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**The Early Latin Sources for the Legend of St. Martha:  
A Study and Translation with Critical Notes**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation focusses on the legends surrounding St. Martha of Bethany. Four major Latin versions are extant, dating from the late twelfth to the mid-thirteenth centuries: the Vita Pseudo-Marcilia, the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae et Sororis Eius Sanctae Marthae, and selected chapters in Vincent of Beauvais' Speculum Historiale and Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda Aurea. In these lives of the saint, traditional material derived from Scripture is supplemented by descriptions of Martha's legendary life as an early missionary in Provence. The substance of these legends proved extremely influential for art and vernacular literature in the later Middle Ages.

The text which follows provides general background material on St. Martha, including an examination of her role in the Gospels, in gnostic literature and in the writings of the early church fathers, and a survey of the origins of the medieval Martha cult in the Christian West. Annotated English translations of the four major Latin lives are provided. Of the four, only the Legenda Aurea was previously available in a modern English translation. A French version of the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae was produced in 1848. The concluding chapter consists of a comparative table of the three texts which are most closely related, namely the Vita Pseudo-Marcilia, and the lives of Martha compiled by Vincent of Beauvais and Jacobus de Voragine.

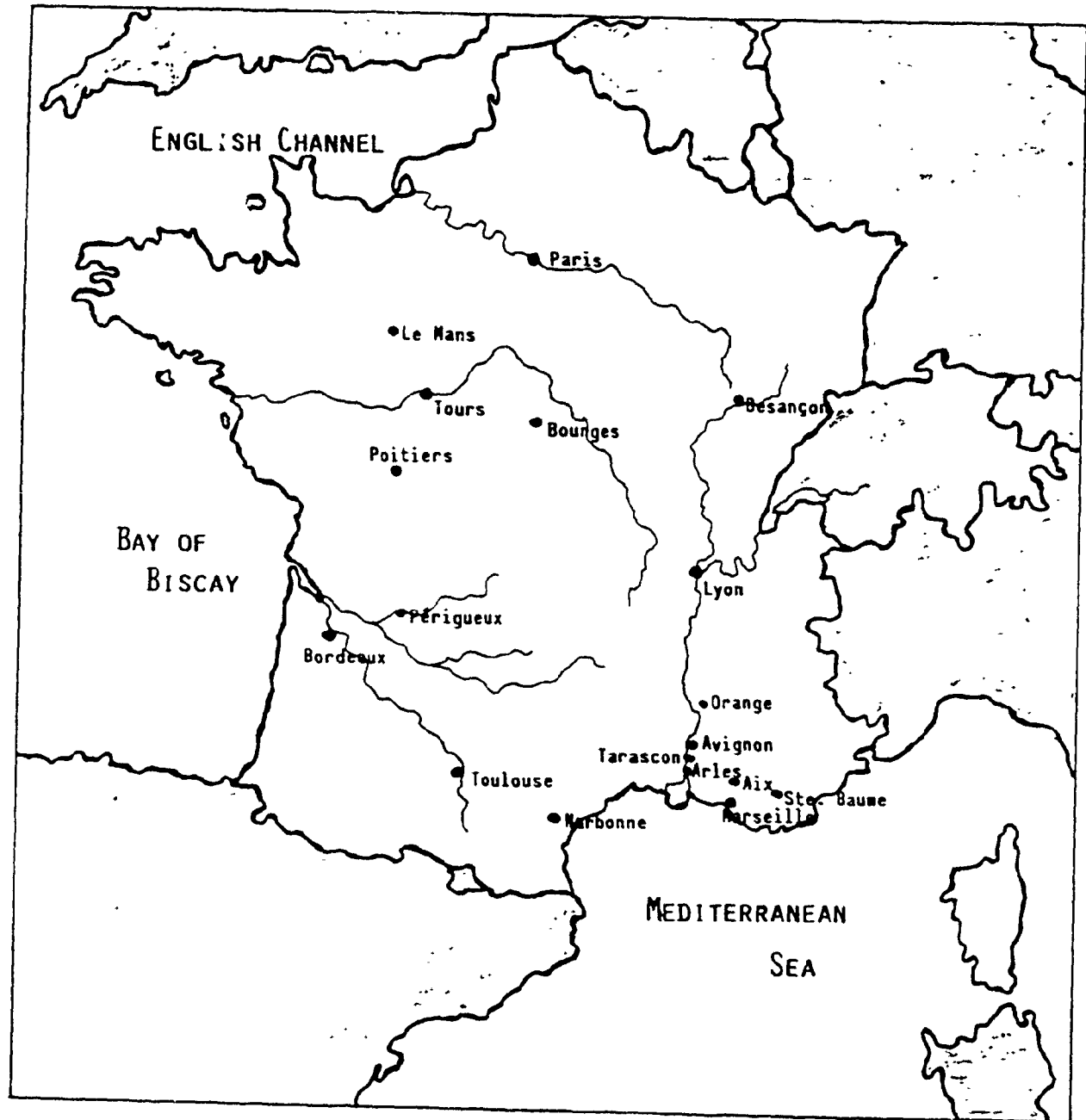
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# FRANCE



## Introduction

In her book The Women Around Jesus, feminist scholar Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel introduces the chapter on Martha with the comment:

When I think of 'Martha', a picture from a children's Bible comes to mind. In it, Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to him, while in the background Martha is leaning against the kitchen door with an evil, mistrustful look on her face. As a child, I always felt sorry for anyone called Martha. The name has connotations of being especially alert, active, earthy, plump, jolly and competent....There was something noble about 'Mary'. 'Martha' was rather common. Mary had an aura of holiness, whereas Martha breathed cooking and the smell of the kitchen. (Moltmann-Wendel, 1982, 18)

This 'Sunday-school' image of Martha, derived from the account of Jesus' visit to Bethany in Luke 10:38-42, remains dominant in the popular imagination. It overshadows even her confession of faith recorded in John 11:27, where she acknowledges Christ as the Son of God, and which Moltmann-Wendel describes as a special climax of the New Testament, comparable only to Peter's acknowledgement of Christ in Matthew 16:16 (ibid., 25).

Who was Martha of Bethany? Relatively little is known of her from the canonical gospels, but her character attracted increasing interest on the part of writers after

the twelfth century and her cult enjoyed great popularity in the later Middle Ages, especially in southern France. Much of the literature which grew up around her during the medieval period can be classified as biblical exegesis: it focusses on the contrast between Martha and her sister Mary, usually identified in the Christian West with Mary Magdalene.

Other sources, however, present 'biographical' details not found in the gospels. Chief among them are the texts which comprise the major focus of this study: the four major extant medieval Latin lives of the saint, which, in turn, proved extremely influential in numerous vernacular versions.<sup>1</sup> Because of the importance of these texts for the study of the Martha legend, I have provided full translations with annotations in the work which follows. The longest text containing Martha material is the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae et Sororis Eius Sanctae Marthae, probably compiled in the mid to late twelfth century. Roughly contemporary with it is the Life compiled by 'Pseudo-Marcilia'. The latter was a major source for Vincent of Beauvais' Martha legend in his Speculum Historiale, compiled in the mid-thirteenth century, and this in turn was a likely source for Jacobus de Voragine in the compilation of his Legenda Aurea, completed by 1267. Of these four works, only that by Jacobus de Voragine was previously available in English (Jacobus de Voragine, 1969,

392-395). A French version of the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae was published in 1848 (Faillon, 1848, II, 133-346). A comparative table showing the textual parallels between the pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent of Beauvais and Jacobus de Voragine texts is found in chapter 5. The remainder of the introduction which follows provides a brief background to the medieval Martha legends, summarizes the origins of the Martha cult in the west, outlines the Latin legends and discusses the relationships between the texts.

#### 1. Background to the Medieval Martha Legend

##### (a) Martha in the New Testament:

The name "Martha" occurs three times in the canonical gospels, and is used of only one person: the sister of Mary and Lazarus. Luke (10:38-42) records an incident in which Martha's behaviour--taking on the active role as hostess of Jesus and his companions--is contrasted with that of her sister. John (11:1) notes that Martha and her siblings lived in the village of Bethany, and they enjoyed a special relationship with Jesus: "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (11:5).<sup>2</sup> The chapter continues with an account of Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:11-44). Some time later, Jesus is again described as a guest in the house in Bethany, where Martha serves the meal and Mary anoints

his feet with fragrant ointment and dries them with her hair (12:1-8). Matthew (26:6-13) and Mark (14:3-9) concur that Jesus was anointed in Bethany, but these two gospels both specify that the anointing took place in the house of Simon the leper. As a result, a number of commentators have suggested that the hostess Martha was the wife, or widow, of Simon.

The character of Martha as portrayed in Luke and in John is remarkably consistent. She is practical, active and outspoken. In Luke she takes charge of the mealtime preparations, and berates her sister before the guests for failing to assist (10:40). In John's account of the raising of Lazarus, Martha takes the initiative, going out to meet Jesus as he approaches the village (11:20). She chides him for not coming sooner (11:21). Her strong sense of practicality surfaces as she reminds Jesus that, after four days in the grave, her brother's body will have begun to decay (11:39). Of particular interest in John's account, however, is Martha's confession of faith in Christ. While Mary remains at home, grief-stricken, Martha engages in a theological discussion with Jesus concerning the resurrection of the dead (11:21-27). This discussion reaches a climax when Martha asserts: "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world" (11:27). As Raymond Brown comments,



The most famous incident in which Peter figures during the ministry of Jesus (and his other claim to primacy besides that of witnessing the first appearance of the risen Jesus) is the confession he made at Caesarea Philippi, especially in its Matthean form (16:16): "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Already the disciples had generally confessed Jesus as a "Son of God" (no definite article in Mt 14:33), but it is Peter's more solemn confession that wins Jesus' praise as a statement reflecting divine revelation. The closest parallel to that confession in the four Gospels is found in Jn 11:27: "You are the Christ, the Son of God;" and it appears on the lips of a woman, Martha, sister of Mary and Lazarus. (And it comes in the context of a major revelation of Jesus to Martha; it is to a woman that the mystery of Jesus as the resurrection and the life is revealed!) Thus, if other Christian communities thought of Peter as the one who made a supreme confession of Jesus as the Son of God...the Johannine community associated such memories with heroines like Martha. (Brown, 1975, 693)

Both Brown and Moltmann-Wendel (1982, 25-26) conclude from this story of Martha that she was a leading personality in the early church.

(b) Martha in Gnostic Literature:

Gnosticism, a philosophy especially prominent in its Christian form in the second century, incorporated Jewish, pagan and Christian elements. Different sects developed different kinds of gnosticism, although some features were common to the movement as a whole:

A central importance was attached to 'gnosis', the supposedly revealed knowledge of God and of the origin and destiny of mankind, by means of which the spiritual element in man could receive redemption. The source of this special 'gnosis'

was held to be either the Apostles, from whom it was derived by a secret tradition, or a direct revelation given to the founder of the sect. The systems of teaching range from those which embody much genuine philosophical speculation to those which are wild amalgams of mythology and magical rites drawn from all quarters, with the most slender admixture of Christian elements. (Cross, 1974, 573)

Raymond Brown's description of Martha as the woman to whom "the mystery of Jesus as the resurrection and the life is revealed" is apt in view of the fact that Martha is mentioned in a number of gnostic documents as a recipient of the gnosis.

One of the major difficulties in assessing Martha's role in gnostic circles is the scarcity of extant source documents. Even though the gnostics were "extremely prolific in their literary output," much of their spiritual teaching probably remained unwritten due to its esoteric nature (Walker, 1983, 22). In addition, for many centuries most of what was known of the various gnostic sects was derived from references preserved in the writings of the Church Fathers, especially Justin Martyr, Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen and Epiphanius (ibid., 23-25). During the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these were supplemented by the discovery of a few Coptic texts and fragments, but it was only with the recovery of a corpus of fifty-three gnostic texts at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945

that a reasonably substantial body of gnostic literature became available to scholars. The extant sources suggest that Martha probably played an important role in the religious life and thought of the early centuries of the Christian era. Origen (ca. 185-254) discusses the various gnostic sects in his Contra Celsum and records (5.62): "Celsus notes, moreover, certain Marcellians, so called from Marcellina, and Harpocratians from Salome, and others who derive their name from Mariamne, and others again from Martha" (Origen, 1913, 570). Salome, Mariamne<sup>3</sup> and Martha are also mentioned in the First Apocalypse of James, in the Nag Hammadi Codex (V,3). James is advised by the Lord, "When you speak these words of this perception, encourage these four: Salome and Mariam and Martha and Arsinoe" (Schoedel, 1979, 99). The editor of the text notes (ibid.) that these four names are brought together twice in the Manichaean Psalm Book.<sup>4</sup>

Presumably the women are to be encouraged by James to offer their interpretations of his words. Three of the four (Martha, Mary and Salome) appear as interpreters in one of the longest extant gnostic texts, the Pistis Sophia. In this work, which dates from ca. 250 A.D. (Walker, 1983, 40), Martha comes forward four times to comment on the revelations of the Pistis Sophia, a female wisdom figure (Book I, chapters 38 and 57, Book II, chapters 73, 80; see

Schmidt, 1978, 123-5, 223-5, 327-9, 353-5). Although Martha does not figure as prominently as her sister Mary, who is one of the principle questioners and interpreters in the work, each of her explanations is commended for its excellence, by Jesus in Book I and by the First Mystery in Book II.

Other early sources suggest that Martha may have played a more active role in the events recorded in the gospels than the canonical texts reveal. For example, the second Greek version of the Gospel of Nicodemus specifically notes that "Martha, and Mary Magdalene, and Salome, and other virgins" accompanied the mother of Jesus at her vigil at the foot of the cross (see Donehoo, 1903, 345; Schneemelcher mentions this gospel (1959, I, 444-449) but does not provide a text). A Coptic fragment relates that Martha, not Mary Magdalene, was the first to tell the disciples of Christ's resurrection. She was not believed, so returned and sent Mary in her place. Mary was not believed either, so Jesus was forced to go to the disciples to announce His own resurrection. This work, edited and translated by H. Duensing in Schneemelcher (1959, I, 189-227) probably dates from the first half of the second century (ibid., 191). It is not mentioned in early Christian literature, and nothing was known of its existence until its discovery in 1895 by Carl Schmidt, who published a German translation that year

in Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin 21 (June 20, 1895), 705-711. Such texts provide interesting insights into the traditions of the early Christian church and Martha's place within them. However, until further evidence is discovered, the full extent of her influence is difficult to evaluate.

(c) Martha in Patristic Literature:

For the most part, the writings of the church fathers contribute little to the "biography" of St. Martha. References to Martha which do occur generally refer to the gospel texts. For example, Tertullian, in his treatise On the Body of Christ (7.9), mentions Martha in passing, as one who, along with "the other Marys" accompanied the Saviour (Tertullian, 1975, 244). Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215), in his Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved?, admonishes the rich man, using the example of Martha's behaviour as recorded in Luke 10:

And he [the rich man] was capable of busying himself about many things; but one thing, the work of life, he was powerless, and disinclined, and unable to accomplish. Such also was what the Lord said to Martha, who was occupied with many things, and distracted and troubled with serving; while she blamed her sister, because, leaving serving, she set herself at His feet, devoting her time to learning: "Thou art troubled about many things, but Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." So also He bade him leave his busy life, and cleave to One and adhere to the grace of Him who offered everlasting life. (Clement of Alexandria, 1913, 594)

This emphasis on the contrast between Mary and Martha appeared with increasing frequency in exegetical literature from the early third century onwards. Many of the variations in the interpretation of the theme resulted from variants in the texts found in early manuscripts, in particular that of Luke 10:42, Christ's reply to Martha when she expresses concern about the fact that Mary does not help her with the preparation of the meal. He gently chides her for her anxiety, but early manuscripts are divided as to whether the text should read "one thing only is needful," "few things are needful," or whether the phrase should be omitted altogether.<sup>5</sup>

Origen's homily on the gospel pericope in Luke 10:38-42 provides a model for later interpretations. He writes that Martha symbolizes action and Mary, contemplation; neither action nor contemplation can exist without the other. Martha receives the Word through her physical act of service; Mary receives Him spiritually through her attentiveness to his teachings. Origen also notes that Martha can be seen as symbolic of the synagogue and the Old Testament laws, while Mary represents the Christian Church, and the new "spiritual law" (cf. Romans 7:14). In addition, Martha is symbolic of the Jews, who observed the precepts of the law, and Mary, of the Christians, who "set [their] minds on things that are above,

not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2). (Origen, 1962, 521, 523) Thus Origen considers Martha and Mary representative of several contrasting concepts; these ideas are amplified in later interpretations, although his identification of Mary and Martha as types of the active and contemplative life has been particularly influential.

Origen's ideas were especially well received in monastic circles. Representative is the writing of John Cassian (ca. 365-435), who played an important role in bringing the ideals of Eastern monasticism to the West (see LaRow, 1982, 65). Cassian himself spent ten or twelve years in Egypt and visited many of the anchorites; after the sack of Rome in 410 he fled to southern France. In his writings Cassian expresses his views on the solitary life in his twenty-four Conferences, written between 420 and 430, which are reputedly reports of discourses among Egyptian monks. He stresses such qualities as freedom from earthly ties, solitude and contemplation; Mary of Bethany is presented as a role model. For example, in his first Conference Cassian writes with respect to a monk's goal:

To cling always to God and to the things of God--this must be our major effort, this must be the road that the heart follows unswervingly. Any diversion, however impressive, must be regarded as secondary, low-grade, and certainly dangerous. Martha and Mary provide a most beautiful scriptural paradigm of this outlook and of this mode of activity. In looking after the Lord and His disciples Martha did a very holy service. Mary, however, was intent on the spiritual

teaching of Jesus and she stayed by His feet, which she kissed and anointed with the oil of her good faith. And she got more credit from the Lord because she had chosen the better part, one which could not be taken away from her....The Lord locates the primary good not in activity, however praiseworthy, however abundantly fruitful, but in the truly simple and unified contemplation of Himself. (Cassian, 1985, 42-43)

Origen's thought has also been transmitted to the Christian West through the writings of Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339-397). In his Treatise on the Gospel of Luke, Ambrose introduces a new element into the Mary/Martha theme: he portrays them as complementary rather than opposing figures. Ambrose begins by citing Luke 1:2, in which Luke describes his narrative as one compiled from the accounts of those who were "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." He then distinguished between "intentio visionis"--the quality of seeing or focussing attention upon something--and "actio", or action; he notes that the two do not occur simultaneously, but that they are intimately linked (I,8). The one inevitably leads to the other: if Martha had not first heard the Word, she would not have been spurred to service. Likewise, the contemplation of Mary later inspires her to act: John 12:3 describes how she washes Jesus' feet with her tears and dries them with her hair (I,9). When considering the Luke 10:38-42 pericope specifically, Ambrose notes that Mary's attitude of contemplation is particularly commended by Christ, and that she thus serves as an example



for all believers (VII, 85). Nonetheless, Martha's service is not reproached. Citing I Corinthians 12, Ambrose presents the image of the Church as one body with many members, and each member has need of the others. Wisdom resides in the head and activity in the hands, but all parts of the body are held in honour (VII, 86). (Ambrose, 1971, 50-51; 1976, 36-37)

For Augustine, Martha symbolizes the servant of the Word made flesh, Mary the hearer of the eternal Word: from this analogy follows the identification of the two with the Church in the temporal world and the church in heaven. Augustine refers to the Mary/Martha theme in at least twelve works. It is addressed at length in three: Quaestiones in Evangelium in Luc 2.20, Sermon 103 and Sermon 104. In these works Augustine emphasizes the idea that Mary's response to Christ is preferable to that of Martha: she chooses the one thing that is needful by focussing her attention on the One who brings all humanity into unity with Himself. However, Martha's activity is not held in disdain:

For what, do we imagine that Martha's serving was blamed, whom the cares of hospitality had engaged, who had received the Lord Himself into her house? How could she be rightly blamed, who was gladdened by so great a guest? If this be true, let men give over their ministrations to the needy; let them choose for themselves "the better part, which shall not be taken from" them; let them give themselves wholly to the word, let them long after the sweetness of doctrine; be occupied about the

saving knowledge; let it be no care to them, what stranger is in the street, who there is that wants bread, or clothing, or to be visited, to be redeemed, to be buried; let works of mercy cease, earnest heed be given to knowledge only. If this be "the better part," why do not all do this, when we have the Lord Himself for our defender in this behalf?...And yet it is not so; but as the Lord spake so it is. So mark; "Thou art occupied about many things, when one thing is needful. Mary hath chosen the better part." Thou hast not chosen a bad part; but she a better....The Lord then did not blame Martha's work, but distinguished between their services. (Augustine, 1908, 429-430)

Martha's activity is considered by Augustine as representative of life in this world, while Mary's foreshadows that in the world to come:

Ye see then, dearly Beloved, and, as I suppose, ye understand already, that in these two women, who were both well pleasing to the Lord, both objects of His love, both disciples; ye see...that in these two women the two lives are figured, the life present, and the life to come, the life of labour, and the life of quiet, the life of sorrow, and the life of blessedness, the life temporal, and the life eternal....What Martha was doing, that we are now; what Mary was doing, that we hope for. Let us do the first well, that we may have the second fully. (ibid., 430)

The example of Martha and Mary is used as an illustration in a number of other works not specifically concerned with the Gospel pericope: Sermons 169, 179, 255 and 352, De Trinitate I,20, De Bono Coniugali 8.8, Tractate in Ioannis 15.18, De Genesi ad Litteram 4.14 and Contra Duas Epistolas Pelagianorum 3.22. Again the major point made is that the form of service which Martha offers is necessary in this world, but will be superceded by a life of

contemplation, such as that anticipated by the actions of Mary, in the world to come. Both "lives" represented by the sisters from Bethany--the active and the contemplative--are worthy of praise, but they represent different stages of Christian growth. Compare Sermon 255:

In this time of our journeying we say 'Alleluia' for solace on our way, and now the 'Alleluia' is the song of the traveler for us; but we are advancing through a laborious path to a peaceful country where all our activities will be laid aside, and nothing will remain for us except the 'Alleluia.' Mary chose this most delightful part for herself: she remained at leisure; she continued to learn; she continued to praise. But Martha, her sister, was busy about many things. She was accomplishing what was, indeed, necessary, but not lasting; she was doing the work of the journey, but not that of her homeland; she was performing the task of the traveler, of one not yet in possession. In fact she, as hostess, had received the Lord and those who were with Him. Besides, the Lord had a body, and just as He deigned to assume a physical body for our sake, so He deigned to be hungry and thirsty. And, as a result of the fact that He deigned to be hungry and thirsty, He condescended to be fed by those whom He Himself enriched; He condescended to be received as a guest, not from need, but from favor. Therefore, Martha busied herself with what pertained to satisfying the needs of those who were hungry and thirsty; with solicitous activity she prepared what the Holy of Holies and His saints would eat and drink in her house. It was an important but transitory work. It will not always be necessary to eat and drink, will it? When we cleave to the most pure and perfect Goodness, there will be no reason for serving necessity. (Augustine, 1959, 349-350)

Mason points out, however, that while some passages in his works "might give the impression that St. Augustine regarded the vita contemplativa as the reward given only in eternity, and as something separate from vita activa, the temporal

struggle to earn it," numerous other passages suggest otherwise (Mason, 1961, 35). The contemplative life can begin on earth, although it will only reach full completion at the end of this world. It is the task of each individual to reconcile the demands of the active and the contemplative lives within him or herself.

The interpretation of Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604) grows out of that of Augustine. Gregory emphasizes the notion that the allegory is applicable on a personal as well as a cosmic level: progress towards, and to some extent, attainment of the goal is possible in the earthly life, and is not reserved for some future realm. For Gregory the active life involves the exercise of the moral virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, while the contemplative life focusses on the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity (Homilies on Ezechiel II, iv, 4). Like Augustine, Gregory believes that the active life is necessary in this world, an essential counterpart to the contemplative life. Indeed, it is possible to enter heaven by the pursuit of the active life alone. In the Moralia, or Exposition on the Book of Job, 6.57, he writes:

For the two lives, the active and the contemplative, when they be preserved in the soul, are accounted as two eyes in the face. Thus the right eye is the contemplative life, and the left the active life.... When thou are not qualified for the contemplative life by a fitting degree of discretion, keep more safely to the active alone, and when thou failest in that which thou choosest

as great, be content with that which thou heedest as very little, that if by the contemplative life thou art forced to fall from the knowledge of the truth, thou mayest by the active life alone be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven at least with one eye. (cited Mason, *ibid.*, 63)

Nevertheless, Gregory, like other commentators, sees the contemplative life as greater in merit than the active:

Every one that is perfect is first joined to an active life in productiveness, and afterwards united to a contemplative life in rest. For that the life of contemplation is less indeed in time, but greater in value than the active, we are shown by the words of the Holy Gospel, wherein two women are described to have acted in different ways. For Mary sat at our Redeemer's feet...but Martha eagerly prosecuted bodily services....Now Martha's concern is not reproved, but that of Mary is even commended. For the merits of the active are great, but of the contemplative, far better. (*Moralia*, 6.61; cited Mason, 1961, 64)

The ideal state is the union of the two lives, and for this Christ Himself sets the pattern:

He set forth in Himself patterns of both lives, that is, the active and the contemplative, united together. For the contemplative differs very much from the active. But our Redeemer by becoming Incarnate, while He gave a pattern of both, united both in Himself. For when He wrought miracles in the city, yet continued all night in prayer on the mountain, He gave His faithful ones an example not to neglect, through love of contemplation, the care of their neighbours; nor again to abandon contemplative pursuits through being too immoderately engaged in the care of their neighbours; but so to keep in together in the mind, in applying it to the two cases, that the love of their neighbour might not interfere with the love of God, nor again the love of God cast out, because it transcends, the love of their neighbour. (*Moralia*, 28.33; cited Mason, 1961, 66)

Thus, Gregory sees the two lives as complementary rather than in opposition, and ideally they exist simultaneously in the Christian striving for spiritual perfection.

The two broad avenues of interpretation outlined above --according to which the sisters from Bethany are seen as either representative of (a) alternative responses to God's Word, with Martha's role portrayed as the inferior one, or (b) progressive levels of spiritual development, with Martha's role considered inferior but necessary--dominated exegetical thought on the Mary-Martha pericope during most of the later Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. The Origins of the Martha Cult in the West

The origins and development of the cult of St. Martha in the Christian West are difficult to trace with certainty. The interest in Martha shown by the church fathers centred primarily on her symbolic role as the representative of the active life. A possible exception was a sermon attributed to Ambrose of Milan, in which Martha was identified with the woman healed of an issue of blood. In the sermon De Salomone, Christ's benevolence towards the family at Bethany is noted as follows: "Christus largum sanguinis xum siccat in Martha, daemones pellit ex Maria, corpus redivivi

spiritus calore constringit in Lazaro" [Christ dried up a copious flow of blood in Martha, expelled demons from Mary and reunited the body and life spirit in Lazarus] (cited Faillon, 1848, I, col. 180).<sup>7</sup> This identification of Martha with the woman with a hemorrhage, along with the attribution to Ambrose, appears in some later medieval "lives" of the saint, most notably the Legenda Aurea. However, it is not found in the earlier extant accounts, so may have been of late derivation. It is of interest that legends surrounding a tenth century St. Martha, abbess of Mombasia in Laconia, note that this St. Martha was miraculously cured of a debilitating hemorrhage after a vision of St. John the Evangelist (see Herrin, 1983, 180-181). It is possible that "Ambrose's" description of "Martha of Bethany's" healing was derived from that of this other St. Martha.

(a) Liturgical Developments:

Brief notations in numerous medieval martyrologies suggest that a feast day of St. Martha was celebrated on January 19 from the late sixth century onwards,<sup>8</sup> although few details as to the nature or extent of such celebrations are known. The first official reference to a feast day dedicated to Mary and Martha, the sisters from Bethany, appears in a manuscript of the martyrology of Jerome produced at Auxerre ca. 595 (see Saxer, 1959, 33). The fact

that the saints' names are found in the context of martyrologies--which generally list those who were persecuted and died for their faith--is unusual, since no extant lives of either saint suggest that she died a martyr's death. The designation is probably attributable to a copyist's error, a result of confusion between the names of the first-century Persian martyrs Marius and his wife Martha, and those of Mary (Maria) and Martha of Bethany (ibid., 38-39). Textual studies suggest that the Auxerre manuscript was widely copied, and that this probably inadvertent mistake was at least partially responsible for the spread of the cults of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Martha in the west in the later Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup>

The confusion regarding Martha's feast day is further compounded by the fact that certain martyrologies and early calendars also suggest that the saint, along with her brother Lazarus, was honoured on December 17.<sup>10</sup> The late ninth or early tenth century martyrology of Usuard records the entry as follows: Eodem die B. Lazari quem dominus Jesus in evangelio legitur resuscitasse a mortuis; item B. Marthae sororis ejus. Quorum venerabilem memoriam exstructa ecclesia non longe a Bethania ubi e vicino domus eorum fuit conservat [On the same day the Blessed Lazarus, whom the Lord Jesus raised from the dead, as it is written in the gospel; also the Blessed Martha his sister. A church was



built not far from Bethany near their home so that their venerable memory was preserved] (cited Leclercq, 1929, col. 2052). Opinion is divided, however, as to whether such references apply to anything more than local cults. On the one hand, the references to Bethany in works such as that of Usuard may serve only to identify the saints by indicating their original home and do not necessarily suggest the location of either their final resting place or the primary centre of their cults.<sup>11</sup> On the other, the references to Bethany, in particular the references to a memorial church located there, may imply the presumed presence of the saints' remains, and thus the major cult site. Other early works--the writings of the early fifth century church historian Sulpicius Severus and the late fourth century pilgrim Etheria (or Egeria)--mention Lazarus' tomb at Bethany, called the Lazarium (see Leclercq, 1929, col. 2051). However, the church at Lazarus' tomb was probably not built until the late fourth century; Eusebius and the Pilgrim of Bordeaux (ca. 333) refer only to a vault of Lazarus, but Jerome (ca. 390) reported a church on the site (see Wilkinson, 1971, 53). Egeria discusses in detail the Lenten celebrations held at the tomb of Lazarus (ibid., 127, 131-132). She refers as well to a church "on the spot where Lazarus' sister Mary met the Lord" (ibid., 131), but makes no specific mention of any celebrations of memorials in Bethany in honour of Martha.

The martyrology of Ado of Vienne (the Small Roman Martyrology) indicates an additional feast of "Martha the sister of Lazarus" on October 17. This may be due to a copyist's error, and should read December 17 (see Duchesne, I, 1907, 324). Nevertheless, the October 17 feast day is also noted in some other martyrologies derived from that of Ado, including the martyrology of Arles, compiled for the use of the church at Toulon in Provence (ibid., 336; Leclercq, 1929, VIII, 2047-2048).

According to the modern church calendar St. Martha's feast day is celebrated on July 29, the date of Martha's death according to the pseudo-Marcilia legend and the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae et Sororis Eius Sanctae Marthae. This date is found in manuscripts of the Roman martyrology from the thirteenth century onwards. The martyrology of Arles-Toulon noted above, which was compiled in its original version ca. 1120, includes a reference to a feast day of St. Martha on the "4th day from the calends of August" (i.e. July 29), but only in an addition which probably dates from the fifteenth century (see ibid., 2047). This suggests that the Martha legends were not circulating in Provence in the early twelfth century. Similarly, martyrologies produced at Arles and Avignon in Provence, and dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries respectively, note the July 29 feast

day only in marginal glosses dating from the thirteenth century (ibid., 2050-2051). Thus it can be concluded that the custom of commemorating Martha's death on July 29 arose sometime between the mid twelfth and mid thirteenth centuries, probably soon after the presumed discovery of her relics at Tarascon in 1187. There is documentation that the general chapter of Cîteaux, at the request of the bishops of Provence, approved the celebration of an office of St. Martha in the provinces of Arles, Aix and Narbonne in 1264. The feast day was generally held on July 29, although with some local variants, for example, the Franciscans fixed the celebration on July 20 in 1267, the Dominicans on July 27 in 1277, the Carthusians on July 30 (see Faillon, 1848, I, 1231-1233).

(b) The Provençal Cult

One of the most extensive accounts of the Martha cult is found in E.M. Faillon's Monuments Inédits sur l'Apostolat de Sainte Marie-Madeleine en Provence, written in 1848. Faillon, who claims to offer "proofs" of certain Provençal legends of the saints from Bethany and their companions, maintains that the tomb of St. Martha was probably venerated at Tarascon from the time of her death in the late first century (Faillon, I, 1848, col. 573). It was held in special renown after the late fifth or sixth century, when

Clovis I, a convert to Christianity who had heard of the miraculous powers of St. Martha's tomb, visited Tarascon and was himself healed of an internal disorder (ibid., col. 584). He subsequently accorded a privilege consisting of a parcel of surrounding lands to the church of St. Martha (ibid., col. 586). Although Faillon argues at length in support of his claims, they are for the most part unconvincing because of the nature of his documentation. He provides a facile explanation for the scarcity of evidence, suggesting that most was destroyed at the time of the Saracen invasions of Provence (ibid., col. 581-2). This claim is not supported by others. Leclercq, for example, denies that the scarcity of documentary evidence of an early cult is due to Saracen destruction, noting that in other areas invaded by the Saracens no conscious attempts were made to obliterate totally the evidence of local religious practices. In addition, surviving martyrologies written in the area of what is now southern France during the pre-invasion period make no mention of local cults of the saints from Bethany (see Leclercq, 1929, col. 2050). Likewise, John Cassian, who used the examples of Mary and Martha as "types" of the active and contemplative lives (see above, pp. 10-11), founded the monastery of St. Victor at Marseille around 400 A.D. but made no mention in his writings of the existence of cults of either saint in the area at that time.

Much of Faillon's documentation is archaeological. He admits that the original (alleged) tomb of St. Martha at Tarascon, which supposedly still contains Martha's relics, was concealed in 1653 within a marble enclosure adorned with a carving of the saint on her death bed (ibid., col. 574). A cast iron replica of the sarcophagus was placed in the church sanctuary, and it is this replica rather than the original tomb which Faillon describes in detail. However, it is unclear as to whether or not Faillon has seen even the replica first-hand. He notes that at the time he wrote his earlier book Monuments de l'Eglise de Sainte-Marthe he relied on "un dessin fort inexact" for his description of the tomb (ibid., col. 579). He does not indicate whether or not his later change of opinion regarding the theme of some of the carvings resulted from a personal visit to the gravesite. He writes: "Si la gravure publiée par Aringhi, et que nous avons reproduite d'après lui, rend fidèlement le sarcophage romain qu'elle représente, il faut conclure que [le sarcophage] de sainte Marthe est inférieure pour le style, et ressent bien...la décadence de l'art" (ibid., col. 581). This comment suggests that he may still have been working from secondary sources when writing in 1848. Faillon notes that the subjects represented on the tomb appear frequently in ancient Christian art: the miracle of the loaves and fishes, an orant, the miracle at Cana, the

denial of Peter, the resurrection of Lazarus. On the basis of his analysis of the sarcophagus imagery, he arrives at some questionable conclusions: "on devrait en conclure que le sarcophage de saint Marthe remonte vraisemblablement au temps de persecutions; au moins on ne peut nier qu'il soit antique, et qu'il ne prouve l'ancienne'é du culte de sainte Marthe à Tarascon" (ibid.). He does not elaborate as to why the presence of a relatively ancient Roman-style sarcophagus in Tarascon should suggest a connection with St. Martha, other than perhaps the implication of a possible affirmation of "tradition". Faillon, despite the fact that he lived in a more enlightened age, seems to fall victim to many of the same assumptions as his medieval predecessors! Because he hopes to "prove" the existence of an early cult of St. Martha in Tarascon, the discovery of an ancient tomb is assumed to be that of the saint in question, with little justification.

Many of Faillon's claims are based on similar convoluted arguments. He describes (again in detail) the ancient doorway of the church of St. Martha in Tarascon. He notes that it predates the construction of the present church, consecrated in 1197, ten years after the "discovery" of St. Martha's remains, citing a bull of Pope Urban II from 1096 which mentions a church of St. Martha (ibid., col. 1204). He is apparently unaware that even earlier

references to a "terra sancte Marthe" or "sancta Martha" at Tarascon appear in charters dating from 964 and 967 (Duchesne, 1907, 340; Leclercq, 1929, VIII, col. 2071). Faillon finds two of the images carved on the doorway to be of particular significance. One, a resurrection scene, is identified as the raising of Lazarus. However, this image was a common prototype of the resurrection of Christ in early Christian art, and would not necessarily imply a concrete connection with Lazarus of Bethany and his sisters. Faillon describes the second image as "Martha's victory over the dragon, commonly called the Tarasque" (ibid., col. 1207), and concludes: "Le portail de Sainte-Marthe que nous venons de décrire est donc un monument de la croyance des anciens habitants de Tarascon touchant la conversion de leurs pères à la foi par le ministère de sainte Marthe" (ibid., col. 1208). However, there are undoubtedly other possible explanations of the woman/dragon scene. Much of the imagery on the door is derived from the book of Revelation, for example, Christ enthroned in judgement and the symbolic representations of the four evangelists (as man, eagle, lion and ox). It is possible that the woman/beast symbolism is also derived from this source (see Revelation 12). The gates of hell were frequently represented by a devouring monster in the art of the medieval West, and the imagery may simply represent an allegorical interpretation of the victory of the Christian

church (Ecclesia, often represented by a woman) over the powers of evil. It is not certain when the legend of Martha and the dragon originated. The story of a monster subdued by a local saint at Tarascon may have predated the Martha cult and was later incorporated into her Life. In addition, even if Faillon's interpretation of the woman/beast imagery on the doorway is accepted, it is hardly "proof" of the existence of an early cult of Saint Martha, when the dating of the door itself is uncertain. Similar comments can be made regarding Faillon's claim that ancient municipal seals from Tarascon depicting Martha as preacher or Martha and the dragon "prove" an early cult, when, once again, the dating of the originals is not firmly established. In addition, Faillon's text suggests that he is aware of only "une empreinte" of the seals, and that he has not personally examined the seals themselves, if, in fact, the originals still existed, which he does not indicate (Faillon, 1848, I, cols. 1215-1218).

Many of the "facts" which Faillon presents do not hold up under scrutiny. The suggestion of a patronage relationship between the cult of St. Martha and Clovis I, although well documented in literature from the twelfth century and later, is questionable. The major source for historians on the life and reign of Clovis, King of the Franks from 481-511, is Gregory of Tours' History of the



Franks, written in the late sixth century (see Book II, chapters 27-43). Neither Gregory, or other contemporary sources, suggest that Clovis personally visited southern Provence; although the area was attacked by a joint force of Franks and Burgundians in 507, it was successfully defended by Theodoric the Great, the Ostrogothic king of Italy (see James, 1982, 23). Gregory's account suggests that it was to St. Martin of Tours that Clovis owed his allegiance (Gregory of Tours, 1974, 151-2, 154). Historians note that the cult of St. Martin gained prominence in greater Gaul only after St. Martin was adopted by the Merovingians as their patron saint following Clovis' conquest of Aquitaine in 507 (Stancliffe, 1983, 361; Geary, 1988, 141). However, Martin's cult scarcely infiltrated the Rhône watershed area in which Tarascon is located. In this area a "parallel but different form of monasticism, much more aristocratic in its associations, more carefully disciplined, and more directly related to the Eastern monastic tradition" developed (ibid., 143). Adherents of the two traditions were suspicious of one another, and thus it seems unlikely that Clovis, whose conversion to Christianity was probably motivated more by political than spiritual considerations (ibid., 84-86), would express allegiance to both Martin and Martha. Interestingly, even Faillon, the arch proponent of an early Martha cult in Provence, admits that some elements of the Martha legends may have been derived from those surrounding

St. Martin, just as some aspects of St. Mary Magdalene's legendary life were derived from that of St. Mary the Egyptian. In the Commentaire historique et critique included in his edition of the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdaleneae, Faillon notes the similarities between the descriptions of the two saints' funerals, and suggests that these may possibly be the result of the "r  semblance de nom entre Martin et Marthe" (Faillon, 1848, II, col. 339).

Faillon's suggestion that Martha's grave in Tarascon was a notable centre of healing and pilgrimage in the early Middle Ages is also open to question. While a settlement of some kind existed at Tarascon from the time of the Romans, it was not a centre of any size or importance until the eleventh century; it was only during a time of economic prosperity in the later twelfth century that the town began to flourish (Hebert, 1979, 8-9). The church of St. Martha which exists today was constructed after the "discovery" of the saint's relics in 1187. It was probably built on the site of an earlier church, possibly one dedicated to a St. Martha, but the identity of this earlier saint is unclear. In hagiographical literature confusion between saints with the same or similar names is common. Among the early church leaders of Provence, the early fifth century bishop Lazarus of Aix could easily have been confused in later centuries with Lazarus of Bethany, and likewise, saints

named Maximinus, Sidonius and Marcella--later claimed to be the companions of the saints from Bethany--were known to have existed in the early Middle Ages in southern Gaul (see Leclercq, 1929, cols. 2055-2061). Thus, confusion between St. Martha of Bethany and another similarly named saint is quite possible.

Despite Faillon's imaginative reconstruction, concrete evidence suggests that no cult of St. Martha of Bethany existed in Provence until the twelfth century, when one was "manufactured" by the monks of Tarascon in response to claims being put forth by rival monasteries. In the twelfth century it was generally accepted that Lazarus and Mary Magdalene had travelled to Provence. The former was honoured as the first bishop of Marseille, probably, as noted earlier, because of a confusion of names between Lazarus of Bethany and the fifth century Bishop Lazarus of Aix. Mary Magdalene's cult had been centred at Vézelay, in the diocese of Autun, from the time of the Cluniac monk Abbot Geoffrey in the early eleventh century. According to legend, however, her body had been brought to Burgundy from Provence to avoid the ravages of the Saracens. Later, in the thirteenth century, both St. Maximin near Aix and Sainte-Baume laid claim to the possession of the "true" relics of the saint.<sup>12</sup> The inhabitants of Tarascon concluded that Martha probably accompanied her siblings to

Provence, although no other town had "laid claim" to her relics. The fact that Tarascon already possessed a church dedicated to a St. Martha reinforced their own cause: a search was undertaken, and in 1187 the body of "Martha of Bethany" was discovered.

### (c) The Medieval Legends

As the preceding discussion suggests, the legendary life of St. Martha is closely related to that of Mary Magdalene. When Martha is mentioned in the Scriptures, she always appears in the company of her sister, and the two are portrayed as contrasting figures. This in turn led to their roles in exegetical literature as representative of the active and the contemplative lives. The linking of the names of Martha and Mary in early medieval martyrologies led to the joint celebration of their feast day in the west, from the sixth century onwards, and in medieval hagiographical tradition the two continued to be closely connected.

The legends of Mary Magdalene are many and varied. A body of legend which was widely accepted in the east connected the saint with the city of Ephesus. In the mid-sixth century, Gregory of Tours wrote in his De Gloria Martyrum (1.30) that Mary Magdalene was buried in that city.

Her tomb was reputedly next to the Cave of the Seven Sleepers. By the seventh century she was honoured at Ephesus on July 22, the supposed date of her death (see Saxer, 1958, 8-11). Modestus, Patriarch of Jerusalem (630-634) recorded that she had gone to Ephesus to join the apostle John after the death of the Virgin (see Foss, 1979, 33). Other traditions suggest that the Magdalene accompanied John to Ephesus. These accounts of her arrival may have originated in the Acts of John, a second or third century apocryphal work which was widely copied in subsequent centuries, and of which only fragments are extant today (see Malvern, 1975, 74-75). The Byzantine emperor Leo VI translated the supposed relics of Mary Magdalene from Ephesus to Constantinople in the late ninth century.

An alternate legend, which had relatively little influence, maintained that Mary Magdalene spent her final days in Palestine, where she remained after the ascension of Christ. After her death she was buried near Jerusalem. Her relics were later transferred to France. The earliest supporting documentation regarding this account of Mary Magdalene's later years is found in the Gesta episcoporum camaracensis, written in the mid-ninth century by Baudric of Cambrai in support of claims by the Abbey of Vézelay that it possessed the Magdalene's true remains (see Saxer, 1958, 19-22).

The most influential Magdalene legends in the West in the later Middle Ages connected the saint with the south of France. According to one account, Mary Magdalene, Mary Jacobi and Mary Salome became the companions of the apostle James, son of Zebedee, following Christ's ascension. Despite Paul's announcement in Romans 15:20-24 that he planned to visit regions "where Christ was not known"--including Spain--the tradition arose that James had previously evangelized Spain sometime between the ascension and his martyrdom at the hands of Herod (Acts 12:1-2), probably around 42 A.D.<sup>13</sup> This legend was later expanded, probably in the twelfth century: after James' death, the three Marys were said to have sailed to Gaul with Martha, Lazarus and others, bringing with them the bones of the Holy Innocents and the head of James. Mary Jacobi and Mary Salome disembarked at the site of what is now the town of Saintes-Marie-de-la-Mer in the Camargues region near the mouth of the Rhône. Their relics were "discovered" there in 1423 (see Leclercq, 1932, cols. 2119-2120).

The "standard" Magdalene legend in the West after the twelfth century was the Provençal version. It is summarized in Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda Aurea, which was widely circulated (see Jacobus de Voragine, 1969, 355-364). Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus, Marcella, Maximinus and various

other companions (depending on the particular variant of the legend) were said to have been put to sea in a rudderless boat which eventually reached Marseille. They immediately began to evangelize the region. Among Mary Magdalene's converts was the prince of Marseille, and through her intercession she obtained a son for him. Later she miraculously saved the child and his mother after a storm at sea. Mary eventually withdrew to the wilderness of Sainte-Baume, where she lived a life of austerity and contemplation for thirty years, being daily fed by angels. The latter half of the legend, focussing on the Magdalene's life as a hermit, arose as a result of the grafting into her "biography" elements from that of the fourth century saint Mary of Egypt, one of the solitary eastern ascetics who practised extreme forms of self-discipline as a means of gaining spiritual insight.

A comparison of the legends concerning the activities of Saints Mary and Martha in Provence reveals a number of similarities. In her study of the medieval iconography of Mary Magdalene, Sister Magdalen LaRow has described the evolution of the Magdalene legend as a "textbook example" of hagiographic development:

The process by which Mary Magdalen's legend evolved was typical of medieval hagiography and the end-product was a "composite saint". Much hagiographic literature possesses certain common characteristics, i.e. confusion and consequent identification of very different persons because

of a similarity of name, a borrowing of incidents of one saint's life and ascribing it to another and an ease in adapting or overlooking chronological and geographic difficulties. All of these characteristics are present in the evolution of Mary Magdalen's fully developed legend. (LaRow, 1982, xxvi-xxvii)

The same can be said of Martha's legend. As noted earlier, Martha's church at Tarascon may have been dedicated originally to a local "St. Martha", and the dragon-slaying episode was probably also based on local tradition. Several incidents, such as the account of her funeral and the visit of King Clovis, suggest a confusion between saints Martha and Martin (of Tours). Anachronisms in the Martha texts include the coexistence of Biblical saints and those who actually lived much later, such as the mid-fourth century Bishop Fronto of Périgueux, and geographic anomalies such as Fronto's simultaneous appearances in both Burgundy and Provence. In terms of basic content, the legends of Martha and Mary Magdalene also show many similarities. Both women are described as preacher/evangelists in southern France, Martha at Tarascon and Mary at Marseille. Both perform miracles, including the raising of the dead. Both live an austere life, Martha in the wilderness at Tarascon and Mary at Sainte-Baume, although Mary Magdalene's Life follows more closely the "typical" pattern of the "holy hermit" legends: she spends the last thirty years of her life alone in a grotto, meditating on the divine and attended by angels. Towards the end of her life she receives a holy visitor, who



witnesses her daily ascent to the heavenly realm, completes the arrangements for her burial, and goes out to inform the world of the saint's activity. In Martha's case, the withdrawal from worldly contact is not complete. She lives alone in the wilderness for seven years, but subsequently a religious community grows up around her. However, the description of her austere life at Tarascon is modelled on the experience of the desert ascetics; for example, she wears rough clothing, sleeps on the ground, eats only once a day and then only roots and berries, and devotes herself to prayer and contemplation of the divine. As noted earlier, the influence of the eastern monastic tradition was particularly strong in the area of southern France after the time of John Cassian. Both Martha and Mary Magdalene predict their own deaths, which occur one week apart. Both are buried under miraculous circumstances in which Bishop Maximinus of Aix plays an important role. Mary Magdalene is transported by angels to the bishop's oratory on the day of her death; after he administers the eucharist, she falls lifeless. Maximinus then takes charge of her funeral and buries her himself. Martha sends a request through St. Maximinus asking that her sister visit her, but this is not accomplished until Martha is on her deathbed, a week after the Magdalene's death. Then, as the Vita Pseudo-Marcilia proclaims, "the one led the other into paradise" (see translation below). At Martha's funeral, Bishop Fronto is

miraculously transported from Périgueux to assist Christ with the burial rites. Subsequent to their deaths, both saints continue to effect miracles.

Because of the close connections between Mary and Martha, some accounts of the lives of the two saints are "double" lives, e.g. the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdaleneae et Sororis Ejus Sanctae Marthae. In other cases, especially in collections of saints' lives, common details are discussed in the life of one saint but not in the other; for example, in the Legenda Aurea most of the biblical references to the two sisters are included in the life of Mary Magdalene but omitted from that of Martha.

### 3. The Major Medieval Latin Legends

The details of Martha's life are preserved in four major Latin documents, probably dating from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

#### (a) Vita Pseudo-Marcilia

Probably the earliest of the major medieval versions of Martha's life is that entered in the Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina under the title "Vita Auct. Pseudo-Marcilia, Interprete Pseudo-Syntycha" (BHL 5545-5547). It

is attributed in the text to Martha's maidservant Marcilia (Marcella), who composed it in Hebrew, and later it was said to have been translated into Latin by Syntyche (Sinticus or Syntex). The latter name appears in the New Testament in Philippians 4:2, where Paul admonishes Syntyche and Euodia to resolve their differences. The BHL lists two major sources, the Sanctuarium of Boninus Mombritius, a collection of saints' legends compiled in 1480, and the Catalogus codicum latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae, published in Florence by A.M. Bandini in 1774. The Life of Martha composed by "pseudo-Marcilia" was probably used by both the compiler of the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae and by Vincent of Beauvais in his Speculum Historiale (see Mycoff, 1985, 19, 62-71).

The "pseudo-Marcilia" text consists of thirteen chapters. The introduction provides background on Martha's family and her character, and notes that Jesus was often received into her home. Chapter two describes and comments upon the scene described in Luke 10:38-42, where Martha busies herself with serving Jesus and his companions while her sister Mary sits attentively at Christ's feet. Chapter three is derived from the biblical account of the raising of Lazarus in John 11. It concludes with a discussion of the roles of Mary and Martha as "types" of the active and contemplative lives. The remaining chapters describe

Martha's life after the ascension of Christ. Chapter four includes some material drawn from the book of Acts, namely the facts that the believers had all things in common (4:2), and that as a result of the persecution of the Christian believers by the Jews, the apostle James was killed and Peter and others taken into custody (12:1-3). However, the chapter moves quickly away from the biblical sources and discusses the division of the land of Gaul among the various bishops who were exiled there. Chapter five describes the arrival of Martha, Mary Magdalene and St. Maximinus in Marseille and their success in evangelizing the region. To this point, only material common to both the Martha and Mary Magdalene legends is considered, but the remainder of the work is concerned specifically with the life of Martha. Chapter six describes a miracle of St. Martha, the conquering of the fierce dragon which had plagued the region around Tarascon. Chapter seven reveals how Martha decided to remain in Tarascon after the death of the dragon, and the austerity of her life there. Chapter eight describes another of the saint's miracles, namely the raising of a young man who drowned while attempting to swim across the Rhône to hear her preaching. The chapter concludes with an account of the visits of Bishops Maximinus of Aix, Trophimus of Arles and Eutropius of Orange, who consecrated Martha's church. At the banquet which followed, another miracle occurred: water was turned into wine. Before the

bishops left, Maximinus informed Martha that her sister Mary would visit her. A short time later, during a time of persecution, two other bishops, St. Fronton of Périgueux and St. Georgius of Velay, sought refuge with Martha. Before they returned to their own homes, Martha asked St. Fronton to return to bury her. Chapters nine and ten describe Martha's death, which was revealed to her a year in advance. All this time she suffered from fevers. On the eighth day before her death, Martha had a vision of angelic choirs carrying the soul of her sister Mary to heaven. During the night of the day before her death, those keeping watch over Martha fell into a deep sleep, and all the lights in her home were extinguished. Evil spirits gathered around the saint. Her loud prayers aroused the sleepers, who left to seek out fire for the lamps. While they were gone, Mary Magdalene appeared before Martha and rekindled the lights, then the Lord himself came to offer consolation. They disappeared when her companions returned. When the day of her death arrived, Martha was carried outside. She asked that the account of the Lord's passion be read to her, and at the words: "Father, into your hand I commend my spirit," she died. For three days a vigil was carried out over her body. Chapter eleven describes Martha's funeral, which was conducted by the Lord and Bishop Fronton, who was miraculously transported to her church from his own at Périgueux. Chapters twelve and thirteen discuss some of the

miracles which took place at the tomb of Martha, including the healing of Clovis, king of the Franks and Teutons, and the punishment of all kinds of misdeeds. The legend concludes with a discussion of the fates of Martha's close companions at Tarascon.

In addition to the legend as outlined above, Mombricitus records an alternative ending (BHL 5547), which contains material not found in other versions. It begins with a description of the bishops who came to Tarascon and dedicated her church. At the banquet following water was converted into wine. Through St. Maximin, Mary Magdalene conveyed a message to Martha, promising that she would visit her. Next comes a garbled passage in which a number of bishops, along with many others, are described as having come together near the city of Arles, in the cemetery of a church built by the bishop of Arles, St. Trophimus. The Saviour appeared and instructed them. After his departure, the disciples present built an altar in the place where the Lord had stood. Subsequently Trophimus was buried there.

(b) Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae et Sororis Eius  
Sanctae Marthae

The longest and most complete medieval account of Martha's life is that known as the Vita Beatae Mariae

Magdalenae et Sororis Eius Sanctae Marthae (VBMM), which is entered in the Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina as no. 5508. It is this work which Faillon cites as the primary authority in support of his claims regarding an early cult of St. Martha in Provence. He argues that it is an authentic work written in the early ninth century by Rabanus Maurus, abbot of Fulda and later Archbishop of Mainz (Faillon, 1848, II, cols. 8-56). Faillon was aware of only one manuscript of the work, that found in Magdalen College, Oxford, which attributes authorship to Rabanus. Subsequently a number of other manuscripts have been discovered, the earliest of which date from the later twelfth century and none of which cite Rabanus as author (see Saxer, 1953, 411-413). Most modern scholars deny both Faillon's attribution and his dating. The earliest extant manuscripts were found in the library of Clairvaux, in collections known to have been compiled by monks there. Other manuscripts found in English collections are also included among works of Cistercian origin. In addition, many of the religious themes also suggest that the VBMM was composed in Clairvaux; there are at certain points direct verbal echoes between the hagiographical text and some of the sermons of St. Bernard (ibid., 415-420). The VBMM was thus most likely compiled in the mid to late twelfth century by a follower of St. Bernard. Victor Saxer, who has done extensive research on the Magdalene cult, has suggested that the work was compiled

by Nicolas of Clairvaux, the author of a sermon on Mary Magdalene, although he admits that authorship cannot be proven (ibid., 413-421).

Chapter 1 of the VBMM describes the characters of Martha and Mary, while chapter 2 elaborates upon their lineage and inheritance. The following chapters up to chapter 33 are concerned primarily with the life of Christ until the time of His resurrection, and the ways in which the lives of the two sisters from Bethany interacted with His. In chapter 5, Martha is said to have been linked by ties of blood and friendship with Simon the Pharisee. Chapter 9 discusses a number of Jesus' miracles, including that of the healing of the woman with an issue of blood; she is said to have been named Martha but is not identified with Martha of Bethany. Chapter 10 is based on the biblical account of the feast where Martha served and Mary listened to Jesus' teachings (Luke 10:38-40). In chapter 11, in the context of a discussion of Jesus' teachings, it is noted that Martha's maidservant Marcella was the woman who cried out from the crowd "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked." Chapters 13-16 are derived from the biblical account of the raising of Lazarus. Chapter 17 describes the conspiracy of the Jews against Jesus and the incident in the house of Simon the Leper where Martha served and Mary anointed the Saviour's feet (John



12:1-8). Chapters 19-30 are concerned with the events of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, in which Mary Magdalene played a prominent role. No mention is made of Martha's participation. Chapter 31 describes Christ's ascension, and Martha and Mary Magdalene are among those present. Martha is not mentioned again until chapter 34, where she is noted as one of the women who sold all she had and laid it at the feet of the apostles, and who subsequently served the apostles of Christ. The disciples frequently recalled both Mary's and Martha's devotion to the Saviour, and they resolved to dedicate the home of the family at Bethany as a house of prayer (chapter 35).

As a result of persecution by the Jews, Christ's followers dispersed. The activities of the twelve apostles and the elders appointed to the regions of Gaul and Spain are described; Mary Magdalene united herself with St. Maximinus, and Martha and her servant Marcella were among those who accompanied them (chapter 36). They travelled from Asia Minor to Gaul, where bishops were assigned to the various cities (chapter 37). Martha and Mary Magdalene were greatly skilled as evangelists and miracle workers (chapter 39).

With the exception of chapter 45, which describes the death of Mary Magdalene, and chapter 50, which notes the

passing of St. Maximinus, the remainder of the work focuses specifically on St. Martha. She conquered the dragon at Tarascon (chapter 40), and subsequently lived an austere life there (chapter 41). Among her miracles was the raising of the boy who drowned when crossing the Rhône to listen to her preaching (chapter 42). Bishops Maximinus, Trophimus and Eutropius visited Martha at Tarascon and dedicated her church there; at the banquet following, water was converted into wine (chapter 43). When persecuted in their own cities, Bishops Fronto and Georgius took refuge with Martha at Tarascon, and before their departure she asked St. Fronto to return the next year to bury her; Martha then informed her companions of her impending death and for an entire year she suffered from fevers (chapter 44).

On the eighth day before her death Martha heard angelic choirs carrying her sister's body to heaven; as reports of Martha's approaching death spread, great crowds of believers gathered (chapter 46). On the seventh day following Mary Magdalene's death, a deep sleep fell upon those keeping watch over Martha. A violent gust of wind extinguished the lamps in her home. Her attendants awoke, then left to find fire. While they were gone, Mary Magdalene appeared with a torch and relit the lamps. Jesus Christ also appeared to comfort Martha. After the two disappeared, a strange light remained in the room (chapter 47). As dawn approached,

Martha asked to be carried outside. The account of the Lord's passion was read to her, and at the words "Into your hand I commend my spirit," Martha died. A vigil was kept for three days until her funeral. (chapter 48) On the sabbath day Bishop Fronto, who was conducting mass at his church in Périgueux, was summoned to Tarascon by Christ and miraculously transported there to assist with Martha's funeral service and burial. Chapter 49 concludes with an account of the activities of Martha's close followers after her death, and a brief description of some of the miracles which took place at the saint's tomb, including the healing of King Clovis.

(c) Vincent of Beauvais, Speculum Historiale

Vincent of Beauvais' account of the lives of Martha and Mary Magdalene appears in the historical section of his Speculum Maius, which has been described as "the greatest of the mediaeval encyclopedias...no other work of such scope was undertaken until the eighteenth century, when Diderot and his confreres, Frenchmen like their predecessor, produced their celebrated Encyclopédie" (Ullman, 1933, 313). Vincent was born about 1190 and became a Dominican at Paris before 1220; he died in Beauvais, which may have also been his birthplace, around 1264. The Speculum Historiale, which summarized the course of world history from the time of Adam

and Eve, was probably essentially complete by 1244 (ibid., 312-313). Approximately 380 of the 900 chapters of the Historiale were devoted to the lives of the saints (ibid., 322). The account of Martha's life is spread over several chapters, and interspersed with material from the life of Mary Magdalene. In the 1624 Douai version of the text, Martha material is found in chapters 92, 94, 99-101, and 104-107.<sup>14</sup>

Chapter 92 provides background details of Martha's lineage and character. It is recorded that the Lord was among the guests who frequented her home. One of the occasions described is that recorded in Luke 10:38-42, when Martha served the meal and Mary sat attentively at Jesus' feet. The Lord gratefully received and approved Martha's form of service, and because of His love for her, He raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. Aside from some brief references to Acts in chapter 94--namely, that after the ascension of Christ the believers had all things in common and that the Christians were persecuted by the Jews--the narrative moves quickly away from the biblical material into that of the Provençal legend. A number of believers were sent into exile in a rudderless boat, and through divine intervention, they were rewarded with great possessions in other lands. The fourteen bishops of Gaul are named, with their appointed cities, and it is noted that Martha and Mary

Magdalene accompanied St. Maximinus to the city of Marseille.

The remaining chapters deal specifically with incidents from the life of St. Martha. Chapter 99 describes the conquering of the dragon at Tarascon. Subsequently the saint remained in Tarascon, where she led an austere life. In time a religious community grew up around her and a great basilica was built in honour of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Through Martha's efforts, many thousands of people in the region were converted to the Christian faith (chapter 100). Chapter 101 discusses two additional miracles of St. Martha, the raising of the young man from the dead and the conversion of water into wine, at the banquet following the consecration of her church by Bishops Maximinus of Aix, Trophimus of Arles and Eutropius of Orange. The circumstances surrounding Martha's death are described in chapters 104 and 105. It is noted that Mary Magdalene conveyed a message through St. Maximinus that she would visit Martha. Soon after, St. Fronto of Périgueux and St. Georgius of Velay took refuge with Martha during a time of persecution. Before they left, Martha sought confession from St. Fronto, and after informing him of her approaching death, asked that he return to bury her. Martha's death was revealed to her one year in advance, and during all that time she suffered from fevers. On the eighth day before her

death she heard angelic choirs bearing the soul of her sister to heaven. Eight days later Martha weakened. She set her affairs in order, then asked her companions to keep vigil. In the middle of the night of the day before her death, those who stood watch were overcome by a deep sleep. A violent gust of wind extinguished all the lamps in the house, and Martha saw a crowd of evil spirits pressing down around her. Her loud prayers awoke her companions, who left to seek a fire. While they were gone, Mary Magdalene appeared with a torch and rekindled the lights. Then Jesus Christ Himself appeared, offering Martha words of comfort. When those who had gone out returned, they were amazed to see the lamps relit. Martha asked to be carried outside; the Lord's passion was read aloud to her, and at the words "Father, into your hand I commend my spirit," Martha died.

Martha's funeral is described in Chapter 106. For three days great crowds kept vigil around her body. On the sabbath day, Bishop Fronto was celebrating mass at his church in Périgueux when he fell soundly asleep and was miraculously transported to Tarascon. There he and Christ conducted Martha's funeral service and placed her body in the tomb. Subsequently many miracles took place at Martha's gravesite, including the healing of Clovis, King of the Franks and Teutons (chapter 107). The section concludes by noting the fates of Martha's close companions at Tarascon

after her death. Of particular interest is the first person reference to Syntex, who transcribed the account of Martha's life into Latin, confirming that Vincent was heavily dependent upon the pseudo-Marcilia version of the legend in the compilation of his text.

(d) Jacobus de Voragine, Legenda Aurea

The most concise medieval account of St. Martha's life is that included in the Golden Legend. Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda Aurea was the most influential compendium of hagiographical material produced in the later Middle Ages. Over 700 manuscripts and 173 early printed editions survive, including translations into every major western language (Mycoff, 1985, 55; see Seybolt, 1946, 327-338 for a bibliography of early printed editions). Jacobus was born in 1228 or 1229, and entered a convent in Genoa around 1244. From 1267 to 1278 and from 1281 to 1285 he was prior of the Dominican province of Lombardy. He became Archbishop of Genoa in 1292, and died in 1298 (Hamer, 1978, 11). The Legenda Aurea was begun sometime after 1244, and probably completed by 1267. It was originally called Legenda Sanctorum, but by the end of the thirteenth century its popularity was such that it was commonly known by the laudatory title "Golden Legend" (Mycoff, 1985, 56). The Martha material appears in chapter 105 of the standard

modern edition of the text, published by T. Graesse in 1846. The life of the saint found in the Legenda Aurea is an abbreviated version of that recorded in the Vita pseudo-Marcilia and the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae, and deals only with her life in the years following Christ's ascension (the Provençal legends). However, as noted earlier, the biblical material concerning Martha is summarized in the Legenda Aurea in the chapter on Mary Magdalene.

Martha's lineage and inheritance are briefly noted, as is the fact that she ministered to the Lord. After Christ's ascension Martha accompanied her siblings, Mary Magdalene and Lazarus, St. Maximinus and many others to Marseille. From there they went to the region of Aix, where they won many converts to faith in Christ. The episode of the subduing of the dragon is described in some detail. Subsequently, Martha remained at Tarascon, where she lived an austere life. A religious community grew up around her. Among the miracles she performed was the raising of the young man who drowned while swimming across the Rhône to listen to her preaching. Reference is made to the woman healed of a hemorrhage by Christ, and Jacobus cites Ambrose' identification of this woman with Martha of Bethany. It is noted that Martha was informed by the Lord of her death a year in advance, and for the whole time she suffered from fevers. On the eighth day before her death



she heard angelic choirs bearing her sister's soul to heaven. In the middle of that night those keeping watch over her fell asleep. A great gust of wind extinguished the lamps, and a crowd of evil spirits gathered around Martha. When she cried out, her sister approached and relit the lamps, and then Christ himself appeared. As the hour of her death approached, Martha was carried outside. She asked that the Passion according to St. Luke be read to her, and at the words, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit," Martha died. The following day, which was Sunday, St. Fronto was celebrating mass at Périgueux when he fell soundly asleep. Christ came and summoned him to Tarascon, where the two led the funeral service and buried Martha. Subsequently many miracles took place at her tomb, including the healing of Clovis, king of the Franks. This life of Martha is attributed to Martha's maidservant Martilla, who later went to Sclavonia, where she died ten years later.

#### 4. The Relationship Between the Texts

Of the four extant texts of the medieval Martha legend, three appear to be closely related. Vincent of Beauvais confirms his indebtedness to the pseudo-Marcilia version by neglecting to change the first person reference to "I, Synthex," who transcribed into Latin the life of Martha written by Marcella in Hebrew. The Legenda Aurea also

notes that Marcella was the author of the work. The Legenda Aurea, although a much abbreviated account, contains a number of verbal echoes of the pseudo-Marcilia/Vincent texts. On the other hand, the most extensive account of Martha's life, the VBMM, differs significantly in a number of respects from the others, although certain passages contain verbal echoes. Mycoff's studies of the Magdalene legends concluded that "there is no evidence that Vincent of Beauvais knew VBMM directly, but much that suggests that Speculum Historiale and VBMM shared a few common sources" (Mycoff, 1985, 64). One of these sources was probably the pseudo-Marcilia life of Martha.

The author of the pseudo-Marcilia text is interested not only in preserving the "biographical" details of Martha's life, but in commenting upon her significance. Of particular interest is the identification of Martha as a "type" of the Christian church in the introductory passage. This association is unusual. As noted earlier, the writings of the church fathers regarding Martha generally considered her a type of the active life, and place her in apposition to her sister Mary, who symbolized the contemplative life. The pseudo-Marcilia author also refers to this traditional association (section two "How Christ received shelter," "section three, "How Lazarus was raised," concluding section, "On the vengeance of God in this place"). Origen,

however, had suggested in his homily on Luke 10:38-42 that the two sisters could be seen as representative of several contrasting concepts, including the Christian church and the Jewish synagogue (see above pp. 9-10). In Origen's thought it was Mary who typified the Church, but more commonly in the Middle Ages, it was the Virgin Mary who was considered the type of the Church (see Semmelroth, 1963; Warner, 1985, especially chapter 7; Seiferth, 1970, especially pp. 136-140). The author of the pseudo-Marcilia text, while maintaining that he or she wishes to forgo discussion of Martha as a type in the introductory statements, nevertheless does present some indications later in the text as to how and why Martha can be considered as representative of the Christian church.

(a) Martha's family background and character

All four accounts of Martha's life begin with an outline of her background and character. The language and content of the pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent texts are similar, with a number of direct parallels (see Chapter 5 for a comparison of the pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and Legenda Aurea texts in chart form). The Legenda Aurea is similar in content, but greatly abbreviated. VBMM, on the other hand, contains some details in common with the others but also notable differences: Martha's father is named Theophilus

rather than Syrus, and the towns possessed by Martha and her siblings are recorded as "Bethany in Judaea, Magdala in Galilee, a second Bethany in Galilee, and a large part of the city of Jerusalem" rather than "Magdala, Bethany, and part of the city of Jerusalem".

(b) Martha's life prior to Christ's ascension

- (i) Links with the woman healed of a hemorrhage (cf. Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48)

As noted earlier, a sermon attributed to Ambrose of Milan, but which may have been of much later origin, identified Martha of Bethany with the woman healed of an issue of blood (see p. 11). This identification is cited by Jacobus de Voragine in the Legenda Aurea, where the statue supposedly erected by the woman is also discussed at some length. This passage is not found in either the pseudo-Marcilia life or Vincent of Beauvais. The VBMM (chapter 9) refers to the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage and names her "Martha" but does not identify her with Martha of Bethany.

- (ii) Jesus' visit to the home of Mary and Martha, when Martha serves and Mary listens to his teachings (cf. Luke 10:38-42)

In the account of Jesus' visit to Martha's home recorded in the Gospels in Luke 10:38-42, the author of the pseudo-Marcilia text is concerned with more than simply describing the event. The text is expanded through the addition of a commentary which compares Martha's hospitality with that of "Abraham, Lot, Joshua and many others" who "had pleased God and likewise welcomed angels as guests". This passage amplifies the author's assertion that Martha was a "type" of the Christian church. In both the Old and New Testaments, Abraham is presented as the prototype of the faithful believer, the elect of God (see, for example, Romans 4:13-25, Galatians 3:6-9). Likewise Lot was the righteous one rescued by God from the midst of sin and idolatry (II Peter 2:6-10). Joshua, the faithful leader who brought the people to the promised land and exhorted them to serve God alone, provided a further prototype of the role of the Church. The author continues with reference to St. Peter. In Isaiah 51:1-2, Abraham is described as "the rock from which God's people were hewn, the quarry from which they were dug"; likewise Peter was described by Christ as the rock on which he would build his church (Matthew 16:18). Mention of Peter also brings to mind Peter's

confession of faith in Luke 9:20, which was echoed by that of Martha in John 11:27. Thus Abraham, Peter and Martha are linked and presented as progenitors of the Church.

Vincent of Beauvais, who does not share the pseudo-Marcilia author's interest in portraying Martha as a type of the Church, omits much of the textual commentary on the passage, although some passages are copied almost verbatim (for example, "she welcomed this great Guest who is welcomed by angels and men...she fed him who feeds all creatures... this great King and Lord, who alone encloses all in the palm of His hand...whom many prophets and kings wish to see and do not see, to hear and do not hear," etc.). Dialogue in both texts is taken directly from the Biblical account. The pseudo-Marcilia author concludes by elaborating upon the significance of Martha's action, in a passage where the traditional association of Martha and Mary as prototypes of the active and the contemplative lives is made.

The Legenda Aurea restricts its account of Christ's visit to Bethany to a single sentence which notes that Martha wished that her sister, and the whole world, would minister to the Lord. However, as noted earlier, most of the events of Martha's life which are derived from Biblical sources are incorporated into the Legenda Aurea in the life of Mary Magdalene.

The account of the meal at Bethany found in the VBMM is based closely on the Biblical account, although it adds that not only were the twelve apostles present, but the seventy-two disciples and the many noble women of Christ's entourage. It is also recorded that Martha was assisted in serving by Marcella, the governess of her house, Susanna and Joanna, wife of the governor of Antipas and table steward of the tetrarch of Galilee.

(iii) The death and raising of Lazarus (cf. John 11:1-44)

In the chapter dealing with events surrounding the death of Lazarus, the pseudo-Marcilia text cites selectively from the Biblical text found in John 11, namely the passages in which Martha confesses her faith, and provides extensive commentary. Martha, whom the author considers a type of the Christian church, is praised for her adherence to the basic tenets of Christian doctrine: belief in the Trinity and in the resurrection of the dead. She is again compared to Peter and Abraham, who likewise confessed faith in the triune God, and also to Job, whose faith in God was sustained by the hope of future resurrection. Most significantly, Martha is compared to the Virgin Mary, the most common medieval prototype of the Church: the former received Christ into her home just as the latter did in her

womb (although it is noted that Mary's worth exceeded that of all other women). Because of her belief in the faith of the prophets and the confession of the apostles, and her good works, Martha shared in the kingdom of heaven, and her home became the birthplace of the holy church. She and her sister Mary, as representatives of the active and contemplative lives, became role models for later believers.

Neither Vincent of Beauvais nor Jacobus de Voragine exhibit particular interest in the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. Vincent merely notes that it took place, in a brief passage copied almost verbatim from pseudo-Marcilia. The Legenda Aurea ignores it altogether in the Martha legend and mentions it only in passing in the Mary Magdalene life. The author of the VBMM, on the other hand, devotes four chapters (13-17) to the incident. Unlike the pseudo-Marcilia text, which provides what is primarily exegetical commentary, the VBMM is for the most part a "story teller's" account, which amplifies the Biblical text by expanding the narrative. There are occasional verbal echoes of the pseudo-Marcilia text, for example, "O happy and praiseworthy generation! For He who is truth says, 'I love those who love me,' yet rarely in the Scriptures are the faithful whom God loves mentioned especially by name."



These suggest that the author may have been familiar with the pseudo-Marcilia text.

(c) Martha's life following Christ's ascension

(i) The dispersion of the apostles

The pseudo-Marcilia text moves quickly from the Biblical account of the hospitality offered Christ following the raising of Lazarus to a discussion of the actions of Christ's followers after His ascension, omitting any reference to His passion and death. The pseudo-Marcilia description of the division of Martha's resources, the persecution of the apostles and their subsequent dispersion is followed closely by Vincent. Slight differences in the names of some bishops assigned to the cities of Gaul are probably due to transmission errors; for example, Urcissinus in pseudo-Marcilia is replaced by Austregisulus in Vincent, Gracianus in pseudo-Marcilia becomes Cratianus in Vincent, Ferrucius in pseudo-Marcilia becomes Ferrutionus in Vincent. Unlike the pseudo-Marcilia author, Vincent does not include a discussion of the powers which the holy bishops continued to exhibit after their deaths, namely, the healing of various illnesses and the forgiveness of sins. The pseudo-Marcilia author also provides additional commentary, returning to the example of Abraham and comparing his

journey to the promised land with the dispersion of the apostles. Christ himself journeyed from the bosom of his Father into the Virgin's womb, from there into the world and the grave, and finally he returned to heaven. Likewise each Christian believer must pass through the world, enter into the grave, and ultimately rise up to be reunited with God in paradise. Both pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent describe Martha's association with St. Maximinus and her voyage to Marseille, in passages displaying close verbal echoes. Pseudo-Marcilia expands the narrative by describing the success of Martha, Mary and Maximinus in converting the people of the territory of Aix.

The Legenda Aurea briefly summarizes the events described by pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent, noting how Martha and her family, St. Maximinus and many others were sent away from Palestine in a rudderless boat. Under the Lord's guidance they reached Marseille and subsequently converted the people of Aix.

The VBMM displays some similarities in content with pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent, but includes much additional material and some discrepancies. The events of Christ's passion and ascension are described at length (chapters 19-34). Chapter 35 notes how the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus at Bethany was dedicated as an oratory in their

honour after Christ's ascension. Lazarus was ordained bishop of Bethany, and later, of Cyprus. Chapters 36 and 37 describe the fates of the apostles of Christ and of the family from Bethany and their companions. It is noted that Martha placed herself under the care and protection of St. Parmenas, just as Mary Magdalene had of Maximinus. While the text agrees with pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent in describing Martha, Mary Magdalene and Maximinus as preachers in the region of Aix, the listing of bishops and their assigned cities in Gaul differs in both content and format, and includes a listing of the appointment of bishops for Belgium, Germany and Spain.

(ii) Martha subdues the dragon known as the Tarascus

All four accounts of the life of St. Martha describe in detail the slaying of the dragon at Tarascon. The basic description of the huge beast, half animal and half fish, and of its destructive nature, is similar in pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and the Legenda Aurea, although abbreviated in the latter. The VBMM mentions the dragon's lethal breath, flaming eyes and shrill shrieks, but otherwise the physical characteristics of the monster are not noted. The passage discussing Martha's subduing of the dragon found in Vincent of Beauvais is a slightly expanded version of that found in pseudo-Marcilia. The Legenda

Aurea text is similar in content, but, again, much shorter. The basic content of the passage is preserved in the VBMM as well, but with some differences in detail; for example, there is no mention that Martha threw holy water on the beast, Martha agrees to perform the miracle only after she has secured a promise from the bystanders that they will subsequently have faith, Martha must encourage the people to come forward and slay the dragon. All four texts record that the place was renamed after the dragon following its slaughter. Pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and the Legenda Aurea conclude by noting that the dragon was likely a descendent of Leviathan and the animal called the bonasus.<sup>15</sup>

(iii) The austerity of Martha's life at Tarascon

In the description of Martha's life at Tarascon, Vincent agrees in content with pseudo-Marcilia, although the text is more paraphrase than direct quotation. The Legenda Aurea summarizes the account found in the earlier works, omitting most of the descriptive detail. The VBMM contains many elements in common with the other texts, for example, the description of Martha's clothing, but greater emphasis is placed on Martha's continuing hospitality towards the poor and needy.

(iv) Martha raises a young man from the dead

The description of Martha's revival of the drowned boy follows the same pattern as that of the austerity of her life. Pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent agree in content and to a great extent in language, while the Legenda Aurea summarizes the texts. VBMM agrees substantially in content, although again there is the comment that Martha agreed to perform the miracle only after the people promised to embrace the Christian faith.

(v) Martha's home is dedicated as a basilica and water is changed into wine

Pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and the VBMM all relate how bishops Maximinus of Aix, Trophimus of Arles and Eutropius of Orange visited Martha's home simultaneously and consecrated her church, and how, at the banquet following, water was miraculously converted into fine wine. All three accounts agree in content, with some verbal echoes. The Legenda Aurea does not refer to this incident.

(vi) Martha is visited by Sts. Fronto and Georgius

Both pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent record that Mary Magdalene sent a message to her sister Martha through Bishop

Maximinus, announcing that she would visit her. In VBMM it is Martha who sends the message to Mary Magdalene, requesting a visit. All three note in very similar language that the promise was fulfilled not while Mary Magdalene lived but after her death. All three accounts note that Bishops Fronto of Périgueux and Georgius of Velay took refuge with St. Martha during a time of persecution; only pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent describe Georgius as "one who was dead and came back to life"--a reference to his miraculous resurrection while en route to Gaul.<sup>16</sup> The three accounts are similar in content, but the pseudo-Marcilia version is the longest. For the first time since the beginning of the post-Biblical narrative, the author returns to the use of imagery which supports the interpretation of Martha as a prototype of the Church. Although she is not at this time specifically compared to the Virgin Mary, her maternal qualities are emphasized. She is described as the "pious mother and nurse" and the "mother hen" who shelters her chicks under her wings. The latter image brings to mind the medieval artistic portrayals of the Virgin as Ecclesia, with her protective cloak spread over her people (the "Madonna Misericordia" type). The Legenda Aurea does not refer to the visit of Fronto and Georgius.

(vii) Martha's death

All four medieval accounts of Martha's life record that the Lord informed her of her impending death a year in advance, and that for the entire year she suffered from fevers. On the eighth day before her death, she had a vision of angelic choirs bearing the soul of her sister to heaven. Subsequently Martha knew that her own death was imminent, and she encouraged and instructed her companions. In the middle of the night of the day before her death, those keeping watch fell into a deep sleep. A violent gust of wind extinguished the lamps. At this point, pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and Legenda Aurea all note that a crowd of evil spirits gathered around Martha and record, in very similar language, the prayer which the saint offered to God for protection. In the VBMM it is noted only that the maidservant of Christ "prayed against an attack of demons". Pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and VBMM record that those who watched over Martha awoke and ran out, seeking a flame to rekindle the lamps. VBMM suggests that this was done at Martha's bidding, pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent that it was on their own initiative. The Legenda Aurea omits the incident. All four accounts note that Mary Magdalene appeared to Martha and relit the candles and lamps with her own torch; soon Christ also appeared to Martha. Verbal echoes are particularly evident in the pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and

Legenda Aurea versions. When those who had left to seek light returned, they were amazed to find the candles and lamps had been rekindled. VBMM also notes that the room was illuminated by a strange glow.

On the day of her death, all four accounts record that Martha was carried outside and placed on a bed of ashes. All accounts are similar in content, although the Legenda Aurea is abbreviated. Vincent and VBMM do not directly cite the words of Martha's prayer before her death. Martha asked that the account of the Lord's passion be read to her, and at the words "Father into your hand I commend my spirit" Martha died. Only VBMM names the reader as Parmenas. Pseudo-Marcilia and VBMM record that Martha's death occurred in her sixty-fifth year, on the fourth day from the kalends of August, on the sixth day of the week, at the ninth hour. It is notable that Vincent, who generally follows pseudo-Marcilia closely in both language and content, records that Martha died on the seventh day from the kalends of January, on the sixth day of the week, at the ninth hour, at the age of seventy. This suggests that Vincent may have been familiar with other versions of the legend, although the close parallels in language show that he depended primarily on pseudo-Marcilia in the compilation of his text.



(viii) Martha's funeral

Pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and VBMM name seven faithful companions who attended to Martha's funeral rites. The lists are the same, except that the male form of the name "Euchodius" is replaced by the female form "Euchodia" in VBMM. The name "Syntex" which is linked to that of Euchodius (Euchodia) appears in Philippians 4:2 (in the form "Syntyche"), where it is linked with a "Euodia". In the biblical text, both of these persons are described as female. Both pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent identify Marcilla (Martilla) as the woman who cried out from the crowd to Jesus "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast that you sucked." VBMM does not make this association at this time, although the author had done so much earlier in the work (chapter 11). All three texts describe the funeral vigil as taking three days. The Legenda Aurea omits reference to Martha's companions and to the three day vigil, noting instead that the funeral took place the day after her death.

All four accounts describe the miraculous appearance of Christ and St. Fronto of Périgueux at Martha's funeral. All are similar in content, although the Legenda Aurea is less detailed. The language of Vincent's version is closer to that of pseudo-Marcilia than is that of VBMM, which

nevertheless contains many verbal echoes. In pseudo-Marcilia, Vincent and the Legenda Aurea, the description of the actions of the deacon at Périgueux and the sending of messengers to Tarascon precedes the description of the clerk at Tarascon; in VBMM it follows.

(ix) The miracles at St. Martha's tomb

All four accounts of Martha's life refer to miracles which took place at her tomb, including the healing of Clovis, king of the Franks. As is usual, the Legenda Aurea version is greatly abbreviated. The other accounts are similar in content, but direct parallels in language, especially between pseudo-Marcilia and Vincent, are not as prominent as in most other sections of the work.

(x) The fate of Martha's companions

The Legenda Aurea concludes with a reference to Martilla alone, the presumed author of the life from which Jacobus' text was compiled. Vincent copies pseudo-Marcilia closely in his account of the fates of Martha's followers, including the first person reference to the translator of the work as "I, Synthex". In VBMM, the discussion of Martha's followers precedes that of the miracles of her tomb

rather than following it. It also differs in content.

Compare:

Marcilla and Syntex and Epaphras, the most virtuous and apostolic of individuals, went to Sclavonia and, preaching there the gospel of Christ, they continued with good works. Marcilla lived ten years after St. Martha. She produced this long life of the distinguished one in Hebrew, then I, Syntex, transcribed it into Latin much later. Euchodius and Germanus and Sostenes, followers of St. Martha, kept watch over the sacred body of the godly hostess as long as they lived, and rested in that place after a blessed end. (Pseudo-Marcilia)

Certain ones of those who served the servant of the Saviour returned to the East to preach the kingdom of God: namely Epaphras, with St. Marcella and St. Syntex, who was buried at Philippi when she died and of whom the apostle wrote. Syntex came to a blessed end. Parmenas was faithful, and by the grace of God, attained the glory of a martyr. Germanus and Euchodia were helpers of the holy apostles and were given the work of consoling the faithful, with St. Clement and their other co-workers, of whom the names are written in the book of life. (VBMM)

In Vincent of Beauvais' Speculum Historiale, Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda Aurea and the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdaleneae, the account of Martha's life occurs within the context of works much broader in scope. The Life of St. Martha compiled by "pseudo-Marcilia" forms more of a self-contained unit. It has an introductory section, as noted above, and a conclusion which draws together some of the themes presented in the opening passage. In particular it notes again how Martha, as an archetype of the active life,

serves as an exemplum for believers, and "one who is mindful of her will be remembered by God."

## Chapter 1

The Life of St. Martha Compiled by Pseudo-Marcilia (BHL 5545)

A Life of the Most Glorious Martha, the Hostess of Christ,  
First Produced in Hebrew by St. Marcilia, her Maid and  
Little Daughter<sup>1</sup> and Afterwards Translated into the Latin  
Language by Sinticus<sup>2</sup>

St. Martha, the follower of Christ, is considered a type of the holy church because of her piety<sup>3</sup>, and her life would require a great volume for the understanding of its mystical sense.<sup>4</sup> Therefore we will write briefly of the declarations of the Gospel regarding her distinguished life, forgoing discussion of her as reflecting types, in order that an extended account of her life will not be distasteful to readers or onerous to the memory of hearers, but that it may be an exemplum for pious imitation for the minds of the faithful. In short, Martha, the blessed and venerable hostess of Christ, a descendant of royal stock, lived in the village of Bethany, near the city of Jerusalem. Her father was Syrus, her mother Eucharis. Her siblings were St. Mary Magdalene and Lazarus, whom Christ, the true Friend of all generations, raised from the tomb.

Noble antiquity passed from the parent to the offspring.

Now a more noble bearing waits in heaven.<sup>5</sup>

From her childhood, she loved greatly the Creator of all things, was highly skilled in Hebrew, and conformed to the precepts of the law. She was physically beautiful, and beautifully educated in the works appropriate to women. She was outstanding among all the pious noblewomen for her morals, and distinguished for her understanding and her works, especially her abundant charity, and her great purity. She avoided all contact with men. Nowhere is it written that she had a husband or that she had entered into marriage with a man, although her father was a distinguished governor of Syria and of many maritime regions. After the dispersion of the disciples of the Lord, he was a most faithful preacher in the city of Athens. Martha, along with her aforementioned brother and sister, possessed three towns which they had inherited by legal right from their mother, namely, Magdala and Bethany and part of the city of Jerusalem. Martha had authority before all her relatives because she was more capable and had a greater abundance of intelligence and honesty. The famous table companion gave freely of all the greatest riches to the soldiers and her household servants. She was greatly skilled in administering a banquet. As the Holy Scriptures claim, one of those invited to the banquet was the Lord, and He

attended. Martha served, as was customary, because of her love of the Lord. When the Lord Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, they prepared there a great banquet. Martha served with honour the one who had raised Lazarus, and in one place it is said that Martha troubled herself with much serving.<sup>6</sup> Such hospitality among us is not destined to be forgotten. For just as Abraham<sup>7</sup> and Lot<sup>8</sup> and Joshua<sup>9</sup> and many others had pleased God and likewise welcomed angels as guests, so was the diligent and most pious hostess attentive to all. She received both members of her household and strangers. Thus it happened that, acting in this way, she began to love the Lord, and she received him. And He who loves all, and who singled out St. Peter from all of us asking, "Peter, do you love me,"<sup>10</sup> He loved her so much that He preferred her home to any other lodging. As the Gospel relates, on days when Jesus was preaching in Jerusalem He returned late to Bethany where his friend Lazarus lived with his sisters Mary and Martha, and he was received there.<sup>11</sup>

#### How Christ Received Shelter

Afterwards it happened that the Lord was preaching in the towns and cities and, tired in body after a day's journey, on a day described in Luke, He entered into a certain house and this woman named Martha welcomed Him in her home,<sup>12</sup>

fulfilling the prophecy which says: "He is like a stranger in the land, and like a wayfarer who turns aside to tarry for a night".<sup>13</sup> O truly happy and glorious one, who deserves to have such a Guest, who serves the bread of angels and on which she was fed! How happy and glorious this woman, whom Jesus loved so much that He wished to be welcomed and fed by her. She received a great and wonderful Guest, whom angels and men welcome and feed. She fed Him who feeds all creatures. One greater than he whom Abraham received as a guest,<sup>14</sup> namely God and man; this great King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who alone encloses all in the palm of His hand; whom Job described as higher than the sky, broader than the greatest land, deeper than the sea;<sup>15</sup> whom many prophets and kings wished to see and did not see, to hear and did not hear: she received and fed this Guest. It is a great and praiseworthy thing to welcome the Lord into a house. Each of the two sisters, namely Martha and Mary, chose to perform her own ministry, which pleased God greatly. Mary, sitting before the feet of the Lord, heard the words of His mouth,<sup>16</sup> as if feasting on that which she preferred to eat. But Martha occupied herself greatly with the preparation of the feast,<sup>17</sup> and because she received so distinguished a Guest in her home, she was eager to serve with the greatest of care: cleaning the house, setting the table, preparing the food. But it did not seem to her enough: it seemed that all the household was unable to give



sufficient service and that her sister should come to help her with the preparations. She wished that all her household would prepare the feast. Therefore she stood before the Lord astonished, and complaining about this thing, she said: "Lord, do you not care that my sister leaves me to serve alone? Tell her to help me."<sup>18</sup> But He who is not a respecter of persons<sup>19</sup> loved the different forms of service which were offered to Him: He received and praised the service of the one but did not condemn that of the other: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. On the other hand, one thing is needful. Mary has chosen for herself the better part, that is the spiritual life, which will not be taken away from her."<sup>20</sup> She will reap eternal life. Together your service which you choose completes and makes well. She strives for the health of the soul, you, in truth, work for the health of the body. Complete what you have begun, and you will do well. The promise of a crown awaits those who persevere in good works, and their praises will be sung at the end." This is clear: the active life which Martha symbolizes in the holy church is not at all able to continue as active or to please the highest King without the contemplative life which Mary signifies. Wherefore the merciful Guest conceded to each of these holy women her office and choice. In short, with happy spirits in festive custom, they ate, stayed in the home and rested on that day. From that time, the Saviour

was customarily freely welcomed as a guest in the house of St. Martha.

#### How Lazarus was Raised by Her Prayers

How many good benefits were agreeable to the Guest because of the good hospitality! Martha received the needy with a diligent and cheerful spirit when they appeared at her home. The hospitality of this woman was rewarded: for because of the friendship and hospitality of St. Martha, the Lord raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. For the Evangelist says that the Lord Jesus loved Martha and Mary her sister and Lazarus.<sup>21</sup> O happy and praiseworthy generation, which Christ loved more than others! Although the wise words of the Father say: "I love those who love me",<sup>22</sup> yet rarely is it found in the Scriptures where the faithful whom the Lord loved are mentioned especially by name. And because St. Martha knew her holy Guest loved her, and did not doubt that it was possible for him to do anything, and because she heard that He had raised the daughter of the synagogue ruler<sup>23</sup> and the widow's son,<sup>24</sup> she complained bitterly to the Lord when he returned to Bethany about the death of her brother. She said: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask."<sup>25</sup> O the unwavering faith of this holy woman! She believed in God,

three in one: she saw the Son concealed in human flesh; she did not see the Father, but did not doubt that he would fulfil the requests of the Son; and she believed in the Holy Spirit, who formed an indestructible bond of love between Father and Son, and through whom the Father, at the request of the Son, would raise her brother. On that account the Lord said to the believing woman: "Your brother will rise".<sup>26</sup> Martha immediately replied: "I know that he will rise on the last day".<sup>27</sup> Clearly this holy woman was acquainted with the basic tenets of the law: she had read of the resurrection of the dead in the prophets; she believed in a final and universal resurrection. But she doubted that she would see her brother at the present time and near at hand, and because of this, the Lord said to her: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me, though he were dead, yet he will live. And all who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?"<sup>28</sup> And she said, "Yes, Lord." O, what great faith abounded in this holy woman! She said: "I believe that you are the Christ, the son of God, who came into this world".<sup>29</sup> Martha proved herself to have much in common with Peter, the chief of the apostles, with Job, with Abraham, and with the Holy Virgin: with St. Peter, who, because he believed in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, said: "I acknowledge that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God,"<sup>30</sup> and Martha likewise confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of God, who

came into the world;" in common with the blessed Job, who said: "I believe that my Saviour will rise up on earth on the last day, and even though my skin be destroyed, in my flesh I will see God,"<sup>31</sup> and Martha, believing in a future resurrection, said: "I know that my brother will rise in the resurrection on the last day;" in common with Abraham, who welcomed three angels as guests, because of faith in the Holy Trinity,<sup>32</sup> and Martha received in her home this God, three in one, and what is more, God and man. She proved to have a common part also with the holy Virgin; for the glorious Virgin Mary received God and man in her holy womb, and Martha received God and man as a guest in her own home. The divine body of the former [Mary] nourished that which is most blessed in her holy womb; the holy hostess Martha cared for Him in her own home. He whom the one begot, the other cared for. Therefore she proved to have something in common with the divine Virgin, but they were different. Their worth is different: for the former is blessed among all women<sup>33</sup> and nothing is similar in worth. In her chaste virgin womb she received the Son of God. The latter [Martha] received Him devotedly in her earthly home. The former cared for a small boy, the latter a man of thirty years. And therefore she believed in her heart the faith of the prophets, and the confession of the apostles, and was occupied with good works, and truly, as a consort and participant with them, she shared in the kingdom of heaven.

And she who believed that all things were possible deserved to receive what she asked of the Lord. He heard her desire, and raised her brother from the dead: when the voice of the Lord decreed: "Lazarus, come out," he was restored to life after four days.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile a ceremony of great joy was celebrated and a banquet made by the faithful Jews in the house of Simon the Leper; and Martha served. There was no doubt that a miracle had taken place, for Lazarus took his place at the table.<sup>35</sup> From that time on, it was believed that the Lord had raised the brother of St. Martha from the grave because of her holy prayers, and it happened that penitent sinners called upon her, and out of the goodness of her heart she entreated God on their behalf. Her holy Guest, out of love for her freed them from their sin and made them whole. The Ruler of heaven most humbly loved St. Martha, so much that it pleased Him to hold the noble virgin in great honour, so that, avoiding the royal palaces, He was pleased to lodge in her home, to be fed and cared for and to rest in her holy home. He instituted and made evident the whole religion of all the religious and the sacraments of the Holy Church. In her sacred home the Holy Church was formed. The pious women Mary and Martha, representing the contemplative and the active lives, rejoiced in the favour of the Saviour, and He equipped them and showed their successors in the Christian churches how to live uprightly. In these two lives all the doctrines of the laws of all the

religious figures of the Old and New Testaments have their meaning and are fulfilled. By which all the saints and elect of God come, and will come to the highest kingdom by loving their neighbours as themselves. Let us persist in the active life with Martha by fulfilling in all necessary ways whatever is required in it. By loving God over all and disregarding earthly love, and looking towards the heavens, let us rejoice in the contemplative life with Mary. Thus are the practises of earth, which will not be lost in heaven. Thus we cross over through temporal goods so that we do not lose eternal ones, and thus terrestrial things are not lost because of celestial things nor celestial things lost for terrestrial. By these things also we deserve to fully enjoy the benefits given to us by God. Let us be worthy to possess the kingdom of Heaven. So much let us say of the holy hostess of Christ, according to the testimony of the evangelists: let us move on to treat briefly the rest, namely her life and end.

#### How His Own Were Sent Away

In short, with all her heart, St. Martha heard and understood the teachings of the Lord when he said: "All who leave their father and mother, wife and children and lands in my name will receive a hundredfold, and will possess eternal life".<sup>36</sup> She divided all her material resources

into three parts. She gave the first part to her sister Mary Magdalene, to supplement the resources from which she supplied the living expenses and clothing for the Lord and his apostles. The second part she gave to her brother Lazarus. The third part she kept, and on it she lived and entertained the Saviour and his disciples when they came to her home. Whatever remained after the ascension of Christ into heaven--when the multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul and no one set apart anything of his own, but they had all things in common<sup>37</sup>--she placed at the feet of the apostles. And it was in common for the believers because, as the philosopher said, "It shines clearly for all when goods are drawn down in common".<sup>38</sup> And Martha proved herself an apostle among apostles and a disciple among disciples. At that time the growing number of disciples aroused against themselves the hostility of the Jews, so that in the end they were expelled.<sup>39</sup> They [the Jews] took Peter and the other apostles into public custody<sup>40</sup> and killed James.<sup>41</sup> Without reason they [the disciples] were taken away and escaped, sailing in a vessel without sail or rudder or any provisions at all. But in the end the raging fury of the Jews was overthrown. Divine providence enriched them [the disciples] in a better region. It enriched them with villages and towns and cities. It made them rich with many treasures. It enriched them with churches. It multiplied their servants and honours. And, moreover, it

would give them heavenly mansions. It gave to each one a city and homeland: Arles to Trophimus; Narbonne to Paulus; Toulouse and Vaucogne to Saturninus; Poitiers to Martialus; Saintonge and Aquitaine to Eutropius; Le Mans and Brittany to Julianus; Bourges to Urcissinus;<sup>42</sup> Tours to Gracianus;<sup>43</sup> Lyons to Irenaeus; Besançon to Ferrucius; Orange to the other Eutropius; Périgueux to Fronto; Velay to Georgius; all of Gaul to Dionysius. Each one was given his own village. See how much the mercy of God did not cease to be evident in foreign regions. When they were dead, requests were made by the people before the holy ashes and bones and tombs, and they came to the aid of the living. The sick coming to their tombs were healed, the blind given sight, the lame restored, those with demons freed, and those in mourning comforted. The guilt of sinners was forgiven. Therefore God did not wish to give them an inheritance in the city of Jerusalem, for he gave them a better one elsewhere. Similarly, God did not wish to give men a perfect inheritance except in the heavenly kingdom which he made for them. Thus he said to Abraham: "Leave your land and your family and come into the land which I will show you, and I will make you grow into a great nation."<sup>44</sup> Thus God first made man. He transferred him out from paradise into this world, and from there into the ground, and after that He will take him into heaven. Thus it happened that the sons of Israel crossed the Red Sea from Egypt into the promised



land.<sup>45</sup> Thus it happened that Christ descended from the bosom of the Father descended into the womb of the blessed Virgin, and from there He came into the world, and then into the tomb, and then into the ground, and after the resurrection He returned to heaven. Similarly, our Lord will supply three mansions for each one of us, and it is right to go across from one to another: He gives the world in which we stop off, He gives the grave in which the body decays, and He gives heaven in which we remain finally. Bitter death is our companion in the world, worms in the grave, angels in heaven. Thus St. Martha, his hostess, was taken away and enriched with her own treasures in foreign regions.

How She Crossed the Sea with St. Maximinus, Bishop of Aix,  
who was One of the Seventy Disciples<sup>46</sup>

Just as the Lord united His glorious mother with St. John the Evangelist, even so the Holy Spirit united Martha and Mary Magdalene with St. Maximinus, who once baptized them. He led them to the kingdom of heaven by the example of his good conduct. They entered into a ship with many others, and after praying for a safe trip, they reached the port of Marseille, under the Lord's guidance. Then they approached the territory of Aix. After fasting and fervent prayers they converted the unbelieving people to faith in

Christ by means of miraculous signs and prophecies. The Lord gave the glorious Martha both the ability to heal all kinds of sickness and to make holy prophecies. She was, as we say, physically beautiful, elegant and charming in appearance, and highly eloquent and clear in speech. Her sermons were received by kings and nobles. She succeeded in converting a greater number of people than the rest of her companions. The majority of the people of this province were converted to Christ by St. Maximinus, Martha and Mary.

#### How She Bound the Dragon by Her Hand<sup>47</sup>

There was at this time on the banks of the Rhône, next to the huge cliff, in the forest between Arles and Avignon towards the western region, a huge dragon, half land animal and half fish, which had destroyed many passersby, asses and horses which had encountered it. It submerged ships crossing the Rhône. Crowds of armed people often came there, but they did not succeed in slaying it, for it concealed itself in the river by the forest. It was larger than an ox,<sup>48</sup> longer than a horse, and had the head of a lion. Its teeth were like sharp swords, its mane like a horse's. It had a sharp ridge on its back, like a pickaxe, heavy scales for tearing apart, sinewy feet and claws like a bear. Its tail was like a snake, and it was fortified with two twisted plates, one on each side. Twelve lions and as

many bears could not vanquish it. When none of the inhabitants were able to destroy it in any way, they heard reports of the reputation of St. Martha and her glittering miracles, how she cast out demons, and they came to her asking that she come and drive away the dragon once and for all. Therefore, the holy friend of God went to the place. The hostess of Christ, confident in her true Guest, discovered the dragon in the forest, devouring a man which it had killed. She threw holy water which she had brought on him, and held up a wooden image of the holy cross. The dragon was overpowered and stood like a sheep. The saint bound it with her own holy belt, and all the people in that place put it to death with spears and stones. This dragon was called "Tirascurus" and afterwards the place was called Tirasconus [Tarascon]. Previously it had been called Nerluc, that is "black forest", because the forest was dark and shadowy. Possibly this dragon was a descendant of that which is called Leviathan in the book of Job,<sup>49</sup> who swallowed up rivers and was not amazed, but had confidence even though the Jordan rushed against his mouth.<sup>50</sup> It had come down by sea from Galatia in Asia, a descendant of Leviathan, a most ferocious aquatic serpent, and of the animal called the Bonasus.<sup>51</sup> The Bonasus is an animal which originated in the region of Galatia, and which drives away its attackers with burning dung, which it shoots out like an

arrow over a huge area, and everything which it touches is burned as if by fire.

#### How She Remained in Tarascon

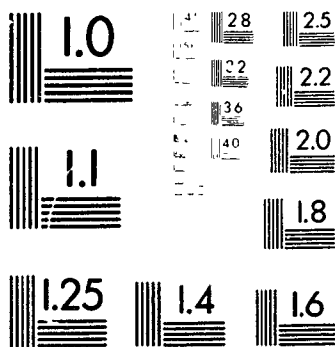
After many petitions of the people, St. Martha stayed on there in that country [Tarascon], with the permission of her former master Maximinus and her sister Mary Magdalene. As long as she lived she continued her fasting, vigils and prayers. What labours, what anguish, what hunger, how many persecutions, how many troubles and sorrows she endured there! Who can estimate the cost? For in the first seven years she ate the roots of raw grasses and the fruits of the trees and the foliage of trees and mushrooms, and they were better to her than a food platter. Afterwards a community of brothers and sisters came to stay with her, and a great basilica was built in honour of the holy Christ and the blessed Virgin Mary. Martha lived a harsh life there, avoiding meat and all fat, eggs, cheese and wine. She ate only once a day. In the winter she customarily wore a cloak of sheepskin, and in summer a tunic and cloak with goat skin next to her flesh. She went barefoot, and wore a turban of camel hair on her head. A belt made of horse hair intentionally tied in knots was around her waist, and often worms came out of her broken and rotting flesh. Stretching out on tree branches or vines, with a stone under her head,

she slept on a hair shirt. She devoted herself diligently to prayer and supplications. She was always attentive to heavenly things, never shelter on earth. Her body was on earth but her mind was turned towards heaven. A hundred times a day and as many times at night she bent her knee to the earth in prayer. She was powerful in all the virtues of faith, hope and charity. She was always notable for the hospitality which she had practised at Bethany: customarily her table was filled with strangers and guests. Her mouth did not cease from divine praises; frequently the works of her hands were enjoyed. Often she stayed at home with those around her. Often she went to the towns and cities and villages nearby to spread the divine word to the crowds of people. The words which she spoke could produce miracles. When she placed her hand on the listeners, they received the Holy Spirit. When she placed her hand on the sick, they received the Holy Spirit. When she placed her hand on the sick, they were made well. Acting in this way, Martha was loved by God and favoured among men. How many thousands of people were converted and baptized through her exhortations to faith in Christ is too long to describe in detail.

#### How She Revived the Dead

Once the distinguished disciple of Christ was near Avignon, before the city gates, in a pleasant place between

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the city and the Rhône River, preaching and healing the sick who were brought to her. A young man on the other side of the river saw the crowds of people on this side listening to the holy one, and he wanted to see and hear her. Lacking<sup>52</sup> a boat, he enthusiastically began to swim across the river, naked. When he was swimming<sup>53</sup> in the middle, he suddenly encountered a swift current in the raging river, and, being carried off, was submerged in the depths. In short, all that day the boats of the citizens were not able to find him in the river. On the second day, about nine o'clock, the lifeless body was discovered, and placed at the feet of St. Martha. Then the illustrious friend of Christ, her heart moved, informed the people that she would prostrate herself and call upon God, asking that He in His mercy would deign to raise the boy from the dead. Prostrating herself next to the body in the form of a cross, she called upon the Lord and said: "Adonai, Jesus Christ, who, in your holy and ineffable mercy once raised my brother Lazarus, your beloved, from the dead; who holds the keys to life and death; who commands death and makes it flee; who calls the dead and they rise: my dear Guest, look upon the faith and prayers of those around and revive this boy, in order that they and those who hear of your power and strength may believe in you, O Adonai, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the Virgin Mother Mary for ever and ever, Amen." Then the illustrious hostess

of Christ felt the power of God come from heaven. She raised herself and taking the hand of the boy said to him: "Rise, boy, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." And immediately he rose up alive and unharmed, and underwent baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. Oh, Christ destroyed death, working through the blessed hostess of Christ, and He restored a man who was condemned to two deaths by a double resurrection through faith in Christ. And afterwards all in the cities and towns believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and underwent baptism. Thus, because of this deed, Martha was praised by all, even more than previously.

At that time bishop Maximinus of Aix and Trophimus of Arles and Eutropius of Orange, all three, came without warning to visit her, each of them unaware that the others were coming. And through their prayers in the name of the holy Christ,<sup>54</sup> and in honour of His mother, they consecrated Martha's church on the sixteenth day before the calends of January [i.e. December 17]. At a banquet for them, the wine having run short, water was converted into wine.<sup>55</sup> Then through Maximinus, Mary, the sister of Martha, conveyed a promise that she would visit her. She fulfilled it not while living but after her death. It happened not a long time later that bishops St. Fronto of Périgueux, who had been ordained by the apostle St. Peter, and the most holy Georgius of Velay, namely he who was dead and came back to



life,<sup>56</sup> were expelled from their own cities for their preaching. They approached St. Martha for help, just as they would seek sanctuary from their mother, and remained with her for several days. By the prayers of St. Martha poured out to God, they were reconciled with their cities. For she was a pious mother and nurse to the bishops and all believers at this time. She took care of all, like a mother hen does her chicks.<sup>57</sup> For the needs of body and soul of the crowds of believers who gathered about her were fulfilled. Then St. Martha, confessing her sin to one of them, namely the elder, St. Fronto, predicted her own death not far off in the future, and asked also that, if God allowed him to live so long, he would promise to return to her at the time of her death. But because all the miracles which she performed on the far side of the sea and on this side and her frequent signs are too many to describe in detail, we shall tell briefly of how she went from a good life to a better one.

#### Of Her Passing

The blessed hostess of Christ was pleasing to her pious Guest in all the good works which she did, and, wishing to pay tribute to her belief, her pious Guest revealed to her by the spirit of prophecy the approaching day of her death, a year in advance. Afterwards she announced it to her brothers and sisters. She was shaken by fevers for almost

all the whole year. On the eighth day before her death, Martha heard choirs of angels bearing the soul of her departing sister, Mary Magdalene, into heaven. She informed all of her own that were in that place, saying: "O my companions and most sweet friends, I ask you to rejoice with me: because hosts of angels are bearing the soul of our sister to the heavenly mansions and rejoicing. O most beautiful and beloved sister, consider that which you promised me, that you would make me joyful by visiting. Live with your Master and our true Guest in the blessed realm." How great and inestimable was the love between the two sisters, and how it was revealed. On the eighth day after the death of the one, the other died. The one led the other into paradise. Immediately St. Martha began to grow listless in her bed, more than usual, and she called her brothers and sisters to gather around her, and fortified herself for heaven with the eucharist and confession. The business of her church was agreeably set in order. She bravely encouraged her companions in the Christian faith to hold firm in their religion. Then they kept watch unceasingly in her home all that day and night until her death, with lighted torches and prayers to God. She asked sweetly that they act diligently.

### How Demons Came at Her Death

In the middle of the night before the day of her death, those keeping watch fell into a deep sleep. A strong whirlwind coming from an evil direction, gusting swiftly, extinguished the seven large candles and three lamps burning in her home. The blessed one, seeing a crowd of foul spirits around her, began to pray: "My Father Ely, my dear Guest, those who would seduce me have gathered around to devour me, holding a list of the evil deeds which I have done, crying loudly, saying: 'God, abandon her, and we will pursue and seize her when she is freed.' Ely, do not forsake me.<sup>58</sup> Ely, come to my aid. Ely, make haste to help me.<sup>59</sup> Do not be mindful of the transgressions of my youth and my ignorance,<sup>60</sup> Adonai, and do not turn your face away from me.<sup>61</sup> Swiftly hear me in my tribulation, Adonai."<sup>62</sup> At the sound of her voice, those who were watching awoke, and they sought a fire in all the house, and not finding one, they were delayed. Behold, the blessed Martha saw her sister Mary Magdalene coming to meet her, holding in her hand a torch, from which she relit all the lamps and candles in the place. Scarcely had the one finished calling the other by name when her pious Guest appeared and said to her: "Come, my beloved hostess, leave the prison of the flesh and cross over to my palace in heaven, where I will receive you as my guest, and where I am, O my servant, you will be with

me.<sup>63</sup> You received me in your home and I will receive you in my heaven.<sup>64</sup> Once I gave my consolation to the desolate, and I will not take it away from you after your death. For love of you, I will hear those who come to your tomb in devotion, complaining bitterly of their need. And when she was about to turn back, quivering, He said: "Stand fast, I will come to you." Hardly were these words spoken when the Lord and Mary disappeared from that place. And those who watched over her, returning without having found a fire, entered the house, and, looking at one another in amazement, they asked eagerly how the lamps which had been extinguished when they went out had been rekindled, thus far not knowing of the greatness of the acts of God. But immediately Martha revealed to her holy brothers what had happened. The night passed and the day of her death arrived. She asked that she be carried outside of the basilica to a certain very beautiful street under the trees, in order to see the heavens, and that she be placed on a cross of ashes, resting on a little chaff, and covered with a hair-shirt, and that a holy wooden cross be held up before her. And this was done. Then she asked that her brothers and sisters pray for her. Immediately the souls of all men turned toward heaven, and she fixed her gaze upon heaven. She began to pray, saying: "Ely, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the eternal God, born of the chaste Virgin Mary, who was born for us, suffered and died, arose

and returned to the heavens:<sup>65</sup> receive my spirit into your resting-place. Do not allow me to be torn apart by the hands of the four angels who control the gates of hell.<sup>66</sup> But just as I was found worthy as a hostess, receive me as your guest in heaven. My dear Guest, watch over your poor little family and encourage them, that all of them who are in this place will seek out heavenly rewards, and that you will find them worthy to be rewarded." Then she asked that the passion of the Lord written in the Hebrew language, which she had brought with her from Jerusalem, be read. And it was read, and when the reader said: "Father, into your hand I commend my spirit,"<sup>67</sup> the friend of God died, and handed over her worthy soul to the embraces of the archangel Michael,<sup>68</sup> who, with his angels, bore her over the battlefield of the prince of darkness, occupied by the bodies and souls of sinners, and crossed over into the holy mysteries of heaven. O race worthy of a glorious death! Who has heard of a death so deserved, secured at so great a cost as this one? It is not death but life: death is swallowed up in victory.<sup>69</sup> How valuable in the sight of the Lord is the death of his holy hostess. Christ set her free from this world in the sixty-fifth year of her life, having spent seven and a half years in the monastery, on the fourth day from the calends of August, the sixth day of the week, at the ninth hour. The distinguished hostess of Christ crossed over into the joy of the angels, where she rejoiced

and praised without end her good Guest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Famous persons and the religious companions of her household remained constantly in that place with her until her death: Euchodius and Syntex and Germanus and Epaphras and Sosthenes, first followers of Paul and then companions of Trophimus, and Parmenas, who was one of the seven deacons of the apostles;<sup>70</sup> and Marcilla, the servant and little daughter through baptism of St. Martha, the one who lifted up her voice out of the crowd and said to the Lord Jesus: "Blessed is the womb which bore you;"<sup>71</sup> and many others leading a spiritual life with her in this place until her death. These faithful companions came together in the basilica which she had built, and attended to her funeral. They adorned the sepulchre with propriety for three entire days and nights, with a great number of people who came from the towns and cities in the vicinity to venerate her death, respectfully keeping vigil with lighted candles and great lamps in the forest.

#### How the Lord and St. Fronton Buried Her

The following day, which was Sunday, all the congregation of the religious and all the throng of the people stood around the body, as if they wished the funeral ceremony to take place soon. They all sang psalms and mourned. At the third hour, in Périgueux, Bishop Fronton was

celebrating mass, and the epistle having been read, he fell asleep on his throne before the altar in the church. The Lord appeared to him, saying: "My beloved Fronto, if you wish to fulfill the promise which you once made to our hostess, come to her funeral. Come quickly, follow me." At this same moment in Tarascon, the two proceeded into the church of the godly hostess and began to sing psalms around the body with the others. Taking the books in their hand, they conducted the whole ceremony from beginning to end, while the others replied and assisted. And the two placed the corpse in the grave. But when these things were taking place, the deacon in Périgueux was ready to begin the reading of the Gospel, the singing of the clergy being finished. He nudged the bishop who was sleeping on his throne, seeking a blessing. But he gave no reply, and all the clergy and men of the city standing around asked in wonder why the bishop made such a delay. Then the holy bishop, waking as if from a pleasant sleep, said: "My brother, what are you doing? Why did you awaken me? Wonderful things have happened to us. Our Lord Jesus Christ led me to the funeral of his hostess Martha, and we handed her over to the grave, as we promised to her once a year ago when she was living. But I beg you, send messengers quickly to that place to bring back to us our gold ring and silver gloves, which, when placing the body in the grave I entrusted to a sacristan of the church to keep for me, and

which I forgot when I left the church because you awoke me so suddenly." Messengers were sent quickly and they found things as the bishop had said. And they brought back the ring and one glove: the sacristan kept the other as a witness of this great thing.<sup>72</sup> After this, when St. Fronto was again discussing the funeral of St. Martha with his brothers, he said: "After we buried her<sup>73</sup> and we were leaving the church, a certain brother of that place who was versed in letters followed us, and asked the Lord who He was, and from where, and by what name he was called. He, replying nothing, held out a book which was open in His hand in which nothing else was written than this verse of the psalmist: 'My hostess will be just in everlasting memory; she will not fear an evil hearing on the last day.' When the book was rolled up again, this writing was found on each leaf." For that reason,<sup>74</sup> it is plain that the just hostess of Christ will be held in everlasting memory of the angels and men, and she will not fear an evil hearing when they pay attention to evil things. Depart from me evilsayers.<sup>75</sup> Thus her abode is established in Salem, and her heavenly dwelling place in Zion.<sup>76</sup> Therefore Christ loved her soul whose body He buried.



### Of King Clovis

Then what great numbers of both the famous and the unknown were received at her tomb, bringing petitions: the weak, lame, blind, withered, mute, deaf, lunatic, those with all kinds of diseases and demons. No one could describe them. The miracle which they sought was received by all. Among them was Clovis, first king of the Franks and Teutons, who had been baptized as a Christian by St. Remy, bishop of Rheims.<sup>77</sup> It is said that Clovis came to the place because he suffered from a serious kidney problem and he had heard rumours of the godly hostess of Christ. As soon as he touched her sacred tomb, he rejoiced to recover, healed of the disease for which no one had been able to discover a cure. And because of St. Martha, he gave to her place the land and cities and towns for three miles on both sides of the Rhône, and sealed it with his ring. And he made this place a free church, writing that it could not be made subject to anyone at any time.

### Of the Vengeance of God in This Place

As for the rest, there is one thing of which it is not good to be silent. For from that time on, if any theft or robbery or false witness or adultery and any outrageous thing was done in that place, or any cheating, in a short

time divine vengeance was enacted. And if it was not, it was because the right hand of God was reserving his vengeance for the future: for no good will be unrewarded or evil unpunished. Both the punished and the unpunished must stand before God.<sup>78</sup> Therefore the inhabitants of this place were terrified and recognized their wickedness. Marcilla and Syntex and Epaphras, the most virtuous and apostolic of individuals, went to Sclavonia<sup>79</sup> and, preaching there the gospel of Christ, they continued with good works. Marcilla lived ten years after St. Martha. She produced this long life of the distinguished one in Hebrew, then I, Syntex, transcribed it into Latin much later. Euchodius and Germanus and Sostenes, followers of St. Martha, kept watch over the sacred body of the godly hostess as long as they lived, and rested in that place after a blessed end. Therefore we brothers are informed of this holy one, whose life we call to memory, for one who is mindful of her will be remembered by God, and we wish to be worthy to reign with her in the heavenly kingdom in good time. Thus Martha, the hostess of Christ, is a form of the active life in the present and for the future, for she will receive the needy who come to her home in the kingdom of heaven, as it was said to her by the Lord. Come and speak well of me to my Father, and gather me into my kingdom. Thus it is declared, and I surrender myself, because He is worthy to answer for

us, whose kingdom and rule will endure without end, for ever  
and ever, Amen.

SOURCE: Vita Auct. Pseudo-Marcilia, Interprete  
Pseudo-Syntychē (BHL 5546a), as published in  
Boninus Mombritius, Sanctuarius, seu Vitae  
Sanctorum, Mediolani: ante 1480, reprinted  
Paris: Fontemoing, 1910, pp. 231-239.

### Alternate Ending (BHL 5546b)

Therefore St. Martha, the happy and most esteemed hostess of Christ, and his faithful and most beloved disciple [sic: word or section missing?] through divine inspiration, coming together in Tarascon to visit her and to consecrate the church which had been built there in the name of the holy Christ and St. Mary [sic: word or section missing?] by three bishops of the seventy-two disciples of Christ, namely Trophimus of Arles<sup>80</sup>, Maximinus of Aix and Eutropius of Orange and by many other religious men and women, concealing in that place many holy and precious relics which she had brought from regions across the sea with great eagerness and labour. The three aforementioned bishops solemnly consecrated the aforementioned church. At the banquet, the wine having run short, water was converted into wine. Then through Maximinus, Mary the sister of Martha conveyed a promise that she would visit her, which she fulfilled not while living but after her death. This church [was] respectfully dedicated according to the custom of the aforementioned bishops of the seventy-two disciples of Jesus Christ, namely Martialus of Poitiers, Sergius Paulus of Narbonne, Saturninus of Toulouse and Fronto of Périgueux. All these, informed by a divine oracle, came together at the same time near the city of Arles, which the

distinguished teacher of the people, Paul the apostle, converted to faith, in the place which is called Ayliscampis<sup>81</sup>. There St. Trophimus, disciple of the apostle and appointed bishop of the aforementioned city, built an oratory in honour of Mary the mother of God and consecrated [literally: for the consecration of] a cemetery in which the faithful of both sexes and all ages were to be buried in peace. They came together equally. When the Lord Jesus by His hand divinely consecrated it, He deigned to show his bodily presence in that place to the seven bishops. Therefore the seven bishops and all the others who came knew Him, and they did not ask Him, "Who are you?," knowing that He was the Lord. Then the Lord Jesus, raising His hands, blessed them all together in the cemetery where they were, and comforting them and instructing [them] of His kingdom, He approved the consecration of His own cemetery, which they had consumed [sic] with His help and the imparting of His authority. And He encouraged and pardoned [them] especially, and granted that no one marked by the character of the Christian faith and persevering in it until the end would be forbidden at any time from burial in this cemetery in which they were to be buried, promising great favour and great reward in the life eternal to those dying in communion with the Catholic church. Moreover He who is faithful in all His words solemnly promised that their bodies would be safe and free from illusion and the harassment of demons,

lest unclean spirits would be able to dwell in their tombs. For they longed to stay in the sepulchres of the dead, according to that statement in the gospel: as Jesus was embarking from the boat, a man with an unclean spirit ran out from the tomb, a man who had his dwelling place among the tombs. And thereafter [they were made safe], lest the matter of the bodies of these men be used as a figment or a mechanism of an evil spirit. For they who were incorporeal and invisible wished to appear in corporal and visible forms. For thus Satan transfigured himself into an angel of light, which God through a hidden decision allowed to be done. Therefore, these things being accomplished for the praise and glory and power and defense of the Christian name by the ineffable goodness of God, the only begotten son of God again blessed them and His cemetery, and said farewell, and reaching out to all, He departed from their sight to the right hand of the majesty on high. The disciples took delight in the divine vision and heavenly rewards of which He was able to speak freely, showing thanks to the greatest of the Trinity, the simple God,<sup>82</sup> for such great favour. In memory of the vision of the Lord and His appearance in the place where their feet stood and [the place] where He showed Himself to them corporally, [and] in honour of the glorious and blessed ever-Virgin mother of God, they erected an altar on the earth nearby in the manner of the rites of the Old Testament, that you made me an altar from earth, and it was

owed higher devotion and reverence than the oratory which St. Trophimus [Ephesinus?] the archbishop of Arles built to the rising of the sun, and which they consecrated on the calends of January. They engraved carefully and firmly letters in Greek on the marble altar for future memory, which all generally noted, and which the intelligent understood. And immediately they endeavoured to set in order at this altar divine ceremonies of obligations. And St. Trophimus, weighed down with the obligation of the flesh, grew weak and instructed his brothers to bury him, and he asked most passionately that they would do all correctly. All returned with rejoicing to their own homes.

## Chapter 2

### The Life of St. Martha Excerpted from the Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae et Sororis Eius Sanctae Marthae (BHL 5508)

Chapter 1 - In the territory of Jerusalem, on the mount of Olives, fifteen stadia from the holy city towards the rising of the sun [i.e. to the east], was situated Bethany, often named in the Gospels as the home of Mary Magdalene, Lazarus and Martha, and well known for the frequent visits of the Lord Saviour, for the hospitality given, the famous miracles, the memorable tears, the magnificent procession, the distinguished footsteps, the remarkable ascension. St. Martha, the venerable hostess and most devoted servant of the son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was born in this town. Her most noble mother, Eucharis by name, traced her renowned lineage from the royal race of Israel. Her father Theophilus,<sup>1</sup> of the Syrian nation, acquired fame not only for his noble lineage but also for his notable renown and most skilled administration, and, in fact, governing as first among the satraps of the province and considered of great importance by the sons of his age, he was a famous leader and prince of all Syria and the whole maritime region. But what is more, after becoming a disciple of Christ as a result of the preaching of Christ, he gave up



all his worldly offices and humbly followed in the footsteps of Christ. Martha had a sister named Mary, renowned for her beauty, and a brother named Lazarus, who was also of exceptional character and in the flower of youth. Talents and sound industry abounded in these three, and they obtained a sound knowledge of Hebrew literature in their childhood years. Goodness of nature was made complete with diligence and honesty; in each one was found physical beauty, a most pleasing character and considerable eloquence. Indeed, each in turn would seem to rival the others with respect to both character and charm.

Chapter 2 - As mentioned previously, Martha's family, being of noble lineage and of distinguished connections, possessed by hereditary right a great inheritance, including lands, money and many servants, a large part of the city of Jerusalem, and three other towns: Bethany in Judaea, which was two miles outside of Jerusalem, Magdala in Galilee, on the left side of the sea of Gennesaret in a valley in the mountains two miles from Tiberius, and a second Bethany across the Jordan in Galilee, in the place where John baptized.<sup>2</sup> Living harmoniously in all ways, they abounded in good things. Both her brother and sister wished to have Martha, as the eldest, in charge of all their important business matters and lands. She did not take advantage of them, but having the soul of a man in her female breast, she

acted generously.<sup>3</sup> Having no husband, she abounded in self-control; she was sweet and well-loved by her own, gentle and courteous towards the poor, merciful and generous to all. In short, she was a woman respected and venerated by all, because she was of noble race, abundant abilities, renowned beauty, famous modesty, hospitable and of great wealth, and obliging to all. This was Martha. [The chapter concludes with a description of Mary and her character.]

[Chapter 3 discusses the ways in which Mary misused the gifts and advantages which had been given her. Chapter 4 briefly summarizes Jesus' early life and the miracles he performed. Chapter 5 deals primarily with how Mary is converted after hearing of Christ's miracles. It is noted that Martha was linked to Simon the Pharisee by ties of both blood and friendship. Chapters 6-8 describe Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet at the home of Simon the Leper, after which Jesus forgave her sins. In chapter 9 it is noted that Mary and many other women accompanied Jesus. Martha is not specifically named as one of them. Some of the miracles of Jesus are recorded, including that of the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage. She is described as having come from Caesarea Philippi, and following her healing she erected a statue of herself and Christ near her home. This woman is said to have been named Martha, but she is not identified with Martha of Bethany.]

Chapter 10 - Around the same time the Saviour was transfigured at Mount Tabor in Galilee.<sup>4</sup> And as the days of His pilgrimage neared an end, He set His face to go to Jerusalem,<sup>5</sup> unafraid in mind, seeking the place where He would suffer. And when He came, He entered into a certain town,<sup>6</sup> namely the town of Magdala, so named because it was the possession of Mary Magdalene. There Martha received Him as a guest, and all of those with Him, and gathered together her rich resources for her guest and His companions. For there were with the Lord Saviour His twelve apostles, the seventy-two disciples,<sup>7</sup> and a large number of noble women. While Martha worried about domestic chores, her most holy sister chose to sit at the feet of the Saviour and to hear His words, rather than coming to assist her sister, who had her hands full with many duties.<sup>8</sup> Therefore Martha said in the presence of the Saviour: "Lord, do you not care that my sister leaves me to serve alone? Tell her to help me."<sup>9</sup> On hearing this, Mary did not answer her complaining sister, but, as if already dining at a banquet in contemplating Him, entrusted her defence to the Saviour saying, "I sit in the shade of Him whom I desire, and the fruit of His mouth is sweet to my taste. Considering these things in my heart, therefore I will trust."<sup>10</sup> And the Saviour replied, "Martha, Martha, you are worried."<sup>11</sup> The repetition of her name indicated His love.<sup>12</sup> For He loved her with great

affection because of her pious actions, and Mary, because of her enthusiasm for contemplation. He said: "You are concerned about taking care of domestic matters and greatly agitated about what is needed for the poor and the afflicted. But, as for the rest, one thing is necessary: to be continually close to God. This is the best part. Your sister Mary has chosen it, and it will not be taken away from her."<sup>13</sup> Her contemplation, her love and her desire that faith begin in her will not be lacking at any time, and in the end will be perfected five-fold in heaven." Having said this, He sat down at the table with the twelve apostles, the seventy and the religious women. St. Martha served the meal, with generosity, as was customary, along with the distinguished Marcella, the governess of her house,<sup>14</sup> and Susanna and Joanna, whose husband was the governor of the kingdom of Antipas and table steward of the tetrarch of Galilee.<sup>15</sup>

[In chapter 11 it is noted that Jesus frequently returned to Magdala and lodged with Martha and Mary. One day when Jesus was healing and preaching, he was told that his mother and brothers were seeking Him. He replied: "Who are my mother and brothers?" Martha's servant Marcella, who was in the crowd of followers, cried out: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked," to which Jesus responded: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and

keep it."<sup>16</sup> Chapter 12 again records that Jesus' frequently visited the home of Martha and Mary, and then describes his encounter with the woman accused of adultery (John 8:2-10).]

Chapter 13 - In the middle of winter, on the fifteenth day of the month called Casleu [i.e. December], a feast was made in Jerusalem, and the Saviour walked in the temple in the portico of Solomon, where He preached and said: "I and the Father are one," and the Jews took up stones to stone Him.<sup>17</sup> But He escaped from their hands and journeyed across the Jordan to Bethany in Galilee, the town of Mary and Martha, where John the Baptist first baptized, and remained there.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, His friend Lazarus fell sick at Bethany of Judaea, the town of the sisters Mary and Martha. Therefore the sisters sent across the Jordan to the Saviour in Bethany, saying: "Behold, he whom You love is ill."<sup>19</sup> "It is enough," they said, "to announce to a loved one the sickness of a loved one. He is our friend, He loves Lazarus, He will not easily abandon the one whom He loves dearly." On hearing this the Saviour said: "This sickness will not lead to death, but a miracle, for the glory of God and in order that the Son of God may be glorified through it."<sup>20</sup> For Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus.<sup>21</sup> The one was ill, the others unhappy, and all loved. But from where was this love? Jesus loved them, the

Saviour of the weak, the one who raised the dead and consoled the unhappy. Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus. O happy and praiseworthy generation! For He who is truth says: "I love those who love me,"<sup>22</sup> yet rarely in the Scriptures are the faithful whom God loves mentioned especially by name. But when the Saviour heard that Lazarus was ill, He delayed His coming. He delayed bringing aid, in order that He could revive him from death. And thus, He remained in Bethany of Galilee for two days, until the fourth day.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile the body of Lazarus was burning with a relentless fever. The doctors were powerless and medicines useless. Nothing could cure the sick one, until the Lord wished to heal him. His sisters, sitting beside the bed of the young man, promised that Jesus would arrive, hoping that He would heal him. But his life spirit dissolved from the heat of the fever in his chest. The holy sisters cried aloud for the young man, tearing their clothes and falling on the body to embrace the dead one. Their faces were wet with tears, their eyes dark from crying, and they filled the air with laments. Finally the funeral ceremony was made and the body was brought with great pomp. Lazarus was enclosed in a marble tomb, and the stone which shut him in was wet with tears. And because he was of noble lineage and of more noble character, upright in actions, discrete in his words, generous and worthy in spirit, the

most noble people of Jerusalem came to Bethany to offer condolences and attend his funeral.

Chapter 14 - Meanwhile, two days later, the Saviour said to his twelve disciples: "Let us journey into Judaea."<sup>24</sup> The frightened apostles gave counsel to the Lord that He would die, He who had come to die, and that they themselves would die. They said: "Rabbi, the Jews seek to stone you, and you would travel there?"<sup>25</sup> Jesus replied: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If someone walks at night, he stumbles, because the light of the world is not with him. But if he will walk during the day, he does not stumble, for he sees the light of this world."<sup>26</sup> I am the day, I am the light of the world. It is for me to precede you, the twelve hours, and for you to follow, as the hours follow the day. Therefore do not forbid me to suffer. Do not give me counsel. But follow me if you do not wish to stumble." Having said this, He said: "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go to awaken him from sleep."<sup>27</sup> At this the disciples replied according to their understanding: "Lord, if he sleeps, he will be well, for if the sick sleep it is a sign that they will recover."<sup>28</sup> But Jesus had spoken of his death; they supposed that He spoke of taking rest in sleep.<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus said to them plainly: "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sake that I was not there, so that you may believe nothing is hidden from me. I know that

he is dead. Let us go to him."<sup>30</sup> Then Thomas said to his fellow disciples: "Let us go and we will die with Him."<sup>31</sup> Behold the mark of a true friend, to wish to live or die with him. Soon Christ came and found that Lazarus had already been in the grave for four days.<sup>32</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about fifteen stadia, or two miles less a stadia away.<sup>33</sup> And many Jews came to Mary and Martha to console them concerning their brother.<sup>34</sup> Therefore Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet him, while Mary stayed at home.<sup>35</sup> Martha said to Jesus: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know now that whatever you would ask of God, God will give it."<sup>36</sup> And I know that you are able to restore him to life. But I leave the choice to you, Lord. I do not ask that you raise him, for I do not presume to know if there is some useful purpose in raising him." Jesus said to her: "Your brother will rise."<sup>37</sup> Martha said to Him: "I know that he will rise in the general resurrection in the last day."<sup>38</sup> Jesus said to her: "I am the Resurrection and the Life, and because I am Life, he rises through me: he will rise through me then, and if I wish, now. Whoever believes in me, the Life, if he were dead in the flesh, he lives, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob live, as I am the God of the living. Whoever believes in me lives, even though dead. Whoever does not believe in me is dead, even though he lives. And all those who, when living in the flesh, believe in me, at



that time when they die in the flesh will not die for eternity: they will live in spirit, in the meantime, waiting for the resurrection of the body." And when he had said this He asked: "Do you believe this?" knowing Martha to be faithful, but wishing a confession.<sup>39</sup> For he believed that a confession of the mouth confirmed the health of the heart. She said: "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into the world to save the world."<sup>40</sup>

Chapter 15 - After saying this, Martha went and called her sister softly saying: "The Master is here and calls you."<sup>41</sup> These words show that the Lord called Mary, although John, to shorten his narrative, is silent as to when and how Mary was called. Therefore Mary, on hearing that the Lord asked for her, arose quickly and came to Him.<sup>42</sup> For Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in that place where He had met Martha.<sup>43</sup> Then the Jews who were with her in the house, comforting her, when they saw Mary rise up quickly and leave, and they followed her, thinking that she sought relief from her sorrows in weeping, saying: "She is going to the tomb, to weep there."<sup>44</sup> But Mary, when she came to where Jesus was, on seeing Him, threw herself at His feet and said to Him: "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died."<sup>45</sup> For no illness would dare to show itself in your presence, for around you life is customarily

received." Jesus, when He saw Mary weeping and the Jews who came with her weeping, was troubled in His spirit, and was thrown into confusion Himself.<sup>46</sup> He whom no one was able to disturb was disturbed, because he wished to be, according to His own will. And even today when a sinner considers the goodness of God which he receives from God and the evil which he returns to God, he trembles in spirit and is moved and troubled. The faith in man trembles when he is rebuked by his sin, Christ trembles in them, Christ is disturbed: for whoever has faith in Christ has Christ in his heart. Then Jesus said: "Where have you laid him?" They said to him: "Lord, come and see."<sup>47</sup> And Jesus wept.<sup>48</sup> O great feeling of tenderness! O great testimony of love! O sign of inestimable intimacy! Who can estimate sufficiently, after that, what great love burned between the Lord Saviour and his friend Mary, the sign of which we know is indicated by the ardour of their most sweet tears! I believe, in looking back, that this love is incomprehensible to all humanity and even to the angels! And Jesus wept. O most worthy tears of reverence, which one cannot name without crying! The tears of the Son of God overflowed from his most pure eyelids, flowed from His most pure eyes, wet His most serene face, when He saw Mary crying: His spirit was troubled, and He was thrown into confusion Himself! And Jesus wept. For Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus. Therefore the Jews said: "Behold, how much He

loved him."<sup>49</sup> And some among them said: "Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind have prevented him from dying?"<sup>50</sup> He was able but did not wish it, because it is a greater thing to raise a dead person than to heal one who is sick.

Chapter 16 - Jesus, trembling again within himself, came to the tomb.<sup>51</sup> And He trembles in you who are in the habit of sinning, if you wish to be restored to life. It was a cave, and a stone was placed there. And Jesus said: "Take away the stone."<sup>52</sup> Martha said to him: "Lord, he will already stink, because it is the fourth day."<sup>53</sup> Jesus said to her: "Did I not say to you that if you will believe you will see the glory of God?"<sup>54</sup> And what is the glory of God? It is that where sin abounds, grace will be more abundant,<sup>55</sup> and that he who is forgiven much loves more."<sup>56</sup> Then they took away the stone. Jesus, raising his eyes above, said: "Father, I give thanks to you because you hear me. I know that you always hear me, but I say this because of the people who are standing about, so that they may believe that you have sent me." When He had said this, He cried aloud.<sup>57</sup> He cried aloud because to rise up is difficult when the burden of bad habits weighs down. And according to Zechariah, iniquity sits like a lead weight.<sup>58</sup> And therefore He cried with a loud voice and He trembled and He was troubled and shed tears. He said: "Lazarus, come out."

And immediately he who was dead came forth, his hands tied and his feet bound and his face enveloped in a cloth.<sup>59</sup> Even so the sinner is bound in inner darkness by his stubborn mind, and he will be bound in the external darkness of future damnation. But Christ released him first from the internal chains of death, then ordered the apostles to untie the external ones. And He said to him: "Untie him and let him go."<sup>60</sup> I say therefore you are gods,<sup>61</sup> and do not revile God,<sup>62</sup> and you will be joined to God as a servant in order to be made free.<sup>63</sup> Therefore they are wrong who grant to God alone the forgiveness of sins and deny that men can participate in it. And they slander God when they deny the power that is given them by God. God alone is good.<sup>64</sup> God alone performs miracles.<sup>65</sup> God alone forgives sins.<sup>66</sup> Without God no one is good. Without God no one can perform miracles. Without God no one can forgive sins. No one is good except God alone. No one can perform miracles except God alone. No one can forgive sins except God alone. Does he lie, therefore, who says of the just Joseph: he is a man good and righteous;<sup>67</sup> or of a holy man: he performed miracles in his life;<sup>68</sup> or Christ, who said: the sins which you forgive will be forgiven.<sup>69</sup> No. For what man does, God does through him. Man does much greater and more honourable things when God works through him. For God did not say to Peter: that which first will be bound in heaven you will bind on earth afterwards, but the reverse.<sup>70</sup> Thus

the judgement of Peter did not precede but followed the judgement of heaven. Thus it is that if the Lord gives to men the power to forgive sins, God himself forgives sins through men. For if the sinner truly repents of his sins, but is not able to confess them, I confidently pronounce that he is furnished with a great high priest, who does what a mortal is not able to do.<sup>71</sup> And it is established before the Lord, because the man does not scorn confession, but truly wishes it, and does not succeed in performing it because necessity prevents him.

Chapter 17 - Many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what Jesus did believed in Him. However, some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.<sup>72</sup> Therefore the chief priests and Pharisees came together in a council, at which the priest Caiphas prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation of the Jews.<sup>73</sup> Therefore from that day, there was no doubt as previously, but from then it was determined that they would take counsel to kill Him.<sup>74</sup> Therefore Jesus did not walk freely about Jerusalem, but went to the country near the wilderness, into the city which is called Ephraim; and He stayed there with His disciples.<sup>75</sup> The Passover, the feast day of the Jews, was approaching, and the high priests gave orders that if anyone knew where Jesus was he should indicate so that they could arrest Him.<sup>76</sup> And Jesus, knowing well that they conspired

against Him, returned to Bethany near Jerusalem, like a lamb to the slaughter,<sup>77</sup> six days before the feast of the Passover,<sup>78</sup> to be killed the sixth day afterwards, at the sixth hour: He who created all in six days, who formed man on the sixth day,<sup>79</sup> who will return in the sixth age to redeem men.<sup>80</sup> It was the solemn Sabbath day, and they made a feast for Him in the house of Simon the Leper,<sup>81</sup> whom he had healed of leprosy a long time previously. Therefore Jesus and the twelve apostles sat down at the table and many joined with them. Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with them,<sup>82</sup> and not as a ghost, which proved that he was truly living. And St. Martha, as was customary, served the meal,<sup>83</sup> abundantly, with cheerful countenance and with generous spirit. Mary Magdalene, the foremost of all the servants of Christ, was not neglectful herself, inasmuch as her great zeal and ardent love did not allow her to rest: taking a pound of precious ointment, she approached the Saviour, with great reverence, and anointed his feet while he was recumbent.<sup>84</sup> [The remainder of chapter 17 and chapter 18 elaborate upon this action of Mary Magdalene, and her subsequent anointing of his head, and their significance.]

[In chapter 19 the events of the week preceding Jesus' death are described, and it is noted that in the evenings He returned to Bethany, to the home of Mary and Martha.

Chapters 20-28 describe Jesus' trial, crucifixion and post-resurrection appearances. Mary's role is emphasized, but Martha is not mentioned. Chapters 29-30 discuss again Mary's anointings of Christ and their significance.]

Chapter 31 - On the fortieth day after His resurrection, when He was about to ascend into heaven, the Saviour wished to see again His own who were in the world, and wishing to be seen by them, He appeared to them in the holy city while they were eating.<sup>85</sup> And as soon as He was seated at the table, He ate with them, so that through the act of eating He proved that He was truly in the flesh. It was thus a solemn feast of joy, the most memorable meal of all time, a worthy feast for angels and men. The Virgin Mary, his happy and glorious mother, the queen of heaven, sat at the table with the Son of God; and he whom Jesus loved before the others, John, the apostle and evangelist, prophet and virgin;<sup>86</sup> also, the special friend of the Saviour and his foremost servant, Mary Magdalene; and his hostess, the most devoted Martha; and Lazarus, whom he had recalled from the dead; also Mary Cleophas, and Salome, and Joanna, and Susanna. [Each of the eleven remaining apostles are mentioned by name and epitaph.] And they were most faithful co-workers, although it was said before the passion that not even His brothers believed in Him.<sup>87</sup> The Son of God deigned to eat with them and afterwards reproached them for

their disbelief.<sup>88</sup> He said: "I send the promise of my Father upon you. Remain in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.<sup>89</sup> For you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit before many days."<sup>90</sup> He imposed on them the charge to preach first in Jerusalem, in Judaea and in Samaria,<sup>91</sup> and then, when the Jews had rejected the Word of Life, to preach the Gospel to all the world,<sup>92</sup> promising to the evangelists the power to perform wonders of all kinds.<sup>93</sup> He said these and similar things as if He were a king on his couch speaking to the princes of His people. Then, the meal being finished, He arose. And leaving, He led his table companions outside, to Bethany on the Mount of Olives, which was a mile from Jerusalem, to celebrate the Sabbath.<sup>94</sup> Finally, with the queen of Heaven, His companions the Marys, the apostles and the crowd of disciples standing by, about one hundred and twenty people, He said His final farewells: "Behold I am with you, even to the end of the age."<sup>95</sup> And raising His hand, He blessed them,<sup>96</sup> and at the same time they saw Him rising into the sky, being carried to heaven. Then a luminous cloud appeared and received Him into the sky,<sup>97</sup> while the queen of heaven, the apostles, the beloved of God and the companion Marys watched.

[Chapter 32 describes how Christ took into heaven with Him the just who had risen from their graves at the time of His



own resurrection. It concludes with a comparison of Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist. Chapter 33 discusses the Magdalene's great love for the Saviour, and her sorrow after his ascension.]

Chapter 34 - Finally, after the vision and words of the angels, the apostles, having worshipped the Lord and Saviour in the place where his feet had stood, accompanied the queen of heaven to Jerusalem with great rejoicing,<sup>98</sup> and they entered the temple, praising and blessing the Lord.<sup>99</sup> And going up into the dining room with the mother of God, the Marys and the other holy women and associates of Christ, about one hundred and twenty people all together, with great joy they devoted themselves as one to prayers.<sup>100</sup> And having elected St. Matthias to the number of the apostles,<sup>101</sup> the day of Pentecost arrived. The Holy Spirit descended upon them at the third hour of the day, showing its physical presence in tongues of fire and a violent noise. And they began to speak the languages of all the people and to prophesy.<sup>102</sup> For whatever language was spoken by each one of these hundred men and women, it seemed to all listening that it was his own language that was being spoken to them.<sup>103</sup> At that time there were inhabitants of Jerusalem celebrating the feast day who were religious men of all languages and nations under heaven. Of these five thousand believed without constraint,<sup>104</sup> and soon they were

innumerable. All who believed were together, and they had all things in common.<sup>105</sup> For whoever were owners of lands and homes sold all and placed the price at the feet of the apostles. Lazarus, the friend of the Lord Saviour, with his sisters Mary and Martha, possessed a great inheritance and many riches, Jerusalem and Bethany of Judaea, Magdala and Bethany of Galilee. They sold all and laid the price at the feet of the prince of the apostles. The noble women and widows served the queen of heaven, the glorious Virgin Mary, mother of God, with admirable devotion and praiseworthy affection, and they offered great allegiance to the holy apostles of Christ, according to the customs of the country; and they were honoured themselves. These were those who had been the devoted companions of the Lord Saviour: Mary, called Magdalene, the special friend of the Son of God and foremost of His servants, the apostle of the apostles;<sup>106</sup> as well as St. Martha, the hostess of Christ, and his generous daughter; and the aunts of the Lord, Mary Cleophas and Salome, and Joanna and Susanna, his servants and relatives of the queen of heaven, whom the evangelist called her sisters.<sup>107</sup> Because of their burning zeal, it was rumoured among the Jews who came from Greece that because of these women from Galilee and Judaea, they were neglectful of the widows of their saints in the daily ministering.<sup>108</sup> This being known, the prince of the apostles called a council, and chose seven deacons in charge of the tables,

and they served the tables: Stephen, Philip, Parmenas, Timon, Prochorus, Nicanor and Nicolaus.<sup>109</sup> St. Stephen was also renowned for his miracles, and soon received a martyr's crown. But all the disciples of the Saviour, with the deacon Philip, were thrown out of Jerusalem, except those apostles who were with the queen of heaven and the women who ministered to them.<sup>110</sup> Mary Magdalene was attached to the glorious Virgin Mary, who was the queen of heaven and mother of the eternal king, with indescribable devotion, ministering to her and following her with an admirable devotion, and joining with her in the contemplation of heaven: because the Virgin was worthy of visions of angels, and visitations. Mary, because she was her servant and the special friend of her son, our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, deserved to be supported and refreshed often. Soothed by her frequent visions and conversations, she meditated incessantly on the memory of the great sweetness of Christ, her love of loves, by whom, in her meditation, the fires of love were ignited, an inextinguishable fire which daily consumed her with unquenchable longing for her Redeemer.

Chapter 35 - [The chapter begins with a description of the high regard in which Mary Magdalene was held by the apostles and the inspiration which she proved to them.] Frequently in their preaching to the people, the disciples also recalled the incomparable devotion of St. Martha in serving

the holy Saviour and all His needs, and her generous spirit and great kindness, and how intimate and popular and pleasing to the Son of God these two devoted sisters were, more than all of the women. How deeply they loved Him, how dearly they were loved by God, how He frequented their lodgings, how passionately they provided Him and those with Him all that they needed out of their own resources, how confidently they called Him to their brother: "Behold, he whom you love is sick,"<sup>111</sup> how lovingly the death of their brother was revealed to the apostles: "Lazarus our friend sleeps,"<sup>112</sup> how compassionately He wept on seeing them weeping,<sup>113</sup> and with what tears He wept: it was such that the Jews said: "Behold, how much He loved him,"<sup>114</sup> agreeing that Jesus loved this disciple more than the others. The Lord Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus.<sup>115</sup> Thus the apostles resolved to make the home of the friends of Christ, namely Lazarus, Mary and Martha, a house of prayer; they recalled how often the omnipotent of God, the Son of the Virgin Mary, had come there and rested, dined, slept, spent the night, prayed and performed many miracles, and how the Saviour Himself had blessed and dedicated it by His holy habitation and visits. And as the number of the faithful grew, St. Lazarus was ordained bishop of his own city in this basilica. After the persecution of the Jews grew more severe, Lazarus went to Cyprus, preaching the word of Christ, and he presided as the first bishop there and

lived twenty-four years after his resurrection. The memory of him and his sisters is venerated to the present day in Bethany on the sixteenth day before the calends of January.

Chapter 36 - [The chapter begins with a description of the fates of the apostles of Christ.] And Peter, on leaving the Orient to go to Rome, designated preachers of the Gospel for those areas to which he could not go himself from the original followers of Christ: for the region of Gaul, in which there were seventeen provinces, the same number of teachers, and for the country of Spain, in which there were seven provinces, the same number of teachers. The first among these twenty-four elders was Maximinus, originally one of the number of the seventy disciples of the Lord Saviour,<sup>116</sup> an illustrious teacher, renowned for performing all kinds of miracles and chosen the leader of the Christian army after the apostles. St. Mary Magdalene united herself to him through the bonds of love for his religion and his holiness, and, as his companion, would not separate herself from his retinue wherever the Lord called him. For already the queen of heaven, in whose service Mary had experienced the delights of heaven through contemplation, had been assumed into heaven; already ten of the apostles had been taken away, for they persisted for so long in pious devotion that the hatred of the Jews for the church had resulted in persecution; Herod beheaded the

apostle James<sup>117</sup> and imprisoned Peter,<sup>118</sup> and in the end the believers were expelled. As the storm of persecution raged, the faithful sought to disperse to the various places on earth which the Lord had chosen for them, so that they could preach steadfastly the word of salvation to people ignorant of Christ. When they left, they were accompanied by the noble women and widows who had ministered to them in Jerusalem and in the East, who were not able to endure being long separated from the special friend of the Lord Saviour and foremost of all his servants. Among them was the venerable hostess of the Son of God, St. Martha, who followed in the footsteps of her sister, her most reverend brother Lazarus being then in Cyprus as bishop; among them also was St. Marcella, a woman of great devotion and faith, the servant of Martha, who had greeted the Lord saying: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, etc."<sup>119</sup> St. Martha approached St. Parmenas,<sup>120</sup> a deacon full of faith and the grace of God, and committed herself to his care and protection through Christ, just as St. Mary had to St. Maximinus. Through the admirable counsel of divine providence, they journeyed towards the westward regions, in order that the praise and memory of St. Mary and her sister should become known in all the world not only through the Gospel: since in the East the example of their devoted lives was already highly regarded, the west was adorned with their physical presence and their most holy relics.

Chapter 37 - Therefore Bishop Maximinus, Archdeacon Parmenas, Bishops Trophimus and Eutropius and the other leaders of the Christian army set out upon the waves of the sea, along with Mary Magdalene, the glorious one of God, and her sister St. Martha. Blown by the east wind, they left Asia and descended through the Tyrrhenian Sea between Europe and Africa by a circuitous route, leaving on the right the city of Rome and all of Italy, as well as the Alps, which rose up between the Ligurian coast and the Gallic Sea, curving to the east from the Ligurian coast. They ended up in the Adriatic Sea, and through good fortune steered towards the right to the region of Vienne in the province of Gaul, near the city of Marseille, where the Rhône meets the Gallic Sea. There, after invoking God, the great prince of the world, the provinces of the region to which the Spirit had steered them were divided among them by His inspiration. Wherever they went out and preached, the Lord took part and confirmed their preaching by the signs which followed it.<sup>121</sup> For the king of power of the beloved, of the beloved, gave the word to the evangelists, with much power, in order to divide the spoils of the strongly armed in the sight of the house of God.<sup>122</sup> Bishop Maximinus was assigned by lot Aix, metropolitan of the second province of Narbonne, where St. Mary Magdalene finished the course of her wanderings; Paulus, Narbonne, metropolitan of the first province of

Narbonne; Austregisulus, Bourges, metropolitan of first Aquitaine; Irenaeus, Lyons, metropolitan of third Lyons (first; Gratianus, Tours, metropolitan of Lyons); Sabinus and Potentianus, Sens, metropolitan of fourth Lyons; Valerius, Trèves, metropolitan of first Belgium; Feroncius, Besançon, metropolitan of the province of greater Saint-Seine; Eutropius, Saintonge, a city of second Aquitaine, of which the metropolitan is now Bourdeaux; Trophimus, Arles, then metropolitan of the province of Vienne. These ten provinces of Gaul believed because of their preaching. The rest of the teachers preached not to the remaining seven provinces but to the seven states of the provinces: Eutropius at Orange, a state of the province of Vienne; Fronto at Périgueux, a city of second Aquitaine; Georgius at Velay, a city of second Aquitaine; Julianus at Le Mans, a city of third Lyons; Martialus at Poitiers, a city of first Aquitaine; Saturninus at the city of Toulouse, in first Narbonne, to which he hurried from the Capitoline Hill, because of faith in Christ. Parmenas withdrew to the city of Avignon, in the province of Vienne, with the venerable servant of the Lord Saviour St. Martha, and also Marcella her servant, Epaphras, Sosthenes, Germanus, Euchodia and Syntex. Rouen, with its province, the second of Lyons, which is now Normandy; Mayence, with its province, first Germany; Cologne, with its province, second Germany; Octodure, with its province of the Greek Alps and Pennines;



Auch, metropolitan of its province of Guyenne; Embrun, metropolitan of its province of the maritime Alps; Rheims, metropolitan of its province second Belgium: these were reserved for other teachers. Those designated for Spain by the apostles were named Torquatus, Thesiphum, Secundus, Indalecius, Caecilius, Esicius, Euphrasius. The seven provinces of Spain were converted to the Christian faith by these seven.

[Chapter 38 describes Mary Magdalene's activity as a preacher at Aix, and her exemplary contemplative life.]

Chapter 39 - St. Martha and her companions preached the gospel of the Lord Saviour to the people in the towns of Avignon and Arles, and in the villages near the Rhône in the province of Vienne, giving testimony to the people she saw around her and witnessing publicly to what the Lord Saviour had proclaimed. Whatever she preached of divine power was reinforced with her own miracles. When occasion demanded, she set about cleansing lepers, healing paralytics, raising the dead, and restoring the blind, mute, deaf, lame, feeble and ill, through prayer and the sign of the holy cross. This was Martha. [Mary Magdalene's power to work miracles is also described.]

Chapter 40 - Between Arles and Avignon, cities of the province of Vienne, near the banks of the Rhône, between the unfruitful bushland and the gravel of the river, there were wild beasts and poisonous reptiles. Among the other poisonous animals there wandered a terrible dragon<sup>123</sup>, of unbelievable length and of great size. Pestilent fumes came forth from its breath, flames of sulphur from its eyes, shrill shrieks and horrible roars from its mouth, with its curved teeth. It tore everything apart with its teeth and claws, and its lethal breath destroyed all who approached. It is unbelievable how many flocks and shepherds it devoured, what multitudes of men were brought to their death by its deadly odour! One day as the holy one was preaching the word of God to the crowds gathered around, it happened that the conversation of all was of the dragon, and some, as faithful supplicants, and others, as a test, asked whether the power of Christ was as the holy woman declared: for no human effort was able to remove this dragon from their midst. Then Martha said: "All things are possible to those who believe".<sup>124</sup> Soon she proceeded to rejoice with the people when they promised to have faith. She calmly approached the dragon's lair, made the sign of the cross, and restrained its fierceness. She bound the neck of the dragon with her own belt, and looked at the people who were watching from a distance. "Why is it that you are afraid?" she said. "Look, I hold the serpent, and you still

hesitate. Approach boldly, in the name of our Lord Saviour, and tear into pieces this venomous monster!" Having said this, by the power of her strength, she henceforth forbade the dragon to harm anyone with its breath or its teeth. Then, reproaching the crowd for their little faith,<sup>125</sup> and calmly challenging them to strike the dragon which she had chained down in that place, she incited the crowds with difficulty. Finally they set about with their arms and cut apart the confused beast, while wondering at the faith and steadfastness of St. Martha, who so easily and fearlessly held the great beast immobile with her fragile belt while it was being mutilated. This desert place was previously called the black forest, but was subsequently called Tharascona [Tarascon], since the dragon was called Tharascus. Henceforth the people of the province of Vienne who heard of this miracle believed in the Lord Saviour and were baptized, glorifying God because of the miracle of his maidservant, who, from this time, was loved and honoured by all the inhabitants of the province, because of her extraordinary merits.

Chapter 41 - After all the poisonous reptiles were banished from the desert of Tarascon by the strength of God, the most holy Martha chose to reside there. The place which was formerly unpleasant and loathsome became habitable, pleasant and lovely. A house of prayer was built there, which she

was eager to decorate with good deeds and miracles rather than with effeminate, useless ornaments. She stayed there alone for seven years. All her food during all this time was roots and green grasses and produce of the trees and fruits. She regarded it as wickedness to eat more than once a day: she did this to herself, but not to her neighbours. For without kindness, her daily fasting was a punishment for her, and onerous to those who stayed with her. Ever mindful of her former hospitality, she was never without the poor, who received bountifully that which was brought to her. Always the needy had a place at her table; she served herbs to herself, and to them, whatever was necessary, with tender care and her usual piety, setting out food with greater eagerness and enthusiasm than she applied to herself, and mindful that the One [Christ] who hungered and thirsted when He was on earth was no longer in need of temporal service and therefore He now wished her to refresh Him through the poor. The servant of Christ was mindful of that which Christ had said to her: what you do for one of the least of mine, you do for me.<sup>126</sup> Therefore she was now eager to provide for the members of Christ's church, as she had once served its head, showing to all the same love and courtesy. And because God loves a cheerful giver,<sup>127</sup> He provided for His servant with His usual compassion. What she asked for was given in abundance, like an unfailing fountain, and overflowed in her storeroom. When it was

emptied as a result of her daily compassion, she was brought more through the devotion of the faithful, so that she could give abundantly, and they, influenced by her generosity, gave freely. But the rich, who came to her in great numbers, were not sent away empty:<sup>128</sup> they took away benefits to the body and soul. During the seven years her clothing was rough: a sack and hair-shirt with a belt of horsehair tied in knots, so tight on her flesh that the worms came out of her rotted flesh. O what incomparable endurance, since when living in the flesh she was food for worms! She always went barefoot, and covered her head with a camel hair turban. Her bed was of tree branches and twigs, with a blanket spread over them, and a stone laid under her head in place of a pillow. Amid such delights, St. Martha, a thousand times a martyr, fixed her mind on heaven. Her spirit, totally dedicated to God, was lost in prayer throughout the night. Untiringly bending her knee, she worshipped Him whom she once saw in humility in her home, now reigning in heaven. She frequently travelled to the cities and towns, preaching to the people of faith in the Lord Saviour, then returned to her solitary place after gaining many believers. For that which she taught in words was reinforced with miracles and signs. By prayer alone, and by the laying on of hands, demons which occupied bodies were expelled, and all kinds of accomplishments were affected by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 42 - One day St. Martha was seated near Avignon, a city in the province of Vienne, before the city gates, in a pleasant place between the Rhône River and the city walls, proclaiming the word of life to a crowd of citizens and healing the sick. A young man who was across the Rhône saw the throng of people around and wished to hear the word of God, although he had at hand neither a bridge nor a suitable boat. Yet he eagerly desired to hear and to see miracles, and being confident in his swimming ability, he stripped, and, throwing himself into the Rhône river, he began to swim. The eyes of all the citizens across the Rhône were directed towards him, when suddenly he was cut off by the surging tide of the Rhône, and he was submersed and drowned. A clamour arose from the people, approving the faith of the young man and lamenting his misfortune. In short, all of the people came alive: one approved, another objected to sending fishermen with nets to search with all diligence for the body of the young man, to see if through the mercy of the Lord Saviour they could find him. The next day at the ninth hour, after much hard work searching, he was found and brought to St. Martha. All the citizens gathered together to watch. The most noble people of the city, of both sexes, implored and entreated the servant of Christ on their knees, asking that Christ the Saviour would allow them to witness His greatness by reviving this boy. Greatly encouraged, she

agreed, if all those who were there would embrace the Christian faith. All cried aloud with one voice: "We believe the Lord Saviour, the true Son of God, to be God, who chose you as his distinguished servant." At this St. Martha rejoiced and, confident in the goodness and power of the Lord Saviour, prostrated herself in tears and prayed. The people prostrated themselves likewise. With great cries they begged mercy of the omnipotent God, that for the honour and glory of His name, He would deign to show His power through this miracle. The prayers completed, the servant of Christ arose and approached the body. She said: "In the name of the Lord Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, rise up, young man, and tell us what great things the bounty of the Redeemer has done for you." To make a long story short, at her voice his spirit returned, the young man revived and he sat up. He confessed his belief in Christ and was baptized. And after many people gladly rejoiced, he returned safe and unharmed to his home. All the people who witnessed this cried aloud with one voice that Jesus Christ was truly God, and there was no other God except Christ. From that time the renown of St. Martha, the servant of Christ, was publicized by all mouths, and she was loved and honoured by all men and women.

Chapter 43 - At that time the most famous renown of the most holy Martha and the most sweet odour of her good reputation,

like the odour of ripe fields blessed by the Lord,<sup>129</sup> inspired the love of all the souls of the provinces to faith in Christ and in the servant of Christ, throughout all the provinces of Gaul, and especially in Vienne, Narbonne and Aquitaine. Her most holy sister Mary Magdalene, held in great reverence, rejoiced with her and congratulated her, as did the most holy archbishop Maximinus, her protector and the overseer of her contemplative life, who proceeded to go from Narbonne, the second province of Vienne, to Tarascon, in order to see and to speak with the servant of Christ. At the same time, archbishop Trophimus of the city of Arles and bishop Eutropius of Orange both arrived at Tarascon with the same intent and desire, on the same day and hour. None of them suspected the arrival of the others, yet they arrived at the same time, through the inspiration of God, who arranges all things agreeably. The sacred heroine received them with honour, served them with generosity, and urged them to remain. On the sixteenth day from the calends of January, which is the seventeenth day of the month of Casleu, which is called December among the Latins, they dedicated to the Lord Saviour as a basilica the home of St. Martha, famous for her miracles and her virtues and distinguished by her holy way of life. After the dedication of the shrine, when the bishops approached the dinner table, St. Martha served them, with her usual admirable love. Many were gathered together around the



table. The wine ran short, so the hostess of the Lord Saviour ordered water to be poured in the name of Jesus Christ and drunk abundantly by all. And when the bishops at the banquet tasted it, they observed that the water was changed into excellent wine.<sup>130</sup> Therefore the bishops established by common decree that the day should be celebrated each year, on account of the dedication of the basilica and the miracle of the changing of water into wine.

Chapter 44 - After the death of St. Martha, it became the custom that on the day of the dedication of her home and the occasion of this miracle, they celebrated the feast of her death, and also the suffering of her brother, St. Lazarus, the bishop. Today we see that it happens in the same way with St. John the Baptist, and the apostles of Christ John and James, Simon and Jude, and many other martyrs, that their suffering is celebrated not on the day of their death but on the day of the dedication of their churches or the discovery of their relics. The bishops bade farewell to the holy maidservant of Christ, commending her holy and distinguished merits and her prayers. After each gave and received a benediction, they departed, one after another. The holy woman sent greetings to her venerable sister Mary Magdalene, who was praised by all the world, asking fervently that she would deign to visit her while she lived. When the Archbishop returned to the one beloved of God, she

returned the greetings of her sister and complied with her request, although she fulfilled it not while in the body but after her death. Thus it is understood that the holy ones of God remember after death what they have promised when living. It happened at the same time that a fierce persecution of the people arose in Aquitaine, and many Christians were driven into exile. Among them were Fronto, the bishop of Périgueux, and Georgius of Velay, who took refuge with St. Martha at Tarascon. She received them with abundant affection, generously shown, and was eager to keep them with honour until they were able to return to their own dioceses. And in the end, when they were hurrying back to their own places, the maidservant of Christ, as a final farewell, said: "O bishop of Périgueux, at the end of next year I will depart from this mortal body. If it pleases you, I ask that your Holiness return to bury me." The bishop replied: "O daughter, I will come to bury you, God willing, if I am still living." The bishops returned to their own places. Martha called together those staying with her, and predicted her own impending death in a year. And for all that year she lay on her bed of brushwood, burning with fever, like gold refined by fire in a furnace.<sup>131</sup>

[Chapter 45 discusses the death and burial of Mary Magdalene.]

Chapter 46 - While these things happened near Aix, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Narbonne [i.e. the death of Mary Magdalene], at the same hour at Tarascon in the province of Vienne, St. Martha, the servant of the Lord Saviour, was confined to her bed with a fever, but nevertheless raised up divine praises. While meditating on heavenly things, she saw a choir of angels bearing the soul of her sister Mary Magdalene into heaven. Calling those who attended her, she reported to them what she had seen, asking them to rejoice with her, and crying aloud saying: "O most beautiful sister, what have you done? Why did you not visit me, as you promised when you were asked? Will you therefore enjoy without me the embraces of the Lord Jesus, whom we loved so much and who loved us so much? I will follow you wherever you go.<sup>132</sup> Meanwhile, live in eternal life, and be happy without end, and do not forget the one who keeps the memory of your spirit." Cheered by this vision, the holy heroine desired more than usual to be released to be with Christ and was reluctant to remain longer in the flesh,<sup>133</sup> deprived of the company of her sister and the angels whom she had seen. Knowing that she would soon depart, she admonished, instructed and strengthened the believers. As the reports became known that the death of the maidservant of Christ was imminent, a great crowd of believers gathered, and they remained with

her until she was buried, setting up tents in the forest and lighting fires everywhere.

Chapter 47 - Therefore as evening approached on the seventh day following, Martha directed them to light the seven wax candles and three lamps. And about the middle of the night a deep sleep overcame those watching, and they fell soundly asleep. A violent gust of wind rushed in and extinguished all the candles and lamps. Discerning this, the maidservant of Christ made the sign of the cross and prayed against an attack of demons. Then she awoke those who watched and asked that they relight the lamps. They ran out, and were delayed for a long time. Suddenly a great light shone from heaven, and in this light Mary Magdalene, the apostle of Christ the Lord Saviour appeared, bearing a torch in her right hand. She soon relit with her heavenly torch the seven candles and three lamps which had gone out. Then she approached her sister's cot and said: "Hail, holy sister." After her sister returned her greeting she said: "Behold, I am visiting you in the body while you live in the body, as you requested of me through the holy bishop Maximinus. And your beloved Lord Saviour approaches in order to call you from this vale of sorrow, just as He appeared to me before my death to summon me to his glorious palace. Therefore come, and do not delay." Having said this, she joyfully ran to meet the Lord, who came near, and, most gently gazing

into the face of Martha, He said: "Behold, I approach: I, whom you served devotedly from out of your material resources not long ago; I, to whom you showed most gracious hospitality; I, for whom you have done many good things to my members after my death; I, to whom you once said, prostrated, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into the world'.<sup>134</sup> Come therefore, my hostess, come out of exile. Come and you will be crowned." On hearing this, she sat upright and struggled to rise up and follow the Saviour immediately. But the Saviour said: "Wait, for I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you in my own place, so that where I am, you will be with me".<sup>135</sup> Having said this, He vanished, and her sister, St. Mary, was no longer visible. But the light which had appeared with them remained. Then, when those keeping watch returned, they were amazed, since the lamps which were extinguished when they left shone with a strange light.

Chapter 48 - When the dawn appeared, she requested that she be laid outside. For the time seemed to pass slowly, and the morning to last a thousand years. Straw was spread under a leafy tree and covered with a hair shirt on which a cross of ashes was made. And when the sun arose, the maidservant of Christ was carried out and placed on the ashes, and at her request, an image of the Saviour on the

cross was set up before her face. After she had rested for a little while, looking upon the crowds of the faithful, she asked that they pray her death would come quickly. While they shed many tears, she raised her eyes to heaven and said: "O my Guest, Lord Saviour, why do you delay? When will I come and appear before your face?"<sup>136</sup> Since you spoke to me at dawn my spirit has weakened. Out of desire for you, all my limbs are stiff, my muscles numbed, my bones decaying, and all my insides withered. Lord, do not confound me in my hopes.<sup>137</sup> My God, do not tarry. Lord, do not delay."<sup>138</sup> While thinking about these things it came to her mind that once she had seen Christ die on the cross at the ninth hour, and that she had once brought with her from Jerusalem an account of the passion of Christ, written in Hebrew. And summoning St. Parmenas, she asked that he bring it forward and read it publicly in order to temper the weariness of her wait. It happened as she hoped. For it seemed to her that when she heard the account of the sufferings of her beloved read to her in her own language, tears of compassion appeared and she began to weep, and forgetting in the meantime her own change of condition, she fixed her attention totally on His passion. And as she heard that Christ commended His spirit into the hands of the Father and gave up the spirit,<sup>139</sup> she sighed deeply and died. She slept in the Lord the fourth day from the calends of August, on the eighth day after the death of her sister

Mary Magdalene, on the sixth day of the week, at the ninth hour of the day, in her sixty-fifth year. Her body was embalmed and wrapped with appropriate honour and brought into her own church by her companions who had come with her from the East and who had remained with her until this day, namely St. Parmenas, also Germanus, Sosthenes and Epaphras, who were followers of St. Trophimus, archbishop of Arles; Marcella, who was her servant; and Euchodia and Syntex. These seven kept vigil for the three days of her funeral, with crowds of people from everywhere who stood guard around the holy corpse for three days, praising God and lighting candles in the church, lamps in their homes and fires in the forest.

Chapter 49 - On the sabbath day a distinguished tomb was prepared for her in her own basilica which the bishops had dedicated. On the day called the Lord's, at the third hour of the day, all the congregation came together to suitably embalm the holy body, the day before the calends of August. At the same hour in Périgueux, a city in Aquitaine, Bishop Fronto was celebrating mass, and, while waiting for the people, he fell asleep on his throne. Christ appeared and said to him: "Come, son, fulfill your promise to assist at the funeral of my hostess Martha." This being said, at the same time, in the blink of an eye, they appeared in Tarascon in the church, holding the books in their hands,

Christ standing at her head, the bishop at her feet. They alone placed the body into the tomb, while all those present marvelled. When the funeral was finished, they went out. One of the clerks followed them, asking the Lord who He was and from where He came. The Lord did not answer him, but gave him the book which He held. The clerk returned to the tomb. He held out the book to all, and it was written on each page: "The memory of Martha, hostess of Christ, will be eternal. She will not fear an evil hearing."<sup>140</sup> Nothing other was contained in the book. Meanwhile in Périgueux, the deacon woke the bishop, suggesting that since the hour of the sacrifice was passed, the people were tiring. The bishop said: "Do not worry or be annoyed that you wait for a long time. For I have just now been taken up in spirit, whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows,<sup>141</sup> and carried off to Tarascon with our Lord Saviour to bury His servant, the most holy Martha, as I promised her when she was living. Now, therefore, send someone to bring back our ring and gloves which I placed in the hands of the sacristan when I laid out the holy body in the tomb." The people who heard this were amazed and sent messengers down to Tarascon. The inhabitants of Tarascon wrote back to those of Périgueux the day and hour of the burial, which was unknown to them, and that a venerable person had been at the funeral with their bishop, with whom they were well acquainted. And as for the book and the inscription in the



book, it was not by chance that this was known to the bishop. And the ring which the sacristan received, and one glove, were sent back: the other was retained as a witness to so great a miracle. Certain ones of those who served the servant of the Saviour returned to the East to preach the kingdom of God: namely Epaphras, with St. Marcella and St. Syntex, who was buried at Philippi when she died and of whom the apostle wrote.<sup>142</sup> Syntex came to a blessed end. Parmenas was faithful and, by the grace of God, attained the glory of a martyr. Germanus and Euchodia were helpers of the holy apostles and were given the work of consoling the faithful, with St. Clement and their other co-workers, of whom the names are written in the book of life.<sup>143</sup> In the basilica of St. Martha, from the day of her death, innumerable miracles occurred: the blind, deaf, mute, lame, paralytics, withered, lepers, and those tormented by various kinds of demons were wholly restored. Clovis, the king of the Franks and Germans, the first to bear the mark of the Christian faith,<sup>144</sup> came to Tarascon, stirred by the multitude and the greatness of the miracles of St. Martha. And as soon as he touched the holy tomb he was freed of a serious kidney ailment, from which he had suffered miserably. In witness to such a great achievement, he gave to God, and sealed with his ring, the land for three miles around the church of St. Martha, on either side of the Rhône, with the farms, fortifications and forests, all of

which the holy heroine possesses up until today exempt from taxes. Thefts, rapes, sacrileges or false judgements are punished suddenly, horribly and without constraint, by the judgement of God, to the praise of the Lord Saviour.

[Chapter 50 concludes the work with a discussion of the death of St. Maximinus and his burial in the basilica which he had consecrated for the corpse of Mary Magdalene.]

SOURCE: Vita Auct. Pseudo-Hrabano (De Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae et Sororis Eius Sanctae Marthae) (BHL 5508), as published in E.M. Faillon, Monuments Inédits sur l'Apostolat de Sainte Marie-Madeleine en Provence, Paris: Migne, 1848, tome 2, cols. 454-556.

Chapter 3  
The Life of St. Martha As Recorded in  
Vincent of Beauvais' Speculum Historiale

Chapter 92 - Of the Life of St. Martha

From her acts. St. Martha was born of noble lineage in the village of Bethany, near the city of Jerusalem. Her siblings were Mary and Lazarus. She loved God greatly from her childhood, was highly skilled in Hebrew, and conformed to the precepts of the law. She was physically beautiful and of beautiful character, of considerable eloquence and educated in the works appropriate to women. She was outstanding among all the pious noblewomen for her morals, her abundant charity and her great purity. She avoided all contact with men. Nowhere is it written that she had a husband or that she entered into marriage with a man, although her distinguished father was prominent in Syria and many maritime lands. After the dispersion of the disciples of the Lord, he was a most faithful preacher in the city of Athens. Martha, along with her aforementioned brother and sister, possessed three towns which they inherited by legal right from their mother, namely Magdala and Bethany and part

of the city of Jerusalem. She preferred the Lord [sic] to all her relatives, because he was of greater and more powerful intelligence and goodness, and brought abundant riches. The famous table companion, greatly skilled in administering a banquet, distributed great stipends by her hand to the soldiers and her servants. And, as the Scriptures record, one of those invited to the banquet was the Lord, and he attended. Martha served as was customary, a diligent hostess to all, and most pious, so much so that all her household and strangers who arrived unexpectedly at her home received whatever they asked. Acting in this way, it happened that she began to love her Lord, and she received Him in her lodgings. He who truly loves all, indeed He who truly is love, loved her so much that He turned aside to her home more than to any other, thus fulfilling the prophecy which says: "He is like a stranger in the land, and like a wayfarer who turns aside to tarry for a night."<sup>1</sup> O truly happy one, who deserves to have such a Guest, who serves the bread of angels! She welcomed this great Guest who is welcomed by angels and men, and is their shepherd. She fed him who feeds all creatures, this great King and Lord, who alone encloses all in the palm of His hand, whom many prophets and kings wish to see and do not see, to hear and do not hear. She welcomed and fed this Guest, a thing most gracious and worthy of praise. When the Lord was received into their home, each of the two sisters,

Martha and Mary, chose to perform her own ministry, which pleased God greatly. Mary, sitting before the feet of the Lord, heard the words of his mouth,<sup>2</sup> as if feasting on that which she preferred to eat. But Martha occupied herself greatly with the preparation of the feast.<sup>3</sup> And because she received so distinguished a Guest in her home, she was eager to serve with the greatest of care: cleaning the house, setting the table, preparing the food. But it seemed to her that all the household was unable to give sufficient service to such a man, and that her sister should come to help her with the domestic chores. She wished that all her household would energetically prepare the feast. Therefore she stood before the Lord astonished, and complaining about this thing, she said: "Lord, do you not care that my sister leaves me to serve alone? Tell her to help me."<sup>4</sup> But He, who is not a respecter of persons,<sup>5</sup> loved the different forms of service which were offered to Him: He received and praised the service of the one but did not condemn that of the other. The Saviour, as was customary, gratefully received the hospitality of St. Martha in a different way. How great a reward was set aside for her in the presence of God, for the liberal hospitality and cheerful spirit offered to the poor and needy: for He approved of the hospitality of this holy woman. For out of friendship for his hostess St. Martha, the Lord raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. For the Evangelist says: "The Lord Jesus loved Martha and

Mary her sister and Lazarus,"<sup>6</sup> and indeed, He raised Lazarus because of the prayers of his sisters.<sup>7</sup>

[Chapter 93 provides background on the life and character of St. Mary Magdalene.]

Chapter 94 - Of Their Dispersion with Certain of the Disciples

From the acts of St. Martha. With all her heart St. Martha heard and understood the teaching of the Lord when He said: 'All who leave father and mother, etc.'<sup>8</sup> She divided all her material resources into three parts. The first she gave to her sister Mary Magdalene, to supplement the resources from which she supplied living expenses for the Lord and his apostles. The second part she gave to her brother Lazarus. The third part she kept for her own support, and so she could entertain the Saviour and his disciples when they came to her home. Anything remaining after the ascension of Christ into heaven--when the multitude of believers were of one heart and of one soul, and no one set apart anything of his own, but they had all things in common--she placed at the feet of the apostles, so that they could provide all necessities in common.<sup>9</sup> And thus Martha proved herself a disciple among disciples. At that time the growing number of believers aroused against themselves the persecution of the Jews, so that in the end

they were expelled.<sup>10</sup> They took Peter and the other apostles into public custody,<sup>11</sup> stoned Stephen,<sup>12</sup> and others like James they killed with swords.<sup>13</sup> Without reason they were taken to the coast, and sent away in a vessel without a rudder and such things as nautical equipment, nor any kind of supplies and protection, and abandoned on the billows of the open sea. But in the end the raging fury of the Jews was dissipated. Divine providence honoured them in a better place. It enriched them with villages, towns and cities, with rich treasures and churches and mansions, both now and forever in heaven. To each one divine providence distributed his own spiritually-assigned place: to Trophimus, Arles; to Paulus, Narbonne; to Saturninus, Toulouse and Vaucogne; to Martialus, Poitiers; to Eutropius, Saintonge and Aquitaine; to Julianus, Le Mans and Brittany; to Austregisulus, Bourges; to Cratianus, Tours; to Irenaeus, Lyons; to Ferrutionus, Besançon; to the other Eutropius, Orange; to Fronto, Périgueux; to Georgius, Velay; to Dionisius, all of Gaul. Thus patrons were given to each region by the Lord, and while living they were equipped with miracles and virtues. When the aforementioned persecution of the Jews against the faithful flared up, St. Martha herself, along with other believers in Christ, was driven out and deprived of her material resources. The same was done to St. Maximinus, one of the seventy-two.<sup>14</sup> The Holy Spirit united him with the disciple of Christ and her sister

Mary, and he baptized them, leading them to the kingdom of heaven by the example of his good way of life. Therefore they entered into a ship with many others, and after a successful voyage reached the port of Marseille.

[Chapters 95-98 are concerned with the acts of St. Mary Magdalene. After her arrival in Marseille, she converted the prince of Marseille and, as a result of her intercessory prayers, a son was born to him and his wife (Chapter 95). Subsequently the prince embarked on a voyage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. En route his wife died, and she and the child were abandoned on a hilly coast (Chapter 96). On the prince's return voyage two years later, he stopped at the place where his wife and son had been left, and discovered his son still alive (Chapter 97). Through his intercessory prayers to St. Mary Magdalene, the dead wife was restored to life and the family returned to Marseille where they were baptized by St. Maximinus (Chapter 98).]

Chapter 99 - Of the Dragon which Martha Bound and the People  
Killed<sup>15</sup>

There was at this time on the banks of the Rhône between Arles and Avignon a huge dragon, the front half of which was shaped like an animal and the rest of the body like a fish. It killed many passersby who encountered it. It also slew asses and horses, and submerged boats which



crossed the Rhône. Therefore great armed crowds of people often came, wishing to slay it, but it concealed itself in the river by the forest. It was larger than an ox, longer than a horse, and had the head of a lion. Its teeth were like sharp swords, its mane like a horse. It had a sharp ridge along its back like a pickaxe, hairy scales, six feet, claws like a bear, and a tail like a snake, and was fortified with two twisted plates, one on each side. It could not be killed when attacked by javelins or any kind of arms. It had so much strength that twelve lions or as many bears could neither equal nor conquer the huge cruel beast. None of the inhabitants of that region for some distance could conquer or kill it. They heard reports of the distinguished deeds which the Lord performed through St. Martha and they came to her, humbly asking that she visit their country and free them from the ruinous dragon which bothered them very much. The compassionate saint set out for the designated place, confident in the strength of the name of Christ to drive out the dragon. However, she found it in the forest leaning over a man whom it had just killed, prior to devouring him. The hostess of Christ was unafraid and approached, sprinkling the holy water which she had brought with her on the evil beast and holding out the sign of the cross. The dragon became so weak and stupid that it did not succeed in going forward or showing any fierceness. Thus it stood overpowered, like a sheep, having

no strength. Without delay the holy one bound it with her own belt, while all wondered at this victory. Immediately it was overpowered by all the people with spears and stones. This dragon was called Tharascurus by the inhabitants, and afterwards the place was called Tharascurus [Tarascon]. Previously it was called Verluc, that is "black forest," because it was dense and dark and black there. This dragon of which we speak was considered of the lineage of that which is called Leviathan in Job<sup>16</sup> and had come down by sea from Galatia in Asia, a descendant of Leviathan, a most ferocious aquatic serpent, and of the animal called the Bonachus.<sup>17</sup> The Bonachus was an animal which originated in the region of Galatia, and which drove away its attackers with burning dung which it shot out like an arrow over the range of almost an acre, and everything which it touched was burned as if by fire.

#### Chapter 100 - Of the Austerity of Her Life In That Place

Finally giving in, after many petitions by the nobles and the people of that country, St. Martha remained [in Tarascon] at the desire of her master St. Maximin and with the permission of her sister Mary Magdalene. She persisted in holy preaching and vigils as long as she lived there. What labours, what anguish, what sorrows, how many persecutions, how much hunger and fasting she sustained! Who can estimate the cost? For in the first seven years she

subsisted on nuts and roots and raw grasses and the fruits of trees, sustaining the body rather than restoring it. Afterwards a community of brothers and sisters grew up and a great basilica was built in honour of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin. She lived a hard and austere life there. In winter time she was protected by a sheep skin thrown over a cheap cloak. In summer she was clothed in a tunic and cloak, with a hair-shirt clinging to her flesh. She walked barefoot and on her head wore a turban of camel hair. Her belt was made of horse hair tied in knots, tightened so much around her waist that worms came out of her broken, rotting flesh. She lay on tree branches or vines with a stone placed under her head as a pillow, covered with a bag filled with a little horse hair. She was never free from prayers and supplications. Being always occupied with good works, she pleased God and men greatly through the hospitality which she had diligently exercised at Bethany. Many thousands of the people acknowledged faith in the Christian religion because of her worthy preaching, holy way of life and all the miracles she provided, and they freely sought holy baptism.

Chapter 101 - Of the Resuscitation of the Young Man and the  
Conversion of Water into Wine

The distinguished disciple of Christ was near Avignon, before the city gates, in a pleasant place beside the Rhône

River, preaching and healing the sick who were brought to her. A young man who was on the other side of the river saw the crowds of people listening to the holy one, and he wanted to see and hear her. Having no boat, but enthusiastically eager to cross the river, he began to swim, naked. Then he grew weak in the middle of the river, having suddenly encountered a swift current in the raging river, and, being carried off, he was submerged in the depths. In short, many came together to help and all that day the citizens searched for him with their boats, but he was not found. On the second day, about nine o'clock, the lifeless<sup>18</sup> body of the youth was discovered and was placed sorrowfully at the feet of St. Martha. Then the maidservant of Christ, her heart moved, informed the people that, prostrating herself over him, she would call upon God, asking that He, in His omnipotent strength, would deign to raise the boy from the dead. She prostrated herself in prayer next to the body in the form of a cross and interceded, saying: "Adonai, Jesus Christ, who in your holy and ineffable mercy once raised my brother Lazarus, your beloved, from the dead; who holds the keys to life and death; who commands death and makes it flee; who calls the dead to life: most bountiful Lord, look upon the prayers and supplications of your servant and those standing around, and order the spirit to return to the corpse of this young man, so that those at hand and in the future who see and hear of

the greatness of your excellent judgement will believe in you and follow you as their Saviour."

Having finished this prayer, the maidservant of Christ rose from the ground, took the young man by the hand and said: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, O young man, rise up from the dead and take up living." And immediately the boy rose up, healthy and unharmed, and was baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.

At the same time Maximinus, the bishop of Aix, and Trophimus of Arles and Eutropius of Orange, three devout priests of the Lord, came to visit her, each unaware that the others were coming. By consent of their holy petitions, they most faithfully consecrated the church which had been built in the name of Jesus Christ and in honour of his holy mother on the sixteenth day before the calends of January [i.e. December 17]. The holy dedication being solemnly completed, a time of refreshment followed. While they were dining, the wine ran short and in these circumstances divine power changed water into wine.

[Chapters 102 and 103 are concerned with Mary Magdalene: the austerity of her life in the desert, where she is miraculously fed by angels (Chapter 102), and her death and burial (Chapter 103).]

Chapter 104 - Of the Spirit which Martha Saw

Through St. Maximinus Mary sent a message to her sister Martha that she would soon visit her. Such a promise was fulfilled not while living in the flesh but after death. It happened that after a short time St. Fronto of Périgueux and St. Georgius of Velay, he who was dead and came back to life, were expelled from their own places and seats and cities for their preaching.<sup>19</sup> Being exiled, they approached St. Martha for protection, and remained with her for several days. Through her prayers to God they were reconciled with their cities. Then, being mindful of her death, she addressed St. Fronto in private, since she wished the sacrament of confession. She predicted to him that the day of her death was imminent. The holy bishop promised her that he would be summoned on this day in the future if it was in accordance with the divine plan. Thus, since St. Martha was pleasing in all things to her Guest, Christ, He wished to pay tribute to her worth, and informed her one year in advance of the approaching day of her death. And she suffered from fevers for the whole year. On the eighth day before her death she heard choirs of angels bearing the soul of her departing sister, Mary Magdalene, into heaven. And immediately she called together all around her saying, "Let us all rejoice, that, being found worthy through divine grace, the soul of my sister Mary Magdalene is borne to her promised throne by an angelic retinue. But, my most sweet

sister, remember the promise that you solemnly vowed, that you would visit me, and live forever with the true Lord, Jesus Christ." But Mary did not disappoint Martha. For after eight days, just as she had said, she drew her happily into paradise with her. For indeed, on the eighth day after the death of St. Mary, Martha began to weaken more than usual, and, leaning forward on her bed, she exhorted her brothers and sisters to remember to hold firm in their profession of the holy Christian religion. In their presence, she disposed of all her possessions to the church and asked that they keep vigil with her until the hour of her death, persisting in prayers and orations and entreaties. After this conversation she fortified herself with the sacrament of the Lord's communion.

#### Chapter 105 - Of Her Happy Passing

In the middle of the night before the time of her death, the brothers and those persons who stood guard around her with torches were weighed down with sleep. A violent gust of wind was stirred up around them by the evil enemy, who envied all of the holy ones, and its motion forcefully extinguished the seven large candles and the lamps. Then the maidservant of Christ, seeing a terrible crowd of evil spirits around her, began to pray. "My Father," she said, "Ely, my most dear Guest, those who would seduce me are gathered around to devour me, holding a list of the evil

deeds which I have done, crying loudly and saying, 'God abandon her, and we will pursue and seize her when she is freed.' Ely, do not forsake me. Ely, make haste to help me. Do not be mindful of the transgressions of my youth and my ignorance, Adonai." At the sound of her voice, those who were sleeping awoke abruptly. Wishing light, her assistants went from the house to the next, seeking a fire with which to rekindle the extinguished lamps, and they were delayed. St. Martha saw her sister Mary Magdalene coming to meet her, holding in her hand a torch, from which she soon relit all the candles and lamps. And after the one called the other by name, behold the Lord Jesus Christ approached, He who had vanished into nothingness, saying: "Come, you who were once my beloved hostess, cross now from the prison of the flesh to my palace in heaven, where you will rejoice eternally with the holy ones, not just as a hostess or stranger, but as a faithful family member, a fellow citizen with the holy ones. You were anxious about me and ministered to me on earth, welcoming me as a guest and reviving me. I will repay you for your time of service with exceeding happiness, so that where I am you will be there with me.<sup>20</sup> For having served me, you will accompany me. Freely I will give consolation to you, and well-being to those whom you instruct. I will neither take it away from you nor diminish it, but will multiply it greatly. For love of you, I will grant mercy to the faithful who come to your sepulchre, and



I will answer their petitions. Long for little, now that you come close to me."

Meanwhile, those who had gone out for torches approached and wondered at seeing that the lamps which they had left extinguished were lit. All looked in amazement. Just as this happened, as they conferred among themselves, the holy one of God explained the order of things to her brothers (as was consistent with her most holy life), revealing the divine visitation. Then she asked that they carry her outside the basilica to a certain point under the trees and place her in the form of a cross on a little chaff sprinkled with ashes. She rested on a hair shirt and, having a holy wooden cross before her eyes, she waited for her death, looking to heaven. While all those gathered around her were occupied with holy prayers, she instructed that the Lord's passion be read aloud, that written in Hebrew which she had brought with her from Jerusalem. Next, when the reader read the following words of the evangelist, "Father, into your hand I commend my spirit,"<sup>21</sup> the maidservant of Christ fell asleep in the Lord, on the seventh day from the kalends of January [i.e. December 26], on the sixth day of the week, at the ninth hour of the day, at seventy years of age.

## Chapter 106 - Of Her Glorious Funeral

Her companions and her pupils, famous and religious persons of her household, attended to her funeral rites with all devotion, namely Eudochius and Synthex and Germanus and Epaphras and Sosthenes, the disciples of Paul; and the companions of Trophimus; and Parmenas, who was one of the seven deacons of the original church;<sup>22</sup> and Martilla, the handmaid of St. Martha, whom she baptized, the woman who lifted up her voice out of the crowd and said to the Lord Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast that you sucked."<sup>23</sup> These, with many others who learned of the death of the holy woman and came quickly, stood there for three days with candles and torches, wishing to pay homage until the sabbath, the day of the burial of her body, and raising up psalms and laments. At the third hour in Périgueux, the bishop St. Fronto was solemnly celebrating holy mass when he fell asleep on his throne before the altar in his church during the reading of the epistle. The Lord appeared to him, saying: "My beloved Fronto, if you wish to fulfill what you promised to our hostess Martha, come quickly to her funeral service, and follow me." This being said, at the same time the two were carried off to Tarascon and entered into the basilica of the godly hostess and began to sing psalms around the holy body with the others. And taking the books in their hand, they conducted the whole funeral from beginning to end, while the others replied and

responded. And the two placed the corpse of the holy woman which they were carrying in the grave. When these things were taking place, the deacon of the church of Perigueux was ready to proclaim the gospel, the singing of the clergy being finished. He nudged the bishop who was sleeping on his throne, seeking from him a blessing on the reading. But the holy one, in deep sleep, did not respond. All wondered why the holy bishop made such a delay. When nudged again, he awoke as if from a pleasant sleep and said, "O brothers, what are you doing? Why did you awaken me? Wonderful things have happened to us, revealed by our beloved Master. Our Lord Jesus Christ led me from this place to the funeral rites of our hostess Martha, whom we handed over to the grave, as we once promised her when she was living. And in order that you may know that I assisted at the funeral of the holy woman, send to bring back the gold ring and gloves which I entrusted to the sacristan of that church to keep for me when I was placing the holy corpse in the tomb. But when leaving the church, I forgot the ring and gloves. I turned back but did not retrieve them from him to whom they were entrusted, being awakened by you." Messengers were sent without delay, and they learned that things had happened just as the holy one had said beforehand. They brought back the ring and one glove, for the sacristan kept the other as a witness to this great thing.<sup>24</sup>

St. Fronto was later discussing with the brothers what had happened at the grave of the holy woman. He said: "After we put her in the tomb, we were leaving the church, and a certain brother of that place who was versed in letters followed us and asked the Lord who he was, and from where, and by what name he was known. He, replying nothing, held out a book which was open in his hand in which nothing else was written except this verse: 'My hostess will be just in everlasting memory; she will not fear an evil hearing on the last day.' When the book was rolled up again this same writing was found on each leaf. And it is plain enough that the just hostess of Christ will be held in everlasting memory of the angels and men, and she will not fear an evil hearing when those who speak evil hear of her worth. Depart from me, evil sayers.<sup>25</sup>

Chapter 107 - Of the Place of Her Tomb, and Of Her  
Companions

Then how greatly St. Martha proved worthy of performing miracles towards the sick, and one after another they were presented at her venerable tomb. Now we will report a few out of many.

Clovis, who was the first king of the Franks and Teutons, believed in Christ through the teaching of St. Remy, and received the sacrament of baptism.<sup>26</sup> He was afflicted with a serious kidney problem. Learning of her

reputation among the people, many of whom were healed of illnesses, he proceeded to the tomb of the maidservant of Christ and there rejoiced at regaining his health. The king generously enriched that place, and gave to the place the lands, farms and fortifications in an area of three miles on either side of the Rhône, sealing the document with his ring. He established the church to be a place free from all lay subjection and secular power. Also, the place was held in such great veneration and reverence that if any violence or secret injustice or perjury or illicit defilement or rape or fraud was committed it did not go unpunished, divine protection having been granted to the holy place.

Martilla and Synthex and Epaphras, the most virtuous and apostolic of individuals, went to Sclavonia,<sup>27</sup> and preaching there the gospel of Christ, they continued with good works. Martilla lived ten years after the departure of St. Martha, of whose life she wrote this large volume in Hebrew, which I, Synthex, transcribed into Latin much later.<sup>28</sup> Eudochius and Germanus and Parmenas and Sosthenes, the companions of St. Martha, and her followers as long as they lived, kept vigil at her sacred tomb, and remained in that place after her blessed end.

SOURCE: Vincent of Beauvais, Speculum Historiale in Speculi Maioris (BHL 5548), as published Douai: Baltazar Belleri, 1624, reprinted in facsimile Graz: Akademische Druck -u. Verlagsanstalt, 1964-65, vol. 4, pp. 355-361.

## Chapter 4

### The Life of St. Martha As Recorded in Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda Aurea (BHL 5548)

Martha, the hostess of Christ, was the daughter of Syrus and Eucharis, who was of royal lineage. Her father was the governor of Syria and many maritime lands. She and her sister possessed three towns which they had inherited by legal right from their mother, namely, Magdala, Bethany, and a part of the city of Jerusalem. Nowhere is it written that she had a husband or that she had entered into marriage with a man.

The famous hostess ministered to the Lord and wished her sister to minister in a like manner, for it seemed to her that the whole world could not adequately serve so great a Guest.

After the ascension of the Lord, when the dispersion of the disciples took place, Martha, with her brother Lazarus, her sister Mary Magdalene and St. Maximinus<sup>1</sup>, who had baptized them and to whom the Holy Spirit had entrusted them, and many others, were sent away by the infidels, confined in a vessel without sail or rudder, and without any

provisions. But with the Lord as their guide they reached Marseille. From there they went to the region of Aix and there converted the people to faith. For St. Martha was extremely eloquent and popular with all.

There was at this time on the banks of the Rhône, in a forest between Arles and Avignon, a dragon<sup>2</sup> which was half animal and half fish, greater than an ox and longer than a horse, with teeth like swords, sharp as horn, and fortified with two shields, one on either side. Lying concealed in the river, it killed all who passed by and submerged ships. It had come by sea from Galatia in Asia, and was descended from the Leviathan<sup>3</sup>, a ferocious aquatic serpent, and from the Bonasus<sup>4</sup>, an animal which originated in the region of Galatia, and which expelled its dung like an arrow at those in its path within the range of almost an acre and whatever it touched burned as if by fire. Martha was called by the people. She encountered the dragon in the forest, devouring a man. She threw holy water on it and held up a cross before it. Immediately it was subdued and stood like a sheep. St. Martha bound it with her own belt, then it was slain by the people with spears and stones. The dragon was called Tarasconus by the people and, in its memory, henceforth the place was called Tarascona [Tarascon]. It had previously been called Nerluc, or "black forest", because the forest there was dark and shadowy. Afterwards



Martha remained there by permission of both her master Maximinus and her sister. She had time for unceasing prayers and fasting. Afterwards a large community of sisters came together in that place, and a basilica was built in honour of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin. Martha led there a very austere life. She ate only once a day, and avoided meat, all fat, eggs, cheese and wine. She fell to her knees in prayer a hundred times a day and as many times at night.

One time when she was preaching near Avignon, between the city and the Rhône River, a young man on the other side of the river paused, wishing to hear her words. Since he lacked a boat, he began to swim across, naked. Suddenly he was seized by the current of the river and immediately he drowned. The following day his body was found and brought to the feet of Martha to be raised. She prostrated herself on the ground in the form of a cross and prayed in this way: "Adonai, Lord Jesus Christ, who once raised my brother Lazarus, your beloved, my dear Guest, look upon the faith of those standing around and raise this young man." She took his hand, and then the young man rose up and received holy baptism.

Eusebius, in the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical History, refers to a woman with a hemorrhage, who, after she

was healed, made a statue in the image of Christ with a fringed garment, as she had seen Him, in her courtyard or garden.<sup>5</sup> And it was greatly revered. The herbs growing up around the statue, which had previously had no power, were of such potency when they touched the fringe of the garment that they subsequently cured many illnesses. Ambrose said that this woman with a hemorrhage whom the Lord healed was Martha.<sup>6</sup> Jerome relates, and it is also found in the Tripartite History, that afterwards Julian the Apostate took away the statue which the woman with a hemorrhage had made and put in place one of himself, which was destroyed by a bolt of lightning.<sup>7</sup>

The Lord revealed to Martha her death a year in advance. For the whole year she suffered from fevers. On the eighth day before her death she heard choirs of angels bearing the soul of her sister into heaven. She soon called together her brothers and the community of sisters and said: "My companions and sweet friends, I ask you to rejoice with me, because I see angelic choirs joyfully bearing the soul of my sister to her promised home. O my most beautiful and beloved sister, live with your Master and my Guest in the blessed realm." Immediately St. Martha sensed that her own end was near, and she admonished them that they keep watch around her with lighted lamps until her death. In the middle of the night before the day of her death, those

keeping watch fell into a deep sleep. A violent wind rushed in and extinguished all the lamps. Seeing a crowd of evil spirits, she began to pray: "My Father Ely, my dear Guest, those who would seduce me have gathered around to devour me, holding a list of the evil deeds which I have done. Ely, do not forsake me, but make haste to help me." And behold, she saw her sister coming to her, holding in her hand a torch, from which she relit the candles and lamps. After each had called the other by name, behold Christ came, saying: "Come, beloved hostess, and where I am, there you will be with me.<sup>8</sup> You received me in your home, and I will receive you in my heaven, and I will hear those who call upon you, for love of you."

As the hour of her passing approached, she was carried outside so that she could see heaven, and she commanded that she be placed on ashes on the ground, and that the sign of the cross be held up before her. And she prayed in these words: "My dear Guest, watch over this, your poor little one, and, as you deigned to be my Guest, receive me into your heavenly lodgings." She commanded that the passion according to Luke be read to her, and when it was said: "Father, into your hand I commend my spirit,"<sup>9</sup> her spirit was released.

On the following day, which was Sunday,<sup>10</sup> while Martha's praises were being extolled around her body, St. Fronto<sup>11</sup> was celebrating mass in Périgueux, about the third hour. After the epistle, he fell asleep on his throne. The Lord appeared to him, saying: "My beloved Fronto, if you wish to fulfill the promise which you once made to our hostess, rise quickly and follow me." He obeyed the command, and suddenly the two arrived at Tarascon. And singing psalms around her body, the two directed the whole office while the others responded, and with their own hands they laid her corpse in the tomb. At the same time the deacon in Périgueux, having finished the singing, awoke the bishop, asking his blessing. St. Fronto awoke suddenly and replied: "My brothers, why have you awakened me? The Lord Jesus Christ led me to the body of his hostess Martha, and we handed her over to the tomb. Therefore, send messengers quickly to that place, so that they may bring back to us our gold ring and silver gloves, which, when we were preparing to bury the body, I entrusted to the sacristan, and which I forgot when leaving because you awoke me so suddenly." Messengers were sent there, and they found things as the bishop had said. They brought back the ring and one glove: the sacristan kept the other as a witness of this thing. St. Fronto added: "When we were leaving the church after the burial, a certain brother of that place who was versed in letters followed us, and asked the Lord by what name he was

called. He, replying nothing, held out a book which was open in His hand, and in which nothing else was written except this verse: 'My hostess will be just in everlasting memory; she will not fear an evil hearing on the last day.' When the book was rolled up, this writing was found on each leaf." 12

Numerous miracles took place at Martha's tomb. Clovis, king of the Franks, who had been baptized as a Christian by St. Remy,<sup>13</sup> suffered from a serious kidney problem. He regained sound health upon coming to her tomb. For this reason he enriched this place and gave to the church the land, towns and fortifications within an area of three miles on either side of the Rhône, and made it a free place.

Martha's maidservant Martilla wrote this life.<sup>14</sup> She later continued on to Sclavonia and preached the gospel there, and she died there in peace ten years after the death of Martha.<sup>15</sup>

SOURCE: Jacobi a Voragine, Legenda Aurea, as edited by Th. Graesse, 3rd ed., Dresden, 1890, reprinted Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1965, pp. 444-447.

## Chapter 5

### Comparative Table

The Life of St.  
Martha Compiled by  
Pseudo-Marcilia  
(BHL 5545)  
A Life of the most  
glorious Martha,  
the hostess of  
Christ, first  
produced in Hebrew  
by St. Marcilia,  
her maid and little  
daughter and  
afterwards  
translated into the  
Latin language by  
Sinticus

The Life of St.  
Martha As  
Recorded in  
Vincent of  
Beauvais'  
Speculum  
Historiale

The Life of St.  
Martha As  
Recorded in  
Jacobus de  
Voragine's  
Legenda Aurea  
(BHL 5548)

St. Martha,  
the follower of  
Christ, is  
considered a type  
of the holy church  
because of her  
piety, and her  
life would require  
a great volume for  
the understanding  
of its mystical  
sense. Therefore  
we will write  
briefly of the  
declarations of the  
Gospel regarding  
her distinguished  
life, forgoing  
discussion of her  
as reflecting  
types, in order  
that an extended  
account of her life  
will not be  
distasteful to  
readers or onerous  
to the memory of  
hearers, but that

it may be an exemplum for pious imitation for the minds of the faithful. In short, Martha, the blessed and venerable hostess of Christ, a descendant of royal stock, lived in the village of Bethany, near the city of Jerusalem. Her father was Syrus, her mother Eucharia. Her siblings were St. Mary Magdalene and Lazarus, whom Christ, the true Friend of all generations, raised from the tomb.

Noble antiquity passed from the parent to the offspring.

Now a more noble bearing waits in heaven. From her childhood, she loved greatly the Creator of all things, was highly skilled in Hebrew, and conformed to the precepts of the law. She was physically beautiful, and beautifully educated in the works appropriate to women. She was outstanding among all the pious noblewomen for her morals, and distinguished for her understanding and her works,

#### Chapter 92 - Of the Life of St. Martha

From her acts. St. Martha was born of noble lineage in the village of Bethany, near the city of Jerusalem. Her siblings were Mary and Lazarus.

Martha, the hostess of Christ, was the daughter of Syrus and Eucharia, who was of royal lineage.

She loved God greatly from her childhood, was highly skilled in Hebrew, and conformed to the precepts of the law. She was physically beautiful and of beautiful character, of considerable eloquence and educated in the works appropriate to women. She was outstanding among all the pious noblewomen for her morals, her

especially her abundant charity, and her great purity. She avoided all contact with men. Nowhere is it written that she had a husband or that she had entered into marriage with a man, although her father was a distinguished governor of Syria and of many maritime regions. After the dispersion of the disciples of the Lord, he was a most faithful preacher in the city of Athens. Martha, along with her aforementioned brother and sister, possessed three towns which they had inherited by legal right from their mother, namely, Magdala and Bethany and part of the city of Jerusalem. Martha had authority before all her relatives because she was more capable and had a greater abundance of intelligence and honesty. The famous table companion gave freely of all the greatest riches to the soldiers and her household servants. She was greatly skilled in

abundant charity and her great purity. She avoided all contact with men. Nowhere is it written that she had a husband or that she entered into marriage with a man, although her distinguished father was prominent in Syria and many maritime lands. After the dispersion of the disciples of the Lord, he was a most faithful preacher in the city of Athens. Martha, along with her aforementioned brother and sister, possessed three towns which they inherited by legal right from their mother, namely, Magdala and Bethany and part of the city of Jerusalem. She preferred the Lord [sic] to all her relatives, because he was of greater and more powerful intelligence and goodness, and brought abundant riches.

The famous table companion, greatly skilled

Nowhere is it written that she had a husband or that she had entered into marriage with a man.

Her father was the governor of Syria and many maritime lands.

She and her sister possessed three towns which they had inherited by legal right from their mother, namely, Magdala, Bethany, and a part of the city of Jerusalem.



administering a banquet.

As the Holy Scriptures claim, one of those invited to the banquet was the Lord, and He attended. Martha served, as was customary, because of her love of the Lord. When the Lord Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, they prepared there a great banquet. Martha served with honour the one who had raised Lazarus, and in one place it is said that Martha troubled herself with much serving. Such hospitality among us is not destined to be forgotten. For just as Abraham and Lot and Joshua and many others had pleased God and likewise welcomed angels as guests, so was the diligent and most pious hostess attentive to all. She received both members of her household and strangers.

in administering a banquet, distributed great stipends by her hand to the soldiers and her servants. And, as the Scriptures record, one of those invited to the banquet was the Lord, and he attended. Martha served as was customary,

a diligent hostess to all, and most pious, so much so that all her household and strangers who arrived unexpectedly at her home received whatever they asked.

Thus it happened that, acting in this way, she began to love the Lord, and she received him. And He who loves all, and who singled out St. Peter from all of us asking, "Peter, do you love me," He loved her so much that He preferred her home to any other lodging. As the Gospel relates, on days when Jesus was preaching in Jerusalem He returned late to Bethany where his friend Lazarus lived with his sisters Mary and Martha, and he was received there.

#### How Christ received shelter

Afterwards it happened that the Lord was preaching in the towns and cities and, tired in body after a day's journey, on a day described in Luke, He entered into a certain house and this woman named Martha welcomed Him in her home, fulfilling the prophecy which says: "He is like a stranger in the land, and like a wayfarer who turns aside to tarry for a night". O truly

Acting in this way, it happened that she began to love her Lord, and she received Him in her lodgings. He who truly loves all, indeed He who truly is love, loved her so much that He turned aside to her home more than to any other,

thus fulfilling the prophecy which says: "He is like a stranger in the land, and like a wayfarer who turns aside to tarry for a night." O truly

happy and glorious one, who deserves to have such a Guest, who serves the bread of angels and on which she was fed! How happy and glorious this woman, whom Jesus loved so much that He wished to be welcomed and fed by her. She received a great and wonderful Guest, whom angels and men welcome and feed. She fed Him who feeds all creatures. One greater than he whom Abraham received as a guest, namely God and man; this great King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who alone encloses all in the palm of His hand; whom Job described as higher than the sky, broader than the greatest land, deeper than the sea; whom many prophets and kings wished to see and did not see, to hear and did not hear: she received and fed this Guest.

It is a great and praiseworthy thing to welcome the Lord into a house. Each of the two sisters, namely Martha and Mary, chose to

happy one, who deserves to have such a Guest, who serves the bread of angels!

She welcomed this great Guest who is welcomed by angels and men, and is their shepherd. She fed him who feeds all creatures,

this great King and Lord, who alone encloses all in the palm of His hand,

whom many prophets and kings wish to see and do not see, to hear and do not hear. She welcomed and fed this Guest, a thing most gracious and worthy of praise. When the Lord was received into their home, each of the two sisters, Martha and Mary, chose

perform her own ministry, which pleased God greatly. Mary, sitting before the feet of the Lord, heard the words of His mouth, as if feasting on that which she preferred to eat.

But Martha occupied herself greatly with the preparation of the feast, and because she received so distinguished a Guest in her home, she was eager to serve with the greatest of care: cleaning the house, setting the table, preparing the food.

But it did not seem to her enough: it seemed that all the household was unable to give sufficient service and that her sister should come to help her with the preparations. She wished that all her household would prepare the feast.

Therefore she stood before the Lord astonished, and complaining about this thing, she said: "Lord, do you

to perform her own ministry, which pleased God greatly. Mary, sitting before the feet of the Lord, heard the words of his mouth, as if feasting on that which she preferred to eat.

But Martha occupied herself greatly with the preparation of the feast. And because she received so distinguished a Guest in her home, she was eager to serve with the greatest of care: cleaning the house, setting the table, preparing the food. But it seemed to her that all the household was unable to give sufficient service to such a man, and that her sister should come to help her with the domestic chores. She wished that all her household

would energetically prepare the feast. Therefore she stood before the Lord astonished, and complaining about this thing, she said: "Lord, do

The famous hostess ministered to the Lord and wished her sister to minister in a like manner, for it seemed to her that the whole world could not adequately serve so great a Guest.

not care that my sister leaves me to serve alone? Tell her to help me."

But He who is not a respecter of persons loved the different forms of service which were offered to Him: He received and praised the service of the one but did not condemn that of the other: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. On the other hand, one thing is needful. Mary has chosen for herself the better part, that is the spiritual life, which will not be taken away from her. She will reap eternal life. Together your service which you choose completes and makes well. She strives for the health of the soul, you, in truth, work for the health of the body. Complete what you have begun, and you will do well. The promise of a crown awaits those who persevere in good works, and their praises will be sung at the end."

you not care that my sister leaves me to serve alone? Tell her to help me." But He, who is not a respecter of persons, loved the different forms of service which were offered to Him: He received and praised the service of the one but did not condemn that of the other.

This is clear: the active life which Martha symbolizes in the holy church is not at all able to continue as active or to please the highest King without the contemplative life which Mary signifies. Wherefore the merciful Guest conceded to each of these holy women her office and choice. In short, with happy spirits in festive custom, they ate, stayed in the home and rested on that day. From that time, the Saviour was customarily freely welcomed as a guest in the house of St. Martha.

The Saviour, as was customary, gratefully received the hospitality of St. Martha in a different way. How great a reward was set aside for her in the presence of God, for the liberal hospitality and cheerful spirit offered to the poor and needy: for He approved of the hospitality of this holy woman.

How Lazarus was raised  
by her prayers

How many good benefits were agreeable to the Guest because of the good hospitality! Martha received the needy with a diligent and cheerful spirit when they appeared at her home. The hospitality of this woman was rewarded: for because of the friendship and hospitality of St. Martha, the Lord raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. For the Evangelist says that the Lord Jesus loved Martha and Mary her sister and Lazarus.

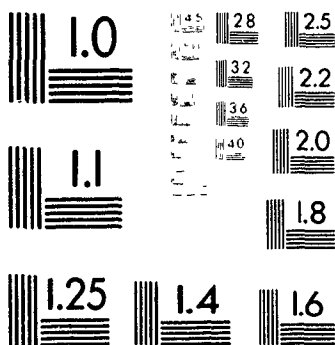
O happy and praiseworthy generation, which Christ loved more than others! Although the wise words of the Father say: "I love those who love me", yet rarely is it found in the Scriptures where the faithful whom the Lord loved are mentioned especially by name. And because St. Martha knew her holy Guest loved

For out of friendship for his hostess St. Martha, the Lord raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. For the Evangelist says: "The Lord Jesus loved Martha and Mary her sister and Lazarus," and indeed, He raised Lazarus because of the prayers of his sisters.

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her, and did not doubt that it was possible for him to do anything, and because she heard that He had raised the daughter of the synagogue ruler and the widow's son, she complained bitterly to the Lord when he returned to Bethany about the death of her brother. She said: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask." O the unwavering faith of this holy woman! She believed in God, three in one: she saw the Son concealed in human flesh; she did not see the Father, but did not doubt that he would fulfil the requests of the Son; and she believed in the Holy Spirit, who formed an indestructible bond of love between Father and Son, and through whom the Father, at the request of the Son, would raise her brother. On that account the Lord said to the believing woman: "Your brother will rise". Martha immediately

replied: "I know that he will rise on the last day". Clearly this holy woman was acquainted with the basic tenets of the law: she had read of the resurrection of the dead in the prophets; she believed in a final and universal resurrection. But she doubted that she would see her brother at the present time and near at hand, and because of this, the Lord said to her: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me, though he were dead, yet he will live. And all who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?" And she said, "Yes, Lord."

O, what great faith abounded in this holy woman! She said: "I believe that you are the Christ, the son of God, who came into this world". Martha proved herself to have much in common with Peter, the chief of the apostles, with Job, with Abraham, and with the Holy Virgin: with St. Peter, who, because he believed in the

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, said: "I acknowledge that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Martha likewise confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world;" in common with the blessed Job, who said: "I believe that my Saviour will rise up on earth on the last day, and even though my skin be destroyed, in my flesh I will see God," and Martha, believing in a f u t u r e resurrection, said: "I know that my brother will rise in the resurrection on the last day;" in common with Abraham, who welcomed three angels as guests, because of faith in the Holy Trinity, and Martha received in her home this God, three in one, and what is more, God and man. She proved to have a common part also with the holy Virgin; for the glorious Virgin Mary received God and man in her holy womb, and Martha received God and man as a guest in her own home. The divine body of the

former [Mary] nourished that which is most blessed in her holy womb; the holy hostess Martha cared for Him in her own home. He whom the one begot, the other cared for. Therefore she proved to have something in common with the divine Virgin, but they were different. Their worth is different: for the former is blessed among all women and nothing is similar in worth. In her chaste virgin womb she received the Son of God. The latter [Martha] received Him devotedly in her earthly home. The former cared for a small boy, the latter a man of thirty years. And therefore she believed in her heart the faith of the prophets, and the confession of the apostles, and was occupied with good works, and truly, as a consort and participant with them, she shared in the kingdom of heaven. And she who believed that all things were possible deserved to receive what she asked of the Lord.

He heard her desire, and raised her brother from the dead: when the voice of the Lord decreed: "Lazarus, come out," he was restored to life after four days. Meanwhile a ceremony of great joy was celebrated and a banquet made by the faithful Jews in the house of Simon the Leper; and Martha served. There was no doubt that a miracle had taken place, for Lazarus took his place at the table. From that time on, it was believed that the Lord had raised the brother of St. Martha from the grave because of her holy prayers, and it happened that penitent sinners called upon her, and out of the goodness of her heart she entreated God on their behalf. Her holy Guest, out of love for her freed them from their sin and made them whole. The Ruler of heaven most humbly loved St. Martha, so much that it pleased Him to hold the noble virgin in great honour, so that, avoiding the royal palaces, He was pleased to lodge in

her home, to be fed  
and cared for and  
to rest in her holy  
h o m e .        H e  
instituted and made  
evident the whole  
religion of all the  
religious and the  
sacraments of the  
holy church. In  
her sacred home the  
holy church was  
formed. The pious  
women Mary and  
M a r t h a ,  
representing the  
contemplative and  
the active lives,  
rejoiced in the  
favour of the  
Saviour, and He  
equipped them and  
showed their  
successors in the  
Christian churches  
how to live  
uprightly. In  
these two lives all  
the doctrines of  
the laws of all the  
religious of the  
Old and New  
Testaments have  
their meaning and  
are fulfilled. By  
which all the  
saints and elect of  
God come, and will  
come to the highest  
kingdom by loving  
their neighbours as  
themselves. Let us  
persist in the  
active life with  
M a r t h a        b y  
fulfilling in all  
necessary ways  
w h a t e v e r        i s  
required in it. By  
loving God over all  
and disregarding  
earthly love, and

looking towards the heavens, let us rejoice in the contemplative life with Mary. Thus are the practises of earth, which will not be lost in heaven. Thus we cross over through temporal goods so that we do not lose eternal ones, and thus terrestrial things are not lost because of celestial things nor celestial things lost for terrestrial. By these things also we deserve to fully enjoy the benefits given to us by God. Let us be worthy to possess the kingdom of Heaven. So much let us say of the holy hostess of Christ, according to the testimony of the evangelists: let us move on to treat briefly the rest, namely her life and end.

How His own were sent away

In short, with all her heart, St. Martha heard and understood the teachings of the Lord when he said: "All who leave their father and mother, wife and children and lands in my name will receive a

Chapter 94 - Of Their Dispersion with Certain of the Disciples

From the acts of St. Martha. With all her heart St. Martha heard and understood the teaching of the Lord when He said: 'All who leave father and mother, etc.'

hundredfold, and will possess eternal life". She divided all her material resources into three parts. She gave the first part to her sister Mary Magdalene, to supplement the resources from which she supplied the living expenses and clothing for the Lord and his apostles. The second part she gave to her brother Lazarus. The third part she kept, and on it she lived and entertained the Saviour and his disciples when they came to her home. Whatever remained after the ascension of Christ into heaven--when the multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul and no one set apart anything of his own, but they had all things in common--she placed at the feet of the apostles. And it was in common for the believers because, as the philosopher said, "It shines clearly for all when goods are drawn down in common". And Martha proved herself an apostle among apostles and a disciple among disciples. At that

She divided all her material resources into three parts. The first she gave to her sister Mary Magdalene, to supplement the resources from which she supplied living expenses for the Lord and his apostles. The second part she gave to her brother Lazarus. The third part she kept for her own support, and so she could entertain the Saviour and his disciples when they came to her home. Anything remaining after the ascension of Christ into heaven--when the multitude of believers were of one heart and of one soul, and no one set apart anything of his own, but they had all things in common--she placed at the feet of the apostles, so that they could provide all necessities in common. And thus Martha proved herself a disciple among disciples. At



time the growing number of disciples aroused against themselves the hostility of the Jews, so that in the end they were expelled.

They took Peter and the other apostles into public custody and

killed James. Without reason they were taken away and escaped, sailing in a vessel without sail or rudder or any provisions at all.

But in the end the raging fury of the Jews was overthrown. Divine providence enriched them in a better region. It enriched them with villages and towns and cities. It made them rich with many treasures. It enriched them with churches. It multiplied their servants and honours. And, moreover, it would give them heavenly mansions. It gave to each one a city and homeland:

that time the growing number of believers aroused against themselves the persecution of the Jews, so that in the end they were expelled.

They took Peter and the other apostles into public custody, stoned Stephen, and others like James they killed with swords. Without reason they were taken to the coast, and sent away in a vessel without a rudder and such things as nautical equipment, nor any kind of supplies and protection, and abandoned on the billows of the open sea. But in the end the raging fury of the Jews was dissipated. Divine providence honoured them in a better place. It enriched them with villages, towns and cities, with rich treasures and churches and mansions, both now and forever in heaven. To each one divine providence distributed his own spiritually-assigned place:

Arles to Trophimus;  
 Narbonne to Paulus;  
 Toulouse and  
 Vaucogne to  
 Saturninus;  
 Poitiers to  
 Martialus;  
 Saintonge and  
 Aquitaine to  
 Eutropius; Le Mans  
 and Brittany to  
 Julianus; Bourges  
 to Urcissinus;  
 Tours to Gracianus;  
 Lyons to Irenaeus;  
 Besançon to  
 Ferrucius; Orange  
 to the other  
 Eutropius;  
 Périgueux to  
 Fronto; Velay to  
 Georgius; all of  
 Gaul to Dionysius.  
 Each one was given  
 his own village.  
 See how much the  
 mercy of God did  
 not cease to be  
 evident in foreign  
 regions. When they  
 were dead, requests  
 were made by the  
 people before the  
 holy ashes and  
 bones and tombs,  
 and they came to  
 the aid of the  
 living. The sick  
 coming to their  
 tombs were healed,  
 the blind given  
 sight, the lame  
 restored, those  
 with demons freed,  
 and those in  
 mourning  
 comforted. The  
 guilt of sinners  
 was forgiven.  
 Therefore God did  
 not wish to give  
 them an inheritance  
 in the city of

to Trophimus,  
 Arles; to Paulus,  
 Narbonne; to  
 Saturninus,  
 Toulouse and  
 Vaucogne; to  
 Martialus,  
 Poitiers; to  
 Eutropius,  
 Saintonge and  
 Aquitaine; to  
 Julianus, Le Mans  
 and Brittany; to  
 Austregisulus,  
 Bourges; to  
 Cratianus, Tours;  
 to Irenaeus,  
 Lyons; to  
 Ferrutionus,  
 Besançon; to the  
 other Eutropius,  
 Orange; to  
 Fronto,  
 Périgueux; to  
 Georgius, Velay;  
 to Dionisius, all  
 of Gaul. Thus  
 patrons were  
 given to each  
 region by the  
 Lord, and while  
 living they were  
 equipped with  
 miracles and  
 virtues.

Jerusalem, for he gave them a better one elsewhere. Similarly, God did not wish to give men a perfect inheritance except in the heavenly kingdom which he made for them. Thus he said to Abraham: "Leave your land and your family and come into the land which I will show you, and I will make you grow into a great nation." Thus God first made man. He transferred him out from paradise into this world, and from there into the ground, and after that He will take him into heaven. Thus it happened that the sons of Israel crossed the Red Sea from Egypt into the promised land. Thus it happened that Christ descended from the bosom of the Father descended into the womb of the blessed Virgin, and from there He came into the world, and then into the tomb, and then into the ground, and after the resurrection He returned to heaven. Similarly, our Lord will supply three mansions for each one of us, and it is right to go

across from one to another: He gives the world in which we stop off, He gives the grave in which the body decays, and He gives heaven in which we remain finally. Bitter death is our companion in the world, worms in the grave, angels in heaven. Thus St. Martha, his hostess, was taken away and enriched with her own treasures in foreign regions.

How she crossed the sea with St. Maximinus, bishop of Aix, one of the seventy disciples

Just as the Lord united His glorious mother with St. John the Evangelist, even so the Holy Spirit united Martha and Mary Magdalene with St. Maximinus, who once baptized them. He led them to the kingdom of heaven by the example of his good conduct. They entered into a ship with many others, and after praying for a safe trip, they reached the port of Marseille, under the Lord's guidance. Then they approached the territory of Aix.

When the aforementioned persecution of the Jews against the faithful flared up, St. Martha herself, along with other believers in Christ, was driven out and deprived of her material resources. The same was done to St. Maximinus, one of the seventy-two. The Holy Spirit united him with the disciple of Christ and her sister Mary, and he baptized them, leading them to the kingdom of heaven by the example of his good way of life. Therefore they entered into a ship with many others, and after a successful voyage reached the port of Marseille.

After the ascension of the Lord, when the dispersion of the disciples took place, Martha, with her brother Lazarus, her sister Mary Magdalene and St. Maximinus, who had baptized them and to whom the Holy Spirit had entrusted them, and many others, were sent away by the infidels, confined in a vessel without sail or rudder, and without any provisions. But with the Lord as their guide they reached Marseille. From there they went to the region of Aix and there

After fasting and fervent prayers they converted the unbelieving people to faith in Christ by means of miraculous signs and prophecies. The Lord gave the glorious Martha both the ability to heal all kinds of sickness and to make holy prophecies. She was, as we say, physically beautiful, elegant and charming in appearance, and highly eloquent and clear in speech. Her sermons were received by kings and nobles. She succeeded in converting a greater number of people than the rest of her companions. The majority of the people of this province were converted to Christ by St. Maximinus, Martha and Mary.

How she bound the dragon by her hand

There was at this time on the banks of the Rhone, next to the huge cliff, in the forest between Arles and Avignon towards the western region, a huge dragon, half land animal and half

converted the people to faith.

For St. Martha was extremely eloquent and popular with all.

Chapter 99 - Of the Dragon which Martha Bound and the People Killed

There was at this time on the banks of the Rhone between Arles and Avignon a huge dragon, the front half of which was shaped like an animal and the rest of the body like a

There was at this time on the banks of the Rhone, in a forest between Arles and Avignon, a dragon which was half animal and

fish, which had destroyed many passersby, asses and horses which had encountered it. It submerged ships crossing the Rhone. Crowds of armed people often came there, but they did not succeed in slaying it, for it concealed itself in the river by the forest. It was larger than an ox, longer than a horse, and had the head of a lion. Its teeth were like sharp swords, its mane like a horse's. It had a sharp ridge on its back like a pickaxe, heavy scales for tearing apart, sinewy feet and claws like a bear. Its tail was like a snake, and it was fortified with two twisted plates, one on each side. Twelve lions and as many bears could not vanquish it.

When none of  
the inhabitants

fish. It killed many passersby who encountered it. It also slew asses and horses, and submerged boats which crossed the Rhone. Therefore great armed crowds of people often came, wishing to slay it, but it concealed itself in the river by the forest. It was larger than an ox, longer than a horse, and had the head of a lion. Its teeth were like sharp swords, its mane like a horse. It had a sharp ridge along its back like a pickaxe, hairy scales, six feet, claws like a bear, and a tail like a snake, and was fortified with two twisted plates, one on each side. It could not be killed when attacked by javelins or any kind of arms. It had so much strength that twelve lions or as many bears could neither equal nor conquer the huge cruel beast. None of the inhabitants of that region

half fish,

greater than an ox and longer than a horse, with teeth like swords, sharp as horn, and

fortified with two shields, one on either side. Lying concealed in the river, it killed all who passed by and submerged ships.

were able to  
destroy it in any  
way, they heard  
reports of the  
reputation of St.  
Martha and her  
g l i t t e r i n g  
miracles, how she  
cast out demons,  
and they came to  
her asking that she  
come and drive away  
the dragon once and  
f o r a l l .

Therefore, the holy  
friend of God went  
to the place. The  
hostess of Christ,  
confident in her  
t r u e G u e s t ,

discovered the  
dragon in the  
forest, devouring a  
man which it had  
killed.

She threw  
holy water which  
she had brought on  
him, and held up a  
wooden image of  
the holy cross.

for some distance  
could conquer or  
kill it. They  
heard reports of  
the distinguished  
deeds which the  
Lord performed  
through St.  
Martha and they  
came to her,  
humbly asking  
that she visit  
their country and  
free them from  
the ruinous  
dragon which  
bothered them  
very much. The  
compassionate  
saint set out for  
the designated  
place, confident  
in the strength  
of the name of  
Christ to drive  
out the dragon.  
However, she  
found it in the  
forest leaning  
over a man whom  
it had just  
killed, prior to  
devouring him.  
The hostess of  
Christ was  
unafraid and  
approached,  
sprinkling the  
holy water which  
she had brought  
with her on the  
evil beast and  
holding out the  
sign of the  
cross. The  
dragon became so  
weak and stupid  
that it did not  
succeed in going  
forward or  
showing any  
fierceness. Thus

Martha was  
called by the  
people.

She  
encountered the  
dragon in the  
f o r e s t ,  
devouring a man.

She threw holy  
water on it and  
held up a cross  
before it.

The dragon was overpowered and stood like a sheep. The saint bound it with her own holy belt, and all the people in that place put it to death with spears and stones.

This dragon was called "Tirascurus" and afterwards the place was called T i r a s c o n u s [ T a r a s c o n ] . Previously it had been called Nerluc, that is "black forest", because the forest was dark and shadowy. Possibly this dragon was a descendant of that which is called Leviathan in the book of Job, who swallowed up rivers and was not amazed, but had confidence even though the Jordan rushed against his mouth. It had come down by sea from Galatia in Asia, a descendant of Leviathan, a most ferocious aquatic serpent, and of the animal called the Bonasus. The Bonasus is an

i t s t o o d overpowered, like a sheep, having no strength. Without delay the holy one bound it with her own belt, while all wondered at this v i c t o r y . Immediately it was overpowered by all the people with spears and stones. This dragon was called Tharascurus by the inhabitants, and afterwards the place was c a l l e d Tharascurus [ T a r a s c o n ] . Previously it was called Verluc, that is "black forest," because it was dense and dark and black there. This dragon of which we speak was considered of the lineage of that which is called Leviathan in Job

and had come down by sea from Galatia in Asia, a descendant of Leviathan, a most ferocious aquatic serpent, and of the animal called the Bonachus. The Bonachus was an

Immediately it was subdued and stood like a sheep. St. Martha bound it with her own belt, then it was slain by the people with spears and stones.

The dragon was c a l l e d Tarasconus by the people and, in its memory, henceforth the place was called Tarascona [Tarascon]. It had previously been called Nerluc, or "black forest", because the forest there was d a r k a n d s h a d o w y .

It had come by sea from Galatia in Asia, a n d w a s descended from the Leviathan, a f e r o c i o u s aquatic serpent, and from the Bonasus, an



animal which originated in the region of Galatia, and which drives away its attackers with burning dung, which it shoots out like an arrow over a huge area, and everything which it touches is burned as if by fire.

#### How she remained in Tarascon

After many petitions of the people, St. Martha stayed on there in that country [Tarascon], with the permission of her former master Maximinus and her sister Mary Magdalene. As long as she lived she continued her fasting, vigils and prayers. What labours, what anguish, what hunger, how many persecutions, how many troubles and sorrows she endured there!

Who can estimate the cost? For in the first seven years she ate the roots of raw grasses and the

animal which originated in the region of Galatia, and which drove away its attackers with burning dung which it shot out like an arrow over the range of almost an acre, and everything which it touched was burned as if by fire.

#### Chapter 100 - Of the Austerity of Her Life In That Place

Finally giving in, after many petitions by the nobles and the people of that country, St. Martha remained [in Tarascon] at the desire of her master St. Maximin and with the permission of her sister Mary Magdalene. She persisted in holy preaching and vigils as long as she lived there. What labours, what anguish, what sorrows, how many persecutions, how much hunger and fasting she sustained! Who can estimate the cost? For in the first seven years she subsisted on nuts and roots and raw grasses

animal which originated in the region of Galatia, and which expelled its dung like an arrow at those in its path within the range of almost an acre and whatever it touched burned as if by fire.

Afterwards Martha remained there by permission of both her master Maximinus and her sister. She had time for unceasing prayers and fasting.

fruits of the trees  
and the foliage of  
t r e e s     a n d  
mushrooms, and they  
were better to her  
than a food  
p l a t t e r .  
Afterwards a  
community of  
brothers and  
sisters came to  
stay with her, and  
a great basilica  
was built in honour  
of the holy Christ  
and the blessed  
Virgin Mary.  
Martha lived a  
harsh life there,  
avoiding meat and  
all fat, eggs,  
cheese and wine.  
She ate only once a  
day. In the winter  
she customarily  
wore a cloak of  
sheepskin, and in  
summer a tunic and  
cloak with goat  
skin next to her  
flesh. She went  
barefoot, and wore  
a turban of camel  
hair on her head.

A belt made of  
h o r s e   h a i r  
intentionally tied  
in knots was around  
her waist, and  
often worms came  
out of her broken  
and rotting flesh.  
Stretching out on  
tree branches or  
vines, with a  
stone under her  
head, she slept on  
a hair shirt.

and the fruits of  
trees, sustaining  
the body rather  
than restoring  
it.

Afterwards a  
community of  
brothers and  
sisters grew up  
and a great  
basilica was  
built in honour  
of our Lord Jesus  
Christ and the  
Blessed Mary,  
ever Virgin. She  
lived a hard and  
austere life  
there.

In winter  
time she was  
protected by a  
sheep skin thrown  
over a cheap  
cloak. In summer  
she was clothed  
in a tunic and  
cloak, with a  
h a i r - s h i r t  
clinging to her  
flesh. She  
walked barefoot  
and on her head  
wore a turban of  
camel hair. Her  
belt was made of  
horse hair tied  
i n   k n o t s ,  
tightened so much  
around her waist  
that worms came  
out of her  
broken, rotting  
flesh. She lay  
on tree branches  
or vines with a  
stone placed  
under her head

Afterwards a  
large community  
of sisters came  
together in that  
place, and a  
basilica was  
built in honour  
of the Blessed  
Mary, ever  
Virgin. Martha  
led there a very  
austere life.  
She ate only  
once a day, and  
avoided meat,  
all fat, eggs,  
cheese and wine.

She devoted herself diligently to prayer and supplications. She was always attentive to heavenly things, never shelter on earth. Her body was on earth but her mind was turned towards heaven. A hundred times a day and as many times at night she bent her knee to the earth in prayer. She was powerful in all the virtues of faith, hope and charity. She was always notable for the hospitality which she had practised at Bethany: customarily her table was filled with strangers and guests. Her mouth did not cease from divine praises; frequently the works of her hands were enjoyed. Often she stayed at home with those around her. Often she went to the towns and cities and villages nearby to spread the divine word to the crowds of people. The words which she spoke could produce miracles. When she placed her

as a pillow, covered with a bag filled with a little horse hair. She was never free from prayers and supplications.

She fell to her knees in prayer a hundred times a day and as many times at night.

Being always occupied with good works, she pleased God and men greatly through the hospitality which she had diligently exercised at Bethany.

hand on the listeners, they received the Holy Spirit. When she placed her hand on the sick, they received the Holy Spirit. When she placed her hand on the sick, they were made well. Acting in this way, Martha was loved by God and favoured among men. How many thousands of people were converted and baptized through her exhortations to faith in Christ is too long to describe in detail.

#### How she revived the dead

Once the distinguished disciple of Christ was near Avignon, before the city gates, in a pleasant place between the city and the Rhone River, preaching and healing the sick who were brought to her. A young man on the other side of the

Many thousands of the people acknowledged faith in the Christian religion because of her worthy preaching, holy way of life and all the miracles she provided, and they freely sought holy baptism.

#### Chapter 101 - Of the Resuscitation of the Young Man and the Conversion of Water into Wine

The distinguished disciple of Christ was near Avignon, before the city gates, in a pleasant place beside the Rhone River, preaching and healing the sick who were brought to her. A young man who was on the other side of

One time when she was preaching near Avignon, between the city and the Rhone River,

a young man on the other side of

river saw the crowds of people on this side listening to the holy one, and he wanted to see and hear her. Lacking a boat, he enthusiastically began to swim across the river, naked. When he was swimming in the middle,

he suddenly encountered a swift current in the raging river, and, being carried off, was submerged in the depths. In short, all that day the boats of the citizens were not able to find him in the river.

On the second day, about nine o'clock, the lifeless body was discovered, and placed at the feet of St. Martha. Then the illustrious friend of Christ, her heart moved, informed the people that she would prostrate herself and call upon God, asking that He in His mercy would deign to raise the

the river saw the crowds of people listening to the holy one, and he wanted to see and hear her. Having no boat, but enthusiastically eager to cross the river, he began to swim, naked. Then he grew weak in the middle of the river, having suddenly encountered a swift current in the raging river, and, being carried off, he was submerged in the depths. In short, many came together to help and all that day the citizens searched for him with their boats, but he was not found. On the second day, about nine o'clock, the lifeless body of the youth was discovered and was placed sorrowfully at the feet of St. Martha. Then the maidservant of Christ, her heart moved, informed the people that, prostrating herself over him, she would call upon God, asking that He, in His omnipotent strength, would deign to raise

the river paused, wishing to hear her words. Since he lacked a boat, he began to swim across, naked.

Suddenly he was seized by the current of the river and immediately he drowned.

The following day his body was found and brought to the feet of Martha to be raised.

boy from the dead.  
Prostrating  
herself next to the  
body in the form of  
a cross, she called  
upon the Lord and

said: "Adonai,  
Jesus Christ, who,  
in your holy and  
ineffable mercy  
once raised my  
brother Lazarus,  
your beloved, from  
the dead; who holds  
the keys to life  
and death; who  
commands death and  
makes it flee; who  
calls the dead and  
they rise:

my dear  
Guest, look upon  
the faith and  
prayers of those  
around and revive  
this boy, in order  
that they and those  
who hear of your  
power and strength  
may believe in you,

O Adonai, Jesus  
Christ, who lives  
and reigns with the  
Father and the Holy  
Spirit, and the  
Virgin Mother Mary  
for ever and ever,  
Amen." Then the

the boy from the  
dead. She  
prostrated  
herself in prayer  
next to the body  
in the form of a  
cross and  
interceded,  
saying: "Adonai,  
Jesus Christ,  
who in your holy  
and ineffable  
mercy once raised  
my brother  
Lazarus, your  
beloved, from the  
dead; who holds  
the keys to life  
and death; who  
commands death  
and makes it  
flee; who calls  
the dead to life:  
most bountiful  
Lord, look upon  
the prayers and  
supplications of  
your servant and  
those standing  
around, and  
order the spirit  
to return to the  
corpse of this  
young man, so  
that those at  
hand and in the  
future who see  
and hear of the  
greatness of your  
excellent  
judgement will  
believe in you  
and follow you as  
their Saviour."

She prostrated  
herself on the  
ground in the  
form of a cross  
and prayed in  
this way:  
"Adonai, Lord  
Jesus Christ,  
who once raised  
my brother  
Lazarus, your  
beloved,

my dear  
Guest, look  
upon the faith  
of those  
standing around  
and raise this  
young man."

illustrious hostess of Christ felt the power of God come from heaven. She raised herself and taking the hand of the boy said to him: "Rise, boy, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

And immediately he rose up alive and unharmed, and underwent baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. Oh, Christ destroyed death, working through the blessed hostess of Christ, and He restored a man who was condemned to two deaths by a double resurrection through faith in Christ. And afterwards all in the cities and towns believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and underwent baptism. Thus, because of this deed, Martha was praised by all, even more than previously.

At that time bishop Maximinus of Aix and Trophimus of Arles and Eutropius of Orange, all three, came without warning to visit her, each of them

Having finished this prayer, the maidservant of Christ rose from the ground, took the young man by the hand and said: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, O young man, rise up from the dead and take up living." And immediately the boy rose up, healthy and unharmed, and was baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.

She took his hand, and then the young man rose up and received holy baptism.

At the same time Maximinus, the bishop of Aix, and Trophimus of Arles and Eutropius of Orange, three devout priests of the Lord, came to visit her, each

unaware that the others were coming. And through their prayers in the name of the holy Christ, and in honour of His mother, they consecrated Martha's church on the sixteenth day before the calends of January [i.e. December 17].

At a banquet for them, the wine having run short, water was converted into wine.

Then through Maximinus, Mary, the sister of Martha, conveyed a promise that she would visit her. She fulfilled it not while living but after her death. It happened not a long time later that bishops

unaware that the others were coming. By consent of their holy petitions, they most faithfully consecrated the church which had been built in the name of Jesus Christ and in honour of his holy mother on the sixteenth day before the calends of January [i.e. December 17]. The holy dedication being solemnly completed, a time of refreshment followed. While they were dining, the wine ran short and in these circumstances divine power changed water into wine.

Chapter 104 - Of the Spirit which Martha Saw

Through St. Maximinus Mary sent a message to her sister Martha that she would soon visit her. Such a promise was fulfilled not while living in the flesh but after death. It happened that after a short



St. Fronto of Périgueux, who had been ordained by the apostle St. Peter, and the most holy Georgius of Velay, namely he who was dead and came back to life, were expelled from their own cities for their preaching. They approached St. Martha for help, just as they would seek sanctuary from their mother, and remained with her for several days. By the prayers of St. Martha poured out to God, they were reconciled with their cities. For she was a pious mother and nurse to the bishops and all believers at this time. She took care of all, like a mother hen her chicks. For the needs of body and soul of the crowds of believers who gathered about her were fulfilled. Then St. Martha, confessing her sin to one of them, namely the elder, St. Fronto, predicted her own death not far off in the future, and asked also that, if God allowed him to live so long, he would promise to return to her at the time of her

time St. Fronto of Périgueux and St. Georgius of Velay, he who was dead and came back to life, were expelled from their own places and seats and cities for their preaching. Being exiled, they approached St. Martha for protection, and remained with her for several days.

Through her prayers; to God they were reconciled with their cities.

Then, being mindful of her death, she addressed St. Fronto in private, since she wished the sacrament of confession. She predicted to him that the day of her death was imminent. The holy bishop

death. But because all the miracles which she performed on the far side of the sea and on this side and her frequent signs are too many to describe in detail, we shall tell briefly of how she went from a good life to a better one.

promised her that he would be summoned on this day in the future if it was in accordance with the divine plan.

Eusebius, in the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical History, refers to a woman with a hemorrhage, who, after she was healed, made a statue in the image of Christ with a fringed garment, as she had seen Him, in her courtyard or garden. And it was greatly revered. The herbs growing up around the statue, which had previously had no power, were of such potency when they touched the fringe of the garment that they subsequently cured many illnesses. Ambrose says that this woman with a hemorrhage whom the Lord healed

was Martha. Jerome relates, and it is also found in the Tripartite History, that afterwards Julian the Apostate took away the statue which the woman with a hemorrhage had made and put in place one of himself, which was destroyed by a bolt of lightning.

Of her passing

The blessed hostess of Christ was pleasing to her pious Guest in all the good works which she did, and, wishing to pay tribute to her belief, her pious Guest revealed to her by the spirit of prophecy the approaching day of her death, a year in advance. Afterwards she announced it to her brothers and sisters. She was shaken by fevers for almost all the whole year. On the eighth day before her death, Martha heard choirs of angels bearing the soul of her departing sister, Mary Magdalene, into heaven. She informed all of her

Thus, since St. Martha was pleasing in all things to her Guest, Christ, He wished to pay tribute to her worth, and informed her one year in advance of the approaching day of her death.

The Lord revealed to Martha her death a year in advance.

And she suffered from fevers for the whole year. On the eighth day before her death she heard choirs of angels bearing the soul of her departing sister, Mary Magdalene, into heaven. And immediately she

For the whole year she suffered from fevers. On the eighth day before her death she heard choirs of angels bearing the soul of her sister into heaven. She soon called together her

own that were in that place, saying: "O my companions and most sweet friends, I ask you to rejoice with me: because hosts of angels are bearing the soul of our sister to the heavenly mansions and rejoicing. O most beautiful and beloved sister, consider that which you promised me, that you would make me joyful by visiting. Live with your Master and our true Guest in the blessed realm." How great and inestimable was the love between the two sisters, and how it was revealed. On the eighth day after the death of the one, the other died. The one led the other into p a r a d i s e . Immediately St. Martha began to grow listless in her bed, more than usual, and she called her brothers and sisters to gather around her, and fortified herself for heaven with the eucharist and confession. The business of her c h u r c h was agreeably set in order. She bravely encouraged her companions in the

called together all around her saying, "Let us all rejoice, that, being found worthy through divine grace, the soul of my sister Mary Magdalene is borne to her promised throne by an angelic retinue. But, my most sweet sister, remember the promise that you solemnly vowed, that you would visit me, and live forever with the true Lord, Jesus Christ." But Mary did not disappoint Martha. For after eight days, just as she had said, she drew her happily into paradise with her. For indeed, on the eighth day after the death of St. Mary, Martha began to weaken more than usual, and, leaning forward on her bed, she exhorted her brothers and sisters to remember to hold firm in their profession of the holy Christian religion. In their presence, she disposed of a l l h e r

brothers and the community of sisters and said: "My companions and sweet friends, I ask you to rejoice with me, because I see angelic choirs joyfully bearing the soul of my sister to her promised home. O my most beautiful and beloved sister, live with your Master and my Guest in the blessed realm."

Christian faith to hold firm in their religion. Then they kept watch unceasingly in her home all that day and night until her death, with lighted torches and prayers to God. She asked sweetly that they act diligently.

#### How demons came at her death

In the middle of the night before the day of her death, those keeping watch fell into a deep sleep.

A strong whirlwind coming from an evil direction, gusting s w i f t l y ,

extinguished the seven large candles and three lamps burning in her home.

The blessed one, seeing a crowd of foul spirits around her, began to pray: "My Father Ely, my dear Guest, those who would

possessions to the church and asked that they keep vigil with her until the hour of her death, persisting in prayers and orations and entreaties. After this conversation she fortified herself with the sacrament of the Lord's communion.

#### Chapter 105 - Of Her Happy Passing

In the middle of the night before the time of her death, the brothers and those persons who stood guard around her with torches were weighed down with sleep. A violent gust of wind was stirred up around them by the evil enemy, who envied all of the holy ones, and its motion forcefully extinguished the seven large candles and three lamps. Then the maidservant of Christ, seeing a terrible crowd of evil spirits around her, began to pray. "My Father," she said, "Ely, my most dear Guest, those who would

Immediately St. Martha sensed that her own end was near, and she admonished them that they keep watch around her with lighted lamps until her death.

In the middle of the night before the day of her death, those keeping watch fell into a deep sleep.

A violent wind rushed in and

extinguished all the lamps.

Seeing a crowd of evil spirits, she began to pray: "My Father Ely, my dear Guest, those who

seduce me have gathered around to devour me, holding a list of the evil deeds which I have done, crying loudly, saying:

"God, abandon her, and we will pursue and seize her when she is freed. Ely, do not forsake me. Ely, come to my aid. Ely, make haste to help me. Do not be mindful of t h e transgressions of my youth and my ignorance, Adonai, and do not turn your face away from me. Swiftly hear m e i n m y t r i b u l a t i o n , Adonai." At the sound of her voice, those who were watching awoke, and they sought a fire in all the house, and not finding one, they were delayed.

Behold, the blessed Martha saw her sister Mary Magdalene coming to meet her, holding in her hand a torch, from which she relit all the lamps and candles in the place.

seduce me are gathered around to devour me, holding a list of the evil deeds which I have done, crying loudly and saying, 'God abandon her, and we will pursue and seize her when she is freed.' Ely, do not forsake me. Ely, make haste to help me. Do not be mindful of t h e transgressions of my youth and my i g n o r a n c e , Adonai."

At the sound of her voice, those who were sleeping awoke abruptly. Wishing light, her assistants went from the house to the next, seeking a fire with which to rekindle the extinguished lamps, and they were delayed. St. Martha saw her sister Mary Magdalene coming to meet her, holding in her hand a torch, from which she soon relit all the candles and lamps. And

would seduce me have gathered around to devour me, holding a list of the evil deeds which I have done.

Ely, do not forsake me, but make haste to help me."

And behold, she saw her sister coming to her, holding in her hand a torch, from which she relit the candles and lamps. After

Scarcely had the one finished calling the other by name when her pious Guest appeared and said to her: "Come, my beloved hostess, leave the prison of the flesh and cross over to my palace in heaven, where I will receive you as my guest,

and where I am, O my servant, you will be with me. You received me in your home and I will receive you in my heaven. Once I gave my consolation to the desolate, and I will not take it away from you after your death.

after the one called the other by name, behold the Lord Jesus Christ approached, He who had vanished into nothingness, saying: "Come, you who were once my beloved hostess, cross now from the prison of the flesh to my palace in heaven, where you will rejoice eternally with the holy ones, not just as a hostess or stranger; but as a faithful family member, a fellow citizen with the holy ones. You were anxious about me and ministered to me on earth, welcoming me as a guest and reviving me. I will repay you for your time of service with exceeding happiness, so that where I am you will be there with me. For having served me, you will accompany me. Freely I will give consolation to you, and well-being to those whom you instruct. I will neither take it away from you nor

each had called the other by name, behold Christ came, saying: "Come, beloved hostess,

and where I am, there you will be with me. You received me in your home, and I will receive you in my heaven,

For love of you, I will hear those who come to your tomb in devotion, complaining bitterly of their need. At when she was about to turn back, quivering, He said: "Stand fast, I will come to you." Hardly were these words spoken when the Lord and Mary disappeared from that place. And those who watched over her, returning without having found a fire, entered the house, and, looking at one another in amazement, they asked eagerly how the lamps which had been extinguished when they went out had been rekindled, thus far not knowing of the greatness of the acts of God. But immediately Martha revealed to her holy brothers what had happened. The night passed and the day of her death arrived. She asked that she be carried outside of the basilica to a certain very beautiful street under the trees, in order to see the heavens, and that

diminish it, but will multiply it greatly. For love of you, I will grant mercy to the faithful who come to your sepulchre, and I will answer their petitions. Long for little, now that you come close to me."

and I will hear those who call upon you, for love of you."

Meanwhile, those who had gone out for torches approached and wondered at seeing that the lamps which they had left extinguished were lit. All looked in amazement. Just as this happened, as they conferred among themselves, the holy one of God explained the order of things to her brothers (as was consistent with her most holy life), revealing the divine visitation. Then she asked that they carry her outside the basilica to a certain point under the trees and place her in the form of a

As the hour of her passing approached, she was carried outside so that she could see heaven, and she commanded that she be placed on ashes on the



she be placed on a cross of ashes, resting on a little chaff, and covered with a hair-shirt, and that a holy wooden cross be held up before her. And this was done. Then she asked that her brothers and sisters pray for her. Immediately the souls of all men turned toward heaven, and she fixed her gaze upon heaven. She began to pray, saying: "Ely, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the eternal God, born of the chaste Virgin Mary, who was born for us, suffered and died, arose and returned to the heavens: receive my spirit into your resting-place. Do not allow me to be torn apart by the hands of the four angels who control the gates of hell. But just as I was found worthy as a hostess, receive me as your guest in heaven. My dear Guest, watch over your poor little family and encourage them, that all of them who are in this place will seek out heavenly rewards, and that you will find them worthy to

cross on a little chaff sprinkled with ashes. She rested on a hair shirt and, having a holy wooden cross before her eyes, she waited for her death, looking to heaven. While all those gathered around her were occupied with holy prayers,

ground, and that the sign of the cross be held up before her.

And she prayed in these words: "My dear Guest, watch over this, your poor little one, and, as you deigned to be my Guest, receive me into your heavenly lodgings."

be rewarded." Then she asked that the passion of the Lord written in the Hebrew language, which she had brought with her from Jerusalem, be read. And it was read, and when the reader said:

"Father, into your hand I commend my spirit," the friend of God died, and handed over her worthy soul to the embraces of the archangel Michael, who, with his angels, bore her over the battlefield of the prince of darkness, occupied by the bodies and souls of sinners, and crossed over into the holy mysteries of heaven. O race worthy of a glorious death! Who has heard of a death so deserved, secured at so great a cost as this one? It is not death but life: it is swallowed up in victory. How valuable in the sight of the Lord is the death of his holy hostess. Christ set her free from this world in the sixty-fifth year of her life, having spent seven

she instructed that the Lord's passion be read aloud, that written in Hebrew which she had brought with her from Jerusalem. Next, when the reader read the following words of the evangelist, "Father, into your hand I commend my spirit," the maidservant of Christ fell asleep in the Lord, .

She commanded that the passion according to Luke be read to her,

and when it was said: "Father, into your hand I commend my spirit," her spirit was released.

and a half years in the monastery, on the fourth day from the kalends of August, the sixth day of the week, at the ninth hour.

The distinguished hostess of Christ crossed over into the joy of the angels, where she rejoiced and praised without end her good Guest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Famous persons and the religious companions of her household remained constantly in that place with her until her death: Euchodius and Syntex and Germanus and Epaphras and Sosthenes, first followers of Paul and then companions of Trophimus, and Parmenas, who was one of the seven deacons of the apostles; and Marcilla, the servant and little daughter through baptism of St. Martha, the one who lifted up her voice out of the crowd and said to the Lord Jesus:

on the seventh day from the kalends of January [i.e. December 26], on the sixth day of the week, at the ninth hour of the day, at seventy years of age.

#### Chapter 106 - Of Her Glorious Funeral "

Her companions and her pupils, famous and religious persons of her household, attended to her funeral rites with all devotion, namely Eudochius and Synthex and Germanus and Epaphras and Sosthenes, the disciples of Paul; and the companions of Trophimus; and Parmenas, who was one of the seven deacons of the original church; and Martilla, the handmaid of St. Martha, whom she baptized, the woman who lifted up her voice out of the crowd and said to the Lord

"Blessed is the womb which bore you;"

Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast that you sucked."

and many others leading a spiritual life with her in this place until her death. These faithful companions came together in the basilica which she had built, and attended to her funeral. They adorned the sepulchre with propriety for three entire days and nights, with a great number of people who came from the towns and cities in the vicinity to venerate her death, respectfully keeping vigil with lighted candles and great lamps in the forest.

These, with many others who learned of the death of the holy woman and came quickly, stood there for three days with candles and torches, wishing to pay homage

How the Lord and St. Fronto buried her

The following day, which was Sunday, all the congregation of the religious and all the throng of the people stood around the body, as if they wished the funeral ceremony to take place soon. They all sang psalms and mourned. At the third hour, in Périgueux,

until the sabbath, the day of the burial of her body, and raising up psalms and laments. At the third hour in Périgueux, the

On the following day, which was Sunday, while Martha's praises were being extolled around her body, St. Fronto was celebrating mass in Périgueux,

Bishop Fronto was celebrating mass, and the epistle having been read, he fell asleep on his throne before the altar in the church.

The Lord appeared to him, saying: "My beloved Fronto, if you wish to fulfill the promise which you once made to our hostess, come to her funeral. Come quickly, follow me."

At this same moment in Tarascon, the two proceeded into the church of the godly hostess and began to sing psalms around the body with the others. Taking the books in their hand, they conducted the whole ceremony from beginning to end, while the others replied and assisted. And the two placed the corpse in the grave.

But when these things were taking place, the deacon in Périgueux was ready

bishop St. Fronto was solemnly celebrating holy mass when he fell asleep on his throne before the altar in his church during the reading of the epistle. The Lord appeared to him, saying: "My beloved Fronto, if you wish to fulfill what you promised to our hostess Martha, come quickly to her funeral service, and follow me." This being said, at the same time the two were carried off to Tarascon and entered into the basilica of the godly hostess and began to sing psalms around the holy body with the others. And taking the books in their hand, they conducted the whole funeral from beginning to end, while the others replied and responded. And the two placed the corpse of the holy woman which they were carrying in the grave. When these things were taking place, the deacon of the church of Périgueux was ready to

about the third hour. After the epistle, he fell asleep on his throne. The Lord appeared to him, saying: "My beloved Fronto, if you wish to fulfill the promise which you once made to our hostess, rise quickly and follow me." He obeyed the command, and

suddenly the two arrived at Tarascon. And singing psalms around her body, the two directed the whole office while the others responded, and

with their own hands they laid her corpse in the tomb.

At the same time the deacon in Périgueux,

to begin the reading of the Gospel, the singing of the clergy being finished. He nudged the bishop who was sleeping on his throne, seeking a blessing. But he gave no reply, and all the clergy and men of the city standing around asked in wonder why the bishop made such a delay.

Then the holy bishop, waking as if from a pleasant sleep, said: "My brother, what are you doing? Why did you awaken me? Wonderful things have happened to us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ led me to the funeral of his hostess Martha, and we handed her over to the grave, as we promised to her once a year ago when she was living. But I beg you, send messengers quickly to that place to bring back to us our gold ring and silver gloves, which, when placing the body in the grave I entrusted

proclaim the gospel, the singing of the clergy being finished. He nudged the bishop who was sleeping on his throne, seeking from him a blessing on the reading. But the holy one, in deep sleep, did not respond. All wondered why the holy bishop made such a delay. When nudged again, he awoke as if from a pleasant sleep and said, "O brothers, what are you doing? Why did you awaken me? Wonderful things have happened to us, revealed by our beloved Master. Our Lord Jesus Christ led me from this place to the funeral rites of our hostess Martha, whom we handed over to the grave, as we once promised her when she was living. And in order that you may know that I assisted at the funeral of the holy woman, send to bring back the gold ring and gloves which I entrusted to the

having finished the singing, awoke the bishop, asking his blessing.

St. Fronto awoke suddenly and replied: "My brothers, why have you awakened me?

The Lord Jesus Christ led me to the body of his hostess Martha, and we handed her over to the tomb. Therefore, send messengers quickly to that place, so that they may bring back to us our gold ring and silver gloves, which, when we were preparing to bury the body, I entrusted to the

to a sacristan of the church to keep for me, and which I forgot when I left the church because you awoke me so suddenly."

Messengers were sent quickly and they found things as the bishop had said.

And they brought back the ring and one glove: the sacristan kept the other as a witness of this great thing. After this, when St. Fronto was again discussing the funeral of St. Martha with his brothers, he said:

"After we buried her and we were leaving the church, a certain brother of that place who was versed in letters followed us, and asked the Lord who He was, and from where, and by what name he was called. He, replying nothing,

sacristan of that church to keep for me when I was placing the holy corpse in the tomb. But when leaving the church, I forgot the ring and gloves. I turned back but did not retrieve them from him to whom they were entrusted, being awakened by you."

Messengers were sent without delay, and they learned that things had happened, just as the holy one had said beforehand. They brought back the ring and one glove, for the sacristan kept the other as a witness to this great thing.

St. Fronto was later discussing with the brothers what had happened at the grave of the holy woman. He said:

"After we put her in the tomb, we were leaving the church, and a certain brother of that place who was versed in letters followed us and asked the Lord who he was, and from where, and by what name he was known. He, replying

sacristan, and which I forgot when leaving because you awoke me so suddenly."

Messengers were sent there, and they found things as the bishop had said.

They brought back the ring and one glove: the sacristan kept the other as a witness of this thing.

St. Fronto added: "When we were leaving the church after the burial, a certain brother of that place who was versed in letters followed us, and asked the Lord by what name he was called. He, replying

held out a book which was open in His hand in which nothing else was written than this verse of the psalmist: 'My hostess will be just in everlasting memory; she will not fear an evil hearing on the last day.' When the book was rolled up again, this writing was found on each leaf." For that reason, it is plain that the just hostess of Christ will be held in everlasting memory of the angels and men, and she will not fear an evil hearing when they pay attention to evil things. Depart from me evilsayers.

Thus her abode is established in Salem, and her heavenly dwelling place in Zion. Therefore Christ loved her soul whose body He buried.

#### Of King Clovis

Then what great numbers of both the famous and the unknown were received at her tomb, bringing petitions: the

nothing, held out a book which was open in his hand in which nothing else was written except this verse: 'My hostess will be just in everlasting memory; she will not fear an evil hearing on the last day.' When the book was rolled up again this same writing was found on each leaf. And it is plain enough that the just hostess of Christ will be held in everlasting memory of the angels and men, and she will not fear an evil hearing when those who speak evil hear of her worth. Depart from me, evil sayers.

nothing, held out a book which was open in His hand, and in which nothing else was written except this verse: 'My hostess will be just in everlasting memory; she will not fear an evil hearing on the last day.' When the book was rolled up, this writing was found on each leaf."

#### Chapter 107 - Of the Place of Her Tomb, and Of Her Companions

Then how greatly St. Martha proved worthy of performing



weak, lame, blind, withered, mute, deaf, lunatic, those with all kinds of diseases and demons. No one could describe them. The miracle which they sought was received by all. Among them was Clovis, first king of the Franks and Teutons, who had been baptized as a Christian by St. Remy, bishop of Rheims. It is said that Clovis came to the place because he suffered from a serious kidney problem and he had heard rumours of the godly hostess of Christ. As soon as he touched her sacred tomb, he rejoiced to recover, healed of the disease for which no one had been able to discover a cure. And because of St. Martha, he gave to her place the land and cities and towns for three miles on both sides of the Rhone, and sealed it with his ring. And he made this place a free church, writing that it could not be made subject to anyone at any time.

miracles towards the sick, and one after another they were presented at her venerable tomb. Now we will report a few out of many.

Clovis, who was the first king of the Franks and Teutons, believed in Christ through the teaching of St. Remy, and received the sacrament of baptism. He was afflicted with a serious kidney problem. Learning of her reputation among the people, many of whom were healed of illnesses, he proceeded to the tomb of the maidservant of Christ and there rejoiced at regaining his health. The king generously enriched that place, and gave to the place the lands, farms and fortifications in an area of three miles on either side of the Rhone, sealing the document with his ring. He established the church to be a place free from all lay

Numerous miracles took place at Martha's tomb.

Clovis, king of the Franks, who had been baptized as a Christian by St. Remy, suffered from a serious kidney problem.

He regained sound health upon coming to her tomb. For this reason he enriched this place and gave to the church the land, towns and fortifications within an area of three miles on either side of the Rhone, and made it a free place.

Of the vengeance of God  
in this place

As for the rest, there is one thing of which it is not good to be silent. For from that time on, if any theft or robbery or false witness or adultery and any outrageous thing was done in that place, or any cheating, in a short time divine vengeance was enacted. And if it was not, it was because the right hand of God was reserving his vengeance for the future: for no good will be unrewarded or evil unpunished. Both the punished and the unpunished must stand before God. Therefore the inhabitants of this place were terrified and recognized their wickedness. Marcilla and Syntex and Epaphras, the most virtuous and apostolic of individuals, went to Sclavonia and, preaching there the gospel of Christ, they continued with good works. Marcilla lived ten years after St. Martha. She produced this long life of the distinguished one

subjection and secular power. Also, the place was held in such great veneration and reverence that if any violence or secret injustice or perjury or illicit defilement or rape or fraud was committed it did not go unpunished, divine protection having been granted to the holy place.

Martilla and Synthex and Epaphras, the most virtuous and apostolic of individuals, went to Sclavonia, and preaching there the gospel of Christ, they continued with good works. Martilla lived ten years after the departure of St. Martha, of whose life she wrote this large

Martha's maidservant Martilla wrote this life. She later continued on to Sclavonia and preached the gospel there, and she died there in peace ten years after the death of Martha.

in Hebrew, then I, Syntex, transcribed it into Latin much later. Euchodius and Germanus and Sostenes, followers of St. Martha, kept watch over the sacred body of the godly hostess as long as they lived, and rested in that place after a blessed end. Therefore we brothers are informed of this holy one, whose life we call to memory, for one who is mindful of her will be remembered by God, and we wish to be worthy to reign with her in the heavenly kingdom in good time. Thus Martha, the hostess of Christ, is a form of the active life in the present and for the future, for she will receive the needy who come to her home in the kingdom of heaven, as it was said to her by the Lord. Come and speak well of me to my Father, and gather me into my kingdom. Thus it is declared, and I surrender myself, because He is worthy to answer for us, whose kingdom and rule will endure without end, for ever and ever, Amen.

volume in Hebrew, which I, Syntex, transcribed into Latin much later. Eudochius and Germanus and Parmenas and Sosthenes, the companions of St. Martha, and her followers as long as they lived, kept vigil at her sacred tomb, and remained in that place after her blessed end.

## Endnotes

### Introduction

1. The most influential collection of saints' lives in the later Middle Ages was the Legenda Aurea compiled by Jacobus de Voragine between 1244 and 1267. Over 700 manuscripts and 173 early printed editions survive, including translations into every major western language (Mycoff, 1985, 55). Seybolt's list of fifteenth century editions alone includes three versions in Bohemian, eleven in Dutch, four in English, twenty in French, eighteen in High German, seven in Low German, and thirteen in Italian (Seybolt, 1946, 332-338). Other important texts of Martha's life not mentioned by Seybolt include the Middle English versions in the South English Legendary (late thirteenth century; see Severs, II, 1970, 609) and in the Gilte Legende (1438; *ibid.*) The Scottish Legendary includes a legend of the saint in the Middle Scottish dialect (*ibid.*). An Anglo-Norman verse legend by Nicole Bozon, dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, is also extant (Meyer, 1906; for a modern edition and translation see Bozon, 1947, 45-59), and Martha legends also appear in Middle French in the D1 Legendary, ca. 1275 (Meyer, 1906, 420); the E Legendary, before 1312 (*ibid.*, 421); the E1 Legendary, early fourteenth century (*ibid.*, 422); the Bibliothèque Nationale fr. 13496 manuscript, late thirteenth or early fourteenth century (*ibid.*, 437-8); the Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique 10295-10304 manuscript, compiled 1428-9 (*ibid.*, 438); the Bibliothèque Sainte-Genevieve 587 ff. 3-32 manuscript (*ibid.*, 439); and the Bibliothèque Nationale fr. 423, early fourteenth century.
2. All Biblical citations are taken from the New Oxford Annotated Bible, Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
3. Mary Magdalene's name appears in gnostic literature in various forms: Maria, Mariam, Mariamne, Mariham.

4. Edited by C.R.C. Allberry, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938.
5. See Baker, 1965, 127-137 for a more complete discussion of the problem.
6. For a more complete summary of the exegetical literature on Mary and Martha, see Solignac, 1932, X, cols. 664-672; Baumgartner, 1953, II/2, cols. 1643-2193; Mason, 1961.
7. Faillon (*ibid.*, cols. 179-183) argues in favour of both the attribution of the sermon to Ambrose and the identification of the woman with the issue of blood (cf. Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48) with St. Martha of Bethany. In other sources, however, the haemorrhissa is identified with St. Veronica (see Donehoo, 1903, 214-215).
8. Saxer (1959, 391-426) lists the following manuscripts which refer to the feast day of Mary and Martha on January 19 (or in some cases, January 20): martyrology of Rheinau, late eighth century, now in Zurich; martyrology of Corbié, 771-814, now in the National Archives, Paris; sacramentary of Gellone, ca. 792-795, now in the National Archives, Paris; martyrology of Auxerre, ca. 800, now in the Monastery of St. Gall; martyrology of Lyon, ca. 800, now in the National Archives, Paris; martyrology of Reichenau, early ninth century, now at Karlsruhe; sacramentary of Amiens, ca. 850, now in the National Archives, Paris; martyrology of English origin, ca. 850, now in the Monastery of St. Gall; sacramentary of Senlis, ca. 880, now in the National Archives, Paris; martyrology of Trèves, ninth century now at Trèves; martyrology of Fulda, tenth century, now at the Vatican Library; martyrology of Ado of Vienne, called the Small Roman martyrology, late ninth century, now in the Monastery of St. Gall; sacramentary of St. Vaast of Arras, tenth century, now in the National Archives, Paris; martyrology of Vienne, tenth century, now in Leyden; calendar of St. Gall, 955-956, now in the Monastery of St. Gall; calendar from a church in western England, ca. 969-978, now at Salisbury Cathedral; calendar of Leofric, ca. 970, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; sacramentary from Brittany or the north of France, early eleventh century, now in the National Archives, Paris; calendar

of a church in Wessex, eleventh century, now in London; calendar of Exeter, late eleventh century, now in London; calendar of Sherborne, ca. 1061, now at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; martyrology of St. Gall, 1077-1100, now at the Monastery of St. Gall; martyrology of Ricemarch, 1082, now at Trinity College, Dublin; fragments of a twelfth century missal, now at Autun; martyrology of Toulon, ca. 1120, now at the Vatican Library; breviary of the canons of St. Augustine, early thirteenth century, now at Trèves. See also the martyrology of Rabanus Maurus, ca. 840-854 (Rabani Mauri, 1979, 14).

9. For a more complete discussion of the January 19 feast of St. Martha, see Saxer, 1959, 35-39; Faillon, I, 1848, cols. 254-266.
10. For example, the Small Roman martyrology compiled by Ado of Vienne and the martyrology of Usuard, both dating from the late ninth century (see Faillon, 1848, I, cols. 636-638; Leclercq, 1929, cols. 2051-2052). Usuard's work was influenced by that of Ado, who in turn claimed (falsely) to have based his work on an ancient papal martyrology discovered in Italy (see LeBrun, 1967, 318).
11. Faillon, who holds this view, claims that the date of December 17 was chosen to honour the saints of Bethany because it was the date of the dedication of the oratory built by St. Martha at Tarascon (Faillon, 1848, I, cols. 643-644; II, 307-308).
12. For a more detailed discussion of the cults of Lazarus and Mary Magdalene, see Leclercq, 1929, VIII.
13. The legends surrounding James' mission to Spain apparently originated in Spain in the seventh century. Cf. Leclercq, 1922, cols. 411-417.
14. See Ullman, 1933, 317-326 for a discussion of the complicated early publishing history of the work.
15. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 51 below re: the bonasus.

16. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 56 below re: St. Fronto of Périgueux and St. Georgius of Velay.

### Chapter 1

1. According to the Provençal legends of the saints from Bethany, Marcilia (Marcella, Martilla) was the maidservant of St. Martha and the woman who cried out to Jesus from the crowd "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked" (Luke 11:27). She accompanied Martha to Provence. These legends probably originated in the late eleventh century (see Duchesne, I, 1907, 321-359; Leclercq, 8/2, 1929, cols. 2044-2081). From the twelfth century, St. Marcella's tomb was venerated in the basilica of the town of Saint-Maximin in Provence, where the sepulchres of Sts. Maximinus, Mary Magdalene, Sidonius (Cedonius) and two Innocents were also revered. A church of St. Marcella is mentioned in a tenth century charter at Chauriat near Billom in the Auvergne region of southern France, but this was probably the centre of a local cult of another saint by the same name. (See Leclercq, 1932, 10/1, cols. 2798-2820.)
2. A Synthex or Syntyche is named in Philippians 4:2 as one of Paul's fellow workers for Christ.
3. The author's identification of Martha as a type of the Christian church is unusual. Origen, in his homily on Luke 10:38-42, had described Martha as the symbol of the synagogue, while her sister Mary represented the church (Origen, 1962, 523). More commonly, however, it was the Virgin Mary who was considered to be the type of the church in the Middle Ages (see Semmelroth, 1963). See introduction, pp. 12-13 for discussion.
4. For a discussion of the medieval practice of interpreting scripture in an allegorical or typological manner see Smalley, 1983, passim.
5. Source of poem unidentified.

6. Luke 10:40.
7. Genesis 18:1-8.
8. Genesis 19:1-3.
9. Joshua 5:13-15.
10. John 21:15-19.
11. Mark 11:11; Matthew 21:17.
12. Luke 10:38.
13. J remiah 14:8b.
14. Genesis 18:1-8.
15. Job 8:7-9; the description of the Almighty is addressed to Job by his friend Zophar the Naamathite.
16. Luke 10:39.
17. Luke 10:40a.
18. Luke 10:40b.
19. Acts 10:34.
20. Luke 10:41-42.
21. John 11:5.
22. Proverbs 8:17a.



23. Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56.
24. Luke 7:11-17.
25. John 11:21-22.
26. John 11:23.
27. John 11:24.
28. John 11:25-26.
29. John 11:27.
30. Luke 9:20.
31. Job 19:25-26.
32. Genesis 18:1-8.
33. Luke 1:42.
34. John 11:43.
35. John 12:2.
36. Matthew 19:29.
37. Acts 4:32.
38. Source unidentified.
39. Cf. Acts 8:1.

40. Acts 4:3.
41. Acts 12:2.
42. Cf. Vincent of Beauvais: Urcissimus=Austregisulus?
43. Cf. Vincent of Beauvais: Gracianus=Cratianus?
44. Genesis 12:1-2.
45. Exodus 14:21-29.
46. St. Maximinus, bishop of Aix, figures prominently in the Provençal legends of both Martha and Mary Magdalene, which probably originated in the eleventh century. According to these traditions, he was one of the seventy-two apostles appointed by the Lord (Luke 10:1, 17), and he later travelled to Provence with the sisters from Bethany. He was appointed the first bishop of Aix-en-Provence. An ancient cult of a St. Maximinus existed in southern France prior to the eleventh century, but was probably centred on another saint of the same name who is thought to have lived in the fifth century. A cult of a St. Maximinus was celebrated at Billom in the province of Auvergne up until the eighteenth century. Eleventh century charters reveal the existence of a basilica dedicated to St. Maximinus of Aix in the town of St. Maximin in Provence. The saint's relics were thought to lie there, along with those of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Sidonius (Cedonius), St. Marcella and two St. Innocents. In 1820 the remains were transferred from St. Maximin to the cathedral of Aix. (See Leclercq, 1932, 10/1. cols. 2798-2820; Duchesne, 1907, 330-340.)
47. The theme of an encounter between a saint and a dragon is common in hagiographical literature. Probably the best known example is that of St. George, later patron saint of England. While such accounts may have been interpreted literally, the medieval mind would also have understood the dragon in an allegorical context, as symbolic of the devil or the forces of evil. In the legend of St. Margaret of Antioch, it is specifically noted that the dragon who appeared before the saint was the devil in disguise (see Jacobus de Voragine, 1969,

353). In medieval artistic works, which helped to shape popular belief in particular, Hell was frequently shown as a monster's mouth, waiting to devour sinners. Such imagery was derived from the Old Testament myth of Leviathan (see Hughes, 1968, 175-181), who is also named in the Martha legends as a progenitor of the beast which Martha encountered. The image of a dark wood as the abode of Satan is also common in medieval and Renaissance art (ibid., 170-174), and the abode of Martha's dragon had previously been known as "Nerluc", or the black forest.

48. bone=bove?

49. Job 41:1.

50. Job 40:23.

51. Graesse notes that the word "Onacho" (in some manuscripts "Honacho" or "Bonacho") refers "without doubt" to the onager or wild ass (Jacobi de Voragine, 1890, 444). However, the description of the beast suggests instead that it was a bonasus, a type of bull or bison. Pliny described the animal as follows in his Natural History, Book VIII, 15.40: "There are reports of a wild animal in Paeonia called the bonasus, which has the mane of a horse but in all other respects resembles a bull; its horns are curved back in such a manner as to be of no use for fighting, and it is said that because of this it saves itself by running away, meanwhile emitting a trail of dung that sometimes covers a distance of as much as three furlongs, contact with which scorches pursuers like a sort of fire." (Pliny, 1967, 31, 33) His description may have been derived from Aristotle's account of the monapos in his Historia Animalia, Book IX, 630a.45: "The bison is found in Paeonia on Mount Messapium, which separates Paeonia from Maedica; and the Paeonians call it the monapos. It is the size of a bull but stouter in build, and not long in the body; its skin, stretched tight on a frame, would give sitting room for seven people. In general it resembles the ox in appearance, except that it has a mane that reaches down to the point of the shoulder as that of the horse reaches down to its withers; but the hair in its mane is softer than the hair in a horse's mane, and clings more closely. The colour of the hair is brown-yellow; the mane reaches down to the eyes, and is deep and thick. The

colour of the body is half red, half ashen-grey, like that of the so-called chestnut horse, but rougher. It has an undercoat of woolly hair. The animal is not found either very black or very red. It has the bellow of a bull. Its horns are crooked, turned inwards towards each other and useless for purposes of self-defence; they are a span broad, or a little more, and in volume each horn would hold about three pints of liquid; the black colour of the horn is beautiful and bright. The tuft of hair on the forehead reaches down to the eyes, so that the animal sees objects on either flank better than objects right in front. It has no upper teeth, as is the case also with kine and all other horned animals. Its legs are hairy; it is cloven-footed, and the tail, which resembles that of an ox, seems not big enough for the size of its body. It tosses up dust and scoops out the ground with its hooves, like the bull. Its skin is impervious to blows. Owing to the savour of its flesh it is sought for in the chase. When it is wounded it runs away, and stops only when thoroughly exhausted. It defends itself against a assailant by kicking and projecting its excrement to a distance of eight yards; this device it can easily adopt over and over again, and the excrement is so pungent that the hair of hunting-dogs is burnt off by it. It is only when the animal is disturbed or alarmed that the dung has this property; when the animal is undisturbed it has no blistering effect. So much for the shape and habits of the animal. When the season comes for parturition the mothers give birth to their young in troops upon the mountains. Before dropping their young they scatter their dung in all directions, making a kind of circular rampart around them; for the animal has the faculty of ejecting excrement in most extraordinary quantities." (Aristotle, 1962, n.p.) McCulloch notes that the *bonasus* frequently appeared in medieval Latin and French bestiaries (1962, 98).

- 52. carnes=carens?
- 53. nataudo=natando?
- 54. Cgristi=Christi?
- 55. Cf. John 2:1-11.

56. In his edition and commentary upon La Vie Ancienne de S. Front de Périgueux (1930, 324-360), M.Coens notes that the earliest extant manuscripts of a life of the saint date from the beginning of the ninth century (ibid., 326), although a seventh century Life of St. G ry indicates that the tomb of a St. Fronto was venerated at P rigueux at that time (ibid., 322). According to tradition, St. Fronto was one of the seventy-two apostles appointed by the Lord (Luke 10:1, 17). Later he was designated by St. Peter as an apostle to Gaul, where he journeyed in the company of St. Georgius of Velay. The latter died during the voyage, but was raised when Fronto touched him with the staff given to him by St. Peter (ibid., 324). References to St. Fronto as a missionary to Gaul also appear in such early martyrologies as those of Ado of Vienne, Usuard and Notker (Faillon, 1848, II, col. 391). St. Fronto's life abounds with inconsistencies and absurdities, for example, an account of the saint's rescue from starvation in the wilderness near P rigueux by the arrival of seventy unattended camels loaded with food (see Coens, 1930, 329-330). Some incidents of the legendary life of Fronto of P rigueux were likely derived from that of a similarly named saint, Fronto of Nitrie, who probably lived in Cappadocia in the mid-fourth century (see Faillon, 1848, II, col. 389; Duchesne, 1910, 130-134).
57. Cf. Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34.
58. Cf. Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.
59. Psalm 22:19; 40:13.
60. Psalm 25:7.
61. II Chronicles 6:42.
62. Cf. Psalm 18:6.
63. Cf. John 14:3.

64. icaelo=caelo?
65. Cf. the Apostles' Creed.
66. Revelation 9:13-15.
67. Luke 23:46.
68. Mihaelis=Michaelis?
69. I Corinthians 15:54.
70. Acts 6:1-6.
71. Luke 11:27.
72. Cf. the account of St. Fronto's miraculous appearance at St. Martha's funeral with that of St. Ambrose of Milan at the funeral of St. Martin of Tours, as recorded by Gregory of Tours in the first book of the Miracles of St. Martin: "For at that time [i.e. the time of St. Martin's death] the blessed Ambrose, whose flowers of eloquence shed fragrance through the whole church, was bishop in charge of the city of Milan. He followed this custom in his celebration of the rites of the Lord's Day. When the reader came with the book he did not presume to read before the saint had given him the order by a nod. However, it happened on that Lord's Day, after the lesson from the prophet had been read, and the man was standing before the altar to deliver the lesson from the blessed Paul, that the most blessed priest Ambrose was asleep above the sacred altar. Many saw this and at first nobody presumed to wake him; then, after a period of about two or three hours, they aroused him saying: 'Now the hour passes. Let the master order the reader to read the lesson, for the people are watching and are extremely wearied.' The blessed Ambrose in reply said: 'Be not disturbed. I profited greatly in my sleep since the Lord deigned to show me a great miracle. You will learn that my brother Martin the priest departed from his body and that I performed the funeral service, and after the completion of the service I had not finished the full chapter of the reading when you aroused me.' Then they

were stupefied and likewise in wonder noted the day and the time, and made careful inquiry. They found out that it was the very time and day on which the blessed confessor had said that he performed his funeral rites." (Gregory, 1949, 36-37)

- 73. sepulchrum=sepelivimus?
- 74. propter=propterea?
- 75. Cf. Matthew 25:41.
- 76. Psalm 76:2.
- 77. Clovis' conversion is described by Gregory of Tours in his History of the Franks 2.31 (1974, 144). Gregory does not include any reference to Clovis' kidney problems.
- 78. Cf. Romans 14:10.
- 79. Sclavonia or Sclavania was the area located between the Elbe and Oder Rivers, in what is now northern Germany. There is no evidence that a cult of a St. Marcella existed there in the later Middle Ages.
- 80. St. Trophimus figures prominently in the alternate ending to the pseudo-Marcilia text. Acts 20:4 refers to a Gentile Christian named Trophimus who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem as a representative of the churches of Asia. In Acts 21:29 he is identified as an Ephesian, and II Timothy 4:20 records that Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus. Later tradition confused this companion of Paul with Bishop Trophimus of Arles, first documented in the fifth century (see Leclercq, VIII, 1929, col. 2054).
- 81. Ayliscampis = Alyscampis (literally, the Elysian fields, the abode of the dead). The remains of the Alyscamps, the ancient Christian cemetery, can still be seen in Arles today.

82. For an outline of the theological concept of the simplicity of God, see Hill, 1967, 229-232. The doctrine is summarized in a dogmatic statement of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215): "Firmly we believe and we confess simply that the true God is one alone, eternal, immense, and unchangeable, incomprehensible, omnipotent and ineffable, Father and Son and Holy Spirit: indeed three Persons but one essence, substance, or nature entirely simple." (Denzinger, 1957, 168-169)

## Chapter 2

1. In other medieval versions of the Martha legend, the saint's father is named Syrus.
2. John 1:28, 10:40.
3. Cf. IV Maccabees 15:25: "Devout reason, giving a man's courage in the very midst of her emotions, strengthened her..."
4. Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2.
5. Luke 9:51.
6. Luke 10:38.
7. Luke 10:1, 17.
8. Luke 10:39-40.
9. Luke 10:40.
10. Song of Solomon 2:3.



11. Luke 10:41.
12. St. Augustine, Sermon 26, De verbis Domini.
13. Luke 10:41.
14. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 1 above re: St. Marcella.
15. Luke 8:3.
16. Luke 11:27-28.
17. John 10:22, 30-31.
18. John 10:39-40.
19. John 11:1-3.
20. John 11:4.
21. John 11:5.
22. Proverbs 8:17; John 14:21.
23. John 11:6.
24. John 11:7.
25. John 11:8.
26. Cf. John 11:9-10.
27. John 11:11.

28. John 11:12.
29. John 11:13.
30. John 11:14-15.
31. John 11:16.
32. John 11:17.
33. John 11:18.
34. John 11:19.
35. John 11:20.
36. John 11:21-22.
37. John 11:23.
38. John 11:24.
39. Cf. John 11:25-26.
40. John 11:27.
41. John 11:28.
42. John 11:29.
43. John 11:30.
44. John 11:31.

45. John 11:32.
46. John 11:33.
47. John 11:34.
48. John 11:35.
49. John 11:36.
50. John 11:37.
51. John 11:38.
52. John 11:39.
53. John 11:39.
54. John 11:40.
55. Romans 5:20.
56. Cf. Luke 7:47.
57. John 11:41-43.
58. Zechariah 5:7-8.
59. John 11:44a.
60. John 11:44b.
61. Psalm 82:6.

- 62. Exodus 22:28.
- 63. Cf. Exodus 21:5-6.
- 64. Matthew 19:17.
- 65. Psalm 72:18.
- 66. Luke 5:21.
- 67. Luke 23:50.
- 68. Ecclesiasticus 31:9.
- 69. John 20:23.
- 70. Matthew 16:19.
- 71. Hebrews 4:14.
- 72. John 11:45-46.
- 73. Cf. John 11:47-50.
- 74. John 11:53.
- 75. John 11:54.
- 76. John 11:57.
- 77. Isaiah 53:7.
- 78. John 12:1.

79. Cf. Genesis 1:26-31.
80. Cf. Augustine's vision of temporal history as outlined in the City of God. The course of time consisted of seven ages or 'days'. The first day extended from Adam to the Flood, the second from the Flood to Abraham, the third from Abraham to David, the fourth from David to the Babylonian exile, and the fifth from the exile to the coming of Christ. Christ's birth heralded the beginning of the sixth age, the one in which Augustine lived, and it would have an indefinite length (Book 22, chapter 30). At the end of this sixth age Christ would return to usher in the day of judgement (Book 20, chapter 5). (Augustine, 1984, 1091, 901)
81. Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3.
82. John 12:2.
83. John 12:2.
84. Cf. John 12:3-8.
85. Mark 16:14.
86. Cf. John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20.
87. John 7:5.
88. Mark 16:14.
89. Luke 24:49b.
90. Acts 1:5.
91. Acts 1:8.
92. Matthew 28:19.

93. Mark 16:17.
94. Luke 24:50a.
95. Matthew 28:20.
96. Luke 24:50b.
97. Acts 1:9.
98. Cf. Acts 1:12.
99. Luke 24:52.
100. Acts 1:13-14.
101. Acts 1:26.
102. Acts 2:1-4.
103. Acts 2:6.
104. Acts 4:4; cf. Acts 2:41.
105. Acts 2:44.
106. This designation of Mary Magdalene can be traced back as early as the time of Hippolytus in the late second century; see LaRow, 1982, 23.
107. John 19:25 refers to only Mary Cleophas as the sister of the Virgin. However, according to tradition, the Virgin Mary had two other sisters named Mary. Some manuscripts of the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (Walker, 1916, 382), probably written in the eighth or ninth century (see Meyer, 1959, 406), record that St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin, had three husbands: Joachim, the father of the Virgin Mary, Cleophas, the father of

the Mary who married Alphaeus, and Salome, the father of the Mary who married Zebedee. This legend was widely circulated in the later Middle Ages, and was included in the Golden Legend, in the section describing the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (see Jacobus de Voragine, 1969, 520).

- 108. Acts 6:1.
- 109. Acts 6:3-5.
- 110. Cf. Acts 8:1.
- 111. John 11:3.
- 112. John 11:11.
- 113. John 11:35.
- 114. John 11:36.
- 115. John 11:5.
- 116. Luke 10:1, 17.
- 117. Acts 12:2.
- 118. Acts 12:3.
- 119. Luke 11:27.
- 120. Acts 6:5.
- 121. Mark 16:20.

122. The Latin text is based on Psalm 68:11-12 (Psalm 67:12-13 in the Vulgate version of Jerome), but most modern English translations are derived from the Hebrew text, which differs from the Vulgate. The Douay version first published in 1607 and based on the Vulgate translates the passage as follows: "The Lord shall give the word to them that preach good tidings with great power. The king of powers is of the beloved, of the beloved: and the beauty of the house shall divide spoils."
123. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 47 above re: the dragon.
124. Mark 9:23.
125. Cf. Matthew 8:26.
126. Cf. Matthew 25:40.
127. II Corinthians 9:7.
128. Cf. Luke 1:53.
129. Genesis 27:27.
130. Cf. John 2:3-10.
131. Cf. Wisdom of Solomon 3:6.
132. Cf. Luke 9:57.
133. Cf. Philippians 1:23.
134. John 11:27.
135. John 14:2-3.



136. Psalm 42:2b.

137. Psalm 119:116.

138. Psalm 40:17b, Psalm 70:5 et al.

139. Luke 23:46.

140. Psalm 112:7.

141. Cf. II Corinthians 12:3.

142. Philippians 4:2.

143. Philippians 4:3.

144. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 77 above re: Clovis.

### Chapter 3

1. Jeremiah 14:8b.

2. Luke 10:39.

3. Luke 10:40a.

4. Luke 10:40b.

5. Acts 10:34.

6. John 11:5.

7. See John 11:1-44.

8. Cf. Matthew 19:29.
9. Cf. Acts 2:44-45.
10. Cf. Acts 8:1.
11. Acts 4:3.
12. Acts 7:58.
13. Acts 12:2.
14. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 46 above re: St. Maximinus of Aix.
15. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 47 above re: the dragon.
16. Job 41:1.
17. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 51 above re: the bonasus.
18. examinati = exanimati?
19. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 56 above re: St. Fronto of Perigueux and St. Georgius of Velay.
20. John 14:3.
21. Luke 23:46.
22. Acts 6:1-6.

23. Luke 11:27; see Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 1 above re: St. Marcella or Martilla.
24. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 72 above re: funeral of St. Martin of Tours.
25. Cf. Matthew 25:41.
26. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 77 above re: Clovis.
27. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 79 above re: Sclavonia.
28. Vincent relies heavily on Pseudo-Marcilia in compiling his account of Martha's life, with many direct quotations. This is confirmed at the end of his text, when he attributes authorship to Marcilia, as translated by Syntex. A Synthex or Syntyche is named in Philippians 4:2 as one of Paul's fellow workers for Christ.

#### Chapter 4

1. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 46 above re: Bishop Maximinus of Aix.
2. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 47 above re: the dragon.
3. Job 41:1.
4. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 51 above re: the bonasus.
5. Eusebius records in the Ecclesiastical History, Book VII, chapter 18: "But since I have come to mention this city [i.e. Caesarea Philippi or Paneas], I do not think it right to omit a story that is worthy to be recorded also for those that come after us. For they say that she who had an issue of blood, and who, as we learn from the sacred Gospels, found at the hands of our

Saviour relief from her affliction came from this place, and that her house was pointed out in the city, and that marvellous memorials of the good deed, which the Saviour wrought upon her, still remained. For [they said] that there stood on a lofty stone at the gates of her house a brazen figure in relief of a woman, bending on her knee and stretching forth her hands like a suppliant, while opposite to this there was another of the same material, an upright figure of a man, clothed in comely fashion in a double cloak and stretching out his hand to the woman; at his feet on the monument itself a strange species of herb was growing, which climbed up to the border of the double cloak of brass, and acted as an antidote to all kinds of diseases. This statue, they said, bore the likeness of Jesus. And it was in existence even to our day, so that we saw it with our own eyes when we stayed in the city." (Eusebius, 1973, II, 175, 177)

6. In the sermon De Salomone, Christ's benevolence to the family at Bethany is noted: "Christus largum sanguinis fluxum siccat in Martha, 'daemones pellit ex Maria, corpus redivivi spiritus calore constringit in Lazaro" (cited Faillon, 1848, I, col. 180). Faillon (ibid., cols. 179-183) argues in favour of the attribution of the sermon to Ambrose and the identification of the woman with the issue of blood (Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48) with St. Martha of Bethany. In other sources, however, the haemorrhissa is identified as St. Veronica (see Donehoo, 1903, 214-215).
7. Jerome's Chronicle was a translation and expansion of the Chronicle of Eusebius, completed ca. 380 and continued to 378 A.D. (see Berardino, 1986, 227; Quasten, 1960, 312-313; Kelly, 1975, 72-75). Jerome's work mentions the reign of Julian the Apostate, emperor from 332 to 363 (see Hieronymus, 1984, 240, 242, 243) but not the episode of the statue specifically. Eusebius' History was continued in Greek by three writers of the early fifth century, Socrates of Constantinople, who described events from 305 to 434, Sozomen, who covered the period from 325 to 439, and Theodoret of Cyr, who wrote of the years from 324 to 428. In the sixth century these three works were translated and combined by Epiphanius, under the supervision of Cassiodorus; the resulting text, known as the Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita or Tripartite History, was widely circulated in the later Middle Ages (see Laistner, 1966, 22-39). The account of the destruction of Julian's statue is found in Sozomon's

remarkable events which occurred during the reign of Julian, I must not omit to mention one which affords a manifest proof of the power of Christ, and of the Divine wrath against the emperor. Having heard that at Caesarea Philippi, otherwise called Paneades, a city of Phoenicia, there was a celebrated statue of Christ, which had been erected by a woman whom the Lord had cured of a flow of blood, Julian commanded it to be taken down, and a statue of himself erected in its place; but fire from heaven was poured down upon it, the head and breast were broken, and it was transfixed to the ground with the face downwards: it is still to be seen on the spot where it fell, blackened by the effects of the thunder. The statue of Christ was dragged round the city and mutilated by the Pagans; but the Christians recovered the fragments, and deposited the statue in the church in which it is still preserved." (Sozomon, 1855, 238-9) Another account of the fate of the statue of Christ is found in the Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgius (7.3), produced some time after 425; an epitome compiled by Photius in the mid-ninth century is extant. It records: "Concerning an image of our Saviour erected by the faith of a pious woman in grateful remembrance of her cure from a bloody flux, Philostorgius writes that it was placed near a fountain in the city among other statues, and presented a pleasant and agreeable sight to the passers-by. And when a certain herb, which grew up at the foot of this statue, was found to be a most effectual remedy against all diseases, and especially against consumption, men naturally began to inquire into the cause of the matter; for by lapse of time all memory of the fact had been lost, and it was even forgotten whose statue it was, and on what account it had been erected. Inasmuch as the figure of our Saviour had long stood exposed in the open air, and a great part of it was covered over by the earth which was perpetually carried down against the pediment, especially during seasons of heavy rain, the notice contained in the inscription upon it was well nigh obliterated. A diligent inquiry was consequently made, and the part of the statue which had been covered up being brought to light, the inscription was discovered which explained the entire circumstances of the fact; and the plant thenceforth was never again seen either there or in any other place. The statue itself they placed in the part of the church which was allotted to the deacons, paying to it due honour and respect, yet by no means adoring or worshipping it; and they showed their love for its great archetype by erecting it in that place with circumstances of honour, and by flocking thither in eager crowds to behold it. During

the reign of Julian, however, the heathen who inhabited Paneas were excited by an impious frenzy to pull down this statue from its pediment, and to drag it through the midst of the streets with ropes fastened round its feet; afterwards they broke in pieces the rest of the body, while some persons, indignant at the whole proceeding, secretly obtained possession of the head, which had become detached from the neck as it was dragged along, and they preserved it as far as was possible. This transaction Philostorgius declared that he witnessed with his own eyes." (Philostorgius, 1855, 475-6) It is interesting that Philostorgius, who claims to have watched the destruction of the statue of Christ by the pagans, does not mention a statue of Julian erected in its place.

8. John 14:3.
9. Luke 23:46.
10. Other accounts of Martha's life record that a three day interval elapsed between the time of Martha's death and her funeral.
11. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 56 above re: St. Fronto of Périgueux and St. Georgius of Velay.
12. Cf. the account of St. Fronto's miraculous appearance at St. Martha's funeral with that of St. Ambrose at the funeral of St. Martin of Tours; see Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 72 above.
13. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 77 above re: Clovis.
14. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 1 above re: Martilla or Marcella.
15. See Pseudo-Marcilia legend note 79 above re: Sclavonia.

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