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The Ancient Dormition Apocrypha and the Origins of Marian Piety

*Early Evidence of Marian Intercession
from Late Ancient Palestine*

All too often Marian piety is presented as something that suddenly exploded onto the scene in the early fifth century, a phenomenon precipitated largely as a consequence of the controversies over Nestorius with only a rather murky provenance.¹ Yet it seems unmistakably clear that Marian piety antedates the Nestorian controversy, and previous studies have identified important glimmers of devotion to the Virgin from the fourth century in the writings of the Cappadocians, for instance, and the famous *Sub Tuum Praesidium* papyrus, but these traces of Marian cult seem insufficient to explain the tidal wave that was to follow.² The *Protevangelium of James* alerts us to a very early theological interest in the Virgin, and while affording no evidence of cult, this apocryphon appears to reflect the rising doctrinal significance of Mary, and perhaps even devotion, already in the second century. Nevertheless it remains rather mysterious how the incipient piety of the *Protevangelium* eventually yielded the elaborate, formal Marian devotion of the fifth century. Clearly something must have happened in between, although exactly what has continued to elude our grasp, and the sources of the first four centuries remain stubbornly laconic when it comes to the Virgin.

Perhaps, however, the problem lies partially with the sources that have thus far been mined. If the early Church Fathers have relatively little to say about Mary and her veneration, it may be that other ancient Christian texts afford glimpses of an emergent Marian piety developing somewhere outside the sphere controlled by the proto-orthodox hierarchy. One of the most obvious places we might look to find such nascent expressions of devotion to the Virgin are the ancient Dormition and Assumption apocrypha. These early Marian apocrypha constitute one of the most valuable, and yet one of the most consistently overlooked, sources for investigating the origins of Marian cult and piety. Indeed, as Enrico Norelli has persuasively argued, it was most likely belief in Mary's intercession that first gave rise to these early Christian accounts of Mary's miraculous departure from this world and her apocalyptic journey into the next.³ Yet this treasure trove of early Marian devotion has for too long lain on the sidelines of Early Christian Studies, to the effect that our understanding of the beginnings of Marian veneration remains somewhat incomplete. The reasons behind their neglect, while not entirely clear, perhaps have something to do with the sheer complexities of these narrative traditions, which unfortunately can be intimidating to the non-specialist: over thirty different versions survive from before the mid-seventh century in nine ancient languages, and it is not always immediately obvious which of these accounts have priority. Coupled with this complexity has been an almost willful lack of consensus emerging from many studies of these traditions, leaving the uninitiated understandably bewildered as to which early texts should command our attention. Clearly such a highly variegated and

¹ See e.g., Hans von Campenhausen, *The Virgin Birth in the Theology of the Ancient Church*, trans. Frank Clarke, Studies in Historical Theology, 2 (London: SCM Press, 1964), esp. 7–9; Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), XII; Richard M. Price, "Marian Piety and the Nestorian Controversy," in *The Church and Mary*, ed. R. N. Swanson, Studies in Church History 39 (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 31–8, 31; Richard Price, "Theotokos: The Title and its Significance in Doctrine and Devotion," in *Mary: The Complete Guide*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (London: Continuum, 2007), 56–73; Averil Cameron, "The Early Cult of the Virgin," in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira, 2000), 3–15, 5.

² See, e.g., Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Marian Liturgies and Devotion in Early Christianity," in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (London: Continuum Press, 2007), 130–45, 130–2; Stephen J. Shoemaker, "The Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century: A Fresh Look at Some Old and New Sources," in *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder (London: Continuum, 2008), 71–87.

³ Enrico Norelli, *Marie des apocryphes: enquête sur la mère de Jésus dans le christianisme antique*, Christianismes antiques (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2009), 132–6.

geographically diffuse corpus must have deep roots within the unfolding narrative of early Christian tradition, but which of the various tellings of Mary's Dormition and Assumption issue from the earliest strata and can thus guide us to a better understanding of the emergence of Marian intercession and veneration?

While Martin Jugie's foundational work on the Dormition and Assumption remains indispensable for its comprehensive survey of the Dormition traditions as they were known at the middle of the last century, certain missteps directed by his strong personal belief in the Virgin's immortality unfortunately led him to marginalize and disparage the historical value of the ancient Dormition apocrypha.⁴ The early Dormition narratives insist resolutely on Mary's mortality, primarily to guard against Doceticism, but this theological tendency ran counter to Jugie's efforts toward the proclamation of the modern Assumption dogma and thus had to be quarantined. It would be Jugie's successor in this field, Antoine Wenger, who was the first to sketch a map of the early Dormition apocrypha's rugged terrain. Unlike Jugie, Wenger was convinced that these apocrypha possessed significant historical and even theological value, describing them as "streams of murky waters, but they occasionally bear in their muddy waters flecks of gold that will never be tarnished."⁵ Moreover, Wenger first reached the fundamental insight that the striking diversity of the early Dormition narratives could not be explained as the evolution of a single, unilinear tradition but rather reflects parallel development from "a great variety of original types."⁶ With this pivotal recognition, Wenger set out to chart the history of a particularly early set of traditions, which van Esbroeck would later name the Palm of the Tree of Life texts.

Working with the narratives then available, which included the fifth-century Syriac fragments of the *Obsequies of the Virgin*, Wenger outlined the broad diffusion of these traditions across the Christian world both East and West. Inasmuch as the bulk of his interests lay in the middle Byzantine period, Wenger did not speculate much as to the origins of these traditions; nevertheless, his analysis of the interrelations among several narratives from the fifth and sixth centuries calls attention to the anterior circulation of their traditions about the end of Mary's life, allowing him to predict, correctly it would turn out, the existence of a then unknown earlier source underlying the recensions of these more recent narratives. A more complete version of this earliest narrative has subsequently come to light in the Ethiopic *Liber Requiei Mariae*, a faithful translation of this ancient apocryphon that seems to have been made directly from the original Greek, most likely during the sixth or seventh century.⁷ In addition therefore to the many important new texts that Wenger published, the great achievement of his study of the early Dormition narratives was to map the relations among the early narratives from this so-called "Palm of the Tree of Life" family, calling attention to the numerous theological anomalies that survive in later narratives as important signs of this tradition's early origins. Thus, Wenger's work was the first to identify the ancient sources of these Byzantine texts as potentially invaluable witnesses to early Marian piety, an observation that has been largely borne out by subsequent studies and new textual discoveries.

Picking up where Wenger left off, Michel van Esbroeck continued the task of charting a clear path through the thicket of early Dormition narratives. Yet in contrast to Wenger, who never really applied himself to probing the pre-Byzantine history of the early Dormition apocrypha, van Esbroeck spent much of his prolific career pursuing questions related to the origins of the ancient Dormition traditions. While van Esbroeck's near obsession with the issues of the Fourth Council in his numerous studies can often prove to be something of a distraction, this feature should not detract from the broader genius of his many investigations into the early history of the Dormition traditions. In regard to the Palm of the Tree of Life narratives, van Esbroeck's work generally extends and refines Wenger's analysis, particularly in identifying the recently published *Liber Requiei* as a very early witness to the

⁴ See Paul E. Duggan, "The Assumption Dogma: Some Reactions and Ecumenical Implications in the Thought of English-Speaking Theologians" (S.T.D. diss., International Marian Research Institute, University of Dayton, 1989), 57–63; see also Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15–17, 103–4.

⁵ Antoine Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VI^e au Xe siècle; études et documents*, Archives de l'Orient chrétien, 5 (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1955), 67.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷ Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 142–67. Indeed, as Tedros Abrahà has recently explained, this early Ethiopic translation is "un magnifico esemplare di un etiopico classico 'primitivo' dal quale, insieme ad opera della medesima specie sarebbe auspicabile ricavare una grammatica del gə'əz arcaico." Tedros Abrahà, «La *Dormitio Mariae* in Etiopia,» in *Il dogma dell'assunzione de Maria: problemi attuali e tentativi di ricompreensione. Atti del XVII Simposio Internazionale Mariologico (Roma, 6–9 ottobre 2009)*, ed. Ermanno M. Toniolo (Rome: Edizioni Marianum, 2010), 167–200, esp. 187. I thank Enrico Norelli for initially drawing my attention to this article and for providing me with a copy.

traditions of the Palm of the Tree of Life family that dates to the fourth century at the latest and transmits traditions that undoubtedly are considerably older.⁸ Equally if not more important, however, are van Esbroeck's efforts to outline the history of the second major literary family, the Bethlehem Dormition traditions, whose narratives are characterized by an excursion from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, where Mary apparently owned a second home. Of these Bethlehem narratives van Esbroeck identifies the "Six Books" Dormition apocryphon as particularly early, and while innumerable copies of this highly popular narrative exist, especially in Arabic and Ethiopic, the most important are several early versions in Syriac manuscripts from the fifth and sixth centuries. The original Greek underlying these early translations almost certainly belongs to the fourth century, as van Esbroeck frequently noted.⁹

Van Esbroeck's extension of Wenger's work thus directs us to two early Marian apocrypha where we might look to find the early shoots Marian piety sprouting up somewhere below the view afforded by the writings of the Church Fathers. Other scholars have similarly identified these two apocrypha as particularly early. For instance, Baldi, Masconi, and Cothenet analyzed the corpus of Dormition narratives using a rather different approach, governed primarily by language tradition rather than literary relations, and yet all agree that the *Obsequies* (i.e., the *Liber Requiei*) and the Six Books apocryphon reflect the earliest traditions, locating their origins in the second or third century.¹⁰ Richard Bauckham too, through study of the heavenly journeys that complete these narratives, dates the Six Books to the fourth century at the latest and identifies several likely signs that the *Liber Requiei*'s apocalyptic conclusion served as a source for the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which was composed at the turn of the fifth century.¹¹ Numerous others, including Maximilian Bonnet, Jean Rivi  re, and Jean Gribomont, have concluded that these narratives originate in the fourth century, if not earlier.¹² Likewise, various scholars connected with the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem have argued for the antiquity of the *Liber Requiei*, and while they successfully identify a number of very early features in the text, their arguments for a second-century "catholic Ebionite" context unfortunately are much less convincing.¹³ Nevertheless, Norelli has recently approached these apocryphal traditions again from the vantage of early "Jewish-Christian" traditions, concluding more persuasively on this basis that these traditions show strong affinities with certain theological currents of the second century.¹⁴

⁸ Michel van Esbroeck, "Les textes litt  raires sur l'assomption avant le X^e si  cle," in *Les actes apocryphes des ap  tres*, ed. Fran  ois Bovon (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), 265–85; Michel van Esbroeck, "Bild und Begriff in der Transitus-Literatur, der Palmbaum und der Tempel," in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den   stlichen V  tern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. Margot Schmidt (Regensburg: Verlag Freidrich Pustet, 1982), 333–51, 341–4, 347; Michel van Esbroeck, "Some Earlier Features in the Life of the Virgin," *Marianum* 63 (2001): 297–308.

⁹ van Esbroeck, "Les textes litt  raires," 273–6; van Esbroeck, "Bild und Begriff," 340, 344–7; van Esbroeck, "Some Earlier Features," 301–8.

¹⁰ Donato Baldi and Anacleto Mosconi, "L'Assunzione di Maria SS. negli apocrifi," in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Fratei Minori d'Italia (Roma 29 aprile–3 maggio 1947)*, Studia Mariana 1 (Rome: Commissionis Marialis Franciscanae, 1948), 75–125, esp. 121–5;   douard Cothenet, "Marie dans les Apocryphes," in *Maria:   tudes sur la Sainte Vierge*, ed. Hubert Du Manoir de Juaye, 7 vols., vol. 6 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1952), 71–156, esp. 118–30, 143.

¹¹ Richard Bauckham, "The Four Apocalypses of the Virgin Mary," in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 332–62; see also Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 42–6. This conclusion was recently affirmed by Norelli in Norelli, *Marie des apocryphes*, 115, 134 n. 79. On the date of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, see Pierluigi Piovaneli, "Les Origines de l'*Apocalypse de Paul* reconsid  r  es," *Apocrypha* 4 (1993): 37–59.

¹² Maximilian Bonnet, "Die   ltesten Schriften von der Himmelfahrt Mari  ," *Zeitschrift f  r Wissenschaftliche Theologie* 23 (1880): 227–47; Jean Rivi  re, "Le plus vieux 'Transitus' latin et son d  riv   grec," *Recherches de Th  ologie ancienne et m  di  vale* 8 (1936): 5–23; Jean Gribomont, "Le plus ancien Transitus Marial et l'encratisme," *Augustinianum* 23 (1983): 237–47.

¹³ Bellarmino Bagatti, "La verginit   di Maria negli apocrifi del II–III secolo," *Marianum* 33 (1971): 281–92; Bellarmino Bagatti, "Ricerche sulle tradizioni della morte della Vergine," *Sacra Doctrina* 69–70 (1973): 185–214; Bellarmino Bagatti, "La morte della Vergine nel Testo di Leucio," *Terra Sancta* 50 (1974): 44–48; Bellarmino Bagatti, Michele Piccirillo, and A. Prodomo, *New Discoveries at the Tomb of Virgin Mary in Gethsemane* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Print. Press, 1975), 11–18; Emanuele Testa, "Lo sviluppo della 'Dormitio Mariae' nella letteratura, nella teologia e nella archeologia," *Marianum* 44 (1982): 316–89; Emanuele Testa, "L'origine e lo sviluppo della Dormitio Mariae," *Augustinianum* 23 (1983): 249–62; L. Cignelli, "Il prototipo giudeo-cristiano degli apocrifi assunzionisti," in *Studia Hierosolymitana in onore di P. Bellarmino Bagatti*, ed. Bellarmino Bagatti, et al., 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1976), vol. 2, 259–77; Miguel Vallecillo, "El 'Transitus Mariae' seg  n el manuscrito Vaticano G. R. 1982," *Verdad y vida* 30 (1972): 187–260; Fr  d  ric Manns, "La mort de Marie dans les textes de la Dormition de Marie," *Augustinianum* 19 (1979): 507–15; Fr  d  ric Manns, *Le r  cit de la Dormition de Marie (Vatican grec 1982): contribution    l'  tude des origines de l'ex  g  se chr  tienne*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio Maior, 33 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1989).

¹⁴ See Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 205–56. See also Norelli, *Marie des apocryphes*, esp. 129–42; and Enrico Norelli, "La letteratura apocrifa sul Transito di Maria e il problema delle sue origini," in *Il dogma dell'assunzione de Maria:*

Indeed, it seems that there is something close to a consensus regarding the general antiquity of these two narratives and their origin sometime by the fourth century at the very latest. Only Jugie and Simon Mimouni present significant exceptions, the former because of his immortalist theological leanings, and latter out of a belief that the Dormition traditions issue from the concerns of the Fourth Council, an assumption that unfortunately is not in evidence.¹⁵ Despite the influence of their views in certain quarters, Jugie's concern to protect the Assumption dogma from Mary's apocryphal decease and Mimouni's partiality toward Chalcedon do not present sufficient grounds for their relatively later datings of these early Dormition narratives, and the evidence to the contrary seems increasingly decisive. Consequently, we may with some degree of confidence look to these two ancient Dormition apocrypha for evidence of early Marian devotion, giving us some impression of what lay behind the explosion of Marian piety let loose by the Third Council. The texts lead us back to early Christian Palestine, where it appears that these traditions of Mary's Dormition had their origins, as evidenced especially by their persistent focus on various locations in Jerusalem (and Bethlehem) associated with the end of Mary's life. Despite the wide range of opinions that have been expressed concerning the early history of the Dormition narratives, there is nonetheless seemingly broad agreement that these traditions first took shape in Palestine, where they developed in close association with the emergent veneration of Mary in the Hagiopolite liturgies and mounting pilgrimage traffic to holy sites associated with her life and death.¹⁶ Thus we find in the ancient Dormition apocrypha some of the very earliest evidence for Marian devotion and intercession, issuing from the Christian communities of late Roman Palestine.

MARIAN INTERCESSION IN THE *LIBER REQUIEI MARIAE* AND THE EARLY PALM NARRATIVES

Of these two early narrative traditions, the *Liber Requiei* shows signs of being the oldest, making this apocryphon, and its early descendents, a logical starting place. As noted already, significant fragments of this Dormition narrative survive in a late fifth-century Syriac manuscript that was translated from a Greek original, leaving little doubt that this apocryphon had been composed by the early fifth century at the very latest.¹⁷ Yet numerous features indicate that the *Liber Requiei*, or the *Obsequies of the Virgin*, as the text is called in Syriac, is even older than this ancient manuscript alone would suggest.¹⁸ For instance, the *Liber Requiei* repeatedly identifies Christ as the earthly manifestation of a "Great Angel" and shows numerous points of contact with "gnostic" traditions, including emphasis on the soteriological importance of esoteric knowledge, reference to numerous gnostic "technical terms," and the presence of a common gnostic cosmological myth, all of which suggest an origin in the third

problemi attuali e tentativi di ricompreensione. Atti del XVII Simposio Internazionale Mariologico (Roma, 6-9 ottobre 2009), ed. Ermano M. Toniolo (Rome: Edizioni Marianum, 2010), 121-65, esp. 142-63.

¹⁵ On Jugie's immortalism, see Duggan, "Assumption Dogma", 57-63; Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 15-17, 103-4. Regarding Mimouni's hypothesis and the significance of Chalcedon in particular, see *ibid.*, esp. 81-98, 142-79, 205-79.

¹⁶ A Jerusalemite origin is of course central to the (rather dubious) hypotheses of Bagatti, Testa, and Manns, concerning the genesis of these traditions among the Jewish-Christians of the Holy Land. There is, however, fairly widespread agreement concerning the emergence of these traditions in Palestine, despite, as noted above, some rather striking differences otherwise concerning the nature of the corpus of early traditions. See, e.g., Baldi and Mosconi, "Atti del congresso nazionale mariano," 114, 125; Cothenet, "Marie dans les Apocryphes," 144-6; Martin Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption de la Sainte Vierge, étude historico-doctrinale*, Studi e testi 114 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), 85-92; van Esbroeck, "Les textes littéraires," 276-85; Simon C. Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie: Histoire des traditions anciennes*, Théologie Historique, 98 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995), 371-585; Brian E. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 7; Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, esp. 78-141. See now also esp. Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians, and the Early Dormition Narratives: The Cult of the Virgin in the Later Fourth Century," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008): 369-99, which argues that Epiphanius seems to have been aware of the nascent Dormition traditions (and the Six Books apocryphon in particular) while he was still in Palestine in the mid-fourth century.

¹⁷ See Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 32-46.

¹⁸ William Wright, *Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1865), pp. ٣٥٠-٣٥١ (Syr) and 42-51 (Eng); Victor Arras, *De transitu Mariae apocrypha aethiopice* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 342-43, 351-52; 2 vols.; Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1973), vol. 1; trans. in Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, pp. 290-350.

century, if not even earlier, a point recently affirmed also by Norelli.¹⁹ Other elements appear to confirm this early dating, including the *Liber Requiei*'s often irreverent characterizations of the Holy Family, such as when Joseph complains about having been burdened with a child that is not his own, prompting a revelation of his initial thoughts that he might have impregnated Mary one night while he was drunk.²⁰ Similarly, Mary, when explaining her fear of death to friends and family, confesses that she had once sinned, suggesting composition sometime before belief in Mary's sinlessness emerged as an important focus of Marian doctrine and devotion: the idea that Mary could have sinned (as separate from the question of her Immaculate Conception in the Western Church) seems to have belonged to the second century, where it is voiced by Irenaeus and Tertullian.²¹ Likewise, the debates over asceticism reflected in this apocryphon and its efforts to defend Paul's authority alongside the Twelve also point toward a fairly early origin, as I have recently argued.²²

The nascent Marian piety reflected in this apocryphon is largely consistent with such an early date. Devotion to the Virgin is only an occasional theme of this ancient Marian biography, revealing a basic form of Marian veneration such as one might expect to find at its earliest stages. Indeed, it is somewhat surprising just how much is absent from this narrative, which seems indicative of its early composition. For instance, the apostles do not afford Mary any special reverence when they first greet her, nor are there any indications of a formal cult of the Virgin. Mary does not work any miracles and expresses doubts and a fear of dying.²³ Yet the *Liber Requiei* unquestionably marks Mary's emergence as a figure of theological significance in her own right and not merely as some Christological annex, in stark contrast to the portrait of Mary that emerges from many studies of the early Fathers.²⁴ Most clearly in view here is the idea of Marian intercession, in what is perhaps the earliest evidence of such belief. For instance, on the evening before Mary's death, Peter proposes maintaining an all-night vigil, and when the others nominate him to deliver a discourse, he begins by invoking Mary's intercessory powers, exclaiming that "the light of our sister Mary's lamp fills the world and will not be extinguished until the end of days, so that those who have decided to be saved will receive assistance from her. And if they receive the image of light, they will receive her rest and her blessing."²⁵

¹⁹ See Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 205–56. See also Norelli, *Marie des apocryphes*, esp. 129–42; and Norelli, «La letteratura apocryfa», esp. 142–63. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Norelli disagrees with the identification of a "gnostic" provenance for these traditions and suggests instead the search for an alternative heterodox milieu in which these traditions first took shape, an endeavor that I warmly welcome.

²⁰ *Liber Requiei* 6 (Victor Arras, *De transitu Mariae apocrypha aethiopice*, 2 vols., CSCO 342–3, 351–2 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1973), vol. 1, 3–4 (Eth) and 2–3 (Lat)); Michel van Esbroeck, "Apocryphes géorgiens de la Dormition," *Analecta Bollandiana* 92 (1973): 55–75, 69–70 (Geor) and 74 (Lat); English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 293.

²¹ *Liber Requiei* 39–41 (Arras, *De transitu*, vol. 1, 22–5 (Eth) and 15–16 (Lat)); van Esbroeck, "Apocryphes géorgiens," 60–2 (Geor) and 65 (Lat); English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 312–15. Regarding the question of Mary's sinfulness, see Tina Beattie, "Mary in Patristic Theology," in *Mary: The Complete Guide*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (London: Continuum, 2007), 75–105, 99–102.

²² *Liber Requiei* 85–8 (Arras, *De transitu*, vol. 1, 50–2 (Eth) and 33–4 (Lat); English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 337–40); William Wright, *Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1865), ٤٦٠ (Syr) and 44–6 (Eng); C. Donahue, *The Testament of Mary: The Gaelic Version of the Dormitio Mariae together with an Irish Latin Version* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1942), 42–5. See now also Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Asceticism in the Early Dormition Narratives," *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010): 509–13.

²³ The only possible exception to this would be the miraculous restoration of Jephonias' severed hands following his botched assault on her funeral bier. After repenting, he is told to embrace Mary's lifeless body and prays over her for three hours in Hebrew, bringing forth testimonies about Mary from the Hebrew Scriptures. Then his arms are healed by invoking the name of Jesus. Strictly speaking, this does not seem to be a miracle worked through the Virgin's agency, but rather through direct appeal to her son. See *Liber Requiei* 76 (Arras, *De transitu*, vol. 1, 44–5 (Eth) and 29 (Lat); English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 330). Cf. Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 236–9; English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 367–8.

²⁴ See, e.g., Price, "Theotokos," esp. 60–9, which expresses the fairly traditional position of Patrology that all interest in Mary's person before the sixth century was limited to her Christological significance. von Campenhausen, *Virgin Birth*, e.g., 68–70 presents an earlier exposition of this opinion. While one certainly could get this impression from reading many of the Church Fathers, other early Christian texts, including those under consideration here as well as certain early liturgical documents, contradict this view. See Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 78–132; Shoemaker, "Marian Liturgies and Devotion," esp. 134–42; Shoemaker, "Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century," .

²⁵ *Liber Requiei* 55 (Arras, *De transitu*, vol. 1, 33 (Eth) and 22 (Lat); English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 321). Cf. Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 230–1; English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 364; Martin Jugie, *Homélies mariales byzantines (II)*, PO 19.3 (Paris: Librairie de Paris/Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1926), 390.

Mary's intercession appears most dramatically, however, near the end of the apocryphon, when, following her resurrection in Paradise, the apostles demand that Christ fulfill an earlier promise to show them the places of torment. This scene, which appears almost identically in the Irish recension of this apocryphon as well as in an early Latin précis, begins as Christ brings his apostles together with Mary and Michael to the place "where the sun sets" and commands the earth to open, revealing the pit of Hell.²⁶ As the visitors draw near to the pit, the damned spot Michael and beg him to intercede on their behalf. Michael reassures the damned that God's angels are always interceding on behalf of all humanity and all creation. The angels of the waters, the winds, and the clouds intercede, followed by Michael himself, who begs the Lord to give the damned rest from their torments. Christ effectively rebuffs Michael's request, asking him if he could possibly imagine that he loves these lost souls more than the one who gave them life and breath. Then follows a tour of Hell, in which Mary and the apostles witness the various sufferings endured by the damned and learn their specific causes. When Mary and the apostles have finished their sightseeing, the damned plead with Mary for her assistance, crying out, "Mary, we beseech you, Mary, light and the mother of light; Mary, life and mother of the apostles; Mary, golden lamp, you who carries every righteous lamp; Mary, our master and the mother of our Master; Mary, our queen, beseech your son to give us a little rest."²⁷ Others of the damned look to the apostles, calling out to Peter, Andrew, and John. The apostles, however, scorn their request, rejoining, "Where did you place our doctrine that we taught you?," at which the damned "were very ashamed and could not reply to the apostles."²⁸ Yet in the end their pleas meet with some success, and Christ grants them three hours of rest every Sunday, "because of the tears of Michael, my holy apostles, and my mother Mary."²⁹ Then, after closing the pit of Hell, Christ leads his mother and the apostles onward to Paradise, where they are greeted by its blessed inhabitants.

Prior to the *Liber Requiei*'s publication, Cothenet questioned whether Mary's intercession for the damned was a late addition to the Irish and Latin texts, inasmuch as the Syriac *Obsequies* fragments are interrupted just before the tour of Hell begins.³⁰ Nevertheless, as Mary Clayton now observes, the close parallels of the *Liber Requiei* assure that "Mary's role as intercessor almost certainly goes back to the beginning of the [Dormition] tradition." Norelli likewise concludes that this intercessory excursion belonged to earliest version of this apocryphon, and, as noted above, it seems to have directly influenced a similar episode in the *Apocalypse of Paul*.³¹ These conclusions are now confirmed by the existence of an unpublished Syriac manuscript in the British Library, a late fifth-century palimpsest which, although almost completely illegible, relates at one point Mary's intercession for the damned during her visit to Hell with the apostles.³² It should be noted, however, that in these early traditions Mary's mediation is not portrayed as uniquely powerful but is presented alongside of angelic intercessions and a request (albeit somewhat unsuccessful) for apostolic intervention. Although Michael's pleas are initially rejected, and the apostles fail to offer any intercession, Christ ultimately yields to the collective supplications of Mary, Michael, and the apostles. Yet perhaps this is exactly the setting in which we should expect to find the origins of Marian piety, embedded within the emergent veneration of the saints and angels, of which the cult of the Virgin is ultimately only a particular variant. Despite the spectacular heights to which Marian devotion would eventually rise, the *Liber*

²⁶ *Liber Requiei* 90–100 (Arras, *De transitu*, vol. 1, 53–9 (Eth) and 35–38 (Lat); Wright, *Contributions to Apocryphal Literature*, 200–0 (Syr) and 47–8 (Eng); English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 341–46); Donahue, *Testament of Mary*, 52–5; Máire Herbert and Martin McNamara, *Irish Biblical Apocrypha: Selected Text in Translation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 130; Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 258–9.

²⁷ *Liber Requiei* 99 (Arras, *De transitu*, vol. 1, 58 (Eth) and 38 (Lat); English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 345).

²⁸ *Liber Requiei* 99 (Arras, *De transitu*, vol. 1, 58 (Eth) and 38 (Lat); English trans., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 345).

²⁹ The interval is given in the *Liber Requiei* as nine hours by one manuscript and three days by the other. The Latin and Irish both have three hours, which is likely the original reading.

³⁰ Cothenet, «Marie dans les Apocryphes», 127.

³¹ Mary Clayton, "The Transitus Mariae: The Tradition and Its Origins," *Apocrypha* 10 (1999): 74–98, 93; Norelli, *Marie des apocryphes*, 132–6.

³² BL Syr. Add. 17,137, f. 9a, second column. On the manuscript's date and condition, see William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1838*, 3 vols. (London: British Museum, 1870–2), vol. 1, 369. The upper text is written across the lower in the same direction, greatly impeding reading. The fragment is published in Stephen J. Shoemaker, "New Syriac Dormition Fragments from Palimpsests in the Schøyen Collection and the British Library. Presentation, Edition and Translation". *Le Muséon* 124/3–4 (2011) 259–278.

Requiei seemingly affords a glimpse of the relative simplicity with which it began, presumably somewhere outside the proto-orthodox stream of ancient Christianity.

THE “SIX BOOKS” NARRATIVES AND THE EARLY BETHLEHEM TRADITIONS

Much more elaborate veneration of the Virgin is witnessed in the oldest Dormition narrative from the Bethlehem traditions, the Six Books apocryphon, which also seems to reflect a more “orthodox” theological milieu than the *Liber Requiei*. The advanced Marian piety of the Six Books apocryphon in comparison with the *Liber Requiei* appears to confirm its relatively more recent origin. At least five different manuscripts from the fifth and sixth centuries preserve a Syriac translation of this apocryphon, and the Greek original(s) lying behind these must be even earlier: the diversity of their accounts already by the end of the fifth century ensures the apocryphon’s composition by the early fifth century at the very latest, and a number of features locate the Six Books much more probably in the fourth century. Its rather unusual account of the discovery of the True Cross suggests this period, and Richard Bauckham’s analysis of the cosmic tour that completes the Six Books determines that the apocryphon dates “from the fourth century at the latest, but perhaps considerably earlier.”³³ Likewise, as I have recently argued, Epiphanius’ assault on the so-called “Kollyridians” seems to indicate the circulation of this early Dormition narrative, at least in oral form, already by the middle of the fourth century.³⁴

From its very beginning the Six Books apocryphon presents a rather different sensibility about the veneration of Mary from the *Liber Requiei*. Whereas in the *Liber Requiei* evidence of Marian piety occurs only rarely and is more or less confined to seeking Mary’s intercessions alongside the prayers of other saints, the Six Books apocryphon is suffused with Marian devotion of nearly every sort, making it an invaluable resource for discovering the roots of the fifth century’s Marian revolution. Indeed, the Six Books apocryphon’s importance for understanding the beginnings of Marian piety has been recognized from almost the very moment of its publication, as evidenced by Heinrich Ewald’s rather chauvinistic evaluation of this early Dormition narrative in his review of William Wright’s 1865 edition. Despite Ewald’s considerable lack of sympathy for this text and its traditions, his comments rather ironically highlight its significance for understanding the rise of Marian piety.

*We can certainly affirm that this book has become from the first the firm foundation for all the unhappy adoration of Mary, and for a hundred superstitious things, which have intruded with less and less resistance into the Churches, since the 5th century, and have contributed so much to the degeneration and to the crippling of all better Christianity. The little book is therefore of the greatest importance for the history of every century in the Middle Ages, and yet today we ought to notice far more seriously than we usually do the great amount of what we have to learn from it. The whole cultus of Mary in the Papal Church rests upon this book; we might search in vain for any other foundation to it.*³⁵

Unfortunately, this is not even the most colorful passage of Ewald’s review, and his anti-Catholicism was considered exceptional even when judged by his contemporaries.³⁶ Still, despite such prejudices, this great Orientalist

³³ In regard to the True Cross traditions of the Six Books apocryphon, see Stephen J. Shoemaker, “A Peculiar Version of the *Inventio crucis* in the Early Syriac Dormition Traditions,” *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006): 75–81, which now supersedes the rather different opinion concerning this material expressed in Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition*, 56; see also Stephen J. Shoemaker, “Death and the Maiden: The Early History of the Dormition and Assumption Apocrypha,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 50 (2006): 59–97. Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 346–60, esp. 358–60. See also Michel van Esbroeck, “Some Earlier Features in the Life of the Virgin,” *Marianum* 63 (2001): 297–308, which also argues for a fourth century date.

³⁴ Shoemaker, “Epiphanius of Salamis.” See also Shoemaker, “Marian Liturgies and Devotion,” 132–8; Shoemaker, “Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century.”

³⁵ Heinrich Ewald, “Review of ‘The departure of my lady Mary from this world. Edited from two Syriac MSS. in the British Museum, and translated by W. Wright,’” *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 26 (1865): 1018–31, 1022–3; cited in the translation from Agnes Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, *Studia Sinaitica* 11 (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1902), xvi, where Smith Lewis notes her strong approval of Ewald’s assessment. Wright also cites the passage as evidence of the work’s historical importance: Wright, *Contributions to Apocryphal Literature*, 9–10.

³⁶ Thomas Witton Davies, *Heinrich Ewald, Orientalist and Theologian, 1803–1903: A Centenary Appreciation*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903, 22–3. Ewald likewise was not one to mince words: he was twice forced from his position at Göttingen for public remarks against the king and toward the end of his life was jailed for libel against von Bismarck.

was able, much to his personal chagrin, to recognize the historical significance of this ancient Marian apocryphon for understanding the emergence of her cult.³⁷

Somewhat more even-handed are the remarks of Max Bonnet, who shortly thereafter responded to Ewald's review by noting that in fact the opposite of what Ewald has proposed must be the case: before ideas such as are found in this text could have been expressed, "Marian veneration and Marian cult must already have been flourishing."³⁸ Bonnet therefore concludes that Marian devotion must have begun quite early within the Christian tradition, suggesting that the silence of the Church Fathers from the fourth century and earlier is a sign of its initial emergence somewhere along the margins of "orthodoxy" or in a more "popular" context. Nearly a century later, the *Liber Requiei* seems to have largely confirmed Bonnet's hypothesis, while the more "orthodox" Six Books apocryphon perhaps reflects early movement of Marian devotion into the proto-orthodox stream of ancient Christianity prior to its full embrace by the church hierarchs in the fifth century. In any case, the Six Books reveals a Marian piety already in full bloom by the fourth century, within a milieu that appears to conform with the emergent discourse of orthodoxy.

The Six Books apocryphon repeatedly advances devotion to the Virgin by portraying its characters in the act of venerating Mary, perhaps aiming to encourage similar behaviors among its audience. For instance, when John arrives at Mary's house in Bethlehem, the first thing he does is kiss the Virgin "on her breast and on her knees."³⁹ Likewise, the other apostles, when they arrive at her dwelling, immediately kiss her breast and her knees.⁴⁰ The Roman governor, when he comes to request healing for his son, kneels down and venerates the Virgin Mary, speaking praises in honor of her and her son.⁴¹ The Patriarchs and Prophets, who accompany Christ when he comes to receive his mother's soul, also venerate Mary: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David worship her, as do the Prophets, carrying censers in their hands.⁴² Even the heavenly bodies venerate the Virgin in this apocryphon: while she was in Bethlehem, "the sun and moon...came and worshipped before the upper chamber" in which she was dwelling.⁴³ After her resurrection in the Paradise of Eden, Mary enters the heavenly Jerusalem and again the sun and the moon worship her, as do thunder and lightning, fire and flame, the rain and the dew. The angels as well, including Gabriel and Michael, bow down before her, before Mary herself finally worships God the Father in the heavenly city.⁴⁴

Mary's mediation is also a particularly prominent theme of the Six Books apocryphon. In contrast to the infrequent Marian intercessions of the *Liber Requiei*, the Six Books is replete with occasions where Mary is shown to intercede successfully with her son on behalf of Christian believers. As in the *Liber Requiei*, Mary embarks on a tour of the heavenly realms after her resurrection in Paradise, although in the Six Books she travels alone, without Michael and the apostles, led only by her son. When mother and child eventually arrive before the roaring fires of Gehenna, Mary beholds the damned, who await their eternal torment after the final judgment and cry out to Christ for mercy. Mary hears the cries of the wicked, and being saddened, she pleads with her son, "have mercy on the wicked when you judge them at the day of judgment; for I have heard their voice and am grieved."⁴⁵ While no specific reprieve is announced, as in the *Liber Requiei*, the effectiveness of Mary's intercessions is repeatedly acknowledged and demonstrated throughout the narrative. Its clear message is that one cannot hope for a better mediator with the divine judge than his beloved mother.

³⁷ Ewald dates the text to the second half of the fourth century at the latest, based on reference to a tradition from the *Testament of Adam* in book three and a reference to convents (ܩܠܝܬܐ) at the end of book four: Ewald, "Review of 'The departure of my lady Mary'," 1020. Nevertheless, the final Christian redaction of *Testament of Adam* belongs to the third century, although its traditions are considerably earlier: James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), vol. 1, 990. Moreover, the mention of "convents" in Wright's text is entirely absent from the sixth-century Göttingen MS (syr 10, 33a) and the Sinai palimpsest fragments from the later fifth century: Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܩܠܝܬܐ; trans. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 372. The lacunae in the Sinai MS are not sufficient to have included the reading from Wright's text.

³⁸ Bonnet, "Die ältesten Schriften," 244–5.

³⁹ William Wright, "The Departure of My Lady Mary from This World," *The Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* 6–7 (1865): 417–448 and 108–160, ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 136 (Eng).

⁴⁰ Ibid., ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 138 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 29 (Eng).

⁴¹ Wright, "Departure of my Lady Mary," ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 146 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 48 (Eng).

⁴² Wright, "Departure of my Lady Mary," ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 150–1 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 54–5 (Eng).

⁴³ Wright, "Departure of my Lady Mary," ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 141 (Eng).

⁴⁴ Ibid., ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 157–8 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܩܠܝܬܐ.

⁴⁵ Wright, "Departure of my Lady Mary," ܩܠܝܬܐ (Syr) and 159 (Eng), translation slightly modified.

In another episode just prior to her death, the apostles ask the Virgin to leave a blessing for the world she is about to depart. She obliges, praying, “May God, who willed of his own will and sent his Son, and he put on a body and dwelt in the place of my members, have mercy upon the people who call upon him.”⁴⁶ She continues, praying “Our Lord Jesus, do Thou receive the prayers of the people who call upon Thee; and make bad times cease from the earth; and give a crown to old age, and bringing up to youth, and aid the souls that call upon Thee.” Christ responds by promising his mother, “Everything thou hast said to me, Mary, will I do to please thee; and I will show mercy to everyone who calls upon thy name.”⁴⁷ Mary’s intercessions are especially linked with the numerous miracles she works in the text, particularly healings. Most of these are gathered together in two large collections, one at the beginning of book three and the other at its end. As the third book opens, Mary and the apostles are still at her home in Bethlehem, where its citizens behold “the stammering, and dumb, and blind, and deaf, and sick, and afflicted, and those who had evil spirits, and everyone who had a pain going to her and being healed,” including “women ... from the cities and regions and from Rome and Athens, the daughters of kings and procurators and prefects.”⁴⁸ Several accounts of specific miracles follow: two women possessed by demons and another with strangury are healed when Mary prays over them; a woman with leprosy prostrates herself before Mary, and Mary heals her by making the sign of the cross over some water and sprinkling her with it; a woman blind in one eye is healed when Mary signs the cross over it. Then a throng “without number” travels from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to seek Mary’s healing, crying out for her to have mercy on them, and when Mary hears their voice, she prays, “Lord Jesus Christ, hear the voice of the souls that cry to you.”⁴⁹ As a result of her prayer, “straightway two thousand six hundred souls were healed, men and women and children.”

Once Mary returns to Jerusalem with the apostles, the Roman governor organizes a public debate between the Jews and Christians, in which the Christians (unsurprisingly) triumph. Immediately thereafter follows a second anthology of Marian miracles that completes the third book, itself framed by two lengthy miracle stories, beginning with Mary’s healing of the Roman governor’s son and concluding with the botched Jewish assault on her bier, when Mary dramatically restores the severed arms of her injured attacker. After the Christian victory in the debate, the Roman governor brings his son, who suffers from a stomach disease and strangury, to Mary’s house and begs her to heal him. When she prays and stretches out her hands to bless the child, he is instantly healed, and thereupon the governor returns to Rome, where he spreads news of Mary’s wonders and miracles among the emperors and the nobility of Rome.⁵⁰ Then follows a report sent to the apostles from the disciples of Peter and Paul in Rome, who describe the miracles recounted by the governor there, and rather remarkably, each of these wonders involves an apparition of the Virgin.⁵¹ When sailors in peril at sea cried out for Mary’s mercy, “she rose upon them like the sun, and delivered these ships, which were ninety-two in number.” One day some robbers attacked a group of men and threatened to kill them, and when they called on Mary for mercy, “she rose upon them like (a flash of) lightning, and rescued these men.” A widow whose son had fallen down a well cried out to her, “and my Lady Mary appeared to her, and snatched up the child, and he was not drowned; and she gave him to his mother alive.” She also appeared to a man who had been sick for sixteen years: when he brought out a censer and prayed to her, immediately she came to him and healed him. A merchant, who had borrowed a thousand dinars and lost them along the road, prayed to Mary, and she came to him and “took him and made him stand over the purse of dinars.” Lastly, two women on their way to Egypt were confronted by a giant snake that was about to devour them, and when they called upon Mary, she “appeared to them and smote the snake on its mouth, and it was split in two.” Yet perhaps most extraordinary is the fact that all the while Mary was doing these miracles “at Rome and in all countries,” we are told that she remained simultaneously right beside the apostles in Jerusalem. Finally, book three comes to a close as the apostles process to Mary’s tomb at “the head of the valley,” with Mary lying on her funeral bier still alive.⁵² As they exit the city, a Jew named Yūphanyā (Jephonias in Greek) attacks her, and when his hands touch her bier, “the angel of the Lord smote him with a sword of fire and they hung like ropes from the

⁴⁶ Ibid., ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 151 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 56 (Eng).

⁴⁷ Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 152 (Eng).

⁴⁸ Ibid., ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 141 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 33–4 (Eng).

⁴⁹ Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 142 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 35 (Eng).

⁵⁰ Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 146–7 (Eng); cf. the much longer account in Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 46–9 (Eng).

⁵¹ Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 147–8 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 49–50 (Eng).

⁵² Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܡܕܢܐ (Syr) and 148–9 (Eng).

bed.” Yūphanyā then begs the apostles to heal him, but they advise him to call upon Mary instead. Once he pleads with Mary for mercy, she instructs Peter to give Yūphanyā his arms. Peter then spits on one of them and says, “In the name of my Lady Mary, the mother of God, cleave to thy place,” and his arms are miraculously restored by the prayers of Mary.

Yet petitions to the Virgin alone are not enough, according to this early Marian apocryphon: they must be joined to liturgical commemorations and offerings in Mary’s honor. The Six Books narrative repeatedly insists on regular observance of ceremonies in Mary’s honor, bearing witness to the existence of a formal cult of the Virgin already by this time. The elaborate invocation that opens book one introduces a liturgical setting from the very start, asking for the Lord’s blessing on “our congregation, that exalts the commemoration [ܡܠܚܬܐ] of your mother, my Lady Mary, O Lord God.”⁵³ Shortly thereafter, when the monks miraculously receive the Six Books apocryphon from St John at his shrine in Ephesus, he explains to them that he “has sent you this book in order that there may be a commemoration of my Lady Mary three times in the year, because if humankind celebrate her memory, they shall be delivered from wrath.”⁵⁴

Likewise, the women who are healed at Bethlehem in book three bring Mary “gifts and offerings” along with their petitions.⁵⁵ At the beginning of book four, when Mary leaves her blessing for the world that she is about to depart, her favors are again tightly linked with her commemoration. The apostles ask for her blessing so “that those who make commemorations on her behalf may be delivered from grievous afflictions.” She then prays, “make bad times cease from the earth when humankind, O Lord, hold a commemoration to my body and spirit, which have departed the earth; and make death and captivity and the sword and famine and all calamities that befall humankind pass away from the land in which offerings are offered to me.” As Mary continues her blessing, a strong connection emerges between her intercessions and agriculture and fertility. No doubt here the Virgin has already begun to fill a role as protectress of the earth and the harvest that she inherited from the various Mediterranean goddesses. Mary prays for her son to “make the pestilence cease from the land in which offerings are made to me; and bless the garland of the year; and let these lands be preserved from locusts, that they may not devour them, and from blight and mildew and hailstones.” She remains on this theme, asking, “Let the fields too, from which offerings are offered in honor of me, be blessed and bring forth the seeds which are concealed in the furrows; and let the vines from which wine is pressed in my name, bear good bunches of grapes.”⁵⁶

After Mary’s son promises to grant her requests, her soul goes forth from her body, which is transferred to the Paradise of Eden. Then the apostles provide specific instructions for celebrating the annual Marian feasts that the Six Books narrative so emphatically enjoins on its audience. In what amounts to a brief liturgical handbook, the Six Books directs that three commemorations of the Virgin should be observed at different times in the year, and with each of these, the agricultural connections remain quite strong. The specific dates vary slightly according to the different early manuscripts, but their approximate times and significance remain constant. The first feast ought to be celebrated on the same day as the Nativity, which is 24 December or 6 January according to different manuscripts, but since that date already held a major feast, Mary’s memorial should follow two or three days later. The purpose of this commemoration is “that the seeds of the farmers, which they have borrowed and sown, will be blessed,” to which the sixth-century Göttingen manuscript adds, “so that by her offerings and prayers, the locusts that hide in the lands will be killed.”⁵⁷ The second feast is on 15 May in all the manuscripts, and it is observed “on account of the seeds that were sown, and on account of the flying and creeping locusts, that they might not come forth and destroy the crops, lest there be a famine and the people perish,” to which the Göttingen manuscript and the fifth-century palimpsest codex add blessings for “the beard of wheat, so that from them there will be an offering to the Lord and the blessed one.” Finally, a feast is appointed for 13 August, “on account of the vines bearing bunches (of grapes), and on account of the trees bearing fruit, that clouds of hail, bearing stones of wrath, might not come, and the trees be broken, and their fruits, and the vines with their clusters.”

⁵³ Ibid., ܐ (Syr) and 130 (Eng), trans. slightly modified; cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܐܬܬܐܝܬܐ (Syr) and 14 (Eng).

⁵⁴ Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܐܬܬܐܝܬܐ (Syr) and 132 (Eng), trans. slightly modified; cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܐܬܬܐܝܬܐ (Syr) and 18 (Eng).

⁵⁵ Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܐܬܬܐܝܬܐ (Syr) and 141 (Eng); cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܐ (Syr) and 33–4 (Eng).

⁵⁶ Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܐܬܬܐܝܬܐ (Syr) and 151–2 (Eng), trans. slightly modified; cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܐܬܬܐܝܬܐ (Syr) and 56–7 (Eng).

⁵⁷ Wright, “Departure of my Lady Mary,” ܐܬܬܐܝܬܐ (Syr) and 152–3 (Eng), trans. slightly modified; MS Göttingen Syr. 10, fol. 30b–31a; cf. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܐܬܬܐܝܬܐ (Syr) and 59–61 (Eng).

Following this calendar the Six Books narrative gives a rather detailed description of the ceremonies to be observed on each of these occasions, which focus on offerings of bread made in the Virgin's name and, in a blatant act of self-promotion, the reading of the Six Books apocryphon.

And the apostles also ordered that any offering offered in the name of my Lady Mary should not remain overnight, but that at midnight of the night immediately preceding her commemoration, it should be kneaded and baked; and in the morning let it go up on the altar while the people stand before the altar with psalms of David, and let the New and Old Testaments be read, and the volume of the decease of the blessed one [i.e., the Six Books apocryphon]; and let everyone be before the altar in the church, and let the priests make the offering and set forth the censer of incense and kindle the lights, and let the whole service be concerning these offerings; and when the whole service is finished, let everyone take his offerings to his house. And let the priest speak thus: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we celebrate the commemoration of my Lady Mary." Thus let the priest speak three times; and (simultaneously) with the word of the priest who speaks, the Holy Spirit shall come and bless these offerings; and when everyone takes away his offering, and goes to his house, great help and the blessing of the blessed one shall enter his dwelling and establish it forever.⁵⁸

A nearly identical version of these ritual instructions appears in the sixth-century Göttingen manuscript, but unfortunately the corresponding section is missing from the three fifth-century palimpsests, all of which are fragmentary.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, the fifth-century palimpsest codex published by Smith Lewis preserves not only the liturgical calendar but numerous other references to these commemorations as well.⁶⁰ Likewise, the palimpsest folios bound together with the Old Syriac Gospels twice mention the observance of these commemorations, and the palimpsest fragments from Sinai now in the Schøyen Collection preserve the liturgical invocation with which all of the early Syriac manuscripts begin, asking for divine blessings on the congregation as they celebrate Mary's memory and departure from the world.⁶¹ It is clear then that these ritual practices belong to the earliest layer of these apocryphal traditions, and one would presume that these Marian feasts were observed by communities using the Six Books narrative as a liturgical text already by the fourth century. Thus, the Six Books apocryphon appears to bear witness to full-blown Marian cult already by this time, somewhere in Palestine, where this narrative most likely originated. This liturgical handbook comes to a close with a prayer for the months of the year, which underscores the strong connections between Marian veneration and the rhythms of the agricultural seasons. Each of the twelve months is invoked, asking for divine blessings for flowers that may adorn the altar of the Lord, for the grain harvest, for fruits, for the farmers, for the rains and snows, and finally for lambs and sheep.

EPIPHANIUS, THE KOLLYRIDIAN, AND THE SIX BOOKS APOCRYPHON

Not to be overlooked, however, are the arresting similarities between the ritual practices of the Six Books apocryphon and those of the so-called "Kollyridians" as described by Epiphanius of Salamis. According to Epiphanius, this group of early Christians allowed women to serve among the clergy and observed annual commemorations of the Virgin at which bread offerings were made in her honor. "On a certain day of the year," he writes, "they put

⁵⁸ Wright, "Departure of my Lady Mary," ܡܪܝܡ (Syr) and 153 (Eng), trans. slightly modified.

⁵⁹ MS Göttingen Syr. 10, fol. 31: "And the apostles ordered that there will be a commemoration of the blessed one in these three months, so that people will be delivered from hard afflictions and a plague of wrath will not come upon the earth and its inhabitants. And the apostles ordered that offerings that have been made to the blessed one should not remain overnight, but in the evening let flour of the finest wheat flour come to the church and be placed before the altar. And the priests will make the offering and set up censers of incense and light the lights. And the entire evening service [vespers] will concern these offerings. And when the service is finished, let everyone take his offering to his house. Because as soon as the priests pray and say the prayer of my master Mary, the Theotokos, 'Come to us and help the people who call upon you,' and with the priest's word of blessing, my master Mary comes and blesses these offerings. And as soon as everyone takes his offering and goes to his house, great aid and the blessing of my master Mary will enter his dwelling and sustain it forever."

⁶⁰ Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca*, ܡܪܝܡ (Syr) and 59–61 (Eng). Note that although this section appears in Smith Lewis' edition and translation, here and elsewhere Smith Lewis has filled in the gaps in the fifth-century manuscript using a codex from the nineteenth century. Although the sections from this modern manuscript are typeset differently in both the Syriac and the translation, it is important to distinguish material from the two manuscripts. Although they are often remarkably close, they are sufficiently different in places that we cannot simply assume, as Smith Lewis appears to, that the modern version can be used to supply the missing sections of the fifth-century manuscript. See also the passages from Smith Lewis' edition indicated in the notes above.

⁶¹ Ibid., ܡܪܝܡ, ܡܪܝܡ; trans. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 372; Schøyen MS 579, fol. 2. The Schøyen fragments are published in Shoemaker, "New Syriac Dormition Fragments".

forth bread and offer it in the name of Mary, and they all partake of the bread.”⁶² Epiphanius’ ensuing denunciation of the Kollyridians has led many scholars to the conclusion that these Christians were worshipping Mary either as a part of the Godhead or as some sort of “pagan” goddess cloaked in Christian garb. Yet these interpretations of the Kollyridians’ actions owe themselves primarily to Epiphanius’ overheated rhetoric and should not be taken as accurately reflecting the liturgical intentions of the early Christians whose practices he describes. Indeed, a careful reading of Epiphanius’ invective reveals his opposition to the Kollyridian practices within the context of a broader condemnation of the emergent veneration of saints.⁶³ According to Epiphanius, the Kollyridian “idolatry” was in theory not unique, and any devotees of a particular holy person who dared to cross the threshold of veneration and began to offer some sort of cult to a saint would be guilty of the same blasphemy. Epiphanius makes clear that the role of the saints in the church should be limited to serving as examples of Christian excellence, and they are not to become themselves objects of devotion. His resistance to this form of “idolatry” is paralleled by his early opposition to the use of images in cultic settings, and in this section of the *Panarion* as well as in the fragments from his now lost iconoclastic writings, Epiphanius joins his censure of venerating the angels and apostles to his condemnation of the use of their images.⁶⁴

Yet while Epiphanius may well have regarded the Kollyridians’ actions as idolatrous, his diatribe affords no evidence that these early Christians actually understood themselves to be worshipping Mary as a goddess or a part of the divinity. As is so often the case with opposition to the cult of the Virgin (and the saints), critics are quick to impute certain intentions to these practices, such as idolatry, that generally seem to be lacking in the practitioners themselves. Carlos Eire, in his study of the rhetoric of idolatry in Reformation Europe, observes that “one man’s devotion was another man’s idolatry,” and thus the mere accusation from an opponent, such as Epiphanius, does not establish that these Christians were worshipping Mary as a divine goddess, as Epiphanius would apparently have his readers believe.⁶⁵ To judge the matter otherwise may ultimately have more to do with the legacy of the Reformation-era debates analyzed by Eire than with the history of late ancient Christianity.

In fact, the Six Books apocryphon appears to provide compelling evidence to the contrary. Here we find a very elaborate devotion to the Virgin, complete with regular bread offerings, articulated, and presumably practiced, within a thoroughly monotheist, Trinitarian context.⁶⁶ The Six Books repeatedly makes reference to veneration or worship (سجدة) of the Virgin, yet without ever implying that she is divine or equal to her son. More often than not, Mary’s miracles are ascribed to intercessions with her son or to the sign of the cross, and the ontological difference between Mary and her divine son never seems to be blurred. One must of course admit that there are numerous “pagan” parallels to many aspects of the Marian piety expressed in the Six Books and attributed to the Kollyridians, such as the bread offerings or the strong agricultural associations. Yet these alone do not allow the conclusion that in either instance Mary was being worshipped as a divine goddess. Innumerable elements of early Christian faith and piety have precursors in the Greco-Roman religious traditions, particularly as seen in certain liturgical practices and the veneration of saints, and while these relationships are historically illuminating and important, the mere existence of such parallels does not control the interpretation of these phenomena nor allow us to impute polytheist beliefs to their practitioners.⁶⁷

The Six Books thus offers an especially relevant point of comparison to the Kollyridians, inasmuch as some sort of a connection between the Six Books and Epiphanius’ invective against the Kollyridians appears likely.

⁶² Epiphanius, *Panarion* 79.1.7 (Karl Holl and Jürgen Dummer, eds., *Epiphanius*, 2nd ed., 3 vols., Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 25, 31, 37 (Leipzig; Berlin: J. C. Hinrichs; Akademie-Verlag, 1915, 1980, 1985), vol. 3, 476.

⁶³ See Shoemaker, “Epiphanius of Salamis,” 376–83; see also Shoemaker, “Marian Liturgies and Devotion,” ; Shoemaker, “Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century,” .

⁶⁴ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 79.4.4–5 (Holl and Dummer, eds., *Epiphanius*, vol. 3, 479); Fragments 7–10 (Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1928–32), vol. 3, 358). On Epiphanius’ iconoclastic writings, see Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 3 vols. (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1950), vol. 3, 390–3; and Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 103–4.

⁶⁵ Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4–7.

⁶⁶ Indeed, it is somewhat tempting to suppose here that we witness some sort of very early precursor to the Eastern Orthodox service of *artoklasia* (“the breaking of bread) or *litiya*, as it is known in Slavic contexts.

⁶⁷ See e.g., Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, The Haskell Lectures on History of Religions, New Series, 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 1–22; Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 21–3, 213–21, 229–30.

While evidence of their relation may not be as direct as some would like, it is perhaps all the more compelling for the manner in which Epiphanius' account seems to obscure its links with traditions of Mary's Dormition.⁶⁸ The bread offerings in Mary's honor are of course the most significant point of contact: nowhere else in early Christian literature (to my knowledge) do we find bread offerings to the Virgin in the manner that Epiphanius describes, except in the Six Books apocryphon. The remarkable similarities between the ritual practices of this early Dormition narrative and those of Epiphanius' opponents alone invite some sort of connection between the two. Yet there are a number of more subtle indications that Epiphanius' attack on the Kollyridians reacts to the traditions of the Six Books apocryphon, which he may have known about only at second or even third hand. Epiphanius addresses the Kollyridians twice, first in the *Letter to Arabia* (which appears as book 78 of the *Panarion*) and more extensively in *Panarion* book 79, and both accounts make very clear but unexplained associations between the ritual practices of the Kollyridians and traditions about the Virgin Mary's Dormition. Epiphanius' attacks here on ritual practices almost identical to those enjoined by the Six Books apocryphon against the backdrop of traditions about the end of Mary's life seems to indicate his awareness of these apocryphal traditions. Moreover, inasmuch as Epiphanius composed the *Letter to Arabia* in 370 while still living in his native Palestine, his attacks on the Kollyridians offer important confirmation of their circulation in Palestine already during the middle of the fourth century.

In his first account, from the *Letter to Arabia*, as Epiphanius excoriates the Kollyridian rituals he turns suddenly to the question of the end of Mary's life, professing the strict agnosticism on this subject for which he has become so famous in various modern studies on the Dormition and Assumption. Without making any transition to a new topic, he writes:

*The holy virgin may have died and been buried – her falling asleep was with honor, her death in purity, her crown in virginity. Or she may have been put to death – as the scripture says, “And a sword shall pierce through her soul” – her fame is among the martyrs and her body, by which light rose in the world, [rests] amid blessings. Or she remained alive, for God is not incapable of doing whatever he wills. No one knows her end.*⁶⁹

Epiphanius then continues his attack on the Kollyridians further, offering no explanation for his introduction of this topic and leaving the unmistakable impression that his discussion of the Dormition has something to do with the Kollyridians. The overall effect is to link his opponents' bread offerings in Mary's honor with the question of how her life ended, a pairing that certainly suggests a connection with the Six Books apocryphon.

A similar association between the Kollyridians' veneration of Mary and the Virgin's Dormition occurs in the penultimate section of the *Panarion*, which is dedicated exclusively to the refutation of this Marian “heresy.” After denouncing the Kollyridian practice of allowing female clergy, Epiphanius eventually comes to address their bread offerings to the Virgin, which he attacks by comparing Mary with Elijah, John, and Thecla. In this way he continues his apparent strategy of undermining this veneration of the Virgin through a broader attack against veneration of the saints.⁷⁰ The main point here is that just as Elijah, John, and Thecla are not venerated using such blasphemous ritual practices, so there is no basis for the Kollyridian veneration of Mary. Thecla's appearance in this context is to be expected, since she had long served as the primary role model for female virginity, a role that Mary only began to assume at this time.⁷¹ Yet comparisons with a prophet and an apostle are a perhaps little unexpected given the harangue against women's liturgical leadership that precedes this discussion of the bread offerings. Obviously, prophecy and leadership are not the qualities that Epiphanius want to associate with Mary.

Instead, Epiphanius' comparisons with Elijah and John focus squarely on the miraculous manner in which each ended his life. Mary is like Elijah, he explains, in that he was “a virgin from his mother's womb, he remained so perpetually, and was assumed [ἀναλαμβάνόμενος] and has not seen death.”⁷² Although this passage has been frequently overlooked in various studies of the Virgin's Dormition and Assumption, the last two points deserve particular emphasis. In contrast with the guarded agnosticism of the *Letter to Arabia*, which previous scholarship has

⁶⁸ See also Shoemaker, “Epiphanius of Salamis,” 387–96.

⁶⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 78.23.9 (Holl and Dummer, eds., *Epiphanius*, vol. 3, 473; trans. Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, 2 vols., Nag Hammadi Studies, 35–36 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987, 1994), vol. 2, 619).

⁷⁰ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 79.5.1–4 (Holl and Dummer, eds., *Epiphanius*, vol. 3, 479–80; trans. Williams, *Panarion*, vol. 2, 624–5, slightly modified).

⁷¹ Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.

⁷² Epiphanius, *Panarion* 79.5.2 (Holl and Dummer, eds., *Epiphanius*, vol. 3, 479).

overwhelmingly taken as evidence that Epiphanius knew no tradition of the end of Mary's life, here he rather unambiguously proclaims that Mary, like Elijah, "was assumed and has not seen death." Moreover, he makes this assertion in the context of rebutting the Kollyridian liturgical practices, again suggesting his awareness of a link between these rituals and a tradition about the end of Mary's life. This connection is reinforced by his comparison between Mary and John, when he invokes John's miraculous dormition, arguing that "John is not to be venerated, even if through his own prayer (or rather, by receiving grace from God) he made of his falling asleep [κοίμησιν] an amazing thing."⁷³ Here Epiphanius refers to the various traditions of John's "metastasis" and the miraculous removal of his body from this world at death that had begun to circulate already in several versions by this time.⁷⁴ Thus again without much explanation, Epiphanius returns to the theme of Mary's Dormition in his assault on the Kollyridian ritual practices. His deployment of traditions regarding the miraculous endings of Elijah's and John's lives in the context of attacking the Kollyridian veneration of Mary suggests even more strongly a connection between these bread offerings and a tradition of Mary's Dormition. Indeed, the implied logic of Epiphanius' argument is that his opponents may have appealed to a tradition about Mary's Assumption to defend their veneration of her, although this is far from certain.

In any case, Epiphanius' own rhetoric reveals in both instances a connection between the Kollyridian bread offerings to Mary and a tradition about her miraculous departure from this world. This configuration can only point to the Six Books apocryphon, whose traditions Epiphanius must have known in either written or oral form. The Six Books is the sole source from the ancient church to mandate regular liturgical offerings of bread to the Virgin, which it enjoins within the context of an account of Mary's Dormition, a subject that Epiphanius apparently saw as being closely intertwined with his opponents' bread offerings. Consequently, it would seem that traditions from the Six Books, including their liturgical ceremonies in Mary's honor, must have been in circulation already by the middle of the fourth century, when Epiphanius presumably encountered them in Palestine before writing the *Letter to Arabia*.

CONCLUSIONS

The Dormition apocrypha thus have much to reveal about the rise of Marian piety during the "tunnel period" between the second-century *Protevangelium* and the Nestorian controversy of the early fifth century. The *Liber Requiei* shows Mary's emergence as a figure of religious significance in her own right, and not just as some appendage to discussions of the Incarnation and Nativity, and also reveals the importance of Marian intercession already by the third century it would seem. Moreover, it appears that this special interest in Mary and her intercessory powers first took hold somewhere outside of proto-orthodox Christianity, in a milieu where there was a strong presence of "gnostic" Christian ideas. The actual Marian devotion evidenced by this narrative is rather basic, as perhaps should be expected from such an early text: one finds only scattered references to the efficacy of Mary's intercessions with her son, which are framed within a setting that also includes intercessory prayers from the apostles and angels. The Six Books apocryphon, however, discloses a rather advanced form of Marian piety, in which the focus on Mary's intercessions has been intensified considerably and joined to belief in Mary's power to work wonders and her apparitions. In addition, the Six Books narrative affords what is most likely the earliest witness to actual Marian cult, in the form of three annual liturgical feasts celebrated in her honor with bread offerings on her behalf. Apparently, Epiphanius must have somehow become aware of these ritual practices, inasmuch as he condemns the nearly identical practices of the "Kollyridians" while simultaneously engaging the issue of Mary's departure from this world.

Thus it would seem that Marian piety did not suddenly burst onto the scene in Constantinople during the late 420s through some kind of spontaneous generation, as it sometimes can be made to appear. The early Dormition apocrypha disclose the existence of Marian intercession and even Marian cult well before the Council of Ephesus, as well as alerting us that if we hope to unearth the roots of this phenomenon, we may well have to look outside of the discursive arenas dominated by the bishops and the early Church Fathers. Indeed, not until the early seventh

⁷³ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 79.5.3 (ibid., vol. 3, 480.).

⁷⁴ Jean-Daniel Kaestli, «Le rôle des textes bibliques dans la genèse et le développement des légendes apocryphes. Le cas du sort final de l'apôtre Jean,» *Augustinianum* 23 (1983): 319–36, esp. 329–30. See also Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R McL. Wilson, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991–2), vol. 2, 161–3, 204–5.

century, in the Dormition homily of Theoteknos of Livias and the *Life of Mary of Egypt*, as well as perhaps the Dormition homily attributed to Modestus of Jerusalem, do we find clear evidence otherwise of belief in Mary's intercessory powers in the Palestine region, making these early apocrypha thus all the more important.⁷⁵ That Marian piety did not lie dormant in between can now be seen from the *Jerusalem Georgian Chantbook*, a massive collection of the Holy City's liturgical hymns from the fifth through seventh centuries. This tremendous resource has only recently begun to be explored, and yet already its importance for understanding the development of Marian piety in Jerusalem and Palestine is abundantly clear. In addition to its preservation of complete hymn cycles for the various Marian feasts, references to Mary's intercession occur throughout the *Chantbook*, and while this material can be somewhat difficult to date, the bulk of its traditions, including, it would seem, these intercessory pleas, appear to date most likely to the fifth and sixth centuries.⁷⁶ Accordingly, further study of these early Jerusalemite hymns has great potential for shedding new light on the history of Marian piety in the late ancient Near East.

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⁷⁵ Theoteknos of Livias, *Homily on the Dormition* 17, 36 (Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 280, 290; trans. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 75, 80); *The Life of Mary of Egypt* 23 (PG97:3713; trans. Alice-Mary Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), 83); (Ps-)Modestus of Jerusalem, *Homily on the Dormition* 10 (PG 86:3301C, 3305A; trans. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 95, 97). For more on these texts, including their provenance and authorship, see Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium*, 65–9; and Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 13–15.

⁷⁶ The text of the *Jerusalem Georgian Chantbook* has been published in El. Metreveli, C. Cankievi, and L. Xevsuriani, *უძველესი იადგარი (Udzvelesi Iadgari [The Oldest Chantbook])*, Zveli kartuli mcerlobis zeglebi 2 (Tbilisi: Mecniereba, 1980). See now also the translations of specific components, with helpful commentary, in Charles Renoux, *Les hymnes de la résurrection. 1. Hymnographie liturgique géorgienne : textes du Sinaï 18.*, Sources liturgiques 3 (Paris: Cerf, 2000); Hans-Michael Schneider, *Lobpreis im rechten Glauben: die Theologie der Hymnen an den Festen der Menschwerdung der alten Jerusalemer Liturgie im georgischen Udzvelesi Iadgari*, Hereditas. Studien zur alten Kirchengeschichte (Bonn: Borengässer, 2004); and Charles Renoux, *L'hymnaire de Saint-Sabas (Ve–VIIe siècle): le manuscrit géorgien H 2123. I. Du samedi de Lazare à la Pentecôte*, Patrologia Orientalis 50.3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008). Concerning the dating of these hymns, see also Peter Jeffery, «The Sunday Office of Seventh-Century Jerusalem in the Georgian Chantbook (Iadgari): A Preliminary Report», *Studia Liturgica* 21 (1991): 52–75; and Stig Frøyshov, «The Early Development of the Liturgical Eight-Mode System in Jerusalem», *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 51 (2007): 139–78. See also Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition*, 120–2, 132–6.

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