent of feeling the heart warm at their pious encouragement, then the inconveniences undertaken in search of miraculous cure—not only great inconveniences like pilgrimages, but even small ones, like praying bare-kneed through the night²⁶—would be inexplicably undermotivated.

Rather than belabor further the inadequacy of these twinned accounts, I want to make a final observation that will come home to roost shortly. These accounts have a curious, asymmetrical relation. One is an explanation you could coherently apply to yourself, while the other is not. You could claim the “didactic” account as a conscious motive, could coherently tell yourself, “I am narrating this miracle not because I think it happened but because it teaches a useful lesson.” The perceptual account, by contrast, could only be the unavowable expression of an unconscious condition; you could not coherently tell yourself, “I am narrating this miracle because, having mistaken a natural event for a supernatural one, I wrongly think it happened.”

Of course these spectacularly inadequate explanations of belief in miracle were in reality meant less to explain belief than to contain it, to account for it just far enough to help otherwise useful sources over their rough patches. The instances I have cited grew up around the mid-twentieth-century Oxford of Powicke, R. W. Southern, V. H. Galbraith—medievalists who worked to rescue medieval history from confessional precommitments: from Aidan Gasquet’s unctuous Catholicism, the incontinent giggle of Edward Gibbon’s heirs, the whiggish Protestant smugness widely shared.²⁷ With broad sympathy, they tried to reconstruct the history of ecclesiastical institutions and thought as a humane and worldly history. Wishing to exploit all useful sources as fully, and to treat them as charitably, as possible, these scholars sought to preserve as far as they honestly could the sense and good name of medieval authors, to show that, whatever the defects of their age, they still reflected a comprehensibly human world in coherent and usable ways. They hoped to avoid embarrassments like the public confrontation between the lazy, affable nostalgia of Cardinal Gasquet and George Coulton’s hysterical contempt for the Catholic past.²⁸ Coulton and his like wrote as heirs to a long and shrill tradition, inheriting from it twinned accusations of the degeneracy exemplified in medieval miracle stories, accusations that remained in structure and substance unchanged from the sixteenth century through the twentieth. Priestcraft and superstition, fraud and credulity: a cunning and shameless Roman clergy devised miraculous fables in order to foster, and then to practice upon, the ill-tutored laity’s credulity. It was a mainstay of Protestant polemic in the sixteenth century, and survived to serve other causes, in other styles and colors. Conyers Middleton’s *Free Inquiry* (1749) explained to enlightened and latitudinarian audiences how Roman Catholicism sustained itself through the symbiosis of shameless frauds and defenseless gulls (“A mind, so totally possessed by superstitious fancies, and disturbed by vain terrors, could not have either the judgment to discern, or the inclination to examine, or the courage even to suspect, the pretensions of these vagrant jugglers”),²⁹ and inadvertently produced England’s most elegantly skeptical historian.³⁰ Gibbon carried Middleton’s charges of fraud and credulity back through Christian antiquity into the New Testament itself: “The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, daemons were expelled, and the laws of Nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world.”³¹ As for the reformer, and then the historian, so for the philosopher: “Modern Judaism and Popery, especially the latter, being the most barbarous and absurd superstitions that have yet been known in the world, are the most enslav’d by their priests.”³²

The conceptual power of “the middle ages” as a historiographical category, which originated in the contexts of philological and literary as well as religious polemic, derived from its success installing in the historiographical scheme a period of different, darker, historical subjectivity.³³ The doublet of fraud and credulity served Kingsley, attacking Newman in the 1860s as something that crawled out of a sinister past, a knave so twisted that all his cunning had turned to foolishness. It served my Sunday-school teachers in the 1960s. By the same token, an idealizing Catholic medievalism simply reversed the polarities on the same state of flattened cognitive possibility: “from the humblest to the greatest, a whole society *believes*: can men of the twentieth century understand what this means?”³⁴

And this durable doublet has a curious, asymmetrical relation whose like we have seen before. One of the pair can be coherently applied to oneself, one not; one can be a conscious stance, while the other must be an unacknowledged condition; you could coherently say to yourself, “I tell this miracle story not because I think it happened but because I knavishly wish to exploit these credulous fools,” but not, “I tell this story because I am a credulous fool.” That is, this pair of historical accusations, the fraud and credulity accounts of miracle, manifest precisely the same phenomenological asymmetry as the paired “didactic” and “perceptual” accounts devised by historians who tried to avoid leveling precisely these accusations. And they do so because they are the same pair. In each set, one alternative proposes that some medieval people told miracle stories for their own sake, because those stories simply seemed to them true (whether because they occupied a different thought world or because they were defectively credulous), and the other that some medieval people told miracle stories to accomplish indirectly some other aim (whether to edify others or to defraud them). The alternative and more humane account of medieval belief offered by twentieth-century historians was really the same account in a more humane tone of voice.

But my claim is not that these historians were unconsciously influenced by Protestant or Enlightenment historiography, that they sloppily replicated old accounts when they should have devised different and better ones. My claim is that there are no different or better ones. If you set out to account categorically for statements of belief, then you will find yourself reduced to some version of this alternative: you will say either that such statements were made for their own sake or that they were made for the sake of something else. The problem is not the means but the end.

Since I began by suggesting that it is self-trivializing and self-truncating for scholarship to avoid explaining belief, but have now claimed that these explanations necessarily trivialize and truncate their subject, I may seem to have tripped on my own feet. But my next and more contentious claim is

that if systematically explaining medieval belief necessarily cartoons both the middle ages and belief, so does categorically bracketing, excluding, it: the exclusion hollows out a belief-like shape that becomes filled willy-nilly with a belief-like object. Consider an example. A classic essay of the mid-1970s argued that the “controlled miracle” of the medieval ordeal enabled local communities to do justice without promoting faction and resentment. In one kind of ordeal, for instance, the accused carried a hot iron in his hand. The hand was bandaged and later examined; if it had healed “normally,” he was innocent. The pliant boundaries of the “normal” allowed communities to find in the state of its healing what they already knew about the accused and the circumstances, to disguise a consensus about right as consensus about a scar.³⁵ This account has not gone undisputed;³⁶ my purpose is not to defend or to dispute it (I am qualified to do neither), but only to remark how it imagines the mind of the communities it describes. Officially, it does not imagine them at all: from the shape and circumstances of the action, it infers what use the ordeal might serve. But the very concept of use or function presupposes the act’s intentional orientation; otherwise “function” would in this context have to mean “chronic but adventitious result,” an eccentric definition at best. In the intention thus tacitly presupposed, the subjectivity that was formally ushered out at the start is smuggled back in.

To this, defenders of such functionalist accounts might offer a couple of ripostes. First, they might say, it is this or nothing: since we have no access to the subjective experience of those who performed the ordeal, we can at least get workable results by harmlessly positing that their performance was rational and then inferring a sort of collective intention by discerning what function it might rationally serve. Second, they might say, the very point of the ordeal in this account is to diffuse responsibility, to dull the clarity of individuals’ recognitions and commitment. These points are fair enough, but neither gives a reason not to take the next step and ask how individuals (in this account) might have supposed the ordeal worked. To ask this is not to try recovering irrecoverable thoughts, but only to ask what explanations might logically have been available. Let us concede provisionally and for argument that Brown was right to claim that in ordeal, the group deployed a ritual that costumed its judgment as a miracle of God. What thoughts would have been available to its members, or might hypothetically be imagined for them? When the question is put that way, the answer is simple: either individuals recognized perfectly well what they were doing, and it was an open secret that “God’s judgment” was a fiction allowing them to judge malefactors without incurring the responsibility of judgment; or, through the persuasions of innocence or ideology or some other unconscious mechanism, they displaced that responsibility unawares, misrecognizing their local savvy as God’s miraculous work.³⁷

The case becomes starker, the devices producing it more tendentious, after the rhetorical turn, when the focus narrows back on the tactical force of individual actions and utterances, and historical agents are treated less as subjects than as subject-positions, vectors of positionality and interest. The double bind, drawn thus tight, yields the flat shrill selves fashioned by many historicist modes of medievalist (and late antique, and early modern) scholarship. We routinely say things like this: Margery Kempe claimed her visions in order to secure in her corporal experience an authority that a woman like herself never could acquire by office;³⁸ John of Gaunt supported John Wyclif's disendowment program because it gave the crown theological warrant for appropriating church property;³⁹ Bonaventure created the image of the pacific and stigmatized St. Francis in order to pacify and mainstream Francis's followers;⁴⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus humbly refused ecclesiastical office so that office would be forced upon him and he could combine episcopal power with saintly authority.⁴¹ What gives such assertions the look of hardheaded realism they ostentatiously sport is their insistence on cutting straight from utterance or action to some form of institutional or cultural capital (sometimes literal capital) it is thought to acquire: no mucking about with anything so immaterial and treacherous as thought. And so we do not ask whether John of Gaunt believed that Wyclif was right, whether Bonaventure thought that his idea of Francis was true to the saint's idea of himself, whether Margery Kempe actually saw her visions. But bypassing such subjective investments in favor of interests served just creates different subjective investments: we refrain from attributing estimates of truth to our subjects, but we attribute estimates of utility and purposive choice. This convention of describing strategy without belief or commitment has little enough to say for itself in theory; in practice, it freezes historical subjects into an idiot deadpan behind which either of two extreme possibilities might lie: they must speak either in a cynical and nearly sociopathic detachment from the truth-content of their words, or in a nearly delusional bondage to interests they do not even recognize as the source of those words. Either Margery Kempe knew that she had had no visions, but claimed them anyhow to get what she wanted, or was so abjectly hostage to her desire that she induced the visions unawares. It could be either, but it must be one; an interpretative scheme that admits purpose but not reflection affords no third.

In these twinned possibilities behind the subject-position's unblinking mask we can observe that same odd and asymmetrical relation we have seen before: one of the possibilities could be coherently applied to the self, the other not; one could be avowed as a conscious motive, the other only unconsciously displayed; you could coherently say to yourself, "I make this assertion not because I think it is true but because making it will get me my wish," but not, "I make this assertion because my wish has swindled me into

thinking it true.” In other words, the categorical bracketing of belief summons the same crude alternatives that attend upon its categorical explanation. So the problem arises neither in explaining the category of belief nor in bracketing it; the problem arises in creating the category, in imagining belief as a distinct kind of cognitive state or activity, and then declaring it the defining property or defining problem of certain centuries. In a scholarly generation fascinated to the point of bemusement with the mechanisms of medieval coercion, it is remarkable that the habit of demarcating belief as a distinct category of mental experience, or a distinct category of utterance, could survive the facts that some of these very mechanisms put so visibly on display.

I mean the mechanisms that enjoined belief, and backed the injunction by that system of regulation and pedagogy, of sanctions and rewards, that R. W. Southern memorably called “truth-enforcement.”⁴² These structures would have been pointless unless belief were something amenable to command, and they would have been redundant had it been second nature, the reflex experience of an enchanted world. Mental states cannot be enjoined, while choice can; the will, not the intellect, can obey. This is what it meant to describe belief as faith, as a discipline of fidelity undertaking and maintaining commitment to a series of putatively true propositions: the content of the commitment is cognitive—one commits oneself to the position that the propositions are true—but the mind encounters the commitment itself as something alien, peremptory, and rebarbative. The first duty every Christian undertook was to maintain assent to a series of propositions: “Do you believe in God the Father. . . ? in Jesus Christ his only Son. . . ? in the Holy Spirit. . . ?” the baptismal ritual asked;⁴³ that ordinarily others answered for one—parents and godparents engaging infants to a matter on which they had no say—left one faced with the prospect of accommodating cognitive habits to the maintenance of truths often repellent to natural dispositions. Belief concerned what was uncertain, difficult, inaccessible.

It was expected to be so. *Fides est de non visis* is one of Thomas Aquinas’s maxims about faith:⁴⁴ you don’t “believe in” what you see. Belief is by definition distinct from knowledge and lacks its assurance.⁴⁵ His approach to faith—from the early *Sentences* commentary and *De veritate* through the *Ila Ilae* of the *Summa*—insists that in faith the mind is commanded to affirm not only those propositions it cannot grasp or see from within, but those which do not even propose themselves as true on grounds the mind can accept,⁴⁶ is not the intellect’s free attachment to what presently strikes it as true. The mind therefore suffers an imperfect certitude, a failure to “grasp” its object.⁴⁷ It also suffers provocations of resistance, for such belief is a discipline holding the intellect to a series of propositional commitments already

undertaken: belief does not settle the mind, but riles it. “Faith holds the intellect captive under the sway of the will,”⁴⁸ which abruptly anticipates intellectual activity,⁴⁹ and the intellect is such by nature that it cannot take kindly to such treatment. Aquinas endorses Augustine’s definition of “believe” (*credere*) as “think with assent” (*cum assensu cogitare*), because *cogitare est simul coagitare*: roughly, “to think is to bang things together.”⁵⁰ The violent agitation imagined in that verb, and the cognitive restlessness it signals, are not the condition from which belief rescues the mind but a condition it inflicts, and related passages describe the restlessness of the mind in belief. The formulary of belief is not that which goes without saying, the plush carpet of presupposition, but that which has to be said, and then said again, because saying it provokes reactive intellectual energy: simultaneous with and inseparable from the act of believing, “a certain motion of doubt befalls the believer.”⁵¹ The metaphor by which Aquinas conveys the formal shape of doubt’s relation to assent in this agitation is discussion, dialogue. In the act of knowledge, he says in a crucial passage, thinking precedes assent; in belief, thinking accompanies the assent, remains continually vocal within it:⁵² the self is always potentially talking to itself, confronting assertion with doubt and doubt with assertion.

These reflections of Aquinas’s were “scholastic,” of course; they also were written after most of the sources I use in this essay. And that is what makes them useful. Aquinas appears here not as an authority; the schoolmen did not treat their own statements as authoritative,⁵³ but worked upon, sought to draw systematic sense from, authorities that embodied the practices and problems, and displayed the logic, of institutional life and pastoral care.⁵⁴ They sought to make systematic sense the matter of instruction, preaching, and sacraments, and therefore to excavate the presuppositions installed therein. I therefore use Aquinas here not as a prescriptive source of medieval practice, nor as a representative medieval mind, but as a trenchant theorist of the language, institutions, and practices of what we might call medieval Christianity’s “normal science,” whose analyses lay out their implicit logic, and show why belief was so routinely taken to be a thing mobile and multiple: shifting, partial, and unregularizable in its cognitive components; reliant on hypothesis and metaphor; sustained by imaginative habits and improvisations, bracing itself against the mind’s *revanche* but also provoking it. These deep presuppositions about belief, shared by traditional practice, demotic expectation, and scholastic theory, explain why recitation of the creed was an act of prayer.⁵⁵ They explain why so much of monastic discipline and ascetic theology concentrated on what Pascal later would call “the machine,” the body’s feedback-loop to the mind.⁵⁶ They explain why heretics under investigation had their thoughts searched out, while heretics recanting performed a series of gestures and utterances, the actual contents of their

minds untested.⁵⁷ And they explain why both academic and practical theology could speak of professing beliefs the content of which one did not know. This last, which has been discussed for what it shows about the pedagogy of the medieval church, shows much also about what it took faith to be. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6),⁵⁸ as countless discussions of medieval faith quoted; but how were those Christians adventitiously ignorant of the articles of faith, or incapable of learning them, to achieve that saving faith? How could they believe what they did not know? They could have an implicit faith, an assertion of conviction in the truths of the faith known to other minds but not to theirs.⁵⁹ At that extreme, belief proves to be nothing but the assertion of will, which has no determinate content, but only a disposition to accept a content that remains opaque. When the content is known, the activity of the will is no less exigent. Though belief is evidently a cognitive and intellectual activity, it just as evidently is not the free course of cognition and intellect left to themselves; this, indeed, is just why the mind never settles into belief. For what provokes the sharpest resistance of the mind is precisely the determination to hold it to a series of propositional commitments already undertaken, to keep it “under the sway of the will.”

Aquinas’s description of will and intellect, of the restlessly energetic contest of faculties, is a capacious and powerful explication of Christian practice in the Latin middle ages, and it suggests two reasons why the categorical explanation and the categorical exclusion of belief are alike impossible. First, belief so practiced is a complex of intellectual and voluntary practices, irreducible to the propositions they are meant to maintain: this is what it means that faith is called a virtue, that is, a set of practices cultivated systematically with the goal of habituation.⁶⁰ Second, and more important, is the will’s action upon the mind and the mind’s response; the presence of this voluntary determination distinguishes belief not only from knowledge, but also from other forms of incomplete cognitive security, like assumption and opinion. Absent evidence of the will’s operation, the discursive traces of belief will be simply indistinguishable from thought as such. No distinctive form, distinctive content, or distinctive context suffices in itself to define belief or to mark it off from any other motive for speaking or writing.

A reader willing to accept these last claims for the sake of argument might here object that I have proved more than this essay can bear. If belief is as dispersed as I claim, distinct from other acts of thought and speech only by the efforts of will that operate on them, then I would seem to have stripped myself of a topic. But we do not routinely insist that phenomena sacrifice their individual instances to categorical explanation before they can be discussed: a systematic account of literature, for example, that sought to

render study of individual works redundant would by that ambition display its absurdity. We do not need to regard baroque style or Hegelian dialectic or postcolonialism as distinct mental states in order to think about them. The Christian faith that appears in medieval sources presents to examination a structure as complex as any other historically realized model of thought and action. The particular case of belief in miracles floats those structures into a crisp visibility, and at the same time brings into focus some of the challenges that religious belief as such presented to medieval Christians. Historiographical and hagiographical records, precisely by encoding miracle in narrative, open to inspection the constraints they work on themselves to maintain their credit in what seems scarcely credible. They bare the devices of faith, and what polemic and scholarship have posed as questions about or criticisms of miracle stories prove to be criticisms and questions in and of them; the forms of skeptical reduction that polemicists and historians have performed on miracle stories since the sixteenth century begin as reductions that miracle stories inflict on themselves.⁶¹

Let us examine an instance. The *Life* of Christina of Markyate, already mentioned, presents a severely ascetic recluse whose miracle-specialty is the prophetic and clairvoyant vision. She knows when, miles away, a friend is dying, and prays him back to health (142); predicts when an important visitor, unannounced, will arrive (144); sees into a friend's soul (156); prophesies unaccountable shifts in policy and political circumstance (162, 168); and so on. This talent of knowing what remains dark to others, one commentator says (using the "perceptual" account of miraculous faith), surely was simply the enterprise of a competent and intuitive mind, which her contemporaries lacked the resources to explain as anything but "miraculous."⁶² But the *Life* itself worries that alternative, naturalizing explanations are all too ready and all too plausible. Several times it mentions Christina's detractors, and on one occasion reports what they say about her prophetic clairvoyance: "some—as if to be more fair-minded—called her an operator [*procuraticem*], canny [*prudenterem*] in worldly affairs. In other words, they tried to attribute to worldly shrewdness [*prudencie*] what was really a gift from God" (172). That is, these detractors say that what seem her miracles arise from natural talents spontaneously misrecognized as supernatural gifts. The author himself speaks of her *providentia* (68)—literally, "foresight"—in worldly affairs, which is both substantially and etymologically the same thing.⁶³ The book knows how easily one could explain the tellings and foretellings of her neighbors' actions as what an alertly informed mind might, on a good day, *just know*. It also knows that to explain them thus is to explain them away, to evacuate their value as testimonies to Christina's sanctity. The "perceptual" account of miracle, far from being beyond the work's conceptual grasp, is something it knows ruefully and by heart.

It also knows the “didactic” account, knows that one can skip around the difficulty of miracles by treating them not as events but as lessons, symbolically precipitating spiritual truth into exemplary narrative. One of Christina’s disciples, and her most effective supporter until his death in 1146, was Geoffrey de Gorran. He was abbot of St. Albans, the neighboring monastery to which Christina’s foundation was attached, one of the wealthiest and most powerful religious houses in England. In the *Life*, before Abbot Geoffrey meets Christina, he is a churchman of strict integrity, but headstrong, impatient, and contemptuous. Christina’s acquaintance begins to win him back to Christ; she becomes his spiritual director. In this initial period of laborious self-reform, the author says, Abbot Geoffrey could repel temptation by thinking of Christina “as if she were present [*quasi presentem*]” (140). By this point in the story, she already has her reputation for clairvoyance and prophecy; Geoffrey’s imaginative device unmistakably draws on that reputation, but without committing him to acceptance of it as a real power. Rather, he proposes her invisible surveillance to his imagination not as a fact but as an efficacious fiction, something between hypothesis and hyperbole by which he can steel himself against temptation. (What would Christina think?)

But though aware of this possibility, the *Life* declares it, as much as the reductive “perceptual” account of her miracles, a failure rather than a mode of belief, and it trumps both these accounts, easily and simultaneously, with a single miracle. At prayer during matins one Christmas Eve, Christina feels uneasy about Geoffrey; she is reassured by a miraculous vision of him as he is at that moment, miles away at St. Albans, “wearing a red cope” (148). Two days later, Alexander, subprior of the monastery, visits her; she mentions her vision; Alexander bristles, first brusquely insisting that Geoffrey had been wearing a *white* cope then, but suddenly remembering, “not without astonishment,” that it was as she says (150). He is not the only one astonished. So are the author and her other disciples: “Though she knows how she had this vision,” he says, “we have so far failed to get it out of her.” And so is Abbot Geoffrey: “From this moment [*dehinc*] that man removed all hope from the world, and fixed it instead in Christ” (150).

When Christina has so many visions, why does this one cause such a stir? With some background, the question is answerable. A cope is a vestment worn for celebration of the liturgical hours. Though sung in the middle of the night, matins is formally a morning office. Matins on Christmas Eve, therefore, is matins for Christmas Day; and with the coming of Christmas, the color of liturgical vestments changed, from red to white.⁶⁴ In other words, Abbot Geoffrey donned the wrong cope that night, in a muscle-memory nosing in from the liturgical season just ended, and Christina, miles away at Markyate, saw it. No one could *just know* that Abbot Geoffrey would choose

the wrong color for Christmas matins—that is figured in the surprise of Subprior Alexander, who failed to register the fact though he was present for it, and the surprise of the author and his fellows, who press her for an explanation of this vision and of no other. The story trumps the demystifying accounts because the vision it records is counter-routine and counter-intuitive. Thus Abbot Geoffrey's definitive conversion. Before this point, as we saw, he tells himself that Christina watches him not because he thinks she really does, but because he finds it helpful to pretend she does. He begins really to change only when he discovers that what he has used as a convenient heuristic premise is actually the rudest fact: it is not *as if* she can see him; she just *can see him*. He thereby learns to believe what he believes, and the dramatic change in his behavior demonstrates how cobbled and fragile that previous belief had been. In the same way, her friends' question—how did you see *that?*—registers their astonishment at something apparently impossible, an astonishment that waves away any cynical judgment that Christina's visions manifest mere worldly good sense. Whatever you might say of her other visions, this one (the work thinks) cannot be explained naturally.

But what *do* you say of her other visions, if you are the author or her entourage? The sheer randomness of the Christmas matins vision, in "proving" that her clairvoyant virtuosity is no merely natural shrewdness, proves too much. By provoking an urgent curiosity that her many other visions do not, it implies that those others, also narrated as miraculous, lie closer to what Christina's biographer and friends suppose an alertly informed person might *just know*. By fastening on the spectacular unlikelihood of naturalistic explanation in this one vision, the work quietly confesses its likelihood in her others. Which suggests the deflating conclusion that the community around Markyate believes Christina's visions as a matter of course because ordinarily they require so little of belief, that it accepts them with an indolent credit that amounts almost to doubt. Those other visions are still narrated, still treated as miracles, and therefore, at least in this idler sense, believed. What we find when we pull at the logic of the narrative is neither serene conviction nor secret infidelity in pious disguise, but something more shifting and difficult: believers conscious not only that there exists a possible deflating explanation of her miraculous visions, conscious not only that it is plausible, but conscious also that they themselves tacitly depend on such deflations to avoid the cognitive strain of trying really to believe in a miracle—conscious, in other words, that they regard with secret relief the thought that much of what they choose to call miraculous may not be.

I have argued that our modern scholarly accounts of medieval belief, which try to explain belief from the outside, cannot actually explain it. One reason they cannot is that medieval belief already incorporates their possibility

as part of its skeptical self-affliction: naturalizing or demystifying accounts of belief not only are available to medieval sources, but are internal to their acts of belief. Not only can these deflating explanations be engaged by critics of a possible saint; not only can they be entertained, and their plausibility conceded, by that saint's partisans; but those partisans can find themselves depending on those deflating explanations in order to sustain belief without the pressure of persistently facing up to full and lively realization of its improbability and of the offense it gives to any common sense of the empirical world.

But if hagiographic authors can quietly concede how much the habit of believing depends on avoiding confrontation of its demands, they also repeatedly summon that confrontation. Godric of Finchale's biographer speaks of the shock that comes from the *novitas*, the recentness, of Godric's miracles: the thought that a local man or woman, in our time and our place, might have done wonders like Antony or Benedict scandalizes the mind—"stuns" it, Reginald says. This concussion shows how easy it is to accept miracles from the past but not in the known empirical world; the challenge of doing so, he says, spurs the mind to inquiry, makes it "burn to investigate the unusual and unhopd for."⁶⁵ But investigation born of homage pushes at least momentarily against it, since the act of seeking out and narrating miracles opens them to question. John of Ford relates how his hagiographical subject, Wulfric of Haselbury, miraculously knows, and announces to a visitor, that a monk at Winchester has just died. The visitor asks the monk's name and the time of his death, and then travels to inquire at Winchester. He learns that Wulfric was correct. When they next meet, before the visitor can speak, Wulfric attacks him for "testing whether I have spoken the truth." Wulfric knows that to inquire into the truth of miracle is, at least in the moment of inquiry, not to believe it. But the author, as he himself has told us, has prosecuted exactly the same sort of inquiry into the truth of all Wulfric's miracles; reminders of his inquiries await the reader at the end of each chapter, where he lists the witnesses to its events.⁶⁶ John offers his investigation as warrant for the reliability of his reports, but he recognizes here that to write the narrative is to "test the truth" of the wonders it narrates; telling a story, you precipitate a vague sense of sanctity and power into a narrative form subject to tests of coherence, plausibility, and evidence and, at least for the moment you conduct those tests, you stand outside full assent.

But it is not just the embodiment of a miracle in formal narrative that provokes the cognitive disinvestment bespoken by "testing the truth," but the very investment by which a miracle starts to be believed in the first place. The instant Abbot Geoffrey of St. Albans learns definitively that Christina of Markyate really does see and judge his actions—the instant he embraces his belief—he is driven to inquiry: "The one thing he yearned [*praecupiebat*] to

know” about her was how she “knew his deeds beforehand. . . . And so he meditated on it often, turned it over in his mind, wondered how he might prosecute the matter. For if he went about it lukewarmly he feared negligence, but if too greedily, temerity” (150). Notice that last phrase: the inquiry he feels pressed to pursue is not pious homage; at one edge he senses the risk of conceptual complacency, at the other of conceptual audacity. The vision of the cope has generated conviction, but conviction generates new desires, and with those desires, new problems: doubting and investigating the miraculous begin almost simultaneously with believing it.

The *Life* of Christina has no wish to ease that tension; it introjects inquiry as desire (the abbot “yearns to know”) and then strands it unsatisfied. Abbot Geoffrey, bitten by this curiosity, is said to have picked and pressed at the problem: “He spent whole days shaken by these questions, and nights nearly sleepless” (150). On one of those nights, Geoffrey had a vision in which he saw himself holding a flower with medicinal virtues; “if he pressed it hard, he could draw only a little juice; but if he pressed with more gentleness, more reserve, he could achieve his desire” (152). The language of sexual satisfaction is so frank that it obviously is not the secret or unconscious content of this passage, but the figure flamboyantly chosen to convey the urgency of the desire to know. Walking the next day to visit Christina, he concludes that the flower in his dream must signify her: “He said that she should be investigated not with an undisciplined force, but with a gentle and coaxing address.” When she sees him arrive, she plucks a flower and asks: “Isn’t this the flower you saw in your vision last night?” (152). In this remarkable sequence the restlessness and force of the desire to understand the miracle is spurred, balked, intensified, held in balance, and then carried outside itself in a kind of aesthetic admiration—a resolution that flourishes its refusal to give an answer, instead reiterating the question and declaring it beautiful.

The thought that the mind might be at home with belief, that it might realize its objects vividly and love them in their vividness, seems almost unintelligible, except in the saint. A different and later Christina illustrates the narratorial cost of certainty. Thomas of Cantimpré’s *Life* of Christina *mirabilis*—Christina “the amazing” of St.-Trond—is notorious among medievalists and hagiographers for its lurid grotesqueries. Christina, already devoted and reclusive, dies young, but her funeral is interrupted when she sits up on the bier and then soars “like a bird” to the ceiling of the church, scattering the mourners in terror.⁶⁷ Brought back to life, she scarcely speaks, but soaks herself in icy water, encloses herself in fiery ovens, fasts until she escapes starvation only by feeding on milk miraculously produced from her own breasts. Thomas’s *Life* dares its readers to conclude what most have in fact concluded, that she is a vulgar thaumaturge whose contortionate physicality nearly blots out the soul.⁶⁸ But that is the point. To have passed through

death, to know firsthand what judgment and purification are, is to occupy an experience inaccessible to ordinary humans even at the limits of imagination. Her sufferings are as terrifying and repellent to audiences within the story as they have been to audiences without, and their effect is to convey, not what it feels like to believe in such torments with an intensity that amounts to knowledge, but how unbelievable such belief is, and how unbearable to ordinary sensibilities. At the start of the book, before her death and resurrection, she achieves sanctity by obscurity: “She remained unknown to all, but the more she held herself secret, the more intimately known she was to God. As he glories in Isaiah [24:16], ‘My secret to myself, my secret to myself.’ For he is a shy lover.”⁶⁹ *Secretum meum mihi*: it might be a motto for Christina of Markyate as well, and for Godric, even for the comparatively garrulous Wulfric. They may speak much or little, may disclose many things or few, but they do not disclose themselves: their antagonists and disciples are always more vividly realized characters than they are. The works confess that the shape of a mind enjoying secure and untroubled experience of belief is beyond their competence to portray. In Christina of Markyate’s story, we saw that Abbot Geoffrey’s choice to act “as if,” *quasi*, Christina could see all his actions is a device only partly efficacious, which flowers once he learns that she actually does see them. Before Christina’s *vita* is a thousand words old, and before she has reached the age of reason, the narrator says, since “she had heard of Christ that he is good, beautiful, and everywhere present, she would talk to him, at night on her bed, as if [*quasi*] to a man she saw” (36), and as the story and her vocation progress, she is granted visions in which what had been an ingenuous supposition—signaled by the same *quasi* we hear in Abbot Geoffrey’s story—becomes actual. She sees Christ, and experiences his presence, palpably, as Geoffrey experiences hers.

This suggests my final point. Against all I have said here, one might object that the stories I cite end, after all, by outflanking the skepticism they passingly acknowledge. Wulfric convicts the visitor who “tests the truth” of his vision; Geoffrey attempts the “didactic” account of Christina’s clairvoyance only until he is forced to acknowledge that Christina really does see everything that concerns him. But notice what that last point implies. Surely if Geoffrey’s profession as a monk, as a Christian, means anything, it commits him to the persuasion that God sees all his actions. Were this persuasion full and complete, one should think, the question of whether Christina really sees them ought to be moot. He abandons his niggardly reservations about Christina’s knowledge, but apparently can realize God’s omniscience, can bring it to bear on his behavior and his speculative deliberations, only by the sustaining analogy of Christina’s. Inquisitions and confession manuals have sometimes been mined to discover the doubts that most troubled medieval

Christians: the transubstantiation at Holy Mass, the efficacy of confession, Christ's resurrection, the damnation of the impenitent.⁷⁰ But of course what such lists show is not precisely what people most doubted, but what doubts seemed most useful to remark, to deplore or assuage or police. The miracle stories and saints' lives suggest the possibility that a deeper skepticism, tacit and pervasive and so diffuse as to elude useful formulation or response, may have attached itself routinely to other and still larger matters, like the reality of God.

Notes

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1. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 12, 11, 39, 12. He does the same with religious narratives from outside the industrialized world.
2. The work in late antique and early modern history of Christian cultures that helped to inspire this turn in medieval studies can be symbolized by a couple of classic essays: Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101; and Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in 16th-Century France," *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 53–91. Both were explicit about the inspiration they drew from, respectively, British social anthropology and the American cultural variety. An early essay of Brown's appeared in a *Festschrift* for Evans-Pritchard—"Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed., Mary Douglas (London, 1970), 17–45—and he has repeatedly mused on his fateful encounter with Mary Douglas: Peter Brown, "The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity," *Representations* 2 (Spring 1983): 1–25; Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 353–76. An appreciative but nuanced reflection on this turn that medieval studies took in the 1970s and 80s can be found in Caroline Walker Bynum, "Why All the Fuss About the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995): 1–33; wider in its focus and more dour in its conclusions is Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 677–704.
3. See, for example, the essays in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 3 (1998), particularly Susanna Elm's introduction (343–51); Mark Vessey, "The Demise of the Christian Writer and the Remaking of 'Late Antiquity': From H.-I. Marrou's Saint Augustine (1938) to Peter Brown's Holy Man (1983)" (377–411); and Neil McLynn, "A Self-Made Holy Man: The Case of Gregory Nazianzen" (463–83).

4. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987), 8.
5. Brown, "Rise and Function of the Holy Man," 88.
6. Monika Otter, "The Temptation of St. Æthelthryth," *Exemplaria* 9 (1997): 139–41.
7. Both the device and the disposition, now familiar in historical studies, emerge in a pure form in an anthropologist of contemporary religion studying the Marian apparitions at Medjugorje. After strikingly intelligent comments on the function of "belief" in academic discourse, she resolves to treat "Her"—the Blessed Virgin with whom her subjects interact—simply as another agent in the story; Elisabeth Claverie, "Voir apparaître: les 'événements' de Medjugorje," in *L'événement en perspective*, ed. Jean-Luc Petit (Paris, 1991), 161; see also Elisabeth Claverie, "La Vierge, le désordre, la critique," *Terrain* 14 (1990): 60–75.
8. For example: "Everyone is familiar with the notion of an 'Age of Faith.' It is the idea that, at some time in the past, everyone believed what religious authority told them to believe"; Alexander Murray, "Piety and Impiety in Thirteenth-Century Italy," in *Popular Belief and Practice*, ed. G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (Cambridge, 1972), 83–84. "In practice it was certainly not a pure 'age of faith,' free from the challenge of a secular view of man and uncomplicated by the use of human reason"; Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* (London, 1972), 6. "Were not the middle ages, after all, an age of faith?" Alexander Murray, "The Epicureans," in *Intellectuals and Writers in Fourteenth-Century Europe: The J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, Perugia, 1984*, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Tübingen, 1986), 140. "Although medievalists know, for example, that 'The Age of Faith' is a highly misleading characterization, it seems nearly impossible, despite all our best efforts, to extirpate it from the textbooks, much less from the popular consciousness"; Lawrence G. Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?" *Word and Image* 5 (1989): 251. "The familiarity of this scheme is again all too obvious: living in an age of faith, Dante was protected from the self-consciousness that tormented Petrarch"; Lee Patterson, "On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 98–99. ". . . the old form of seeing the middle ages as an Age of Faith"; Susan Reynolds, "Social Mentalities and the Case of Medieval Scepticism," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6, no. 1 (1991): 22, 25. "Pendant longtemps, on a affirmé que le Moyen Age avait été crédule et ingénu"; André Vauchez, *Saints, prophètes et visionnaires: le pouvoir surnaturel au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1999), 13. "The Middle Ages were not a straightforward 'age of faith'"; John H. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (London, 2005), 3.
9. These claims, taken individually and together, show why I have taken so little from Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago, 1988), that borrowing its title is a little insolent.
10. James Howard-Johnston, introduction to *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*, ed. James Howard-Johnston and Paul Antony Hayward (Oxford, 1999), 16.
11. Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi Abbatis Rievall'/The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, ed. F. M. Powicke (London, 1950); C. H. Talbot, ed., *The Life of Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Recluse* (Oxford, 1959). Subsequent references to both will be parenthetical; I have reprinted quotations from the latter. Translations from

these and all sources are my own. My assumptions about the date of the *Life* of Christina of Markyate follow Rachel M. Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51 (2000): 663–98, as against its editor.

12. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946), 136.
13. Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record, and Event, 1000–1215* (Philadelphia, 1982), 205, 211. Instances of the approach can be found in Pierre Boglioni, "Miracle et nature chez Grégoire le Grand," in *Epopées, légendes et miracles* (Montreal, 1974), 11–102; Sofia Boesch Gajano, "Demoni e miracoli nei 'Dialogi' di Gregorio Magno," in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés, IVe–XIIIe siècles. Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris (2–5 mai 1979)* (Paris, 1979), 263–80; William McCready, *Signs of Sanctity: Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great* (Toronto, 1989). Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988), tries to promote this account into something like a philosophy of life.
14. See Urs Herzog, "Vorschein der 'neuen Erde': Der Heilige und die Tiere in der mittelalterlichen Legende," in *Verborum amor: Studien zur Geschichte und Kunst der deutschen Sprache*, ed. Harald Burger, Alois M. Haas, and Peter von Matt (Berlin, 1992), esp. 256–62.
15. "Qui enim auctori omnium creaturarum fideliter et integro corde famulatur, non est mirandum si eius imperiis ac uotis omnis creatura deseruiat"; Bertram Colgrave, ed., *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), 222–24.
16. C. J. Holdsworth, "Christina of Markyate," in *Medieval Women: Dedicated and Presented to Professor Rosalind M. T. Hill on the Occasion of Her Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford, 1978), 202. For some other instances, see Henry Mayr-Harting, "Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse," *History* 60 (1975): esp. 341–42; R. C. Finucane, "The Use and Abuse of Medieval Miracles," *History* 60 (1975): 1–10; R. C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977); John Wortley, "Three Not-So-Miraculous Miracles," in *Health, Disease, and Healing in Medieval Culture*, ed. Sheila Campbell, Bert Hall, and David Klausner (New York, 1992), 159–68; Augustine Thompson, OP, *Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy: The Great Devotion of 1233* (Oxford, 1992), 113–14; R. I. Moore, "Between Sanctity and Superstition: Saints and Their Miracles in the Age of Revolution," in *The Work of Jacques Le Goff and the Challenges of Medieval History*, ed. Miri Rubin, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK, 1997), 55–67; Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, 94.
17. I derive the example from Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (New York, 1969), §23.
18. André Vauchez, "Les stigmates de saint François et leurs détracteurs dans les derniers siècles du Moyen Age," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École Française de Rome* 80 (1968): 595–625; also Alain Boureau, "L'historien et le stigmaté de l'événement," in *L'événement en perspective*, 140–56.
19. There has been extensive discussion of the process in recent years, classically in André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, 1997), 40–57; see also Alain Boureau, "Miracle, volonté et imagination: la mutation scolastique (1270–1320)," in *Miracles, prodiges et merveilles au moyen âge: XXVe Congrès de la S.H.M.E.S. (Orléans, juin 1994)* (Paris, 1995), 159–72; David Gentilcore, "Contesting Illness in Early Modern Naples: *Miracolati*, Physicians, and the Congregation of Rites," *Past and Present* 148 (1995): 117–48.

20. [Fernand Van Ortro], ed., "Procès-verbal du dernier consistoire secret préparatoire à la canonisation du Célestin V," *Analecta bollandiana* 16 (1897): 478. For a description of this stage of the process, see Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 54–55.
21. There are excellent examples in Laura Smoller, "Defining the Boundaries of the Natural in Fifteenth-Century Brittany: The Inquest into the Miracles of Saint Vincent Ferrer (d. 1419)," *Viator* 28 (1997): 333–59, which can be easily paralleled in earlier dossiers. Smoller, in fact, is one of those who think that the middle ages needed to learn the concept of the natural, and proposes that it was *informationes in partibus* like these that brought this context to the laity (334–35). There are several problems with this argument. One is the fact that canonization *processus* were rare, institutionally cumbersome, and expensive; it is hard to imagine that the relatively few *informationes* undertaken (especially after the late thirteenth century; see Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 61–76) could have broadcast the introduction of a distinction as new and revolutionary as this is said to be; on the procedure, see also Christian Krötzel, "Zu Prozeßführung, Zeugeneinvernahmen und Kontext bei spätmittelalterlichen Kanonisationsprozessen," in *Hagiographie im Kontext: Wirkungsweisen und Möglichkeiten historischer Auswertung*, ed. Dieter R. Bauer and Klaus Herbers (Stuttgart, 2000), 85–95. The much larger problem lies in the assumption that before a certain point, anyone—intellectuals or not—lacked, or could have lacked, a relatively robust grasp of the distinction. Though the question is too large to resolve here, the remarks that follow suggest the outlines of my answer.
22. Smoller, "Boundaries of the Natural," 333.
23. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby Bigge and P. H. Nidditch, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1975), 115.
24. The phrase is taken from Gentilcore, "Contesting Illness," 124.
25. The concern with inauthentic relics and dishonest miracles can be traced in familiar evidence through late antiquity and the middle ages. Augustine speaks of wandering monks selling dubious relics ("membra martyrum, si tamen martyrum, uenditant"); Augustine, *De opere monachorum*, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL (Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum) 41 (Vienna, 1900), 585. Guibert of Nogent's famous tract on saints and their relics tells stories of fraudulent miracles as a familiar scam of a landscape populated by avaricious religious and their publicist "spokesclerics" (*prolocutores*); *De sanctis et eorum pignibus*, CCCM (Corpus christianorum continuatio medievalis) 127 (Turnhout, 1993), 98. Peter Abelard names such scams, conducted through such spokesclerics, as one of the indignities to which the imprudent religious house may be reduced, "ut . . . praedicatores conducamus et pseudoapostolos nobiscum circumducendo, cruces et phylacteria reliquiarum gestemus, ut tam haec quam verbum Dei seu etiam figmenta diaboli simplicibus et idiotis vendamus Christianis"; T. P. McLaughlin, CSB, ed., "Abelard's Rule for Religious Women," *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956): 283. We see in these the ancestors of Chaucer's Pardoner, whose very conception relies on the distinction of nature and supernature. The same can be said even more pointedly of Giovanni Boccaccio's Ser Ceperello; that story, in which a faked saint effects real miracles, depends on the thorough internalization of the idea of a faked miracle. Thomas More, disputing in favor of saints and their miracles, acknowledges as a matter of course the methodological point that miracles can be faked and therefore must be proved, rather than

- used to prove other claims; *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, ed. Thomas M. C. Lawler, Germain P. Marc'hadour, and Richard C. Marius (New Haven, 1981), 1:62.
26. "propter devotionem omnes viri amovissent caligas a genibus suis, ut orarent tam ipsi quam mulieres nudis genibus super terram"; "Miracula ex processu canonizationis Thomas de Cantilupe"; *Acta sanctorum* (henceforth AASS) October, vol. 1, col. 611.
 27. Instructive in this regard is Southern's inaugural lecture as Chichele Professor in 1961. The occasion demanded generosity as well as clear judgment; the greatest achievement he attributes to William Stubbs, "the greatest of Oxford historians," is his constitutional history, which "helped to make [history] both severe and secular"; "The Shape and Substance of Academic History," in *History and Historians: Selected Papers of R. W. Southern*, ed. Robert Bartlett (Oxford, 2004), 94.
 28. David Knowles, *Cardinal Gasquet as an Historian* (London, 1957); Eamon Duffy, "A. G. Dickens and the Late Medieval Church," *Historical Research* 77 (2004): 98–110.
 29. Conyers Middleton, *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers Which Are Supposed to Have Subsisted in the Christian Church* (London, 1844), 54.
 30. On Gibbon's debt to Middleton, see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 1, *The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764* (Cambridge, 1999), 43–49.
 31. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury (London, 1896–1900), 2:69–70.
 32. David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London, 1898), 146.
 33. Lucie Varga, *Das Schlagwort vom "finsternen Mittelalter"* (Baden, 1932). On the origins both of the idea and the terminology of a "middle age," see esp. George Gordon, *Medium aevum and the Middle Age*, vol. 19 of *Society for Pure English Tracts* (Oxford, 1925); Theodore E. Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages'," *Speculum* 17 (1942): 226–42; Nathan Edelman, *Attitudes of Seventeenth-Century France Toward the Middle Ages* (New York, 1946), 2–10; Fred C. Robinson, "Medieval, the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 59 (1984): 745–56.
 34. Henri Daniel-Rops, *Histoire de l'Eglise du Christ*, vol. 3, *L'Eglise de la cathédrale et de la croisade* (Paris, 1952), 45.
 35. Peter Brown, "Society and the Supernatural: A Medieval Change," *Daedalus* 104 (1975): 133–51; see also Paul R. Hyams, "Trial by Ordeal: The Key to Proof in the Early Common Law," in *On the Laws and Customs of England: Essays in Honor of Samuel E. Thorne*, ed. Morris Arnold, et al. (Chapel Hill, 1981), 90–126.
 36. It has been most famously disputed by Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford, 1986).
 37. In a possible third case, some members of the community recognize the utility of the fiction, while others (perhaps under their gentle guidance) are benignly duped by it. This, of course, merely distributes the alternatives among a population. In that, it resembles structurally the story of credulous laity exploited by cunning clergy, of innocent laity instructed by learned clergy.
 38. Liz Herbert McAvoy, "'Aftyr hyr owyn tunge': Body, Voice, and Authority in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," *Women's Writing* 9 (2002): 159–76.
 39. Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1994), 83–90.
 40. Chiara Frugoni, *Francesco e l'invenzione delle stimmate: una storia per parole e immagini fino a Bonaventura e Giotto* (Turin, 1993), 25–28.

41. McLynn, "Self-Made Holy Man."
42. R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, vol. 1, *Foundations* (Oxford, 1995), 237.
43. See the Sarum use ritual, in the appendix to W. G. Henderson, ed., *Manuale et processionale ad usum insignis ecclesiae Eboracensis* (Durham, UK, 1875), 14*. The table in Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (London, 2006), 137, shows the persistence in medieval rites of this credal inquiry, which in fact is part of the baptismal ritual from Christian antiquity; see H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 23rd edition (Freiburg, 1963), no. 10 and attending commentary.
44. "Fides est de non visis, et spes de non habitis"; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (henceforth *ST*), ed. Dominican friars (Rome, 1888–1906), IIIa q. 7 a. 9 ad 1; see also, e.g., "nec fides nec opinio potest esse de visis aut secundum sensum aut secundum intellectum," *ST* IIa IIae q. 1 a. 4 co.
45. Christ, for example, possessing the contents of faith as knowledge, lacked faith ("defuit fides"), because in place of faith, he had plain vision ("loco fidei, habuit apertam visionem"); *ST* Ia IIae q. 65 a. 5 ad 3.
46. Faith is an adherence of the intellect that arises, not because it is moved by the intellect's proper object—immediate understanding or derived knowledge—but "by a certain choice turning it by will to one part rather than another," "non quia sufficienter moveatur ab objecto proprio, sed per quamdam electionem voluntarie declinans in unam partem magis quam in aliam," *ST* IIa IIae q. 1 a. 4 co.
47. That those matters proposed to faith may be "penetrated or grasped by the intellect" comes not in faith, but in the purely supernatural gift of understanding, the second gift of the Holy Spirit; "ut intellectu penetrentur vel capiuntur . . . pertinet ad donum intellectus," *ST* IIa IIae q. 8 a. 6 co.
48. "Unde et fides captivare dicitur intellectum, inquantum non secundum proprium motum ad aliquid determinatur, sed secundum imperium voluntatis: et sic in credente ratio per se intellectum non terminat, sed mediante voluntate," Thomas Aquinas, *Commentum in quatuor libros sententiarum Petri Lombardi* (henceforth *Comm. in Sent.*), lib. 3 d. 23 q. 2 a. 2 qc. 1 co. (Parma edition cited from *Commento alle Sentenze di Pietro Lombardo* [Bologna, 2000]).
49. Anent Aquinas: "Nous ne croyons, non au plan des raisons qui peuvent nous permettre de croire, mais dans l'acte de Foi lui-même"; Yves M.-J. Congar, "Le moment 'économique' et le moment 'ontologique' dans la *sacra doctrina* (révélation, théologie, *Somme théologique*)," in *Mélanges offerts à M.-D. Chenu* (Paris, 1967), 166.
50. "Cogitatio inquisitionem quamdam importat: dicitur enim cogitare quasi coagitare, id est discutere, et conferre unum cum altero"; *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, ed. A. Dondaine (Rome, 1972–76), vol. 2, q. 14 a. 1 arg. 2. (The same point is considered, to the same effect, at *ST* IIa IIae, q. 2 a.1.) The philology of all the terms relevant here is complex, but the drift is unmistakable. The root of *co-agitare* in *agitare*—primarily "to shake, move about," by derivation "to consider"—is clear enough. Thomas's continuation of the definition has the same effect: "coagitare, id est dicutere, et conferre unum cum altero." *Unum cum altero* shows that *conferre* means not "confer, discuss," but "bring together," or "pit against"; *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "confero," 16. This is confirmed by *discutere*, which suggests violently knocking things about; see *OLD*, s.v. "discutio." (English

“discuss” begins with the same range of meanings; its present sense originates from the notion of putting things to a test.) *Discussio*, in Thomas, is a partly technical term for the inquisitive disturbance of the mind characteristic of a sinless form of doubt: he distinguishes the “doubt of disturbance” (*dubitatio discussionis*) and the “doubt of wonder” (*dubitatio admirationis*) from the “doubt of infidelity” (*dubitatio infidelitatis*) at *ST IIIa* q. 27 a. 4 ad 2. Augustine’s original statement (“*ipsum credere, nihil aliud est, quam cum assensione cogitare*”) is found in *De predestinatione sanctorum*, J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia latina* [henceforth *PL*] 44, col. 963.

51. “credenti accidit aliquis motus dubitationis,” *Comm. in Sent.*, lib. 3 d. 23 q. 2 a. 2 qc. 3 ad 2.
52. “Sciens . . . habet et cogitationem, et assensum; sed cogitationem causantem assensum, et assensum terminantem cogitationem . . . ; sic non habet assensum et cogitationem quasi ex aequo; sed cogitatio inducit ad assensum, et assensus cogitationem quietat. . . . Sed in fide est assensus et cogitatio quasi ex aequo. . . . adhuc habet cogitationem et inquisitionem de his quae credit, quamvis eis firmissime assentiat”; *De veritate*, q. 14 a. 1 co.
53. M.-D. Chenu, OP, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris, 1957), 351–65.
54. Increasingly, Thomas’s own work is treated as an attempt to give systematic underpinnings to pastoral care; see Leonard E. Boyle, OP, *The Setting of the Summa theologiae of Saint Thomas* (Toronto, 1982).
55. The liturgical function of the creed was present from the beginning, in the rite of baptism; though recitation of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed began to be introduced into the Mass from the sixth century, and became normative at dominical and festal masses from the eleventh (Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* [San Francisco, 1945], 485–88), it was regarded as a prayer long before that; Caesarius of Arles, in the sixth century, classed it with the Paternoster, antiphons, and psalms 50(51) and 90(91) for lay memorization; *Sermones*, ed. Germain Morin, CCSL (Corpus christianorum series Latina) 103 (Turnhout, 1953), 32. The *Quicumque vult* (“Athanasian” creed) appeared in the psalter for the office of Prime on Sunday; Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to Their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto, 1982), 38.
56. “Après la lettre qu’on doit chercher Dieu,” says a memorandum in the *Pensées* organizing the hortatory part of his apologetics, “faire la lettre d’ôter les obstacles qui est le discours de la Machine . . .”; “Il faut donc faire croire nos deux pièces, l’esprit par les raisons qu’il suffit d’avoir vues une fois en sa vie et l’automate par la coutume”; Blaise Pascal, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Lafuma (Paris, 1963), 502, 604.
57. Bernard Gui advises that the inquisitor “sic freno discretionis hereticalium astucias circumducatur ut . . . de sentina et abyssio errorum obstetricante manu educatur coluber tortuosus”; Bernard Gui, *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis*, ed. C. Douais (Paris, 1886). See the fine discussion of developments in thirteenth-century investigation of Cathars, in John H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia, 2001), 103–7.
58. Biblical quotations are Douay-Rheims-Challoner.
59. The founding statement of the problem, on which subsequent discussions relied, was in the *Sentences*: “in Ecclesia minus capaces sunt, qui articulos Symboli distinguere et assignare non valent, omnia tamen credunt quae in Symbolo

continentur: credunt enim quae ignorant, habentes fidem velatam in mysterio”; Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, ed. Quaracchi fathers, (Rome, 1971–1981), III, d. 25, c. 3. Aquinas will insist that the object of the implicit faith of the unlearned is not the learned—they are not believing in their betters—but in the content, which is known to the learned but not to them; *ST* IIa IIae q. 2, a. 6, ad 3. The importance of the problem was noted by Pierre-Marie Gy, “Évangélisation et sacrements au moyen âge,” in *Humanisme et foi chrétienne: mélanges scientifiques du centenaire de l’Institut Catholique de Paris*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser and Yves Marchasson (Paris, 1976), 565–72; and Jean-Claude Schmitt, “Du bon usage du ‘credo’,” in *Faire croire: modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XIIe au XVIe siècle* (Rome, 1981), 340–42; and see the superb, more recent discussion in John Van Engen, “Faith as a Concept of Order in Medieval Christendom,” in *Belief in History: Innovative Approaches to European and American Religion*, ed. Thomas Kselman (Notre Dame, 1991), esp. 38–47.

60. The classification of virtue as a kind of habit originates from the definition of virtue as a “habit directed to choice,” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b. The literature on the scholastic treatment of virtue and habit is massive; there is a brief and very helpful summary of their relation in A. Michel, “Vertu,” *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 15:esp. 2753–57.
61. It should go without saying, but I do not wish it to go unsaid, that such a study as this one does not and cannot touch, one way or another, the truth of either the formal or the material motives of faith. The theorist I have been using describes faith as a virtue infused by God: “fides . . . est a Deo interius movente per gratiam”; *ST* IIa IIae q. 6, a. 1, co. I assume we all agree that scholarly inquiry is not adapted to detect this property, but must remain content with the earthly logic of believers’ utterances.
62. See note 18.
63. Countless instances of wordplay, along with Peter Lombard’s definition (“prudentia, id est providentia temporalium,” Peter Lombard, *Commentarium in epistolam ad Ephesios*, PL 192, col. 173), show that medieval authors knew that the two words shared a common derivation. On Christina’s household authority, and the general recognition of her worldly talents that authority signals, see the excellent observation in Stephanie Hollis and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “St Albans and Women’s Monasticism: Lives and their Foundations in Christina’s World,” in *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Holy Woman*, ed. Samuel Fanous and Henrietta Leyser (London, 2005), 36.
64. For background on medieval liturgical colors, and for the reasons I can confidently assert these here, see Roger E. Reynolds, “Clerical Liturgical Vestments and Liturgical Colors in the Middle Ages,” in *Clerics in the Early Middle Ages: Hierarchy and Image* (Aldershot, 1999), VI.1–16.
65. Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de vita et miraculis S. Godrici, heremitae de Finchale*, ed. Joseph Stephenson (London, 1847), 17.
66. John of Ford, *Wulfric of Haselbury [Vita beati Wulfrici]*, ed. Maurice Bell (London, 1933), 106, 10.
67. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita [Christinae virginis]*, AASS July, vol. 5, col. 651.
68. The deliberate audacity of this work is brilliantly described in a different connection by Barbara Newman: “What could Thomas’s readers have thought when it dawned on them that in this *vita, mirabilis* indeed, the demoniac was

- herself the saint?"; "Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 763.
69. "Mansit tamen cunctis incognita, solique Deo tanto notior, quanto secretior. Unde per Isaiam gloriatur dicens: Secretum meum mihi, secretum meum mihi. Est enim ipse verecundus amator," AASS July vol. 5, col. 651.
70. Eucharist and Resurrection: Murray, "Piety and Impiety," 98–100; Eucharist: Craig Harline, *Miracles at the Jesus Oak: Histories of the Supernatural in Reformation Europe* (New York, 2003), 154; Eucharist, damnation, confession: John Edwards, "Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria circa 1450–1500," *Past and Present* 120 (1988): 3–25.