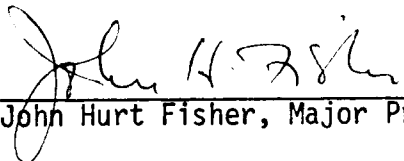

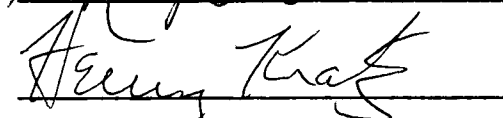



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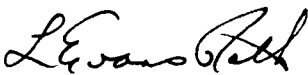
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Ute Stargardt entitled "The Influence of Dorothea von Montau on the Mysticism of Margery Kempe." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.


John Hurt Fisher, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

THE INFLUENCE OF DOROTHEA VON MONTAU ON THE MYSTICISM
OF MARGERY KEMPE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ute Stargardt

August 1981

3053736

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the assistance and guidance of Dr. John H. Fisher, who first suggested this research project to me. I also wish to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Mary Richards, Dr. Thomas Wheeler, and Dr. Henry Kratz for their help and advice.

I am especially grateful to Mrs. Albert C. Baugh, who graciously gave me permission to consult the papers of the late Hope Emily Allen, deposited at the Bryn Mawr College Library at Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Miss Allen had planned to research the relationship between Dorothea von Montau and Margery Kempe and to publish her findings in a companion volume to the EETS² edition of The Book of Margery Kempe. Miss Allen's death interrupted her research.

Finally, I want to thank Dr. Anneliese Triller of Bonn, Germany, for making unpublished materials on Dorothea von Montau available to me.

ABSTRACT

This investigation examines the influence of Dorothea von Montau, the patroness of Prussia and the Teutonic Knights, on the mysticism of Margery Kempe.

Dorothea was born near Danzig in Prussia in 1347, married in 1363, and after her husband's death in 1391 moved to Marienwerder where she lived as Prussia's first anchoress until her death in 1394. To secure her speedy canonization, her confessor, the Dominican canon Johannes von Marienwerder, between 1395 and 1400 wrote a series of Latin accounts of Dorothea's life, visions, and revelations for the papal legates in charge of the canonization inquiry. For the local populace and the Teutonic Knights he prepared a vernacular spiritual biography, which in 1492 furnished the text for the first book to be printed in Prussia.

The life and spiritual career of Margery Kempe of Lynn, as they are described in The Book of Margery Kempe, bear such a striking resemblance to the life of Dorothea, as it is recorded in Johannes von Marienwerder's vernacular biography Des Leben der zeligen frawen Dorothee clewsenerynne in der thumkyrchen czu Marienwerdir des landes czu Prewszen, as to raise the question of whether Margery knew about Dorothea and consciously or unconsciously patterned her own mysticism on Dorothea's example.

The focus of this study, a close textual analysis of both The Book of Margery Kempe and Des Leben der zeligen frawen Dorothee clewsenerynne in der thumkyrchen czu Marienwerdir des landes czu

Prewszen, establishes the probability of Dorothea's having served as an important model and inspiration for Margery Kempe, and of Johannes Marienwerder's biography's having influenced the pattern and content of Margery's own spiritual autobiography. The close mercantile ties which Lynn and Danzig enjoyed under the auspices of the Hanseatic League, Margery's life-long association with Germans and her abiding interest in German affairs, and her visit to Danzig in her later years indicate the channels through which Dorothea's influence could have reached Margery.

This investigation concludes that Margery was probably familiar both with Johannes von Marienwerder's popular vernacular biography and with the many accounts of Dorothea's miracles which circulated in Danzig and throughout Prussia after her death. It also concludes that the style and content of The Book of Margery Kempe, which differ so greatly from those of the writings of other English mystics, are indebted to the accounts of continental female mystics and especially to Johannes von Marienwerder's vernacular spiritual biography of Prussia's first recluse, Dorothea von Montau.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMPE

In 1934 a major event in medieval English scholarship occurred with the discovery of a 15th-century manuscript now known as The Book of Margery Kempe. This unique manuscript was found in the library of the Butler-Bowden family, a Catholic family in Lancashire, who apparently had acquired it after the dissolution of the English monasteries. The present owner, Colonel Butler-Bowden, had sent it to the Victoria and Albert Museum for repairs on the binding. There the American medieval scholar Hope Emily Allen identified it and later collaborated with professor Sanford Brown Meech in preparing a critical edition of The Book of Margery Kempe for the Early English Text Society. Complete with critical apparatus, this edition appeared in 1940, preceded by a modernized version produced by the owner of the manuscript in 1936.

Miss Allen also intended to write a companion volume to this edition which was to place The Book of Margery Kempe in the tradition of English and European medieval feminine mysticism. One of the principal topics of this proposed work was to have been Margery's relationship to the Blessed Dorothea von Montau (or von Preussen, as she is also known), whom Miss Allen considered a formative influence upon Margery's development as a mystic. Miss Allen, however, did not live to complete this book, and her notes deposited at the Bryn Mawr

College Library indicate very little progress in her study of Margery and Dorothea.¹ But the many striking parallels in the lives of these two women still make such a study worthwhile. This dissertation, therefore, will take up Miss Allen's project and investigate the extent of Dorothea's influence upon the mysticism of Margery Kempe.

The Book of Margery Kempe is a fascinating document. Divided into two parts and a brief appendix called "The Preyers of the Creature," it describes the physical and spiritual experiences of Margery Kempe, the daughter of a prominent citizen and wife of a burgess, who was born in Lynn in Norfolk about 1373 and who died there sometime after 1438. Late in life she dictated her adventures to two scribes, neither of whom has been identified. The scribe who produced the first draft of Margery's book was of inferior ability. His account of Margery's life up to the death of her husband (ca. 1431) was so poorly written that the second scribe, a priest whom Margery approached for a revision and continuation of the work after the death of the former, refused to undertake the work:

pe booke was so euel wretyn þat he coud lytyl skylle peron,
for it was neipur good Englysch ne Dewch, ne þe lettyr was
not schapyn ne formyde as oper letters ben. Perfor þe prest
leued fully þer schuld neuyr man redyn it, but it wer special
grace.²

¹Miss Allen's material consists of photocopies of sections of the Vita venerabilis domine Dorothee (the so-called Vita Latina), a copy of Hans Westpfahl's book Dorothea von Montau (Meitingen: Kyrios Verlag, 1949), and some inconsequential correspondence with Westpfahl. I found no notes that indicate Miss Allen's having advanced on this project beyond gathering a few primary and secondary sources.

²The Book of Margery Kempe, ed. Sanford Brown Meech (London: EETS, 1940), p. 4; hereafter cited as The Book.

Even an acquaintance of the dead scribe to whom the priest sent Margery because he "had ben mech conuersawnt wyth hym þat wrot fyrst þe booke, supposyng þat he schuld cun best rede þe booke, for he had sum-tym red letters of þe oper mannys wrytyng sent fro be-3onden þe see whyl he was in Dewchland"³ could not help her because "þe boke was so euel sett & so vnresonably wretyn" (The Book, p. 4).

Ultimately, however, the priest overcame his hesitation. After withstanding Margery's badgering "wel on-to a iij zer or ellys mor, not-wyth-standyng þe creatur cryed often on hym þerfor" (The Book, p. 4), he began revising Book I in July of 1436 and writing Book II in April of 1438. Though the revised Book relates Margery's life from the time of her youth to her old age, the chronology of events is not strictly observed. As the proem points out: "Thys boke is not wretyn in ordyr, euery thyng aftyr oper as it wer don, but lych as þe mater cam to þe creatur in mend whan it schuld be wretyn, for it was so long er it was wretyn þat sche had forgetyn þe tyme & þe ordyr whan thyngys befellyn" (The Book, p. 5). As a result, The Book contains many digressions and repetitions, and the order of events is difficult to establish. Also, the second scribe made no effort to round out the narrative; both parts end equally abruptly.⁴

According to Meech, this unique manuscript of The Book of Margery Kempe is probably an immediate copy of the priest's original

³Hope Emily Allen in note 4/4, pp. 257-58 in The Book applies the term "Dewchland" to the area now comprising the Low Countries and north Germany.

⁴R. M. Wilson, "Three Middle English Mystics," Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, 9 (1956), 105-06.

manuscript.⁵ It consists of 124 paper leaves gathered in folios. One of the two watermarks identifies the paper as of Dutch origin, having been produced sometime between 1440 and 1450, at most fourteen years after Margery commissioned the priest to record her memoirs. The uniformity of phonology, morphology, and spelling throughout Professor Meech attributes to the priest, Margery's second amanuensis, who changed the first scribe's spelling, inflection, and style to make them conform to his own standards (Meech, p. ix). The uniformity of the dialect, however, which is that of fifteenth-century Lynn, reflects Margery's own habits of speech as well as those of her two amanuenses and the scribe Salthows, who copied the extant manuscript sometime before 1450. Apparently, Salthows, like the others, was a citizen of Lynn (Meech, pp. xxxiii-v). He was a careful scribe. In addition to several missing letters and syllables, there are only a few words left out. There is only one serious error; a part of a sentence is missing on page 250, line 23.

The manuscript is very plain. The text is written legibly, each page containing from thirty to thirty-five lines. The only adornments are the rubricated capitals marking the beginnings of the proem, of the following explanatory paragraph, of each of the chapters of Books I and II, and of Margery's prayers. There are, however, numerous marginal comments in four different colors of ink and in four different hands. The comments made in red ink are the latest

⁵Sanford Brown Meech, ed., Introd., The Book of Margery Kempe, p. xxxv.

and the most numerous, and many passages of the text are underlined with the same red ink (Meech, pp. xxxvi-xl). Most of these red ink lines and comments are expressions of the annotator's interest in what he read, but a few of them cite mystical experiences of other mystics, most notably those of Richard Rolle, as parallels to Margery's visions (Meech, p. xl). This enthusiastic commentator was probably a monk of Mount Grace, a Carthusian monastery in Yorkshire which owned the manuscript for some time before it passed into the ownership of the Butler-Bowden family, but the other three commentators cannot be identified (Meech, p. xxxii).

Prior to the discovery of this manuscript, scholars knew of Margery only from a single surviving copy of a pamphlet printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1501. It contains seven pages of prayers extracted from Margery's autobiography, entitled "A shorte treatyse of contemplacyon taught by our lorde Ihesu cryste, or taken out of the boke of Margerie kempe of Lynn." As Professor Meech observes, the extract presents not a single event of Margery's life, and the only mystical experiences de Worde included are those showing Margery in quiet communion with Christ and the Virgin Mary (Meech, p. xlvi). Consequently, de Worde's pamphlet gives a totally misleading picture of Margery as a person and as a mystic, which caused scholars to expect the lost original to contain little to distinguish it from other mystical literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶

⁶Wilson, p. 110. Mr. Wilson demonstrates the misleading effect of de Worde's extract on modern scholarship by quoting David Knowles' evaluation of Margery in The English Mystics, published in

Matters became even more confused through a reprint of de Worde's pamphlet by Henry Pepwell in 1521. To Margery's name Pepwell added the designation "anresse" so that from then on in works on English religious recluses Margery was always referred to an " anchoress of King's Lynn in Norfolk."⁷ But, as Eric Colledge points out, some readers of the pamphlet may have wondered about this " anchoress'" devotion to holy places. Few, however, would have known that the phrase "as was granted to you when you were in Rafnys" referred to Margery's visit in Ramleh, a town half way between Jaffa and Jerusalem, an unlikely accomplishment for a recluse (Colledge, p. 16).

II. MARGERY KEMPE: BIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

In contrast to the plainness of the manuscript, the life revealed on its pages is colorful and exciting. Margery was the daughter of John Burnham, a successful merchant of Lynn. In 1393

1927. "Consequently it is not surprising that Dom David Knowles, knowing only these extracts, should have seen 'a very striking agreement of spirit' between Margery and Julian." In his book The English Mystical Tradition, published in 1961, Knowles reverses himself when he describes the purpose and the tone of Margery's visit to Dame Julian's hermitage about 1413. "According to Margery, the anress . . . accepted Margery's experience as genuine and her tears as authentic tokens of grace, but it seems clear that the visit took place before the 'cryings and roarings' began, and the lengthy passage in oratio recta attributed to Julian in an account that was written down twenty years later is both theologically unexceptionable and remarkably vague, and might well represent the substance of advice given by a prudent woman who did not feel any obligation to overhaul the life of a passing visitor who was eccentric and self-centered if also sincere and devout. It is to be noted that when Margery visited Norwich again two years later on her way back from Rome there is no mention of a visit to Julian" (p. 149).

⁷Eric Colledge, "Margery Kempe," Month, 28 (1962), 16.

she married John Kempe, the son of an equally successful Lynn merchant. Her life as a mystic began after the birth of her first child, when she suffered what appears to have been a severe case of postpartum depression from which she recovered only through the alleged intervention of Christ himself. Her subsequent boisterous demonstrations of faith and devotion made her notorious wherever she went. She visited all the major shrines of Europe and the Holy Land, experiencing physical hardships, mental anguish, and financial reversals. On several occasions she was even in danger of losing her life when she was accused of heresy and Lollardy. She undertook her last journey abroad when she was about sixty years old. Her son Thomas, the only survivor of fourteen children, had lived in Prussia for a number of years and had married a girl from Danzig. When the young couple visited his parents in Lynn, Thomas fell ill and died, and approximately a year and a half later Margery accompanied his widow back to her home town. After her return to Lynn Margery eventually persuaded her second amanuensis, the priest, to revise Book I of her autobiography, written before her departure to Danzig,⁸ and to complete her life history under her direction. After 1438 she is

⁸Many scholars consider Margery's son Thomas who had lived in Germany for some time and had married a girl from Danzig Margery's first amanuensis. They suggest that he composed Book I during his visit with his parents in 1431. However, Louise Collis in The Apprentice Saint (London: Michael Joseph, 1964), pp. 150-51, casts doubt on such a conclusion. She points out, for example, that Thomas "is said to have sickened the day after his arrival and died a month later. No mention is made of any previous long visit to his mother. It is hardly likely that a dying man could have written 220 pages of rather small print in three weeks, at the most. For it is not as if the scribe was a practiced writer, dashing off sentences and

mentioned a few times in various town records of 1439.⁹ The date of her death is not known.

paragraphs without effort." Miss Collis concludes that Margery's first secretary was probably a friend of Thomas, a colleague among the merchants of Danzig. This conclusion is reasonable since Margery's description, although it fits her son in many ways, could have easily described other Englishmen as well. By that time the English population of Danzig had become so large that the citizens of Danzig were quite concerned. E. R. Daenell in his book Die Blütezeit der Deutschen Hanse (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1905), I, p. 76, cites an official complaint dated 1438. "Danzig aber erläuterte 1438 die englische Forderung auf Niederlassungsfreiheit in Preussen dahin, dass England allmählich soviel Volksgenossen ins Land zu schicken beabsichtige, um ihm dann ebenso seinen Willen aufnötigen und es von sich abhängig machen zu können, wie es auch mit Bordeaux und Gascogne und anderen Ländern getan habe."

There is still another person who might have written the original draft of Margery's Book. Margery's German daughter-in-law stayed with Margery in Lynn for about a year and a half after Thomas' death. During this time she could have learned enough English to produce the garbled half English, half German manuscript the priest, Margery's second amanuensis, revised. The fact that the letters were "not schapyn ne formyd as oper letters ben" may have been due to their being written by an inexperienced writer, well-versed in neither the English language nor proper penmanship. It seems that a merchant or a merchant's clerk like Margery's son Thomas would have produced a much cleaner manuscript than the one the priest encountered. Furthermore, when the priest sent Margery to a close business acquaintance of the first scribe to let him decipher the manuscript, this man, who was supposedly quite familiar with the dead man's handwriting could not read the book either. The reason for this may very well have been that the person whom Margery named as her first scribe did in fact not write Book I.

If Margery's daughter-in-law was indeed Margery's first scribe, Margery's reluctance to say so is perfectly reasonable in the light of contemporary political events. Book I was produced in 1432 during a period of Lollard unrest and Lollard persecution. Margery, who had been accused of Lollardy on several occasions, may have thought it prudent not to cast suspicion on her Book as being a Lollard tract, some of which had been produced by women. Also, as The Book asserts, Margery's second scribe, the priest, was suspicious of Margery and her Book for a long time; therefore, Margery's insistence that the first draft had been written by a man close to her may have been necessary to persuade the reluctant priest to undertake the revision of Book I. For more information on Lollardy and women's participation in Lollard activities, see notes 333 and 334.

⁹Hope Emily Allen, "Appendix III," The Book of Margery Kempe, pp. 358-59. The entries relate mainly to payments of various kinds. One

Although scholars of English literary history praise Margery's book as a landmark in the development of vernacular literature because it is the first extant biography or autobiography in English, their response to Margery's particular brand of mysticism has been mainly negative. Aside from a few uncritically admiring accounts, most studies condemn her behavior, cast doubts on her temperament as conducive to the development of genuine mystical insight, and therefore question the mystical nature of her religious experiences. Eric Colledge sums up the attitude of the skeptics in dismissing her "ravishings" as fits of hysteria or epilepsy and her "revelations" as subjective, imitative, and excogitated.¹⁰

One reason for this negative evaluation of Margery as a mystic is no doubt that Margery was almost an exact contemporary of England's most gifted woman mystic, Dame Julian of Norwich. Dame Julian, who was born in 1342 and died after 1416, was an anchoress enclosed in the church of St. Julian in Norwich. In 1373 she suffered a serious illness which ended in a series of "shewings," visions of the Virgin Mary and the passion of Christ. Apparently Dame Julian prepared a brief account of them immediately after her return to health. These visions never reoccurred, but for the rest of her life she pondered their meaning and significance. Finally, twenty years after having recorded them for the first time, she described them once

of them suggests that Margery may have become a member of the Trinity Guild in 1438.

¹⁰Colledge, p. 28.

more, including her own meditations concerning them. Unlike Margery's rambling spiritual autobiography, Dame Julian's Revelations is a carefully constructed work, complete with cross references. Because of the quality of the Revelations' organization, style, vocabulary, and imagery, Dame Julian has been judged equal to the best prose writers among her predecessors as well as her contemporaries.¹¹

A comparison of the content of their work is even more damaging to Margery than Julian's stylistic superiority. In respect to their personalities, for example, Margery's sense of self-importance contrasts unfavorably with Dame Julian's reticence and humility. Margery time and again betrays her conviction that God had set her apart from the rest of humanity and would protect her from those envious people less favored than herself:

thys is my wyl, dowtyr, þat þow receyue my body euery
 Sondag, and I schal flowe so mych grace in þe þat alle
 þe world xal meruelyn þerof. Þow xalt ben etyn & knowyn
 of þe pepul of þe world as any raton knowyth þe stokfysch.
 Drede þe nowt, dowtyr, for þow schalt haue þe vycetry of
 al þin enmys (The Book, p. 17).

Julian, on the other hand, always remains a humble soul in search of God's grace:

for sothly it was not schewid me that God lovid me better
 than the lest soule that is in grace, for I am sekir that
 there by many that never had schewing ner sight but of the
 comon techyng of holy Church, that loven God better than
 I.¹²

¹¹Wilson, p. 96.

¹²Wilson, quoting Dame Julian of Norwich, p. 104.

But it is the difference in spiritual perception that makes Margery's mysticism so inferior to Dame Julian's. As Dom David Knowles says, unlike Dame Julian's revelations, Margery's do not "in any way perceptible to the reader, deepen the writer's spiritual insight or convey any message or programme to her readers. They are, almost entirely, devout conversations or monologues."¹³ Margery fails to convey to the reader "any of that sense of mental and emotional and spiritual distinction, and of that exceptional quality of personality of which all readers of Julian's book speedily become aware" (Knowles, p. 142). Whereas in the opinion of many critics Margery's Book describes a woman of little spiritual wisdom and few if any mystical experiences, they recognize in Julian's Revelations one of the greatest of the English mystics, who balances the fervor of the continental women mystics with the emotional restraint characteristic of English mysticism, and whose depth of inquiry into the nature of mysticism rivals that of the greatest mystics of her time.¹⁴

III. SURVEY OF GERMAN MEDIEVAL FEMININE MYSTICISM

But if Margery fits poorly into the English mystical tradition, she is a direct spiritual descendant of the many women mystics of the fourteenth century who flourished especially in Germany. Although

¹³David Knowles, The English Mystical Tradition (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 142.

¹⁴Wilson, p. 111, quoting from an unpublished dissertation entitled Julian of Norwich: Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love.

German feminine mysticism goes back to the twelfth century to such visionaries as Hildegard von Bingen and Elisabeth von Schönau, the type of mysticism Margery practiced did not appear in Germany until after 1267. At that time pope Clement V entrusted the fratres docti, the teachers and lecturers of the Dominican order, with the cura monialium, the spiritual care of the women who after the establishment of the mendicant orders had flocked to the Dominican nunneries in ever-increasing numbers. Thus the Dominican friars, through their sermons, introduced the nuns, most of them well-educated members of the nobility,¹⁵ to the secrets of scholasticism. Many of the Dominicans instructing these women had strong mystical leanings; Meister Eckehart, the creator of German speculative mysticism, was one of these fratres docti. And the women, through their desire to retreat from the world and through the strict ascetic exercises customarily observed in these houses, were very receptive to mystical

¹⁵ Carl Boeckl, "Die Bedingtheiten der deutschen Mystik des Mittelalters," Aus der Geisteswelt des Mittelalters, ed. Albert Lang et al. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1935), p. 1015.

In discussing the high social status of the female inhabitants of German Dominican convents, Boeckl reiterates Wilhelm Preger: "'Viele der Schwestern hatten eine hohe Lebensstellung aufgegeben . . . , viele waren unter Zurücklassung von Reichtum und Ehren aus einem Leben der Weltfreuden gerade in die ärmsten Klöster getreten'"

Herbert Grundmann, "Die Frauen und die Literatur im Mittelalter," Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 26 (1936), 93, gives a good survey of the level of education among the women of the nobility and their influence on the development of German vernacular literature during the Middle Ages. He compares the development of mysticism in Germany to that in other countries, stating: "Nur hat diese Bewegung in Deutschland vornehmlich Frauen erfasst-und zwar vor allem die Frauen des Adels, der ritterlichen Geschlechter und des städtischen Patriziats"

ideas. The result was a flourishing of visions and experiences in these Dominican convents which found no equal in European religious history.¹⁶

Unfortunately, however, what was gained in the quantity of mystical experience during the late 13th and the 14th centuries was never equalled in quality. Although the mysticism of such women as Hildegard von Bingen had promised the development of a speculative feminine mysticism, this promise was never fulfilled. What Josef Quint observes with respect to Mechthild von Magdeburg, the most important German woman mystic of the 13th century, and her equally important Dutch contemporary Hadewijch, becomes increasingly characteristic of the Dominican women mystics who follow them: "One looks in vain for something like a speculative system in these two mystics. The center of their mysticism, its driving concern, is not Eckehart's unlimited desire for understanding, but the love of Bernard for the heavenly bridegroom."¹⁷ But while Mechthild, by casting her Brautmystik in the language and conventions of courtly love, avoids unrestrained eroticism, such control totally disappears in the descriptions of later visions. In contrast to Mechthild, the Dominican

¹⁶Martin Grabmann, "Die deutsche Frauenmystik des Mittelalters," Mittelalterliches Geistesleben (München: Max Hueber, 1926), I, p. 478.

¹⁷Josef Quint, "Mystik," Reallexikon der Deutschen Literaturgeschichte, 2nd ed. (1962), II, p. 549. "Nicht aber kann man bei Hadewijch, ebenso wenig wie bei Mechthild von spekulativer Mystik reden. So etwas wie ein spekulatives System sucht man bei beiden Mystikerinnen vergebens. Das Zentrum ihrer Mystik, ihr treibender Faktor, ist nicht der unendliche Erkenntnisdrang Eckeharts, sondern die Minne Bernhards zum himmlischen Bräutigam."

nuns describe their visions of Christ the bridegroom seeking his bride in the erotic formulas of the "Song of Songs," which eventually became so heightened and extended that they present embarrassing and even pathological fleshly versions of the supposedly spiritual unio mystica.¹⁸

A highly, at times pathologically charged eroticism is not the only discomfiting characteristic of German feminine mysticism during the 13th and 14th centuries. The many visions of the childhood of Christ and the motherhood of the Virgin Mary at times also take on a bizarre character. One mystic, for example, a nun in the Dominican house of Töss, describes herself as sucking, like the Christ child, on Mary's breast, while another nun from Töss, in her efforts to provide physical comfort for the infant, offers her own skin as a diaper.¹⁹ But it is in the Passionsmystik, the desire of the mystic to experience and imitate the suffering of Christ, that the most serious aberrations occur. As one might expect, this type of mystical experience was especially sought after during Lent. Besides castigating themselves

¹⁸Friedrich Wilhelm Wentzlaff-Eggebert, "Erscheinungsformen der 'unio mystica' in der deutschen Literatur und Dichtung," Belehrung und Verkündigung, ed. Manfred Dick und Gerhard Kaiser (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), pp. 98-99; hereafter cited as "Erscheinungsformen."

Walter Blank, Die Nonnenviten des 14. Jahrhunderts (Freiburg: K. Müller, 1962), p. 263, gives a pathetic example of eroticism in the visions of these Dominican nuns: Adelheid von Trochau, a nun at Engeltal, while in a visionary trance goes into the cloister garden and embraces all the trees, pressing them to her breast in the delusion of holding Jesus, her soul's bridegroom in her arms.

¹⁹Blank, p. 263.

especially harshly during this season, the visionary nuns also strove to receive outward signs of Christ's suffering on their own bodies, especially the stigmata. This striving was pursued with such rigor and produced such nervous tension that it could find relief only in convulsive screaming.²⁰ When the desired suffering was not forthcoming, the nuns frequently resorted to self-mutilation. For example, Guta Jüingin, a nun in the Dominican house of Weiler, attempted to devour her own hand in an effort to suffer the pain of Christ and the saints.²¹

As the 14th century progressed, the concentration of the Dominican women on ecstatic mysticism led to a falsification of the mystical vision through endless imitation and repetition. The spiritual elements of the vision disappeared and were replaced by purely physical sensations which produced experiences that increasingly emphasized the strange and the miraculous, to make them resemble the fabulous tales of the Legenda aurea rather than mystical visions.²² Such physical

²⁰Quint, p. 550. "Selbst die Mystik der bedeutendsten unter diesen Mystikerinnen, einer Margareta Ebner, Adelheid Langmann, Elsbeth Stigel u. a. bewegt sich im wesentlichen im engen Zirkel der angegebenen Wundergesichte, die etwa bei Margareta Ebner fast mit Regelmässigkeit in die Fastenzeit fallen und das Mitleiden der Passion zu einem so starken Grad ansteigen lassen, dass es sich nur in konvulsivischen Schreien lösen kann."

²¹Blank, p. 263. "Dar zu pant si sich als vil, daz si ir selber die hend wart abessen mit iren zenen und das sy die kaum mit aller kraft mocht geziehen von irem mund."

²²Quint, p. 550.

phenomena as the visionary breaking into copious weeping, floating above the surface of the earth, or becoming transparent, comprise the bulk of such "visions," occurring over and over in ever-hardening patterns, and recorded in increasingly schematic language.²³ Furthermore, instead of being written down "in response to a divine command and an inner necessity to proclaim a supernatural secret,"²⁴ they become incorporated into the mystic's vita as miraculous occurrences among other miracles. Instead of being regarded as a spiritual gift granted to only a few blessed souls, the vision is presented as a reward for the visionary's sanctity, which anyone imitating such saintliness can experience as well (Wentzlaff-Eggebert, Deutsche Mystik, p. 60). Accordingly, the Dominican women's chronicles from

²³Quint, p. 550. "Alle diese Vitensammlungen einer Elsbeth Stigel (Töss), Katharina von Gebweiler (Unterlinden in Colmar), Anna von Munzingen (Adelhausen) u. a. mit ihren Berichten von wunderbarer Gabe der Tränen, vom Schweben über der Erde, vom stigmatischen Mitfühlen der Wunden Christi, vom Durchsichtigwerden des Körpers usw. haben wieder mit Mystik an sich nichts zu tun und sind wohl teilweise angeregt durch jene 'Mystikerviten' der Thomas von Chantimpré, Jakob von Vitry, Petrus v. Dacien, durch die Wundergeschichten der Legenda aurea und des Cäsarius von Heisterbach. Infolgedessen herrscht in allen diesen Berichten eine gewisse Gleichförmigkeit um nicht zu sagen Schablone, nach der die Ekstase mehr traumhaft, mit krankhaften Zuständen verbunden verläuft, als dass sie zu mystischer Schau und Einigung führt."

²⁴Friedrich Wilhelm Wentzlaff-Eggebert, Deutsche Mystik Zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit, 3rd. ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960), p. 61; hereafter cited as Deutsche Mystik. "Die Schwesternviten entstehen aus der intensiven Beobachtung inner-seelischer Vorgänge, aus der Sucht nach Gottesbegegnung, Verzückung und Vision und den allgemein umgehenden Vorstellungen davon. Sie sollen Spiegel des vollkommenen Lebens sein, wie es Schwestern des eigenen Klosters geschenkt worden ist. Sie werden als erzieherische Erbauungsbücher geschrieben, nicht mehr unter göttlichem Auftrag und innerem Zwang zur Kündigung überirdischen Geheimnisses."

the 14th century are saints' lives, chronicles of education soliciting imitation; they are no longer accounts of the unio mystica.

Finally, in the second half of the 14th century these mystical ideas spread among the common people. One reason for this widening interest in and acceptance of mysticism was an increased contact between the populace and the mystical sermons preached in the monastic houses as more and more laymen became members of the audience. The Dominican nuns through their letters, vitae, legends, and poems also disseminated mystical concepts among lay audiences.²⁵ In the wake of such disasters as the Black Death, lay interest in mysticism manifested itself in two ways. The threat of sudden death without benefit of absolution drove many people to join such extremist groups as the flagellants who, with their public confessions, penances, and self-castigations, at least suggested a possibility of gaining salvation in the absence of clergy and sacrament.²⁶ Others, mainly women, became lay mystics.

²⁵K. Bihlmeyer, "Die Selbstbiographie in der deutschen Mystik des Mittelalters," Theologische Quartalschrift, 114 (1935), 520. "Auch Laienkreise, Verwandte der Nonnen, Beichtkinder der Dominikanermystiker und Zuhörer ihrer Predigten in den Klosterkirchen wurden in das gleiche Interesse hineingezogen und gaben sich dem Streben nach einem höheren geistlichen Leben hin. So wurde die Mystik, die bisher gewissermassen mehr aristokratisch geartet und auf enge Kreise beschränkt gewesen war, popularisiert."

"Jene Dominikanernonnen schrieben nicht nur die Predigten ihrer Ordensbrüder nach und überlieferten sie so der Nachwelt, sie wurden selbst zur Schriftstellerei angeregt, zeichneten ihre religiösen Erfahrungen schlicht und unkritisch auf und verarbeiteten sie weiter in geistlichen Memoiren, Briefen, Traktaten, Legenden und Gedichten. Dadurch übten sie wiederum unter Gleichgesinnten in Kloster und Welt eine wirksame Propaganda für die mystischen Ideen aus" (pp. 520-21).

²⁶Wentzlaff-Eggebert, Deutsche Mystik, p. 75. "Bevor es zur Beteiligung der unvorbereiteten Menge an den Geisslerzügen kam, blieb

IV. DOROTHEA VON MONTAU: BIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

One such woman was Dorothea von Montau, the patroness of Prussia and the Teutonic Knights. Like Margery, she was a burgess's wife who became a lay mystic. The seventh child of the Dutch peasant Wilhelm Swarze who had emigrated to Prussia in search of better economic opportunities, Dorothea was born in Montau where she was baptized, probably within the week of her birth, on the feast day of her patron saint, February 6, 1347.²⁷ Her ascetic life began when she was only seven years old after she had been accidentally scalded over most of her body by boiling water. Not only did she survive the accident, she

es auch bei der Wirkung des mystischen Gedankengutes in den Konventikeln, Orden und Klöstern, das durch die Predigt nach aussen drang. Äussere Wirren und Wunden der Zeit aber, wie der schwarze Tod, zwingen auch das Volk in die Frömmigkeitsbewegung hinein,--die die so lange abseits geblieben waren, und die nun die Fanatiker der Geisslerbewegung von 1349 werden."

On page 83 the author discusses the attraction of the lay populace to the flagellant movement and the similarities and parallels in mysticism and the flagellant movement: "So kann die Geisselung selbst die magische Wirkung auf die Masse ausüben, weil durch diesen Akt die sofortige Hilfe gegen die Bedrohung des Gottesgerichtes zugesagt wird. (inwieweit hier die echte Mystik verlassen wird, die niemals die Sicherheit der Sündenvergebung, sondern nur die Möglichkeit der Gottesbegegnung für den einzelnen versprach, wird der Masse der Gläubigen nicht deutlich.)"

²⁷Franz Hipler, "Christliche Lehre und Erziehung in Ermland und im preussischen Ordensstaate während des Mittelalters," Zeitschrift für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ermlands, 6 (1877), 110; hereafter cited as "Christliche Lehre." "Frühzeitig, spätestens acht Tage nach der Geburt, wurden die Kinder der christlichen Eltern getauft, und wir finden nirgendwo auch nur die geringste Andeutung darüber, dass diese durch die Friedensurkunde von 1249 festgelegte Frist nicht wäre innegehalten worden." Although Dorothea's exact birthdate is not known, this custom of baptizing infants within eight days of their birth suggests her birthday to fall somewhere between January 30th and February 6, 1347.

bore the pain silently and patiently after she heard a voice in her heart telling her, "I will make a new person out of you."²⁸ From that time on, Dorothea pursued a very active religious life, full of rigorous exercises and self-castigations. However, since she kept these activities carefully hidden from her family, apparently no one recognized her greater suitability for a religious career than that of a housewife. Consequently in 1363, when she was seventeen years old, she was married to the wealthy Danzig weaponsmith Adalbert, many years her senior.

Throughout her life Dorothea pursued the mystical union with God. Nevertheless, the fleshly union with her husband produced nine children. However, only the youngest child, Gertrud, survived the various plagues and contagious diseases that visited Danzig from time to time. After the death of all her other children Dorothea took up the life of a pilgrim. Like Margery, she visited many of the important shrines in Europe, but unlike Margery, she never could realize her dream of going to the Holy Land. In 1391, a year after her husband's death, Dorothea moved to Marienwerder where the most accomplished Prussian theologian of the age, the Dominican canon Johannes von Marienwerder, became her confessor. Through his influence Dorothea finally achieved her desire to be enclosed as an anchoress. From the day of her enclosure, May 2nd, 1393, until her death on June 25, 1394, she lived in a cell attached to the cathedral of Marienwerder under Johannes von Marienwerder's spiritual supervision and care.

²⁸Hilde Firtel, Dorothea von Montau. Eine deutsche Mystikerin (Freiburg: Kanisius Verlag, 1968), p. 9.

Even though Dorothea and Johannes Marienwerder knew each other only for the relatively short space of three years, there developed between them one of those relationships which has numerous well-known antecedents in the history of mysticism.²⁹ Since Dorothea and Johannes Marienwerder differed so greatly in education, personality, and religious experience, this relationship is itself something of a miracle. While Dorothea never had any formal education and was probably illiterate,³⁰ Johannes Marienwerder, before becoming the canon of Marienwerder cathedral, had taught as a professor of theology at the University of Prague.³¹ Whereas Dorothea was an emotional woman

²⁹Among the most famous of such relationships in German mysticism are that of Margareta Ebner and her confessor Heinrich von Nördlingen and that of Heinrich Seuse (Suso) and his spiritual daughter Elsbeth Stagel, who may have composed the first draft of Seuse's "autobiography."

³⁰Richard Stachnik, "Die Geistliche Lehre Dorotheas," Zeitschrift für Ostforschung, 3 (1954), 591; hereafter cited as "Geistliche Lehre." The evidence on whether or not Dorothea was illiterate is not conclusive.

³¹Franz Hipler, "Johannes Marienwerder, der Beichtvater der seligen Dorothea von Montau," Zeitschrift für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ermlands, 29 (1956), 14; hereafter cited as "Der Beichtvater." This article, revised by Hans Westpfahl, was first published in 1864. It gives an account of the growing difficulties the overwhelmingly German faculty experienced in Prague with the rise of Bohemian nationalism in the last third of the 14th century. As a result of these tensions, many of the professors left Prague, which led to the establishment of such universities as Heidelberg, Cologne, and Erfurt in Germany. Konrad Zöllner von Rotenstein, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights since 1382, planned to establish a university in Kulm. Apparently Johannes Marienwerder left Prague in 1386 to help organize the theological faculty of the proposed new university. Because of various problems, this university was never established, and it was as a result of this failure that Johannes Marienwerder became a canon of the Marienwerder cathedral chapter.

who expressed her religious enthusiasm in a highly unconventional manner, Johannes Marienwerder rejected religious rapture as rash fanaticism, believing man's salvation to lie in the system and spiritual remedies of the Church.³² In addition to condemning the budding "Pietist" movement in Bohemia,³³ Johannes Marienwerder also rejected as unreliable and untrue all apocryphal materials, legends, etc., not firmly rooted in the Bible or in religious exegeses of the Scriptures (Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 26). Apparently, however, the sober scholastic philosopher and jurist, who as a moderate Nominalist distinguished carefully between reaching knowledge of God through faith alone and reaching knowledge of God through reason, recognized in Dorothea a being whose faith produced a spiritual longing for God such as he himself could never hope to experience.³⁴ So this

³²A. Schleiff, "Die Bedeutung Johann Marienwerders für die Theologie und Frömmigkeit im Ordensstaat Preussen," Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte, 60 (1941), 55. "Johann Marienwerder ist bei aller Abwehr voreiligen Schwärmertums ein durchaus frommer Mann, dem es mit der Erkenntnis der eigenen Sünde und Hinfälligkeit und mit der Erlösung davon sehr ernst ist; aber er findet diese in dem System und den Heilmitteln der Kirche."

³³Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," pp. 15-26. On these pages Hipler discusses Johannes Marienwerder's Expositio symboli apostolorum which was composed around 1400, based on Johannes Marienwerder's experiences in Prague. Its main purpose was to keep all nations united in their faith, regardless of their linguistic and cultural differences. "Sein Hauptzweck . . . ist die Bewahrung aller Völker in der Einheit des Glaubens, bei der grössten Verschiedenheit in Sitten und Sprachen" (p. 18).

³⁴Schleiff, p. 60. "Johann Marienwerder, der in Prag die Willensfreiheit gelehrt hatte, lernt von der armseligen Klausnerin, was Sünde und innere Not und was eine grosse Gottessehnsucht ist."

unlikely candidate in time became Dorothea's most ardent supporter, and according to Philipp Funk, this union of Johannes Marienwerder's theological calm and wisdom and Dorothea's intensely emotional religious visions is among the most moving events in the history of Christian faith.³⁵

V. JOHANNES VON MARIENWERDER'S WORKS ON DOROTHEA VON MONTAU

The tangible result of their relationship is that Johannes Marienwerder, the avowed skeptic in respect to mystical visions, not only listened to Dorothea's revelations but eventually felt called upon to record them. These recordings, according to Dorothea's wishes, took place in secrecy and began probably in the year 1392. Franz Hipler, Johannes Marienwerder's biographer, describes the process as follows:

Since according to her wish, no one other than her spiritual superiors was to find out anything about her revelations before her death, Johannes, in order not to be observed by those standing about, was forced to make notes on a wax tablet hidden beneath his choir robes and to transfer them, often with great effort, to paper later that night. Afterwards he read to her what had been recorded, and it often happened that she was not pleased with either his expressions or her own, so that alterations were necessary.³⁶

³⁵Philipp Funk, "Zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit und Mystik im Ordenslande Preussen," Zeitschrift für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ermlands, 30 (1960), 16. "Derartige Begegnungen von theologischer Ruhe und Weisheit mit persönlich-genialem Affekt gehören zum Reizvollsten in der Geschichte der christlichen Frömmigkeit."

³⁶Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 43. "Gleichwohl sollte nach deren Wunsch vor ihrem Tode ausser ihren geistlichen Oberen niemand etwas von ihren Offenbarungen gewahr werden, und so war Johannes

During Johannes Marienwerder's occasional absences, Dorothea's other confessor, the prior of the cathedral chapter, Johann Rymann, took over the task of recording Dorothea's visions.

Immediately after Dorothea's death Johannes Marienwerder transformed his notes into formal Latin accounts of Dorothea's life and religious experiences in order to support the efforts toward her canonization which began within a year after her death.³⁷ In 1396 he completed his first major work, a Vita, consisting of eighty-eight chapters and a prologue which urged the papal officials in charge of the canonization proceedings

to add this morning star which had risen in far-away Prussia at the farthest hem of the unsewn garment of Christ to the episcopal heaven of saints, so that through its light the sad darkness of the schism . . . may be lifted and the day of mercy and the Catholic confession rise in the hearts of those separated from the Mother Church.³⁸

genötigt, um von den Umstehenden nicht gesehen zu werden, unter seinem Chorhemde auf einem Wachstäfelchen seine Notizen zu machen und diese dann abends oft mit grosser Mühe und Anstrengung zu Papier zu bringen. Er las ihr dann später das Geschriebene vor, wo sie dann mit ihrem Geder mit seinem Ausdruck öfters nicht zufrieden war, so dass neue Änderungen nötig wurden."

³⁷Max Toeppen, "Einleitung für Das Leben der Heiligen Dorothea von Johannes Marienwerder," Scriptores rerum Prussicarum (Leipzig: n. p., 1863), II, p. 180; hereafter cited as "Einleitung." "Schon ein Jahr nach dem Tode Dorotheens . . . beantragten die Bischöfe Heinrich III. von Ermeland, Johann von Pomesanien und Heinrich von Samland, die Domkapitel der vier preussischen Bistümer, die Aebte Nicolaus von Oliva und Johann von Pelplin, der Hochmeister Conrad von Jungingen, so wie im Besonderen die Pomesanischen Domherren Johannes Marienwerder und Johann Reymann bei Pabst Bonifacius IX. die Canonisation derselben." The original petitions are lost, but rough drafts are preserved in a folio which is now deposited with the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz in West Berlin.

³⁸Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 63. "Voraus geht dem ganzen ein warm und beredt geschriebener Prolog, der mit Zugrundelegung des

This Vita was followed by Johannes Marienwerder's most ambitious work on Dorothea, the so-called trilogy. The first work of the trilogy, the Vita venerabilis dominae Dorotheae, is divided into seven books with a total of two hundred and thirty-seven chapters. It is a description of Dorothea's life, sufferings, and virtues, presented within the somewhat artificial framework of the seven allegorical pictures of the Apocalypse.³⁹ The second part of the trilogy is the Apparitiones venerabilis dominae Dorotheae seu Liber de festis which compiles Dorothea's visions centered around the fifty most important feast days of the church calendar in one hundred and thirty chapters.⁴⁰

Textes 'Redimentes tempus, quoniam dies mali sunt' (Eph, 5, 16) den Papst, die Kardinäle, die römischen Theologen, Kanonisten, Advokaten und Prokuratoren aufs dringlichste auffordert, den im fernen Preussenlande, am äussersten Saume des ungenähten Gewandes Christi aufgegangenen Morgenstern in den kirchlichen Sternenhimmel der Heiligen aufzunehmen, damit durch sein Licht die traurige Finsternis des Schismas, dem fast der dritte Teil der Kirche anheimgefallen, aufgehoben werde und der Tag der Gnade und des katholischen Bekenntnisses in den Herzen der Getrennten aufgehe."

This Vita, after being copied various times, was edited in 1702 by Adrian von der Linde and printed in the convent of Oliva. This Vita magnae beatae Dorotheae Pruthenae, generally referred to as the Vita Lindana, was reprinted by the Bollandist Society in the Acta Sanctorum, XIII (1883), 499-560. The original vellum manuscript is lost.

³⁹Hans Westpfahl, ed., Einleitung, Vita Dorotheae Montoviensis magistri Johannis Marienwerder (Köln: Böhlau, 1964), p. 4. The various names by which scholars refer to this vita are quite confusing. The title given in the text of this chapter is the one I have encountered most frequently. This vita is generally called Vita Latina, although that too is a misnomer since Johannes Marienwerder wrote six Latin lives in all on Dorothea. Prior to Westpfahl's edition of this work, there existed only three manuscripts. The most important of those, the so-called Königsberger Handschrift, was written in part by Johannes Marienwerder himself. It was lost, however, during World War II. The two remaining ones are fifteenth-century copies.

⁴⁰Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 69. Hipler describes this work as somewhat repetitious in detail, which accounts for its being one of

The final work of the trilogy is the Septililium venerabilis dominae Dorotheae Montoviensis which consists of seven books, divided into one hundred and twenty-six chapters. From a strictly theological point of view, it is Johannes Marienwerder's most accomplished work on Dorothea because it is the most mature expression of his theological training and his most speculative inquiry into the nature of mysticism (Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 72). But the Septililium is important for yet another reason. Its final twenty-one chapters consist of Dorothea's ecstatic confessions in their original form and language. As far as can be determined, these confessions provide the only record of the vernacular text of the confession of faith, the seven sacraments, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer as they were recited by the laity in the territories of the Teutonic Knights during the fourteenth century.⁴¹

Johannes Marienwerder's least popular and least copied works. "Fast bei jedem der 50 Feste . . . merkt er regelmässig an, wie Dorothea sich darauf vorbereitete, wie lange sie an demselben in der Ekstase zu verweilen pflegte, wie oft ihr der Heilige Geist gesandt wurde, welche Grade der Liebe sie zum Empfange des hl. Sakramentes mitbrachte. Hierdurch kommt eine gewisse Monotonie in das Buch, die, zumal bei der Eigentümlichkeit des Inhalts, doch mehr ein eingehenderes Studium als eine blosse Lektüre erfordert. Daraus erklärt es sich auch, dass es unter allen Schriften Marienwerders verhältnismässig am wenigsten abgeschrieben und verbreitet wurde." This work survives in two manuscripts only.

⁴¹Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 69. Hipler edited the Septililium for the Bollandist Society in 1885. It was published in the Acta Sanctorum, II-IV (1885), but without the German chapters. Hipler published them separately in an article entitled "Christliche Lehre und Erziehung in Ermland und im preussischen Ordensstaate während des Mittelalters" (see note #27). There is one vellum manuscript in the Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, complete with the German chapters. Hope Emily Allen discovered what is now thought to be the oldest surviving manuscript of the Septililium, also with the German chapters. It was

In addition to these Latin works, Johannes Marienwerder also composed a vernacular biography for the local populace and the Knights of the Teutonic Order. This work rapidly spread Dorothea's fame throughout Prussia. It comprises a lengthy prologue and four books. Book I consists of thirty-three chapters, Book II of thirty-eight chapters, and Book III of forty-four chapters. These three books are free translations of the so-called Vita Lindana, whereas Book IV is made up of brief excerpts from the first three books of the Septililium. This book is divided into three parts, listing the thirty-seven degrees of divine love visited upon Dorothea, the gifts of the Holy Spirit to her, and her spiritual experiences upon receiving the sacrament of communion.

This vernacular Life exists now in only two copies. One, entitled Leben der seligen vrouwen Dorothea is a heavily mutilated vellum manuscript consisting of thirty-eight leaves written in an early fifteenth-century hand.⁴² It was formerly part of the royal library in Königsberg and now belongs to the Prussian archives deposited in Berlin. The second copy, Des leben der zeligen frawen Dorothee clewsenerynne in der thumkyrchen czu Marienwerdir des landes czu Prewszen is the single surviving copy of the first book to be printed

composed in 1403, and, according to Miss Allen, came from the Bridgettine convent in Elbing. For details on this so-called Corpus Christi Cambridge MS 509, see Hope Emily Allen, "Appendix V," The Book of Margery Kempe, p. 379.

⁴²Toeppen, "Einleitung," p. 187. After comparing the manuscript to the print, Toeppen concludes that about half of the manuscript is missing.

in Prussia in 1492. The printer was a goldsmith, Jacop Karweysze, of Marienburg.⁴³ This print was in the possession of the imperial public library in St. Petersburg.⁴⁴ In 1863 Max Toeppen edited Des Leben Der Zeligen Frawen Dorothee Clewsenerynne In Der Thumkyrchen Czu Marienwerdir Des Landes Czu Prewszen in the Scriptores rerum Prussicarum. The edition is based on the Königsberg manuscript with supplements of missing sections from the St. Petersburg print. Toeppen provided the text with marginal references to appropriate sections of the Bible, and important parallel passages from the trilogy appear in footnotes and appendices. Because of the carefully edited text and the extensive apparatus, this edition of Johannes Marienwerder's vernacular Life has served as the basis of all modern scholarship on Dorothea von Preussen, and it will be the primary source for this study as well.⁴⁵

If Margery Kempe was familiar with any of Johannes Marienwerder's accounts of Dorothea's life, it was most probably the

⁴³The print ends with the following conclusion: "gedruckt unde volendit in der stat Marienborck durch mich Jacop Karweysze goltsmyd, den dinstag noch Gregory alsz man czelete MCCCC unde CXII, lob sey gote." Toeppen points to the mistake in the date. Instead of MCCCC unde CXII, it should read MCCCC unde XCII (1492).

⁴⁴Scholars are curiously vague as to the present whereabouts of the print. The way they word their references to its having been in the possession of the Imperial library at St. Petersburg during the nineteenth century hints at its not being there any more. No one, however, discusses its present location.

⁴⁵The other primary sources I have consulted are the German chapters of the Septililium (see note #41), and the letter from Dorothea to her daughter in the convent of Kulm, which is reprinted by Richard Stachnik, "Die Geistliche Lehre Dorotheas," Zeitschrift für Ostforschung, 3 (1954), 589-96.

vernacular version. Johannes Marienwerder's Latin works were composed primarily for the papal legates in charge of the canonization proceedings, which lasted from 1395 to 1406.⁴⁶ Apart from these officials, the only wider audience was the religiously trained clergy.⁴⁷ It is, therefore, highly unlikely that Margery had any access to these Latin works. The vernacular Life, on the other hand, was written with a lay audience clearly in mind and was circulated widely among the Prussian laity. It gives the events in Dorothea's life in chronological order, beginning with her childhood and ending with her death and funeral. Descriptions of her visions and ecstasies are interspersed in the narrative. Except for the fourth book, which is clearly not an organic part of the whole, the Life is an attractive narrative for a lay audience because it tells an inspiring tale and at the same time gives an accurate insight into Dorothea's religious

⁴⁶Richard Stachnik, ed., Einleitung, Die Akten des Kanonisationsprozesses Dorotheas von Montau von 1394-1521 (Köln: Böhlau, 1978), p. xix. The material edited in this work consists for the most part of manuscript #1241, which is now in the possession of the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz in West Berlin. The manuscript is a notarized copy of one of the two original records Johannes Marienwerder made of Dorothea's first canonization inquiry, which lasted from 1395 through 1406. One of the two originals had been sent to Rome, but had been lost. When the proceedings were about to be taken up again in 1486, Pope Innocent VIII asked for a notarized copy of the remaining original record which had remained in Marienwerder. This copy furnishes the text for Stachnik's edition.

⁴⁷Both Toeppen and Hipler believe the audience of the trilogy to have been very limited, consisting almost entirely of officials of the Roman curia and the inhabitants of the monasteries in the neighborhood of Marienwerder.

Hans Westpfahl, in the introduction of the Vita Latina, stresses that this work was composed specifically for the educated clergy. Its prologue ends with a dedication to scholars and clerics.

concepts and spiritual experiences. As Toeppen points out, the most important virtue of this vernacular Life is that it is relatively free of Johannes Marienwerder's latinized diction and scholastic commentary, and therefore it more accurately reflects Dorothea's own vocabulary, speech patterns, and thought processes than do any of the Latin works.⁴⁸

VI. SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

Because medieval mysticism has a very long history and has produced an abundance of literature, one of the most difficult tasks for the scholar of mysticism is to trace the distinct formative influences which helped a mystic to shape and express his own experiences and religious concepts. Mystics not only draw on the Scriptures and the commentaries of the Church Fathers, but also on a variety of mystical tracts for guidance and inspiration for their own religious careers and formulation of their own mystical experiences. As a result, it is often impossible to establish the direct influence of one particular mystic upon another. Every so often, though, there appear in the lives and

⁴⁸Toeppen, "Einleitung," pp. 188-89. He also gives a brief list of details contained in the major Latin vitae, but carefully omitted from the German Life for fear of their being misunderstood by the lay audience. The most bizarre of these is the supposed enlargement of Dorothea's uterus in moments of ecstasy.

Hipler in "Der Beichtvater" makes similar observations. "Sonst waltet darin [the German Life] überall sichtlich das Streben nach möglichster Klarheit und Verständlichkeit vor; daher auch die Vorsicht bei der Beschreibung einzelner für den Laien leicht missverständlicher Erscheinungen der mystischen Plastik im Leben Dorotheas . . .; daher die Schilderung ihrer Kasteiungen in einer Weise, dass der Wahrheit Genüge geschieht und doch der gewöhnliche Leser nicht abgestossen wird; daher endlich die Weglassung gelehrter Expositionen und scholastischer Terminologie, wie sie in den lateinischen Schriften sich finden" (p. 80).

writings of some mystics parallels so strikingly similar as to invite speculation about possible influences. If historical evidence supports the possibility of direct influence of one mystic upon the other, an investigation can be fruitful and worthwhile. The vernacular accounts which describe the lives of Dorothea von Montau and Margery Kempe contain so many notable similarities that they can hardly be accidental. There is also sufficient historical evidence to allow for the possibility of Dorothea's life and religious career having exerted a formative influence upon Margery Kempe. Therefore, this dissertation will examine the historical evidence and the two vernacular biographies, Johannes Marienwerder's Des Leben and Margery's Book, to determine to what extent Margery's religious career was indebted to Dorothea's example and to what extent the characteristics of late medieval continental mysticism were transmitted to Margery through the life and experiences of Dorothea von Montau.

CHAPTER II

DOROTHEA VON MONTAU

I. LIFE AND RELIGIOUS CAREER

Johannes Marienwerder's vernacular prose work Des Leben der zelligen frawen Dorothea clewsenerynne in der thumkyrchin czu Marienwerdir des landes czu Prewszen describes the life history of a woman who is both admirable and pathetic. Uneducated and hedged in by the inflexible conventions of the middle class which have survived to this day in the slogan "Kinder, Kirche, Küche," Dorothea found her lifelong determination to fulfill her spiritual needs obstructed at every turn. Even though her parents were prosperous peasants, Dorothea as the seventh child could not command the sizeable dowry of a noble lady and use it to buy her way into the "freedom" of the convent which offered to the mystics of the Roman Catholic Church all the prerequisites for a full unfolding of visionary talents and provided the necessary leisure for meditation and ascetic exercises to nurture the spiritual life.⁴⁹ Even more importantly, as Des Leben suggests, Dorothea's family was

⁴⁹Ernst Benz, Die Vision-Erfahrungsformen und Bilderwelt (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1969), p. 52. "Die meisten Visionäre der römisch-katholischen Kirche sind Ordensleute oder Geistliche, denen bereits ihr geistlicher Stand alle Möglichkeiten einer Entfaltung ihres visionären Charismas bietet und die zumindest genügend freie Zeit für die Mediatation und die asketische Pflege ihres geistlichen Lebens zur Verfügung haben."

quite interested in advancing its economic fortunes through advantageous marriages and was not very tolerant of a daughter seeking both an unconventional and unprofitable mode of life. Adalbert was chosen as Dorothea's husband over a sizeable number of suitors because of his social position and wealth,⁵⁰ and Dorothea, though she perceived the marriage as a serious impediment to the life she envisioned for herself, nevertheless agreed to it as an "obedient servant of her superiors."⁵¹ Just as her family background prevented her from becoming a nun, it also prevented her from becoming one of the many religious vagrants who roamed the countryside in the wake of the Black Death. To prosperous peasants proud of their achievements in a newly settled land such a career would have been an intolerable embarrassment; so Dorothea, like a few other saints of the Roman Catholic Church, had no choice but to satisfy her mystical inclinations within the framework of marriage.

As Ernst Benz points out, a full history of saints' marriages has never been written.

In hagiographic literature the saint himself always occupies the center of the narrative. His personal history, his conversion, his mystical experiences, his miraculous deeds,

⁵⁰Des Leben, p. 219. "Wen sie waz nuchtirn, messig, demutig, mitsam, gutig, wolgemut, vredesam; zwy velden ding wante sy jo zcum besten, und doromme hatte sy vil vrier. Des wart sy von erim eldisten bruder vorlobit eyne erbarn witzegin hantwerksmanne, rich genug noch synen statin."

⁵¹Des Leben, p. 227. "Und als sy zcu irme emanne vobuden was, so was ir groz bekummernisse, wi sy begriffe di stucke der volkommenheit in zcumftigen zeiten." p. 219. "Di vorlobunge voryoworte sy als eine gehorsame dirne irir obirsten in gotlicher vorchte."

are the sole interest of hagiography. The persons connected to the saint through the ties of matrimony, the husband, the wife, the children, regularly fade into the background and disappear from the view of the hagiographer, just as they had disappeared from the view of the saint himself.⁵²

Johannes Marienwerder's Des Leben provides a notable exception to this rule. With considerable detail it not only describes Dorothea's spiritual progress, but also Dorothea's and Adalbert's disastrous attempts to establish a workable balance between her spiritual yearnings and her worldly duties as the wife in charge of the extensive household of an established, well-to-do artisan in a prosperous town. As Des Leben abundantly proves, the demands of the mystic's heavenly bridegroom on his bride and the demands of the fleshly husband on his wife were irreconcilable. For all concerned it was a life of struggle, frustration, and pain.

In contrast to her remarkable personality and life history, Dorothea's mysticism offers few surprises. Predictably, she admired and to a degree imitated saints who like herself had been wives and mothers, such as St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Birgitta of Sweden. But there is little to distinguish Dorothea's mystical experiences from those of the nuns in any of the Dominican convents. What differences do appear are generally a matter of degree, not of kind. Like the

⁵²Benz, pp. 52-53. "Niemand hat bisher die Geschichte der Ehe der Heiligen beschrieben. Immer steht der Heilige (oder die Heilige) selbst im Mittelpunkt der Darstellung; die Geschichte seiner Person, seiner Bekehrung, seiner charismatischen Betätigung, seiner Wundertaten ist der einzige Gegenstand der Hagiographie. Die mit ihm durch die Bande der Ehe verbundenen Personen, der Ehemann, die Ehefrau, und die Kinder treten regelmässig in den Schatten und verschwinden ebenso aus dem Gesichtskreis des Hagiographen wie aus dem Gesichtskreis der Heiligen selbst."

Dominican nuns, Dorothea was a follower of St. Bernard's Brautmystik, heavily accentuated by Passionsmystik. Many of the "visions" are actually divine monologues, presented in a tiresome, repetitious manner, and the unio mystica, the crowning experience of the mystical life, is merely a matter of partaking of the Eucharist. Des Leben provides no concrete evidence of a speculative mysticism and no mystical "system" emerges from its pages. Thus, all the criticism theologians and other experts have levelled against the feminine mysticism of the fourteenth century applies fully to Dorothea's experiences. Her mysticism is also steeped in hysteria, tainted by a pathologically charged eroticism, and, at least as it is described in Des Leben, often flat, schematic, and superficial.

Dorothea's career as a mystic began in her early childhood with a rigorous imitatio of the passion of Christ. When she was only seven years old, she started to perform Venien, religious exercises designed to let the practitioner experience Christ's sufferings on his own body.⁵³ These exercises had been made popular by the Franciscans whose religious observances stressed the imitatio of Christ's pain and poverty as a means of achieving a deeper love of God through first-hand experience of the sufferings Christ took upon himself to redeem mankind. When they were incorporated into the observance of the stations of the cross, they became widely practiced by devout laymen, surviving in many Catholic countries to this day.

⁵³Hans Westpfahl, "Die Geistesbildung der heiligen Dorothea von Montau," in Dorothea von Montau, Eine preussische Heilige des 14. Jahrhunderts, eds. Richard Stachnik & Anneliese Triller (Münster: Fromm, 1976), pp. 38-39; hereafter cited as "Geistesbildung."

Under her mother's supervision Dorothea started out with simple genuflexions. But soon she took up more rigorous exercises, which she practiced at night to keep them hidden from her family. Christ's agonized prayer at the Mount of Olives she imitated by kneeling with her arms raised to heaven, as depicted in many contemporary paintings. His stumbling under the cross on the way to Calvary she copied by letting herself fall on her face from a standing position with her arms clasped tightly behind her back. His crucifixion she imitated by standing with arms outstretched against a wall, supporting her weight by holding onto nails driven into the wall as far apart as her arms could reach. The piercing of Christ's side with the spear she approximated by beating her chest with her fists, and the bruising of his corpse during the deposition from the cross she accomplished on her own body by violently hurling herself onto her face.⁵⁴

As she became older, Dorothea's hunger to experience Christ's agonies on her own flesh led her to try more ingenious methods of self-mortification. She tortured herself by wearing the obligatory hair-shirt, but devised new ways to heighten the pain. After having flagellated herself with stiff broom twigs, stinging nettles, broken nut shells, etc., she donned the hairshirt and a rough woollen skirt, making sure to press the fibers of the skirt deeply into the bloody welts for "when the rough threads of the skirt pressed into the wounds and were stuck fast in them, it was more painful to her than the agonies she endured by wearing a hairshirt. She was also in the habit

⁵⁴Westpfahl, "Geistesbildung," pp. 38-39.

of soaking her fresh wounds for hours in meat or fish brine."⁵⁵ She systematically deprived herself of sleep. This, according to Johannes Marienwerder, caused a ringing in her head "as if a great flock of birds were whistling and raging inside."⁵⁶

But not even these and other painful disciplines too numerous to mention sufficiently approximated Christ's pain: "Dorothea . . . was not satisfied with the wounds she inflicted upon herself. Her love, which made her want to suffer with the crucified God, compelled her to reopen these wounds and thus add suffering to suffering."⁵⁷ The result of all this self-mutilation was, as Johannes Marienwerder proudly points out, that Dorothea's body was soon transformed into one big oozing wound, covered with scabs and scars, as close together "as if her body were a field ripped open by the plow."⁵⁸ Needless to say,

⁵⁵Des Leben, p. 211. "so sich di grobin hor des rockis druckten an di frischen wunden und vorhertin dorynne, daz war ir pynlicher, wen di smertze vom heryne cleyde. Ouch hatte sy eyne gewonheit, daz sy sich czu stundin mit irn frischen wunden legite in saltzwassir von fleische adir heringlake."

⁵⁶Des Leben, p. 212. "Das wachin erim houpte sulche lydunge schuf, das is ir dorynne lodemte, ob ir do bynnen eyne grosse menege gevogils garrete und wute."

⁵⁷Des Leben, p. 211. "Dorothee, der dynnen gots, wi ir nicht genugete an den wunden, di sy ir machete, sundir di libe, di sy hatte zcu metelidunge des gecrucigiten gotis, twang sy zcu vornunge irre wunden und lidunge liden zcu zcu legin."

⁵⁸Des Leben, p. 210. ". . . und machte mit den vorgeantent gezcoyen eyne wunde bi der andirn von den schuldirn bis da di ermil wantin, und von der huf ufwert, als is di kleyder bedackten, eyne wunde bi der andirn, und glichir wys tate sy daz vorne zcu an ire brust, das ir wunden so dichte bi ein andir worin, ab is eyne wunde wer, ir lip mit castyunge als eyn ackir mit eyne pfluge durchvarn."

the reader of Des Leben is hard pressed to reconcile this description with his praise of Dorothea as a blooming young maiden who attracted many suitors and who preserved much of her physical beauty until her death at the age of forty-seven.

The Franciscan imitatio of Christ's poverty Dorothea practiced with equal zeal. Again, she began to cultivate this virtue when she was a mere child. "Now holy poverty, which had taken a strong root in her heart, began to sprout like a green branch, as she was to demonstrate well in the future with her works."⁵⁹ Later, as the wife of a well-to-do artisan, Dorothea rejected the luxuries which Adalbert tried eagerly to provide as a fitting display of his wealth and prominence in the community.

Her desire to be poor grew to such an extent that she not only shuddered when she beheld her property and the adornments of her clothes or when she wore her veils and cloaks, . . . but she was disgusted and pained in her heart at the very thought of these things. When she had to attend church in a pleated cloak, she was so sore at heart and so anxious that she had to leave the church to remove the garment.⁶⁰

One of her favorite pastimes was to don ragged clothing and beg for alms in front of St. Mary's Church in Danzig. This habit did not

⁵⁹Des Leben, p. 207. "Wen das heilige armut begunde itzcunt us yr zcu spryzen als eyn gruner zwig, daz in ir herzce veste ghewurzeilt was, als sy in zcukunftigen tagin mit den werken wol bewysete."

⁶⁰Des Leben, p. 255. "Ir begerunge nomen czu und wuchsen zo groes arm czu sein, das ir rechte grawte nicht allein, wen sy sach ir eigenthum und czirung irer cleyder adder gebrauchte irer sloyer adder mentel, dy do czirlich woren, zunder och eyste ir, wen sy doran gedochte, und we tat an irem herczen, und wen sy mit gefalding mentil yn dy kirche ging, so was ir zo wee und bange, das sy wider doraus muste geen und den mantil aplegen."

endear her to the paupers who were forced to beg there for their livelihood and resented her receiving alms she did not need. Their anger, however, did not faze Dorothea:

She felt so good that she sat there for five whole hours until all the beggars had left without her realizing it, for she was drawn toward heaven to behold it while she was in the state of grace in which she was. The alms she had received there she loved so much that she could not bear to give them away. She kept them for her own use and gave to the poor other money and much more in their stead.⁶¹

Her imitatio of Christ's agonies on her own body produced such a deep pity for the son of God that Dorothea constantly bemoaned the indifference of the world toward his sacrifice with an abundance of tears. Even as a child she wept copiously whenever social activities interrupted her strenuous ascetic exercises: "If she had to attend banquets . . . she neither ate nor drank, but was so tortured in her heart that she often shed tears."⁶² As a young girl she spoiled many a festivity with her tears and lamentations: "If she was forced to dance even for a short time, . . . she would suddenly turn away from the joys of the world, retreat into a corner and there bemoan the vanity of the world and the fact that such annoying affairs hindered her in the contemplation of spiritual joys in heaven."⁶³

⁶¹Des Leben, p. 255. "Ir was so wol, das sy do gancze V stunden sas, bis alle betlir worn uffgestanden an ir mercken, wen sy was gezcogen himelsch czu betrachten in der woltat, dorinne sy was. Das almose, das sy do genommen hatte, das hatte sy so liplich, das sy is nicht mucht andern weggebin, zunder sy behilt is in iren nucze, und gap dovor armen leuten vil meh."

⁶²Des Leben, p. 208. "do sy noch gar jung was, wen man sy czu wirtschaften furte, so sas sie und as nicht, noch entrank, sundir sy wart von herczen gequelt, das sie ofte ir zcere vorgos vor leide."

⁶³Des Leben, p. 208. "so sy betwungen wart zcu tantzen gar eyne kortze zeit, so ir di lune mochte werden, zcu hant wante sy sich von

Ultimately, her weeping made her a public spectacle, especially in church. Christ often made her "cry so gently that the tears flowed without ceasing, as if one tear were chasing the other. Then again the sobbing and the sighing was so impetuous and so loud that she could not hide it although she would have liked to do so."⁶⁴ This spectacle, as she later confessed to Johannes Marienwerder, always reached its climax during the elevation of the host, the symbolic manifestation of Christ's self-sacrifice for the salvation of all mankind:

I wept so fiercely . . . that I did not notice the elevation of the host. As it was time for me to receive the Lord, he bade me cry heartily and to fall down on my face and pray about all the defects in Christendom. . . . While I thus prayed for myself and others, as I had been ordered, I was so full of tears and sadness that I did not know how to go about receiving my dear Lord.⁶⁵

Dorothea also perceived constant crying as a sure means of achieving the beatific vision. According to Christ's own words to her,

der werlde froyden in eynen winkel wo sy mochte, und beweynte do di ytelkeyt der werlde, und ouch das sie in sulchen vraten dingen von bescheylichkeit geistlichir gutir solde gehindert werden."

⁶⁴Des Leben, p. 346. "zcu eyner anderen czeyt so quam her unde machte sy also gar mildiglichen weinen, das dy czere flossin hen ane uffhaldin gleich ap ein czere den andirn jagete. In dem woren offte das gischin und irsufftczin also unstewer und lauth, das sy is nicht mochte vorbergen, wywol sy is gern vorborgen hette."

⁶⁵Des Leben, p. 347. "Ich weynte also hitcziglich sere in fleeen und in libekosen dem hern, das ich nicht merckte, wen man den hern irhub in der messe, dy man vor mir las. Do is nu noe was, das ich sulde entpffoen den hern, do his mich her herre ser weinen, niddirvallin uff mein antllitcze und en bitten umbe allen den gebrechin, der do ist in der cristenheyte. . . . Dyweyle ich bat, als ich geheisin warth, vor andir und och vor mich, das mich der herre beritte czu im, was ich also vol czeren und trawrigkeit, das ich nicht woste, wy ich mich sulde schicken, das ich entpffing meinen liben herren."

tears bring about the honest recognition and acceptance of all spiritual weaknesses:

If you in progressing from one virtue to another should win a greater light through which you can see so clearly and powerfully the overflowing great goodness of God . . . that you cannot keep from crying so that tears burst forth and pour out in gratitude to the Lord for the good things he has done for you . . . the spiritual squinting in you will cease; you will have progressed and climbed higher with the increase in perfection.⁶⁶

Tears also prevent the soul's being clouded by sin. As God himself revealed to Dorothea,

hot tears are necessary, not only to cleanse the soul, but also to preserve the soul's cleanness. For the cleansed soul easily becomes stained by the dust of small sins. . . . These sins are so small that the illuminated person can see them and yet is unable to describe them. . . . It is also necessary for a human being to cry vehemently once a day to rinse these sins from his soul.⁶⁷

Accordingly, Dorothea, who claimed to have been made transparent like a crystal many times to enable her to behold the state of her soul, cried day and night to wash away the sins which floated on the surface of her

⁶⁶Des Leben, p. 276. "Ist daz ir in deme vortgen und in dem wandirn von eynir tugunt in di andir gewynnet noch eyn grosir licht, mit dem ir die unmezsige grosse gute gots, di uch mitgeteilt ist, moget beschowen als lutterlich, grozlich und rechtvertiglich, das ir uch nicht mogit enthaldin von weynen, als das die zcere hervorschizen und gyzen in grosir danknemheit, in der ir gote danket des grozen gutis, das her uch getan hoth; wenne das geschyt, so ist uch vorgangen das geistliche schyln, und syt vortgegangen und hoher gestegin in dem zcunemen der volkommenheit."

⁶⁷Des Leben, p. 299. "Hyczige czere sein nocze und notdurfftig nicht alleyne czu der zelin reynunge, zundir och dorczu, das dy zele in reynikeyt behalden werde. Wen dy gereynigete sele wirt leichtlich befleckt von dem pulver der kleynen sunden. . . . Dy sundin sint so cleyne, das eyn durchlewchter mensche mag sy sehen unde kan sy doch nicht aussagen. . . . Ouch ist not, das eyn mensche teglich eins hicziglich weyne und wasche dy sunde von der zelen."

soul "like dust on a sunbeam."⁶⁸ God had warned her if such sins are not washed away by hot tears, the soul would be denied immediate entrance into eternal life.⁶⁹ He, however, who burns in the love of God so hotly as "to cry and lament fiercely, demanding to behold the glory of God continuously, will climb the mountain of the Lord and from there will begin to see the glory of God."⁷⁰

When Dorothea was espoused to Adalbert at the age of seventeen, she already considered herself the bride of the heavenly bridegroom. In order to become an acceptable bride to Christ, she also started to practice a systematic imitatio of the Virgin Mary, whom all Christian mystics acknowledge as the "archetype of all mystical experience . . . and at the same time as the benevolent and powerful mediator of all mystical grace."⁷¹ The virtues the early church fathers had associated with her--her humility, the total surrender of her own will to God's

⁶⁸Des Leben, p. 299. "als ich dir dicke habe gegeben czu seen deyn kleine sunde, dy do riste uff deyne zele also kleyne als das gestoppe in der sonnen durch der sunde wille."

⁶⁹Des Leben, p. 299. "Wen wo etliche solche cleyne sundin bleyben bis noch dem tode unapgewaschen von hiczigen czeren . . . so wörde dy zele noch dem tode gehindert, das sy nicht möchte czuhant ane mittel in das ewige lebin."

⁷⁰Des Leben, p. 276. ". . . sere czu jamern und czu vorlangen czu allen zeiten di ere gots czu beschouwen, wer so verre kumpt, der stiget uf den berg des hern und begynnet do di ere gotis czu beschouwen und zcu seen."

⁷¹Anton Pummerer, "Maria in der Mystik," Geist und Leben, 20 (1947), 54. "So steht sie vor uns als Urbild und Vorbild aller mystischen Begnadigung und zugleich ist sie die gütige und mächtige Helferin und Mittlerin jeder mystischen Gnade."

will, her inner peace, her union with God, and her strength in suffering--became the virtues all mystics emulated.⁷² Although various mystics in their imitation of the Virgin stressed observance of some of her characteristics over others, they all considered the emulation of Mary's qualities as the key to the visio beatifica and the union of the soul with God.

Dorothea's imitation of the Virgin Mary reflects the thoughts of the greatest medieval mystics. Like the mysticism of St. Bernard, Dorothea's is best described as Brautmystik, which focuses on emulating the Virgin in her aspect as the perfect bride of Christ so that the mystic, like Mary, may experience the marriage of his soul to the Holy Spirit and thus achieve the unio mystica. It is based on the "Song of Songs," which St. Bernard and his spiritual descendants interpreted as the wedding of Mary, the perfect bride, to the Holy Ghost, the heavenly bridegroom. St. Bernard was one of the most influential mystics of the Middle Ages, and his mystical concepts were disseminated throughout Europe. In the literature of German medieval mysticism, his concepts were most cogently expounded in the "St. Trudperter Hohelied." In this famous twelfth-century vernacular poem:

the love of Solomon for Sulamith is not only interpreted as Christ's relation to the Church, but especially as the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Virgin Mary and God's relationship to the human soul. The souls who love God and strive toward him are his brides. The model for all brides of the Savior is the bride and bridegroom relationship of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.⁷³

⁷²Pummerer, p. 68.

⁷³Pummerer, p. 56. "Die Liebe Salomons zu Sulamith wird nicht bloss auf Christus und die Kirche bezogen, sondern vor allem auf die

As is the case with all spiritual descendants of St. Bernard, Dorothea describes her religious experiences in highly erotic terms. Christ, for example, behaves like an amorous bridegroom in pursuit of his beloved. At the dinner table he is the perfect gentleman: He shows himself "very courteous, much like a bridegroom to his bride. He spoke to her with true, pure love, showed her what to eat, served her, carved for her, whispered sweetly to her and prepared a great banquet for her soul."⁷⁴ Just as the bride longs for the caresses of her bridegroom, the bridegroom craves the affection of his bride:

Running toward each other, they met, the Lord and the soul, hurrying toward one another out of their great desire for one another. The Lord explained this with a parable and said: "I desire you and you desire me. Therefore, I run to you hastily as one who moves swiftly on a smooth road, and I do not stop until I embrace your soul and she embraces me."⁷⁵

Finally, like an ardent lover, Jesus promises his eager bride to sweeten and shorten the time until their wedding day: "I will console

Beziehung des Heiligen Geistes zur Jungfrau Maria und auf Gottes Verhältnis zur menschlichen Seele gedeutet. Die Seelen die Gott lieben und zu ihm hinstreben, sind seine Bräute. Das Vorbild für alle Bräute des Heilandes ist das Brautverhältnis zwischen dem Heiligen Geist und Maria."

⁷⁴Des Leben, p. 296. "so bewiste her sich gar vruntlich obir tische, rechte als eyn brutegam syner liben brut; von rechter lutter libe saite her ir und bewiste ir, was sy solde essen, und legite ir vor, und sneit ir vor, rechte fruntlich, und runete suzlich mit ir, und machte eyne grose wirtschafft in ire sele."

⁷⁵Des Leben, p. 345. "In dem loufe begeynten sy enandir, der herre und dy sele, und eilten sere eins czum andiren von grosir begerunge, dy sy czu enander hattin. Das bedeüte der herre in einem gleychnis, und sprach: Ich bin dein begerende und du mein. Ich loufe czu dir also endelich als eyner, der do rysch fure uff eyner glatin ban, und höre nicht uff, bis das ich umbefoe deine zele und sy mich."

you here on earth with a variety of comforts until I bring you into my kingdom and my house. Let us melt into one ball so that we can be united with one another and can be alone."⁷⁶

The soul's response to the wooing of her lover Jesus Christ is expressed in equally erotic language and imagery. Dorothea uses such terms as "love," "craving," and "desire," over and over again to describe her reaction to Christ's love for her. Johannes Marienwerder in Book IV of Des Leben repeatedly describes Dorothea's burning love for Christ and the unio mystica in terms of carnal lovemaking. "While being inflamed with burning love, it was granted her through grace that she saw Jesus her bridegroom either in contemplation or in ecstasy and felt how tender his embrace of her soul was, how sweet his kiss, how pleasurable his whispering, how deep his union with her soul."⁷⁷ Like a woman tasting all the delights of love, Dorothea wishes this intimacy to continue without interruption. The following passage is even faintly reminiscent of an alba, the lament of courtly lovers bemoaning the coming of day which brings an end to their bliss:

Generally, every night after having exchanged her old heart for a new one, the Lord spoke sweetly and pleasantly to her with a voice which she heard within the inner ear of her soul

⁷⁶Des Leben, p. 313. "Ich wil dich hy uff dem ertreych tröstin mit mancherley trost, also lange bis ich dich bringe in mein reich und meyn haws. Wyr wellin uns miteinandir smeltczin in eynen klos, das wir werden mitenandir voreynigeth unde seyn alleyne."

⁷⁷Des Leben, p. 237. "in der flammunge der bornden libe wart ir vorlegen von gnoden, daz sy undirwilen in der schoylikeit und undirwilen in der zcockunge sach Jhesum, irn brutegam, und fulte, das syn ummevaen mit irre sele was senfte, und syn kus gar suze und sein rawmen lustig, und di voreynunge mit der selen was tyf."

with such great joy and rapture that the long nights seemed very short to her, and she often dreaded to see the dawn of the new day because she feared to be thwarted in her sweet dalliance with God.⁷⁸

As Johannes Marienwerder reports, Dorothea's desire for God finally became so intense that she died not of any physical ailment, but of the "heartbreaking love," which "gained such powerfully burning heat that it consumed the natural moistness of the body. It racks and stretches the heart and its strength until it breaks the heart and destroys its strength."⁷⁹

In contrast to these descriptions of passion and desire, Dorothea's vision of her soul's wedding to the heavenly bridegroom is presented with remarkable restraint. The events are described in a graceful blend of biblical metaphor and medieval church ceremony. The soul of Dorothea, "the chosen bride,"

was like the daughter of a great and powerful king, daintily dressed and richly ornamented. Like a bride richly adorned with gold, silver, and precious gems, she sat in a comfortable, beautifully appointed hall with her maids of honor. She waited, watching eagerly for her noble, honorable, well-born bridegroom and his friends to come through the door.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Des Leben, p. 237. "Gemeynlich alle nacht noch der uzruckunge irs hertz in rette der herre gar suzsiclich und fruntlich mit ir mit eyne stymme, dy sy innewendig horte mit den oren der sele mit so grosir lust und freude, das ir lange nacht gar kortz worin, und dorumme was ir dicke gar leide, wen der tag anbrach, wenne sy vorchte, das sy gehindert wurde an dem liplichin gekose mit gote."

⁷⁹Des Leben, p. 337. "Sy hot gewonnen also crefftige börnende hycze, domitte sy vorczerte dy natürliche geworzelte feuchtikeyt des leybes. Sy recket unde strecket das hertcze und seine creffte also lange, bis sy das hercze czubricht und seine creffte vorterbet."

⁸⁰Des Leben, p. 312. "ir sele was gleich als eines mechtigen grosin koniges tochtir gar czirlich gecleyt und reichlich wol czugemachit, gleychsam eyne braut gar erberlich gecziret mit golde,

Finally the bridegroom arrives with a large retinue of retainers. They all wear scarlet robes, "and as they came to the door, leading the richly dressed bridegroom . . . in their midst . . ., they all took off their birettas and respectfully bowed their heads to the bride. And when the bridegroom stood in the door, his face shone as clearly and as brightly as the sun."⁸¹ After they have enjoyed a sumptuous feast in the palace of the bridegroom in the presence of all the saints of heaven, the bridegroom finally redeems the pledge he gave his bride so many times before their wedding day: "I want to lead the bride I take into the winecellar of my sweet love, which is my delightful paradise and my secret chamber. There I will reveal to her those secrets of my heart I do not want to reveal to anyone else."⁸²

Dorothea's Brautmystik is tempered with the mystical speculations of the three greatest German mystics, Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Heinrich Seuse (Suso), whose imitatio of the Virgin focuses

silber und edelm gesteyne sese in eynem wonsamen wolgeczyrten sale mit iren junckfrawin, dy do beitte und sege gar fleislich, wen ir edelir, hochwirdigir und wolgeborner brewtegame worde komen durch dy thöre ires sales mit seinen frundin."

⁸¹Des Leben, p. 313. "Unde do sy nu quomen czu der thöre mit deme wolgeczyrthen brewtegame, den sy czwyschen en furtin gar czuchtiglichen unde löbelichen czu der vortrewunge, do totin sy alle ire kogeln abe kegin der brawth unde neygetin ire höupte kegin yr gar erbarlichin. Do nu der brewtegame was in der thöre, do scheyn seyn antlytze clare unde lawter als dy klare sonne."

⁸²Des Leben, p. 313. "Ich wil dy braut, dy ich neme mir czu eyner braut, furen in eynen weinkellir meyner sussen libe, das ist in meyn wollustiges paradise und in meynen heymlichen gadem; do wil ich mit ir redin dy heymlichkeyt meynes herczin, dy ich andirn nicht wil offinbarn."

on her as the mother of God incarnate.⁸³ According to Meister Eckhart, Mary gave spiritual birth to Christ in her soul before giving birth to him physically, and he stresses that without having done so, she would not have been chosen to become the mother of God.⁸⁴ No one else, of course, can give physical birth to Christ as Mary had done; however, every faithful Christian can emulate Mary by giving spiritual birth to Christ in his own soul. As a matter of fact, it is ultimately of greater value to God "that Christ be born spiritually by every virgin and pure soul than that he was born physically by the Virgin Mary," because through such a process his birth can never be reduced to a mere historical event, but is transformed into an everlasting present event.⁸⁵ In his speculations concerning the proper imitatio of Mary, Eckhart insists on her being seen as a symbol of Christian perfection in whom man can discern the conditions which make the spiritual birth of Christ possible in his own soul. As Tauler,

⁸³In 1384 Dorothea and Adalbert made their first pilgrimage to Einsiedeln in Switzerland. From Aachen they travelled south through Cologne, Strasburg, Constance, and Basel where these three mystics had lived and preached and where their followers were especially numerous. As my discussion on pp. 114-115 points out, Dorothea's journeys through the Rhineland acquainted her with the thoughts and expressions of these three important Dominican mystics.

⁸⁴Peter Meinhold, "Die Marienverehrung in der deutschen Mystik," Saeculum, 27 (1976), 186-87.

⁸⁵Meinhold, p. 187. "Er [Meister Eckhart] entnimmt diesem Vorgang den Vorrang der geistlichen Geburt vor der leiblichen und kann sich sogar zu der Ausserung steigern, dass es für Gott wertvoller sei, dass Christus von einer jeden Jungfrau und guten Seele geistlich geboren werde, als dass er in Maria leiblich geboren wurde."

p. 189. "So gehört die Christgeburt nicht der Vergangenheit an, sondern ist sie immerwährende Gegenwart."

Meister Eckhart's disciple, summarizes this concept, Mary was much more blessed by having born God spiritually in her soul than by having brought him into the world physically, and he who wants to experience this spiritual birth of God in himself must observe Mary's qualities. He must be as Mary was, physically and spiritually a mother, isolated from the affairs of the world.⁸⁶ Suso, finally, in contrast to both Meister Eckhart and Tauler, rejects the concept of Mary as a symbol of Christian perfection in favor of emphasizing her human aspects as a real mother of a real child, experiencing all the joys and pains of actual motherhood. This emphasis encourages especially the imitatio of Mary as the mater dolorosa, helplessly watching her son's agonies and death.⁸⁷

Eckhart's and Tauler's ideas of the proper emulation of the Virgin Mary are echoed in all the phases of Dorothea's life described in Des Leben. The spiritual birth of Christ in Mary's soul is alluded to in the religious education of Dorothea's nine children. "And the saintly woman exerted herself diligently to give spiritual birth to the children she had physically born into the world so they would become her spiritual children as well as being her fleshly children."⁸⁸

⁸⁶Meinhold, p. 191. "Tauler kann sogar bemerken, dass Maria viel seliger davon war, dass Gott geistlich in ihrer Seele geboren wurde, als davon, dass sie ihn leiblich zur Welt gebracht habe. Wer nun, so folgert Tauler, diese geistliche Gottesgeburt in sich erfahren will, der muss auf die Eigenschaften achten, die Maria an sich hatte. Er muss sein wie Maria war; sie war leiblich und geistlich eine Mutter und . . . eingeschlossen, von allem abgeschieden."

⁸⁷Meinhold, p. 195.

⁸⁸Des Leben, p. 220. "Sundir daz gebenedyte wibisnam arbeite dornoch mit flise, daz sy di selbin kinder geistlich gebere, di sy vor

After she had become a recluse, Christ came to her in the Eucharist "in a spiritual birth in which he gave birth to himself in her soul."⁸⁹ A most interesting variation of this concept of the imitatio appears in the descriptions of Dorothea's death, where her dying out of this world is conceived as the birth of the soul into eternal life. As Christ himself tells her in a vision, "your soul, my bride, shall overflow from my great mercies until the day of its birth when you will bear it into eternal life."⁹⁰ Dorothea will know the hour of her death because she will suffer the pains of a woman in travail: "When you will have such heavy, bitter pains as a woman who is about to give birth, the hour will be close by when you will enjoy good health in eternity."⁹¹ In accordance with Christ's predictions, Johannes Marienwerder reports, Dorothea suffered severely on the day of her death:

The Lord created a deep inexpressible suffering in her. She was under severe pressure and suffered heavier and much more bitter travail and labor pains than she had endured when her children were born. And that was not surprising because she was supposed to give birth to her soul into eternal life with more severe pains than when she had borne her children into

lyplich der werlde gebert hatte, of daz sy weren ir naturlichin und ouch ire geistlichin kinder."

⁸⁹Des Leben, p. 345. ". . . quam her ir mit eyner geystlichen gebort, mit der her sich gebar in irer selin."

⁹⁰Des Leben, p. 323. "Deine zele, meine braut, sal öbirflötig sein in meinen grosin gnadin bis an den tag irer geburt, an dem du sy wirst gebern czum ewigin lebin."

⁹¹Des Leben, p. 323. "Wen du nu also swerlich bittir smertczin wirst habin als eyn weyp, das do itczunth gebeern sal, so wirt dy stunde no seyn, in der dir wirt wol seyn in dem ewygin lebin."

this transitory life. This the Lord had told her many times.⁹²

Dorothea's imitation of Mary as the mater dolorosa is treated only briefly in Des Leben, but her efforts to achieve Mary's total seclusion from worldly affairs form a prominent part of the work. Like many of her religious exercises, the attempt to kill off all needs of the flesh began in Dorothea's childhood and quickly degenerated into the bizarre. For example, she made a point of eating only what others had rejected:

And when she sat at table with her husband and the others ate fine food, she remained hungry; vegetables and gruel left over from the previous day or before or very tiny fish disdained even by the servants were her nourishment. . . . Only seldom did she partake of meat . . . [and] the strain of pilgrimages and pregnancies reduced her fasts and other deprivations of the body little or not at all.⁹³

She avoided festivities whenever possible, by self-mutilation, if necessary.

When she was married and bound to the wishes of her husband, she would prick her feet with needles whenever she heard about upcoming festivities to which she feared to be invited. This caused her feet to fester. Thus she had visible proof

⁹²Des Leben, p. 326. "Der herre hatte in ir grose unsprechliche bitter wirckunge. Sy war in eynem sweren drocke, und leit grössir bittir smertczen und wetage, wen sy ye geliden hatte in geberunge irer kinder, und das was och nicht wunder, wen sy sulde nu gebern ire sele czum ewigen leben mit grösern bittiren smertczin, wen sy ir kinder gebert hette czu diszem vorgenglichen leben, als is der herre dicke czuvor gesagt hatte."

⁹³Des Leben, p. 206. "So sie ouch zcu irs emannis tissche saz, und andir mitezsende lostbar spise asen, so bleib sie hungirsmchtig; gemusir und grutze, vom andirn odir dritten tage behalten, adir gar kleyne visschelyn von irme gesynde vorworfen, was ere spise. . . . Gar seldom az sie fleisch . . . die arbeit des wegis in pilgerims wyse zcu wandirn adir kindelbette geringete wenig adir nichtisnicht ire vaste und ire abezcyunge des libes. . . ."

of being unable to attend and a good excuse for both husband and the hosts who then believed her to suffer from frostbite or other disorders.⁹⁴

She was constantly busy with "appropriate" preparations for the many religious holidays and "enjoyed" them in a rather peculiar fashion.

When the feasts of Christ, of Our Lady, the martyrs, or other saints approached, she either suffered from new wounds or her old ones reappeared . . . and as in the hearts of other devout people joy increases in anticipation of the holy days of the Church, so in the elected friend of God Dorothea the suffering of reopened wounds and other pains increased before these feast days. . . . Much like precursory messengers they announced with severe stabs the impending delights of spiritual feasts.⁹⁵

The ultimate expression of Dorothea's desire to achieve Mary's withdrawal from the world is of course her enclosure as an anchoress. As long as she was married, she could never completely follow God's command to seek the contemplative life: "You must not exert yourself so much by hurrying [from one church to another] and you are not to cry out so much in prayer. You are to listen quietly and peacefully

⁹⁴Des Leben, p. 208. "Do sy zcur e quam, und gebunden was zcu den geboten irs ewirtis, so sie dirfur zcukumftige wirtschafte der hochzciten, und sich des besorgete, sie worde dozcu geladen, so zcustach und zcuswelte sie ire vuze mit eyner nolden als mercklichin, das sy mit offen zzeichin ir unmacht bewisen mochte, das sy dorzcu nicht enqueme und redeliche entschuldunge hette kegin erim emanne und ouch kegin den hochzeitluten, die wenten, is were von vroste odir andirn sachen zcukomen."

⁹⁵Des Leben, pp. 215-16. "So sich nekenten die hochzciten Cristi und unsir vrouwen tage, der merterer hochzciten und vil andir heiligen, so hatte sie entwer nuwe wunden, odir di alden wunden vornuetin sich . . . und glichir wyse als in andir ynniger menschin hercze sich di vreude merit kegin der kirchen hochzciten, als merete sich di lydunge an der usdirweltin vrundynne gotis Dorothee von vornunge der wunden und irre wetat kegin den hohen viertagen . . . als dy vorlofinden boten, die mit stymenden schussen botschaftin die zcukumftigen vreuden der geistlichen hochzciten."

to my voice and taste the healing sweet fruit of the contemplative life."⁹⁶ But after Adalbert's death nothing could restrain her. "Now that she had become a widow she practiced righteousness with extreme diligence and looked for a place where she could serve the Lord perfectly unencumbered by her friends and the world."⁹⁷ More than a year passed from the time she first approached Johannes Marienwerder about being enclosed in the cathedral church until her wish became a reality, because of lengthy investigations into her character and orthodoxy. But on May 2nd, 1393, Dorothea was walled in. Johannes Marienwerder often alludes to Dorothea's complete success in emulating Mary's state of spiritual perfection, as for example in this statement where Christ commands Dorothea to keep silent about some of her religious practices:

You must not reveal and leave behind on earth your most important exercises, castigations, and disciplines with which you have won me, but you are to take them with you to eternal life. There are my beloved saints who know better how to value them than those on earth. Generally they [the people on earth] believe one can attain eternal life for very little and do not take it to heart that my elected mother did not receive it for nothing, but attained it through trouble and pain.⁹⁸

⁹⁶Des Leben, p. 235. "Du salt dich nicht vil muen mit loffen und ouch nicht vil ruffen in dem gebete, sundir in dem stilnis und in der rue horche miner stymme zcu, und kuste di heilsame suze frucht des schoylichin lebins."

⁹⁷Des Leben, p. 269. "Do sy nu was wordin witwe, sy ubte sich gröslich in der gerechtikeit und suchte eine stat, in der sy dem hern volkomlich mocht dinen ane hindirnis irer frunde und der werlt."

⁹⁸Des Leben, p. 274. "Du salt nicht deyne allirgröstin ubunge, casteyungen, und disciplinen, mit den du mich gewonnen host, aussagin und uff dem ertreich lossin, zundir du salt sy mit dir nemen in das ewige lebin, wen do seyn meyne liben heiligen, dy das konnen bas

But whereas for devout men the imitation of the Virgin Mary remained a spiritual exercise, women mystics frequently lost sight of the philosophical dimensions of this quest by translating spiritual concepts into physical sensations and experiences. This is what happened to Dorothea, as it had happened to so many of the Dominican nuns. Like the nuns at Christmas time, Dorothea often imitated Mary by providing motherly care and comfort to the infant Christ after his mother herself had given her proper instructions:

We [the Virgin and the saints] have taken you into our midst and sit here with you so you can observe me and my labors and by so doing learn to do such things for my child as you see me do. As you see me tending and protecting him, so you shall tend and protect him also. You see very well that I do not talk much with others or have much to do with them, but that all my desire is to enjoy my child.⁹⁹

When Mary visits her and lets her hold the infant in her arms as a sign of heavenly grace, Dorothea caresses the infant, cooing over and over: "Oh, dear rose, laugh! laugh, dear tender rose."¹⁰⁰ The visio beatifica in this type of imitatio is reduced to the level of a well-deserved reward for Dorothea's skill as a nursemaid: "Then Mary, the mother of

wegen, wen dy, dy uff dem ertreych sint. Gemeinlich wenen sy, das man das ewige lebin geringlich möge irwerbin, und nemen nicht czu hertczin, das meyne ausirkorne libe muttir hat das nicht umbsust gehat, zundir mit muhe und arbeyt ist sy dorczu komen."

⁹⁹Des Leben, p. 293. "Wir haben dich hiryn doromme czu uns genomen, und sitze bi dir, dastu mich an seest und mine werk, und lernest sotane ding irbiten myme kinde, als du sehst von mir, wi ich tu; und als du seest, wi ich syn worneme und iz beware, also soldistu ouch tun. Du seest wol, daz ich icht vil mit ymand rede noch habe zcu tun, sundir dozcu ist alle mine begerunge, das ich mit myme kinde moge habe myne froyde."

¹⁰⁰Des Leben, p. 235. "O libe rose lache, lache libe zcarte rose."

mercy, appeared to her, bent over her with maternal benevolence and said to her: 'You helped me bathe my child; now I will prepare him and bring him to you at once.'¹⁰¹

In her misunderstanding of the common mystical metaphor of spiritual pregnancy Dorothea's substitution of physical experience for an abstract concept reaches its climax. In contrast to the vast majority of women mystics, Dorothea, like St. Birgitta of Sweden, was a wife and the mother of many children. Apparently, her personal experience with pregnancy and childbirth caused her to identify the figurative description of spiritual fulfillment with the physical phenomenon so familiar to her. Birgitta had claimed to have experienced Christ's stirring in her womb as well as in her heart on her pilgrimage to the Holy Land, long after her childbearing years had passed.¹⁰² Likewise, Dorothea, after having given spiritual birth to Jesus in her soul, asserts that she carried him in her womb: "Sometimes he enlarged her womb; then she felt him as a lovely child moving back and forth in her womb, jumping for joy and behaving as if he were being caressed and given a great delight."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Des Leben, p. 348. "Do irschein ir Maria, dy muttir der barmhertzikeit, unde neygete sich czu yr mit müttirlichir gütte, und sprach: Du host mir geholffin mein kint baden. Nu wil ich is bereytin und czu dir schire brengin."

¹⁰²Birgitta Eimer, Gotland unter dem Deutschen Orden (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1966), p. 174.

¹⁰³Des Leben, p. 345. "Czu stundin gröste her ir iren leip; in dem fulte sy ein liplich kyndelein, das sich wegete hin und her, und sprang von grosin froydin, und hatte sich alzo, gleich ap man im grose froyde und wirtschaft tete."

This confusion of metaphor with reality not only goes far beyond the most daring expressions of mystical pregnancy, it also comes dangerously close to blasphemy. By blurring the distinctions between herself and the Virgin Mary, Dorothea practically usurped Mary's unique position as the spiritual and physical mother of God. It is not too uncommon for God to urge his saints to relax their most strident exhibitions of sanctity and devotion, but as Johannes Marienwerder records in the Septililium, God severely reprimanded Dorothea for her presumption and all-too-apparent need to outdo and surpass all the saints of heaven in their holiness. Especially in respect to her rapturous claims concerning her spiritual pregnancy, he warned her of immoderate enthusiasm:

Now you must not in addition express many things, the like of which were not done by my saints, nor must you proclaim in addition new holiness which Holy Scripture itself does not expressly contain. And if St. Birgitta had not pronounced that in her heart and uterus a living child appeared and moved from this side to that, you even now could not reveal a similar thing about yourself. But yet you now have expressed more of this than she. I have enlarged your heart and uterus even more than I enlarged hers, and I have pressed you and weighed you down more heavily than I pressed and weighed down that woman."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Max Toeppen, ed., "Aus den anderen Schriften Johann Marienwerders," Scriptores rerum Prussicarum (Leipzig: n.p., 1863), II, p. 365; hereafter cited as "Beilage." "Tu adhuc non debes exprimere multa, quorum similia a sanctis meis non sunt acta, nec adhuc novam sanctitatem edicere, quam sacra scriptura non continet expresse, et si sancta Brigitta non expressisset in suo corde et utero fetum vivum apparuisse et se hinc inde movisse, tu adhuc non debuisses hoc de te consimile manifestasse. Attamen tu jam plus de hoc quam ipsa expressisti. Ego eciam plus cor tuum et uterum quam ejus magnificavi, teque plus quam illam expressi et amplius gravavi."

In her last years, Dorothea's imitation of the Virgin extended even to Mary's legendary qualities as intercessor with God on behalf of all mankind. Like the Mary of countless legends, she remained accessible to all those in need of comfort even after becoming an anchoress because she was certain God himself wished her to do so: "You must not be idle, but perform many good deeds. There are many on earth who are in great need and poor, who very much require someone to do good things for them."¹⁰⁵ According to God's command, she was to pray for all those who had ever done a good deed for her sake or who sought to find God through her. She was to pray especially for the sick and the dying and all those afflicted who came to her cell asking for help. For these labors she was to ask nothing and take nothing since God would provide for all her needs: "I am rich enough and will send you enough of everything you are to have."¹⁰⁶ All these commands Dorothea followed with great dedication, as confirmed by the testimony of the many witnesses who testified on her behalf at the canonization inquiry of 1404-1405. But these labors caused her great anguish. As she once told Johannes Marienwerder, "the sins of the people cause me such worry that I truly don't know what to say, and I worry especially about the people of Marienwerder, for it seems to me I am

¹⁰⁵Des Leben, p. 298. "Du salt nicht ledig gen, sundir tu vil gutis! Ir ist gar vil uf ertrich, die gar durftig syn und arm, di do wol durfen, das man vil gutis tu vor sy."

¹⁰⁶Des Leben, p. 291. "Ich bin reych genug, und wil dir genug schickin allis des, das du salt haben."

supposed to be a guardian to this town."¹⁰⁷ But Dorothea did have God's assurance that "whoever does something for you on my behalf or searches for me in you will not have done so in vain," and he promised her to "further and honor them greatly."¹⁰⁸

Dorothea also considered herself the patroness of the East Prussian clergy. Her first concerns were of course her confessor, the canon Johannes Marienwerder, and the prior of the cathedral chapter Johannes Rymann, both of whom she considered her spiritual sons. God revealed to her that their acquaintance with her and their task of recording her visions would be of great benefit to them both:

When your two confessors . . . start revising what they have written about you, they will come to love heaven and will feel a great longing for the eternal life whence all the things they have written down have come; at that time I will be more pleasing to them than ever before because I have granted them to hear these things from you.¹⁰⁹

Johannes Marienwerder, especially, was to profit greatly from his acquaintance with her. He was supposed to thank God for the

¹⁰⁷Des Leben, p. 298. "Ich bin also sorgveldig durch der lute sunde wille, das ich nicht weis schire, waz ich sayn sal, und sunderlich mus ich sere sorgin um di menschen in der stat Marienwerder, und mich dunkit, daz ich derselben stat sal syn eyne huterynne."

¹⁰⁸Des Leben, p. 291. "wer dir etwas thut durch meynen willin addir sucht mich an dir, der sal das nicht haben umbsust gethan."
"dy sollin an mir dorumb grose vorderunge habin und ere."

¹⁰⁹Des Leben, p. 322. "Wen deine czwene b. p. [the words 'Beichtvater' and 'Prior,' which denote Johannes Marienwerder and Johannes Rymann, respectively, are abbreviated as b and p throughout the text] werden nemen czu handen das, das sy von dir geschriben haben, das sy is bringen czu rechte, szo werden sy lip haben den himel und werden grose begerunge haben czu dem ewigen lebin, von dannen disse geschribene ding seyn komen, und ich werde denne behegelicher werdin, dorumb das ich in dis habe begeben czu hören von dir."

opportunity of furthering God's honor and praise by giving aid and comfort to Dorothea. After her death he was to kneel down and praise God for the privilege of having been Dorothea's confessor with the following prayer: "My most beloved lord, Jesus Christ! I thank you highly for mercifully having helped me in furthering your praise and your honor through this woman. Be praised and honored forever!"¹¹⁰ Dorothea, in turn, was instructed to support Johannes Marienwerder by fervently imploring God as follows: "Jesus Christ, my dearly beloved lord, help him, so that he may honorably fulfill your high praise and your honor through me."¹¹¹

Beyond being patroness to the two clergymen so intimately associated with her, she was also to be a means of salvation for the members of the cathedral chapter and for all those in any way connected to its church. About her importance to the canons at Marienwerder in whose church she lived as an anchoress, God spoke to her as follows: "If the members of the church of Pomesania are to become blessed with you, you must think of them often and exert yourself much for their sake."¹¹² Such care, however, she was to expend not only on

¹¹⁰Des Leben, p. 322. "Mein allirlibster herre Jhesu Criste, ich dancke dir gröslich umb das, dastu mir gnediglich geholfen host czu volbrenge dein lop und dein ere an diszem menschin! Du seist ewiglichen gelobet und geeret!"

¹¹¹Des Leben, p. 322. "Jhesu Criste, meyn allirlibster herre, hylffe ym, das her deyn hochwirdig lop und ere wirdiglichen volbrenge in mir."

¹¹²Des Leben, p. 291. "Sollin dy thumherren der kirchen czu Pomesan mit dir zelig werden, so mustu sy vil in deynem gedechtnis haben, unde gar sere umb sy sorgin!"

the living members of the chapter, but also on those already dead and those not yet born.¹¹³ Finally, God reminded her that the salvation of all those who had ever worshipped at Marienwerder cathedral was to a large degree dependent upon her presence there and on her prayers: "And again, [you came here] not only for the sake of these canons, but for all those who at any time gave alms or whose body is buried here and who had hopes of partaking of the prayers and the good things taking place here in this location in this church."¹¹⁴ This revelation ends with Dorothea's vision of all the dead and all the living who had ever given alms at Marienwerder begging her to help them achieve God's mercy.

Dorothea, at God's urging, also spent a great deal of her time praying for the Church hierarchy and for the speedy unification of the Universal Church rent by the schism. God ordered her to pray for "the unification of the Church, for the pope, the cardinals, the archbishops, the bishops, the leaders of the country, for all the religious people . . . , and for the sermons to be fruitful to the

¹¹³Des Leben, p. 291. "Du bist doch nicht alleyne herkommen durch der thumhern wille . . . [at this place there is a section missing which Toeppen augments in a footnote with the appropriate section from the Vita Latina: "propter canonicos nunc presentes et vivos, sed eciam propter jam mortuos et futuros"], dy tot seyn, und der dy noch werdin kommen. . . ."

¹¹⁴Des Leben, p. 291. ". . . und nicht alleyne durch der itczunt gnanten thumhern wille, sundir durch alle der wille, dy ir almosen ye czu der kirchin czu Pomesan gegeben habin, addir der leyp do begrabin ist, dy dy hoffnunge habin gehat, das sy mochtin teylhafftig werdin alle des gebetis und guttis, das do worde geschehn hy an der stat, das ist in der kirchin."

listeners."¹¹⁵ Unlike the two great female saints of the fourteenth century, St. Birgitta and St. Catherine of Siena, Dorothea did not take a prominent part in the religious controversies of her day. She never left her cell to visit Avignon or Rome to exhort the two popes personally to effect the end of the schism, nor did she send letters or reports of her visions concerning this issue to them or to the emperor. She did, nevertheless, hold Clement VII, the antipope in Avignon, responsible for the schism and several times predicted his imminent death. After Clement's death in 1394 she also criticized Boniface IX, whom she considered the rightful pope, for vacillating and thus prolonging the schism. Although her early visions of him had shown him as the god-fearing, pure-hearted successor of St. Peter, he appeared in her later visions as weak-minded and otherwise lacking in perfection.

Finally, in addition to St. Mary, to whose service their order was dedicated, the Teutonic Knights also found a patroness in Dorothea. Her concern for them manifested itself mainly in her sponsorship of their high master Konrad von Jungingen, who succeeded the willful Konrad von Wallenrodt in 1393. As a devout, pious, and peace-loving man, Konrad von Jungingen promised to be much more pliable in the hands of the Dominicans than his predecessor had been, and Dorothea had supported him in his bid for the office of high master.

¹¹⁵Des Leben, pp. 297-98. "Also hiz er sy dicke beten . . . um di voreynegunge der kirchin, vor den pobist, cardenal, ertzebischofe, slechte bischofe, um dy obirsten des landes, um alle geistliche menschin . . . und das di predigat fruchtsam sy den hörern. . . ."

She had hailed him as a veritable "prince of peace," a role he did his best to fulfill throughout his reign, both in his foreign and domestic policy.¹¹⁶ He was able to stay, at least temporarily, the dangerous and rapidly growing hostility of Russia, Lithuania, and Poland toward the Order in the so-called "perpetual peace of Raczan" of 1404. This peace treaty, according to Hipler, was generally

¹¹⁶Eimer. In this work the author concentrates on the efforts of Konrad von Jungingen to advance the order's power and stabilize its territory increasingly threatened by various internal and external forces. According to Miss Eimer, Jungingen was motivated not only by political considerations, but by the spiritual guidance of St. Birgitta and more directly, Dorothea.

Miss Eimer also directs the reader's attention to an important iconographic innovation in late medieval religious art, the so-called "Schreinmadonna," which art historians generally consider a personal invention of Dorothea, inspired by her devotion to the Virgin Mary. Indeed, this type of hollow wooden statue which contains a hidden altar inside the Virgin's body is a three-dimensional representation of the Virgin Mary as she often appears in Dorothea's visions. The most important of the ten "Schreinmadonnas" to survive into modern times is the so-called "Elbinger Schreinmadonna" which adorned the high altar of St. Mary's Church in Elbing, East Prussia, until the end of World War II. This madonna was commissioned about the year 1400 by Konrad von Kyburg, Konrad von Jungingen's ambassador to Vytautas, the grand duke of Lithuania, to commemorate the important friendship treaty of 1399 between the Teutonic Knights and the Danish queen Margareta. The unique feature of all "Schreinmadonnas" is that the kneeling supplicants who commonly appear in adoration scenes are here painted on the inside of the doors of the altar, so that, when it is opened, a "Schreinmadonna," in accordance with Dorothea's frequent pleas to the Virgin to accept and protect her spiritual children, spreads out her arms and her cloak to receive them. The "Elbinger Schreinmadonna" is adorned with the portraits of many of the personages most affected by this friendship treaty. The inside of the left-hand door, which is a place of special grace, since the infant Jesus rests immediately above on Mary's left arm, reveals the kneeling figures of Konrad von Jungingen, Konrad von Kyburg, Dorothea, Queen Margareta, King Eric of Pomerania, St. Birgitta's daughter Catherine, several representatives of the cathedral chapter of Marienwerder, and the Pomesan bishop Johannes Mönch. Thus, in this "Schreinmadonna" all the personages who contributed to the preservation of peace in an area threatened by constant warfare on account of territorial rivalries are united under the Virgin's protection.

attributed to Dorothea's good offices as patroness of the Teutonic Knights.¹¹⁷ Also, according to the high master's own testimony at the canonization inquiry, she protected him and the Knights from destruction on numerous occasions by warning him of impending disasters. In 1394, for example, thus warned, they escaped a treacherous storm while they were on a raid against pirates who ravaged the Baltic Sea under the protection of the Danish crown.¹¹⁸

Because Dorothea, from the moment she reached puberty until the day she died, channelled all her sexual desires into the spiritual marriage with Christ, poor Adalbert was forever in competition with his wife's heavenly bridegroom, a competition which he, as Christ himself pointed out, could not possibly win. "You must love me very much because I have so often taken you away from your husband. While

¹¹⁷Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 83. "Mehrfach hatte nämlich Dorothea geäußert, dass unter Konrads Regierung der langersehnte Friede zwischen Preussen, Litauen, Polen und Russland zustande kommen werde und infolgedessen viele Heiden sich zum Christentum bekehren würden. Nun war wirklich kurz vor Beginn des Prozesses, am 23. Mai 1404, der sog. 'ewige Friede' von Racianz geschlossen, und alles Volk glaubte, dies freudenreiche Ereignis den Fürbitten Dorotheas wesentlich mitverdanken zu müssen."

¹¹⁸Eimer, p. 254.

But ultimately neither Mary nor Dorothea could prevent the destruction of the Order, which Dorothea had predicted on numerous occasions. The threatened coalition of eastern European nations against the Teutonic Knights, which had first appeared in 1386 with the marriage of the Polish queen Jadwiga to the Lithuanian prince Jogaila, became a reality in 1409 when Jogaila (King Wladyslaw II of Poland) was reconciled with his cousin Vytautas, the grand duke of Lithuania. Together they defeated the Teutonic Knights decisively in the battle of Grunwald in 1410. The peace treaty of Torun in 1411 deprived the Order of much of its territory and broke its domination of Eastern Europe forever.

he was still alive he thought he possessed you while all the time I pulled you away from him and possessed you."¹¹⁹ Adalbert naturally looked forward to enjoying his young bride, which Dorothea, however, from the first day of their marriage did her best to prevent. "When the marriage had been celebrated according to the custom of the land, she remained untouched by her husband and untainted by any fleshly desire, not for three nights, as the angel Raphael had advised, but for several nights more."¹²⁰ Adalbert finally did consummate the marriage, but all sexual contacts between husband and wife were to remain joyless because of Dorothea's passive responses to his advances:

The maid of God lived with her husband in the marriage bond for twenty-six and a half years and kept her marriage vows in such chastity that she never demanded her conjugal rights from her husband, but fulfilled her own conjugal duties when they were demanded of her in fear of God and out of the obligation to render unto

¹¹⁹Des Leben, p. 249. "Du macht mich wol groslichin lib haben, wen ich habe gefach dich gezcocket von dyme manne: di wile her noch lebete und wente, her hette dich, so zcockte ich dich, und hatte dich."

¹²⁰Des Leben, p. 219. "und do dy hochzeit noch les landes seten getan wart, also doch das sy nicht alleyne dri nacht noch des engils Raphaelis rote, sundir me nachte bleib unberurt von irem frydil, und von aller wollust irs selbis halben bleib sy di zcit unbevleckt."

Henry Ansgar Kelly, Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 276, explains this passage by stating that "marriage was not legitimately entered into unless the couple spent the first two or three days in prayer before indulging in intercourse." This provision was based on the angel Raphael's advice to Tobias to pray with his wife Sara for three days before consummating the marriage. This continence was to save him from suffering the same fate as Sara's previous husbands, all of whom had become victims of the devil through their unrestrained lust.

Caesar what is his due and unto God what is his due. Thus she became a mother in the flesh, but in spirit she remained a virgin.¹²¹

Dorothea made no effort to hide her preference for her heavenly bridegroom over her earthly one and was quite skillful in discouraging Adalbert from demanding his conjugal rights too frequently. After they had been married for several years, she first persuaded him to let her sleep in a separate bed and later in a separate room by disturbing his rest with her self-imposed insomnia:

The habit of staying awake at night she retained when she was married so that her husband wanted to force her to sleep either with endearments or with threats. But he could not prevail upon her to sleep more than she was accustomed to. . . . When he truly understood her strong desire to stay awake, he gave her permission to sleep in another bed in the same room, but when she still did not sleep any more than she had before, he allowed her to make her bed in whatever room she chose.¹²²

Her habit of spending the night gazing at the sky through the open window regardless of snow, hail, rain, wind, or frost no doubt hastened his decision. In 1380, after years of prodding, Dorothea at last succeeded in getting Adalbert to renounce all sexual claims on

¹²¹Des Leben, p. 221. "Di gots dirne wonte mit erim ewirte vorbundin zcu elichen sachen sechs und zewenzig jor und eyn halbis, und hilt ir e in solcher kuscheit, daz sy ny ir erecht gevordirte von erim emanne, sundir sy bezcalte erecht, so is von im geheyschin wart, mit gotlicher vorchte und vorbindunge des rechtis zcu gebin dem keysir, was dem keysir gebort, und gote, was gote gebort, und wart kindir mutir am lybe, und juncvrowe bleip sy des gemutis am geiste."

¹²²Des Leben, p. 204. "Di selbige wache hatte sy so stete, do sie quam zcur e, das sy ir eman mit libekosin und drouwen zcu slofen wolde twingen, noch enmochte das geschicken, das sy me slife, wen sie gewonheit hatte. . . . Do her jo dirkante ir grose beger, do gab her ir orlob zcu slofen in eyne andrin bette in synes selbes kamere, und do sy glich wenig slyf in sulchem orlob, do gonde her ir zcu legen in wilchim gemache sie selben wolde."

her. "Finally, after she gave birth to a daughter, they both realized that it would be pleasing to God, if they, to serve him with an unencumbered spirit, were to live in total chastity; they agreed upon it and thus lived together for ten years until death parted them."¹²³ For Dorothea, this decision brought increased delight. As a reward she was allowed to receive the body of her heavenly bridegroom which never failed to transport her into ecstasy on Sundays and all high feast days.

Dorothea's indifferent performance as a housewife compounded the problems between husband and wife. Numerous times Christ had ordered Dorothea to solve the predicament of both "husbands" requiring her attention simultaneously by removing herself at once from his "sweet dalliance to be obedient to her earthly husband's wishes."¹²⁴ Of course Dorothea obeyed Christ's command without question, but she

¹²³Des Leben, p. 221. "Of daz letzte, do sie eyne tochtir enphing und gebar, do mercten sy beide, daz is gar behegelych were, das sy sich enthilden von elichen werken in vollir kusheit gote zcu dienen mit vriem geiste, und wurden des eyns, und blieben dornoch bi enandir zcehn jor sunder eliche werk, biz daz sy der tot schyt."

¹²⁴Des Leben, p. 251. "Nu schach is in der herberge, in der sy wolden benachten, e den sy von dem wayn trat, daz sy wart von der gute unsirs herren von den uzsirn dingen enczogen und ynnewenich mit grosir libe und suzikeit irfult, und dorum me wolde sy nicht stigen vom wayne, do sy ir man ryf und hisch, wen sy wente, daz is bilcher wer, daz sy gote zcuhorde, waz her mit ir rette, wen daz sy noch dem geheise irs erdischen mannes von dem gekose gots sich zcoge und wer bekummirt mit den uzsirn dingen. Do sy vorzcog, do wart der man so grymlichin zcornig, daz her recht begonde zcu toben dorch ir ungehorsamkeit. Des irschrak sy und bat den herren, das her ir ryte, ab sy solde bilchir by im bliben und vorsitzen des mannes gebot oder nicht. Do entworde ir der suze Jhesus und sprach: Czu stunden enczuch dich von meynem liplichin gekose und bis gehorsam dem gebote dynes mannes!"

did so reluctantly and tended to Adalbert's needs mechanically and inattentively. Her efforts in the kitchen frequently ended in disaster. "Sometimes she prepared fish without scaling them or without removing the innards . . ., not realizing that they were unpalatable."¹²⁵ If her husband sent her on an errand, she frequently came home empty-handed, or purchased the wrong thing. He was often appalled at her largesse toward paupers and drifters and accused her of having given too many alms and of having squandered his wealth. Things finally got so bad that he took the keys away from her and left nothing of consequence under her control. He even went to the market himself to purchase their necessities. Dorothea, predictably, was far from being offended by this turn of events: "It was most pleasing to the blessed Dorothea not to have to be concerned with such mundane matters any longer."¹²⁶

Dorothea was not only a reluctant wife, but also a resentful mother. Her ability to produce nine living children is in itself something of a miracle since, according to Des Leben, she neither discontinued her dangerous self-castigations nor her severe fasts during her pregnancies. The forty-day purification period after each childbirth filled her with deep resentment: "She was sick in body and sick in spirit because of her unfulfilled desire [for her heavenly

¹²⁵Des Leben, p. 248. "Undirwilen kochte sy dy vische ungeschupt adir unuzgenomen, adir in eynr andirn ungetlichen wise, und hatte nicht merken doran, das is also nicht tochte."

¹²⁶Des Leben, p. 249. "Das was der seligen Dorothee gar behegelych, das sy mit den zcitlichyn dingen nicht dorfte bekummert syn."

bridegroom] because for forty days she had to stay away from church services. This restriction annoyed her very much."¹²⁷ At the end of this period she would take the newborn infant to church, but her joy at being in church again was always tinged with dread, for she realized the worry about the proper care of the infant would severely limit her attendance at church services.¹²⁸

Her seemingly untiring care of these infants suggests deep maternal devotion. In reality, though, it was a ploy to avoid Adalbert's caresses, for the end of the forty-day purification period also meant the resumption of marital relations, which Dorothea was eager to avoid: "She would often sit by the cradle and rock the child all night long. During the winter when it was cold, she wore nothing but a skirt, covered by an old ragged coat. She paid no attention whatever to the trouble and coldness, but endured them with the intention of staying away from her husband's bed."¹²⁹ Early in the morning she hastily saw to her children's needs, commended them to God's safekeeping, and hurried off to the church where she would spend the better part of the day. But even there she could not escape the demands of these babies: "When she felt the milk trickling from

¹²⁷Des Leben, p. 222. "Dovon sochte sy am libe, ouch sochte sy an der zelen von ynniger begerunge, doromme das sy des kirchganges enpern muste vyczik tage; das abwesin was ir gar verdrossen."

¹²⁸Des Leben, p. 222.

¹²⁹Des Leben, p. 222. "Dorch deswillen sy ofte saz bi der wigen und wigete ir kint di gantze nacht, ym winter, so iz kalt was, in eyne eynigen rocke und eyne alden vraten mantil dorobir, und di arbeit und den frost achte sy vor nicht, sundir leit iz mit willen, of das sie gesundirt blebe von eris emannis bette."

her breasts . . . she hurried home without delay to her child. It was very irksome and painful to her, especially at night, to have to leave the church and go through the dirty streets without a light."¹³⁰

Because of Dorothea's preoccupation with her own spiritual welfare, her children were in dire need of God's protection. Des Leben describes one incident where only a miracle saved them from total disaster.

It happened thus on the feast day of the Immaculate Conception of St. Mary when a miracle happened to the blessed Dorothea in the thirty-third year of her life [Dec. 8, 1379]. She went very early to the church in Danzig which has been built in honor of Our Lady St. Mary and remained there for approximately four hours in the constancy of her pious prayer. Afterwards she wanted to go to the church of the preaching friars [St. Nicholas] and worship there over the noon hour, according to her habit. But as she stepped from the churchyard into the lane, she met with an obstruction, as if a wall had been erected in front of her, impeding her progress. At once she perceived a divine warning and without delay she hurried home and went into an attic she had not entered for half a year and there discovered a big fire which she extinguished only with great difficulty with the help of many other people. Her house, her household goods, and four of her children would have perished had she not received warning from God and his mother Mary who had stayed her in the street with her presence.¹³¹

¹³⁰Des Leben, pp. 222-23. "Wen sy gevulte, das us erin brusten die milch begende zcu trifen, wi schire sie das geware wart, is wer bynnen der kirchen odir busen, so ylte sy ane sumen zcu irme kinde, und das waz ir gar vordrossen und pynlich, besunder bi nachte uz der kirchin ane licht zcu huse durch den unvlot zcu geen."

¹³¹Des Leben, pp. 227-28. "Is geschach an sente Marien tage, als sy entphangen wart der seligen Dorotheen sus wundirs geschicht ym dri und driczigestin jare. Sy ging gar vru zcur pfarrekirchin zcu Gdantzk, di in der ere unsir vrouwen sente Marien gestifted ist, und bleip dorynne by vier stunden yn bestendikeit irs ynnigen gebetis. Dornoch wolde sie geen zcur kirchen der predigerbruder, und do des mittagis noch irre gewonheit dirbeitin. Do sy vom kirchofe of di neeste gasse getrat, zcuhannt dirscheyn ir eyn widerstos, recht ab eyne muer vor sy di twer gestrackt were, und ir der vortgang vorbotin

Ultimately, though, even God's safekeeping did not preserve the couple's children. One by one they died until in 1383 only their youngest child, a girl of three, remained.¹³²

Dorothea's performance as a wife and mother would have tried the patience of a saint; Adalbert was no saint, and his explosions of rage became ever more frequent and violent. Sometimes when she felt so overcome by the "sweetness of the Holy Spirit" that she could neither speak nor move, Adalbert would douse her with water to bring her back to reality. At other times her neglect of her duties would so enrage him that he laid hands on her. Once when he had sent her to the market to purchase straw and she returned hours later blissfully happy but empty-handed because she had spent the time in "sweet conversation" with her heavenly bridegroom, he lost his temper and

wurde. Snelle sy eynen yndrok gotlichir vormanunge gefulte, und ane sumen ylte zcu huse, und ging of eynen sulr, do sy bynnen eym halbin jore nicht war gewest, und wart gewor eyns grosen fuers, das sy kum vil andir lute hulfe vorleschte, und ir hus und husgerete und ir kinder viere, di von dem fuere vorbrant weren, hette sy nicht sulche warnunge von gote und syner mutir Marien gehat, die sy uf der gassen widerstossig machte mit ire keginwortikeit."

¹³²In Günter Grass's novel Der Butt, Darmstadt: Luchterhand Verlag, 1977, Dorothea von Montau appears as one of the major characters. In this novel, a hilarious but penetrating and perceptive exposé of the relationship between men and women since the beginning of time, the disaster of Dorothea's and Adalbert's marriage is told from the point of view of the much-wronged, undeservedly maligned husband, who in this iconoclastic account of Dorothea's sanctity is fully vindicated at last. According to Grass's Adalbert, Dorothea, not the plague, was responsible for the demise of eight of their nine children. One of them, for example, falls into a huge kettle of fish soup, unnoticed by her mother who, kneeling on dried peas, is in ecstasy over her "liep Jesu" instead of minding the infant and the kettle. The child thus spoils the household's penitential lenten fare by enriching it with a little meat broth.

beat her so severely on the chest that she spit up blood for days afterwards. According to Des Leben, she endured such mistreatment by donning "the shield of patience," but her devout suffering enraged him all the more: "Her husband thought her saintly patience and silence sprang from obstinacy and spite and hit her hard on the head with a chair."¹³³ When she neglected her household too flagrantly, he finally threatened her with violent measures: "If you will not cease your wanderings and take care of your house with greater diligence than you have done up to now, I will tame you with fetters and chains."¹³⁴ When this threat brought no improvement whatsoever, "his anger overpowered him and he kept the saintly Dorothea prisoner in the house, shackled with chains, for three days."¹³⁵ Their domestic upheavals aroused public attention. When Adalbert's abuses became too obvious, "two priests, the confessors of the couple, [came] and severely reprimanded the husband because of his cruelty and ferocity as well as the great injustice and discomfort he had visited upon his wife, as they had been told by other people."¹³⁶

¹³³Des Leben, p. 226. "Sundir sy warf vor sich den geistlichen schilt der gedolt, und ving dy grymmigen schusse und slege des zcornis und scheltwort, und leid di so an alle clage und widerkosunge, das ir ewirt ir heilige gedolt und stilleswigen wente, wi is queme von irem widermute und frebil und slug sy an ir houbt gar herte mit eyne stule."

¹³⁴Des Leben, p. 226. "Lest du nicht din ummeloufen, und wartis dines huses mit groserm flise, wen du noch host getan, ich wil dich zcemen mit banden und ketin."

¹³⁵Des Leben, p. 226. "Des obirwant yn der zcorn und hilt dy erwirdige husfrowe Dorothee dri tage gevangen und mit kethin gevessirt in synem huse."

¹³⁶Des Leben, p. 249. "Umme dise und andir ungevuge quamen zewene prister, ir beider bichtiger, und stroften den man gar sere

The tragedy of this marriage, as Des Leben clearly indicates, is that these two could have enjoyed a share of conjugal felicity had Dorothea not insisted on ignoring even Adalbert's slightest wishes in favor of spending her time in ecstasy with her heavenly bridegroom. In spite of Johannes Marienwerder's blatant attempts to portray Adalbert as Dorothea's most relentless persecutor, Adalbert nevertheless impresses the reader as having been very understanding of her spiritual needs. He himself was quite devout and had made a number of pilgrimages. Furthermore, "as long as his wife could fulfill his wishes, he readily allowed her to serve God faithfully before dinner-time as she wished and was able; to prevent the care of the children from being a hindrance to her in her devotions, he himself remained at home with them and diligently supervised them in her stead."¹³⁷ But he was elderly, suffered from arthritis, and in addition to being in pain, he quite naturally resented her ruining his social life with her endless tears over the vanities of the world, damaging his professional prestige by wearing rags and begging in the streets of Danzig, refusing to provide him with hard-earned and deserved creature comforts, and constantly nagging him to live with her in sexual abstinence. But Dorothea also on occasion displayed kindness and concern for him.

unne syne un gute und grymmekeit und unne das grose un recht und ungemach, das her syne bettegenossen tat, als sy von andren menschen gehort hatten."

¹³⁷Des Leben, p. 226. "Diwile sine ewirtynne, die selige Dorothea, sines willen romen mochte, so gonde her ir wol, daz sy vor essen zcit gote dinte mit vlize, als sy wolde und mochte, und daz doran der kinder pfloge nicht hinderte, so bleib her selbe zcu huse di zcit und vorwesete ire stat mit flyse."

When he was bedridden with arthritis she served him "in the state of helplessness the arthritis often forced upon him with love and kindness both day and night as well as she could."¹³⁸ But unfortunately, there was too little given and too much taken. As Ernst Benz observes, Dorothea's life reveals a disregard of the needs of others which is incomprehensible to modern man: "The saint's self-absorption in salvation and grace often reveals itself in a degree of ruthlessness toward wife and child which we nowadays are much more likely to regard as inhumanity than as a mark of sanctity."¹³⁹

Dorothea's endless wanderings from one church to another not only vexed her husband Adalbert; they soon attracted a great deal of public attention. Of the seven churches she visited daily, St. Mary's became her favorite, which, given Dorothea's devotion to the Virgin, is not surprising. Also, it was in this church that God finally calmed her religious frustrations by exchanging her old cold heart for a new hot one.¹⁴⁰ In order to be the first one at church every morning, she left the house long before the churches were open:

¹³⁸Des Leben, p. 249. "Hirumme, das der man muste sinen willen losin, vil her yn eynen sweren sychtum, in dem her lange lag, und ym nymandis hantreychunge adir dinst genugig was, wen alleyne siner husvrouwen Dorothee, di ym in der krancheit und in anderm leger, das her dicke hatte von der gicht, lieblich und gutlich tag und nacht dinte, als sy beste mochte."

¹³⁹Benz, p. 53. "Der Heilsegoismus der Heiligen äussert sich oft in Form einer Rücksichtslosigkeit gegenüber Weib und Kind, die wir heute eher geneigt sind, als Unmenschlichkeit denn als Zeichen von Heiligkeit zu empfinden."

¹⁴⁰Des Leben, p. 232. "Do sy also stunt, und das stilnis der messe was, do quam unsir herre Jhesus, ir liephabir gros, und rockte ir alds herzce us, und stys ir vor daz ein nuwe hitzig hertze yn."

"Often it happened that she spent the long time before the church doors were unlocked weeping, praying, and kneeling in front of the church."¹⁴¹ If others were already waiting when she arrived, she was greatly annoyed: "If she was not able to outdo others in this, she was ashamed and punished her laxity because it was her desire to be first in the service of the Lord in waking and praying and not to be sluggish."¹⁴² Even her confessor seems discomfitted by this statement; he hastens to add "she did not do this out of desire for fame, but because of the great love she had for God."¹⁴³ Once inside, she completely lost track of time in the performance of her religious exercises. She

hid herself in a corner and there performed her genuflexions and prayers over and over and repeatedly threw herself on the ground with such an ardent spirit and such physical exertion that even in winter, although she wore only a thin skirt and a thin coat, she was covered with perspiration. . . . Therefore she had to cool herself winter and summer by fanning herself with her coat or by sitting on the cold stones.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹Des Leben, p. 222. "Ofte iz geschach, das sy lange zeit vortreib mit weynen, fleen und knyen vor der kirchen, e den sy wart ofgeslossin."

¹⁴²Des Leben, p. 222. "Vorquam sy ouch kein mensche, so schemete sie sich des, und strofte ire trogheit, wen ire begerunge waz, das sy an wachin, bettin, und dem herren zcu dienen di irste were, ader nicht trege."

¹⁴³Des Leben, p. 222. "und tat das nicht von rumreytikeit, sundir us grosir libe, di sy zcu gote hatte."

¹⁴⁴Des Leben, p. 222. "und barg sich in eyenen winkil, und manchveldigte dor ire knybögunge, ir venien und ir gebete, mit so eyeme hitzigin geiste und irs libis arbeit, das ouch wintirzcit in eyeme dunnen rocke und mantil vor grosir hitze der sweys von ir ran, und sy gar benetzte. . . . Dorumme sy ofte wintirzcit als somerzcit sich kulen moste, den wint mit erim mantil dem antlitze zcu wehen, odir of kalte steyne sitzcen."

Although Johannes Marienwerder pictures Dorothea's religious practices as exemplary, she was by no means universally admired. Her public ecstasies, for example, were often greeted with derision. Once, when she felt herself visited by the Holy Spirit while she was shopping and held some goose eggs in her hands, staring at them uncomprehendingly, her fellow shoppers in the market square snickered and laughed.¹⁴⁵ Another time, when she and Adalbert were on a pilgrimage and Dorothea took charge of the wagon because of Adalbert's infirmity, people came from near and far to gawk and poke fun at her: "The people often came running in droves as if to witness a great miracle, and when they saw her husband and realized he was old and gray and had a long beard, they laughed and some of them spoke wonderingly and others mockingly: 'Dear sister, where do you want to take your Joseph? Are you trying to take him to the fountain of youth?'"¹⁴⁶ Even after her death a good number of people remained skeptical about her sanctity, as her canonization inquiry reveals. Those who voiced their doubts publicly were said to have been

¹⁴⁵Des Leben, p. 225. "Ouch wart sy zcu stunden so gar in sich selbin von wirkenden gotis gnoden gezcogen, daz sy die usersten ding nicht kante, di ir doch ander zeiten wol bekant worin, als is ein mol geschach, daz sy ganseyer zcu handen hatte und sach sy mit lyblichen ougin flyslich an, und doch nicht irkante, das iz ganseyer woren, doromme sy di ander wibe vorlachten, di dobi warin."

¹⁴⁶Des Leben, p. 243. "sy trenkte di pfert und gap yn zcessen, und spyn sy an den wayn, und furte uf deme wayne ir eynige junge tochtir und irn alden man dorch dy lant, dorfer, markte und stete, in dem dy lute dicke scharecht quamen um sy geloufen, recht als zcu eyne wundirwerke, und wenne sy sayn und merkten irn man, das her alt und gro was, und eynen grosen bart hatte, so lachten sy und sprachen etliche spotlichin, etliche von wundirn: Libe swestir, wo wiltu den Yoseph hynfuren? Wiltu yn zcu dem jogenborne furen?"

instantly smitten with disease, which Dorothea's champions of course interpreted as just punishment for their blasphemy. The prayer of one such doubter reflects the ambiguous feelings of some of Dorothea's contemporaries toward her: "Oh, blessed Dorothea, if you can obtain health for me from God through your prayers, I will sincerely believe in your sanctity and will always consider you holy."¹⁴⁷

By the summer of 1391 Dorothea's astonishing public expositions of faith were attracting so much adverse criticism that charges of heresy were brought against her. Her chief accusers were the priest of St. Mary's Church and canon of the diocese of Leslau, Doctor Christian Rose, and another priest called Ludeke. These officials objected mainly to Dorothea's disruptive behavior during mass. As Johannes Marienwerder later explained her behavior to the papal legates at her canonization inquest, Dorothea was often in ecstasy while the service was in progress and therefore neither saw nor heard what was happening around her. As a result, she generally failed to rise at the elevation of the host, which her accusers interpreted as a lack of respect for the sacrament.¹⁴⁸ Nor did her behavior upon

¹⁴⁷Triller, "Der Kanonisationsprozess," p. 330. "O beata Dorothea, si precibus tuis michi sanitatem a Deo obtineris, ego veraciter in tuam sanctitatem credo et te sanctam semper reputabo."

¹⁴⁸Anneliese Triller, "Häresien in Altpreussen um 1390?," Studien zur Geschichte des Preussenlandes, ed. Ernst Bahr (Marburg: Elwert Verlag, 1963), p. 401; hereafter cited as "Häresien," quoting Johannes Marienwerder. "In solita accepit a Domino beneficia, consolationes et gaudia, ex quibus stupida reddebantur eius membra, quod tempore elevationis sacre hostie non valuit assugere facta impotens et ob hoc in culpabatur, quod non faceret reverentiam sacre hostie condignam. Item quod aliquando non surrexit. Propter hoc fuit, quod ita intime Deo in contemplatione vel in raptu coniuncta fuit, quod a se alienata, pulsum campanelle non audivit."

returning to consciousness dispel their misgivings: "Upon having come to herself, Dorothea laughed gently and gaily as if she had come from great delights; also sometimes thus having come to herself, the blessed Dorothea was vehemently racked by tears, so that by the men present it was seen as an unknown and unheard of thing."¹⁴⁹ Perhaps most damaging to her case, she confessed to these priests "things unknown to men." Her confession, the "excessive and immoderate devotion to divine services, and good works which Dorothea herself possessed beyond other human beings" convinced her critics "she was captured in mind [by heresy]."¹⁵⁰

The heresy in question, according to Anneliese Triller, was that spread by the Brethren of the Free Spirit. This thirteenth-century sect, whose tenets of faith had gained widespread acceptance among such religious lay groups as the Beguines and the Begards,¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹Triller, "Häresien," p. 400. "et dixit depones, quod multociens reversa a se Dorothea modeste et hilariter risit, acsi de magnis gaudiis venisset, eciam aliquando sic ad se reversa b. Dorothea vehementer lacrimabatur, sic quod adstantibus hominibus videbatur incognitum et inauditum."

¹⁵⁰Triller, "Häresien," p. 400. "Cum dicta Dorothea esset in oppido Gdanczk, quidam dominus Henricus Lapide, officialis episcopi Wladislaviensis et Ludike, famosi presbiteri, credentes ipsam matrem Dorotheam in fide catholica errare propterea, ut ipsa deponens credit, qua dicta Dorothea dictis presbiteris in confessione forte incognita hominibus enarravit et etiam propter excessivam et insolitam ad divina officia et bona opera devocionem, quam ipsa Dorothea ultra alios homines habebat, credebant eam mente captam."

¹⁵¹R. W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages, Vol. II of The Pelican History of the Church (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 300-31. The Beguines were devout laywomen who formed very loosely structured religious communities. Their movement started in the early thirteenth century in the area around

had been declared heretical because its members denied the agency of the Church in the dispensation of God's grace and the importance of the sacraments for salvation.¹⁵² They stressed the illumination of the

Liège and from there spread from the Alps to the Baltic Sea and from Flanders to Bohemia. Like other popular religious movements it was especially prominent in the Rhineland with its strongest concentration in Cologne. The Beguine movement "had no definite Rule of life; it claimed the authority of no saintly founder; it sought no authorization from the Holy See; it had no organization or constitution; it promised no benefits and sought no patrons; its vows were statement of intention, not an irreversible commitment to a discipline enforced by authority; and its adherents could continue their ordinary work in the world." The Beguines, most of them middle-class widows or unmarried women, generally lived in small communities in private dwellings and expressed their dedication to God through such charitable works as the care of the old, the sick, and the dying.

Because they were not attached to any established religious order, the Church had little control over them, which in time led to all sorts of suspicions concerning their religious practices and beliefs. In 1273 Bruno, the bishop of Olmütz, formulated the objections of many churchmen against them, saying, "that the 'religion' of the Beguines had not been approved by the Holy See, that the women used their liberty as a veil of wickedness in order to escape the yoke of obedience to their priests, and 'the coercion of marital bonds.'" Accordingly, the Church first strove to gather up all Beguines in convents and to attach these convents to a regular order, which was widely accomplished by 1400. By 1421 all were attached to an order and all, by papal decree, had to live by an established Rule. The term "Begards" refers to the male counterparts of the Beguines.

¹⁵²"Mysticism," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1970 ed. The Brethren of the New Spirit, or of the Free Spirit, as they eventually called themselves, were followers of the teachings of Amalric of Bena (d. 1207), who derived his ideas in part from Johannes Scotus Erigena. Like Joachim of Fiore, he divided the history of the world into three phases, the age of the Father, the age of the Son, and the age of the Holy Spirit. The ages of the Father and of the Son, according to Amalric, had already passed, and the Age of the Holy Spirit had begun with the Holy Spirit's incarnation in Almaric's followers, the Amalricans. Almaric rejected the sacraments as superfluous to man's salvation, because just as the Mosaic law had been superseded by the appearance of Christ, so the sacraments of the new law had lost their meaning and efficacy since the incarnation of the Holy Spirit in the

individual by the holy Spirit by a person's close individual relationship with God, which was achieved by subduing the demands of the body by severe asceticism. In time, a human being could become free of sin and perfect, in need of neither church nor sacrament. "He who thus attains perfection is blessed already while he still dwells on earth and is not in need of mercy or grace; he would, in fact, descend beneath the complete and pure level of contemplation he has achieved if he were still to venerate the sacraments of the altar or reflect on the sufferings of Christ."¹⁵³ But Dorothea, whose activities could

Almaricans. The Church condemned Almaric's teachings and in 1225 publicly burned Erigena's De divisione naturae as their source.

The Brethren of the Free Spirit also incorporated very ancient heresies into their tenets of faith, such as pantheism and the heresy of the Adamites. The Adamites, a short-lived north African sect of the second and third century, claimed to have regained Adam's original state of innocence before he was driven from the Garden of Eden. As a consequence, they rejected marriage as an institution unnecessary for sinless man and insisted that none of their actions could be judged as evil. Just as this philosophy had given license to grievous misconduct among the Adamites, the claim of the Brethren of the Free Spirit to be the embodiments of the Holy Spirit and therefore sinless frequently encouraged unchecked licentiousness among them. The heresy of the Brethren of the Free Spirit spread rapidly through France, Switzerland and Germany, and during the 13th and 14th century was especially prominent in the Rhineland. For information on the Adamites, see "Adamites," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1970 ed.

Eleanor McLaughlin, "The Heresy of the Free Spirit in Late Medieval Mysticism," Medievalia et Humanistica, 4 (1973), 37-54, gives an excellent account of the influence of this heresy upon the Beguines and Begards by tracing its tenets in the Mirror of Simple Souls, an early fourteenth-century Beguine devotional treatise.

¹⁵³Triller, "Häresien," p. 402, quoting Herbert Grundmann. "Wer so vollkommen wird, ist von Natur selig schon im Diesseits, nicht der Gnade bedürftig, er würde aus hoher reiner Kontemplation herabsteigen, wenn er noch das Altarssakrament verehrte und an Christi Leiden dächte."

justifiably be mistaken for an expression of this heresy, acquitted herself satisfactorily and was spared a heresy trial:

I do not err, nor can I err because I have one doctor and teacher who instructs me and all people diligently, and about that which the said lords put upon me, willingly and readily I would want to die and would that the logs were bought at my expense and that I should have to carry them to burn myself on account of my faith.¹⁵⁴

Although Dorothea was ultimately fully vindicated, this traumatic experience and its aftermath persuaded her to leave Danzig and settle permanently in Marienwerder. Actually, she had considered such a move much earlier. Nikolaus von Hohenstein, her confessor in Danzig, felt unequal to the task of supervising her properly and had advised her as early as 1389 to seek the spiritual guidance of Johannes Marienwerder:

Master Nikolaus, a priest in Danzig, had been her confessor for many years. He advised her to go to Marienwerder; there she would find a canon, a master of holy Scripture, who, he believed, would know how to instruct her in respect to her questions and problems. As Nikolaus advised her thus, she was very pleased with his advice, and the master of whom he had told her appeared to her at once in the shape and appearance in which she saw him more than two years later for the first time.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴Triller, "Häresien," p. 401. "Ego non erro, nec possum errare, qua habeo unum doctorem et magistrum, qui me et omnes homines diligenter informat, et super isto, quod dicti domini michi imponunt, libenter et parata vellem mori, et utinam ligna meis consumptibus emerentur, et quod ego deberem portare ad comburendum me propter fidem meam."

¹⁵⁵Des Leben, p. 268. "Her Nicklos, der do prediger was czu Gdantczk, was yr beychtiger vil jore gewest, der rit er, das sy czöge ken Marienwerder, do funde sy einen thumherren, meyster der heyligen schrift, dem her wol glöbte, das her sy künde entrichten an iren fragin und sachin. Do her Nicklos ir das rit, do behagete ir gancz der roth, unde der meyster von dem her ir gesagit hatte, entschein ir czuhant in der gestalt und forme, in der sy en dernoch vilnoch czwey jore czum irsten sach."

But circumstances prevented Dorothea from exploring this possibility at that time. Pope Urban VI declared the year 1390 a year of jubilee, promising Plenary indulgences to all pilgrims visiting Rome during that year. Adalbert, who was too sick and too weak to undertake this pilgrimage himself, asked Dorothea to make the journey in his stead. Apparently, he felt his end approaching and wished to benefit from this extraordinary kind of indulgence which meant "the remission of the entire temporal punishment so that no further expiation is required in Purgatory."¹⁵⁶ Dorothea left Danzig for Rome in the fall of 1389, and when she returned in the spring of 1390, she found herself a widow.¹⁵⁷ In May 1391, finally, she travelled to Marienwerder on foot, met her future mentor, and confessed all of her religious experiences to him. Evidently he was sufficiently sympathetic to encourage her to consider permanent residence in Marienwerder. When she was accused of heresy in July of that same year, the move became imperative because when even her confessions were used as evidence against her, she quickly realized there was no one in Danzig whom she could trust.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶J. D. Hall, English Medieval Pilgrimage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 13.

¹⁵⁷There will be a more detailed discussion of Dorothea's pilgrimage to Rome later in this chapter. Adalbert died during Lent of 1390, and there is no information about Dorothea's activities from the time of her return from Rome until May of 1391 when she travelled to Marienwerder for the first time.

¹⁵⁸Des Leben, pp. 267-68. "sy hatte do und vor gar lange grose begerung gehat, das sy mocht ein weisin man haben, dem sy möchte getrawin und uffenbarn dy hemlickeyt ires herczen."

For Dorothea to have been accused of the heresy of the Brothers of the Free Spirit is quite ironic since there have probably been few mystics with devotion more solidly centered in the sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist, than was hers. The intense pleasure she derived from receiving the body of Christ in the sacrament produced in her an ever increasing desire to repeat the experience. But lay participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion was severely restricted,¹⁵⁹ so Dorothea's inability to enjoy communion whenever she felt in need of it gave rise to feelings of anguish and frustration. After having taken communion for the first time when she was eleven years old, she chafed under the restriction which forbade children under fourteen to receive this sacrament more than twice a year:

"When she was twelve years old, Dorothea had a strong desire to prepare herself by fasting for the seven high feast days of the year, as her mother did, in order to receive the body of Our Lord on those holy days. But because she was still too young, she was allowed to do so only twice a year, during Advent and at Easter."¹⁶⁰ When Dorothea was fourteen years old, she was entitled to more frequent enjoyment of the sacrament. But her mother increased her frustration by restricting

¹⁵⁹Hipler, "Christliche Lehre," pp. 110-22, gives a very detailed account of religious education for children and adults and their participation in religious ceremonies in the territories ruled by the Teutonic Knights during the Middle Ages.

¹⁶⁰Des Leben, p. 215. "Noch dem eilften jare irs alders Dorothea begerte gros, das sie als ir mutir uf siben gezeiten des jaris mit vasten sich bereyten mochte zcu enphan den lichnam unsirs herren uf di siben hochzeiten, daz ir doch nicht so jung dirloubit wart, den zwier in dem jare, als uf daz advent und uf ostern."

her participation in Holy Communion to the seven high feast days of the liturgical year:

The statutes of the Teutonic Knights commanded each member of the Order to receive the Holy Eucharist seven times a year; for this reason the devout Agatha did not feel justified to go beyond that limit. Later her daughter had to conform to her mother's rule, no matter how her heart longed for more frequent communion.¹⁶¹

Her need for frequent participation in Holy Communion was further frustrated in Danzig because at that time the question of proper administration of this sacrament to the laity was a thorny religious controversy through much of eastern Europe. The custom of letting the laity receive the Holy Eucharist daily was spreading rapidly through Bohemia and other areas, much to the dismay of the orthodox clergy who wished to preserve daily communion as an inviolate privilege of the priesthood. In 1389, finally, the Council of Prague forced one of the most prominent proponents of daily communion for the laity, the Prague theologian Mathias von Janow, to renounce this practice.¹⁶² Not surprisingly, Nikolaus von Hohenstein, Dorothea's confessor, was reluctant to give in to her pleas for frequent communion although since 1380 he had admitted her to the Eucharist once a week. But things got even worse. After having brought charges of heresy against her, Christian Rose restricted her participation in the sacrament to the

¹⁶¹Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 37. "Der deutsche Orden hatte in seinen Statuten seinen Mitgliedern den siebenmaligen Empfang der hl. Eucharistie das Jahr hindurch vorgeschrieben; deshalb glaubte auch die fromme Agatha, diese Zahl nicht überschreiten zu dürfen, und nach der Mutter musste sich später auch die Tochter richten, so sehr sie auch ihr Herz zu häufiger Kommunion hinzog."

¹⁶²Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 35.

seven high feast days of the Church. For Dorothea this was intolerable. As she later revealed to Johannes Marienwerder, "hunger and desire were so great that sometimes I was ill and bedridden. My strength deserted me and I was so full of longing to receive the body of Our Lord often, I gladly would have given the entire town of Danzig, had it been mine to give, in exchange for being able to receive the sacrament according to my need and desire."¹⁶³ After disposing of her property in Danzig and entrusting her only surviving child Gertrud to the care of the Benedictine convent at Kulm, she moved to Marienwerder in September 1391. Less than a month after she arrived there, Johannes Marienwerder allowed her to communicate three times a week.¹⁶⁴

Even this arrangement did not satisfy her for long. "Her desire and her hunger grew even more in the two years before she became

¹⁶³Des Leben, p. 270. "beyde hunger und begerunge woren so gros, das ich manchstundt sochte und belag swerlichen. Meyne creffte entgingen mir, und mir was szo bange, dicke czu entpfoen den leichnam unsirs hern, das ich hette dy gancze stat Gdanczck, wer sy meyn gewest, gerne dorumb gegeben addir gelossin, wenn ich hette mocht domete irwerben, das mir das sacrament noch meynner begerunge wer worden."

¹⁶⁴Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 36. In this controversy Johannes Marienwerder took a more liberal position than many of his contemporaries. In the introduction to the Expositio symboli apostolorum he reminds his audience that "this sacrament is the soul's sustenance and its balm, the enjoyment of which the soul's physician [the confessor] has to grant each individual according to his spiritual condition." Johannes Marienwerder erinnert am Schluss seiner Einleitung für das Expositio symboli apostolorum daran, "dass dies Sakrament eine Seelenspeise und Arznei sei, deren öfteren oder selteneren Gebrauch der Seelenarzt dem einzelnen je nach seiner inneren geistigen Disposition anzuraten und zu gestatten hat."

enclosed. She used to await the next day in great bitterness of spirit. For this reason she said: 'On the day on which I cannot receive the holy body of Our Lord, my soul is grieved to death.'"¹⁶⁵ After being enclosed, Dorothea received communion daily. Evidently even Johannes Marienwerder had not planned on going this far, but he complied with her wishes upon being told that God himself had promised her this boon, even over the objections of her confessor:

And should he [Johannes Marienwerder] ask "why do you want to take the Lord in the sacrament so often, that is daily, which is after all unusual for someone who is not a priest," answer him like this: ". . . the Lord himself prepares a place for himself in me; he creates in me a fierce impatient love and longing for him and he creates what is good in me. He desires himself passionately in me and receives himself greedily in me."¹⁶⁶

Because Dorothea perceived the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist as the unio mystica, the marriage of her soul to her bridegroom Jesus Christ,¹⁶⁷ even daily communion soon proved unsatisfactory:

¹⁶⁵Des Leben, p. 301. "Ire begerunge abir und hunger woren noch grösser in den czweyen jaren, e wenne sy in dy clawse quam, in dem sy kömerlich beytte öbir den andiren tag, in grosir bittirkeyt ires geystis, wen sy beitin muste. Dorumbe sprach sy: An welchem tage ich nicht entpfe den heiligen leichnam unsirs herren, an dem ist meyne zele betrübit bis in den tot."

¹⁶⁶Des Leben, p. 287. "Und ap her spreche:Worumb wiltu den herrn alzo offte sacramentlich nemen und habin, das ist tegelichen, das doch ungewönlich ist einem, der nicht prister ist? so antworte im alzo: . . . der herre bereitet selbir im in mir eine stat, und wirckit in mir czu im ader noch im ein wütende ungeduldige libe und begerung, und was guttis ist in ir das wirckt her. Her begert hicziglich in mir noch im, her enfeet geyriglich sich selben in mir."

¹⁶⁷Des Leben, p. 313. "Do fant sy sich von irem allirlibistin brewtigam Jhesu gar wol bereyt und löbelich gecziret czu der vortreung mit im, dy do genadiglich geschach czwischin Jhesu und Dorothea czu der stundin addir czeith, do Dorothea entfinge das heylige wirdige sacrament des woren leychnas unsirs herren Jhesu Cristi."

"She wept bitterly, sighed unceasingly, screamed with longing, lamented pitifully and that so vehemently that she often exhausted the ears of her merciful lover Jesus and those of her confessor."¹⁶⁸ To relieve her anguish and avoid disturbing the other worshippers, Johannes Marienwerder started giving her the sacrament late at night after the midnight mass instead of early in the morning. Also, with permission of the prior Johannes Rymann and the bishop of the diocese, Johannes Mönch, he started locking the host into a small reliquary near her cell. This provided some relief, for Christ often spoke to her from the reliquary, assuring her of his presence: "Now you have overcome me with your many tears and your screams so that I have become your nearest neighbor. I am here; I serve you and wait until you are ready to receive me."¹⁶⁹ Once on Good Friday he even revealed his physical presence in the host, and she could see the host locked in the shrine as clearly as if the priest had been holding it in his hand.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸Des Leben, p. 325. "Sy weynte bittirlichen, irsufftczte integerlich, schrey zenlich und clagete jomerlich, und tat das also unsteürlich, das sy dy oren ires barmhertczigen liphabers Jhesu und och dy oren ires beychtigers dicke irfölt. . . ."

¹⁶⁹Des Leben, p. 301. "Du host mich nu betwungen mit deynen grosin czeren und geschrey, das ich bin worden dein neste nockbar. . . . Ich bin hy und dyne dir und beite, wen du bereit wirst und wilt mich habin."

¹⁷⁰Des Leben, p. 302. "Das geczewgnisse und noch andir mee that der herr, der sich ouch ir in der nacht des karen freytages in deme egenantin venienstule beweiste im sacrament, gleich ap ein prister hette den wirdigen leichnam unsirs hern in der hant."

Her incessant longing for the sacrament reached its climax on the day of her death. As usual, she became more and more restless as the time to receive it approached. Finally, unable to wait any longer, she pushed her head through the grate facing into the church, calling for her confessor to absolve her at once and give her the host. He speedily complied and reports that upon receiving the body of Our Lord, she immediately became quiet, "was greatly comforted and calmed, and her soul was in ecstasy, deeply united with God."¹⁷¹ But as the day progressed, she became more restless than she had ever been before, and kneeling down by the grate, she begged her confessor to give her her "dearest Lord . . . because for love of him I cannot bear to be deprived of him any longer."¹⁷² But Johannes Marienwerder was afraid to give it to her because she had already received it that day, reminding her of God's admonition when she was enclosed to be satisfied to receive him once a day.¹⁷³ But because he pitied her in her distress, he promised not to await the end of the midnight mass, but to return during the te deum to give her the sacrament. She, however, sighed and lamented, insisting that she would not be able to wait that long. Johannes Marienwerder admits he did not recognize

¹⁷¹Des Leben, p. 326. "Czuhant als sy das erwirdyge sacrament entpfing, wart sy gestillet und quam czu grosem troste und czu rue, und ire zele wart tiff voreyniget mit gote in her entczökunge."

¹⁷²Des Leben, p. 327. "Eya, gebit mir meynen allirlibstin hern, das ist das sacrament unsirs hern; wen von libe mag ich seyn nicht lenger entpern."

¹⁷³Des Leben, p. 287. "Du salt dir losen genugen, wen du mich nor eyns czu eynem mole des tages host."

her extraordinary request to receive the host twice on the same day as an indication of her imminent death although she had revealed several times that she was to die very soon without any sign of illness whatsoever: "In these words her confessor did not perceive the approach of her death because it had happened several times before that she had hungered to receive the sacrament for a second time in one day. But never before had she actually asked for it."¹⁷⁴ When he returned as he had promised three hours later, he found her dead on her cot.

II. MAJOR INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF HER MYSTICISM

Whether one considers Dorothea's religious fervor as a genuine gift of God or as little more than a psychopathic flight from the unpleasant realities of middle class life in the Middle Ages, the question nevertheless arises as to what forces influenced the shaping and the formulation of the religious experiences of such an untrained, ignorant woman living on the very edge of the Christian world. Since certain religious concepts and expressions appear so regularly in the mystical thought of all ages to be considered the common property of all mystics, it is very difficult to establish what possible influence one mystic may have exerted on another. However, Johannes Marienwerder's accounts of Dorothea's life as a mystic include a number of experiences, visions, etc. of such striking similarity to

¹⁷⁴Des Leben, p. 327. "Aus diszen wortin irkant ir b nicht dy kortcze czukonfft ires todis, wen is was czuvor och etlich mol gescheen, das sy czum andirn mol hungerte an eynem tage noch dem sacrament, alleyne sy is ny me gebetin hatte czum andirn mole."

St. Birgitta's life and experiences as to identify Dorothea at least in some respects as a spiritual descendent of the Swedish saint. Geographical and historical conditions could have encouraged such an influence.

The traditional travel route from Sweden to Rome in those days, for example, led through Danzig, the city where Dorothea lived for the greatest part of her life.¹⁷⁵ Dorothea was only two years old in 1349 when Birgitta left Sweden for Rome, never to return alive. But as she grew up, she may have heard stories about the holy woman from Sweden who had stopped in Danzig on her progress to Rome, and may have felt inspired by Birgitta's example even in her childhood. Dorothea began her ascetic life when she was only seven years old after hearing Christ's voice in her heart. Likewise, St. Birgitta at the age of seven had decided to become the bride of Christ after receiving the bridal wreath in her first religious vision.

Now when Bridget was seven years old, she saw one night facing her bed an altar, and a lady in shining raiment sitting on the altar and holding a crown in her hand said to her: "Oh, Bridget, come hither!" When she came up to her the lady said: "Will you have this crown?" She said that she would. Then the lady put the crown on her head, so that she distinctly felt the ring of the crown on her brow. And immediately the vision vanished, but it never faded from her memory.¹⁷⁶

Without documented evidence, the possibility of Birgitta's influence on the child Dorothea remains of course a matter of

¹⁷⁵Max Toeppen, ed., "Noten für Das Leben der Heiligen Dorothea von Johannes Marienwerder," Scriptores rerum Prussicarum (Leipzig: n.p., 1863), II, p. 258; hereafter cited as "Noten."

¹⁷⁶Johannes Jorgensen, Saint Bridget of Sweden, trans. Ingeborg Lund (London: Longman's, Green & Co., 1954), I, 32.

speculation, but her influence on the young housewife Dorothea is indisputable. Dorothea could not possibly have remained ignorant of Birgitta's life and mysticism when the holy woman's remains were transferred from Rome to Sweden in 1373, the year following her death. The cortege, consisting of Birgitta's two confessors, her daughter Catherine [later St. Catherine], several nuns from Wadstena, and a number of Swedish noblemen carrying the casket on poles, left Rome on December 2, 1373, and after braving many hardships, arrived in Danzig in the middle of winter.¹⁷⁷ The Baltic Sea was frozen solid, so the travellers were detained in Danzig for several months and did not reach Sweden until the end of June, 1374.¹⁷⁸ While the high master of the Teutonic Knights, Winrich von Kniprode, who had come from Marienburg to pay homage to Birgitta's remains, entertained his distinguished guests with banquets and other festivities, the casket containing Birgitta's bones was deposited in St. Mary's Church, guarded by the Teutonic Knights. Birgitta's daughter used the long stay in Danzig to preach to the populace about her mother's holy life, religious fervor, and political ideals. At this time, Dorothea was daily spending many hours praying at St. Mary's. It was therefore impossible for her not to have seen Birgitta's relics while they were deposited there. Since much of Birgitta's criticism of the Teutonic Knights, reiterated privately and publicly by her daughter, later

¹⁷⁷Eimer, p. 90.

¹⁷⁸Jorgensen, II, p. 306.

reappears in Dorothea's political visions, it is likely she heard at least some of Catherine's sermons as well.¹⁷⁹

Dorothea's initial exposure to the life and mysticism of Birgitta was reinforced continuously by a variety of events. In 1390, for instance, the religious fervor stirred up in Prussia by Birgitta's funeral cortege and Catherine's sermons was rekindled by the Swedish commission travelling with great acclaim through Danzig and Prussia to participate in Birgitta's canonization in Rome.¹⁸⁰ A lay brotherhood in honor of Birgitta and her religious principles was established that same year.¹⁸¹ In the spring of that year, which Pope Urban VI had declared a year of jubilee, Dorothea was on pilgrimage in Rome, where Birgitta had spent the last two decades of her life and where the final preparations for her canonization (October 9, 1391) were in full swing. In 1392 the first nuns from Wadstena arrived in Danzig to negotiate the foundation of a daughter house for Birgitta's order. This convent, Marienbrunn, was officially founded by a charter of the high master of the Teutonic Knights, Konrad von Jungingen, on

¹⁷⁹Eimer, pp. 212-13. After the Teutonic Knights had failed to respond to Birgitta's numerous exhortations to undertake new crusades, she accused them of having outlived their avowed purpose--the conversion of the heathen in eastern Europe. Her daughter Catherine revived these charges, and after accusing their Order of having fallen prey to pride, greed, and gluttony, called for a total reform of its program, organization, and administration. Dorothea later reiterated these sentiments, charging the Order with having produced few devout and saintly men. In the Septililium, for example, God orders her to mourn for the lack of saints among the Knights and the impossibility for a man to become saintly as long as he is a member of that organization.

¹⁸⁰Schleiff, p. 18.

¹⁸¹Eimer, p. 90.

July 24, 1394, exactly a month after Dorothea's death.¹⁸² Perhaps Dorothea would never have become an anchoress at Marienwerder had Marienbrunn been established in time for her to enter the Birgittine convent instead. Her long-time confessor, Nikolaus von Hohenstein, who finally advised Dorothea to remove to Marienwerder and put herself under the spiritual tutelage of Johannes Marienwerder was himself an ardent admirer of Birgitta and a strident supporter of her order.¹⁸³

Johannes Marienwerder's own admiration of St. Birgitta also encouraged and supported Dorothea's veneration of the Swedish saint. Birgitta's Revelations began circulating in Prussia soon after her death in 1373. Representatives of the Teutonic Knights had copied them in Rome in 1379 during the first investigations concerning Birgitta's sanctity under the supervision of Cardinal Turrecremata, who was in charge of the proceedings.¹⁸⁴ Johannes Marienwerder studied them extensively in 1392, the year after Birgitta's

¹⁸²Richard Stachnik, "Die Klosterchronik von St. Brigitten in Danzig," Zeitschrift für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ermlands, 30 (1956), 63-119; hereafter cited as "Die Klosterchronik." The first nuns took their vows in Marienbrunn on December 8, 1396. But since all Birgittine convents housed both men and women, Marienbrunn was actually completed only with the establishment of its brother convent in 1397. At that time the mother convent of Wadstena gave its legal recognition of the daughter convent by sending relics of St. Birgitta to Marienbrunn. The first monks moved into their section of the convent on March 5, 1400.

¹⁸³Eimer, p. 180. The author discusses Nikolaus von Hohenstein's expertise on St. Birgitta and her order of St. Savior, which caused him to be commissioned to design a reform program for Marienbrunn in 1416 by the then-reigning high master of the Teutonic Knights.

¹⁸⁴Funk, p. 17.

canonization.¹⁸⁵ His familiarity with St. Birgitta's mysticism has even led some scholars to suspect that many of the obvious similarities in the visions of these two women as well as in the vocabulary which records them may be more a result of Johann Marienwerder's own intimate knowledge of St. Birgitta's Revelations than of Dorothea's dictations.¹⁸⁶

But even the most notable similarities are not necessarily the product of Johannes Marienwerder's intentional manipulation of Dorothea's visions. Through events in Danzig, Dorothea was already familiar with certain traits of Birgitta's mysticism before coming to Marienwerder in the fall of 1391. Therefore, many experiences and

¹⁸⁵Schleiff, p. 56.

¹⁸⁶Schleiff, p. 58. "Vielleicht stammt aber der öftere Anklang, den die Überlieferung von Dorothea an Brigitta hat, auch mehr aus der Feder Johann Marienwerders als von der Klausnerin selbst."

Incidentally, Johannes Marienwerder's expertise on St. Birgitta's mysticism found full application only toward the end of his career. After Dorothea's death and after having completed his numerous works on her life and visions, he spent a considerable amount of time editing the Revelations for use by the Prussian clergy. Johannes Mönch, the bishop of Pomesania, had previously edited Birgitta's advice to and admonition of various secular and religious bodies in three volumes, one of which addressed itself specifically to the prelates, one to the clergy, and one to the Teutonic Knights. He commissioned Johannes Marienwerder to produce yet another volume. This edition, which was completed sometime before Mönch's death in 1409, gathered Birgitta's widely scattered visions of Christ's life, the Virgin, and mankind's ultimate fate in eighty chapters, ordering them into a harmonious whole. Mönch intended this volume to aid the clergy in preparing their sermons against the heretical ideas which invaded Prussia from Bohemia (Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 86). In accordance with his wishes, the book soon formed the basis for sermons preached throughout the territories of the Teutonic Knights. Johannes Marienwerder thus helped to disseminate Birgitta's religious and political concepts to all levels of the population (Funk, pp. 17-18).

visions reminiscent of Birgitta's are probably the result of Dorothea's own efforts to emulate a woman who had led an exemplary life and whose difficulties in trying to lead the life of a saint she understood so well. Furthermore, the tone of Johannes Marienwerder's insistence on having recorded as faithfully and as correctly as possible what Dorothea dictated to him goes beyond the formulaic rhetoric so prominent in medieval writing. His prologue to Des Leben, for instance, betrays an urgency, even an anxiety to be believed in every detail:

Therefore, be silent, you man of the senses, or you who contradict the works of God which are unknown to you. . . . Be not suspicious, thinking she or I were so neglectful of our salvation that we, risking eternal harm and perdition, knowingly have spoken or written falsehood. Truly, we have no cause for such a deed because, if we, as St. Peter says, were to hope for Christ only in this life, we would be the very poorest among all mankind. Therefore, do not act as a judge who condemns a man unjustly before realizing his injustice. Therefore, before doing thus, read her life humbly and diligently and consider well the words and works the almighty God has wrought in her. . . . Accept the instruction and testimony of those who knew her well while she dwelled here with us and of those honest people to whom God showed mercy through her after her death. And if you cannot get satisfaction from them, prove honestly, if you can, that what is written about her in this book is untrue. Give your reply in writing and let it be known whether it is based on the holy Scriptures, on reason, on sincere love for the true faith, or whether it is based on envy, ill will, and a reliance on your own intellect.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷Des Leben, p. 198. "Und dorumme, du vylicher mensche, ader du widersprecher der werk gotis, die dir unbekentlich syn, swig und verstumme; . . . biz nicht so arkdenkig, das du wenist, daz sy adir ich unsers heyles also vorgessende syn, das wir welden sagen adir schriben eyne unwarheit mit wissen zcu unserm ewigen schaden und vortympnis, des hette wir yo nyrkeyne sache, wenne wir hoffende in Cristo, als sente Paul spricht, nor in disem keginwortigen leben, so were wir undir allin menschin dy aller dorftigisten. Bis nicht als

This and similar defensive statements throughout Des Leben suggest that Johannes Marienwerder was under great pressure to produce an account of Dorothea's life that would withstand attack. According to Hipler, the challenge contained in the prologue was addressed to a specific heretical preacher who had sought to discredit both Dorothea and her confessor for a long time.¹⁸⁸ This preacher, whom Johannes Marienwerder simply refers to as an "oblator" whose preaching is "the barking of a mad dog" and who "devours himself with his crazy barking, disturbing the peace of those who want to hear"¹⁸⁹ [the truth about Dorothea's life], was probably the so-called "Doctor Leander." Simon Grunau, in his Preussische Chronik, describes this "Doctor Leander" as a French heretic, "a physician and mathematician," who for a long time had been urging church reforms in

eyn richter, der e eynen menschin unrecht teylet, e wen her syne sache unrecht irkennet. Dorumme lis vor demuticlich und vlysslich ire leben, und weg wol wort und werk, di der almechtige got mit ir getan hoth; . . . nym undirwisunge und gezcugnis von den, di sie recht gekant han, di wile sie hy mit uns was, und von redelichen menschen, den der herre gnade getan hat noch irme tode durch sie! Und kan dir nicht genug geschen von den selbin, so bewise du redelich daz is unwor sy, daz von ir geschriben ist in disem buche, ab du macht! Gib beschriben dine widdersrede und laz luten, ab sie ge uz eyne grunde der heiligin schrift oder der vornunft und uz rechter lybe des rechten geloubin, oder uz eyne grunde des nydes oder der abegunst und getruwen eyns eygen synnes!"

¹⁸⁸Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 79.

¹⁸⁹Des Leben, p. 198. "Hirumme, daz ir icht gehindert werdit an uwer selikeit, keret uch nicht an ir vorsmeher und vorachter und an ir unredelichen widersprecher, wen ir widerkeuelen ist nicht me zcu achtin, wen als eyn bal eyns wutenden hundes, der sich selbin vorzcert mit syme unvornumftigen bellen, und hindirt di horer an ir ru!"

Prussia.¹⁹⁰ As far back as 1391, Leander had challenged the Prussian clergy to a debate of his church-reform program. If, as it appears, Johannes Marienwerder's works on Dorothea were meant to help defeat Leander's "heretical" ideas concerning clergy and church, it seems unlikely that the author tampered with the content of Dorothea's visions because a learned opponent like Leander might be able to expose such fraud. Although Johannes Marienwerder no doubt deepened Dorothea's knowledge of St. Birgitta's mystical experiences, the only parallel to Birgitta's Revelations that can safely be ascribed to him concerns the format of the narrative and certain items of vocabulary. Clearly, he perceived Dorothea as a saintly woman as gifted as Birgitta and cast himself, as Birgitta's two confessors had done, into the role of the holy woman's spiritual mentor and biographer. Like Birgitta's Revelations, Des Leben is written as a third person narrative, and throughout, Dorothea, like Birgitta, is simply referred to as "the bride."

Furthermore, Johannes Marienwerder's writings about Dorothea by no means show Dorothea to be merely a slavish imitator of the Swedish saint. This is most obvious in a vision of Christ's passion described in the Liber de festis, which departs markedly from Birgitta's. According to Birgitta, Jesus' hands and feet were nailed to the cross

¹⁹⁰Anneliese Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt, Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens (1391-1393), im Spiegel der Quellen über Dorothea von Montau," Zeitschrift für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ermlands, 34 (1970), 26; hereafter cited as "Konrad von Wallenrodt." The Preussische Chronik was written about 1525 by the Dominican monk Simon Grunau. It is based on an earlier chronicle, the Dominikanische Chronik of Elbing.

with four nails, and the lance which pierced his side also pierced his heart. In Dorothea's vision, three nails pierce the hands and feet, and the thrust of the lance leaves the heart undamaged.¹⁹¹ When Johannes Marienwerder drew her attention to this discrepancy, Dorothea insisted she could only report what she had seen, regardless of how much her own revelations differed from those of others. She instructed him to concern himself only with the veracity of her visions with respect to the Bible, and to eradicate only items contradicting the Holy Scriptures so that on her account no error would ever confound the faithful.¹⁹² Accordingly, Johannes Marienwerder left Dorothea's vision unaltered, although, as Hipler observes, he must have done so with great reservations since it contradicted the revelations of a celebrated, newly canonized saint.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 69.

¹⁹²Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 69.

¹⁹³Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," pp. 69-70. In a footnote Hipler mentions a flagellant hymn of the fourteenth century, entitled "Sünder, womit wilt du mir lonen, Drei Nägel und ein Dornenkronen," which may provide a clue to the origin of Dorothea's vision. In the German biography Johannes Marienwerder tells his readers how eagerly Dorothea had welcomed beggars, migrating folk, and the poor to her parents' home in Montau, learning poems and songs from them: "Als gar sundirliche libe hatte si zcu den armen, das sie yn ire vuze wusch, und bette in selben, und mit yn zcu sin und redin was ir eyne sunderliche lust und vreude. Und was di selige Dorothea gebetis odir ynnige lyde von den armen lernen mochte, dy tichte sy in ir, und sprach und sang di nacht und tag gote zcu lobe mit andirn erem gutin gebete" (Des Leben, p. 207). It is therefore likely that in this notable departure from the vision of her model, Dorothea was inspired by the hymns of the flagellants who roamed the countryside in her childhood.

Birgitta's influence on Dorothea shows itself most potently in Dorothea's eschatological visions. Birgitta had had numerous visions about the fate of individuals after their death and had often been invited to witness the last judgment of a departed soul. Dorothea experienced such visions less frequently, but like Birgitta's, hers were terrifying and produced far-reaching political effects. One man whose reputation she thoroughly destroyed by reporting to have seen his soul tormented in hell was one of the high masters of the Teutonic Knights, Konrad von Wallenrodt.¹⁹⁴ Only two years after his election, Wallenrodt, a very energetic, capable man, died suddenly on July 23, 1391, of what appears to have been rabies, without receiving the sacraments. Whereas the oldest contemporary chronicles of Wigand von Marburg and Johannes von Posilge describe his reign in favorable terms, later chronicles compare him to Julian the Apostate and condemn him as one of the most shameful rulers of the Teutonic Knights. The Chronica terrae Prussiae, for example, states: "In the year 1391 brother Konrad Wallenrodt, who because of his morals and his tyranny was called a Julian, was elected as high master. He made an evil start on the feastday of the holy pope Gregory as he also came to a horrible end in 1393 A.D. on the day of the holy apostle St. James. Praise and honor be to God that we were delivered from the tyrant."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 43.

¹⁹⁵Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 25. "Anno 1391 frater Conradus Walleroder, dictus a moribus et tyrannide Julianus, electus fuit in magistrum generalem, et male intravit ipso die sancti Gregorii papae; qui et pessimus obiit anno domini 93 ipso festo sancti Jacobi apostoli. De laus et gloria, quod liberati sumus a tyrannide."

As the appellation Julian the Apostate suggests, Dorothea's vision of Wallenrodt's soul being tortured in hell is a result of the high master's struggle with the Prussian clergy. Even before being elected to the office of high master, Wallenrodt retained the previously mentioned Doctor Leander as his closest advisor. Leander presumably came into Prussia from Bohemia where Wycliff's ideas were beginning to flourish. He found a receptive listener in Wallenrodt who apparently shared his contempt for the clergy. Accordingly, the high master, "a very willful man [who] . . . despised the priesthood, for he called all of them knaves,"¹⁹⁶ during his first year in office allowed Leander to challenge the Catholic clergy throughout Prussia to a disputation of his program for church reform, a mixture of Albigensian and Wycliffite ideas.¹⁹⁷ The loser was to be committed to the flames. Thereupon the incensed clergy wanted to burn Leander as a heretic, but this attempt came to nothing because of Wallenrodt's protection: "For this they wanted to kill him, but he escaped and became that high master's angel."¹⁹⁸ After attempting to deprive the cathedral chapter of Marienwerder of real estate, Wallenrodt in January of 1393 tried to remove Dorothea from Marienwerder. At the

¹⁹⁶Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 26, quoting the Preussische Chronik, written about 1525 by the Dominican monk Simon Grunau. It is based on an earlier chronicle, the Dominikanische Chronik of Elbing. "Dieser homeister war ein seer eigenwilliger man und ein verachter der briesterschafft, dan er sie alle nannte hundesbuben."

¹⁹⁷Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," pp. 27-28, lists part of the program.

¹⁹⁸Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 27, quoting Simon Grunau. "Darumb wolt man in totten, aber er entgiengs und wart dises homeisters engel."

time Dorothea was still waiting to be enclosed, and Wallenrodt and Leander, in their struggle to curtail the growing power of the clergy, probably foresaw what prestige the canons of Marienwerder especially would gain by harboring Prussia's first female recluse in their cathedral. Obviously this attempt came to nothing since Dorothea, perhaps through the intercession of Johannes Rymann, who was one of Wallenrodt's legal advisors, was enclosed in Marienwerder later that year.¹⁹⁹

Wallenrodt payed dearly for his efforts to restrain the power and prestige of the Prussian clergy. First, Dorothea predicted his sudden death ten days in advance, and although supposedly only Johannes Marienwerder knew about it, this prediction spread rapidly and became widely accepted as proof of Dorothea's ability to predict future events. When he did die, as the Ältere Hochmeisterchronik reports, the clergy denied him the last sacraments: "Priests and monks he despised greatly; therefore, none of them wanted to come to his comfort at the

¹⁹⁹Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 39.

Günter Grass's novel Der Butt presents Dorothea's enclosure at Marienwerder cathedral as a conspiracy of the secular and ecclesiastical powers of Prussia who wished to rid Danzig of a nuisance and at the same time gain a profitable saint for their realm. According to his version of the event, Johannes Marienwerder meets with the representatives of the city of Danzig and of the Teutonic Knights in Dorothea's house to settle the matter. While they are eating the Norwegian herring Dorothea has "tastily" fried in a mixture of flour and ashes, they agree on how to silence this troublesome dupe. According to Grass, all goes well, except for Johannes Marienwerder's miscalculation concerning Dorothea's resilience. He was certain that a diet reduced to the communion wafer parceled out once a day would speedily rid the cathedral of this noisy screamer. Instead, he and the brothers had to endure her hystics for more than a year.

time of his death."²⁰⁰ But of most lasting damage to his reputation was Dorothea's vision of his soul in hell, described in great detail in the Liber de festis. Several weeks after Wallenrodt's death, five lords of hell, leading his soul between them, came into her cell, showing her whose soul it was, its condition, and its sufferings. Then they hastily departed with it, rejoicing over it as if dividing booty among themselves. For four days in a row Dorothea saw his soul in hell, bound hand and foot, covered by eternal fire which was removed just long enough for her to see it blackened as an Ethiopian, tormented by the heat of the fire, the pitchforks of the demons stoking the fire, and their horrid countenances. Dorothea herself was so frightened by these visions that she resolved to tell no one about them. God, however, ordered her to reveal all she had seen: "Reveal with many tears the death of this soul, whose separation of the body you knew ten days in advance through my revelation, but which I did not allow you to report."²⁰¹ Dorothea's publicly branding Wallenrodt as a damned heretic, cowed into silence, at least for the time being, those among the Teutonic Knights who may have supported Wallenrodt's desire for church reform in Prussia. As Simon Grunau's Preussische

²⁰⁰Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 23. "Prister und monche vorechte her sere, doromme mochte em keyner an seynem ende czu troste komen."

²⁰¹Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 31, translating from the Liber de festis: "'Offenbare du mit vielen Tränen den Tod dieser Seele, deren Trennung vom Körper du durch meine Offenbarung zehn Tage vorhergewusst hast, was ich dir aber nicht erlaubte, weiterzusagen.'" The Latin account of this vision comprises several chapters of the Liber de festis. Max Toeppen gives the Latin account in the appendix to his edition of Des Leben in the Scriptores rerum Prussicarum, II, pp. 371-74.

Chronik points out, "she told it to the brothers [the Teutonic Knights], who were much alarmed, but there was no remedy for it and they had to keep utterly silent."²⁰²

Doctor Leander was also utterly vanquished. His challenge of 1391 to the Prussian clergy was answered at last, several years after the horrible death of his protector. About the year 1400 Johannes Marienwerder had completed his scholastic refutation of contemporary heresies, the Expositio symboli apostolorum, in which Dorothea is presented as the only contemporary recipient of genuinely divine revelations.²⁰³ Thus, this work, along with Johannes Marienwerder's other works on Dorothea, was composed to refute as vicious and unfounded Leander's attacks on Dorothea, her confessor, and her admirers. As Anneliese Triller points out, the introduction clearly spells out the ultimate purpose of this tract. It was intended to silence Leander once and for all and to destroy his reform program with him: "Even in Marienwerder, which because of its teaching the proper doctrine in the sermons should have been the last place for any error to raise its head, a man appeared who, living swinishly, took it upon himself to devise a new creed and erred in many other respects as well."²⁰⁴ The planned disputation, however, never took place because

²⁰²Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 27. "Unnd sie es sagte den brüdern, sie wol erschracken, sonnder da war keine besserung daraus, unnd sie mussten stille schweigen gantz."

²⁰³Eimer, p. 180.

²⁰⁴Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 39, quoting Johannes Marienwerder. "In Marienwerder quoque, ubi propter sanam doctrinam ibi in praedicatione frequentatam minus debet aliquid erroris surgere, quidam bestialiter quodammodo vivens et de se praesumens unum symbolum de novo confinxit, in alius quam pluribus erravit."

of Leander's unexpected sudden death: "The doctor traveled to Marienwerder for the disputation. But when he came to the brickyard on the outskirts of Marienwerder, he had to drown there in a deep clay pit and had to remain there."²⁰⁵ The emphatic phrasing of this incident in Preussische Chronik, "he had to drown there," and "he had to remain there," reflects the Prussian clergy's obvious satisfaction with such singularly convenient divine intervention which vindicated them and their cause completely by causing the troublesome "heretic" to suffer such a humiliating end.

In spite of Dorothea's indebtedness, Des Leben mentions Birgitta by name only once. On All Saints' Eve after vespers when Dorothea was in her cell enjoying a vision of the joys of the saints in heaven, she did not want to eat any supper for fear the vision would fade. But God admonished her to keep her body fit and healthy in order to maintain the physical strength necessary for sustaining her exhausting spiritual labors:

You must nourish yourself on account of the great inner labor; if you did not do so, you would have to fear losing your reason for lack of food. Get up now and nourish your body. Eat and drink! Thus I have often commanded St. Birgitta to eat and drink and to strengthen her body, so she might live on earth in my service all the more strongly.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵Triller, "Konrad von Wallenrodt," p. 28, quoting Simon Grunau. "uund der doctor zog gehm Marierwerder zu der disputation, aber er quam bei der ziegelscheune vor Marienwerder und da muste er ertrincken im dieffen leimgraben, und musste so bleiben da."

²⁰⁶Des Leben, pp. 257-58. "Nu abir mustu dich labin durch der grosen ynnern arbeyt wilen; wen tetistu des nicht, du must dich besorgen, das du von dem abeczyen der speise deyne vornufft icht vorsirist und mochtist vorlisen deyne vornunfft. Nu ste uff unde speyse deynen

God's reference to St. Birgitta served as a particularly powerful reassurance that extreme fasting was neither demanded of a servant of God nor a particularly effective means of service. Upon hearing this, Dorothea got up immediately and ate some cold fish left over from a previous meal. But when the little boy in charge of serving her brought a meal of fresh fish, enticingly seasoned with saffron, Dorothea looked at it a little too longingly and ate of it a little too heartily. That night, as a punishment for her fleshly appetites, God withheld all the customary spiritual comforts. Instead, he sent her a vision of that meal, forcing her to look at it for two hours, reminding her that "he who looks to my comfort and waits for it, shall receive it; but he who is concerned with bodily cares has to forego spiritual and heavenly comfort."²⁰⁷

Surprisingly, Des Leben does not mention two of the most important references to St. Birgitta found elsewhere in Johannes Marienwerder's records of Dorothea's visions. The Liber de festis describes one of the decisive events in Dorothea's spiritual life, the piercing of her heart with God's arrows, as being preceded by a vision of St. Birgitta's embracing Dorothea:

I [God], moreover, . . . showed to you my open side and my open heart so that from the rest it may be easily noted by you where you may find my heart and wound it with the spears of love. Now with the arrow of love you shoot into

ley, is und trinck! Alzo habe ich uffte dy heilige Brigida geheisen essen und trinckin und crefftin iren leip, das sy mocht diste crefftiger leben in meinem dinste uf ertreych."

²⁰⁷Des Leben, p. 259. "Wer noch meynem trost syt und des beytit, dem wil ich meynen trost gebin; wer aber genug leypliche sorge hat, der mus geystlichs und hymmelische trostis entpern."

me, drawing me off to you, for I submit to this so gladly that you draw and seize me, just as you gladly suffer my abduction and my drawing you. Furthermore, when the lady Birgitta was living here on earth, I was in such agreement of will with her that arrows of love were shot into her by me, and in the same manner arrows of love were sent back into me by her.

But the holy woman, hearing this, vehemently desired to know whether it could be that even now there were such men on earth with whom the Lord united himself thus, just as he had done with St. Birgitta, so that he, by shooting them often with arrows, wounded them. Then the Lord most holy, agreeing to her desire, allowed her, herself illuminated divinely, to roam in spirit far and wide in order to find out if she could find such a man anywhere.

When she had searched diligently and had found no one, St. Birgitta with a beautiful and severe countenance and with wonderful amicability appeared to her, not as a mortal human being, but as a divine shape, that is, more similar to a god than a man. In her presence she revealed herself so lovingly as if out of friendship she wanted to take her into her tender arms. With an enticing face, beautifully smiling, she departed. This done, the Lord soon shot the saintly heart through with arrows. This he did so powerfully that she was not strong enough to think further about St. Birgitta, but she was given over to contemplation of her lord in his excellence.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸Toeppen, "Beilage," p. 368. "Ego enim propter hoc ostendi latus meum tibi apertum et cor meum patulum, ut de cetero tibi de facili sit notum, ubi possis cor meum invenire et amoris cuspidibus vulnerare. Nunc sagitta amoris sagittas in me trahens me et rapiens ad te, hoc enim ita libenter suscipio, quod me trahas et rapias, sicut tu libenter suscipis meos raptus atque tractus. Porro cum domina Birgitta hic super terram vivente fui in tali secum concordata voluntate, quod amoris sagitte in eam sagittabantur a me, at ab ea equo modo transmittabantur in me amoris sagitte. At sancta hoc audiens, vehementer desideravit scire, an adhuc homines in terra tales essent, cum quibus dominus sic se univit, prout cum sancta Birgitta, ut eos frequenter sagittando vulneraret. Tunc dominus piissimus ejus desiderio condescendens ipsam divinitus illustratam permisit longe lateque terram in spiritu discurrere, ut quereret, si alicubi hominem talem reperire posset. Que dum diligenter quesivisset et neminem invenisset, sancta Birgitta facie pulchra et severa et amicitate mira ei apparuit, non ut homo mortalis, sed ut deiformis, id est plus deo quam homini similis. In sua ita amice se exhibuit presencia, ac si ex amicitia eam suscipere vellet inter brachia delicata; pulchre vultu blando ei arridens disparuit. Quo facto dominus cor sancte sagittis mox transsagittavit. Hoc egit tam valide, quod amplius sanctam Birgittam non valuit considerare, sed contemplabatur dominum suum in sua bonitate."

Likewise, Des Leben omits Dorothea's vision of St. Birgitta a few days before her death. On five consecutive days during the week preceding her death, Dorothea had visions of great processions of Christ and all the saints of heaven visiting her in her cell. Des Leben describes these processions in considerable detail, but it does not specifically mention St. Birgitta, who in the Vita Latina is clearly set apart from all the other saints, beckoning Dorothea to follow her to heaven: "She saw the Lord and the blessed Birgitta reveal themselves amicably to her. St. Birgitta was seen to act in such a way as if she soon wanted to draw her to herself in body and soul. The Lord told her many things about St. Birgitta."²⁰⁹ Dorothea considered these visions

²⁰⁹Toeppen, "Noten," p. 258. "Vidit dominum et beatam Birgittam circa se multum amabiliter se exhibere; sancta Birgitta videbatur sic agere, ac si eam mox vellet ad se rapere cum anima et corpore; multa dominus ei dixit de sancta Brigida."

Dorothea, in many respects the spiritual daughter of St. Birgitta, did leave traces of her own mysticism in Sweden, the home land of her famous predecessor. Two of the surviving "Schreinmadonnas," for example, are in Swedish churches. Furthermore, in 1404, ten years after Dorothea's death, Sten Bentsson, the most powerful Swedish nobleman in the province of Södermanland, endowed the cathedral of Strängnäs with a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, possibly as a gesture of gratitude to the Teutonic Knights who had established themselves in Strängnäs but had no place of worship of their own. What is important about this chapel is that it contains two cells for recluses which conform in every detail to Dorothea's specifications for her own cell in Marienwerder. Like Dorothea's cell, they each have three windows, one of which faces the altar of the chapel to allow the recluse to witness the mass, one of which faces the outside to furnish the recluse with food and other necessities, and the last of which looks up into the sky to provide light. Like Dorothea's cell they both contain wall niches, and the wall paintings in the chapel proper are based on scenes in Dorothea's visions. One wall even contains a painting of a "Schreinmadonna." Although it cannot be ascertained whether these cells were actually inhabited, it is obvious that Dorothea, the first anchoress in the territories ruled by the Teutonic Knights, introduced the concept of living the life of a recluse to a country not yet familiar with such practice (Eimer, pp. 92-94).

important manifestations of her impending removal to heaven; it is therefore most surprising that this important detail of her model's assurance that she soon would be among the saints was left out of the vernacular account of Dorothea's life, especially since St. Birgitta was so well-known and highly venerated in Prussia.

Vitally important to Dorothea's development as a mystic were her pilgrimages, especially those to Einsiedeln (also called Finsterwald) in Switzerland. In 1384 both husband and wife, having lived chastely together for four years, decided to travel to Aachen to see the relics collected there:

When all their children except for one daughter had died, they sold their house and household goods, renounced all earthly vanities to serve God with an unfettered spirit, committed their remaining possessions into other people's safekeeping, and in the thirty-eighth year of the blessed Dorothea's life went to Aachen for Whitsuntide. Their only remaining daughter, Dorothea committed to the care of her spiritual friends. After they had concluded their pilgrimage to Aachen, they journeyed on to the hermits at Finsterwald to chapel of Our Dear Lady.²¹⁰

In the hermitic community of Finsterwald Dorothea found a religious environment favorable to her spiritual needs. The first hermitic community had been established there around the hermitage of St. Meinrad who had been murdered by robbers in 861. After Meinrad's death, his hermitage became a shrine known as "St. Mary's of

²¹⁰Des Leben, p. 228. "Do alle ir kinder gestorbin, bis uf eyne tochtir, do vorkouftin sy hus und husrot und unslugen sich aller eitilkeyt der werlde, of daz sy gote mit fryen gemute dynen mochtin, und in dem achtunddriczigisten jore der seligen Dorothea zcu pfingisten gingen sy kegin Ouche und obirgobin alle habe und mog; sundir di eynige tochtir beful sy den frunden, und me den geistlichin wen den fleslichein. Do sy zcu Ouche ire betevart geleist hatten, do wandirtin sy zcu den eynsediln, Vinsterwald genant, zcu unsir liben vrouwen capellen."

the Hermits," or "Einsiedeln" for short. In the late fourteenth century there were still a number of hermits living there, most of them in communal houses. According to Westpfahl, Dorothea was especially attracted to Finsterwald's four communal houses for devout women. These women acquainted Dorothea with Mechthild von Magdeburg's work Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit, whose mystical language and metaphors exerted an important influence on Dorothea.²¹¹ When it was time for Dorothea and Adalbert to return to Aachen and from there to Danzig, Dorothea had difficulty tearing herself away from Finsterwald. She had become so enamored of the Chapel of Our Dear Lady that she returned to it three times from great distances while they were already on their way back to Aachen: "On this same journey the blessed Dorothea came a third time to the chapel of Our Lady at Einsiedeln to tighten the knot three-fold, which was to dedicate herself to the service of Mary, the venerable Empress [of Heaven] and Mother of Mercy."²¹²

This journey to Einsiedeln crystalized Dorothea's desire to spend her life in total seclusion from the affairs of the world. There were no hermits in Prussia; Dorothea became Prussia's first recluse when she was finally enclosed in Marienwerder in 1393.

²¹¹Hans Westpfahl, Dorothea von Montau (Meitingen: Kyrios Verlag, 1949), pp. 38-39; hereafter cited as D.v.M.

²¹²Des Leben, p. 229. "und in der selbin reyse quam di selige Dorothea zcum dritten mol zcu unsir vrouwen capelle czun eynsediln, of daz sy einen vestin knotin drivach strickte, sich zcu vorbinden zcu dinste Marien, der aller wirdigesten keyserynne und mutir der gnoden."

The novelty to the Prussian laity of the concept of living the hermitic life is clearly apparent in the pathetic response of Dorothea's own mother to her daughter's decision to become an anchoress:

When after the blessed Dorothea's enclosure her mother was told that her daughter had been walled into a cell at the church of Marienwerder, she was greatly distressed and cried, and she would say with tears in her eyes to those speaking to her about this matter: "Oh, what great sin has she committed that she wanted to be locked away? They say only very great sinners are thus locked away."²¹³

But along the Rhine and in Switzerland many devout laymen were living as hermits, or, as the name "Einsiedeln" suggests, in hermitic communities under the spiritual supervision of the Dominicans,²¹⁴ and Dorothea was so taken with this kind of religious community that she urged Adalbert to settle there permanently. Consequently, in the summer of 1385, a year after their first pilgrimage to Einsiedeln, Adalbert once more

settled his affairs and disposed of his property, and on the feast of St. Lawrence left for Aachen with his wife Dorothea and his youngest daughter, the only one who remained to him, and intended . . . to remain in a town named Finsterwald in order to serve God with more leisure. This pilgrimage was an important event for Dorothea who had urged her husband to move to the above-mentioned town

²¹³Des Leben, p. 289. "is geschach noch der zeligen Dorothea beslissing, do ir natürlichen muttir wart gesagt, das ir dochtir Dorothea wer beslossen in einer clausin czu Marienwerdir in der kirchen, des wart sy betrübit, und weinte und pflag czu sprechen mit weynendin ougin czu den, dy das rettin vor ir: Eya! was groszir sunde hat sy gethon, das sy sich hot wellin beslissen? Man sprycht, das man nicht wen grose sundir pfeleget czu beslissen."

²¹⁴Westpfahl, D.v.M., p. 41.

with her because she had hopes of winning him there much more successfully to the service of God.²¹⁵

But political events prevented Dorothea's hopes of leading a secluded life in Einsiedeln from materializing. The Swiss confederates were trying to free themselves from their Habsburg overlords, which resulted in constant warfare.²¹⁶ "During the year and a half they stayed there, the people were much disturbed by war and hostility. When the enemies came or when it was said that now they would come, the bells were rung, the people rushed together, sometimes running into the church, sometimes running from the church, and there was much weeping, clamor, unrest, and wailing."²¹⁷ Food became scarce and expensive, and Adalbert wanted to return to Danzig because he found it increasingly difficult to provide for his family. Dorothea, however, was so delighted at the prospect of living the life of a beggar for the sake of God that she wanted to stay behind. The thought of remaining

²¹⁵Des Leben, pp. 240-41. "Und doromme schickte her syn ding und bestalte syn gut und zcog by dem fest sente Laurencii mit siner husvrouwen Dorothee und mit syner eynigen jungisten tochtir, dy ym blebin was, zcu Oche und meynete zcu bliben, als her tet, an eyner stat, di heyst Vinstirwalt, das her mochte gerulichir gote dienen. Des wandirns was Dorothea eyne grose sache, di irn wirt dozcu gehalten hatte, das her mit ir an di vorgenante stat zcoge, wen sy hatte des eyne hoffenunge, das sy en do mochte gote bas zcu dienste gewynnen."

²¹⁶The decisive battle of Sempach, in which the Swiss confederates were victorious and the Habsburg duke Leopold III was killed, took place on July 9, 1386.

²¹⁷Des Leben, p. 244. "Bynnen den andirhalbem jore, di wile sy do worn dorch des orlogs willen und zcweytracht, di do was, wart dicke das folk irschreckt; wen di vinde quamen, odir wen man saite, das sy itzunt wurden komen, so loute man zcu storme, und di lute liffen zcu enandir, itzunt in dy kirche, itzunt uz der kirche, und wart vil weynens, schreyns, unru, und klayns hyn und her von den menschin."

alone and destitute in a religious community so congenial to her own religious fervor, "far away from her worldly friends," pleased her immensely: "She laughed loudly and practiced aloud the words with which she was going to beg for bread by going from one house to another, crying 'bread for the sake of our dear Lord.'"²¹⁸ Adalbert agreed at first, but he changed his mind. He revoked their agreement of separation before the priest who was to draw up the certificate which would have made their decision legal. Thereupon the priest ordered Dorothea to return to Danzig with Adalbert because "it was not permissible for one marriage partner to leave the other against his will."²¹⁹ Dorothea obeyed, but she never abandoned her ultimate goal of living a life of complete seclusion dedicated to the service of God.

²¹⁸Des Leben, p. 245. "Is geschach, do sy worn gewest andirhalb jor zcum Vinstirwalde, und di turunge obirhant nam, und di zcerunge yn zcu swer wart, do dochte der man wider heym zcu Prusen zcyn, und Dorothea vor grosir libe und begerunge weer gerne dort blebin dorch gots wille eyne arme betelerynne. Nu quamen sy mit eynandir obireyn und worden des eyns von ir beider guten willen, das Dorothea do blebe und her, der man, mit der tochtir zcoge heym zcu den synen und irn frunden. Und das sy des eynen brif gewunen von dem pfarrer zcu eyme gezugnis, doromme gingen sy beide do selbens zcum vorgenantin pharrer zcum Vinsterwalde. In der wile, als sy beitin des pfarers, waz Dorothea an irme gebete, und ir was gar lybe, daz sy solde da bliben verre von iren fleislichen fronden in dem elende. Do gab ir got so grose obirflutige geistliche wollust, das sy von grosin vroyden unde frolucken sich nicht mochte enthalden, sy muste lute lachen, und mit lutir stymme sprechen di wort, mit den sy willen hatte zu beten das brot von eyme huse zcu dem andirn, und sprach: Brot dorch unsirn liben herren."

²¹⁹Des Leben, p. 246. "Der pfarrer waz des wyse us der heiligin schrift, daz is nicht zcymlich were elichen menschen, daz eyns das andir lisse wedir synen willen, und doromme hilt er sy darzcu, das sy mit ime wider zcu lande zcoge."

The accounts of Dorothea's pilgrimages give inordinate attention to the many hardships she had to endure on these journeys and to the many miracles that delivered her from the perils she encountered. For example, as she and Adalbert were returning from Aachen, God prevented their being murdered by a greedy innkeeper.

One night they came to the inn of a wood turner who received them with an extremely friendly countenance, but secretly he readied his weapons for use against the peaceful guests, and he would have murdered them for their possessions had not God out of special mercy sent a carter. He came to the inn just at the right moment and out of true love for justice protected the strangers whose innocent blood the host wanted to spill.²²⁰

Another time, while they were staying in Einsiedeln, God provided sustenance for the totally impoverished family. As they resigned themselves to starve

a shopkeeper in another town not far away, who had seen Dorothea and her husband only twice, at God's urging sent three huge loaves of bread and a cask of wine that very day. When they saw this, they both thanked God. . . . The husband realized that this relief had not been given as a reward for his own merits, but for the sake of his wife Dorothea. Therefore he granted her permission to serve God without restriction and to keep on doing so. He promised he would from then on neither hinder her in her prayers nor be angry when she remained in prayer for a long time.²²¹

²²⁰Des Leben, p. 229. "Sundirlich quamen sy eyne zeit in eyne herberge eynes dreselers der sy entphing mit fruntlichem geberde von busen, sundir her bereite heymelich syne boshaftigen wofen kegin den vredesamen gesten und wolde sy um ir habe dimort han, hette got nicht von sundirlichin gnoden dor gesant eynen furman, der quam zcu hant gevorn und beschirmete di geste uz ernster libe der gerechtikeit, der unschuldig blut der schuldige wirt vorgissen wolde."

²²¹Des Leben, p. 245. "Eyne kromerynne in eynir stat, di do nicht verre von dannen lag, dy do kume zwer Dorotheam und irn man hatte geseen, dy sante yn dorch got desselbin tages dry grose brot und eyn gros legil vol wines. Do sy des sogen, do dankten sy beyde

There are many accounts of Dorothea's tribulations and miraculous deliverances in Johannes Marienwerder's description of her pilgrimage to Rome, which lasted from August 1389 until May 1390. After praying daily at the seven major churches of the Eternal City for eight weeks, Dorothea fell ill, not, as Des Leben insists, from infirmity of the body, but from love of God. "The illness lasted more than seven weeks, during which time she could neither walk nor stand and only seldom could she turn from one side to the other. She lay there incapable of moving and was left for dead by her neighbors and friends."²²² She was taken to a hospital where the attendants despaired for her life, but during the eighth week she miraculously recovered: "Behold, the physician who heals all our diseases had maintained her, had inwardly restored her with his love, and had removed her from all external matters. During her sickness he had filled her with great joys and had often tenderly embraced her soul. Now he gave her strength to get up . . . and her face, which had remained rosy, was healthier than before."²²³

gote. . . . Der man irkante do, das dise gutete nicht geschach dorch synes vordynen wille, sundir dorch Dorotheam wille siner husvrouwen, und doromme gap her ir vryen orlob, gote zcu dynen und des us zcu warten, ob sy lange worde darynne wonen."

²²²Des Leben, p. 265. "Dy kranckheyt werte öbir VII wochen, in der sy nicht mochte geen noch steen noch sich seldin von einer seitin uff dy ander wendin. Sy lag gleich ap sy sich nicht mochte bewegen, und wart von iren nestin und bekantin gelossen als ein toder."

²²³Des Leben, p. 265. "Nu seet uff den arczt, der do heylet alle unsir kranckeyt, der hatte sy inwending vorneüet mit seyner libe; her hatte sy ouch innewendig behaldin, und den eüstern dingen entzogin! Her hatte sy och in der kranckeyt irfullet mit grosen freüden, unde ire zele uffte senfftiglich umbfangen, und vorleig ir creffte sich wider uffzurichten . . . und was doch rot bliben an iren wangen und an irem antlicz bas geferberit den czuvor."

But she still could not walk. When she hired two strong men to carry her to St. Peter's where St. Veronica's handkerchief bearing the imprint of Christ's face was being exhibited, they abandoned her helpless and alone by the wayside. Convinced she would never again be able to walk, she begged on the steps of St. Peter's for her livelihood. But miraculously she recovered the use of her legs and was able to return to Danzig. Only in the last year of her life did God reveal his purpose in allowing her to suffer so acutely so far away from home:

Had you become as weak here as you did in Rome, you would have received comfort and aid from your family and would have paid no heed to this infirmity. But there, in misery, you were abandoned, uncomforted by your loved ones and you had no one who nursed you faithfully. Furthermore, I took all your strength with my love; I removed all your neighbors and friends and saw to it that your sustenance and all you had taken to provide for your needs was used up because it was my will to test and recognize the true limit of your devotion.²²⁴

Dorothea's pilgrimages to Einsiedeln had another important effect on her development as a mystic--they acquainted her with the so-called "Friends of God."²²⁵ Besides tempering her Brautmystik with the

²²⁴Des Leben, p. 266. "Werstu doselbst czu mole uncrefftig worden, als czu Rome, du hettist trost und hantreychunge von den deynen gehat, und hettist der kranckheytt nimmer geachtet, wen do du worst in dem elende gelossin, von all den deynen ungetrost, und hattist nicht eynen menschen, der deyn getreulich warte. Mer, ich benam dir deine crefftten mit meyner libe. Ich entzoch dir alle deine nestin und bekantin, und lis dich deine czerunge, und was du mit dir hattest genomen czu deyner notdurfft, vorczeren, wen es was mein wille, das der grunt deyner worn stetin gedult vorsucht, geprüfft und gemerckit worde."

²²⁵The term Gottesfreund oder Gottesfreundin is an expression the mystics of many ages have used to describe themselves and their relationship to God. More specifically, the term is applied to the

salient features of the mysticism of the three most prominent Friends of God, Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Heinrich Suso, this acquaintance provided her with mystical terminology with which to formulate and express her own experiences. The vocabulary of Des Leben is filled with these conventional mystical terms. Such expressions as smack or vorsmack ("taste" or "foretaste"), for example, are common terms to describe the mystic's enjoyment of heavenly delights, as are the concepts of smeltzcin in eynen klos ("to melt into one lump") and images of heat and light, such as hitzcige begerunge, börnde libe ("hot desire," "burning love"), etc., to show the intensity of the mystic's involvement with God. Such terms as grunt ("foundation," the spiritual center of man's soul), or the concept of the mystic's submergence into the abyss of God's love, which Des Leben presents as God's command to Dorothea "sencke dich tyffe in dy apgrundt meiner gotheyt," are more specifically associated with Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso.²²⁶ Johannes Marienwerder even refers to Dorothea as a "gotisfrundynne,"

fourteenth-century followers of Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Heinrich Suso, who always referred to themselves as friends of God. Their followers were especially numerous in the cities of Cologne, Strasburg, Basel, and Constance, where these Dominican friars had been most active. Upon his death in 1382, two years before Dorothea and Adalbert made their first pilgrimage to Einsiedeln, the Strasburg Gottesfreund Rulman Merswin left a set of mystical tracts supposedly written by the mysterious "Gottesfreund vom Oberlande," which attracted great excitement at the time. Dorothea, no doubt, heard much about this as she traveled south along the Rhine. Before these documents were finally exposed as forgeries by Father Denifle, they were used as proof of the existence of firmly organized communities of Gottesfreunde, for whose existence there is no evidence.

²²⁶p. Ulrich Horst, "Beiträge zum Einfluss Taulers auf das Deutschordensland Preussen," in Johannes Tauler: Ein deutscher Mystiker, ed. E. Filthaut (Essen: Hans Driewer Verlag, 1961), p. 418.

a friend of God, a term which was often applied to Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, and their followers.

In addition to the many words and expressions which by the end of the fourteenth century had become common property of mysticism, Des Leben contains a few vocabulary items which are indebted specifically to the linguistic creativity of Johannes Tauler.²²⁷ On several occasions Dorothea or the reader is urged to kill off den eigenen willen (his "wilfulness" or "self-will") to gain spiritual perfection. This terminology derives from Tauler's noun eigenwille. Such terms as gebruchunge ("use," "profit"), einsamlich ("solitary"), and bevoelen ("to entrust") are reminiscent of Tauler's nouns gebruchlichkeit, einsamkeit, and bevelunge. The adjective vergenglich ("transitory") is most likely derived from Tauler's noun vergenglichkeit ("the transitory nature of things").²²⁸

Much of Dorothea's metaphoric language, like that of other Christian mystics, is derived from the "Song of Songs." Most prominent in Des Leben is the metaphor of spiritual drunkenness, which Dorothea frequently employs to describe both her longing for spiritual comfort and her ecstasy upon receiving it: "After these pains and this comfort from God had often taken turns and repeated themselves in her experiencing now bitter suffering, and then great comfort, now again great comfort and then bitter pain, she began to wish for the sustenance and fruit of heaven; more than anything she craved grapes

²²⁷Horst, p. 419.

²²⁸Horst, p. 419.

from heaven."²²⁹ The favor was granted, and there flowed in her mouth "an abundance of sweet juice which had a delicious flavor, as the flavor of the grape in the must. When this juice flowed mildly in her mouth she took great care for it not to flow out of her mouth."²³⁰ Such sweet taste, Des Leben reports, "she often had in her mouth when she was receiving or had received the holy body of Our Lord, and when the Lord comforted her greatly after she had suffered bitter pains, or when he gave her to drink until she was spiritually drunk."²³¹

But this metaphor, like many others in Des Leben, loses its figurative properties and becomes indistinguishable from purely physical sensations. "At times she was so filled with divine sweetness that she behaved as if she were drunk; at times she was overcome by such joys of the spirit that, robbed of the control over her senses, she lay as in a stupor and people thought she lay in a swoon or a deep sleep."²³² Once on a pilgrimage to the Virgin's shrine in Köslin,

²²⁹Des Leben, p. 253. "Do disse smertzen und trost von gote dicke und vil sich hatte gewandilt, und vilvachin, in dem sy itzunt bitter liden hatte und dornoch grosen trost, und abir wider gros bitter liden und dornoch trost, do begonde sy begern spyse und fruchte vom hymle, besundirlich begerte sy wynber vom himle."

²³⁰Des Leben, p. 253. "In irm munde wart flysen mildiglich eyn suzer tran und der hatte weinbernsmacke aus dir mose lustig. Wen der tron addir czuflos mildiglich in irem munt, so bewarte sy sich, daz her nicht uzflosse."

²³¹Des Leben, p. 253. "Eyns sotan tranis suzen smack hot sy vil gehat in irm munde, wenne sy den heiligen lichnam unsers herren enphing oder enphangen hatte, und wen sy der herre richlich troste noch bittern smertzen, oder trenkte sy, das sy geistlich trunken wart."

²³²Des Leben, p. 225. "Sy wart ouch zcuwilen so gar dirvollit mit gotlichir suzikeit, das sy von busen geberdete, ab sy trunken were, und wart ouch zcu stunden obirgangen mit sulchen wollusten des

Dorothea remained in ecstasy long after the end of the mass, and upon being awakened she exhibited all the signs of physical intoxication:

After the mass the sisters, her traveling companions, came, pulled on her, and said: "It is time for us to go home." She rose and went with them but was so drunk that she stumbled and was unable to find the way which she had known well before. In reality she was spiritually intoxicated, made drunk in the winecellar of her bridegroom, Our Lord Jesus Christ, where she often before and afterwards was so intoxicated that she confused the roads and went to a different place than where she wanted to go.²³³

This confusion of spiritual inebriation and physical drunkenness is most notable in Dorothea's description of her state of mind during her first visit to Marienwerder:

On the Sunday following Corpus Christi Day I became so intoxicated by divine sweetness that I could not find the short way from my lodgings to the church and back. I was ashamed to ask for directions because I did not want anyone to notice my drunkenness or hold it against me; I followed other people going to the church until I arrived there without difficulty.²³⁴

geistis, das sy lag als in eyne twalme abegesundirt von ubunge der usirsten synne, das man wanete, sy were amechtig ader slife."

²³³Des Leben, p. 250. Noch der homesse quomen dy swestern, ir wegeferten, zcogen sy und sprochen: Is ist zcit, das wir wegzcien. Do stunt sy of und ging mit yn also trunken, das sy struchelte und den weg nicht mochte vinden, den sy vore gar wol wiste. In der worheit was sy trunken geistlich wol getrenkit in dem wynkel irs brutegams, unsirs herren Jhesu Cristi, in deme sy gar dicke vor und dornoch also trunken wart, das sy irrete an dem wege und ging zcu eyner andirn stat, wen zcu der, dar sy wille hatte."

²³⁴Des Leben, p. 270. "An deme sontage noch des heyligen leychnams tage was ich wordin geystlichen also trunckin von der hymmelischen sussikeyt, das ich eynen korczin weg aus meiner herberge in dy kirche nicht mochte findin, noch mich wider vorrichte in dy herberge. Ich schemte mich czu frogin umb den weg, das man nicht meyne trunckenheyte merckte addir mirs vorkerte, zundir ich ging also lange andrin geenden menschen noch, bis das ich quam in die kirche unbedast."

Many of Dorothea's visions are neither particularly original in content nor concrete in presentation, but there are a few notable exceptions. One vision is quite remarkable because in it Christ appears to Dorothea in all the various shapes and sizes he possessed as a human being simultaneously: "From time to time [he] presented himself before her eyes in the various sizes he had had in the first, second, third, fourth and up to his thirtieth year. Thus she was surrounded by the real, well-built human shapes which the Lord had had while he dwelled on earth."²³⁵ This situation posed a delicate problem for Dorothea: "From time to time the Lord filled her entire cell with his majesty so that she everywhere recognized the greatness of the Lord with the eyes of the soul and did not know in what direction to turn her back so as not to show disrespect or dishonor to the Lord. This same worry she had whenever the Lord showed her that her cell was full of saints."²³⁶

Some of the most effective images and metaphors which describe Dorothea's state of mind or religious experiences are those most appropriate to a woman of her class and station in life. The old

²³⁵Des Leben, p. 292. "Is geschach dicke mancherley irscheynunge unde lipliche bewaysunge des herren, der sich czu stundin beweyste in mancherley grösze, dy er gehat hatte in dem irsten, andirn, drittin, virden bis an das dreyssigste jore seyenes aldirts, also das sy al umbe und umb en vol liplicher wolgestaltir menschlicher bilde worn, gleych in der gestalt und forme, dy der herre hy uff ertreych gehat hatte."

²³⁶Des Leben, p. 292. "Czu stunden so irfulte der herre dy clawse mit seyner majestat, das sy mit den ougin der zelin öbiral den hern grösllich irkante, und woste nicht wohin werts sy sich wolde wendin mit dem rucken, das sy dem hern keyn unere noch unzcocht irczegete, und dyselbe sorge hatte sy och, wen ir der herre beweyste, wenne dy clawsze vol heiligin was."

biblical metaphors of sowing and reaping are on one occasion gracefully adapted to Dorothea, the daughter of a peasant, whose tears are to make the whole world fertile for God's plan of salvation:

In her mind she traveled through the regions of the earth, according to the command of the Lord . . . and saw with heartfelt pity the numerous and heavy defects and cried over them pitifully with mild, big tears. As she was doing so, the earth seemed well watered to her, and it seemed as if water were still standing in the furrows, as it does after a heavy rain. But dryness still prevailed in numerous places. Concerning that the Lord said: "Notice how parched the soil is here still. Cry copiously and water it."²³⁷

Dorothea's state of mind upon being filled with God's grace is aptly described in a metaphor reminiscent of a medieval housewife stocking her larder: "He came to her full of comfort, revealed many secret things to her, and filled her soul full with the highest good like a sack which is stuffed so heavily that it becomes so stiff and tight that it cannot hold more without tearing."²³⁸ The unio mystica is most effectively and concretely described in a metaphor entirely suitable to Dorothea's role as the wife of a medieval artisan. However, this metaphor is not original to Des Leben. "When the Lord had said

²³⁷Des Leben, p. 298. "Sy lif ym geiste obir di lant noch dem geheyse unsers herren, der sy irluchte und entzunte, daz sy vil grosis gebrechens sach mit eyne hertzelichin meteliden, und beweynte is clegelich mit milden grosen zcern. Do sy daz tat, do irscheyn ir das ertrich rechte ap is were wol betowit und daz wasser stunde noch in den vorchen, als is pfligit zcu sein, wen is sere gereynet hot. An etlichin endin irscheyn noch dörrikeyt. Von dem sprach der herre: Sich, wy dörre ist noch hy dy erde! Weyne zere und tuncke sy. . . ."

²³⁸Des Leben, pp. 349-50. "Do quam her ir gar tröstlich und offinbarte ir vil heimlicher ding und irfolte iren sal mit im selbin also gar vol des höchstin guttis, gleich als ein sack, der do vol gestosen wer, das her dente und möchte nicht mee entfoen, her risse denne."

this, Dorothea's soul was melted by the fire of divine love like bell metal and flowed with the Lord into one lump."²³⁹

But like all mystics, Dorothea frequently experienced the ineffable. Wisely, she seldom attempted to put such experiences into words. Instead, she often told her confessor, who invariably pressed her hard to describe everything she had seen in minutest detail, that God had challenged her to reveal the inexpressible, if she could, but that she, as He had predicted, found it impossible to do so. Eventually, she altogether refused to try to express the inexpressible: "She saw and heard divine things which were not fitting for her to relate to others."²⁴⁰ But God apparently did not entirely trust Dorothea's discretion. Therefore, he devised a very effective method of securing her silence: "Our secret whisperings which we have with one another also cannot be revealed because whenever I want to reveal to your soul a secret thing which I desire to remain secret, I intoxicate your soul before I tell you my secret. That way, she can neither remember nor put into words what I whisper to her."²⁴¹

²³⁹Des Leben, p. 313. "Do dis der herre sprach, do was dy zele Dorothea von dem feuer der götlichin libe henflissinde gleychsam eyne gesmeltzte glockspeyse, und flos mit dem hern in eynen klos." This metaphor is not, however, original with Dorothea. Grete Lüers in her book Die Sprache der deutschen Mystik des Mittelalters im Werke der Mechthild von Magdeburg (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966) lists this metaphor on page 81.

²⁴⁰Des Leben, p. 316. "Sy sach und hörte himelische ding, dy ir nicht czemelich worn czu sagin."

²⁴¹Des Leben, p. 317. "Unsir rawnen, das wyr mit enandir thun, ist och nicht czu sagin. Den wen ich wil ein heymelich dinge offinbaren deyner zelin, das ich wil gar heymelich habin, so mache ich deyne sele trunckin, e denne ich dir offenbare meine heymelikeit, so mag sy denne das, das ich mit ir rawne, nicht behaldin noch aussagin."

If such comments proved unsuccessful in restraining Johannes Marienwerder from probing too deeply into mystical secrets, she would turn aside his curiosity with the playful rejoinder, "I feel as happy as if I had been in life everlasting."²⁴²

Johannes Marienwerder's medieval audience was enchanted with his vernacular account of Dorothea's life. The modern reader, however, cannot help noticing a conspicuous monotony pervading the entire work. This monotony is not a matter of content, but a matter of style. The frequent repetition of words and phrases dulls even the most exciting descriptions, and a pervading lack of detail reduces many of Dorothea's most important spiritual experiences to abstract summaries, occasionally punctuated by specific minutiae. This reduction of the pictorial qualities inherent in many of Dorothea's visions causes Des Leben to compare unfavorably with such concrete accounts of mystical experiences as Mechthild von Magdeburg's Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit and St. Birgitta's Revelations. The heavy reliance on conventional mystical metaphors to describe Dorothea's visions and the lack of speculative thought concerning them aggravate the problem of Des Leben's superficial presentation of Dorothea's mystical experiences. In contrast to the vague and abstract presentation of so many of her spiritual experiences, her real life experiences are presented vividly and concretely. As a result, Johannes Marienwerder's Des Leben is a work of uneven success: it gives a fascinating account of Dorothea's life and personality, but her status as a mystic remains an enigma.

²⁴²Des Leben, p. 288. "Mir was also wol, ap ich wer in dem ewigen lebîn gewest."

CHAPTER III

MARGERY KEMPE

I. RELATIONSHIP TO ST. BIRGITTA OF SWEDEN

Louise Collis calls Margery Kempe an "apprentice saint."²⁴³ As an "apprentice saint," Margery had several master saints who introduced her to the mysteries of her calling, some of whom she acknowledged in The Book. The most notable among them was St. Birgitta of Sweden. As Miss Collis points out, "in the fifteenth century, St. Bridget of Sweden was one of the best known and most revered saints of northern Europe" (Collis, p. 139). In England knowledge of her and her Revelations became widespread with the marriage in 1406 of Philippa, the daughter of King Henry IV, to Eric XIII of Sweden.²⁴⁴ In 1415 King Henry V established a Bridgettine house in England. This religious foundation, Syon monastery in Middlesex, whose cornerstone Henry laid on February 22, 1415, in time exerted a powerful influence on English religious life by circulating vernacular translations of St. Birgitta's Revelations throughout England.²⁴⁵ Exactly how Margery

²⁴³Louise Collis, The Apprentice Saint (London: Michael Joseph, 1964).

²⁴⁴William P. Cumming, ed., Introd., The Revelations of Saint Birgitta (London: EETS, 1929), p. xxix.

²⁴⁵Cummings, p. xxix.

became familiar with details about St. Birgitta's life as a mystic is difficult to determine, but she boasts acquaintance with "Seynt Brydys boke,"²⁴⁶ and her own Book testifies to a superficial and often confused imitation of the experiences and activities of this famous woman whom she obviously admired and wished to emulate.

Margery's muddled emulation of St. Birgitta is apparent in her own prophetic visions and revelations. These visions, like those of St. Birgitta, were generally in response to inquiries by people who wanted to be informed as to their own futures or those of friends or relatives. On such occasions, Margery freely provided information on such topics as the ultimate course of a disease, an impending death, or the state of a soul already departed. Before going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, for example, she was approached by a widow who "preyd þis creatur to preyn for hir husbond & wete yf he had ony nede of help" (The Book, p. 46). As Margery prayed for him, she found out from God "þat hys sowle xuld be xxx zer in Purgatory les þan he had bettyr frendys in erthe" (The Book, p. 46). She informed the widow of these

²⁴⁶The Book, p. 143. Margery tells of a young priest who read to her for seven years or more from pious works before he became too ill to do so. "He red to hir many a good boke of hy contemplacyon & oper bokys, as þe Bybyl wyth doctorys þer-up-on, Seynt Brydys boke, Hyltons boke, Bone-ventur, Stimulus Amoris, Incendium Amoris, & swech oper." Whether these readings began before Margery's pilgrimage to the Holy Land beginning in the fall of 1413, or after her return to England in 1415, is not clear. Margery's direct contacts with sites important in respect to St. Birgitta occurred relatively late in her own career as a mystic. She did not visit Rome, the site of St. Birgitta's most important religious activities, until 1414, and she did not go to the convent of Syon until after her return from Germany, probably in 1434.

things, suggesting a remedy to ease the dead man's plight: "'Zyt ze wyl don almes for hym iij pownd er iij in messys & almes-zeuyng to powyr folke, ze schal hyly plesyn God & don þe sowle gret esse'" (The Book, pp. 46-47). In this instance, however, Margery's efforts were wasted, for "þe wedow toke lytyl hede at hir wordys & let it pasyn forth" (The Book, p. 47).

Unlike St. Birgitta's prophetic visions concerning the fate of other people, Margery's are generally lackluster, devoid of all pictorial quality. The description of one of her revelations concerning the impending death of one of her fellow citizens of Lynn is a typical example of the insipid quality of her prophecies.

As þis creatur was in a cherch of Seynt Margarete in þe qwer wher a cors was present, & he þat was husbond of þe same cors whyl sche leuyd was þer in good hele for to offeryn hir Messe-peny aftyr þe custom of þe place, owyr Lord seyde to þe forseyd creatur, "Lo, dowtyr, þe sowle of þis cors is in Purgatory, & he þat was hir husbond is now in good hele, & zet he xal ben ded in schort tyme." & so it befel as sche felt þe reuelacyon (The Book, p. 53).

This vision is a pale abstraction in comparison to St. Birgitta's vision of the ailing Pope Clement VI, to cite only one example.

Although the Pope appeared to her as a stately knight in shining armor, she penetrated the disguise and witnessed his putrefication while he was still alive:

His brain is uncovered, his ears are on his forehead, his eyes are in the back of his head. His nose is cut off, his cheeks are shrivelled as on a dead person. On the right side half of the jaws and of the lips are gone. . . . His chest is full of crawling maggots, his arms are like two serpents, in his heart lies the worst venomous worm, whose name is scorpione. His back is charred like coal, his entrails stink like rotten meat, his knees lie bent like a dead man's knees, his feet are dead and are of no use for walking (Jorgensen, II, p. 76).

Equally bland and abstract are the descriptions of Margery's eschatological visions in which God reveals to her, as he had formerly done to Birgitta, the fate of departed souls at the Last Judgment. St. Birgitta had frequently attended the trials of departed souls and had witnessed how angels and devils had struggled over the possession of these souls until God, after consulting with the Virgin Mary and Christ, pronounced final judgment upon them. Margery, in contrast to her model, merely offers an abstract summary of her eschatological visions:

It wer in a maner vn-possibyl to writyn al þe holy thowtys, holy spechys, and þe hy reuelacyons which our Lord schewyd vn-to hir, bothyn of hir-selfe & of oper men & women, also of many sowlys, sum for to ben sauyd & sum for to ben dampnyd, & was to hir a gret ponyshyng & a scharp chastisyng. For to knowyn of þo þat xulde be sauyd sche was ful glad & joyful, for sche desyred in as mech as sche durst alle men to be sauyd, and, whan our Lord schewyd to hir of any þat xulde be dampnyd, sche had gret peyn (The Book, p. 144).

Margery's determination to equal St. Birgitta in fame is implied in the account of her stay in Rome, the city where the Swedish saint had spent so many years of her life and had first acquired the appellation "la Santa" among the populace. Margery spent only about six months in the Eternal City, from the fall of 1414 until the spring of 1415, on her return journey from the Holy Land, but she made good use of her time to find out what she could about St. Birgitta's holy life in Rome. Clothed all in white, she visited the places St. Birgitta had frequented, gathering information from those who had known her.

Aftyward þis creatur spak wyth Seynt Brydys mayden in Rome, but sche coud not vndirstondyn what sche seyde. Pan had sche

a man þat cowde vndirstondyn hir langage, & þat man tolde Seunt Brygiptys mayden what þis creatur seyde & how sche askyd aftyr Seynt Brigypt, hir lady. Pan þe mayden seyde þat hir lady, Seynt Brigypt, was goodly & meke to euey creatur & þat sche had a lawhyng cher. And also þe good man wher þis creatur was at hoste telde hir þat he knew hir hys owyn selfe but he wend lityl þat sche had ben so holy a woman as sche was, for sche was euyr homly & goodly to alle creaturys þat woldyn spekyn wyth hir. Sche was in þe chawmbre þat Seynt Brigypt deyde in, & herd a Dewche preste prechyn of hir þerin & of hir reuelacyonys & of hir maner of leuyng. & sche knelyd also on þe ston on þe which our Lord aperyde to Seynt Brigypte and telde hir what day sche xulde deyn on. & þis was on of Seynt Brigyptys days þat þis creatur was in hir chapel, which befor-tyme was hir chawmbre þat sche deyde in (The Book, p. 95).

Armed with such eye-witness accounts about St. Birgitta, Margery lost no time trying to fill the void left by her famous predecessor's death; her experiences in Rome bear a remarkable resemblance to those of the holy woman from Sweden. Like St. Birgitta, Margery soon impressed the Romans by her exhibitions of faith.

Pan meche pepyl wonderyd up-on hir, askyng hir what sche eyled, to whom sche as a creatur al wowndyd wyth lofe & as reson had, fayled, cryed wyth lowde voys, "þe Passyon of Crist sleth me." Þe good women, hauyng compassyon of hir sorwe & gretly meruelyng of hir wepyng & of hir crying, meche þe mor þei louyd hir. & þerfor þei, desyryng to make her solas & comfort aftyr hir gostly labowr, be sygnys & tokenys, for sche vndirstod not her speche, preyde hir and in a maner compellyd hir to comyn hom to hem, willyng þat sche xulde not gon fro hem. Than our Lord sent hyr grace to han gret lofe & gret fauowr of many persons in Rome, bothyn of religyows men & oper. Sum religyows comyn to swech persons of hyr cuntremen as louyd hir & seyden, "þis woman hath sowyn meche good seed in Rome sithyn sche cam hydir, þat is to sey, schewyd good exampyl to þe pepyl, wherthorw þei louyn God mor þan þei dede be-forn" (The Book, pp. 98-99).

St. Birgitta had lived for many years in Rome before she became an object of public veneration; Margery, according to The Book, accomplished this goal in the space of a few months. Her fame as another holy woman from a country far away in the north spread

rapidly, and she became a goal for pilgrims from her own country, as St. Birgitta had been for pilgrims from Sweden. An English priest, for example, led a group of English pilgrims to Rome just to see her:

Whil he was in Inglond he herd tellyn of swech a woman was at Rome wyth þe which he longyd hyly to spekyn zyf God wolde grawntyn hym grace. Wher-for, whyl he was in hys owyn lond, he purposyng to se þis creatur whan he thorw þe sufferawns of owr Lord myght come þer sche was, purueyd golde to bryng hir in releuyng of hir zyf sche had nede. Pan be inqwryng he cam in-to þe place wher þat sche was, & ful humbely & mekely he clepyd hir modyr, preying hir for charite to receyuen hym as hir sone (The Book, p. 96).

This priest was not the only one who "wolde . . . no lengar suffyr hir to beggyn hir mete fro dore to dore" (The Book, pp. 96-97), insisting on providing her with food and giving her "golde sufficiently to come hom with in-to Inglond" (The Book, p. 97). Some of Rome's finest and wealthiest families vied with each other for the privilege of supporting her, as they had supported Birgitta while she lived in their city. Margery even became godmother to one of their children. "Pan was þer a gret jentyl- woman in Rome preying thys creatur to be godmodyr of hir childe & namyd it aftyr Seynt Brigypt, for they haddyn knowlach of hir in hir lyue-tyme. & so sche dede" (The Book, p. 94). This invitation to become the godmother of a child named in honor of St. Birgitta suggests that in the eyes of the Romans, Margery was a worthy successor to the Swedish saint. Margery herself clearly considered this to have been the case. As she reports in The Book, her fame among Romans was secure from that time on: "Sithyn God gaf hir grace to haue gret lofe in Rome, bothyn of men & of women, & gret fauowr a-mong the pepyl" (The Book, p. 94).

Not only could Margery boast fame equal to St. Birgitta's during her stay in Rome, she, like St. Birgitta's other admirer, Dorothea von Montau, could claim on at least one occasion to have surpassed this famous saint in spiritual accomplishment. Dorothea had been blessed with a spiritual pregnancy far more strenuous than the one St. Birgitta had endured. Margery, on the other hand, was blessed with a vision more prophetic than any vision St. Birgitta had experienced. As she was hearing mass one day, the host, as the priest elevated it at the consecration, fluttered as if it were a dove beating its wings. The chalice, upon consecration, shook back and forth so violently that the priest could hold on to it only with great difficulty. Later Margery wished to know the significance of this vision. Christ informed her it signified vengeance. He told her he would send an earthquake to punish the people for their sins and their unwillingness to mend their ways. Margery, eager to repeat this experience, quickly learned that it was a sign of singular grace, which not only was not to be repeated, but had never been seen before: "þow xalt no mor sen it in þis maner, þerfor thank God þat þow hast seyn. My dowtyr, Bryde, sey me neuyr in þis wyse" (The Book, p. 47).²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷William P. Cumming, ed., The Revelations of Saint Birgitta (London: EETS, 1929), p. 95; hereafter cited as Revelations. In one of her visions Birgitta had seen the heavenly Jerusalem compressed in the host during the celebration of the mass: "And the same holy hoste was made a quyke lomb, and in the lomb appered a face of a man. And a brynnyng flawme was see with-in & with-oute the lombe and the face. And when I festened my syght besyly in by-holdyng the face, I se the lombe in the face. And when I behold the lombe, I see the same face in the lombe. & the virgyn sate crowned by the lombe, and all angelles serued them, which wer of so grete multitude as þe motes in the sonne." According to Jorgensen, II, p. 297, this vision is St. Birgitta's most powerful statement in the defense of the doctrine of transubstantiation, which she vigorously defended throughout her life.

II. HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS WITH DOROTHEA VON MONTAU

Ultimately, however, the influence of St. Birgitta on Margery's religious career was probably less decisive than that of her spiritual descendant Dorothea von Montau, whose example provided Margery with a much more persuasive encouragement for seeking sainthood than even St. Birgitta could. Like Margery, Dorothea was neither a nun nor a pious noblewoman influential enough to assert herself as the voice of conscience for both emperor and pope or wealthy enough to establish a new religious order. If Dorothea, like Margery a burgess's wife, a housewife, and a mother, could become a saint, there was no reason for Margery not to aspire to the same honor. The many striking parallels in the lives and religious experiences of these two women strongly suggest that Margery was acquainted with matters concerning Dorothea's reputation and career long before Johannes Marienwerder's vernacular Des Leben began to circulate in Prussia in 1405, and long before Margery went there herself; that, in fact, she modeled her own career as a lay mystic to no small degree on that of Dorothea. While it was said that Dorothea had tried to avoid public knowledge of her visions before her death, her public manifestations of faith had made her as notorious in Danzig as Margery was to be in Lynn.

Margery's most reliable source of information concerning Dorothea would have been the merchants, both English and German, who constantly moved back and forth between Lynn and Danzig, as these two towns enjoyed particularly close mercantile ties under the auspices of the Hanseatic League. These ties, according to E. R. Daenell, went back to the thirteenth century when the Hanse was still a

federation of individual merchants rather than the federation of mercantile towns it became in the fourteenth century. "They [the merchants of Hamburg and the Baltic Sea ports] had founded establishments in York, Ipswich, Hull, Norwich and Yarmouth, also in Bristol, but most importantly in Lynn and Boston, with aldermen of their own."²⁴⁸ In 1282, by allying themselves with the Hanse merchants of Cologne who had established themselves in London, they put themselves under the authority of the London office, which through this merger became the central authority over Hanseatic trade with England. In 1388, after many disputes over trading rights, English merchants established themselves in Danzig through treaties with the high master of the Teutonic Knights. The merchants of Lynn were apparently the most aggressive group in seizing the opportunity of securing new markets for Lynn's manufactured goods in exchange for raw materials.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸E. R. Daenell, Die Blütezeit der deutschen Hanse (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1905), I, p. 58. "Sie hatten in York, Ipswich, Hull, Norwich und Yarmouth, auch in Bristol, besonders aber in Lynn und Boston Niederlassungen mit eignen Älterleuten begründet, die nachmals nach der Vereinigung dieser Ostseehansen mit der Kölner Hanse zu London 1282 unter die Oberleitung des Londoner Kontors getreten waren, das dadurch zur Zentrale des hansischen Handels wurde."

²⁴⁹Henry Hillen, History of the Borough of King's Lynn (Norwich: East of England Newspaper Co., 1907), II, pp. 726-28. According to Hillen, Lynn produced and exported mainly fabrics, having eclipsed Norwich in the production of woven goods after the Flemings, who had originally settled there, migrated to Lynn.

Daenell lists the Prussian goods exported to England as follows: lumber for ship building, tar, pitch, copper, grain, and yew for the famous English long bows (p. 61).

"The increase in English trade after the treaties of 1388 was most significant in Danzig, and here the trade privileges granted to English trade were extensive. In the Baltic Sea area, as in Norway, the merchants of Lynn seem to have been the most energetic pioneers of English trade."²⁵⁰ Beginning in 1390, the English merchants annually elected an alderman to settle legal disputes with Baltic Sea merchants. His seat was in Danzig where in 1388 Konrad Zöllner von Rotenstein, the high master of the Teutonic Knights, had leased them a building and had granted them the right to incorporate.²⁵¹

These merchants would surely have known about Dorothea von Montau whose reputation of saintliness spread rapidly after her enclosure at Marienwerder. Even before her death many petitioners made the fifty-mile pilgrimage from Danzig to Marienwerder to seek Dorothea's help. Within a year after her death, her grave in the cathedral of Marienwerder became a shrine, and Dorothea herself was revered as a saint.²⁵² So many people flocked to her gravesite with

²⁵⁰Daenell, p. 66. "Der Aufschwung des englischen Handels nach den Verträgen von 1388 war namentlich in Danzig ganz bedeutend, und umfangreich waren die hier ihm stillschweigend gewährten Freiheiten. Insbesondere die Kaufleute von Lynn scheinen in dieser Periode in der Ostsee wie in Norwegen die rühmlichsten Vorkämpfer des englischen Handels gewesen zu sein."

²⁵¹Daenell, p. 66.

²⁵²Hipler, "Der Beichtvater," p. 58. Many people had sought Dorothea's advice and help at her hermitage in Marienwerder. But Hipler ascribes her instant reputation of saintliness after her death to Marienwerder's funeral speech which revealed her visions to the public for the first time. These revelations also may have caused a new wave of feminine lay mysticism as maidens, wives, and widows, especially, felt compelled to follow her lead in renouncing the vanities of the world. ". . . Jungfrauen, Ehefrauen und Witfrauen

prayers and requests for help that eighteen weeks after her funeral her grave was walled in and surrounded by an iron fence to protect it from damage. Later that same year the bishop ordered the lawyers of the cathedral chapter to investigate and record accounts of Dorothea's alleged miraculous intercessions on behalf of her supplicants.²⁵³ As each of these investigations came to a close, it was Johannes Marienwerder's duty to present the findings to the congregation, which spread Dorothea's fame even further.

As a result, pilgrims from the farthest regions of Prussia, Poland, Lithuania, Silesia, and Bohemia visited her grave with votive offerings of wood, wax, silk, and silver. The most famous pilgrim to visit her shrine was Anna, the grand duchess of Lithuania, wife of Vytautas, the grand duke of Lithuania, who came to Marienwerder in 1400 with a large retinue, bearing rich gifts. Finally, between 1395 and 1406, the first phase of Dorothea's canonization proceedings, two hundred and sixty witnesses from all over Prussia came forward to attest to her sanctity. Furthermore, there were three hundred and forty-two sworn and notarized accounts of miracles, cures, etc.

[fühlten] sich angetrieben, dem Vorbild, das Dorothea in ihren verschiedenen Lebensperioden den genannten drei Ständen gegeben, nach Kräften nachzustreben, der Welt und ihrer Pracht zu entsagen und mit des blossen Lebens Notdurft sich genügen zu lassen."

Incidentally, Dorothea's cell was inhabited again soon after her death by a woman named Elisabeth of whom nothing more is known.

²⁵³The result was a series of Libri miraculorum which were kept at Marienwerder cathedral. They were lost, possibly in the wake of the Reformation.

credited to Dorothea's good offices.²⁵⁴ A notably large number of these witnesses came from Danzig, where a chapel had been established in her honor and where a devout lay brotherhood calling itself by her name had been founded.²⁵⁵

Obviously, then, Dorothea was no obscure holy woman, but an object of tremendous popular veneration whose example could very well have inspired Margery. It is interesting to note, for example, that Margery's initiation into the mystical life occurred during the period immediately following Dorothea's death when all of Prussia was alive with tales concerning her sanctity and when episcopal and secular authorities alike were making strenuous efforts in behalf of her canonization. Meech dates Margery's birth around the year 1373.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴Anneliese Triller, "Der Kanonisationsprozess Dorotheas von Montau in Marienwerder 1394-1405 als Quelle altpreussischer Kulturgeschichte und Volkskunde," Preussenland und deutscher Orden (Würzburg: n.p., 1958), p. 311; hereafter cited as "Der Kanonisationsprozess."

²⁵⁵Triller, "Der Kanonisationsprozess," p. 314. "Besonders viele Zeugen kommen aus Danzig, wo Dorothea bis zu ihrer Übersiedlung nach Marienwerder als Ehefrau lebte."

The chapel was part of the church of St. Mary's in Danzig where Dorothea spent most of her time while still living in Danzig. It is mentioned in records for the first time in 1406.

Siegfried Rühle, "Dorothea von Montau: Das Lebensbild einer Danziger Bürgerin des XIV. Jahrhunderts," Altpreussische Forschungen, 2 (1925), 99, dates the establishment of the brotherhood toward the end of the 14th century with official mention in 1401. "In Danzig bildete sich noch am Ende des 14. Jahrhunderts eine Dorotheenbrüderschaft, die schon 1401 erwähnt wird. Sie trat als dritte Priesterbrüderschaft neben die grosse Priesterbrüderschaft zu St. Marien und die St. Katharinenbrüderschaft der Priester und besass einen eigenen Altar in der Marienkirche, sah sich auch bald im Besitz von Geldmitteln und konnte sich schon 1406 eine eigene Kapelle erwerben."

²⁵⁶Meech, p. xlix.

Margery herself says that she married when she was about twenty and soon afterwards expected her first child: "Whan þis creatur was xxger of age or sumdele mor, sche was maryed to a worschepful burgeys and was wyth chylde wyth-in schort tyme, as kynde wolde" (The Book, p. 6). This statement suggests 1393 or 1394 as the year of her marriage, with the birth of the child which caused her such mental stress following within a year or so, that is in 1394, 1395, or even as late as 1396.²⁵⁷ Dorothea died in the summer of 1394. Thus Margery's sudden miraculous recovery from lengthy and severe emotional disorders through Christ's intervention, which marks the beginning of her life as a mystic, may have been directly related to contemporary events in Prussia.

There is evidence which suggests that Margery's contact with merchants who were well acquainted with Prussian affairs was by no means casual, but so intimate and continuous to make it possible for her to have stayed informed of matters relating to Dorothea throughout her life. One such intimate source of information concerning events in Prussia might have been her own father, John Burnham. If the organization of Hanse establishments elsewhere in England was modeled on that of the League's London office, John Burnham as mayor and alderman of Lynn would have had a decisive position in the administration of their establishment in Lynn. Daenell describes the organization of the London office as follows:

At the head of the office stood two aldermen; the one who was in charge of managing its affairs and coordinating its

²⁵⁷Meech does not give a date for the birth of Margery's child in this chronology, but lists the date of marriage as "c 1393 (probably after 1393)."

business with the home country was always a German whom the merchants selected from their midst. The other, who was in charge of all Hanseatic establishments and superior to all the Hanseatic merchants in England, had to be an Englishman and a member of London's municipal government. He too was chosen by the Hanseatic merchants and was either an alderman, or more frequently, the mayor of London himself.²⁵⁸

If John Burnham, on a regional scale, held a position in the Hanse office in Lynn similar to the one the mayor of London held in the Hanse's London office, he would have been well acquainted with affairs in Danzig and would have been an excellent source of news for Margery.

Later in life Margery had other intimate sources of information as well. A person who was in excellent position to furnish her with the most accurate information about Dorothea was her son Thomas, the only one of Margery's fourteen children to survive to adulthood. After having squandered his youth in the pursuit of dissolute pleasures, he "had a wife & a childe, blissyd mote God ben, for he weddyd his

.. ²⁵⁸Daenell, p. 57. "An der Spitze des Kontors standen zwei Alterleute; der eine von ihnen, der die Verwaltung des Kontors, die Verbindung mit der Heimat zu ordnen und zu leiten hatte, wurde natürlich von den Kaufleuten selbst aus ihrer Mitte gewählt. Der andere, der auch einmal als 'des ghemeinen copmans overste alderman van al Engellant' bezeichnet wird, also allen hansischen Niederlassungen, der ganzen hansischen Kaufmannschaft in England vorstand, musste dagegen ein Engländer sein, und zwar Mitglied der Stadtbehörde von London. Aber auch er wurde von den hansischen Kaufleuten für die Stellung gewählt. Entweder wurde er aus den Aldermen der Stadt genommen, anscheinend häufig war es der Londoner Mayor selbst, der von ihnen bevorzugt wurde."

Hope Emily Allen in Appendix III to The Book of Margery Kempe, pp. 364-65, suggests another possible close connection of Margery's own family to Hanse activities in Prussia. In 1388 the English government presented the Hanse with a claim on behalf of English merchants whose goods had been seized and sold by the Prussians in 1385 at less than their value. "Among the merchants of Lynn, the man with the largest claim was a John Kempe who was set down for three hundred pounds sterling." Miss Allen concludes that this John Kempe was probably Margery's future father-in-law.

wife in Pruce in Dewchelonde" (The Book, p. 223). Upon settling down as a merchant in Danzig, he mended his ways, making "many pilgrimages to Rome & to many oþer holy placys to purchasyn hym pardon, resortyng a-geyn to hys wife & his childe as he was bowndyn to do" (The Book, p. 224). Margery, noting the change in him while he visited his parents, "in fewe ȝerys aftyr þat þis ȝong man had weddyd he cam hom in-to Ingland to hys fadyr & hys modyr al chongyd in hys aray & hys condicyonis. . . . Now he weryd no daggys, & hys dalyawns was ful of vertu" (The Book, p. 223), opened her heart to him, "schewyng hym & enformyng how owr Lord had drawyn hir thorw hys mercy & be what menys, also how meche grace he had schewyd for hir, þe which he seyde he was vnworthy to heryn" (The Book, p. 224). It is reasonable to assume that Thomas, knowing about his mother's spiritual yearnings and being himself a reformed sinner, would have told his mother what he knew about Dorothea whose memory was so revered in the city in which he lived.

An even better source of information might have been Margery's German daughter-in-law. Being a native of Prussia, presumably of Danzig, this young woman could have known more about Dorothea than even the merchants because, as Hipler reports, after its completion in 1405, Johannes Marienwerder's Des Leben was distributed freely to congregations throughout Prussia to encourage lay people to follow Dorothea's example and thus resist the heretical teachings infiltrating Prussia from Bohemia. The Book's description of the young woman's eagerness to meet her English mother-in-law implies her interest in such saintly women as Dorothea and Margery. When her husband told her about

his mother, "sche wolde leeuyn hir fadyr & hir modyr & hir owyn cuntre for to comyn in-to Inglonde & seen hys modyr" (The Book, p. 224). In 1431 the young couple finally travelled to Lynn where Thomas died within a month of their arrival, followed shortly afterwards by Margery's husband:

Pei [Thomas and his wife] come hom on þe Satyrday in good heele, & on þe next day þat was þe Sondag, whil þei wer at mete at noon with oþer good frendys, he [Thomas] fel in gret sekenes þat he ros fro þe tabyl & leyd hym on a bed, whch sekenes & infirmite ocupijd hym a-bowte a monyth, & þan in good life & ryth beleue he passyd to þe mercy of owr Lord. . . . In schort tyme aftyr, þe fadyr of þe sayd persone folwyd þe sone þe wey whch euery man must gon (The Book, p. 225).

After Thomas' death, Margery's daughter-in-law stayed with her for a year and a half, an indication that they got along well together. During this time the young woman would have had plenty of opportunity to tell Margery all she knew about Dorothea. She might have brought Margery a copy of Des Leben as a suitable gift for getting acquainted with her saintly mother-in-law, which she could have translated for Margery after having learned the language.

Margery most clearly exhibits her life-long interest in Germany and German affairs by keeping close contacts with Germans wherever she went. Her Book mentions a considerable number of them as her hosts, confessors, and helpers in need, tolerant of her habits and eager to assist her. During her stay in Canterbury, for example, she stayed "at a Dewchmannys hows" (The Book, p. 29). In the Holy Land when none of her fellow Englishmen would help her, two German pilgrims led her safely to the city of Jerusalem:

Pan, for joy þat sche had [upon seeing the Holy City for the first time] & þe swetnes þat sche felt in þe dalyavnce of owyr Lord, sche was in poynt to a fallyn of hir asse, for sche myth not beryn þe swetnesse & þe grace þat God wrowt in hir sowle. Pan tweyn pylgrymys of Duchemen went to hir & kept hir fro fallng, of þe which þe on was a preste. And he put spycys in hir mowth to comfort hir, wenyng sche had ben seke, & so þei holpyn hir forth to Jerusalem (The Book, p. 67).

In Rome she attended a number of sermons preached by "Duchemen" although she could not understand what was being said and suffered from the resulting lack of spiritual nourishment: "Svm-tyme, whan þe forseyd creatur was at sermownys wher Duchemen & oper men prechyd, techyng þe lawys of God, sodeyn sorwe & heuynes occupying hir hert cawsyd hir to compleyn wyth mornyng cher for lak of vndirstondyng, desyryng to be refreschyd wyth sum crumme of gostly vndirstondyng" (The Book, p. 98).

One of Margery's German friends who might have been able to supply her with reliable information on Dorothea was the priest Wenslawe whom Margery chose as her confessor during her stay in Rome. This Wenslawe, who unfortunately is not further identified in The Book, "was a good man, & of hys birth he was a Dewcheman, a good clerke, & a wel lernyd man, hily belouyd, wel cherschyd, & myche trostyd in Rome, and had on o þe grettest office of any preste in Rome" (The Book, p. 82). As Hope Emily Allen suggests, such a well-educated, highly placed German prelate might have had knowledge of Dorothea's stay in Rome in 1390, and if he came from the east of Germany, as his name indicates, he might have known even more about Dorothea, or might even have been in contact with Johannes Marienwerder who was still alive at that time and was still trying to keep interest

in Dorothea's canonization alive.²⁵⁹ All of this is of course speculative, but it does seem significant that Margery chose this particular priest as her confessor although they could not communicate with one another except through an interpreter:

An-oper tyme, as þis creatur was at Seynt Ionys Cherch Lateranens be-for þe awter heryng þe Messe, hir thowt þat þe preste which seyde Messe semyd a good man & deuowte. Sche was sor mevyd in spiryt to speke wyth hym Pe preste vndirstod non Englysch ne wist not what sche seyde, & sche cowde non oper langage þan Englisch, & þerfor þei spokyn be an jnterpretowr, a man þat telde her eyþyr what oper seyde (The Book, p. 82).

Like other German acquaintances Margery mentions in her Book, Wenslawe supported her against her detractors, and in time he became a true friend to her. To ease their communication problem, God provided Wenslawe with the ability to understand Margery's English, although, as The Book asserts, he remained incapable of understanding the speech of any other Englishman. In order to minister to Margery's needs, he gave up other duties: "he forsoke hys office be-cawse þat he wolde supportyn hir in hir sobbyng & in hir crying whan alle hir cuntremen had forsakyn hir" (The Book, p. 83). His tolerance of her exotic behavior apparently incited the ill will of Margery's countrymen who had already forced the brethren of the Hospital of St. Thomas of Canterbury in Rome to expel her, for "þei wer euyr ageyn hir & a-geyn þe good man which supportyd hir" (The Book, pp. 83-84). When Margery at last departed from Rome in the spring of 1415, their parting was tearful. She "toke hir leue of hir frendys in Rome, & most specyaly of hir gostly fadyr, which, for owr Lordys lofe, had supportyd hir &

²⁵⁹Allen, "Notes," p. 300.

socowrd hir ful tenderly a-geyn þe wykked wyndys of hir invyows enmyis, whos departyng was ful lamentabyl as wytnessyd wel þe pur watyrdropys rennyng down her chekys" (The Book, p. 100). Since Margery obviously felt comfortable and appreciated in the company of Germans, it is probable that she also was drawn to German feminine mystics such as Dorothea and drew inspiration from their spiritual lives.

If Margery had learned about Dorothea, and if Dorothea's life did provide a model for Margery long before she actually traveled to Danzig, the journey she made in the spring of 1433²⁶⁰ may well have been a combination of pilgrimage and fact-finding tour. The urgency with which Margery insisted on accompanying her daughter-in-law all the way to Danzig against the wishes of her confessor supports such a conclusion. As usual, she presents her decision as a command from God himself: "I bydde þe gon in my name, Ihesu, for I am a-bouyn thy gostly fadyr & I xal excusyn þe & ledyn þe & bryngyn þe a-geyn in safte" (The Book, p. 227). Her daughter-in-law, like her confessor, was opposed to Margery's decision, as Margery herself reiterates on several occasions: "Þer was non so meche a-geyn hir as was hir dowtyr, þat awt most to a ben wyth hir" (The Book, p. 228). Given Margery's penchant for pilgrimages, taking her daughter-in-law home to Danzig would have provided her with the perfect opportunity to visit all the sites of Dorothea's religious activities in that city and to make the pilgrimage to her shrine in Marienwerder, just as she long ago had visited all of St. Birgitta's memorials during her stay in Rome.

²⁶⁰Meech, p. 1.

Unfortunately, however, The Book provides no information whatever about Margery's activities during her six-week stay in Dorothea's hometown.

The journey to Danzig may have strengthened Margery's resolve to make public her own life's history. Meech dates the death of Margery's first amanuensis "in or before 1432, inasmuch as the priest who began to copy and revise his work 23 July, 1436, delayed doing so for at least four years after his death" (Meech, p. vii). Margery's journey to Danzig in 1433-34, thus fell between the completion of Book I and the composition of Book II, which Margery's second amanuensis, the priest, started writing after having revised Book I on April 28, 1438.²⁶¹ The prologue to The Book states that upon returning from Germany in 1434 Margery badgered her second amanuensis to revise Book I. Unlike this priest, who complained about the first book having been "so euel wretyn," Margery could neither read nor write. It is therefore likely that she was neither aware of nor disturbed by the poor grammar and style of Book I until the priest pointed out its flaws to her when she brought it to him for revision. Her reasons for revision, then, must have been substantive. How many events she may actually have changed to make her own narrative as attractive and as popular in England as Johannes Marienwerder's Leben of Dorothea was in Prussia can of course never be determined without the original version of Book I. But as Hope Emily Allen asserts, there can be little doubt that she became acquainted with Johannes Marienwerder's book while she

²⁶¹Meech, "Notes," p. 341.

was in Prussia and that its success strengthened her determination to put her own life's history before the English people: "The fact that she thus, during the period when she was unable to get her manuscript read at home, went to a region where so recently a woman saint had been so enthusiastically given literary memorial, seems to me of great interest for the study of the genesis of her Book" (Allen, "Notes," p. 341).

Moreover, Margery's experiences in Prussia must have strengthened her conviction that she too deserved to be venerated as a saint. Upon her return from this long arduous journey in 1434, Margery was over sixty years old, with little but death to look forward to. Considering her acute sense of self worth, she may well have hoped to become the object of reverence, and her grave in St. Margaret's Church in Lynn the goal of pilgrims from all over England. The traditional patron saint of Lynn was St. Margaret, a virgin of Antioch, who had been martyred and canonized in 278 A.D.²⁶² But she was, after all, not a native saint, and she was long dead. Sweden had its St. Birgitta; Prussia was seeking canonization of its St. Dorothea;²⁶³ Lynn deserved to have its own St. Margaret, and Margery deserved to be it. After all, she had suffered as much "for the love of God" as either Birgitta or Dorothea. Accordingly, upon her return from Prussia, she set about the revision and completion of her own life's history with great

²⁶²Hillen, I, p. 30. St. Margaret's feast day is July 20.

²⁶³On account of all sorts of delays which will be discussed in the conclusion, Dorothea was not canonized until January 9, 1976.

urgency. As I shall show presently, in some respects her life history resembles a saint's life more closely than it does a biography or autobiography.

III. TEXTUAL SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMPE
 AND DES LEBEN DER ZELIGEN FRAWEN DOROTHEE CLEWSENERYNNE
IN DER THUMKYRCHEN CZU MARIENWERDIR DES LANDES
CZU PREWSZEN

Because of the paucity of factual information, the historical evidence which might tie Margery's Book to Johannes Marienwerder's Des Leben must remain sketchy. A close examination of these two works themselves, however, reveals a wealth of parallels which make the possibility of Des Leben having exerted a considerable influence upon the composition and content of The Book very likely. A comparison of the genre, purpose, and method of composition of these two works shows a sufficiently large number of significant similarities to admit the possibility of Des Leben having served as an important inspiration for the composition of The Book of Margery Kempe.

Genre

Both works are a curious mixture of saint's life and biography or autobiography. In the manner typical of a saint's life, Dorothea and Margery are presented as individuals especially singled out by God to receive his grace and favor. Johannes Marienwerder exhorts his audience to consider Dorothea as God's specially elected bride:

You blessed listeners and readers of this book, examine, consider, and believe that the Lord of this old world

which daily renews itself in its vices has renewed his merciful miraculous deeds in his elected bride Dorothea, for the world as an example for improvement, for himself as a source of praise and honor, and for him who has cooled in his love for God as a rekindling of his fire, so that He may be greatly praised and glorified through her.²⁶⁴

Margery, as God himself assured her many times, also had been selected as his special bride from the beginning of time: "My lofe is so mech to be þat I may not drawyn it fro þe, for, dowtyr, þer may non hert thynke ne tunge telle þe gret loue þat I haue to þe, and þat I take witnes of my blyssyd Modyr, or myn holy awngelys, & of alle þe seyntyngs in Heuyn, for þei alle worschep me for þi lofe in Heuyn" (The Book, p. 206). All the spiritual gifts God granted Margery were his own special gifts "þat I zeue to myn owyn chosyn sowlys þe wherch I knew wyth-owtyn be-gynnyng xulde come to grace & dwellyn wyth me with-owtyn endyng" (The Book, p. 205). Like Dorothea's saintly life, Margery's was to magnify God's glory: "& so schall I ben worschepyd in erth for þi loue, dowtyr, for I wyl haue þe grace þat I haue schewyd to þe in erth knowyn to þe worlde þat þe pepil may wonderyn in my goodnes & merueylyn of my gret goodnes þat I haue schewyd to þe" (The Book, p. 206).

The trials and triumphs of a saint, which comprise the bulk of material in a typical saint's life, form a substantial part of both Des Leben and The Book. The indignities Dorothea had to suffer at the

²⁶⁴Des Leben, p. 199. "Ir seligen horer und leser dis buches, pruet und weget und gloubet, daz der herre der alden werlt, di sich tegelich vornuwet in untugunt, vornuwet hot in syner erwelten brut Dorothee syne gnadenriche wundirwerk, der werlt zcu eyner besserunge, ym zcu lobe und zcu ere und den vorkalten in syner lybe zcu eyner enczundunge, das her wurde gewirdiget und geeret grozlich an ir."

hands of others have already been discussed; the injustices inflicted on Margery by her fellow men will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Like all of God's saints, both women had to endure God's testing of their faith. Des Leben and The Book both describe in great detail the temptations the Devil visited on Dorothea and on Margery. For years he counseled Dorothea to abandon her dedication to God, trying to convince her of its futility. According to Johannes Marienwerder, Dorothea's struggle against the evil spirit began when she was nine years old and "took place daily before her marriage and after her marriage also without ceasing."²⁶⁵

During a two year period preceding the miraculous exchange of her old cold heart for a hot new one, Dorothea was especially vulnerable to the Devil's mischief and, unlike most other saints, almost fell into despair:

It happened in the thirty-ninth year of her life . . . that she had great longing and desire for the blessed holy body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, for the reception of which she had prepared herself with great diligence. Even in this very praiseworthy preparation the spirit of distrust and hesitation which . . . for two whole years had assailed, troubled and grieved her especially often, assailed her vehemently.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵Des Leben, p. 217. "und werte tegelich vor der e, und ouch in der e steticlichin."

²⁶⁶Des Leben, p. 231. "Is geschach in dem nununddrizcigstin jore irs aldirs . . . das sy hatte gar grose senunge und vorlangunge noch dem wirdigen heiligen lichnam unsirs herren Ihesu Cristi, zcu dem sy sich ouch bereit hatte mit grosim vlyse. In derselbin lobelichin bereitunge facht sy an hafticlich der geist des missetruwens und des zcagen, der sy ouch . . . hatte zwei gantze jor sundirlich gar vil angevochtin, gemuet und betrubit."

Like all saints, Dorothea, with God's help and severe mortification of her body, finally vanquished her enemy: "During these years she wounded her body severely to overcome the temptation of the fiend from which she suffered greatly, especially during her married life."²⁶⁷

When the Devil tempted Margery, he met with considerably more success. After several unsuccessful attempts to live the life of a saint, Margery fell into the deadly sin of vainglory, assuming she loved God more than he loved her. God, upon perceiving her presumption, sent her three years of severe temptation: "Owyr gostly enemy slepyth not, but he ful besyly sergyth owr complexions & owr dysposycionys, & wher þat he fyndyth us most freel þer be owyr Lordys sufferawns he leyth hys snar, which may no man skape be hys owyn power" (The Book, p. 14). Margery's greatest weakness was her sexual appetite, "and so he leyd be-forn þis creatur þe snar of letchery, whan sche wend þat all fleschly lust had al hol ben quenched in hir" (The Book, p. 14). In contrast to Dorothea, who in spite of Johannes Marienwerder's protestations to the contrary does not impress the reader as a person seriously in danger of falling victim to Satan's guile, Margery could not resist him, no matter how severely she mortified her flesh. After offering herself to a man who had propositioned her, and after being rejected by him when she finally consented to lie with him, her shame, confusion, and guilt cast her into despair. She was convinced God "had forsakyn hir & durst not trostyn to hys mercy, but was labowrd

²⁶⁷Des Leben, p. 217. "binnen den joren tat sie irem lichnam gar we, of das sy mochte des vindes bekorunge obirwinden, di sy besundirn groz leit im elychin lebin."

wyth horrybyl temptacyons of lettherye & of dyspeyr ny al þe next 3er folwyng" (The Book, p. 16). Only after weeping penitential tears daily for two years and after having asked God daily for his "mercy & forzyfnes of hir synnes & hir trespas" (The Book, p. 16), did she finally regain his grace.

Descriptions of the ultimate triumph of God's saints over the wickedness of the world and their blessed end are also a notable feature of both works. Both women suffered derision, deprivation, disease, pain, and persecution for God's sake, all of which are narrated in great detail. Like other saints, they were miraculously saved from harm until it pleased God to deliver them from their earthly existence. Johannes Marienwerder summarizes the complexity of Dorothea's martyrdom like this:

Her suffering was not constantly brought about solely by her own doing, but she also suffered patiently without ceasing many and varied afflictions and torments from the world, from the evil spirit, from her own senses, and especially from Our Lord. He tormented her often and caused her great suffering in love through a variety of spiritual and bodily wounds, through hard inner labors, through great desire, longing, and searching of him, his holy body, and eternal life, of which much, but nevertheless much less is written here than actually took place.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸Des Leben, p. 197. "Ir liden ist ouch nicht alleyne von ir selben steticlich gemacht, sundir sie hot ouch zcu pflege vil und manchirley liden und martir geduldich enphangen von der werlt, von dem bosen geiste, von irre eygen synnekeit und sundirlich von unsirm herren, der sie vil gemartirt hot, und ir groz liden in lybe gemachit hot in manchirley vorwundunge geistlich und lyplich mit grozer swerer ynwendiger erbeit, mit groser vorlangunge, senunge, und sochunge noch ym, noch syne heiligen wirdigen lichnam und noch dem ewigen leben, devon vil und doch vil mynre geschribin ist, wen is gewest ist."

Margery's Book describes her suffering in much the same way when Christ summarizes her martyrdom:

I haue chastysed þe my-self as I wolde be many gret dredys & turmentrijs þat þu hast had wyth euyl spyritys boþin slepyng & wakyng many zerys. I haue also, dowtyr, chastised þe wyth þe drede of my Godhede, & many tymes haue I feryd þe wyth gret tempestys of wyndys þat þu wendyst veniawns xuld a fallyn on þe for synne. I haue preuyd þe be many tribulacyons, many gret heuynes, & many grevows sekenes in so mech þat þu hast ben anoynted for deed (The Book, p. 51).

Neither Des Leben nor The Book describe the actual death of their subjects, but both make it perfectly clear that these two women died with the absolute certainty of being received into heaven with the pomp and circumstance they deserved. On numerous occasions Christ had promised both Dorothea and Margery a fitting reward in heaven for every indignity they suffered on his behalf on earth. Speaking to Dorothea, for example, he said: "When you come into eternal life, you will become a great saint. Because you did forgo the adornment of your body through my will, your soul shall have beautiful adornment forever."²⁶⁹ Speaking to Margery, he observed: "Þu hast be despysed for my lofe, & þerfor þu xalt be worshepyd for my lofe. Dowtyr, whan þu art in Heuyn, þu xalt moun askyn what þu wilt, & I xal grawnte þe al þi desyr" (The Book, p. 52). Their reception in heaven was to be an occasion of universal celebration and rejoicing. Discussing her death with Dorothea, Christ stated:

²⁶⁹Des Leben, p. 320. "Wen du kömst czu dem ewigen leben, so wirstu eyne grose heylige darinne werden; und dorumbe dastu durch meynen willin host gelossin dy czirunge deynes leibis, sal deine zele ewiglich schöne czirunge habin."

"When you die, there will be joy in heaven and on earth. The saints in heaven will rejoice to have you in their midst; on earth many of those who know you will rejoice because they will have the hope that you came to eternal life." Another time the Lord said: "You will die [soon] because those who are in eternal life wait for you impatiently and with great eagerness."²⁷⁰

Similarly, Christ promised Margery to deliver her soul to heaven with his own hands:

Wyth myn owyn handys, wech wer nayled to þe Crosse, I xal tak þi sowle fro þi bodd wyth gret myrthe & melodye, wyth swet smellys & good odowrys, & offyr it to my Fadyr in Heuyn, þer þu xal se hym face to face, wonyng wyth hym wythowtyn ende. Alle myn holy seyntys xal enioyen of þi comyng hom. The sowlys in Purgatory xal joyn in þi comyng hom, for þei knowyn wel þat God louyth þe specyaly, & men in erth schal joyn in God for þe, for he xal werkyn meche grace for þe and makyn al þe world to knowyn þat God louyth þe (The Book, pp. 51-52).

In contrast to the saint's life, however, both Des Leben and The Book present a great wealth of information about the personal lives of their subjects. Whereas hagiography is not interested in the private lives of saints and discusses their personal lives only briefly, if at all, these two works provide many realistic, concrete descriptions of Dorothea's and Margery's common everyday experiences. Comparing Johannes Marienwerder's Des Leben with his Latin works on Dorothea, Helm and Ziesemer comment on the preponderance of biographical details at the expense of theological elements and speculations in the vernacular work:

²⁷⁰Des Leben, p. 322. "Wen du gestirbist, so wirth froyde werdin im himmel unde in ertreych. Dy heiligen im himmel werdin sich froyen, das sy dich werdin mit in habin. Uff dem ertereych werdin sich der vil froyin, dy dich kennen, wen sy werdin des eyne hoffenunge habin, das du seyst komen czu deme ewigen leben. Eines andiren tages sprach der herre: Du salt sterbin, wen dy, dy in dem ewigen lebin sint, beytin begerlich noch dir."

His work in the vernacular German is changed significantly. The biographical element predominates by far. Dorothea's childhood and marriage, her pilgrimages to Rome and Aachen, her life as a recluse, her piety, her inner life, her revelations and visions are related. Other matters are abridged, as for example the theological observations which can be found in the Latin vita.²⁷¹

Margery's Book has exactly the same character. Thus it resembles Des Leben far more than it does most of the Middle English versions of St. Birgitta's Revelations or such a typical saint's life as the Middle English Life of S. Mary of Oegines, a work which some critics have considered a model for Margery's Book.²⁷² The

²⁷¹Karl Helm and Walter Ziesemer, Die Literatur des deutschen Ritterordens (Giessen: Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag, 1951), p. 131. "Das Werk ist in der Verdeutschung stark geändert: Das Biographische überwiegt weitaus; erzählt wird Dorotheas Kindheit und Ehe, die Wallfahrten nach Rom und Aachen, ihr Leben als Klausnerin, ihre Frömmigkeit, ihr Seelenleben, Offenbarungen und Visionen. Anderes wird gekürzt, so die theologischen Betrachtungen, die sich in der lateinischen Vita finden."

²⁷²In the introduction to his edition of the Garrett MS of St. Birgitta's Revelations William Cumming briefly describes the other six extant Middle English manuscripts of the Revelations. The Garrett MS, like most of the other manuscripts Cumming describes, contains no biographical information about St. Birgitta. There is, however, one MS, the Claudius B. I, which because of its length is unsuitable for edition, which is preceded by a vita. It may have been this version with which Margery was familiar.

The single Middle English translation of pe lyf of s. Marye of Oegines, printed by C. Horstmann in Anglia 8 (1885), 134-84, is a radically shortened version of the Latin vita b. Mariae Oigniacensis, composed in 1215 by Mary's confessor Jacques de Vitry. It shares many commonplace mystical ideas with both Des Leben and The Book, hardly any of which, however, are described in any detail. Therefore, this translation, which Margery mentions that she had read to her, could have provided Margery with little more than an outline for her own Book.

One of the few incidents of St. Mary's religious experiences which is described in detail, however, is of particular interest to this study because it suggests not only Margery's, but also Dorothea's indebtedness to this Flemish mystic. When a priest

biographical details concerning her marriage, pilgrimages, trials, and successes are numerous and concretely related, whereas her visions and revelations with a few exceptions tend to be abstract and are generally related in a summary fashion. Theological speculations are altogether missing. Because of their fusion of hagiographical subject matter with an unusual preponderance of biographical information, these two late-medieval works represent an intermediate stage in the development of biographical writing. On one hand, they look back to the medieval form of "biography," the saint's life, on the other hand, they anticipate a new genre which was to emerge during the Renaissance, the

admonished Mary for her noisy weeping in church, "she, knowynge hir vnmyghte, wente priuely oute of þe chirche and hidde hir in a priue place fer fro alle folke: and gate graunte of oure lorde with terys þat he wolde shewe to þe same preste þat hit is not in mannes powere to wipholde þe stronge streme of teerys, whanne a grete blaste blowþ and þe watir flowiþ. Wherefore þat preste, þe while hee sange masse þat same daye, was so ouercomen wip abundauns of terys, þat his spirite was wel nyghe strangelyd; and þe more þat hee bisyed hym to reffreyne his terys, þe moor not oonly hee but also þe buke and þe auter-clothes were wette wip water of wepynge."

Hipler in "Der Beichtvater," p. 52, reports that Johannes Rymann, Dorothea's second confessor, related a similar event at Dorothea's canonization proceedings: "Rymann once suffered from spiritual dryness and on the feast day of St. Mary Magdalene he complained to her [Dorothea] about this; she promises to pray for him, and he had barely taken his place in the choir, when he starts feeling deepest contrition and has to leave his place so as not to disrupt his brothers too much with his abundantly flowing tears." "Rymann litt einst längere Zeit an grosser geistiger Trockenheit und klagte ihr am Feste der hl. Maria Magdalena seine Not; sie verspricht, für ihn zu beten, und kaum hat er seinen Platz im Chore wiedereingenommen, als er sofort die tiefste Zerknirschung fühlt und sein Stallum verlassen muss, um durch seine überreich fließenden Tränen bei seinen Brüdern nicht zu sehr aufzufallen."

Margery relates St. Mary's experience in The Book as a justification of her own weeping, and she reports that the priest who later became her second scribe abandoned his suspicion toward Margery and her abundance of weeping after having read this account of St. Mary's tears (The Book, p. 153).

biography or autobiography in the modern sense of the word, containing all the inconsistencies and incongruities such a mixture of incompatible materials and conventions produces.²⁷³

Purpose

External pressures were partially responsible for forcing Johannes Marienwerder and Margery to exceed the traditional scope and purpose of hagiographic literature, which produced some of these incongruities and inconsistencies. Des Leben and The Book were written at a time when church and state first began to understand and react to the potential dangers inherent in religious reform movements, and both works represent their authors' responses to the emerging struggle of the forces of orthodoxy on the one hand and the forces of change on the other. Johannes Marienwerder, as is obvious from his other works, was well aware of the dangers the reform movement in neighboring Bohemia would pose for Prussia if it were to spread there, and was determined to prevent it from doing so. He was perceptive enough to realize that he had to win the support of the laity to win the struggle against the spread of heresy in Prussia. The prologue to Des Leben clearly indicates his intention of using his vernacular account of Dorothea's life as his most potent weapon in the Church's crusade to prevent the populace of Prussia from

²⁷³Roberta Bux Bosse, "Margery Kempe's Tarnished Reputation: A Reassessment," 14th Century English Mystics Newsletter, 5 (1979), 9-19. This essay discusses Margery's Book as a saint's life and points out some of the most glaring inconsistencies and incongruities which mar the work.

accepting the Bohemian reforms which were so attractive and advantageous to the laity.²⁷⁴

Johannes Marienwerder mounted his attack on current heresies in the prologue of Des Leben, which is an effective mixture of cajolery and threat. First, it describes Dorothea as the greatest saint yet to appear on the face of the earth, and Prussia and her inhabitants as especially blessed by her appearance there:

Lift up your eyes, incline your ears, all inhabitants of Prussia and all Christian people! See and hear how the ancient, the eternal God has renewed his grace in Prussia in his special maiden Dorothea. . . . At all times she adorned her life with such great miraculous deeds and with such overflowing grace of her only friend and elected bridegroom Jesus Christ that it cannot be described as briefly as the life of many other saints. . . . [Her life can also not be discussed briefly] because of God's extraordinary inexpressible effects of grace in her and through her, which were so great and varied that she herself did not want to reveal them nor was allowed to reveal them without the special bidding and permission of her dear friend, Our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴These reforms were heavily influenced by the teachings of John Wyclif, the English religious reformer whose tenets also inspired the Lollards in England. Many of the Bohemian reformers were in favor of daily communion for the laity and of religious services being held in the vernacular. Anneliese Triller, in her article "Konrad von Wallenrodt," 27-28, lists Doctor Leander's eight point reform program for the Prussian clergy, which she characterizes as a mixture of Albigensian and Wycliffite heresies.

²⁷⁵Des Leben, p. 201. "Habit uf uwir ougin, negit uwir oren, alle inwoner Prusenlandes, und ouch alle cristgeloubige menschin, seht und vornemit, wi der alde, der ewige got syne gnade in dem lande zcu Prusen vornuwet hot an siner sundirlichin dirnen Dorothea genant. . . . Alleyne das ir gantz leben sy also gros allenthalben gezciret mit wundirwerken und mit obirvlussigen gnaden irs aller sundirlichsten vrundes und usderweltin brutegamis, des herren Ihesu Cristi, also das ir lebin nicht gerinlich beschribin werden mag, als vil ander heyligen lebin. . . . ouch von sundirlichir unsprechlicher wirkunge gots gnade in ir und mit ir, als groz und manchirley was, daz sie is selbin nicht uz sprechin mochte noch entorste ane sundirliche geheyse und orloub irs liben frundes, unsirs herren Ihesu Cristi."

The prologue then exhorts the audience to follow Dorothea's example, warning them of the dire consequences they would suffer should they fail to do so and follow her heretical detractors instead:

Take to heart, you devout, faithful Christians, God's honor, your own improvement, and the reaffirmation of faith in this blessed mother Dorothea, in whom God wrought merciful deeds to shame the sensuous, fleshly people, to comfort and improve Christendom, to awaken and incite those of the true faith to good works, and to set those on fire whose hearts have turned cold. So that you will not be prevented from achieving your own salvation, do not turn to those who scorn and despise her or to those who oppose her dishonestly.²⁷⁶

The prologue closes with a lengthy prayer Johannes Marienwerder had composed to aid his audience in their efforts to achieve their own illumination in the true faith. In this prayer Dorothea is presented as their intercessor in the heavenly hierarchy:

Lord Jesus Christ, true light of the world, illumine my soul, drive from it all harmful darkness and ignorance, and teach me to recognize you in a true and proper faith, in a firm and strong hope, and in a chaste, burning love. . . . May Mary, my faithful helper in need, your worthy mother, win all these things for me through the prayers and the merits of the blessed recluse Dorothea, your and your adored mother's faithful servant. Amen.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶Des Leben, p. 198. "Nemet zcu herczen, ir andachtigen getruwen cristen, gotis ere, uwer besserunge und des gloubin bestetigunge an dirre seligen mutir Dorothee, mit der got gnadenriche werk geworcht hot den wollustigen fleischlichen menschin zcu eyner beschamunge, der cristenheyt zcu troste und zcu besserunge, den rechtgloubegen zcu eyner irweckunge odir reysunge zcu guter ubunge, und den vorkalten hercen zcu eyner enczundunge! Hirumme, daz ir icht gehindert werdit an uwer selikeit, keret uch nicht an ir vorsmeher und vorachter und an ir unredelichen widersprecher."

²⁷⁷Des Leben, pp. 199-200. "Herre Ihesu Criste, du woris licht aller werlt, irluchte myne sele, und trib us ir alle schedeliche tunkelheit und unwissenheit, und lerne mich irkennen dich in eyne waren gerechten glouben, in eyner vesten starken hoffenunge, und in eyner kuschen burnender lybe. . . . Des sy mir eyne werberynne, Maria, mine getruwe nothelferynne, dine wirdige gebererynne, durch daz gebeth und vordynen der seligen Dorothee klusenerynne, dyn und diner aller libestin mutir getruwe dienerynne! Amen."

Apparently Johannes Marienwerder realized that portraying Dorothea as a perfect being graced with singular divine gifts, the personification of every Christian virtue, by itself might not be sufficient to persuade the laity to accept her as their inspiration and model and reject the teachings of those who would lead them away from the Mother Church. Therefore, he also took pains to portray her as a real human being who, like them, struggled for perfection all her life. His realistic account of Dorothea's day-by-day struggles against misfortunes and disappointments accomplished this task very effectively. Furthermore, he wanted to undercut the effectiveness of heretical teachings by reassuring his audience through Dorothea's example that all the spiritual blessings anyone may need and want were still available within the Mother Church and were freely given to anyone who earnestly strove to attain them. As the following passage implies, the attainment of God's grace and eternal salvation within the bounds of orthodox Christianity was as easy as picking flowers in a meadow, if one accepted Dorothea as one's intercessor:

[Her life], as it is here described in the following work, should be for all . . . a light and a way to step out of the wide road which leads to perdition and a guide onto the path which leads man to the gate of heaven. . . . Therefore, every devout man shall enter into her life with judgment and desire, as into a pleasant meadow, to gather there, with God's help and to the limit of his discernment, the flowers of virtue which she produced with such fruitfulness and abundance that they not only were sufficient to secure her own salvation, but the salvation of all lovers of virtue.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸Des Leben, p. 201. "[Ihr Leben] Als hy noch beschriben ist, solde syn an allen . . . eyn licht und ein weeg zcu tretin us der breytin strose des vortummis, und eyne inleitunge des weges, der do furit den menschin zcu der pforte des hymmilrichs! . . . Dorumme

In order to make effective use of Des Leben as a means of keeping the laity firmly committed to orthodox Catholicism, Johannes Marienwerder also had to succeed in vindicating Dorothea fully in the eyes of the populace. This was no easy task, for Dorothea, unlike most saints, had not only been maligned by heretical detractors, but had been accused of heresy by influential and respectable officials within the Church. Accordingly, the work frequently betrays Johannes Marienwerder's anxiety to convince his audience that Dorothea was no heretical wolf in sheep's clothing, ready to lead them into perdition, but a genuine saint of Holy Church. He rejects the attacks from without the Church as utterly unjustified, dismissing them as contrary gossip born out of ignorance and therefore as nothing more substantial than "the barking of a mad dog who devours himself with his senseless barking and hinders those who want to hear [the truth] in their tranquility."²⁷⁹ Yet he is careful to hold out the olive branch to those prodigals who may have already strayed far from the fold of Holy Church, pleading with them to defer hasty judgment, to examine the evidence, and to abandon their unwarranted suspicion of Dorothea's sanctity:

sal eyn itzlichir gloubiger mensche mit vornumft und begerunge geen in ir lebin als in eynen wunsamen anger, noch syner enphenlichkeit mit der hulfe gots zcu lesen di blumen der tugunden, der sie so vol und fruchtbar was, das sie nicht alleyne ire personen, sundir allen libhabern der tugunden zcur salde mogen komen."

²⁷⁹Des Leben, p. 198. "wen als eyn bal eyns wutenden hundes, der sich selbin vorzcert mit syme unvornumftigen bellen, und hindirt di horer an ir ru!"

Be not like a judge who condemns a person unjustly before he has proven his doings as unjust. Therefore, first read her life humbly and diligently and consider carefully the words and the works which the almighty God wrought in her; consider the fruit which has grown from this; accept the teaching and the testimony of those who knew her well while she was still with us and of those honest people whom the Lord, through her, granted mercy after her death.²⁸⁰

Vital to the success of Johannes Marienwerder's efforts of protecting Prussia from the spread of heresy, however, was the successful conclusion of Dorothea's canonization inquiry, which was in progress when Des Leben appeared in 1405. By that time he had already written a series of Latin works on Dorothea to initiate and support her canonization. Des Leben served an important purpose in his efforts to realize his fondest dream--to see Dorothea recognized as the first native saint of Prussia. It was to acquaint the laity throughout Prussia with Dorothea's life and spiritual accomplishments. Apparently, he hoped to generate an overwhelming popular enthusiasm which would support the official efforts of Prussia's political and ecclesiastical authorities for a speedy and successful end of the proceedings. Quite apart from the wealth and prestige Dorothea's canonization would bring to Prussia and more specifically to Marienwerder, her cult would enhance the prestige of orthodox Catholicism in an area so recently converted to Christianity and so severely

²⁸⁰Des Leben, p. 198. "Bis nicht als eyn richter, der e eynen menschin unrecht teylet, e wen her syne sache unrecht irkennet. Dorumme lis vor demuticlich und vlysllich ire leben, und weg wol wort und werk, di der almechtige got mit ir getan hoth; sich an di frucht, di doruz komen ist; nym undirwisunge und gezcugnis von den, di sie recht gekant han, di wile sie hy mit uns was, und von redelichen menschen, den der herre gnade getan hat noch irme tode durch sie!"

threatened by the rapid spread of heresy in Bohemia. Nothing would vindicate Dorothea's life more effectively in the eyes of unsophisticated laymen than official sanctification by the very same institution whose officials had formerly accused her of heresy.

Margery's reasons for producing The Book, though less complex, nevertheless were essentially the same as Johannes Marienwerder's reasons for writing Des Leben. Dorothea's confessor was interested in spreading Dorothea's fame throughout Prussia and provide the populace with an account of her saintliness as an inspiration for their seeking their own salvation by following her example. Margery wanted to produce a record of her own life and spiritual accomplishments as an inspiration to her fellow Englishmen. Christ himself had pointed out the necessity for doing so:

Pi stody þat þu stodiist for to do writyn þe grace þat I haue schewyd to þe plesith me ryght meche & he þat writith bope. For, þow ze wer in þe chirche & wept bothyn to-gedyr as sore as euyr þu dedist, zet xulde ze not plesyn me mor þan ze don wyth zowr writyng, for dowtyr, be þis boke many a man xal be turnyd to me & beleuyn þerin (The Book, p. 216).

But like Dorothea, whose visions and revelations were to remain secret during her lifetime, Margery was ordered by God to keep her visions and revelations secret until he would permit her to reveal them. For this reason, Margery rejected the offers of many clerks to record her experiences as they occurred:

Sum proferyd hir to wrytyn hyr felyngys wyth her owen handys, & sche wold not consentyn in no way, for sche was comawndyd in hir sowle þat sche schuld not wretyn so soone. & so it was xx zer & mor fro þat tym þis creatur had fyrst felyngys & reuelacyons er þan sche dede any wryten. Aftyward whan it plesyd ower Lord, he comawndyd hyr & chargyd hir þat sche xuld don wryten hyr felingys & reuelacyons & þe forme of her leuyng þat hys goodnesse myth be knowyn to alle þe world (The Book, pp. 3-4).

The many autobiographical details in The Book served the same purpose as they did in Des Leben. They were meant to convince Margery's audience that even the most sinful human being could attain salvation, provided he believed in God's grace, read The Book, and followed Margery's example:

& so schal I ben worschepyd in erth for þi loue, dowtyr, for I wyl haue þe grace þat I haue schewyd to þe in erth knowyn to þe worlde þat þe pepil may wonderyn in my goodnes & merueylyn of my gret goodnes þat I haue schewyd to þe þat hast ben synful, & be-cawse þat I haue be so gracyows & mercyful to þe, þei þat ben in þe worlde xal not dispeyrin, be þei neuyr so synful, for þei may han mercy & grace zyf þei wil hem-self (The Book, p. 206).

Like Dorothea, Margery had been accused of heresy, and just as Johannes Marienwerder had been determined to vindicate Dorothea fully, so Margery was determined to clear herself once and for all of all suspicions of Lollardy. As Des Leben reports, Christ himself had repeatedly assured Dorothea of the orthodoxy of her faith and the written accounts of her religious experiences:

Now consider what a serious, strict, intelligent, honest, benevolent and erudite schoolmaster you have had, whose school you attended for a long time and from whom you received many kind benefits. All writing which you learned from him, that is from me, your instructor, you may with honor and without shame put before your two masters b. p. [Johannes Marienwerder and Johannes Rymann], whom I sent you, so that they consider it and hold it up against the Holy Scriptures and check whether it is justified because I do not wish that you leave error behind. And all who will read these writings that you have from me, will say that you had a high-minded, good master.²⁸¹

²⁸¹Des Leben, p. 273. "Nu bedencke, wy gar eynen ernstin, strengin, wiczigin, erlichen, güttgen und wolgelarten schulmeister du hast gehat, in des schule du lange host gegangen, und von im vil guttete fruntlichen entpfangen! Alle schrifft, dy du von im, das ist von mir, deinem meister gelart host, dy magistu mit eren ane

Margery defended her orthodoxy in exactly the same manner, by claiming that Christ himself had been her teacher, which made error impossible. In Rome Christ had promised her: "I xal preche & teche þe my-selfe, for þi wyl & þi desyr is acceptabyl vn-to me" (The Book, p. 98), assuring her "ther is no clerk in al þis world þat can, dowtyr, leryn þe bettyr þan I can do. . . . Ther is no clerk can spekyn a-zens þe lyfe whch I teche þe, & zyf he do, he is not Goddys clerk; he is þe Deuelys clerk" (The Book, p. 158). With Christ himself as her spiritual instructor, Margery could insist that although she could not report events chronologically, "sche dede no þing wryten but þat sche knew rygth wel for very trewth" (The Book, p. 5).

Her own vindication was as important to her as Dorothea's had been to Johannes Marienwerder because she desired to become Lynn's native saint just as much as Johannes Marienwerder had desired Dorothea to become Prussia's first native saint. By revealing her "hy contemplacyons" and "her maner of leuyng" to eminent theologians throughout England, Margery may well have hoped to find an influential sponsor among them who might consider her a worthy candidate for sainthood. But in this respect she was not nearly as fortunate as Dorothea had been. The Book frequently mentions the enthusiasm her revelations generated among English ecclesiastical authorities; some

schemde tragin vor dy czwene meyster b. p., dy ich dir geschickit habe, das sy is wegin und halden ken der heyligen schrift, unde prüfin, das is rechtfertig ist, wen ich wil nicht, das du irrung noch dir lest; und alle, dy dy schrift werden lesen, dy du von mir host, dy werdin sprechin, dastu eynen ernstin gutten meister host gehat."

of them, like the bishop of Lincoln, Philip Repyngdon, "tokyn it in perel of her sowle and as þei wold answer to God þat þis creatur was inspyred wyth þe Holy Gost and bodyn hyr þat sche schuld don hem wryten & makyn a booke of hyr felyngys & hir reuelacyons" (The Book, p. 3). However, no one of the status and intellectual accomplishments of a Johannes Marienwerder took up her cause, so even at the very end of her life as she was dictating her book to the priest, Margery had little assurance of seeing herself officially sanctified. Nevertheless, Margery's Book clearly reveals her conviction that she deserved the status of a saint. If the churchmen could not recognize her saintliness sufficiently to canonize her, Christ at least was never deceived about her merit and promised her the role of an intercessor in heaven until the end of time: "Dowtyr, I be-hote þe þe same grace þat I be-hyte Seynt Kateryne, Seynt Margarete, Seynt Barbara, & Seynt Powle, in so mech þat what creatur in erth vn-to þe Day of Dom aske þe any bone & beleuyth þat God louyth þe he xal haue hys bone er ellys a bettyr thyng" (The Book, p. 52).

Method of Composition

In their method of composition Des Leben and The Book are similar to a number of saint's lives composed during the late Middle Ages. Des Leben is the product of close collaboration between the saint's confessor and his charge, which by that time had become a commonplace mode of production of hagiographic literature. At the same time Des Leben differs from this pattern in several important respects. Johannes Marienwerder did not compose this work until ten

years or so after Dorothea's death, so in contrast to many saints whose lives were recorded in this fashion, Dorothea had no part in determining the final organization of the biographical details, visions, and religious experiences she had revealed to her confessor during her acquaintance with him. The work is not even the original spiritual biography based on these earlier dictations, but a translation and summary of Johannes Marienwerder's earlier Latin works on Dorothea, every one of which also had been written after Dorothea's death.

Margery's Book also differs from the traditional method of composition in several ways. Neither of her two scribes had ever been her confessor, and the second scribe, who was responsible for giving the work its final shape, was neither immediately involved with her, as Margery claimed her first scribe to have been, nor was he ever involved in the shaping of her spiritual career or in witnessing any of the spiritual events he recorded for her. Therefore, many details of Margery's life apparently impressed him as either fantastic or untrue. The Book suggests that this priest's distaste for taking on the task of revising and completing the account of Margery's religious career was not only based on his inability to decipher the hopelessly garbled account produced by Margery's first scribe, but also on his mistrust of Margery's credibility. Not until he read the life of Mary of Oigines, did he finally accept Margery's experiences as genuine:

And þan many of hem þat pretendyd hir frenschep turnyd a-bakke for a lytyl veyn drede þat þei haddyn of his wordys [a friar's, who had preached a sermon against Margery and her religious pretensions] & durst not wel spekyn wyth hir, of þe whеч þe same preyste was on þat aftirward wrot þis boke & was in purpose neuyr to a leuyd hir felyngys aftyr. & zet

owr Lord drow hym a-zen in schort tyme, blissed mote he ben, pat he louyd hir more & trustyd mor to hir wepyng & hir crying þan euyr he dede be-forn, for aftyrward he red of a woman clepyd Maria de Oegines & of hir maner of leuyng of þe wondirful swetnesse pat sche had in þe word of God heryng, of þe wondirful compassyon pat sche had in hys Passyon thynkyng, & of þe plentyuows teerys pat sche wept, þe wech made hir so febyl & so weyke pat sche myth not endur to beheldyn þe Crosse, ne heryn owr Lordys Passyon rehersyd, so sche was resoluyd in-to terys of pyte & compassyon (The Book, pp. 152-53).

These variations from the commonly observed pattern of composition of late medieval hagiographic literature and the fact that the women were themselves illiterate cause these two works to present special problems to the modern reader. One of the most important problems is to determine the extent of scribal influence upon the form and the content of the work. All critics who have studied Des Leben have addressed themselves to this question, and most of them have concluded that in every respect the work is far more indebted to Johannes Marienwerder than to Dorothea. As Horst summarizes their conclusions, considering Johannes Marienwerder's theological training as well as "the linguistic and intellectual unity of this vita, we must assume that Johannes was more than a mere editor."²⁸² These critics, though they do give Dorothea some credit for her spiritual gifts, consider her too ignorant to have been familiar with any of the details of speculative mystical theology and their scholastic expression to have exerted any appreciable influence on Johannes Marienwerder's writings:

²⁸²Horst, p. 420. ". . . die sprachliche und gedankliche Einheit der Dorotheenvita zwingt uns, anzunehmen, dass Johannes mehr war als ein blosser Redakteur."

The fact that this vita partakes of a widespread mystical tradition, though it, probably intentionally, avoids verbatim reproductions, is most naturally explained through long and intimate acquaintance with this kind of literature. Nobody had more opportunity to acquire this intimate acquaintance than the theologian who had access to all those works in Prague and also in Prussia.²⁸³

This is certainly a reasonable conclusion, but it totally ignores Dorothea's lifelong interest in mysticism and her frequent contacts with the experiences of other mystics.

It is equally difficult to determine the importance of the scribe in the composition of Margery's Book. Meech believed the influence of Margery's second amanuensis to have been extensive in matters of grammar and style. A recent study dealing with this topic concedes considerably more importance to this priest. John C. Hirsh, after examining pertinent textual evidence asserts that:

the evidence suggests that the second scribe did more than transcribe the earlier text [Book I, written by Margery's first amanuensis]. Rather he rewrote it from start to finish. It is impossible to say very much about the first version, except that it may have been completed in a month, and yet must have been long enough to discourage the second scribe when he first began to transcribe it. It probably consisted of an epitome of Margery's activities, which the second scribe expanded without hesitation.²⁸⁴

This the scribe could have done without much difficulty since Margery was available to provide details. Hirsh concludes that the second

²⁸³Horst, p. 420. "Die Tatsache, dass die Vita Anteil hat an einer weitverzweigten mystischen Tradition, wobei sie wörtliche Übernahmen wohl bewusst vermeidet, erklärt sich am ungezwungensten aus einem langen vertrauten Umgang mit dieser Literatur. Niemand hatte mehr Gelegenheit dazu als der Theologe, dem alle diese Werke in Prag und z. T. auch in Preussen zur Verfügung standen."

²⁸⁴John C. Hirsh, "Author and Scribe in The Book of Margery Kempe," Medium Aevum, 44 (1975), 147.

scribe vitally affected not only the content but also the structure of the work: "He first copied out the contents of the first version into clear English. Then, with this new manuscript to guide him, he set out to write the book he had promised to write, The Book of Margery Kempe" (Hirsh, p. 147).

If the critics are correct in their assessments that Des Leben and The Book are much more the "books" of their scribes than the books of the women whose lives they describe, the composition of both works differs considerably from that of the saints' lives which recorded the religious experiences of the prominent Dominican nuns of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and fundamentally from the accounts of the religious experiences of such women as Mechthild von Magdeburg and St. Birgitta. The German Dominican nuns were literate and thus could influence the composition of their vitae in a much more effective way than either Dorothea or Margery. St. Birgitta, admired by both Dorothea and Margery, was not only literate, but had learned Latin in order to record her visions and revelations as accurately as possible, and many of her religious experiences recorded in the writings of her two confessors are in fact her own composition.

IV. LIFE AND RELIGIOUS CAREER

The most persuasive evidence to support the possibility that Margery modeled her religious career upon Dorothea's example is revealed through a comparison of the lives of these two women as they are recorded in Des Leben and The Book. If Dorothea served Margery

as a model, it is likely that many of the characteristic features of continental feminine mysticism which appear in Margery's Book and tie her much more closely to the continental mystical tradition than to the English tradition may have been transmitted to Margery through Dorothea. Margery, by her own admission, never learned to speak or understand a foreign language. Because "sche cowde non oper langage þan English" (The Book, p. 82), she frequently found herself cut off from spiritual experiences, even in Rome, the very center of the Christian world:

Svm-tyme, whan þe forseyd creatur was at sermownys wher Duchemen & oper men prechyd, techyng þe lawys of God, sodeyn sorwe & heuynes occupyng hir hert cawsyd hir to compleyn wyth mornyng cher for lak of vndir-stondyng, desyryng to be refreshyd wyth sum crumme of gostly vndirstondyng vn-to hir most trostyng & entyrylyst belouyed souereyn Crist Ihesu (The Book, p. 98).

This "lak of vndir-stondyng" may have prevented any significant direct impact of German feminine mystical traditions on Margery, even though on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem she passed directly through the Rhineland, the area of Germany where these mystical traditions had flourished most vigorously. The Book gives no indication of how familiar Margery may have been with the importance of such cities as Cologne, Strasburg, and Constance to the development of German feminine mysticism. She does mention staying in Constance on her way to the Holy Land. How long she was there is impossible to determine, but her stay could not have been extensive. According to Meech, Margery traveled from Lynn to Venice in two months' time, and later from Rome back to Norwich in less than a month.²⁸⁵ Traveling such

²⁸⁵Meech, "Notes," p. 284 and p. 306.

distances in such a short time could not have given her much time to absorb local mystical traditions, especially without any knowledge of German. Furthermore, as The Book points out, Margery's stay in Constance was filled with problems which might have kept her too distracted to explore the rich legacy of feminine mysticism which had flourished in the Dominican convents in the area around Constance.²⁸⁶ Because her English travel companions were extremely hostile to her and abandoned her in Constance, Margery may have spent most of her time there making new arrangements for the safe continuation of her pilgrimage.

None of these difficulties, however, would have prevented her becoming acquainted with Dorothea's life and mysticism, and through her with German feminine mystical traditions. As the discussion of historical evidence suggests, information concerning Dorothea could have reached Margery over a long period of time, transmitted by people who were well informed about events in Danzig and very likely bilingual. Furthermore, when Margery finally traveled to Danzig herself, "the seyde creatur abood in Danske in Duchelond a-bowt v er vj wekys & had ryth good cher of meche pepil for owr Lordys lofe" (The Book, p. 231). During these five or six weeks she could have gathered a lot of information about Dorothea, and because of the thriving English merchant community in Danzig, there would have been no shortage of translators.

²⁸⁶The famous Dominican house of Töss was located near Winterthur in Switzerland and lies closest to Constance. Other convents in the area were Adelhausen in Freiburg and Unterlinden near Colmar.

Her relations with these merchants were cordial, as the following incident proves. When Margery was ready to leave Danzig, she could not do so. Mercantile rivalries between English and German merchants had strained relations between the English king and the Teutonic Knights, and one of the many retaliatory measures taken by the Teutonic Knights was the curtailment of English travel in their territory.²⁸⁷ According to The Book, an English merchant volunteered to secure permission for Margery to travel and succeeded in doing so:

Pan myth sche han no leue to gon owt of þat lond, for sche was an Englisch woman, & so had sche gret vexacyon & meche leftyng er sche myth getyn leue of on of þe heerys of Pruce for to gon þens. At þe last, thorw steryng of owr Lord, þer was a marchawnt of Lynne herd tellyn þer-of, & he cam to hir & comfortyd hir, behestyng hir þat he xulde helpyn hir fro þens, eybyr preuyly er apertly. And þis good man thorw gret labour gate hir leue to gon wher sche wolde (The Book, p. 232).

Like Dorothea, Margery started her career as a mystic with a variety of ascetic exercises, although none of them equalled Dorothea's purgations in scope and severity. Johannes Marienwerder claimed that Dorothea was entirely successful in hiding her self-castigations from her family and from Adalbert; Margery, likewise, claims complete success in concealing hers: "Pan sche gat hir an hayr of a kylne swech as men dryen on malt & leyd it in hir kyrtylle as sotylych & as preuylich as sche mygth þat hir husbond xult not aspye it, ne no mor he dede, & zet sche lay be hym euery nygth in his bedde, & weryd þe hayr euery day, & bar chylderyn in þe tyme" (The Book, p. 12). She also "zaf hir to gret fastyng & to gret wakyng" (The Book, p. 12).

²⁸⁷Meech, "Notes," p. 344.

Unlike Dorothea, who showed no signs of being discomfitted by her fasting, Margery was evidently more incommoded when God commanded her to abstain from her favorite food: "My derworthy dowtyr, þu must forsake þat þow louyst best in þis world, & þat is etyng of flesch. And in-stede of þat flesch þow schalt etyn my flesch & my blod, þat is þe very body of Crist in þe Sacrament of þe Awter" (The Book, p. 17).

In accordance with God's command, Margery had "etyng no flesch ne drunkyn no wyn iij zere er sche went owt of Ynglond" (The Book, p. 61) on her journey to the Holy Land in the fall of 1413, and it was her abstinence which frequently brought her into conflict with her traveling companions. Like Dorothea, who had spoiled many a merry gathering with her pointed abstinence and her wailing over the vanities of a world unmindful of Christ's suffering, Margery enraged her fellow pilgrims with her incessant sermons on proper Christian comportment. On the road to Constance, for instance,

thorw meuyng of summe of hir cumpany hyr confessowr was dysplesyd for sche ete no flesch, & so was mech of alle þe cumpany. And þei wer most displesyd for sche wepyd so mech & spak alwey of þe lofe & goodnes of owyr Lord as wel at þe tabyl as in oper place. & þerfor schamfully þei repreuyd hir & alto-chedyn hir & seyden þei wold not suffren hir as hir husbond dede whan sche was at hom & in Inglond" (The Book, p. 61).

When she had exhausted their patience, Margery, like Dorothea, frequently ended up in a corner or at the very end of the table, though not of her own volition. Sometimes her fellow travellers even abandoned her on the road to fend for herself as best she might.

Margery's self-castigations ended abruptly when God commanded her, as he had commanded Dorothea, to abandon her frenzied activities

and painful disciplines in favor of a contemplative religious life. Pointing out to her that many of her more extreme spiritual exercises, such as fasting and severe penances, were suitable only for beginners, but that she herself was sufficiently advanced to practice more sophisticated devotions, he instructed her to put aside her hairshirt, "& I schal ziue þe an hayr in þin hert þat schal lyke me mech bettyr þan alle þe hayres in þe world" (The Book, p. 17). Like Dorothea, she was to stop her restless wandering from church to church in search of indulgences, and her constant praying, in order to be rested and receptive to his grace: "I wyl þow leue þi byddynge of many bedys and thynk swych thowtys as I wyl putt in þi mend. I schal zeuyn þe leue to byddyn tyl sex of þe cloke to say what þow wyld. Þan schalt þow ly stille & speke to me be thowt, & I schal zeve to þe hey meditacyon and very contemplacyon" (The Book, p. 17).

But Margery's compliance with God's wishes was far from complete, and he often complained about her disregard of the program of worship he himself had designed to enable her to achieve spiritual perfection: "And I haue oftyn-tymes, dowtyr, teld þe þat thynkyng, wepyng, & hy contemplacyon is þe best lyfe in erthe. And þu xalt haue mor meryte in Heuyn for o 3er of thynkyng in þi mende þan for an hundryd 3er of preyng wyth þi mowth, & 3et þu wylt not leuyn me, for þu wilt byddyn many bedys whedyr I wil or not" (The Book, pp. 89-90). Unlike Dorothea, who became an anchoress to live the contemplative life God desired her to live, Margery never fully renounced the real world. She kept on wandering from one prelate to another, from one shrine to another.

Next to St. Birgitta and St. Catherine of Siena, Margery was probably the most mobile mystic of the Middle Ages.

She did, however, obey God's command to give up her fasts, and a particularly striking correspondence to Des Leben appears in her account of how she started to eat meat again after having abstained totally for a great number of years. When God suddenly commanded her to eat meat again, she hesitated to obey for fear that people would think her a hypocrite. She also reminded God of a vow she had made to the Virgin to fast once a week in her honor, which she was loathe to break. Thereupon the Virgin herself appeared to her, bidding her to tell her confessors that she herself wished Margery to be released from this vow: "Sche wolde han hir dischargyd of hir vow þat sche xulde ben mythy to beryn hir gostly labowrys, for wythowtyn bodily strength it mytyn not ben enduryd" (The Book, p. 162). After her confessors had released Margery from this vow to allow her to fulfill God's command, Mary appeared once more to thank Margery for complying with God's wishes even though she herself would have preferred to continue her fasts: "Dowtyr, þu art weyke j-now of wepyng & of crying, for þo makyn þe febyl & weyke anow. & kan þe mor thank to etyn þi mete for my lofe þan to fastyn, þat þu mayst enduryn thy perfeccyon of wepyng" (The Book, p. 162). The Virgin Mary's words are strikingly reminiscent of God's admonitions to Dorothea to cease her extreme fasts:

You must eat from time to time to strengthen your head, and for this reason you must eat often although it is painful to you to do so. . . . You must nourish yourself on account of the great inner labor; if you did not do so, you would

have to worry about injuring your mind for lack of food and you might lose your reason. Get up now and nourish your body. Eat and drink.²⁸⁸

Margery's description of the state of illumination, clothed in the traditional mystical metaphor of the flame of love burning in the heart of the mystic, is also strongly reminiscent of Johannes Marienwerder's particular handling of that metaphor in his descriptions of Dorothea's illumination. In his discussion of the thirty-seven degrees of divine love he states the effects of God's arrow of love upon her body and soul:

She felt how the flame leaped up [from her heart] and then returned to the place from which it had risen, how it rekindled itself there on the spiritual fire and then leaped forth again and returned again. The flame kept on doing this until she was so inflamed that body and soul became hot. . . . The Holy Spirit inflamed her and cleansed her from sins, and with constant exercise of virtue he brought her to the cleansing of her heart, and he caused her to become receptive to divine illumination, and she discerned secret things which are hidden from the wise men of this world.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸Des Leben, p. 294. "du must zcu stunden essen, das du sterkest dyn houpt; und doromme mustu dicke essen, alleine iz dir pylich ist."

Des Leben, p. 257. "Nu abir mustu dich labin durch der grosen ynnern arbeyt wilen; wen tetistu des nicht, du must dich besorgen, das du von dem abezcyen der speise deyne vornunfft icht vorsirist und mochtist vorlisen deyne vornunfft. Nu ste uff unde speyse deynen leyp, is und trinck!"

²⁸⁹Des Leben, p. 297. "Zcu stunden fulte sy, das derselbe vlam ufging und widder nidderging in di selbe stat, do her usgegangen was, und entzunte sich hitzeclichir von dem geistlichin fuyre, und fur denne abir widder uz, und ging uf, und dornoch wider in. Daz tet her als dicke, bis daz sy so sere entzunt wart, daz lip und sele dovon hitzig wurden."

Des Leben, p. 340. "Der heylige geist entczunte sy und reynigete sy von sunden, und mit stetir ubunge der togunt brochte her sy czu der reinigung des hertzen, und schickte, das sy entfentlich wart der götlichen irleuchtung und irkante heimeliche ding, dy den weysin diszer werlt voborgen seyn."

Such matters, which Johannes Marienwerder describes in exhaustive detail reappear in Margery's description of the same phenomenon: "As sodeynly as þe leuyn comith fro Heuyn, so sodeynly come I in-to thy sowle, & illumyn it wyth þe lyght of grace & of vn-dirstandyng, & sett it al on fyr wyth lofe, & make þe fyr of lofe to brenn þerin & purgyn it ful clene fro alle erdly filth" (The Book, p. 182).

Both Des Leben and The Book not only describe the effect of God's flame of love on the mystic's heart, but also its effects on the body. Dorothea sweated profusely from the internal heat of the fire of love while even the ink froze in Johannes Marienwerder's pen as he was writing,²⁹⁰ and while people were freezing to death during a particularly cold winter, Dorothea was literally steaming: "From the fire of love she often became so hot that she was sweating and that her breath came out of her mouth like steam from a boiling kettle. There was often so much sweat and so much of this hot breath that her clothes became wet from them. Her body was so hot that she could not bear to put her hand to her bare skin for long."²⁹¹ Likewise, Margery claims to have been impervious to the extremities of winter because she too was warmed from within by the flame of love:

Also owr Lord zaf hir an-oper tokne, þe whеч enduryd
a-bowtyn xvj zer & it encresyd euyr mor & mor, & þat was
a flawme of fyer wondir hoot & delectabyl & ryth

²⁹⁰Des Leben, p. 296.

²⁹¹Des Leben, p. 297. "Sy wart dicke von dem fuyre der libe so hitzig, daz sy switzte, und von ir eyn brodem ufging als von eyne syedende toppe. Daz was dicke so mildeclich, sweis und brodem, daz ire kleider dorvon zcumol worden naz. Ir lib was dicke so heis, daz sy di hant nicht lange mochte liden an der blozen hud."

comfortabyl, nowt wastyng but euыр incresyng, of lowe, for,
 thow þe wedyr wer neuыр so colde, sche felt þe hete brennyng
 in hir brest & at hir hert, as verily as a man schuld felyn
 þe material fyer zyf he put hys hand or hys fynger þerin
 (The Book, p. 88).²⁹²

The most pronounced parallel appears in the description of the strain God's love exerted on both Dorothea and Margery. As Des Leben states, Dorothea's body could scarcely withstand the onslaught of God's love: "The tremendous power of his love in her caused her heart to tremble and to jump fiercely, and often she exerted the strength of her heart so severely that her heart would have broken, had the Lord not prevented it."²⁹³ Christ alone kept her heart from breaking by restraining the power of his love for her: "Through the might of the love with which I love you I force you to love me exceedingly, and if I wanted to, I could easily love you so strongly and so impetuously that your heart would break."²⁹⁴ Like Dorothea, Margery was exhausted by the power of God's love:

²⁹²The last part of this description, "as verily as man schuld felyn þe material fyer zyf he put hys hand or hys fynger þerin," may be an allusion to Richard Rolle's famous image of the burning finger. "he or scho, þat es in þis degre, mai wele fele þe fyre of lufe byrnand in þaire saule, als þou may fele þi fynger burn." Richard Rolle, quoted by Wolfgang Riehle, in Studien zur englischen Mystik des Mittelalters unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer Metaphorik (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1977), p. 156.

²⁹³Des Leben, p. 325. "dorumb wirckte dy mechtige gröse diszer libe in yr, das yr hertcze klohtczte und sprang unstümelichin zere, und rackte und strackte dy creffte ires hertczen dicke so öbirmeslich, das das hertcze gebrochen wer, hette is der herre nicht gehindirt."

²⁹⁴Des Leben, p. 325. "Mit der gröse meyner libe, mit der ich dich libe, twinge ich dich, das du mich zere lyp host, unde wen ich welde, künde und mochte ich dich wol also gröslich unde also sere libin, das deyn hertcze breche."

Pan aftyr þis sche was in gret rest of sowle a gret whyle & had hy contemplacyon day be day & many holy spech & dalyawns of owyr Lord Ihesu Cryst boþe a-for-noon & aftyr-noon, wyth many swet terys of hy deuocyon so plentyvowsly & contynually þat it was meruayle þat hir eyne enduryd er how hir hert mygth lestyn þat it was not consumyd wyth ardowr of lofe, whych was kyndelyd wyth þe holy dalyawns of owyr Lord (The Book, p. 29).

She too would have been unable to survive God's love, were he to show it to her in its full strength: "Dowtyr, þu knowist not how meche I lofe þe, for it may not be knowyn in þis werld how meche it is, ne be felt as it is, for þu schuldist faylyn & brestyn & neuyr enduryn it for þe joye þat þu schuldist fele. & þerfor I mesur it as I wil to þi most ese & comfort" (The Book, p. 157).

The vitae of many mystics reveal a heightening of sensory perceptions during the state of illumination. Johannes Marienwerder devotes an entire chapter of Des Leben to this phenomenon, carefully distinguishing the five senses of the body from corresponding senses of the soul which in the mystic become sharpened by a sinless existence unencumbered by the sensory perceptions of the body. This discussion is supported throughout Des Leben by illustrations of the keenness of Dorothea's inner senses. The following passage, for example, describes her response to divine sounds inaudible to others: "Her inner senses were opened so that she saw how the saints rejoiced in eternal life, and she heard clearly their sweet songs with which they praised our Lord and which were so sweet in her ears and reounded in such a way that she heard little of the singing in church."²⁹⁵

²⁹⁵Des Leben, p. 260. ". . . ire ynnern synnen geuffent, das sy sach dy heyligen yn dem ewigen lebin sich sere freüin, und horte

Though less precise in detail, Margery describes essentially the same experience, and the verbal reminiscences are strong enough to suggest again that Dorothea's experience served as an immediate model for Margery's description of this familiar mystical experience of divine grace: "Sche herd a sownd of melodye so swet & delectable, hir powt, as sche had ben in Paradyse. And þerwyth sche styrt owt of hir bedde & seyde, 'Alas, þat euyr I dede synne, it is ful mery in Heuyn.' Thys melody was so swete þat it passyd alle þe melodye þat euyr mygth be herd in þis world wyth-owtyn ony comparyson" (The Book, p. 11).

Whenever Margery heard such sounds and melodies, she, like Dorothea, became so entranced that she forgot everything around her "and myth not wel heryn what a man seyde to hir in þat tyme les he spoke þe lowder" (The Book, p. 88).

To a much higher degree than Johannes Marienwerder's account of Dorothea's spiritual life, The Book of Margery Kempe reveals the anxieties a married woman suffered upon embarking on a spiritual life devoted to God without benefit of spotless virginity. Although even some of the greatest saints of the Catholic Church had not been virgins and had achieved sainthood even after having lived sinful and unchaste lives, Dorothea and Margery both perceived their status as wives and mothers as a stigma which produced sharp feelings of inadequacy in their efforts to become perfect brides of Christ. The Church, which had always regarded the state of matrimony as the less perfect state

offenbarlich iren sussen sang singen, und damit lobtin unsirn herren, der in iren oren szo susse was und also sere schalletete, des sy des gesanges in der kirchin wenig icht horte."

and less conducive to spiritual perfection and effective service to God, did nothing to relieve these anxieties. Johannes Marienwerder had attempted to gloss over the impossibility of a married woman's living the life of a saint while remaining in the world by describing Dorothea as a mother in the flesh but a virgin in the spirit.²⁹⁶ Margery also tried to allay her own sense of inadequacy by attempting to justify her pursuit of two divergent lives when she told her husband after her conversion: "I may not deny zow my body, but pe lofe of myn hert & myn affeccyon is drawyn fro alle erdly creaturys & sett only in God" (The Book, p. 12). But just as Dorothea, upon recognizing the impossibility of serving two masters, had step by step abandoned the secular world in favor of the spiritual world, Margery in time also gave up her attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable demands of the flesh and the spirit and concentrated all her efforts upon becoming the perfect bride of Christ and on achieving the unio mystica.

To reassure Margery of her worthiness as his bride, even though she did not come to him as a spotless maiden, Christ frequently declares his ardent love for her. He brushes aside her insistence that she is not a maid and therefore not worthy of him by asserting his freedom to choose as his brides whomever he wishes, regardless of their station in life:

Za, dowtyr, trow þow rygth wel þat I lofe wyfes also, and specyall þo wyfys whеч woldyn levyn chast, zyl þei mygtyn haue her wyl, & don her besynes to plesyn me as þow dost, for, þow þe state of maydenhode be mor parfytte & mor holy

²⁹⁶Des Leben, p. 221. "und wart kindir mutir am lybe, und juncvrowe bleip sy des gemutis am geiste."

þan þe state of wedewhode, & þe state of wedewhode mor
parfyte þan þe state of wedlake, zet dowtyr I lofe þe as
wel as any mayden in þe world (The Book, p. 49).

Far from being reassured, Margery remains doubtful, so Christ more explicitly points out that her lack of physical purity presents no hindrance to his affection for her: "I haue telde þe be-for-tyme þat þu art a synguler louer, & þerfor þu xalt haue a synguler loue in Heuyn, a synguler reward, & a synguler worshep. &, for-as-mech as þu art a mayden in þi sowle, I xal take þe be þe on hand in Heuyn & my Modyr be þe oper hand, & so xalt þu dawnsyn in Heuyn wyth oper holy maydens & virgynes, for I may clepyn þe dere a-bowte & myn owyn derworthy derling" (The Book, p. 52). To convince Margery once and for all of her fitness to be his bride, Christ finally exhorts her to compare her status to that of the many wives who never can escape the state of matrimony to serve him properly, but who nevertheless will be richly rewarded for their modest accomplishments:

Dowtyr, zyf þu knew how many wifys þer arn in þis worlde þat wolde louyn me & seruyn me ryth wel & dewly, zyf þei myght be as frely fro her husbondys as þu art fro thyn, þu woldist seyn þat þu wer ryght meche beheldyn on-to me. & zet ar þei putt fro her wyl & suffyr ful gret peyne, & þerfor xal þei haue ryght gret reward in Heuyn, for I receyue euery good wyl as for dede (The Book, p. 212).

Unlike Dorothea, however, who finally gained full release from the oppressive anxiety for being something less than a perfect bride of Christ by becoming an anchoress, Margery never overcame her feelings of inadequacy. When Christ had first exhorted her to become his bride during one of her pregnancies, she had refused regretfully by saing: "Lord Ihesu, þis maner of leuyng longyth to thy holy maydens," reminding him of her continued sexual relationship with her husband

manifested in the pregnancy (The Book, pp. 48-49). Later, after she had decided to heed Christ's call, she forever bewailed the loss of her maidenhood to a worldly husband, which in her eyes made her unworthy of his grace: "A, Lord, maydenys dawnsyn now meryly in Heuyn. Xal I not don so? For be-cawse I am no mayden, lak of maydenhed is to me now gret sorwe; me thynkyth I wolde I had ben slayn whan I was takyn fro þe funtston þat I xuld neuyr a desplesyd þe, & þan xuldyst þu, blyssed Lorde, an had my maydenhed wyth-owtyn ende" (The Book, p. 50). The abundance of such self-denegations and Christ's reassurances throughout The Book are eloquent testimony to Margery's lifelong inferiority complex, which even her heavenly bridegroom could never fully dispel.

Margery's anxiety to be as worthy of God as any other saint in heaven led her to pursue a rigorous program of forcing her husband to relinquish his conjugal rights. This effort began after she had once and for all, after several fruitless starts, committed herself to serve God body and soul. Like Dorothea, who throughout her married life had fulfilled her conjugal duties with extreme reluctance, "when they were demanded of her in fear of God and out of the obligation to render unto Caesar what is his due,"²⁹⁷ Margery suddenly developed a great distaste for sexual intercourse: "And aftyr þis tyme sche had neuyr desyr to komown fleschly wyth hyre husbonde, for þe dette of matrimony was so abhominabyl to hir þat sche had leuar, hir thowt, etyn

²⁹⁷Des Leben, p. 221. "sy bezcalte erecht, so is von im geheyschin wart, mit gotlicher vorchte und vorbindunge des rechtis zcu gebin dem keysir, was dem keysir gebort."

or drynkyn þe wose, þe mukke in þe chanel, þan to consentyn to any fleschly comownyngs saf only for obedyens" (The Book, pp. 11-12).

John, to her dismay, insisted on her obedience, "& sche obeyd wyth greet wepyng & sorwyng for þat sche mygth not levyn chast" (The Book, p. 12). She tried to sway John's recalcitrance by implying the urgent necessity to pacify God's displeasure over their former inordinate passion for one another:

& oftyn-tymys þis creatur counseld hir husband to levyn chast, & seyde þat þei oftyn-tymes, sche wist wel, had dysplesyd God be her inordynat lofe & þe gret delectacyon þat þei haddyn eybyr of hem in vsyng of oper, & now it wer good þat þei schuld be her bobins wylle & consentyng of hem bothyn punschyn & chastysyn hem-self wylfully be absteynyng fro her lust of her bodys (The Book, p. 12).

Adalbert had given in to Dorothea's pleas to live chastely together only after the birth of their eighth and last child. John, likewise, was in no hurry to abstain from what he clearly did not perceive as sin: "Hir husband seyde it wer good to don so, but he mygth not zett, he xuld whan God wold. And so he vsyd her as he had do be-for, he wold not spar" (The Book, p. 12).

Ultimately, though, Margery's efforts to rid herself of her husband were much more successful than Dorothea's had been, for several years later, with Christ's help, Margery was finally able to force her husband into submission. In 1413, when she was about forty years old, she apparently decided that the time "whan God wold" had arrived. She prayed for God's help in persuading John to release her from her conjugal duties, and Christ promised a speedy resolution to her problem: "Pow schalt haue þi desyr er Whitsonday, for I schal sodeynly sle þin husbonde" (The Book, p. 21). Fortunately for John,

things didn't get quite that far, but when he tried to approach her on the Wednesday after Easter, she called on Christ's help "& he had no power to towche hir at þat tyme in þat wyse, ne neuyr aftyr wyth no fleschly knowyng" (The Book, p. 21). Later that year, on Midsummer Night's Eve, the confrontation between husband and wife reached its climax. By that time they had lived together for eight weeks without sexual intercourse. In answer to Margery's question why he had not even attempted to approach her although they were still sleeping in the same bed, he readily admitted that "he was so made a-ferde whan he wold a towchyd hir þat he durst no mor don" (The Book, p. 23).

John, nevertheless, was still reluctant to release her from her conjugal duties for fear of committing a deadly sin later, should he change his mind. Margery, perceiving his resistance, now resorted to threats. Revealing that she had already threatened him with death some years earlier should he not comply with her wishes, she now threatened him with imminent destruction: "Now, good ser, amend zow & aske God mercy, for I teld zow ner iij zer sythen þat ze schuld be slayn sodeynly, & now is þis þe thryd zer, & zet I hope I schal han my desyr" (The Book, p. 23). She now even went so far as to say, "For-sope, I had leuar se zow be slayn þan we schuld turne a-zen to owyr vnclennesse" (The Book, p. 23). John's resistance collapsed in the face of such threats, and he privately agreed to Margery's terms: "Grawntyth me þat ze schal not komyn in my bed, & I grawnt zow to qwyte zowr dettys er I go to Ierusalem. & makyth my body fre to God so þat ze neuyr make no chalengyng in me to askyn no dett of matrimony aftyr þis day whyl ze leyun" (The Book, p. 25). A short time later

Margery dragged him before the Bishop of Lincoln, Philip Repyngdon, to make his promise legal. From that time on husband and wife lived separately and Margery was free to do as she pleased, whereas Dorothea, after having failed in persuading Adalbert to agree to a separation, was free to do what she wanted to only after Adalbert's death.

As soon as Margery had secured John's promise "as fre mot zowr body ben to God as it hath ben to me" (The Book, p. 25), she lost no time in proclaiming herself publicly a bride of Christ. Even before John had made his vow of chastity before Philip Repyngdon, Margery implored the bishop to grant her certain visible tokens of her new status: "I am comawndyd in my sowle þat ze schal zyue me þe mantyl & þe ring & clothyn me al in whygth clothys. And yf ze clothyn me in erth, owyr Lord Ihesu Cryst xal clothyn zow in Heuyn, as I vndyrstond be reuelacyon" (The Book, p. 34). But neither the reminder that God himself desired these tokens, nor the inducement of being spared Purgatory produced the desired results. The bishop evaded her extraordinary request to be invested with the insignia of chastity, which were apparently reserved solely for widows who had taken a triple vow of celibacy.²⁹⁸ When all his delaying tactics failed to dissuade Margery from her goal, he referred her to Thomas Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, claiming to have no authority in the matter since Margery was not a member of his diocese. To Margery, who, as Hope Emily Allen observes, "takes white as symbolical of a very

²⁹⁸Meech, "Notes," p. 274. In the fifteenth century a number of widows apparently took such a vow before the bishop and then assumed white garments and wore a ring.

comprehensive purity," and whose white clothing was perhaps "meant to show that she was a maiden in her soul" ("Notes," p. 273), Repyngdon's refusal was a severe blow, and not until she was staying in Rome during her return journey from the Holy Land did she actually realize her desire to be dressed in the white garments of a bride of Christ.

Soon after John's public renunciation of his rights over her body, Margery also celebrated her marriage to her heavenly bridegroom. Before embarking on her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the fall of 1413, "the forseyd creatur had a ryng þe wech owyr Lord had comawndyd hir to do makyn whil she was at hom in Inglond & dede hir gravyn þerup-on, 'Ihesus est amor meus'" (The Book, p. 78), which Margery refers to as "my bone maryd ryng to Jhesu Crist" (The Book, p. 78). As Christ had promised Dorothea to "reveal to her [his bride] those secrets of my heart I do not wish to reveal to anyone else"²⁹⁹ upon their wedding day, he promised Margery, "Dowtyr, I wil han þe weddyd to my Godhede, for I schal schewyn þe my preuyteys & my counselys, for þu xalt wonyn wyth me wyth-owtyn ende" (The Book, p. 86). The ceremony proper, however, was not performed until the feastday of St. John the Lateran, November 9th, 1414. After this suitably long period of engagement, God the bridegroom in the Church of the Apostles in Rome, before the saints of heaven, the apostles, and a great multitude of angels, recited the age-old wedding vow which Margery's husband had probably recited years earlier in pledging his troth to her: "I take þe, Margery, for my weddyd wyfe, for fayrar, for fowelar, for richar,

²⁹⁹Des Leben, p. 313. "do wil ich mit ir redin dy heymlichkeyt meynes herczin, dy ich andirn nicht wil offinbarn."

for powerar, so þat þu be buxom & bonyr to do what I byd þe do. For, dowtyr, þer was neuyr childe so buxom to þe modyr as I xal be to þe bope in wel & in wo, - to help þe and comfort þe. And þerto I make þe suyрте" (The Book, p. 87).

Ironically, the attainment of her highest goal, becoming the bride of Christ, turned out to be less satisfying than Margery had anticipated. Dorothea, apparently, had been entirely successful in sublimating her sexual needs from a physical to a spiritual sphere. But Margery, a woman endowed with strong sexual appetites, struggled with her fleshly desires for the rest of her life, and her self-imposed abstinence resulted in serious aberrations. One of these, as T. W. Coleman observes, was her lifelong, inordinate fear of rape.³⁰⁰ In 1413, the year in which she and her husband agreed to live chastely, Margery went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In Constance, abandoned by her companions, she charged Christ, her new fiance, with the responsibility of preserving her virtue. Identifying herself with the woman taken in adultery, she begs Christ: "Lord, as þow dreve a-wey hir enmys, so dryfe a-wey myn enmys, & kepe wel my chastite þat I vowyd to þe, & late me neuyr be defowlyd, for ȝyf I be, Lord, I make myn a-vow I wyl neuyr come in Inglonde whil I leue" (The Book, p. 65).

Four years later, when she was brought to trial on the charge of Lollardy in Leicester, she again saw herself beset by lecherous men eager to ravish her. When she was to be detained in jail, she begged

³⁰⁰Thomas William Coleman, English Mystics of the Fourteenth Century (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1971), p. 158.

the mayor to spare her the ordeal: "I prey zow, ser, put me not among men, þat I may kepyn my chastite & my bond of wedlok to myn husbond, as I am bowndyn to do" (The Book, p. 112). Here Margery appealed to her married state to protect her, although she and John had in fact renounced their cohabitation years earlier. But this appeal was successful every time Margery believed herself in danger of rape, as for example, in her encounter with the steward of the Earl of Leicester: "Than þe Stywarde toke hir be þe hand & led hir in-to hys chawmyr & spak many fowyl rebawdy wordys vn-to hir, purposyng & desyryng, as it semyd hir, to opressyn hir & for-lyn hir. & than had sche meche drede & meche sorwe, crying hym mercy. Sche seyde, 'Ser, for þe reuerens of al-mythy God, sparyth me, for I am a mannys wife" (The Book, p. 113).

Advancing age did nothing to relieve Margery's dread of defilement; quite the contrary, her fears increased with age. During her last pilgrimage in Germany in 1433 when Margery was about sixty years old, she was still terrified of becoming a victim of rape.

And on nyghtys had sche most drede oftyn-tymys, & perauentur it was of hir gostly enmy, for sche was euyr a-ferd to a be rauishyd or defilyd. Sche durst trustyn on no man; whedir sche had cawse er non, sche was euyr a-ferd. Sche durst ful euyl slepyn any nyth, for sche wend men wolde a defilyd hir. Perfor sche went to bedde gladlich no nyth les þan sche had a woman er tweyn wyth hir. For þat grace God sent hir, wher-so sche cam for þe most party maidenys wolde wyth good cher lyn be hir, & þat was to hir gret comfort (The Book, p. 241).

But not even the company of young women reassured her for long. On her way to Aachen

sche had mech drede for hir chastite & was in gret heuynes. Pan went sche to þe good wife of þe hows, preying hir to han sum of hir maydenys þat myth lyn wyth hir þat nyght. Þe good

wife assygynd tweyn maydenys, þi wech weryn wyth hir al þat nyght, zet durst sche not slepyn, for dred of defilyng. Sche woke & preyid ny al þat nyght þat sche myth be preseruyd fro al vnclennes & metyn wyth sum good felashep þat myth helpyn hir forth to Akun (The Book, pp. 236-37).

Thus Margery's abnormal fears resulted in the ludicrous situation of an old crone's virtue being guarded by young women instead of their honor being protected and watched over by an old woman past her prime and sexual allure.

Margery's occasional self-identification with the woman taken in adultery and especially her extraordinary devotion to St. Mary Magdalene also point to the tensions her fleshly desires on the one hand and her spiritual pretensions on the other were creating in her mind.³⁰¹ In many respects Mary Magdalene is the most appropriate biblical model for any human being attempting to overcome his sins and achieve a state of spiritual grace and perfection. Because of her success in transforming herself from a woman controlled by illicit passions into a chaste, devoted follower of Christ, Christian mystics traditionally considered her as an important symbol of the contemplative life they all strove to achieve.³⁰² Her example would have been

³⁰¹One instance of Margery's self-identification with the woman taken in adultery has already been noted earlier. Another time when Margery begs God to grant her indifference toward all earthly pleasures, she again likens herself to her: "Haue mend, Lord, of þe woman þat was takyn in the vovtre & browt be-forn þe, and, as þu dreue a-wey alle hir enmyis fro hir & sche stod a-lone by þe, so verily mot þu dryuyn a-wey alle myn enmijs fro me, boþin bodily and gostly, þat I may stondyn a-lone by þe & make my sowle ded to alle þe joyis of þis world & qwyk & gredy to hy contemplacyon in God" (The Book, p. 253).

³⁰²St. Birgitta's Revelations, for example, present Mary Magdalene as the perfect example of service to God in the contemplative

particularly inspiring to a woman like Margery since she too did not come to Christ as an unblemished virgin. Furthermore, she is the patron saint of weepers, and Margery wept copiously on every occasion. Unfortunately, however, Margery's understanding of St. Mary Magdalene's significance to mysticism is very muddled, and one of her Easter visions betrays her own lack of spiritual progress from her embarrassingly corporeal devotion to the Manhood of Christ to the spiritual adoration of his Godhead.³⁰³

And anon aftyr þe creatur was in hir contemplacyon wyth Mary Mawdelyn, morning & sekyng owr Lord at þe graue, & herd & sey how owr Lord Ihesu Crist aperyd to hir in lekenes of a gardener, seying, "Woman, why wepist þu?" Mary, not knowyng what he was, al inflawmyd wyth þe fyre of lofe, seyde to hym a-geyn, "Sir, zyf þu hast a-wey my Lord, telle me, & I xal takyn hym azen." Pan owr merciful Lord, hauyng pite & compassyon of hir, seyde, "Mary." And wyth þat word sche, knowyng owr Lord, fel down at hys feet & wolde a kyssyd hys feet, seying, "Maistryr." Owr Lord seyde to hir, "Towche me not." Pan þe creatur thowt þat Mary Mawdelyn seyde to owr Lord, "A, Lord, I se wel ze wil not þat I be so homly wyth zow as I haue ben a-forn," & med heuy cher. "Zys, Mary," seyde owr Lord, "I xal neuyr forsake þe, but I xal euyr be wyth þe wyth-owtyn ende." And þan owr Lord seyde to Mary Mawdelyn, "Go telle my bretheryn & Peter þat I am vp-reson." And þan þe creatur thowt þat Mary went forth wyth gret joye, & þat was gret merueyl to hir þat Mary enioyid, for zyf owr Lord had seyde to hir as he dede to Mary, hir thowt sche cowde neuyr a ben mery. Pat was whan sche wolde a kyssyd hys feet, & he sayde, "Towche me not" (The Book, p. 197).

mode of life, whereas her sister Martha embodies perfect service to God in the active mode of life. Although St. Birgitta, like all mystics, considered the contemplative life as the more valuable of the two, she nevertheless insisted that active service must complement contemplation. Her own life is a practical application of this concept.

³⁰³According to Hope Emily Allen, "Notes," p. 336, especially Hilton, the author of The Scale of Perfection, and St. Bonaventure interpreted the Noli me tangere as an admonition against excessive devotion to the manhood of Christ at the expense of devotion to his Godhead.

The one thing Margery's choice of St. Mary Magdalene as her patron saint clearly reveals is her bad conscience in respect to her sexual desires which persisted unabated long after she had vowed to live in total abstinence, and which she, in contrast to St. Mary Magdalene, never really conquered. Christ himself, long after she had supposedly committed herself wholeheartedly to him, commends her choice, suggesting she has need of the reformed harlot's intercession on her behalf: "[I knowe] how þu clepist Mary Mawdelyn in-to þi sowle to wolcomyn me, for dowtyr, I wot wel a-now what þu thynkyst. Þu thynkyst þat sche is worthiest in þi sowle, & most þu trustyst in hir preyerys next to my Modyr, & so þu maist ryth wel, dowtyr, for sche is a ryth gret mene to me for þe in þe blysse of Heuyn" (The Book, p. 210). On another occasion when she informs Christ of her desire for immediate death in order to avoid any further separation from him and his divine love even for a moment, the supposedly proper former housewife and now blameless bride of Christ exhibits an uncharacteristic sense of unworthiness in comparing herself to a woman who lived a life far more sinful than she: "I wolde I wer as worthy to ben sekyr of thy lofe as Mary Mawdelyn was" (The Book, p. 176). Christ's reassuring answer is an even more powerful revelation of Margery's restless spirit and bad conscience in respect to the powerful fleshly desires which continued to disturb her than her own words had been: "Trewly, dowtyr, I loue þe as wel, & þe same pes þat I gaf to hir þe same pes I zeue to þe" (The Book, p. 176).

That "pes," however, was not to be Margery's as long as she lived, and her suppressed sexual appetites manifest themselves most

blatantly in her sexual fantasies, many of which involved clerics. When she failed to believe that her visions of damned souls came from God, not from the devil, God punished her disbelief in exactly the same manner in which he once punished Dorothea for her discourtesy. After having angered God by turning her attention from him to a delectable fish dinner, God had punished Dorothea by removing all his grace from her: "I will give my comfort to him who looks for my comfort and prays for it. He, however, who is concerned about physical cares must do without spiritual and heavenly comfort."³⁰⁴ Instead of visions of paradise, God sent her a vision of the fish dinner she had coveted too heartily: "The food which had been brought to her that evening . . . appeared before her eyes so vividly that she could not turn the eyes of her soul away from it. Against her will and with great anguish she was forced to look upon that dish."³⁰⁵

Margery's punishment took the same course. First God removed all his blessings from her: "Than for hir frowardnes & hir vnbeleue owr Lord drow fro hir alle good thowtys & alle good mendys of holy spechys & dalyawns & þe hy contemplacyon which sche had ben vsyd to be-for-tyme, & suffyrd hir to haue as many euyl thowtys as sche had be-forn of good thowtys" (The Book, p. 144). Then she, too, had to

³⁰⁴Des Leben, p. 259. "Wer noch meynem trost syt und des beytit, dem wil ich meynen trost gebin; wer aber genug leypliche sorge hat, der mus geystlichs und hymmelichs trostis entpern."

³⁰⁵Des Leben, p. 259. "dy speyse, dy des obends wart gebrocht, . . . dy wurdin iren ougin so keginwertlich vorgehaldin, das sy dy ougin irer zelen nicht mochte dovon wenden, sundir wider iren willen mit smerczen muste sy dy gericht anseen."

look upon the very things she least wanted to see. But whereas Dorothea had to endure nothing more traumatic than a two-hour vision of a fish dinner, Margery

sey as hir thowt veryly dyuers men of religyon, preystys, & many oper, bothyn hethyn & Cristen comyn befor hir syght pat sche myht not enchewyn hem ne puttyn hem owt of hir syght, schewyng her bar membrys vn-to hir. & þerwyth þe Deuyl bad hir in hir mende chesyn whom sche wolde han fyrst of hem alle & sche must be commown to hem alle. & he seyde sche lykyd bettyr summe on of hem þan alle þe oper. Hir thowt pat he seyde trewth; sche cowde not sey nay; & sche nedys don hys byddyng, & zet wolde sche not a don it for alle þis worlde (The Book, p. 145).

This "torment" lasted for twelve whole days.

The few direct references to Margery's performance as a housewife and a mother show that her preoccupation with her own spiritual welfare made her as neglectful of her duties as Dorothea had been. Dorothea generally left the house before daybreak to be the first one in church when the doors were opened, and she often did not leave the church until after dark because she "insisted on remaining in the church until all the masses had been celebrated."³⁰⁶ Margery, after her conversion, "roos at ij or iij or þe klok & went to cherch & was þer in hir prayers on-to tyme of noon and also al þe aftyrnoon" (The Book, p. 12). Like Dorothea, she lost all sense of time when she

lay ful stille in þe chirch, heryng & vndirstondyng þis swet dalyawnce in hir sowle. . . . Owr Lord of hys hy mercy visityd hir so mech & so plenteuowsly wyth hys holy spechys & hys holy dalyawnce pat sche wist not many tymys how þe day went. Sche supposyd sumtyme of v owrys er vj owrys it had not ben þe space of an owr. . . . Sche thowt neuyr long þerof ne sche was neuyr irke þerof, þe tyme went a-wey sche wist not how (The Book, pp. 214-15).

³⁰⁶Des Leben, p. 222. "Wi ir nu der wille wol was zcu bliben in der kirchen, bis alle messen volbrocht wurden."

Like Dorothea, she deeply resented being distracted from her religious exercises. Her complaint to God for having been banished from the sermons of an eminent friar who preached guest sermons at Lynn because of her disruptive behavior is reminiscent of Dorothea's bitterness about being kept from attending church services during the forty day purification period following the birth of a child:

I prey þe, zyf it be thy wil, take þes cryngys fro me in þe tyme of sermownys þat I cry not at þin holy prechyng & late me hauyn hem be myself alone so þat I be not putt fro heryng of þin holy prechyng & of þin holy wordys, for grettar peyn may I not suffyr in þis worlde þan be put fro þi holy worde heryng. And, zyf I wer in preson, my most peyn xulde be þe forberyng of þin holy wordys & of þin holy sermownys (The Book, pp. 181-82).

Like Dorothea, Margery exhibits little interest in her children. Des Leben mentions only one of Dorothea's children, her daughter Gertrud, the only one of her eight children to survive into adulthood. Likewise, The Book mentions only one of Margery's children, her son Thomas, who alone of fourteen children grew up to be an adult.³⁰⁷ Both women, although they had many children of their own, apparently channeled their maternal affections into the worship of the infant Christ, which had been such a prominent feature of the mysticism

³⁰⁷Margery describes Thomas as a dissolute young man who fell into lechery, ignoring his mother's warnings until he became so ill that "hys colour chawngyd, hys face wex ful of whelys & bloberys as it had ben a lepyr" (The Book, p. 222). Needless to say, he eventually came to see the error of his ways, embarked on a mercantile career in Prussia, married a girl from Danzig, and settled down to the life of a devout burgess. Her son's recovery from what may have been venereal disease and his subsequent life as a solid citizen and devout Christian is of course presented as another one of Margery's many success stories. It was through her intercession that God healed him and through her counsel that he came to be a success in life.

of the nuns in the German Dominican convents. Accordingly, both Des Leben and The Book contain numerous descriptions of Dorothea and Margery as Christ's nursemaids. At Christ's birth, for example, Margery "swathyd hym wyth byttyr teerys of compassyon, hauyng mend of þe scharp deth þat he schuld suffyr for þe lofe of synful men, seyng to hym. 'Lord, I schal fare fayr wyth zow; I schal not byndyn zow soor. I pray zow beth not dysplesyd wyth me'" (The Book, p. 19). Christ himself is most appreciative of her services and does not fail to thank her profusely: "Þan our Lord mad a maner of thankyng to hir, for-as-meche as sche in contemplacyon & in meditacyon had ben hys Modyrs maydyn & holpyn to kepyn hym in hys childhod & so forth in-to þe tyme of hys deth" (The Book, p. 203).

The worship of the infant Christ was such a prominent part of their mystical experience because both women considered it a means of achieving the unio mystica. Mary often came into Dorothea's cell to instruct her in the proper care of the infant: "[I] sit here with you so you can observe me and my labors and by so doing learn to do such things for my child as you see me do. As you see me tending and protecting him, so you shall tend and protect him also."³⁰⁸ Whenever Dorothea begged the Virgin Mary for spiritual comfort, Mary, "to give her a sign that her prayer had been granted, tossed into her arms a delightful thing, which she received with great thankfulness and joy. And [she] was inflamed with the fire of divine love and was filled

³⁰⁸Des Leben, p. 293. "und sitze bi dir, dastu mich an seest und mine werk, und lernest sotane ding irbiten myme kinde, als du sehst von mir, wi ich tu; und als du seest, wi ich syn worneme und iz beware, also soldistu ouch tun."

with great ineffable joy in which she remained for many days."³⁰⁹

Margery receives that same kind of instruction, and she too is rewarded with the unio mystica for a job well done:

Sodeynly sche sey, . . . ovr Lady in þe fayrest syght þat euyr sche say, holdyng a fayr white kerche in hir hand & seyng to hir, "Dowtyr, wilt þu se my Sone?" & a-non forthwyth sche say ovr Lady han hyr blissyd Sone in hir hand & swathyd hym ful lytely in þe white kerche þat sche myth wel be-holdyn how sche dede. Þe creatur had þan a newe gostly joye & a newe gostly comfort, wheche was so meruelyows þat sche cowde neuyr tellyn it as sche felt it (The Book, p. 209).

As with Dorothea, Margery's neglect of her duties as a wife and mother was most pronounced in her treatment of her husband. Unlike Dorothea, Margery had succeeded in persuading John to live in total separation from her several years after they had made their vow of living chastely together: "They dwellyd not to-gedyr, ne þei lay not to-gedyr, for, as is wretyn be-forn, þei bothyn wyth on assent & wyth fre wil of her eipyr haddyn mad avow to leyun chast" (The Book, p. 179). According to The Book, this arrangement was not only to allow Margery to live chaste and clean in service of her heavenly bridegroom, but also to leave her free to come and go as she pleased, "þat sche xulde not be lettyd fro hir contemplacyon" (The Book, p. 180). When her husband at the age of sixty years or more fell and hurt himself so seriously as to require constant care, she begged God to save his life, not out of love and charity for him, but for her own safety: "Whan he had fallyn & greuowsly was hurt . . . þe pepil seyde,

³⁰⁹Des Leben, p. 235. "und zcu eyne zzeichin, daz sy irhort were, warf Maria in ir armen gar eyn lustig ding, das sy mit grosir dangnamikeit unde luste entphing, und wart mit dem fewer der götlichen libe entzcunt und mit groser unsprechlicher froude irvolt, in der sy vil tage bleip."

zyf he deyid, it was worthy þat sche xulde answeryn for hys deth" (The Book, p. 180). To avoid any danger of prosecution, "sche preyid to owr Lord þat hir husband myth leuyn a ȝer & sche to be deliuaryd owt slawndyr" (The Book, p. 180).

The Lord granted her wish, but Margery might have prayed differently had she paid more attention to the consequences her prayer might entail for her. First of all, God insisted she take John home and nurse him. Margery, vexed, refused outright: "Nay, good Lord, for I xal þan not tendyn to þe as I do now" (The Book, p. 180). Thereupon God lectured her on the virtue of charity and the debts she owed her husband: "þu hast seyde many tymys þat þu woldist fawyn kepyn me. I prey þe now kepe hym for þe lofe of me, for he hath sumtyme fulfillyd þi wil & my wil boþe, and he hath mad þi body fre to me þat þu xuldist seruyn me & leuyn chast & clene, and þerfor I wil þat þu be fre to helpyn hym at hys nede in my name" (The Book, p. 180). Only after God assured her "þu xalt haue as meche mede for to kepyn hym & helpyn hym in hys nede at hom as zyf þu wer in chirche to makyn þi preyerys" (The Book, p. 180), did she reluctantly agree to care for him in her own home. But Margery never really enjoyed playing the good Samaritan, especially since God did not comply with her wish of letting John live only long enough to silence malicious gossip. John, after reverting to the state of an infant unable to control his bodily functions, lived for a number of years, and Margery resented the unpleasant task and the expense and considered his care a punishment designed to keep her from her accustomed dalliance with her heavenly bridegroom:

And þerfor was hir labour meche þe mor in waschyng & wryngyng & hir costage in fyring & lettyd hir ful meche fro hir contemplacyon þat many tymys sche xuld an yrkyd hir labour saf sche bethowt hir how sche in hir zong age had ful many delectabyl thowtys, fleschly lustys, & inordinat louys to hys persone. & þerfor sche was glad to be ponischyd wyth þe same persone & toke it mech þe mor esily & seruyd hym & helpyd hym, as hir thowt, as sche wolde a don Crist hym-self (The Book, p. 181).

Many close parallels to Dorothea's spiritual career appear in Margery's emulation of the Virgin Mary as the patroness of all those in need of comfort. God ordered Margery, as he had ordered Dorothea, to pray for the salvation and well-being of people everywhere: "I haue ordeyned þe to knele be-for þe Trynyte for to prey for al þe world, for many hundryd thowsand sowlys schal be sauyn be þi prayers" (The Book, p. 20). In order to fulfill God's command, Margery, like Dorothea, prayed for the quick and the dead, for which God himself thanked her frequently:

I thanke þe for þe general charite þat þu hast to alle þe pepil þat is now in þis worlde leuyng & to alle þo þat arn for to come in-to þis worldys ende, þat þu woldist ben hakkyd as smal as flesche to þe potte for her lofe so þat I wolde be þi deth sauyn hem alle fro dampnacyon zyf it plesyd me, for þu seyst oftyn in þy thowt þat þer arn j-nowe in Helle & þu woldist þat þer xulde neuyr mo men deseruyn for to comyn þerin (The Book, p. 20)

Like Dorothea, Margery prayed for all the various estates, both secular and ecclesiastical, down to the humblest member of human society:

Now good Lord, Crist Ihesu, I crye zow mercy for alle þe statys þat ben in Holy Chirche, for þe Pope & alle hys cardinalys, for alle erchebischopys & bischopys, & for al þe ordir of presthode, for alle men & women of religyon, & specially for hem þat arn besy to sauyn & defendyn þe feith of Holy Chirch. Lord, for þi mercy blisse hem &

gawnt hem þe victory of alle her enmijs & spede hem in alle þat þei gon a-bowtyn to þi worshep (The Book, p. 250).³¹⁰

In her role as a patroness to all mankind, Margery also made herself accessible to all those seeking her help and advice. In her hometown of Lynn, for example, she frequently comforted the dying in their last hour: "Also þe sayd creatur was desiryd of mech pepil to be wyth hem at her deyng & to prey for hem, for, þow þei louyd not hir wepyng ne hir crying in her lyfe-tyme, þei desiryd þat sche xulde bothyn wepyn & cryin whan þei xulde deyin, & so sche dede" (The Book, pp. 172-73). When her lector of many years, a young priest, became gravely ill, Margery "was steryd in hir sowle for to kepyn hym in Goddys stede. & whan sche faylde swech as was nedful for hym, sche went abowtyn to good men & good women & gate swech thyng as was necessary vn-to hym" (The Book, p. 147). After the priest's miraculous recovery, Margery even made a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to St. Stephen's Church in Norwich where she prayed at the grave of Richard Caister, a former vicar of that church, who after his death had become a locally venerated saint.³¹¹

Most touching is the comfort Margery extended to a young wife who temporarily lost her wits after the birth of a child. On account of her own suffering from this condition after giving birth to her first child, Margery shows uncharacteristic patience and remarkable

³¹⁰The Book also contains a prayer for the secular estates which is too lengthy to be reproduced here.

³¹¹Meech, "Notes," p. 320. Margery had numerous meetings with Caister during her journeys to or through Norwich. He was one of her most faithful supporters.

restraint in nursing the young woman back to health. Visiting her at least once or twice daily, Margery, "was meke a-now & herd hir spekyn & dalyin wyth good wil wyth-owtyn any roryng er crying" (The Book, p. 178). Margery's care had the desired effect on the distraught patient:

As sone as þe seke woman þat was alienyd of hir witte saw hir, sche spak to hir sadly & goodly & seyde sche was ryth wolcome to hir. & sche was ryth glad of hir comyng and gretly comfortyd be hir presens "For ze arn," sche seyde, "a ryth good woman, & I behelde many fayr awngelys a-bowte zow, & þerfor I pray zow, goth not fro me, for I am gretly comfortyd be zow" (The Book, p. 178).

Like "Mother Dorothea," Margery was fond of seeing herself as the spiritual mother of all her supplicants. "I cry þe mercy, Lord, for alle my childeryn, gostly & bodily, & for al þe pepil in þis world þat þu make her synnys to me be very contricyon as it wer myn owyn synnys, & for-zeue hem as I wolde þat þu forzoue me" (The Book, p. 251). Christ, as usual, was not slow to commend Margery's maternal exertions on behalf of others: "þu makyst euery Cristen man & woman þi childe in þi sowle for þe tyme & woldist han as meche grace for hem as for þin owyn childeryn" (The Book, p. 212). In his gratification with Margery's success as the spiritual mother to all those in need of comfort, he even likened her to his own mother, promising her great rewards for this labor: "þu art to me a very modir & to al þe world for þat gret charite þat is in þe, & zet I am cawse of þat charite my-self, & þu xalt haue gret mede þerfor in Heuyn" (The Book, p. 91). Like Dorothea, who worried greatly about the ultimate fate of sinners but who was assured of their eventual salvation because of her life, her prayers, and her intercession on their behalf, Margery also had

God's assurance that all those who came to know God through her would not perish: "I am in þe and þow in me. And þei þat heryn þe þei heryn þe voys of God. Dowtyr, þer is no so synful man in erth leuyng, yf he wyl forsake hys synne & don aftyr þi counsel, swech grace as þu behestyst hym I wyl confermyn for þi lofe" (The Book, p. 23).

Most strikingly similar to Johannes Marienwerder's description of Dorothea's life as a patroness of all mankind is Margery's description of the many benefits her confessors were to reap from their association with her. Like Dorothea, Margery had two confessors, Master Robert and Master Aleyn,³¹² who, like Johannes Marienwerder and Johannes Rymann, were to be richly rewarded for their good offices. "Pat persone [Master Robert] hath plesyd me ryth wel, for he hath oftyn in hys sermownys excusyd thy wepyng & þi crying, and so hath Mastyr Aleyn don bothyn, and þerfor þei schal haue ful gret mede in Heuyn" (The Book, p. 217). Johannes Marienwerder, by having been chosen by God himself as Dorothea's principal confessor, had been singled out for both a singular responsibility and a singular grace: As Christ told Dorothea, "he shall rejoyce in me and shall be highly grateful to me that I granted him to complete my honor and my praise

³¹²Master Robert Spryngolde was a bachelor of law and a parish priest of St. Margaret's Church in Lynn. Master Aleyn, Margery's other confessor, was a Carmelite doctor of Divinity at Cambridge. A native of Lynn, he was the most illustrious of Margery's supporters in her home town. Some of Margery's familiarity with St. Birgitta's Revelations and her prophesies may have come through him because he compiled an index for the Revelationes Brigittae and another for the Prophetiae Brigittae ("Notes," p. 268).

through his assistance to you."³¹³ Master Robert, Margery's principal confessor, was also to enjoy special rewards for his skillful guidance of Margery's spiritual progress: "I am hyly plesyd wyth hym, for he biddith þe þat þu xuldist sittyn stille & zeuyen thyn hert to meditacyon and thynkyn swech holy thowtys as God wyl puttyn in þi mende" (The Book, pp. 217-18). As a special reward to him God granted Margery's desire for him to be blessed with "halfe thy teerys & half þe good werkys þat I haue wrowt in þe. Perfor he schal trewly be rewardyd for thy wepyng as thow he had wept hymselfe" (The Book, p. 216).

Both Des Leben and The Book stress the mutual benefit the mystic and her confessor were to reap from their relationship with one another. From time to time God reminded Dorothea to be meek and obedient to Johannes Marienwerder, whom she was always to consider as his representative on earth: "You shall kneel humbly at his feet and beg him for God's sake that he will take you fully under his supervision. You shall submit your will totally to his command. Do what he orders you to do and refrain from doing what he forbids you to do."³¹⁴ After Dorothea promised total obedience to her confessor, Christ explained the nature of their relationship:

³¹³Des Leben, p. 322. "Her sal sich och zere froyen in mir, och gröslich danckin, das ich im vorligen habe in dir mit seyner hantreichunge czu volbregin meyn lop und ere."

³¹⁴Des Leben, pp. 271-72. "Du salt demuttiglich nederknien czu seynen fussen und bitten en durch got, das her dich entpföe, und nem dich in seynen ganczen vollen gehorsam; du salt öbirgeben gancz deynen willen; was her dir gebewt, das thu, und was her dir vorbewt, das los!"

Both of you shall take it very much to heart how I have joined you together. I have united you with one another as one joins two people in marriage, and therefore, each of you shall care for the other and help the other so that both of you may come into eternal life. Know that there never has been nor ever will be a person committed to your confessor's care as you have been committed to him.³¹⁵

Margery's relationship with Master Robert was to be equally profitable for them both. Like Johannes Marienwerder, Master Robert had been selected by God to be Margery's confessor, and Margery was to bless God "wyth-owtyn ende þat euyr I zaf þe so trewe a gostly fadyr, for þow he hath be scharp to þe sum-tyme, it hath ben gretly to thy profyte" (The Book, pp. 216-17). Like Dorothea, she was to see him as God's representative and was ordered to obey him unquestioningly: "Do aftyr þe counsel of þi gostly fadyr, for he biddith þe do þe same þat I bidde þe do" (The Book, p. 218). As God had promised Dorothea and Johannes Marienwerder, he promised Margery and Master Robert eternal bliss in heaven through their relationship of mutual help: "& beleue wel, dowtyr, þat ze xal be ful mery in Heuyn to-gedyr at þe last and xal blyssyn þe tyme þat euyr zowr on knew zowr oper" (The Book, p. 216).

One of the most notable characteristics of continental feminine mysticism which receives unusually detailed attention in both Des Leben and The Book is the mystic's penchant for incessant weeping.

³¹⁵Des Leben, p. 272. "Ir sult is dicke czu hercze nemen, wy ich euch czu einandir gefuget habe. Ich habe euch recht czu enandir voreyniget, also man czwey czu enandir bindet in der ee, und dorumb sal ewir eyns des andir sorge tragen, unde ewir eyns dem anderin helfin, das ir mögit komen czu dem ewygen leben, und du salt wyssin, das deynem b. keyn mensch so hoch befollin wart, noch wirt, als du."

Johannes Marienwerder, for example, frequently describes the depth of Dorothea's pity, implying that she did not consider Christ's agony and death as a historical event of the past, but as an event which is reenacted every time a human being commits a sin. Therefore, Dorothea's frequent vision of Christ in agony is of central importance to her mysticism. It prevented Dorothea from losing sight of the scope of Christ's sacrifice and sharpened her awareness of the extent of her own responsibility for his fate. According to Des Leben, Christ came to her

all covered with wounds and covered with blood and said to Dorothea, who at that time always had great longing for eternal life: "I did not come to you as a small child, the form I took when I was born, but I came to you at once in the shape I had when I was hanging on the cross, as a grown man and poor, as I was at the time when my body was martyred and destroyed."³¹⁶

In order to become worthy of living with Christ eternally, she had "to witness and bemoan the martyrdom of Our Lord, his death, and everything he has suffered."³¹⁷ Her awareness of the extent of Christ's sacrifice and her own culpability in renewing his agony explains the violence of her reactions to her own most harmless transgressions and shortcomings:

³¹⁶Des Leben, p. 346. "vol wunden und gantcz mit blutte beronnen, und sprach czu Dorothea, dy denne muste gar grose begerunge habin noch dem ewigen leben: Ich bin nicht komen czu dir cleyn, als ich bin geboren, sunder ich bin komen gleich als arm und also gros, als ich habe gehangin an dem crewtcze czu der czeit, do mein leip was gar vorquelt, vornicht und vorczert."

³¹⁷Des Leben, p. 276. "czu beschouwen, mit mitliden zcu beyweynen di martir unsirs herren, sinen tot und allis, daz her gelyden hoth."

She sighed deeply, cried to the Lord for forgiveness of her sins and begged him humbly to forgive her, to grant her his grace again and help her never to annoy him again so that she might remain with him always and act in accordance with his holy will. In such prayers, screaming and crying she often labored so long until she became totally dry and had no more tears. The great bitterness of her suffering at times pressed so many tears from her that she had none left to shed.³¹⁸

In Margery's Book the concept of Christ's death as an ever-present event is expressed even more distinctly than in Des Leben, and the violence of Margery's response equals the violence of Dorothea's tearful outbursts. Like Dorothea, Margery unfailingly responded to the slightest reminder of Christ's suffering with a deluge of tears of compassion. This habit started during her pilgrimage to the Holy Land where a vision of Christ's passion touched off violent paroxysms of "cryings" and "roarings." In Norwich, for example, she once saw a pieta, "and thow þe beholdyng of þat pete hir mende was al holy occupied in þe Passyon of our Lord Ihesu Crist & in þe compassyon of our Lady, Seynt Mary, þe wech sche was compellyd to cryyn ful lowde & wepyn ful sor, as þei sche xulde a deyde" (The Book, p. 148). When a priest attempted to comfort her by reminding her that Jesus' death took place long ago, Margery was beside herself at so much indifference toward Christ's suffering on behalf of all mankind: "Sir," she

³¹⁸Des Leben, pp. 239-40. "Sy irsufczte tyf und schrey zcu dem herren umme vorgebunge ire sunde, und bat yn demutlich, daz her ir dis vorsege, und syne gnade ir widergebe, und ir holfe, daz sy in vorbas nicht derzcornte, sundir das sy alle wege mochte by ym bliben, und noch syne heiligen willen tun, und den jo volbrengin. In sogetan bete, schrien und weynen erbeite sy dicke so lange, das sy recht dorre wart, und hatte nicht me zceer; wen di grose bitterkeit irre leide preste us ir manchstunt als vil zcer, das si ir nicht me hatte zcu vorgysen."

remonstrated, "hys deth is as fresch to me as he had deyde þis same day, & so me thynkyth it awt to be to zow & to alle Cristen pepil. We awt euyr to han mende of hys kendnes & euyr thynkyn of þe dolful deth þat he deyde for vs" (The Book, p. 148).

But since not all Christian people constantly kept Christ's doleful death in mind, they were annoyed when Margery, never missing an opportunity to remind them, sobbed and roared and threw herself on the ground until "mech pepyl slawndryd hir, not leuyng it was þe werke of God but þat sum euyl spyrit vexid hir in hir body er ellys þat sche had sum bodyly sekenesse" (The Book, p. 40). Dorothea had claimed that she would have liked to cry silently so as not to draw attention to herself, had God only permitted her to do so. Sometimes the Lord came to Dorothea "and caused her to cry so gently that the tears flowed without ceasing as if one tear were chasing the other. When this happened, the sobbing and sighing were so vehement and noisy that she was unable to hide them, no matter how much she would have liked to conceal them."³¹⁹ Margery claims she too would have liked to cry privately, but like Dorothea, "þe mor þat sche wolde a wythstonde it er put it a-wey, þe mor strongly it wrowt in hir sowle wyth so holy thowtys þat sche xulde not sesyn. Sche xulde sobbyn & cryen ful lowde al a-geyn hir wyl þat many man & woman also wondryd on hir þefore" (The Book, p. 98).

³¹⁹Des Leben, p. 346. "unde machte sy alzo gar mildiglichen weinen, das dy czere flossin hen ane uffhaldin gleich ap ein czere den andirn jagete. In dem woren offte das gischin und irsufftczin also unstewer und lauth, das sy is nicht mochte vorbergen, wywol sy is gern vorborgen hette."

Like Dorothea, Margery also considered her tears as one of the most powerful means of purgation. Dorothea had wept several hours daily with tears her soul had drawn from the rivers of eternal life to wash her soul clean of sin;³²⁰ Margery daily bewailed her sins with penitential tears drawn from "a welle of teerys þe which xal neuyr man take fro þe" (The Book, p. 99). God frequently reminded both women to accept their tears as a special gift of divine grace, granted only to a few select souls through no merit of their own. Dorothea had been commanded to tell her confessor, "this [crying] is the Lord's work, not mine. It is his gift; if he were to withhold it from me and were not to work it in me, I would no more be able to cry than you are."³²¹ Margery was to "knowyn wele þow mayst not han terys ne swych dalyawns but whan God wyl send hem þe, for it arn þe fre zyftys of God wyth-owtyn þi meryte & he may zeue hem whom he wyl" (The Book, p. 30). She was to accept them gratefully, "for terys of compunccyon, deuocyon, & compassyon arn þe heyest & sekerest zyftys þat I zeue in erde" (The Book, p. 31). For Margery this incessant weeping constituted exhausting physical labor. Especially on Good Fridays, "sche was wepyng & sobbyng v er vj owrys to-gedyr & þerwyth cryed ful lowde many tymes so þat sche myth not restreyn hir þerfro, which madyn hir ful febyl & weyke in hir bodily mytys" (The Book, p. 140).

³²⁰Des Leben, p. 312. "Dy zcere hot deyne sel geschapt aus den flissen des ewigin lebens unde hoth sy mit ir hyher brocht."

³²¹Des Leben, p. 299. "Dis ist des herren werg, nicht meyn; es ist seyne gobe; wen gebe her mirs nicht, und worchte is nicht in mir, ich mochte alsozo wenig weynen also du."

Furthermore, Margery, like Dorothea, not only saw her tears as a means of effecting her own salvation, but as a redemptive force in the salvation of all mankind. Therefore, in addition to bewailing her "owyn synnes ful plentyuously," she wept "an-oper owr for þe sowlys in Purgatory; an-oper owr for hem þat weryn in myschefe, in pouerte, er in any disese; an-oper owr for Iewys, Sarazyns, & alle fals heretikys þat God for hys gret goodnes xulde puttyn a-wey her blyndnes þat þei myth thorw hys grace be turnyd to þe feyth of Holy Chirche & ben children of saluacyon" (The Book, pp. 140-41). According to God's own revelation to Margery, her tears were so potent a weapon as to free from eternal perdition even those destined for hell: "Þu xalt not dredyn þe Devyl of Helle for he hath no powyr in þe. He dredyth þe mor þan thou dost hym. He is wroth wyth þe for þu turmentyst hym mor wyth þi wepyng þan doth al þe fyer in helle; þu wynnyst many sowlys fro hym wyth þi wepyng" (The Book, p. 51). In a rare demonstration of absolute humility, Margery acknowledges her tears on behalf of others as God's outstanding gift of grace to her which alone gives meaning and purpose to her existence:

I schal not sesyn, whan I may wepyn, for to wepyn for hem plentyuowsly, spede zyf I may. And zyf þu wylt, Lord, þat I sese of wepyng, I prey þe take me owt of þis world. What xulde I don þerin but zyf I myth profityn? For, thou it wer possibyl þat al þis world myth be sauyd thorw þe teerys of myn eyne, I wer no thank worthy. Perfor alle preysyng, al honowr, al worshep mot ben to þe Lord (The Book, p. 142).

Like Dorothea's, her crying always reached its climax at the sight of the Eucharist. "And most of alle whan sche sey þe precyows Sacrament born a-bowte þe town wyth lyte & reuerens, þe pepil knelyng on her kneys, þan had sche many holy thowtys & meditacyonys, and þan

oftyntymys xulde sche cryin & roryn as þow sche xulde a brostyn for þe feyth & þe trost þat sche had in þe precyows Sacrament" (The Book, p. 172). Like Dorothea, Margery wept loudest during the elevation of the host, creating such a disturbance during mass that she too eventually had to be separated from the congregation. To keep Dorothea's cries from disturbing the other worshippers, Johannes Marienwerder administered Holy Communion to her late at night after the midnight mass when no one else was present. After Margery's return from the Holy Land, her cries and weepings increased so much

that prestys durst not howselyn hir opynly in þe Chirche but preuily in þe Priowrys Chapel at Lenne fro þe peplys audiens. And in þat Chapel sche had so hy contemplacyon & so meche dalyawns of owr Lord, in-as-meche as sche was putte owt of chirche for hys lofe, þat sche cryed what tyme sche schulde ben howselyd as zyf hir sowle & hir body xulde a partyd a-sundyr, so þat tweyn men heldyn hir in her armys tyl hir crying was cesyd, for sche myth not beryn þe habundawns of lofe þat sche felt in þe precyows Sacrament, which sche stedfastly beleuyd was very God & Man in þe forme of breed (The Book, p. 138).

Dorothea perceived Holy Communion as the ultimate mystical experience, the unio mystica. For this reason, her longing for the Eucharist produced vehement weeping and screaming which stopped only when she received the host because at that time "her soul was in ecstasy, deeply united with God."³²² Likewise, only partaking of Holy Communion could calm Margery's cryings and roarings which the mere sight of the Eucharist had brought on, for she also considered the sacrament of the Eucharist as the unio mystica. Condemning the dismay

³²²Des Leben, p. 326. "Czuhant als sy das erwirdyge sacrament entpfing, wart sy gestillet und quam czu grosem troste und czu rue, und ire zele wart tiff voreyniget mit gote in der entczökunge."

of her fellow parishioners over her disruptive crying and shrieking during mass, Christ assures her she need not worry about behaving as she does; her response to the imminent enjoyment of the host is only too natural

for þu hast euery weke specialy on þe Sunday gret feer & drede in thy sowle how þu maist best be sekyr of my lofe, & wyth gret reuerens & holy drede how þu maist best receyuyn me to þe saluacyon of thy sowle wyth al maner of mekenes, lownes, & charite, as any lady in þis werld is besy to receyue hir husbond whan he comyth hom & hath be long fro hir (The Book, p. 213).

Explaining her calmness after having received the sacrament, God goes on to say that that is also entirely natural, for in receiving the host her soul is once more united with her heavenly bridegroom, fulfilled and happy:

þu seest wel, dowtyr, þi-self, þat whan þu hast receyuid me in-to thy sowle þu art in pees & in qwyete & sobbist no lengar. & þerof þe pepil hath gret wondyr, but it thar no wondyr be to þe, for þu wost wel þat I far lyke an husbond þat schulde weddyn a wyfe. What tyme þat he had weddyd hir, hym thynkyth þat he is sekyr a-now of hir & þat no man xal partyn hem a-sundyr, for þan, dowtyr, may þei gon to bedde to-gedyr wyth-owtyn any schame er dred of þe pepil & slepyn in rest & pees zyf þei wil. And thus, dowtyr, it farith be-twix þe & me (The Book, p. 213).

The controversy over Margery's behavior during mass finally threatened to impede proper pastoral care for her at her parish church of St. Margaret's. Because her cryings and roarings disturbed the worshippers at the church, her confessors had arranged for her to hear mass and receive the sacrament in the prior's chapel. But when a new member of the Benedictine priory attached to St. Margaret's forced the prior to bar Margery from receiving the sacrament in his

chapel,³²³ Margery's confessor, Master Robert, was confronted with a serious problem. Beginning in 1413, Margery had been granted the right to frequent communion through a dispensation from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, and his successor, Henry Chichely,³²⁴ which obliged her confessors "to heryn hir confessyon & ministryn to hir þe Sacrament as ofty n as we ben reqwiryd" (The Book, p. 139). The prior's prohibition left Master Robert without a suitable place to minister to Margery. So, Margery had to be readmitted to hear mass in St. Margaret's Church, and promptly she once more created chaos:

Pan was sche howselyd aftyr þis tyme at þe hy awter in Seynt Margaretys Chirche, & owr Lord visited hir wyth so gret grace whan sche xulde ben howselyd þat sche cryed so lowde þat it myth ben herd al a-bowte þe Chirche & owte of the Chirche as sche xulde a deyid þerwyth þat sche myth not receyuyn þe Sacrament of þe prestys handys; þe prest turnyng hym a-geyn to þe awter wyth þe preciows Sacrament til hir crying was cesyd (The Book, p. 139).

Margery's experience closely resembles Dorothea's inability to receive the host because her sadness and her weeping prevented her from following the church service:

³²³According to Professor Meech, "Notes," p. 261, this Benedictine priory was dependent upon the priory of Holy Trinity in Norwich. The prior's "newe bropyr," who "wil not comyn in our Chapel as long as sche is þerin" (The Book, p. 139), may therefore have been a superior who had come from Norwich. The "Notes" do not identify him further.

³²⁴Unfortunately, the passage does not clarify how often Margery's confessor was required to grant her Holy Communion. Hope Emily Allen believes that Henry Chichely's dispensation of 1417 may have allowed Margery more frequent communion than Thomas Arundel's, perhaps even granting Margery the same daily communion Dorothea had enjoyed during the last year of her life ("Notes," p. 319). Margery herself mentions being shriven several times daily, but all her direct references concerning participation in Holy Communion mention Sunday communion only.

While I was dallying with the Lord and was praying to him, I cried so hotly that I did not notice the elevation of the host. . . . As the moment was near when I was to receive my Lord, the Lord ordered me to cry vehemently and to fall on my face and pray to him about all the deficiencies of Christendom. As I was praying, there appeared before me the whole world full of all kinds of deficiencies and full of the many grievous sins of many of its inhabitants. While I was praying as I had been commanded for others as well as for myself so that the Lord might properly prepare me to receive him, I was so full of tears and sadness that I did not know how I should go about receiving my dear Lord.³²⁵

Dorothea's strange behavior resulted in her being tried as a heretic; Margery's equally odd behavior eventually led to the same fate. She was frequently accused of being a Lollard,³²⁶ and on

³²⁵Des Leben, p. 347. "Ich weinte also hitziglich sere in fleen unde in libekosen dem hern, das ich nicht merckte, wen man den hern irhub in der messe. . . . Do is nu noe was, das ich sulde entpffoen den hern, do his mich der herre ser weinen, niddirvallin, uff mein antllitcze und en bitten umbe allen den gebrechin, der do ist in der cristenheyt. Do ich nu bette, do quam mir kegenwertig dy gantze werlt mit manchirley gebrechen unde mit vil groben sunden, dy do worn in vil menschen. Dyweyle ich bat, als ich geheisin warth, vor andir und och vor mich, das mich der herre beritte czu im, was ich also vol czeren und trawrigkeit, das ich nicht woste, wy ich mich sulde schicken, das ich entpffing meinen liben herren."

³²⁶The Lollards were an English religious sect whose tenets were inspired by the teachings of the Oxford theologian John Wyclif (c. 1330-1384). They rejected some of the most important doctrines of Roman Catholicism, espousing a fundamentalist type of church in which all men enjoyed free access to the Scriptures. Their beliefs were widespread among the lower classes of society during the second half of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century.

With the accession of the Lancastrian kings, Lollardy became a political threat to royal pretensions because many Lollards sympathized with the deposed king Richard II, whom many of them believed to be hiding in Scotland long after he was in fact dead. To diffuse their threat to Church and state simultaneously, Parliament, on the recommendation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, passed the statute De haeritico comburendo, which declared the Lollards heretics and made full legal provisions for their trial and execution. In spite of this forbidding document, Lollardy spread rapidly, gaining adherents even among the upper classes and members of Parliament. By 1410, under the leadership of Sir John Oldcastle, a Herefordshire nobleman, the

several occasions had to appear before an ecclesiastical court to defend herself. The first serious incident of this sort took place in the late summer of 1417 upon her return from Santiago de Compostela.³²⁷ Before the ecclesiastical court of Leicester, presided over by the abbot of Leicester, Richard Rothley, the mayor of Leicester, John Arnesby, accused her of being "a fals strumpet, a fals loller, & a fals deceyuer of þe pepyl" (The Book, p. 112). As was customary in Lollard trials throughout England, the court examined her closely on her understanding of the Articles of Faith, especially the Eucharist.³²⁸ Margery answered all questions to the court's

Lollards felt sufficiently strong to attempt the modification of the statute and the dispossession of the Church, which was to enrich the secular estates with the spoils. Apprehended and convicted of Lollardy, Oldcastle escaped from the Tower in October, 1413, and began gathering his followers throughout England for an assault on London. The confrontation between royal troops and the marchers on St. Giles' Fields during January 9th and 10th, 1414, ended with the Lollards' dispersal and the arrest of their leaders. Oldcastle, however, escaped, and until 1417, when he was finally arrested, tried, and executed, efforts to crush the Lollard movement were stepped up. After Oldcastle's death there were periodic scares of new Lollard plots, but after the collapse of the 1414 rebellion, their political influence was shattered, they were driven underground and survived in small isolated groups until the Reformation under King Henry VIII.

³²⁷Actually, Margery had aroused suspicion of being a Lollard even before the Oldcastle Rebellion of 1414. During her stay in Canterbury in 1413, the monks drove her from their monastery, threatening her with death at the stake: "Pow xalt be brent, fals lollare. Her is a cartful of thornys redy for þe & a tonne to bren þe wyth" (The Book, p. 28).

³²⁸John A. F. Thomson, The Later Lollards (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 220-236 gives a detailed account of the procedures commonly followed during Lollard trials. Apparently, the procedure of investigation in Margery's trials was in accordance with established precedents. Close questioning on the subject of Holy Communion was the surest way of exposing a person as a Lollard since Lollards openly denied transubstantiation even before the ecclesiastical courts.

satisfaction, convincing them of her orthodoxy by upholding both the doctrine of sacerdotal sanctity and transubstantiation:³²⁹

Serys, I beleue in þe Sacrament of þe Awter on þis wyse, þat what man hath takyn þe ordyr of presthode, be he neuyr so vicyows a man in hys leuyng, zyf he sey dewly þe wordys ouyr þe bred þat our Lord Ihesu Criste seyde whan he mad hys Mawnde a-mong hys disciplys þer he sat at þe soper, I be-leue þat it is hys very flesch & hys blood & no material bred ne neuyr may be vnseyd be it onys seyde (The Book, p. 115).

The mayor, however, was not convinced, insisting "sche menyth not wyth hir hert as sche seyth with hir mowthe" (The Book, p. 115). But this "dedly enmy," who, if he "myth han hys wil, he wolde don hir be brent" (The Book, p. 114), had to let her go after forcing her to procure a letter from the Bishop of Lincoln, Philip Repyngdon, releasing him of all responsibility in the matter of Margery Kempe.³³⁰

Potentially more dangerous to her life were subsequent trials before Henry Bowet, the Archbishop of York. After being released in Leicester, Margery traveled to York on pilgrimage, but after staying there for two weeks, she was summoned to appear in the chapter house of

³²⁹From John Wyclif the Lollards had adopted the concept of any possible spiritual blessing contained in the sacraments being cancelled if they were administered by a corrupt priest or a priest in a state of sin.

³³⁰John A. F. Thomson sees the mayor's zeal as a clear indication of the widespread popular opinion against the Lollards in places like Leicester where the Lollards had been especially active before the Oldcastle rising of January, 1414. Leicester, of course, had also been the center for Wyclif's activities after his banishment from Oxford. But more importantly, John Arnesby was concerned with fulfilling his responsibilities under the provisions of the parliamentary act passed in April of 1414, after the collapse of the Oldcastle rebellion. This act, which was designed to avert the danger of another Lollard uprising, obliged lay authorities to give extensive help to the Church in apprehending Lollards for trial in the ecclesiastical courts.

York cathedral for questioning. Again she was examined on the Articles of the Faith, and again she acquitted herself well, protesting her loyalty to orthodox church doctrine: "zyf her be any clerke a-mongys zow alle þat can preuyn þat I haue seyde any worde oper-wise þan I awt for to do, I am redy for to amende it wyth good wille. I wil neipyr meyntheyn errowr ne heresy, for it is my ful wil to holdyn as Holy Chirche holdith & fully to plesyn God" (The Book, p. 122). But the clergy clearly remained suspicious of this woman who had already been accused of Lollardy in Leicester, and they were reluctant to release her for fear of her working mischief among the faithful. So her judge deferred final judgment in her case to the Archbishop of York. The Archbishop had her put in fetters, and Margery for the first time lost some of her self-assurance. While she prayed for God's help against her enemies, "hir flesch tremelyd and whakyd wondirly þat sche was fayn to puttyn hir handys vndyr hir cloþis þat it schulde not ben aspyed" (The Book, p. 124). Although she again answered all questions in strict accordance with church doctrine, the Archbishop was not entirely convinced of her orthodoxy either. However, he was a fair man and refused to detain her without conclusive evidence of heresy, but he banned her from his diocese and even paid a guide five shillings to "lede hir fast owt of þis cuntre . . . for þe pepil hath gret feyth in hir dalyawnce, and perauentur sche myth peruertyn summe of hem" (The Book, p. 125).

But before Margery had a chance to leave his diocese, she was arrested again, this time by John, the Duke of Bedford, the Lieutenant of the kingdom in the absence of King Henry V who was in France. At

this time Sir John Oldcastle, the leader of the abortive Lollard uprising, was still at large, and as John A. F. Thomson points out, "The years immediately after the rising saw the repression [of Lollardy] at its most severe, when the main concern of the authorities was to capture and punish those who had been involved in it, and all persons who had in any way been connected with Oldcastle were especially suspect" (Thomson, p. 6). Surprisingly, the Duke of Bedford suspected Margery of being Sir John Oldcastle's daughter, who was delivering his letters to his followers while he remained in hiding.³³¹ The duke, therefore, considered Margery a serious threat to the safety of the realm, and in his capacity as the administrator of the realm, trying to annihilate "the danger of a heretical movement which not only had its roots throughout the country but also could be called to action by one man" (Thomson, p. 19), he declared Margery a dangerous criminal and, as his retainers told her, even promised a reward for her capture: "þu art holdyn þe grettest loller in al þis cuntre er a-bowte London eythyr. & we han sowt þe in many a cuntre, & we xal han an hundryd pownde for to bryng þe be-forn owr Lord" (The Book, p. 129).

But since the secular powers could not try a person for heresy, Margery once more ended up before the Archbishop of York, who upon being again confronted with this troublesome woman could only groan in anguish, "What, woman, art þu come a-zen? I wolde fayn be delyueryd

³³¹Margery's trials before the Archbishop of York took place in the early fall of 1417. Oldcastle was not apprehended until November of that year. He was executed on December 14, 1417, in the presence of the Duke of Bedford.

of þe" (The Book, p. 131). The Archbishop, after much haggling with her accusers,³³² finally granted her a letter of safe conduct, again clearing her of all charges. But the hostility of the populace against the Lollards in general and Margery in particular was unmistakable. She was warned not to set foot in Yorkshire again, on pain of instant death should she disregard the ban. The steward of the Archbishop's household apparently spoke for many when he said: "Lord, we prey ȝow late hir go hens at þis tyme, & yf euyr sche come ageyn, we xal bren hyre our-self" (The Book, p. 134).

Although Margery's religious habits do show Lollard influence,³³³ she ultimately escaped conviction for heresy mainly because the accusations brought against her were too muddled and confused to stand up in court. The charge of her being Sir Oldcastle's daughter was, of course, ridiculous and had to be dismissed. Although Lollards

³³²In this second trial the Archbishop, evidently a just and patient man, found himself in a very awkward position. He had already once let Margery go, and whatever his private feelings were toward her, he did not want to reverse his earlier judgment without specific evidence of her guilt. On the other hand, he did not wish to antagonize such a powerful lord as the Duke of Bedford on Margery's account, as he said several times during the proceedings.

³³³Most notable among those to her contemporaries would have been her lack of fasting after God had bidden her to strengthen her body with wholesome food, her reading, or more appropriately, her having read to her religious tracts translated into the vernacular (though none of those she cites in The Book was considered heretical), and her refusal to swear oaths. Twice, for example, as she was being examined by the Archbishop of York, she refused to swear, first to leave the diocese immediately, and secondly, to neither "techyn ne chalengyn þe pepil in my diocyse" (The Book, pp. 125-26). One of the habits which most likely raised the suspicion of her being a Lollard everywhere she went was her fondness for quoting the Scriptures, which implied an uncommon familiarity with the Bible, associated among laymen only with Lollards.

granted women many privileges in religious matters,³³⁴ the accusation of another witness who claimed Margery "cownseledyst my Lady Greystokke to forsakyn hir husbonde, þat is a barownys wyfe & dowtyr to my Lady of Westmorelonde" (The Book, p. 133), would have been less appropriately raised against a Lollard than a flagellant because flagellants freely encouraged women to leave their families.³³⁵

³³⁴Hope Emily Allen, "Notes," p. 315, cites some of the historical evidence which suggests that a much greater amount of equality was granted to women among the Lollards in respect to religious practices than was granted them in the Catholic Church. Women of the artisan class in Norwich apparently were taught to read the Scriptures, and some eminent Lollard leaders such as Walter Brute were ready to grant sacerdotal powers to women of merit.

John A. F. Thomson's discussion of Lollard trials in the various regions of England gives insight into quite a remarkable variety of religious endeavors on the part of women, and the survey shows a considerable number of women among the defendants.

³³⁵According to Miss Allen, "Notes," pp. 314-15, the flagellants, who incidentally were dressed in white robes and wore white face masks, were prohibited from entering England by a royal proclamation issued in 1399. Miss Allen states that the differences between them and Margery were too obvious for her to have been mistaken for a flagellant. This conclusion is an oversimplification. Her incessant travels, her insistence on preaching publicly, her white clothing, and her writhing on the ground crying and roaring probably convinced many people that she was indeed a flagellant. The behavior of her German confessor in Rome testifies to that. Instead of encouraging her to heed God's command to wear nothing but white clothes, he tried his best to dissuade her, and when she ignored him, he insisted on her taking them off: "I charge zow þan ze leue zowr white clothys, & weryth a-geyn zowr black clothys" (The Book, p. 84). The Mayor of Leicester's comment on her strange apparel is very curious. It suggests that though he publicly accused her of Lollardy, he really suspected her of being a flagellant who might incite virtuous wives to leave their families and take up a life of religious vagrancy: "I wil wetyn why þow gost in white clothys, for I trowe þow art comyn hedyr to han a-vey owr wyuys fro us & ledyn hem wyth þe" (The Book, p. 116). Many women apparently also feared and resented her. The women of Hessele, for instance, "cam rennyng owt of her howsys wyth her rokkys, crying to þe pepil, 'Brennyth þis fals heretyk'" (The Book, p. 129). However confused people may have been about what kind of heresy Margery represented, lay and ecclesiastic hostility toward

However appropriate this charge may have been, Margery easily refuted it by pointing out that she had not seen these ladies for several years and by offering to get a formal statement from Lady Westmoreland herself which would testify to the falseness of the charge. More dangerous was the charge presented by a Dominican friar from Lynn who came to Beverly while the Archbishop of York was examining Margery for the second time for the express purpose of proving her a heretic. Claiming "sche disprauyd alle men of Holy Chirche" and insisting she would have been burned in Lynn long ago had not his order prevented it, he accused her of having boasted that "sche may wepyn & han contricyon whan she wil" (The Book, p. 132). Although this statement accused her of being a shameless liar about the divine origin of her tears and could have been construed as a Lollard's contempt of the efficacy of the sacraments, Margery was apparently able to diffuse this charge by her faultless orthodoxy with respect to the Articles of Faith.

In these trials, as well as in her numerous other confrontations with ecclesiasts of all ranks, Margery's behavior reveals a bravura which stands in contrast to Dorothea's humility. Although Dorothea was by no means lacking in authority or courage in her encounters with petitioners and superiors, and although she pursued her goal of spiritual perfection with a ruthlessness incomprehensible to a modern

her was widespread and fierce. Many priests considered her a wolf in sheep's clothing, and even well-meaning laymen advised her to behave in a manner appropriate to a woman of her class and station in life: "Damsel, forsake þis lyfe þat þu hast, & go spynne & carde, as oper women don, & suffyr not so meche schame & so meche wo" (The Book, p. 129).

person, she nevertheless impresses the reader of Des Leben as being courteous and deferential rather than calculating and aggressive. Margery provides ample evidence of being both of the latter. For example, whenever she was threatened with arrest, Margery did not attempt to save herself from the ordeal by claiming to be a holy woman, a bride of Christ. Instead, she shrewdly appealed to her superiors' sense of obligation to protect the honor of her husband John. Long after John and she had ceased living together, she begged the officers of the law not to put her into prison with men so that she could keep her chastity and her bond of wedlock. As a result, she always awaited her trials in the comfort of the homes of private citizens appointed to protect her from harm. Charges of unclean living she refuted with reference to her status as the blameless wife of an honest citizen and the mother of many children: "I neuyr had part of mannys body in þis worlde in actual dede be wey of synne, but of myn husbondys body, whom I am bowndyn to be þe lawe of matrimony, & be whom I haue born xiiij childeryn" (The Book, p. 115). Her masterpiece of casuistry was her answer to charges of unlawful preaching. With the subtlety worthy of a scholastic disputant Margery denied being guilty of transgression against St. Paul's prohibition that no woman should preach by insisting: "I preche not, ser, I come in no pulpytt. I vse but comownycacyon & good wordys, & þat wil I do whil I leue." No wonder her supporters were impressed and "enjoyed in owr Lord þat had zouyn hir not lettryd witte & wisdom to answeyn so many lernyd men wyth-owtyn velani or blame, thankyng be to God" (The Book, p. 128).

Usually, however, Margery relied on attack as her best defense, and she seldom missed an opportunity to use this technique to silence her critics. Before the Archbishop of Canterbury had a chance to question her on the rumors circulating about her, she criticized the worldliness of his court: "My Lord, owyr alderes Lord al-myty God hath not ȝon ȝow ȝowyr benefys & gret goodys of þe world to maynten wyth hys tretowrys & hem þat slen hym euery day be gret othys sweryng. ȝe schal answer for hem les þan ȝe correctyn hem or ellys put hem owt of ȝowr seruyse" (The Book, p. 37). During her trial in the chapter house of York she charged her judge with unjustified harshness in asking for documents from her he did not ask for from the other female pilgrims present. "Myn husbond ȝaf me leue wyth hys owyn mowthe," she countered when he demanded to see her husband's written permission for her to go on pilgrimage by herself. "Why fare ȝe þus wyth me mor þan ȝe don wyth oper pilgrimys þat ben her, wheche han no lettyr no mor þan I haue?" (The Book, p. 122). The Archbishop of York's prohibition against her preaching in his diocese she answered with a neat little lecture on proper Christian behavior: "I xal spekyn of God & vndirnemyn hem þat sweryn great othys wher-so-euyr I go vn-to þe tyme þat þe Pope & Holy Chirche hath ordeynde þat no man schal be so hardy to spekyn of God, for God al-mythy forbedith not, ser, þat we xal speke of hym" (The Book, p. 126). Even the saints could not escape Margery's devastating technique of silencing her detractors by exposing their own deficiencies. In a vision of the death of the Virgin Mary, Margery disturbed the solemnity of the occasion by her noisy lamentations. When the Apostles bade her to be quiet, Margery

silenced them by implying a lack of compassion in their own dry-eyed participation in this portentous event: "Wolde ze I xulde see þe Modyr of God deyin & I xulde not wepyn? It may not be, for I am so ful of sorwe þat I may not wythstonde it. I must nedys cryin & wepyn" (The Book, p. 175).

In spite of her impressive success in keeping her enemies at bay, Margery nevertheless considered herself one of God's great martyrs, for she, far more often than Dorothea, was the object of public scorn and derision. In her home town, for example, she once suffered the very same indignity St. Birgitta had suffered while she lived in Rome when an irate citizen, "litol chargyng his owyn schame, wyth wil & wyth purpose kest a bolful of watyr on hir heuyd comyng in þe strete" (The Book, p. 137). Frequently her fellow citizens, weary of her incessant preaching and her presumption of knowing the secrets of heaven, cut short her rhapsodies with the most deprecatory comments:

wher sche was in ony cumpanye, sche wold sey oftyn-tyme, "It is ful mery in Hevyn." & þei þat knew hir gouernawnce be-for-tyme & now herd hir spekyn so mech of þe blysse of Heuyn seyde vn-to hir, "Why speke ze so of þe myrth þat is in Heuyn; ze know it not & ze haue not be þer no mor þan we," & wer wroth wyth hir for sche wold not her no speke of worldly thyngys as þei dedyn & as sche dede be-forn-tyme (The Book, p. 11).

She insisted that anecdotes about her were invented by the devil, the "fadyr of lesyngys, fauowryd, maynteynd, and born forth of hys membrys, fals jnyvows pepil, hauyng indignacyon at hir vertuows leuyng, not of powyr to hyndryn hir but þow her fals tungys" (The Book, p. 243). In London people greeted her by shouting, "A, þu fals flesch, þu xalt no good mete etyn" (The Book, p. 243). This was in allusion to an event

which had supposedly taken place many years earlier when Margery during a fish dinner at a wealthy man's house allegedly had refused the lowly red herring in favor of the delicious pike by stating hypocritically: "A, þu fals flesch, þu woldist now etyn reed heryng, but þu xalt not han þi wille" (The Book, p. 244).

Even more than Des Leben, Margery's Book is crammed with evidence of her suffering "for Gods lofe" and God's promises of reward for all her pain and discomfort. Dorothea saw suffering for God's sake as her highest accomplishment:

Because of her sensual nature, her bitter suffering was painful to this blessed lover of Christ. But in accordance with the highest power of reason her suffering was sweet and pleasant to her. Because of her great love for God and her great desire for eternal life she would not have wanted to do without it. . . . With such great wounds, pains, and disciplines she pressed into her soul the constant memory of the holy wounds and scars of the Lord Jesus Christ and read in them as in a book the love and the suffering of Christ Our Lord and the duty of being grateful for such a great boon from God the father who proved his love for the entire human race in that he did not wish to spare his son, but was willing to let him be wounded to death for the salvation of mankind.³³⁶

³³⁶Des Leben, p. 199. "Also ist dirre seligen liephaberynne ire bittir liden swer gewest irre gesynlikeit; abir noch der obirsten kraft irre vornumft von grosir lybe zcu gote und begerunge zcu dem ewigen leben waz is ir gar suze und behegelych, und hette syn nicht willen enpern."

Des Leben, p. 213. "In sulchir wyse, mit so grosin wundin, smertzen und castyunge druckte sy in ire sele eyn stete gedechtnis her heiligen wunden und narwen Crist des herren, in den sy als in eynem buche laz di libe und das lyden Cristi unsers herren und di zcuverbundene der danckunge so grosir woltat gots des vatirs, der syne lybe also an allen menschlichem geslechte hot bewiset, das her synes eyborn suns nicht schonen wolde, sundir yn liez vorwunden bis in den tot durch der menschin salde wille."

Like Dorothea, Margery was convinced no suffering of hers could ever equal Christ's, and like Dorothea, she considered suffering as the highest source of happiness.

Fro þat tyme forwarde þat sche knew it was owr Lordys wille þat sche xulde suffyr mor tribulacyon, sche receyued it goodly when owr Lorde wolde send it & thankyd hym hily þerof, beyng ryth glad & mery þat day þat sche suffryd any disese. And be processe of tyme þat day which sche suffyrd no tribulacyon sche was not mery ne glad as þat day whan sche suffyrd tribulacyon (The Book, p. 120).

The reason for this joy in suffering is plainly stated in both works. Dorothea, according to Des Leben, realized the impossibility of achieving eternal life without suffering on earth, and therefore she "followed the narrow path which the Lord Jesus and all his beloved friends had traveled who had passed through the narrow gate of worldly misery and have earned the right to rule in the great palaces of heaven in the perfection of all joy."³³⁷ Like Dorothea, Margery was convinced that suffering on earth meant instant sainthood in heaven: "Alle his apostlys, martyres, confessorys, & virgynes and alle þat eyr comyn to Heuyn passed be þe wey of tribulacyon, and sche desyryd no-thing so mech as Heuyn. Pan was sche glad in hir consciens whan sche beleuyd þat sche entryng þe wey which wold leden hir to þe place þat sche most desyred" (The Book, p. 13). Christ himself promised both women eternal joy in heaven as compensation for all their earthly sufferings. "You shall rejoice with me here and in eternity," he told

³³⁷Des Leben, p. 214. "Di unmoglikeit dirkante daz wyse wibisnam und volgete den engen stige noch, den der herre Ihesus und alle syne liben frunde gewandirt habin, und durch di enge pforte dises lebins betrupnis durchgedrungen han, und dirworbin han zcu herschin in dem rumen pallacien des hymils in volkomenheit aller vreude."

Dorothea. "You will share with me eternal life and great honor, and your pains will be turned into joy, and you will have power over all my possessions."³³⁸ Margery was assured that "whan þu comyst hom in-to Heuyn, þan xal euery sorwe turnyn þe to joye" (The Book, p. 131). Furthermore, God had promised Dorothea a death without purgatory:

That person becomes sanctified on earth on whom I put my cross and whom I nail to the cross so tightly that he must carry it with its heavy burden for as long and as heavily as I want him to carry it. Such a person is crucified to the highest degree and when he dies, he will ascend into heaven without purgatory. I have nailed you to the cross and put a very heavy burden on you.³³⁹

Like Dorothea, who was to bear her soul directly into the joys of heaven, Margery was granted her desire not to suffer "non oper Purgatory . . . but in þis werld only" (The Book, p. 157). Upon passing out of this world, she was to enjoy the "blysse of Heuyn . . . wyth-in þe twynkelyng of an eye" (The Book, pp. 16-17).

Even though so many details in Margery's life and so many events in her spiritual career are too strikingly similar to Dorothea's life to be entirely coincidental, the personalities of these two women differed greatly. Dorothea consistently drew public attention to herself, and yet the reader of Des Leben never feels that her behavior

³³⁸Des Leben, p. 320. "Du salt dich mit mir hy unde in der ewikeit froyen! Du wirst mit mir das ewige lebin und grose ere haben, und deyne smertczin werdin gewandilt in eine froyde, und wirst mechtig werdin öbir all meyn gut!"

³³⁹Des Leben, pp. 278-79. "Der mensche wirt heilig uf der erden, uf wem ich lege myn cruce, und nayle yn so veste an daz cruce, daz her mus das cruce mit syner sweren burde tragen, wi lange ich wil und wi swere ich wil. Eyn sotener mensche wirt uf das hoheste gecruciget, und wenne her irstirbet, so wirt her ane vegevuyr varn in den hymmel. Ich habe dich an daz cruce genaylt und dir gar eyne swer borde ufgeleget."

was calculated to achieve this effect, but that it was indeed an unsought-for consequence of the religious trances which made her oblivious to her surroundings and public response to her activities. Margery, on the other hand, impresses the reader as an exhibitionist who enjoyed nothing more than being the center of attention. Her craving for notice and praise was insatiable, as all her activities clearly reveal. After having assumed the life of a lay mystic, Margery traveled restlessly from one religious authority to another to consult with them on the genuineness of her religious experiences: "Thys creatur schewyd hyr maner of leuyng to many a worthy clerke, to worshepful doctorys of divinyte, bope religiows men & oper of seculer abyte, & þei seyden þat God wrowt gret grace wyth hir & bodyn sche xuld not ben aferde, - þer was no disseyte in hir maner of leuyng" (The Book, p. 43).

It is understandable that an unlearned woman newly converted to a religious life might worry about the source of such newly acquired supernatural powers as visions, but when even the approval of the highest spiritual authority in the country, of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who "fond no defawt þerin but a-prevyd hir maner of leuyng & was ryghth glad þat owyr mercyful Lord Cryst Ihesu schewyd swech grace in owyr days" (The Book, p. 37), did not put an end to Margery's disclosures of her "maner of leuyng," one cannot dismiss the possibility of her having had an additional reason for these journeys than the stated one--the desire to announce to the worthies of the English Church the arrival of a new English saint who deserved to be canonized.

Margery's notable lack of modesty in her claims of spiritual accomplishments supports such a conclusion. Unlike Dorothea, for example, who had to be satisfied with Christ's promise that her intercession would help many people to heaven, Margery, as "a peler of Holy Cherch," was granted the power to save people by the hundreds of thousands. Whereas Dorothea was so honored when God's saints and angels visited her that she did not know where to stand for fear of offending some of them by turning her back on them, Margery was to consider these divine personages her servants. God himself had told her so: "Þer is no seynt in Heuyn but ȝyf þu wilt speke wyth hym he is redy to þe to comfortyn þe & spekyn to þe in my name. Myn awngelys arn redy to offyryn thyn holy thowtys & þi preyerys to me & þe terys of thyn eyne also, for þi terys arn awngelys drynk, & it arn very pyment to hem" (The Book, pp. 160-61).

Dorothea's heavenly bridegroom was often harsh and difficult to please, causing his bride physical pain and spiritual anguish. Margery's bridegroom was easy to please, and unlike Dorothea, Margery frequently ignored his commands, so that God on occasion had reason to complain of her negligence: "And I haue oftyn-tymys bodyn þe so myself, & ȝet þu wilt no don þeraftr but wyth meche grutchyngs" (The Book, p. 218). But instead of punishing her, he hastened to assure her of his approval of anything she did: "& ȝet am I not displesyd wyth þe, for, dowtyr, I haue oftyn seyde on-to þe þat whepyr þu preyist wyth þi mowth er thynkyst wyth thyn hert, whepyr þu redist er herist redyng, I wil be plesyd wyth þe" (The Book, p. 218). In fact, God at times resembles a henpecked husband, meekly pointing out what gifts

Margery "awt" to thank him for, and he spends a conspicuous amount of time thanking her for all her good deeds on his behalf. One long list of thanks for all conceivable favors begins like this: "Pan owr Lord mad a maner of thankyng to hir, for-as-meche as sche in contemplacyon & in meditacyon had ben hys Modyr's maydyn & holpyn to kepyn hym in hys childhod & so forth in-to þe tyme of hys deth" (The Book, p. 203).

Lest even God's own unqualified approval of all her activities should not be sufficient to prove her a true holy woman and a genuine mystic deserving of sainthood, Margery even secured the endorsement of the two saints most violently opposed to women's making themselves conspicuous in the service of the Lord. St. Paul, who stridently opposed women's preaching and on whose authority the Archbishop of York tried Margery as a Lollard in 1417, apologized to her for making life difficult for her on account of his writings. As God reminds her when she loses heart,

Dowtyr, I sent onys Seynt Powyl vn-to þe for to strengthyn þe & comfortyn þe þat þu schuldist boldly spekyn in my name fro þat day forward. And Seynt Powle seyde vn-to þe þat þu haddyst suffyrde mech tribulacyon for cawse of hys wrytyng, & he behyte þe þat þu xuldist han as meche grace þe-a-zens for hys lofe as eyr þu haddist schame er reprefe for hys lofe (The Book, p. 160).

St. Jerome, on whose mistrust and dislike of women many medieval anti-feminist tracts were based, appeared to her in a vision in the Roman Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, where his body had been miraculously transported from Bethlehem after his death, and urged her to continue in her mission of mercy, no matter what the obstacles:

"Blissed art þow, dowtyr, in þe wepyng þat þu wepyst for þe peplys synnes, for many xal be sauyd þerby. And, dowtyr, drede þe nowt, for it is a synguler & a specyall zyft þat

God hath zouyn þe, - a welle of teerys þe which xal neuyr man take fro þe." Wyth swech maner of dalyawns he hily comfortyd hir spiritys. & also he made gret preysyng & thankyng to God for þe grace þat he wrowt in hir sowle, for les þan sche had an had sweche gostly comfortys it had been vnpossybyl hir to a boryn þe schamys & wonderyngys þe which sche suffyrd pacyently & mekely for þe grace þat God schewyd in hyr (The Book, p. 99).

Obviously, Margery estimated her own spiritual accomplishments as superior to those of any of her models. Yet a close look at the accomplishments in which she took so much pride time and again reveals the limitations of her spiritual pretensions. Dorothea, unlike her admired model St. Birgitta of Sweden, had confined her involvement in contemporary religious and political controversies to matters important only to her immediate surroundings, namely the spiritual and temporal affairs of the cathedral chapter in Marienwerder. Margery's involvement in current affairs was even more restricted. The only political event of which she reports having been a part concerned the investiture of the prior of Lynn, a matter which apparently caused some anxiety to the Benedictine chapter there. Her account of this confusing issue, however, clearly shows that she did not take a decisive part in the choice of a cleric suitable to the task, but merely, as usual, had been correct in predicting who would ultimately succeed the deceased prior. As Miss Collis observes, Margery does not even notice such dramatic events as England's war with France or King Richard II's deposition.³⁴⁰ She does not mention the Lollard uprising, which after all affected her personally, and the death of England's beloved warrior king Henry V she refers to only in passing.

³⁴⁰Collis, p. 12.

While her lack of political involvement is not a serious shortcoming in her quest for sainthood, the superficiality of the moral admonitions to her audiences does at times cast doubt on the sincerity of her commitment to save sinners by the hundreds of thousands. While scolding ecclesiasts and lay people alike for swearing oaths, she seldom mentions any of the deadly sins that might keep people from going to heaven. There are only two notable departures from Margery's tiresome, repetitious admonitions against swearing. Once she reproved a monk for having sinned in "letthery, in dyspeyr, & in worldly goodys kepyng" (The Book, pp. 26-27). She even answered his question of whether he enjoyed himself with matrons or with maidens by specifying, "Ser, wyth wyfes" (The Book, p. 27). When she was examined by the Archbishop of York, she delivered a stinging criticism of the clergy in form of an allegory which tells of a priest who witnesses the destruction of a lovely pear tree by a loathsome bear. The priest, and with him Margery's audience, were clearly informed of the tale's meaning:

Pan þe palmyr, schewyng hym-selfe þe massanger of God, þus aresond hym, "Preste, þu þi-self art þe pertre, sumdel florischyng & floweryng thorw þi Seruyse seyng & þe Sacramentys ministryng, thow þu do vndeowtly, for þu takyst ful lytyl heede how þu seyst þi Mateynes & þi Seruyse, so it be blaberyd to an ende. Pan gost þu to þi Messe wyth-owtyn deuocyon, & for þi synne hast þu ful lityl contricyon. Pu recyuyt þer þe frute of euyrlestyng lyfe, þe Sacrament of þe Awter, in ful febyl disposicyon. Sithyn al þe day aftyr þu myssespendist þi tyme, þu zeuist þe to byng & sellyng, choppyng & chongyng, as it wer a man of þe werld. Pu sittyst at þe ale, zeuyng þe to glotonye & excesse, to lust of thy body, thorw letchery & vnclennesse. Pu brekyst þe comawndmentys of God thorw sweryng, lyng, detraccyon, & bakbytyng, & swech oper synnes vsyng. Thus be thy mys-gouernawns, lych on-to þe lothly ber, þu deuowryst & destroist þe flowerys & blomys

of vertuows leuyng to thyn endles dampnacyon & many mannys hyndryng lesse þan þu haue grace of repentawns & amendyng (The Book, p. 127).

Very damaging to Margery's religious pretensions is her painfully naive concept of visible tokens of divine grace which reduces God to a miracle worker who amazes his simple-minded audiences with displays of thunder and lightning. Whenever Margery needed a visible sign of divine approbation, she asked God for a "tokne of leuyn, thundyr, & reyn so þat it hyndir ne noy no-thing þat I vn-worthy may þe rathar fulfillyn thy wil" (The Book, p. 103), and God, dutiful as always, fulfilled her desire: "Dowtyr, dowte it not, þu xalt haue þat tokyn be þe thryd day" (The Book, p. 103), and, as promised, "erly in þe morwenyng, as sche lay in hir bed, sche sey gret leuyn, sche herd gret thundyr & gret reyn folwyng, & as swyþe it passyd a-wey & was fayr wedir a-geyn" (The Book, p. 104).

Her enemies and detractors soon realized it was not wise to meddle with her because the Lord did not at all hesitate to frighten them with thunder and lightning if they did. The people of Leicester, for instance, fell victim to God's wrath when their "wicked" mayor imprisoned Margery's two innocent fellow pilgrims. After assuring her "þat þe pepyl xal be ryth fayn to letyn hem gon & not longe kepyn hem . . . owr Lord sent sweche wederyng of leuenys, thunders, & reynes contynuyng þat al þe pepyl in þe town wer so afrayd þei wist not what to do. Þei dreddyn hem it was for þei had put þe pylgrimys in preson" (The Book, p. 114). Sure enough, as soon as they were released, "a-non þe tempest sesyd, & it was fayr wedir, worschepyd be owre Lord God" (The Book, p. 114). While Margery was forced to remain

in Leicester until the Bishop of Lincoln's letter arrived which absolved the mayor of all judicial responsibility for Margery's arrest and trial, "þer fellyn gret thunders & leuenys & many reynes þat the pepil demyd it was for veniawns of þe sayd creatur, gretly desyryng þat she had ben owt of þat cuntre" (The Book, p. 119).

This simplistic concept of God's visible signs of grace is most dramatically presented in The Book's account of the great fire of Lynn, which provided Margery with the golden opportunity to function as the patroness of her own home town by saving it singlehandedly from certain destruction. After the Guild Hall of the Trinity had burned to the ground, everyone realized that St. Margaret's Church and the entire town would fall victim to the conflagration "ne had grace ne myracle ne ben" (The Book, p. 162). For a while there was hope that carrying the Holy Sacrament to the fire would contain the flames; Margery herself had advised the parish priest to do so. The host, however, proved no match for this disaster, and Margery, following the priest about, beheld "how þe sparkys comyn in-to þe qwer thorw þe lantern of þe Cherch" (The Book, p. 163). This emergency called for immediate divine intervention, and Margery was ready to initiate it. She cried: "Good Lord, make it wel & sende down sum reyn er sum wedyr þat may thorw þi mercy qwenchyn þis fyer & esyn myn hert" (The Book, p. 163). God immediately did both, for while Margery still cried and wept, there came to her "iij worschepful men wyth whyte snow on her clothys, seying vn-to hir, 'Lo, Margery, God hath wrowt gret grace for vs & sent us a fayr snowe to qwenchyn wyth þe fyr. Beth now of good cher & thankyth God þer-for'" (The Book, p. 163). Margery had every

reason to do just that; both her hometown and her reputation were safe. "With a gret cry sche gaf preysyng & thankyng to God for hys gret mercy & hys goodnes, & specyaly for he had seyde to hir be-forn pat it xulde be ryth wel whan it was ful vn-lykely to ben wel saf only thorw myrakyll & specyall grace" (The Book, p. 163).

Margery's frequent misunderstanding and misapplication of the most common mystical concepts reveal her limitations as a mystic even more forcefully than does the banal content of her visions. As has been shown earlier, the accounts of St. Birgitta's and Dorothea's mystical careers at times reveal a confusion of metaphor and reality in their descriptions of their spiritual experiences. Margery exhibits this confusion to a far greater extent than either of her predecessors and models. For example, like St. Birgitta and Dorothea, Margery totally misunderstood the mystical concept of the pilgrimage as a metaphor which describes the mystic's spiritual progress toward the unio mystica.³⁴¹ Instead of obeying God's frequent admonitions to cease her hastening to and fro and seek the seclusion so vitally important for spiritual progress, instead of occupying her time with the mystic's contemplative pilgrimage toward the heavenly Jerusalem far removed from the noise, distraction, and worldliness of an actual pilgrimage, Margery, even more than her two models, traveled

³⁴¹Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (New York: Dutton, 1961), pp. 126-33, discusses the pilgrimage as a metaphor for the mystic's spiritual journey in its various applications, as, for example, the soul's journey from earth toward heaven, the alteration of personality which transforms the earthly man into a heavenly man, the contemplative journey to the heavenly Jerusalem, the journey to the unio mystica, and man's ultimate eternal union with the Godhead.

restlessly from one shrine to another. In the course of her life she visited all of the most important shrines of the Christian world and many of only secondary importance. In England she visited the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, the shrine of the Holy Blood of Hayles, and the Holy House of Walsingham.³⁴² Her most important pilgrimage was of course her journey to Jerusalem, which she combined with an extended stay in Rome on the return leg of the voyage. A few years later she traveled to Santiago de Compostela, and as a very old woman she journeyed to Danzig, visiting the shrine of the Blood of Wilsnak and the famous shrine in Aachen on her return journey to England.³⁴³

³⁴²The shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury, commemorating the martyr's death of Thomas à Becket was the greatest English shrine, rivalling Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago de Compostela in popularity. The shrine of the Holy Blood of Hayles was housed in the Cistercian Abbey of Hailes in Gloucestershire. On Holy Rood Day of 1270, the Abbey got possession of a vial of Holy Blood guaranteed to be authentic by pope Urban IV. It became a popular shrine with this acquisition. After Canterbury, Walsingham was the most popular shrine in England. The shrine was believed to be a miraculous reproduction of the house in which Mary received the angelic salutation. Its proudest possessions were a statue of the Virgin and the Virgin's milk. Since there are many natural wells in the vicinity of the shrine, Walsingham was a popular goal for sick people seeking cure from a variety of diseases by bathing in the springs. For more information on English shrines, see Donald John Hall, English Medieval Pilgrimages (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1965).

³⁴³Wilsnak was a shrine in the diocese of Havelberg in the Mark Brandenburg where after a fire which burned the church, three hosts sprinkled with blood were found unharmed on the Tabernacle. This supposed miracle made the place an object of popular veneration, although the authenticity of this miracle was already a matter of controversy when Margery visited there.

As had happened in Dorothea's life, some of Margery's most acute sufferings "for Gods lofe" occurred on these pilgrimages, and they are as fully described in The Book as Dorothea's had been in Des Leben. On every pilgrimage she was the victim of derision, abandonment, and want, to mention only a few of the many hardships she endured, and most of the time her own travel companions were responsible for her misery. On her journey to Jerusalem, for example, they forced her to play the buffoon: "They cuttyd hir gown so schort þat it come but lytil be-nethyn hir kne & dedyn hir don on a whyte canwas in maner of a sekkyn gelle, for sche xuld ben holdyn a fool & þe pepyl xuld not makyn of hir ne han hir in reputacyon" (The Book, p. 62). By the time the group reached Constance, they were so tired of Margery's demonstrations of holiness that not even the intercession of a papal legate could weaken their decision to travel on without her. They refused to keep her in their company unless the legate "wolde comawndyn hir to etyn flesch as þei dedyn & levyn hir wepyng & þat sche xulde not speke so mech of holynes" (The Book, p. 63). Upon his refusal to do so, they left her in his care, withholding both her money and her maid servant whom she had brought along.

After her arrival in the Holy Land, her suffering increased.

In the land

"wher owyr Lord Jhesu Crist was qwyk & ded," Margery for the first time was visited with the "roarings" with which she was to confound and dismay her fellow citizens for many years after. "& whan þei cam vp on-to þe Mownt of Caluarye, sche fel down þat sche mygth not stondyn ne knelyn but walwyd & wrestyd wyth hir body, spredying hir

armys a-brode, & cryed wyth a lowde voys & þow hir hert xulde a brostyn a-sundyr, for in þe cite of hir sowle sche saw veryly & freschly how owyr Lord was crucified. . . . & sche had so gret compassyon & so gret peyn to se owyr Lordys peyn þat sche myt not kepe hir-self fro krying & roryng, þow sche xuld a be ded þerfor" (The Book, p. 68).

This thrashing about on the ground with outstretched arms appears to have been nothing more than a particularly violent type of Venie, which was so commonly practiced in eastern Europe,³⁴⁴ but to her English traveling companions this was exotic, unacceptable behavior, and as Margery herself reports, "þerfor sufferyd sche mych despite & mech reprefe" (The Book, p. 68). Some of them said, "it was a wikkyd spyrty vexid hir; sum seyde it was a sekenes; sum seyde sche had dronkyn to mech wyn; sum bannyd hir; sum wissed sche had ben in þe hauyn; sum wolde sche had ben in þe se in a bottumlas boyt" (The Book, p. 69).

But what God had done for Dorothea, he did for Margery with equal zeal; he promptly provided a miracle for every emergency to convince her and everyone else of his special fondness for his "dowtyr" and of his approval of all her deeds. When her companions in Constance forced her to sit at the very end of the table "be-nethyn

³⁴⁴Westpfahl, "Geistesbildung," p. 38. "In der früheren Provinz Posen konnte man in den Kirchen polnische Frauen sehen, wie sie niederknieten und sich dann lang auf den Boden warfen, so betend und die Verneigung auch wiederholend. Das ist eine echte Venie, die sich aus dem Mittelalter bis heute erhalten hat."

alle oper," the innkeeper without fail served her first of all: "& þe good man of þe hows þer þei wer hostellyd, þow sche sat lowest at þe tablys ende, wold al-wey cheryn hir be-for hem alle as he cowde & myth & sent hir of hys owyn mees of swech seruyse as he had, & þat greuyd hir felawshep ful euyl" (The Book, p. 62). Whenever her company abandoned her, God forthwith provided her with a new guide who, however reluctantly, never failed to bring her safely to her destination, and most of the time she arrived there sooner and better provided for than those who had abandoned her. In Rome Margery, like Dorothea, was reduced to such poverty that she too had to beg for her food, but when her need was most desperate, God kindly provided a fairy godmother, as he had done for Dorothea and her family in Finsterwald. A Roman lady "comawndyd hir to etyn wyth hir euery Sunday & set hir at hir owen tabil a-bouyen hir-self & leyd hir mete wyth hir owyn handys. . . . Whan þei had etyn, þe good lady, vsed to takyn hir an hamper wyth oper stufte þat sche myght makyn hir potage þerwyth, as meche as wolde seruyn hir for a too days mete, & filled hir botel wyth good wyn" (The Book, p. 93).

Besides describing Margery's miraculous deliverances from persecution and danger, these accounts also describe the poetic justice which unfailingly overcame all of Margery's enemies and detractors. Although Margery tried to conceal her satisfaction with God's punishment of those who wronged her, she was not entirely successful. With thinly disguised glee she relates the sufferings of an English lady who had deceived and maligned her on her last pilgrimage to Germany. During the return journey from Calais to Dover,

Margery was the only one who was not seasick while everyone else "in be schip [was] voydyng & castyng ful boistowsly & vnclenly, . . . and specially be woman of London had most of pat passyon & pat infirmite, to whom þis creatur was most besy to helpyn & comfortyn for owr Lordys loue & be charite, - oper cawse had sche non" (The Book, p. 242).

In light of the justified disrepute into which pilgrimages had fallen by Margery's time, she would have been wiser to stay at home.³⁴⁵ As Christian K. Zacher shows in his book Curiosity and Pilgrimage, by the end of the fourteenth century pilgrimages had lost much of their function as penitential acts. Ideally, they "were expected to be occasions for worship and, indeed, like the hermit's seclusion or a modern day spiritual retreat for laymen, a chance to escape the noise and distractions of normal daily routine" (Zacher, pp. 48-49). But by Margery's time they had become "a boisterous social event for groups of traveling citizenry" out for a good time (Zacher, pp. 48-49). The complaints of Margery's fellow pilgrims against her holy speeches certainly testify to that tendency. More seriously, "pilgrimages were widely thought to be occasions for sexual promiscuity" (Zacher, p. 108). Margery herself was accused of promiscuous behavior on numerous occasions. Her fellow pilgrims, for instance, refused to release her handmaiden into her custody when they abandoned her in Constance because "þei woldyn han a-wey hyr mayden fro

³⁴⁵Christian K. Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1976), p. 56. Lollard criticism, going back to John Wyclif's writings, was especially virulent. Some of the most revered shrines they burlesqued with such puns as "Falsingham" for Walsingham, "Foulpit" for Woolpit, or "Cankerbury" for Canterbury (Thomson, p. 126).

hir þat sche xuld no strumpet be in hyr cumpany" (The Book, p. 62). The Mayor of Leicester called her a strumpet, and an anchorite in Norwich accused her of having given birth to an illegitimate child while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Finally, critics condemned "the general economic ambience of pilgrimages--the fact that pilgrims spent money for travel which ought to have gone for alms, that the benefits of pilgrimage could be had vicariously by hiring professional pilgrims, that the money given to shrines was used to make more statues, and that indulgences were obtained for a price"³⁴⁶ (Zacher, p. 95). Margery's as well as Dorothea's pilgrimages clearly show the appropriateness of such criticism since their pilgrimages at times cast them into dire poverty.

Unlike other mystics, Margery seldom describes herself as a mere spectator in the biblical events which comprise the bulk of her visions. Her need to occupy the center of the stage, coupled with her complete misunderstanding of the concept of mystical participation in Christ's life and suffering, caused her to a much higher degree than Dorothea to court blasphemy by usurping the status of the biblical saints. This behavior is readily apparent in her description of events surrounding the nativity of the Virgin and of Christ. Not content with being St. Anne's handmaiden and servant, "sche besyde hir

³⁴⁶The last two points of this argument go directly back to John Wyclif's numerous objections to pilgrimage. Wyclif "particularly objected to pilgrimage because it condoned the belief that Christ was more accessible in some places than in others, because it was spiritually redundant (since pilgrims began their journey cleansed by confession), and because it encouraged men to pray to an assortment of statues, not directly to God or the saints" (Zacher, p. 56).

to take the chyld to hir & kepe it tyl it wer twelve zer of age wyth good mete & drynke, wyth fayr whyte clothys & whyte kerchys" (The Book, p. 18). She steals the angel Gabriel's show by telling the twelve year old Mary, "Lady, ze schal be þe Modyr of God" (The Book, p. 18). As Mary's servant, she completely displaces St. Joseph:

And þan went þe creatur forth wyth owyr Lady, to Bedlem & purchasyd hir herborwe euery nyght wyth gret reuerens, & owyr Lady was receyued wyth glad cher. Also sche beggyd owyr Lady fayr whyte clothys & kerchys for to swathyn in hir Sone whan he wer born, and whan Ihesu was born, sche ordeyned beddyng for owyr Lady to lyg in wyth hir blyssed Sone. And sythen sche beggyd mete for owyr Lady & hyr blyssyd chyld (The Book, p. 19).

Likewise, during the Holy Family's stay in Egypt, it is she who "day be day [was] purueyng hir herborw wyth gret reuerens" (The Book, p. 19).

Margery's indiscriminate application of mystical concepts to situations removed from the mystical experience also weakens her claims to spiritual illumination and perfection. This is especially glaring in her use of the term "daliaunce," the English equivalent of the German word kôsen, which, according to Grete Lüers, originally signified the intimate conversation of Christ with the soul, but which the mystics of the fourteenth century frequently employed with erotic connotations as well.³⁴⁷ Dorothea used this term far more extensively than any other German mystic to describe her spiritual relationship to her heavenly bridegroom. The sexual implications of this term, which, according to Miss Lüers, first appeared in the

³⁴⁷Grete Lüers, Die Sprache der deutschen Mystik des Mittelalters im Werke der Mechthild von Magdeburg (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), p. 208.

writings of Heinrich Suso and Adelheid Langmann,³⁴⁸ are a notable feature of many of Dorothea's descriptions of her intimate conversations with Christ:

As I was glowing with burning love, sweated profusely and cried, the Lord was very gracious to me. He bent over me and urged me to keep on laboring, dallying [Libekosen], and weeping with the same heat of love so that he would not have to inflame me further. . . . I was so inflamed that I, without ceasing to sweat and cry, prayed, dallied [libkoste], and rejoiced in great hot-burning love for more than six hours.³⁴⁹

Dorothea always responded to Christ's tokens of affection with special prayers and special attention: "Her gratefulness was then so great, her prayers and dalliance [libekosin] very friendly and affectionate."³⁵⁰

As Wolfgang Riehle observes, "in contrast to the main representatives of English mysticism who don't make very frequent use of the term 'dalliance,' this concept achieves central importance in the autobiography of Margery Kempe" (Riehle, p. 146),³⁵¹ as it had

³⁴⁸Lüers, p. 208.

³⁴⁹Des Leben, p. 347. "Do ich nu in grosir börnender libe was flammende, sere switczinde und weinende, was mir der herre gar fruntlich. Her stunt öbir mich und mante mich sere, das ich immer me dar erbeyte, libekoste und weinte in derselben hitcze der libe, das her mich nicht dorffte andirweit entczunden. . . . Ich was also sere entczunt, das ich noch enander an uffhören swiczinde und weinende in grosir hitczinder börnender libe flete, libkoste und danckte öbir VI stundin."

³⁵⁰Des Leben, p. 346. "unde machte sy gar dangnam, bittinde und sunderlich tipkosende im, das den gar gros wart dy dangsamkeyt, das gebete und das libekosin was gar fruntlich von grosir libe."

³⁵¹Wolfgang Riehle, Studien zur englischen Mystik des Mittelalters unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer Metaphorik (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1977), p. 145. According to

done in Dorothea's Leben, serving her also as "a metaphor for mystical ecstasy" (Riehle, p. 146). But in contrast to Dorothea, who never employs this term to describe any encounter or conversation with anyone but her heavenly bridegroom, Margery uses this word to describe all sorts of meetings and conversations with all sorts of men. By "dallying" with intimate friends and casual acquaintances alike, the singular intimacy between God and man which the mystics wished to imply in their use of the term is lost, and Margery's "daliaunces" with Christ become indistinguishable in importance and intimacy from her encounters with earthly men. One of her most illustrious earthly partners in one of the numerous "daliaunces" The Book describes in detail was Thomas Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury: "Her dalyawns contynuyd tyl sterrys apperyd in þe fyrmament" (The Book, p. 37).

Like Dorothea, Margery occasionally attempted to employ the metaphor of drunkenness to describe the effect of Christ's divine love upon her spirit, and like Dorothea, she confused the metaphor with the actual state of inebriation. While she was on pilgrimage, she often suffered from a lack of spiritual comfort because of her

this author, other English mystics did not necessarily use this term in its erotic sense, often only employing it in its wider connotation of "conversation" or "communication" in contrast to Margery's use of its limited connotations of "amorous talk" and "sexual union."

"Im Gegensatz zu den Hauptvertretern der englischen Mystik, die, von dem Wort 'daliaunce' einen nicht eben häufigen Gebrauch machen, erlangt dieser Begriff in der Autobiographie der Margery Kempe zentrale Bedeutung." After listing some of Margery's uses of the term within the framework of mystical experiences of various types, Riehle states: "Darüber hinaus dient ihr der Begriff 'daliaunce' auch zur Umschreibung der mystischen Ekstase schlechthin."

inability to understand the sermons preached in foreign languages. When she begged Christ for "sum crumme of gostly vndirstondyng," his "melydiows voys swettest of alle sauowrys softly sowndyng in hir sowle," affected her so strongly that her soul was "so delectably fed wyth þe swet dalyawns of owr Lorde & so fulfilled of hys lofe þat as a drunkyn man sche turnyd hir fyrst on þe o syde & sithyn on þe oper wyth gret wepyng & gret sobbyng, vn-mythy to kepyn hir-selfe in stabilnes for þe vnqwenchabyl fyer of lofe which brent ful sor in hir sowle" (The Book, p. 98). Once on Candlemas Day during the mass commemorating the purification of the Virgin and the presentation of the infant Christ in the temple, she could not participate properly in the service because upon hearing the heavenly music which accompanied her vision of this event,

sche myth ful euyl beryn vp hir owyn candel to þe preyst, as oper folke dedyn at þe tyme of offeryng, but went waueryng on eche syde as it had ben a dronkyn woman, wepyng & sobbyng so sor þat vn-ethe sche myth stondyn on hir feet for þe fervowr of lofe & deuocyon þat God putte in hir sowle thorw hy contemplacyon. & sumtyme sche myth not stondyn but fel downe a-monge þe pepil & cryid ful lowde, þat many man on hir wonderyd & merueylyd what hir eyled, for þe feruowr of þe spyrte was so meche þat þe body fayld & myth not endur it" (The Book, p. 198).

Margery's consistent inability to differentiate between metaphor and actual experience appears with most embarrassing clarity in her descriptions of her soul's mystical marriage to the Godhead. Margery perceived the unio mystica as the human sex act; accordingly, Jesus behaves like a fleshly husband eager to enjoy his conjugal rights. Like a magnanimous husband lecturing his worldly-wise bride on their proper relationship before consummating the marriage, Christ tells Margery:

It is conuenient þe wyf to be homly wyth hir husband.
 Be he neuyr so gret a lorde & sche so powr a woman whan
 he weddyth hir, zet þei must ly to-gedir & rest to-gedir in
 joy & pes. Ryght so mot it be twyx þe & me, for I take
 non hed what þu hast be but what þu woldist be. And
 oftyn-tymes haue I telde þe þat I haue clene forzoue þe
 alle thy synnes. Perfore most I nedys be homly wyth þe &
 lyn in þi bed wyth þe (The Book, p. 90).

Margery's efforts to describe a spiritual concept which her experience of being a real man's wife compelled her to perceive strictly in physical terms produce not only a falsification of the mystical concept of the soul's being Christ's bed on which he rests within the body of the believer. They also result in such ludicrously mixed metaphors as the following:

Dowtyr, thow desyrest gretly to se me, & þu mayst
 boldly, whan þu art in þi bed, take me to þe as for
 þi weddyd husband, as thy derworthy derlyng, & as for
 thy swete sone, for I wyl be louyd as a sone schuld
 be louyd wyth þe modyr & wil þat þu loue me, dowtyr,
 as a good wife owyth to loue hir husbonde (The Book,
 p. 90).

On one occasion Christ even thanks his bride "for alle þe tymys þat þu hast herberwyd me & my blissyd Modyr in þi bed" (The Book, p. 214).

The metaphors original with Margery do nothing but strengthen the reader's impression of Margery's inadequacy as a candidate for sainthood. Des Leben at times describes Dorothea's mystical experiences in homely metaphors suitable to her life as a peasant's daughter and the wife in charge of the household of a well-to-do artisan.

From time to time The Book also describes Margery's life as a mystic in metaphors reflecting her environment and station in life.

Dorothea often wished to die for Christ, "and would not have paid any attention what kind of death it would have been, if she only could have

been killed, even if she had been cut into little pieces."³⁵² Margery expresses her devotion to God in similar terms in a metaphor suitable to her role as cook: "zyf it wer thy wille, Lord, I wolde for þi lofe & for magnyfyng of þi name ben hewyn as smal as flesch to þe potte" (The Book, p. 142).

This image of Margery being reduced to stewmeat is not entirely inappropriate. Unfortunately, however, most of Margery's homely metaphors, though they are far more original than those that appear in Des Leben, are also more incongruous. The metaphors God employs in some of his conversations with Margery, for example, are nothing short of ludicrous. As Henry Hillen points out, the curing of stockfish, a valuable commodity especially during Lent, was one of Lynn's main industries, and during the fourteenth century there existed the so-called "Stockfish Row" where the salters and curers carried on their business.³⁵³ God speaks just like a salter or curer when he compliments Margery on the strength of her faith: "Dowtyr, for þu art so buxom to my wille & cleuyt as sore on-to me as þe skyn of the stokfysche cleuyth to a mannys handys whan it is sothyn, & wilt not forsake me for no schame þat any man can don to þe" (The Book, p. 91). The seriousness of the biblical prophecies concerning the sufferings God's ministers must endure for his sake is reduced to absurdity when God the fishmonger warns Margery, "þow xalt ben etyn & knawyn of

³⁵²Des Leben, p. 324. "und hette nicht geacht, welchirley der tot wer gewest, das sy noer wer getötit, ap man sy och czu kleynen stuckelein hette geteylit."

³⁵³Hillen, Vol. II, p. 786.

þe pepul of þe world as any raton knawyth þe stokfysch" (The Book, p. 17).

Margery, at least officially, never became "a peler of Holy Cherch," and, as Louise Collis asserts, "her glimpses of the infinite, as related in her book at tedious length, are sadly banal" (Collis, p. 217). But, as Miss Collis goes on to say, Margery may have succeeded in writing a book of inspiration for the wives and daughters of the members of the new middle classes, the merchants, the aldermen, the mayors, the master craftsmen, the artisans, who like herself "had almost insatiable appetites for improving literature" (Collis, p. 249). Furthermore, "the pious laity were not the only audience Margery could hope to address. Her orthodoxy had been fully attested under the Archbishop of Canterbury's seal. Nuns and other religious persons could safely read her book" (Collis, p. 250). Nothing is known about the circulation of Margery's Book. But if it was read widely by middle-class women and religious personages, it was probably a great success with these audiences, for "here was not a remote God speaking only in the words of the mass, or of the scriptures. He was like an elder brother, or an ideal husband: simple, direct, and dependable" (Collis, p. 250).

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

I. THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMPE AS EVIDENCE OF DECLINE OF MIEVIAL FEMININE MYSTICISM

According to David Knowles, "Margery Kempe can only improperly and accidentally be classed among the English mystics" (Knowles, p. 149). The emphasis here is upon "English," for Margery's spiritual experiences as she describes them in her Book are much more closely related to those of the continental women mystics of the fourteenth century than to the visions and contemplations of Dame Julian of Norwich, Walter Hilton, or the unknown author of The Cloud of Unknowing.³⁵⁴ In fact, Margery and her religious career in many respects represent the final stage in the lengthy process of the decline of continental feminine mysticism which became evident especially in the second half of the fourteenth century. This decline, as Wentzlaff-Eggebert observes, was a result of what he calls "the popularization of mysticism," which caused it to lose in depth what it gained in breadth: "Over and over the thesis is reaffirmed that the

³⁵⁴George Wood Tuma, The Fourteenth Century English Mystics: A Comparative Analysis, 2 vols. (Salzburg: Universitätsverlag, 1977), provides many opportunities for comparing the works of the various English mystics and establishes clearly that Margery's mysticism bears little similarity to the works of her English predecessors and contemporaries.

height of expression of the mystical experience and the deepening of such experience remain dependent upon the personality of individual mystics and that superficiality and falsification result from a too widespread propagation of mystical concepts."³⁵⁵ According to this author, the initial signs of decay first observed in the Dominican convents could for some time be contained on account of the seclusion of these houses, but defied such containment "once mysticism became a popular movement and spread from these convents to the layfolk, without the supervision and guidance of the masters [the *fratres docti*]." ³⁵⁶ Once that happened, mystical concepts were easily misunderstood and misapplied to describe delusions and self-deceptions which had nothing to do with mystical experiences. This flattening and falsification of mysticism, in the opinion of several critics, reached its end stage when mystical ideas and concepts became the intellectual property of the bourgeoisie.³⁵⁷

The signs of decay which Wentzlaff-Eggebert discusses are clearly apparent in Johannes Marienwerder's account of Dorothea's life,

³⁵⁵Wentzlaff-Eggebert, Deutsche Mystik, p. 70. "Immer wieder bewahrheitet sich die These, dass die Höhe der sprachlichen Form und die Vertiefung des mystischen Problems abhängig bleiben von der Einzelpersönlichkeit, und dass die Verflachung und Verfälschung mit der allzu starken Ausbreitung verbunden ist."

³⁵⁶Wentzlaff-Eggebert, Deutsche Mystik, p. 130. "Wenn die Anzeichen des beginnenden Verfalls auch zunächst noch eingeschränkt wurden durch die Abgeschlossenheit der Klöster, so musste sich die Wirkung vervielfältigen, sobald die Mystik zur Volksbewegung wurde und sich über die Klöster hinaus unter den Laien, ohne Kontrolle und Zucht der Meister ausbreitete."

³⁵⁷Wentzlaff-Eggebert, Deutsche Mystik, p. 68. "Mystik wird allmählich Gedankengut des bürgerlichen Publikums."

and to a far greater extent in Margery's Book. The decline of mystical language and imagery is prominently displayed in both works. However appropriately such language and imagery is applied in Des Leben, scarcely any of it is original, and Margery's language, whenever it is original, is ludicrously inappropriate to her purpose. Truncated metaphors in both works testify to their authors' lack of discernment in using complex mystical concepts without a proper frame of reference and without a clear understanding of their function and complexity. When Johannes Marienwerder, for instance, describes Dorothea's spiritual elevation in terms of her soul soaring like an eagle into the sun of God's glory, the metaphor fails to impress the reader because it is not organic to the narrative and therefore appears to have been snatched up at random for want of a better means of describing her state of mind. Margery's singular reference to "the castle of her soul" as the scene of a particular vision is equally artificial and unconvincing because there too this complex mystical metaphor is neither prepared for nor developed and thus serves merely as a decoration, not as a viable metaphor for an otherwise ineffable spiritual experience. Most importantly, both works exhibit a distressing lack of concreteness. Apart from a few striking exceptions, The Book even more than Des Leben summarizes Margery's visions and concentrates on describing the effects of these visions on her psyche rather than presenting the content of the visions themselves. More than Des Leben, The Book is schematic and repetitious; certain phrases and motifs appear over and over, and the divine personages who are presented concretely lack

individuality, resembling each other so closely that it is impossible to tell them apart.

The most serious decline in medieval feminine mysticism lies in its ever increasing superficiality. Both Des Leben and The Book display "the exaggeration, humanization, and concretization of the concept of the unio mystica,"³⁵⁸ which falsified mysticism by transforming spiritual experience into physical sensation. Dorothea and Margery both exhibit this trend in their confusion of mystical metaphor with actual experience. Both Des Leben and The Book show how the lack of speculative thought in late medieval feminine mysticism led to an oversimplification of piety which found its ultimate fulfillment not in the private personal unio mystica of soul and Godhead, but in the public sacrament of the Altar. This oversimplification of piety, according to Wentzlaff-Eggebert, produced an increasing one-sidedness of the mystical dialogue, ultimately reducing it to a straightforward divine sermon on proper Christian behavior.³⁵⁹ This trend, also noticeable in Des Leben, is seen especially in Margery's "hy contemplacyowns" which are for the most part comprised of lengthy monologues delivered by Christ to an adoring Margery.

³⁵⁸Wentzlaff-Eggebert, Deutsche Mystik, p. 66. "Die Übersteigerung und gleichzeitig die Vermenschlichung und Konkretisierung des Vereinigungsgedankens führt zu solchen Einbildungen und Selbsttäuschungen, wie sie uns am sichtbarsten in der Vision der Mechthild von Stans entgegentreten."

³⁵⁹Wentzlaff-Eggebert, Deutsche Mystik, p. 68. The author demonstrates this trend in a discussion of the mystical poem "Tochter Syon" and concludes: "Im weiteren Verlauf geht ein solches Gedicht immer einseitiger zur direkten Belehrung über, ohne dabei noch etwas von dem Wunder der Gottbegegnung auszustrahlen."

But whereas Dorothea under the guidance of such an eminent and experienced theologian as Johannes Marienwerder did avoid the more embarrassing excesses of the concretization of the unio mystica and did achieve some genuine spiritual elevation, Margery never progressed beyond the most primitive stage of spiritual illumination. Part of the responsibility for this failure lies with her spiritual counselors, none of whom, as David Knowles observes, made the least effort to guide and develop her spiritual gifts along the lines laid down by Walter Hilton in The Scale of Perfection.³⁶⁰ By Margery's time, mysticism had indeed become the property of the bourgeoisie, and no one proves this more eloquently than Margery herself. Unrestrained by any disciplined spiritual guidance, Margery's mysticism became "a spiritual economics as schematic as anything produced by the Puritans."³⁶¹ The money consciousness that pervaded her world and her social class pervades her mysticism as well. Every prayer and every good deed are the commodities which produce a hundred percent profit in heaven, as Christ, the executor of Margery's spiritual estate, reminds her at every opportunity.³⁶²

³⁶⁰Knowles, p. 149.

³⁶¹Sheila Delaney, "Sexual Economics, Chaucer's Wife of Bath, and The Book of Margery Kempe," Minnesota Review, 5 (1975), 110.

³⁶²Delaney, p. 111.

II. DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE DEATH OF DOROTHEA VON MONTAU AND MARGERIE KEMPE

Both Dorothea and Margery kept on suffering "for Gods lofe" even after their death, and not until the twentieth century were their labors fully recognized. In contrast to Margery, Dorothea was never totally forgotten, but her cult suffered considerable reversals through politics. The canonization proceedings of 1404-05 could not be brought to a successful conclusion because of the rapid growth of hostility between the Teutonic Knights and the powerful rulers of Poland and Lithuania, who were determined to check German expansion and destroy German influence in eastern Europe. After the Polish-Lithuanian victory at the Battle of Grunwald in 1410, the Teutonic Knights and the Dominican houses in their territories were too impoverished to continue their efforts toward her canonization. A new hearing in 1486 in Rome was also unsuccessful because many important documents had been lost in the meantime, and all efforts to effect her canonization came to an end when in 1525 both the secular and the ecclesiastical powers of Prussia abandoned Catholicism. During the Reformation Dorothea's shrine was destroyed,³⁶³ and there were vigorous official efforts to suppress her cult. But her memory survived among the populace, and during the Counter Reformation interest in her revived. In 1637, finally, Bishop Johannes Lipie

³⁶³Her grave was destroyed and a number of panel paintings depicting Dorothea were removed. But her cell can be seen to this day at Marienwerder Cathedral.

Lipski of Kulm officially reinstated her shrine.³⁶⁴ In the twentieth century interest in her canonization revived once more. After World War II German Catholic refugees from West Prussia pursued a vigorous campaign to add Dorothea's name to the calendar of Roman Catholic saints.³⁶⁵ On January 9, 1976, finally, Dorothea von Montau became Saint Dorothea by papal decree.

After having been completely forgotten for centuries, Margery found the appreciation and recognition she so avidly sought to secure for herself during her lifetime in the twentieth century. Ironically, it is a recognition far different from the kind of fame she had envisioned. Few of her contemporaries saw her as she saw herself, as a "peler of Holy Cherch," and even fewer people would accord her such status today. But with the discovery of her Book in 1934, she has become the subject of considerable scholarly attention. Scholars of religion and medieval Church history debate her spiritual accomplishments, scholars of the behavioral sciences study her personality,

³⁶⁴Richard Stachnik & Anneliese Triller, ed., "Dekret," Dorothea von Montau-Eine preussische Heilige des 14. Jahrhunderts, trans. Richard Stachnik (Münster: Selbstverlag des Historischen Vereins für Ermland, 1976), p. 146.

³⁶⁵This campaign produced a considerable amount of scholarship concerning Dorothea. But since all of it was written in the interest of her canonization, it lacks objectivity and is therefore of limited value to less partisan scholars and critics. Because Dorothea has become the patron saint of these Catholic refugees, greater objectivity in their future scholarship may also be difficult to achieve. There is, however, evidence of growing interest in Dorothea among Polish scholars, which might help produce more objective studies than has been the case up to now. The strength of recent German scholarship on Dorothea lies in the edition of primary source materials which up to that time were available only in manuscript form.

social historians are fascinated by the wealth of information her Book yields about the private and public affairs of medieval English citizens of various social classes, and among scholars of language and literature she has become a celebrity because of her literary accomplishment. Few critics would unequivocally call her Book an autobiography in the modern sense of the word,³⁶⁶ but ultimately most of them agree that in a sense it is the first extant autobiography in the English language and as such is a landmark in the development of vernacular English literature.

³⁶⁶R. W. Chambers, in his introduction of W. Butler-Bowden's modernized version of The Book of Margery Kempe, refuses to make a definite classification of The Book's genre and calls it "a biography or autobiography."

James M. Osborn, The Beginnings of Autobiography in England (Los Angeles: U.C.L.A. Press, 1959), denies The Book is an autobiography. He calls it "one of the most autobiographical of biographies," which may be called "the prototype of bio-autobiography, the genre so popular with Hollywood movie stars" (p. 7). He goes on to describe The Book as follows: "Once the Book of Margery Kempe is rejected as autobiography, it remains to inquire where it fits into literary history. Actually, it looks back, instead of forward, for it is more in the tradition of the lives of saints than that of autobiography. Indeed, Margery's Book could be called the life of a would-be-saint, reported in detail from her own mouth. As such, it is the end of a tradition, for the subject saint has ceased to be an idealized type, the doer of conventional deeds and miracles, and has become instead an individual with personal experiences and responses. To adopt Matthew Arnold's phrase, Margery was wandering between two traditions, one dead and the other powerless to be born" (pp. 7-8).

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