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Long-Distance Love: The Ideology of Male-Female Spiritual Friendship in Goscelin of Saint Bertin's *Liber confortatorius*

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EVE OF WILTON FIRST ENCOUNTERED Goscelin of Saint Bertin as a child at the aristocratic nunnery at Wilton. Goscelin probably served as the abbey's chaplain, and, upon first meeting Eve, he was struck by her spiritual beauty. They shared a close friendship for approximately fifteen years (ca. 1065–ca. 1080), with Goscelin acting as Eve's tutor, before the churchman fell out of favor with the bishop of Wiltshire and was banished. Before he was able to return, Eve had left England for the church of Saint Laurent du Tertre in Angers, where she became an anchoress.¹ When Goscelin discovered that his beloved had left without a proper farewell, he was deeply saddened. And so he wrote his *Liber confortatorius* (Book of Encouragement) for his absent friend. In it he referred to himself and to Eve as possessing a joint "singular soul [*unice anime*]," emphasizing their shared spiritual intimacy, a theme that appears throughout the text.² Indeed, in the *Liber* Goscelin articulated a fervent love, friendship, and longing that few other high medieval discourses on friendship can rival.

The *Liber confortatorius* was written in an epistolary format meant to instruct and comfort Eve as she lived in solitude, yet the work was equally important to Goscelin himself, as it helped him come to terms with his sense of loss at Eve's unannounced departure.³ He obviously missed Eve's

¹ Stephanie Hollis, introduction to *Writing the Wilton Women: Goscelin's Legend of Edith and Liber confortatorius*, ed. Stephanie Hollis et al. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 1–2.

² Goscelin of Saint Bertin, *Liber confortatorius*, trans. W. R. Barnes and Rebecca Hayward, in Hollis et al., *Writing the Wilton Women*, 99. I use Barnes and Hayward's translation throughout. Parenthetical number citations refer to the Latin version of the *Liber confortatorius* edited by C. H. Talbot as "The *Liber confortatorius* of Goscelin of Saint Bertin," in *Analecta monastica*, series 3, *Studia Anselmiana*, 37, ed. M. M. Lebreton, Jean Leclercq, and C. H. Talbot (Rome: Pontifical Institute of Saint Anselm, 1955).

³ Irene van Rossum draws the same conclusion in her 1999 PhD dissertation: "It is evident that he benefited from the process of writing his book and the activity of writing the *Liber confortatorius* had a cathartic effect on him" ("*Adest meliori parte*: A Portrait of Monastic

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companionship and longed for her presence. Monika Otter captures this peculiar double function of the *Liber* in her description: it is “a letter of guidance to a female recluse by her male spiritual advisor, a guide to meditation and prayer, and an anthology of spiritual and meditative texts, it is also a personal letter and an account of a deep, desperate, only half sublimated love between a man and a woman in religious orders.”⁴ The text also contains an internal dialogue that places its composition within the eleventh- and twelfth-century phenomenon that Colin Morris terms “the discovery of the individual.”⁵ Still, as will be argued here, while the *Liber confortatorius* was indeed a manual of guidance, it reveals not a self-sublimated love between a religious man and woman but rather a friendship that was deep, intimate, and mutually beneficial—although not sexual. It simultaneously illuminates Goscelin’s conflicting opinions on distant friendship as well as his respect for Eve’s spirituality and intellect. Moreover, it shows how Goscelin regarded their friendship as spiritual love, ennobling Goscelin himself and Eve in return.

In the Middle Ages friendship was an aspect of love, yet it was also an integral part of spirituality. By participating in friendship, an individual might attain spiritual growth through the beneficial nature of the relationship. Rosemary Rader has commented on this phenomenon: “Mutuality of goals as a basis for true friendship was a recurring theme in the Christian writers’ depiction of heterosexual friendship.”⁶ According to Morris, furthermore, friendship was “closely connected with the exploration of the self and the search for a true identity.”⁷ Goscelin expressed intense emotions of love and friendship in his *Liber confortatorius*, but his passionate exhortations should not be confused with expressions of romantic or erotic love. For medieval men and women, friendship was love, and thus these kinds of expressions would not necessarily have seemed unnatural or suspicious. Although accusations of inappropriate relations were sometimes leveled at religious men and women, allegations of this sort were often the result of religious politics and not the direct result of sinister activity itself.⁸ As we

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Friendship in Exile in Goscelin’s *Liber confortatorius*” [PhD diss., University of York, 1999], 181). Van Rossum also argues that Goscelin wrote the *Liber* to console himself, much like Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* (ibid., 211). Van Rossum’s observation is very astute considering that Boethius is one of the writers whom Goscelin recommended Eve should read.

⁴ Monika Otter, introduction to *Goscelin of St. Bertin: The Book of Encouragement and Consolation [Liber confortatorius], the Letter of Goscelin to the Recluse Eva*, ed. and trans. Monika Otter (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 1.

⁵ Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

⁶ Rosemary Rader, *Breaking Boundaries: Male/Female Friendship in Early Christian Communities* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 17.

⁷ Morris, *The Discovery*, 99.

⁸ See in this issue Megan McLaughlin, “The Bishop in the Bedroom: Witnessing Episcopal Sexuality in an Age of Reform,” for specific examples of such accusations.

shall see, Goscelin took care in the *Liber* to guard himself and Eve against these charges.⁹

Scholars who have written about Goscelin's *Liber confortatorius* and his relationship with Eve have addressed the question of the monk's true feelings for Eve, speculating as to whether or not Goscelin had romantic or even erotic feelings for Eve. Scholarship on Goscelin and Eve falls into two general categories: those who view Goscelin's feelings for Eve as something more than a spiritual connection, and those who view his feelings as purely spiritual. Most recently, Rebecca Hayward has argued against the claim that Goscelin had romantic or sexual feelings for Eve, and my own interpretation of the *Liber confortatorius* follows her lead. Hayward astutely applies C. Stephen Jaeger's definition of "ennobling love" to Goscelin and Eve's friendship.¹⁰ According to Jaeger, love's "social function is to show forth virtue in lovers, to raise their inner worth, to increase their honor and enhance their reputation. It is, or is seen as, a response to the virtue, charisma, or saintliness of the beloved, and must be distinguished from the monastic ideal of communal friendship (*caritas*), which is given as a social duty to all alike."¹¹ Nevertheless, the love that Goscelin and Eve shared, as he expressed it, was more than ennobling; it was also mutually beneficial in that it had the potential to bring *both* friends closer to God. God was the intermediary who connected Goscelin and Eve, while at the same time each friend served as a conduit to God for the other. Thus, as it will become clear, the basis of their relationship was spiritual, not romantic, and indeed beneficial to each of the friends through their interaction in the friendship.

Today we do not necessarily equate friendship and love, yet to medieval men and women love and friendship were, in essence, inseparable, and we should remember this mode of thought when examining Goscelin's book. The concept of friendship as a form of love is central to Goscelin's ideology of friendship. We can see this centrality throughout the text. As Goscelin says to Eve in his first book, "Permit me now, for mutual comfort and memory, to go over again the unbroken history of our affection and strengthen our perpetual love."¹² Ruth Mazo Karras has addressed the differences between modern and medieval concepts of friendship and love within a discussion of erotic desire. After she discusses Ælred of Rievaulx's *Speculum caritatis* (Mirror of Charity), written in the twelfth century, Karras notes:

⁹ See van Rossum, "Adest meliori parte," 209–10.

¹⁰ Rebecca Hayward, "Spiritual Friendship and Gender Difference in the *Liber confortatorius*," in Hollis et al., *Writing the Wilton Women*, 346.

¹¹ C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 6.

¹² Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 102 (27): "Liceat me nunc in mutuum refrigerium ac memoriam perhennem nostre dilectionis recapitulare ordinem ac perpetuam confirmare caritatem."

We expect the most intense emotional relationships in our lives to be with our sexual partners, especially spouses. They [medieval people] did not. For them the erotic was not equated with the carnal. Whatever desires may lurk beneath this kind of language [that is, “erotic” language], it is not useful historically to label medieval people who did not recognize them as victims of false consciousness who were unable to come to terms with their own sexuality. Rather, it is more helpful to use such texts to understand how they approached friendship, love, and sex.¹³

Morris makes a similar observation when he writes:

Our modern reaction to such language is to suppose that the sexuality which was not obtaining its normal outlet is overflowing here into the idea of friendship. It is hard to doubt that this was happening, but we must also remember that these images performed another function. The Song of Songs, in monastic tradition, expressed the ascent of the soul to God, and in using sexual symbolism derived from it the writers of the time were affirming that friendship was a primary means by which one might come into the presence of God.¹⁴

Both assertions are applicable to Goscelin’s *Liber confortatorius* and to the question concerning the nature of his feelings for Eve. Some scholars have viewed medieval friendship through a modern lens and suggested that these relationships were either sexual or that one or both friends at least had sexual feelings for the other. To be sure, it would be naive to assume that such relationships could *never* be romantic and/or sexual; the famous tale of Abelard and Héloïse serves as glaring proof that such encounters could and did happen. Nonetheless, in many cases the writings on friendship simply do not reveal any information that proves the relationships to be more than friendship. The language of desire is, in contradistinction, a medieval literary motif onto which we must be careful not to project our modern sensibilities. If Goscelin did indeed have any romantic feelings for Eve, they were subsumed by spiritual concerns, and it is these concerns that Goscelin emphasized. Brian Patrick McGuire points out his purpose in studying Goscelin’s *Liber* as “not to provide an explanation for the behavior of one individual in the eleventh century but to show his writings as a reflection of a new wave of sentiment and open involvement in human bonds.”¹⁵ My purpose in this article follows McGuire’s.

¹³ Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 16–17.

¹⁴ Morris, *The Discovery*, 105.

¹⁵ Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience 350–1250* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 1988), 201.

This new wave of spiritual friendship had old foundations. The language of desire in medieval discourse on friendship found precedent in biblical writings not only in the Song of Songs, as Morris points out, but also in other books. The biblical first book of Kings highlights Jonathan and David's loving friendship (1 Samuel 18–19). The notion of love as the embodiment and sign of God appears throughout the Christian Bible: in John's First Epistle he wrote that "God is love" (1 John 4:8); Paul told the Romans that love is the most supreme of the commandments and encouraged them to love their neighbors as themselves (Romans 13:8–10); and in Matthew's Gospel Christ said that love for God and love for one's neighbor are the greatest commandments (Matthew 22:34–40). John's Gospel also describes Christ's declaration of friendship for the disciples at the Last Supper and his commandment that they love each other, too (John 15:12–17).

Friendships between religious men and women date back to the days of the early Christian churches, but the intensity of expression that appears in Goscelin's work is a high medieval innovation. According to Morris, "There was already a long tradition of learned thought about friendship, a tradition which ascribed to it many of the values which we ascribe to marriage."¹⁶ It is widely known, for example, that in the fourth century Jerome shared a friendship with a group of Roman noblewomen, including Marcella and Paula as well as Paula's daughter Eustochium.¹⁷ In the same period Gregory of Nyssa esteemed his pious sister Macrina, to whom his *On the Soul and Resurrection* was dedicated and whom he described as his "teacher."¹⁸ Likewise, John Chrysostom corresponded with Olympias, a Greek noblewoman and deaconess, after he was exiled from Constantinople.¹⁹ In the late sixth century, similarly, the Irish missionary Columban formed friendships with Frankish women. Suzanne Fonay Wemple argues that Columban "recognized their spiritual equality." He formed a friendship with an elite religious woman known as Theudemada, for example, and he provided spiritual guidance for numerous married women who consequently offered their support for the monastic life. Wemple asserts that "Columban's example inspired a new attitude toward women among his collaborators and disciples" and that "these men cultivated spiritual friendships with women and sought feminine cooperation in building a network of monasteries throughout the [Frankish] kingdom."²⁰ Columban's contemporary, the poet-bishop Venantius Fortunatus, is also known to

¹⁶ Morris, *The Discovery*, 98.

¹⁷ Rader, *Breaking Boundaries*, 99–109; see also Carolinne White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 135–37.

¹⁸ Rader, *Breaking Boundaries*, 89.

¹⁹ Ibid., 94–98; White, *Christian Friendship*, 85.

²⁰ Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 159.

have been friendly with Queen Radegund and a nun named Agnes, for he exchanged correspondence with both women.²¹ It is certain that Goscelin had Jerome's friendships with women in mind and perhaps those of these other Christian saints and writers when he formed his own friendship with Eve and when he composed the *Liber confortatorius*.²²

These kinds of friendships took on a new and more prominent significance in the twelfth century, a change that is probably connected with "the discovery of the individual" as well as with the growing importance of the Virgin Mary in medieval religious thought. Goscelin's contemporaries, Bishop Gundulf of Rochester and Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, also shared close bonds with women.²³ Gundulf was both a friend of Anselm and a former monk of the monastery of Bec, which Anselm had once led; he founded the first convent in England after the invasion of 1066. Furthermore, Gundulf was spiritually close to a woman, England's Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I.²⁴ Anselm shared a friendship with Countess Ida of Boulogne, as evidenced by his correspondence with her, and Anselm's letters reveal that she was an extremely pious woman. In fact, Goscelin's abbey of Saint Bertin was one of three monasteries that Ida refounded. Anselm also guided a monastic cell of women at Lyon and established a women's priory at Canterbury.²⁵ Sally N. Vaughn argues that Anselm used his correspondence to create models of female behavior, giving special prominence to pious married women.²⁶ The similarity between Goscelin's concern for pious women and Anselm's concern for women's spirituality is striking, and to this we shall return later, since both men supported women while at the same time recognizing their agency. Giles Constable has pointed out the unique nature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries for women's spirituality: "More perhaps than at any other time in Christian history (not excluding the present), male religious leaders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were responsive to the needs of women and welcomed their presence and influence in religious institutions."²⁷ Goscelin and Anselm both serve as

²¹ Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 33–36. See also Venantius Fortunatus, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems*, trans. Judith George (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995).

²² Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 164 (81).

²³ On Anselm's friendships with women see Sally N. Vaughn, "Saint Anselm and His Students Writing about Love: A Theological Foundation for the Rise of Romantic Love in Europe," in this issue.

²⁴ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450–1500* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995), 196.

²⁵ Sally N. Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens of God: A Study of Anselm's Correspondence with Women* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002), 14; Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 36.

²⁶ Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens*, 2–3.

²⁷ Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65.

shining examples of the phenomenon to which Constable refers, but where Anselm esteemed married women, Goscelin held religious women in the highest regard, especially Eve of Wilton.

Still, the emotional tone in Goscelin's treatise is unique. One of the earliest scholars to study Eve of Wilton was André Wilmart, writing in the 1930s, who observed Goscelin's intense language.²⁸ Likewise, C. H. Talbot, editor of the Latin version of the *Liber confortatorius*, notes what he called "inner tumult" in Goscelin's language.²⁹ In his reference to Goscelin (in the appendix to his translation of *The Life of King Edward*, of which Goscelin was likely the author) Frank Barlow characterizes the *Liber* as showing "signs of emotional troubles."³⁰ Brian Patrick McGuire provides two possibilities for the *Liber's* language: either Goscelin had fallen in love with Eve, or he was upset that she failed to confer with him about her move to the Continent.³¹ The latter seems the best explanation. Thomas Hamilton concurs, arguing that "Goscelin is guilty of a certain excess in the manner in which he expresses his sentiments" yet concluding that "the intensity of feeling with which Goscelin expresses himself in the *Liber confortatorius* may reflect bitterness over his expulsion from Sherbourne, apprehension about his future, and disappointment over Eve's failure to confide in him. Thus, it seems much fairer to say that Goscelin's friendship with Eve was simply a warm personal relationship, free from any hint of scandal, which reflected Goscelin's deep appreciation for the spiritual capabilities of women."³² Sharon Elkins, while noting that "the intense emotional tone he employed is unexpected," concludes only that this language reveals Goscelin's "deep affection" for Eve and his disappointment over her departure.³³ Irene van Rossum asks the question: "If . . . Goscelin and Eve had overstepped the bounds of propriety at some point in their shared past, would Goscelin have written the letter that he has?"³⁴ She concludes accordingly that "on the whole, he presents us with no detail that could imply anything that was not part of a perfectly spiritual relationship. There is indeed little reason for us to suspect that there was anything more than that."³⁵

Whatever the nature of Goscelin's feelings, it is also significant that he wrote them down. Mark Williams has argued that the *Liber* "is more than

²⁸ André Wilmart, "Ève et Goscelin," *Revue bénédictine* 50 (1938): 42–83, 60 n. 1.

²⁹ C. H. Talbot, introduction to "The *Liber confortatorius* of Goscelin of St. Bertin," 23.

³⁰ Frank Barlow, appendix C, in *The Life of King Edward*, ed. and trans. Frank Barlow (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1962), 99.

³¹ McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 201–2.

³² Thomas Hamilton, "Goscelin of Canterbury: A Critical Study of His Life, Works, and Accomplishments," 2 vols. (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1973), 166–67.

³³ Sharon K. Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 22.

³⁴ Van Rossum, "*Adest meliori parte*," 209.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

anything else a public document. If there was anything more scandalous than ennobling love between Goscelin and Eve, an unscrupulous Goscelin may have used the *Liber confortatorius* to camouflage rather than to advertise the true nature of his attachment to Eve.³⁶ Indeed, Goscelin was very much aware that others might read the text as it made its way to Eve at Angers or after, and a public acknowledgment of a romantic and/or sexual relationship could have been his downfall.³⁷ Goscelin explicitly wrote that he intended the document to be a “private [*archanum*]” one but that he knew that others besides Eve would surely see it: “If by chance, this pilgrim letter, which I give to the fickle winds but commend to God, falls into the hands of others, I entreat that it should be returned to her to whom alone it stands destined, and let no one snatch away in advance what is not made for them.” In the end he says: “But whatever happens, I have preferred to be made an object of mockery by the superciliousness of strangers than to neglect what is owed to affection [*caritati*].”³⁸

Because the *Liber* is as much, if not more, about Goscelin as it is about Eve, it is easy for her to get lost among Goscelin’s many lamentations, exhortations, and spiritual lessons. Nevertheless, we can determine a fair bit about Eve’s life from the *Liber*. We know that she was given to Wilton nunnery when she was a child as an oblate. She came from an aristocratic family and was born in England to a Lotharingian mother and a Danish father.³⁹ In the *Liber* we get a glimpse of what her life at Wilton was like when Goscelin describes the memories she must have had of her native England: “Your homeland flowing with milk, your parents, sweet as honey, dear relations, crowds of friends, charming letters, the piety of your mother, the diligence of your teacher, the happy company of your sisters.”⁴⁰ Eve went to live with a small cell of female religious recluses at Angers around 1079 or 1080 (after Goscelin was forced to travel between various houses in England).⁴¹ In addition, two other sources shed some light on Eve’s later life. One is a letter that the abbot Geoffrey of Vendôme addressed to her and her later friend and associate, an otherwise little-known monk named Hervé, a letter that Monika Otter asserts means that Eve “must have been a highly respected religious figure.”⁴²

³⁶ Cited in Hayward, “Spiritual Friendship,” 345. Williams’s lecture, given at the Hill Monastic Library in 2000, was subsequently posted online but is unfortunately no longer available.

³⁷ On accusations of sexual misbehavior leading to scandal see Megan McLaughlin, “The Bishop in the Bedroom: Witnessing Episcopal Sexuality in an Age of Reform,” in this issue.

³⁸ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 101–2 (26). The Latin word *archanum* might also be translated as “intimate” or “personal.”

³⁹ Hollis, introduction, 2; Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 117.

⁴⁰ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 113 (37).

⁴¹ Otter, introduction, 6.

⁴² Ibid.; Geoffrey of Vendôme, Epistula (hereafter Ep.) 48, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina* (hereafter PL), ed. Jean-Paul Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Migne, 1844–64), 157, cols. 184–86. Geoffrey addressed the letter to “the servant and handmaid of God, the recluses Hervé and Eve.”

A biographical poem that Hilary of Orléans composed upon Eve's death is the other source that provides further insight into her life. The poem also describes the relationship between Eve and Hervé. To understand it a bit of background is necessary. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries an early Christian tradition called syneisactism reemerged in western Europe. Under syneisactism a man and woman lived together and perhaps shared a bed. Giles Constable calls this arrangement "a chaste and spiritual marriage that was considered both a test of chastity and, perhaps more importantly, a surmounting and denial of sexuality."⁴³ Rader has investigated the early practice in more detail: "One can conjecture," she concludes, "that certain Christians chose a type of spiritual relationship in which a male and female celibate lived together as brother and sister for mutual support and edification."⁴⁴ Eve and Hervé appear to have been practicing this lifestyle, and Hilary defended their cohabitation in his poem:

Eve had lived there for a long time with Hervé her companion—
 Anyone who hears these things that I say should not feel disturbed.
 Brother, do not be mistrustful or shun this:
 Not in the world, but in Christ was their love.⁴⁵

The details of Goscelin's life can also be fairly confidently reconstructed. He apparently came to England from Flanders around 1058 or possibly later, and there he joined the retinue of Bishop Hermann of Ramsbury. Hermann, who was born in Lotharingia, was one of a number of non-English bishops to gain influence in eleventh-century England. He was also Eve of Wilton's uncle and a friend of Lanfranc, later the archbishop of Canterbury. Because his see was rather poor, in 1055 Hermann requested a transfer to that of Malmesbury. With Queen Edith's help he was relocated, but the monks at Malmesbury expressed such great displeasure at the decision that Hermann's appointment was revoked three days later. He left England for Saint Bertin, where he became a monk and stayed for three years and where he presumably met Goscelin. In 1058 Hermann was asked to return to England when the bishop of Sherborne died, and although the medieval historian William of Malmesbury reported that the bishop brought Goscelin with him, the modern scholar C. H. Talbot points out that Goscelin's own writings reveal that Hermann was already established in England when he asked Goscelin to join him and serve as his secretary.⁴⁶

⁴³ Constable, *The Reformation*, 68.

⁴⁴ Rader, *Breaking Boundaries*, 63.

⁴⁵ Hilary of Orléans, *Hilarii versus et ludi*, ed. John Bernard Fuller (New York: Henry Holt, 1929), 50: "Ibi vixit Eve diu cum Herveo socio— / Qui hec audis, ad hanc vocum te turbare senco. / Fuge, frater, suspicari nec sit hic suspicio: / Non in mundo, sed in Christo fuit hec dilectio."

⁴⁶ Talbot, introduction, 1–5; Hollis, introduction, 2; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regnum Anglorum*, 4.342, in *Oxford Medieval Texts*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 1:592–93.

In the *Liber confortatorius* Goscelin himself describes the poor housing to which he was delivered upon his arrival: "When I first came to the bishop at Pottern or Canning as a very young man, when you were only a little girl, the lodging assigned to me was so deserted, dirty, filthy and fetid that it seemed to be a wallowing-place for pigs rather than a habitation of men."⁴⁷ According to his own recollections, then, Goscelin arrived in England *after* Hermann. Hamilton has further suggested that Goscelin's arrival may have been as late as September 1065, based on Goscelin's reference to his and Eve's attendance at the dedication of Queen Edith's church at Wilton.⁴⁸ At any rate, he would have been in his early twenties.

The date is important because it was shortly after he came to England that Goscelin met the young Eve and developed a particular affection for her after observing her during the ceremony in which she formally took the monastic habit. He described their meeting and his subsequent admiration for her at the beginning of his *Liber* in eloquent and loving terms:

I won you over with talk, but you conquered me with kindness. You gave me books that I wished for; you praised my Bertin with great eagerness; you hastened to perform all the duties of love. To this point, however, I was fond of you moderately and only outwardly in the good hope of Christ. But when indeed among fourteen maidens, with candles shining like stars and heavenly torches, you approached your marriage with God nervously and second to last, and with a thronging crowd waiting with solemn expectancy, you put on the pledge of divine faith with your holy clothes, I was struck more deeply in my heart by your humble habit, your trembling approach, your face, blushing as if from the fiery throne of God sitting above the cherubim, wisely anxious.⁴⁹

He asserted that his love grew during the religious festivities surrounding the aforementioned church dedication, writing: "The darts of love were fixed deeper and stuck fast; my wounded heart languished."⁵⁰ While these words appear to the modern eye much like a love letter, Goscelin's intentions should not be confused with romantic feelings; rather, he was describing a spiritual connection.

⁴⁷ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 188 (102).

⁴⁸ Hamilton, "Goscelin of Canterbury," 143.

⁴⁹ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 102 (28): "Ego te alloquiis, tu me uicisti beneficiis. Libros optatos dedisti, Bertinum nostrum affectuosissime extulisti, omnia caritatis officia excurristi. Adhuc tamen te tolerabiliter forinsecus tantum in spe bona Christi dilexi. Vbi uero inter quattuordecim uirgines, coruscantibus cereis tanquam syderibus et lampadibus supernis, ad dominicas nuptias trepida et penultima accessisti ac, populosa caterua sollemniter expectante, pignus fidei diuine cum sacrata ueste induisti, ille humilis habitus, ille tremebundus accessus, ille suffusus uultus, tanquam ab igneo throno Dei sedentis super cherubim, sapienter metuentis."

⁵⁰ Ibid., 104 (29): "Heserunt altius infixata spicula, caritatis languebant uulnerata precordia."

Their initial meeting was followed by correspondence between the two. Goscelin told of the letters they exchanged during this period, although unfortunately these letters have not been preserved.⁵¹ Around 1066 or 1067 Goscelin probably composed the *Vita Edwardi regis* under the patronage of Queen Edith.⁵² Not much is known about Goscelin's life in this period, though, aside from the fact that he fell out of favor after Bishop Hermann's death in 1078 and so had to leave the diocese upon the accession of Osmund to the bishopric of Salisbury.⁵³ He apparently wandered around England, writing multiple saints' lives, many of women, before he settled at the monastery of Saint Augustine at Canterbury.⁵⁴ In the *Liber* he identified the period after Hermann's death as a time of sadness for both himself and Eve and referred to his subsequent disfavor when he wrote: "After the death of our father [presumably Hermann], I assuaged our shared orphanhood with you more frequently, until with the rise of a king who did not know Joseph, by serpent envy and a stepfather's barbarity your devoted one was compelled to wander a long way."⁵⁵ Goscelin wrote the *Liber* between 1082 and 1083 at a place he called "Burgis" that was either Bury Saint Edmund's or Peterborough.⁵⁶

Goscelin was undoubtedly well educated, and he cited numerous classical authors in the *Liber confortatorius*, including Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Sallust, and Seneca the Younger, although the breadth of his knowledge is something at which we can merely speculate.⁵⁷ In his text he also instructed Eve to read the works of Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory. He mentioned Augustine's *Confessions* and *City of God* by name, and he also encouraged her to read the lives of the church fathers, specifically the *Life of Saint Antony*. He suggested that she read Eusebius's *Church History* as well as Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* among other texts.⁵⁸ Not only does this list say something about Goscelin's intellect, but it also reveals some of the

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Talbot, introduction, 6, citing R. W. Southern, "The First Life of Edward the Confessor," *English Historical Review* 58 (1943): 386. See also Barlow, who suggests that Goscelin is "a strong claimant to the authorship on the anonymous work" (introduction to *The Life of King Edward*, xlviii).

⁵³ Talbot notes that Hermann was "Bishop of Ramsbury, later of Sherborne and Salisbury" (introduction, 3). According to Hermann's entry in *Fasti ecclesiae anglicanae 1066–1300*, the see was approved for transfer to Salisbury (Old Sarum) at the council of London (held 1074–75). Available online at <http://british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=34219>.

⁵⁴ Talbot, introduction, 7.

⁵⁵ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 104 (29). Talbot notes that "the king" to whom this quotation refers was Osmund, whom Lanfranc consecrated in 1078 (introduction, 29 n. 14).

⁵⁶ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 127; Talbot believes that it was Peterborough (introduction, 8).

⁵⁷ W. R. Barnes, "Goscelin's Greeks and Romans," in Hollis et al., *Writing the Wilton Women*, 401–2. Stephanie Hollis (afterword to *ibid.*, 421) reminds us that Goscelin's knowledge of these texts may not have come from firsthand reading of them but instead from excerpts recopied and read during his training in rhetoric.

⁵⁸ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 163.

author's own expectations of Eve: that she was clearly well educated and, moreover, that Goscelin respected her abilities enough to recommend these texts to her. At the same time, Goscelin's learning encouraged him to see his relationship with Eve within a historical and spiritual context. He referred to Jerome's letters on several occasions in the *Liber* and then invited Eve to model herself on Jerome's female friends, Paula and Eustochium.⁵⁹

Of course, it is the text of the *Liber confortatorius* itself that provides the clearest understanding of the relationship between Goscelin and Eve. Writing in verse, Goscelin described its organization and purpose in his prologue: "The first book expresses complaints and consolations. Wars are waged with desires and won by the second. The third expels discontent with impassioned prayers. From earthly things the fourth seeks the stars in a four-horse chariot."⁶⁰ In other words, in the first book Goscelin chastised both Eve and himself for his distress over her choice to seek solitude at Angers. In the second book he encouraged Eve to battle her desires and overcome them, emphasizing the theme of martyrdom as an *exemplum*. In book 3 Goscelin praised the solitary life and provided Eve with numerous examples of hermits and contemplatives in order to inspire her. He further emphasized prayer, meditation, and reading as the ideals of the eremitical lifestyle. In book 4 he constructed a long exposition on humility as the highest of all virtues and emphasized the glory of martyrdom once again. He ended his treatise with an apocalyptic description and an explanation of the glorious eternal life that awaits the faithful. It is the first book, then, that concerns us most.

Goscelin espoused a plethora of complaints and lamentations in his first book. He appeared torn between his hurt feelings over Eve's choice to leave, in particular, without bidding him farewell and his sense of esteem for the eremitical life and its rejection of all things worldly. Thus, the first book illuminates Goscelin's feelings about absent friendship, which are both complex and insightful. Ultimately, he viewed pain as the purpose of distant friendship because the suffering friends would be rewarded for their sacrifice in paradise.⁶¹ Friendship is therefore a medium through which one can find salvation. Goscelin was not the first to write in this vein. Cicero's *Laelius de amicitia* (Laelius on Friendship) was also concerned with distant friendship.⁶² His text was widely read during the Middle Ages. Giles Constable notes that during the eleventh and twelfth centuries Cicero's work inspired a cult of friendship that led to the exchange of letters of friendship among educated individuals, part of a "golden age of medieval

⁵⁹ Ibid., 164 (81).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 99 (26): "Primus agit questus et consolamina thomus. Pella cum demonibus mouet euincitque secundus. Tertius ignitis pellit fastidia uotis. Edictis sumptis quartus petit astra quadrigus."

⁶¹ Ibid., 118.

⁶² Carolinne White, "Friendship in Absence: Some Patristic Views," in *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 70–75.

epistolography.”⁶³ Patristic literature was also concerned with the dilemma presented by distant friendship. Carolinne White has shown, however, that early Christians and pagans alike believed that friendship could persevere by remembering the friend and through letters, which is precisely what Goscelin also intended.⁶⁴

Goscelin, then, followed a long tradition of consoling oneself through composition and exchange. Throughout the first book of the *Liber* we see Goscelin’s humanity as he grapples with the notion of distant friendship and eventually comes to terms with this new dimension of his relationship with Eve. Not only is the *Liber* a dialogue with Eve in which Goscelin anticipates her thoughts, feelings, and reactions, but it is also a dialogue with himself. Hayward has observed that Goscelin felt betrayed that Eve had left without consulting him and concludes that earlier writers “seem to emphasize the value of the spiritual presence of friends who have been parted and find it more consoling than Goscelin does.”⁶⁵ Goscelin did, in fact, suggest that Eve remained a spiritual presence to him, although it only brought him mediocre comfort. The *Liber* is thus perhaps more Goscelin’s way of saying good-bye to Eve, a good-bye that he missed out on when she left for Angers. As he saw it, her new lifestyle meant that she had to close herself off from the world around her. Her new life as an anchorite caused Goscelin pain, but this pain served a purpose because to the medieval mind suffering on earth was the “imitation of Christ [*imitatio Christi*]” and would therefore lead one to eternal joy.

At the conclusion of book 1 Goscelin suggested that he and Eve could remain spiritually in each other’s presence through a series of descriptions that showed how friends often had visions of one another. Visionary experience was often a key component of medieval spiritual friendship. For example, Christina of Markyate’s *vita* often described visions that she had of Abbot Geoffrey of Saint Albans, and these visions served to provide Christina with special knowledge that she could then share with Geoffrey so as to strengthen their bond of friendship.⁶⁶ Goscelin provided hopeful evidence that friends could remain connected in such a way, recounting the legend that Saint Ambrose fell asleep during mass in Milan and found himself present at the funeral for Saint Martin of Tours. Goscelin then explained how these appearances happened: “Therefore no intervening region of country separates from his friend [*amico*] one who trusts in the omnipotent God, who makes all things present. Anyone who has a pure soul for seeing God sees further than the whole world.” Still, Goscelin

⁶³ Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1976), 32.

⁶⁴ White, “Friendship in Absence,” 72.

⁶⁵ Hayward, “Spiritual Friendship,” 348.

⁶⁶ *The Life of Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth Century Recluse*, ed. and trans. C. H. Talbot (1959; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 134–39.

qualified this statement by adding, "But as I have noted above, impatience knows no bounds and does not sustain longing."⁶⁷ Then he asked Eve not to forget him and ended by explaining to her how she could always be in his presence: "But if ever the thought returns to you and asks thus 'what is he, who was once dear, doing now?,' this page will always respond with this one verb in the active rather than the passive voice: he sighs [*suspirat*]. And whenever you seek him, you will find him here: you will either see him or hear him whispering with you here."⁶⁸

In order to understand Goscelin's meaning, we must go back to the beginning of the first book, where he also noted that the written word can link friends when he asked Eve to "accept this consolation as if I were present [*consolationem quasi presentis . . . accipe*]."⁶⁹ He also described how the pleasing scent of Eve's "ways, places, and studies" have not been "lost even in a distant land."⁷⁰ Furthermore, he recommended to Eve to imagine him *as if* he were physically present.⁷¹ Yet through most of book I, until he reached his resolution in the concluding paragraphs, Goscelin was filled with anguish. He referred to himself as "one who is speaking to you as if from a bed of pain [*quasi de lectulo doloris affantem attende*]," wrote of his "pitiable soul [*miserabilem animam*]," and described himself as "shipwrecked [*ego fluctuo*]."⁷² Moreover, he struggled with his role as Eve's teacher and spiritual guide, for he asked how he might give her comfort when he could not even comfort himself.⁷³

Angrily, he rebuked Eve for having left England without bidding him farewell and provided examples of those whom he called "begetters of wounded love [*uulnerate caritatis genitores*]," like Saint Benedict and Saint Martin, who told their friends good-bye before departing or dying so as to instill patience in those whom they abandoned. Christ, or as Goscelin calls Him, that "author of all love [*totius dilectionis auctor*]," likewise bid farewell to those he left behind.⁷⁴ Goscelin equated Eve's departure with death. This analogy served in part to explain his despair, which is clearly articulated in the following address: "Indeed you concealed all your counsels from such a special soul as if from an enemy, and when it was never imagining such pain you struck it with your precipitous and unannounced flight, assuredly in

⁶⁷ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 121 (45): "Sed ut memorauī supra, impatientia nescit modum, et desiderium non sustinet."

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 122 (45): "Si quando autem reuersa ad te cogitatio ita interrogauerit, 'ille quondam carus quid nunc facit?', hec semper pagina hoc uno uerbo actiuo pro passiuo respondebit: Suspirat. Vbi cumque illum queres, hic inuenies, hic tecum susurrantem uel uidebis uel audies."

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 102 (27).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 104 (29): "Omnis uia tua et loca et studia ex Domini gratia nectar mihi redolebat et balsama. Longum est exequi cuncta, nec amittit longinqua terra, nec tua indiget memoria."

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 110 (34).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 102 (27), 108 (33), 110 (35).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 110 (35).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 105 (30).

order that unexpected arrows would strike more destructively than foreseen ones, lest any healing for the wound remain. If God is love, it would have seemed more holy that he be approached by one who demonstrated love, rather than one who rejected it.” He even went so far as to tell Eve that she was “judged to have sinned against love [*unde, estimaris in caritatem peccasse*].”⁷⁵ Since God was love, as Goscelin noted, it seems to have been his way of accusing Eve of having sinned against God. Furthermore, he quoted a letter by Jerome that suggests that love cannot be measured, that love’s impatience is also unbounded, and that this impatience cannot bear the desire that loss causes.⁷⁶ He was not upset that she had chosen to live as a recluse, he maintained, for he praised this lifestyle and even considered it for himself.⁷⁷ He could come to terms with it, but the lack of a proper good-bye left a deep wound. He hoped that Eve would find Christ by remaining in the cloister so that he would not be forced to miss her and also acknowledged his belief that her solitary life was ordained by God and would allow her to gain salvation.⁷⁸ So it was only the abruptness of Eve’s departure that so upset him. Had she notified him that she was leaving England, he could have fortified his heart for the coming loss.

Understanding the way in which Goscelin defined and viewed love is central to comprehending his anguish and his thoughts about distant friendship. Foremost, God is an active agent in friendship. Indeed, he is the intermediary who links two people in friendship. Goscelin highlighted this belief at the very beginning of the *Liber*: in his prologue he wrote that his book was “sealed with Christ as intermediary [*Christo medio signatum*].”⁷⁹ As we have seen, Goscelin quoted the biblical “God is love” when criticizing Eve’s sudden departure. Goscelin expanded upon this connection: “Therefore bring it about, sweetest one, that the Lord may be between you and me, and may bind us together in himself in our hearts, whom for the time being he has separated in body.” Quoting scripture again, he wrote: “He [Jesus] said: ‘Where there are two or three gathered in my name, I am there in their midst. And if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my father.’ The Lord alone with the Father wishes also that we too shall be one in him.”⁸⁰ He called Christ the “mediator himself [*ipso mediatore*]”

⁷⁵ Ibid., 105 (29–30): “Immo omnia consilia tua tam unice anime quasi hosti obserasti, nec unquam cogitantem tantos dolores precipitata et ignorata fuga percussisti, uidelicet ne non interniciosius ferirent insperata iacula quam preuisa, ne qua plage superesset medela. Si Deus caritas est, san(c)tius uideretur adiri commendata quam contempta caritate. Nam qui totam legem seruauerit, offenderit autem in uno, hoc est in caritate, attende quid sequatur.”

⁷⁶ Ibid., 107 (31); Jerome, Ep. 46.1, *PL* 22:483.

⁷⁷ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 109 (34). Goscelin told Eve that he often “sighed” for a cell such as the one in which she lived.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 112 (36).

⁷⁹ Ibid., 99 (26).

⁸⁰ Ibid., 110 (34); Matthew 18:19–20.

and the “root of all love [*radix totius dilectionis*].”⁸¹ He wrote of the love the apostles had for one another through their association with Christ and asserted that they were “fused into one heart and soul [*cor unum animam conflati*].”⁸²

He also described a pagan friendship, which he concluded “would have been blessed if it had had Christ in the middle [*si Christum habuisset medium*], without whom all goodness is proved bad and all piety impious.”⁸³ This concept of God as the medium through which friends remain connected also appeared in his discussion of the visions that permitted friends to appear to one another as described above. According to Goscelin, such visions were a gift from God and were granted because of the purity of one’s soul.⁸⁴ He went on to state that love “recognized neither order nor moderation”—it was “an act of will” and did not “speak so much in an orderly way as in a passionate way.”⁸⁵ One cannot control God, and if love is God, then one cannot control love. Thus, Goscelin justified his emotional language of desire and despair. He protected himself from accusations of scandal by arguing that his love for Eve was divinely inspired and for that very reason beyond his control, while at the same time he explained the basis for his sorrow and the vehemence of his condemnation of Eve’s neglect of him.

Goscelin was able to resolve his anguished feelings, but his ability to do so was directly related to Eve’s gender. Goscelin was Eve’s tutor, but he also learned from her, and these twin themes coexist throughout the *Liber*. Goscelin offered Eve a treasury of advice on how to live a satisfactory solitary life. Nonetheless, he continuously described their friendship with maternal metaphors. He used this imagery to explain his role as Eve’s spiritual teacher and guide but also inverted the metaphor by applying the maternal role to Eve and thus changing the dynamic of their relationship. The use of maternal imagery is not unusual, although Goscelin does pre-date many of the best-known theologians and mystics of the high and late Middle Ages who used this kind of rhetoric. Indeed, as van Rossum has noted about this imagery, “Goscelin gave evidence of an original attitude towards female spirituality.”⁸⁶

Caroline Walker Bynum explains this phenomenon but does not mention Goscelin. Instead, Bynum focuses on the maternal image among mostly twelfth-century Cistercians, particularly Bernard of Clairvaux, although she does discuss a few eleventh-century writers such as William of Saint

⁸¹ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 110 (34), 119 (43).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 119 (43).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 120 (44).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 110 (34–35): “ipsa caritas omnia dicere flagrans, nescit seruare ordinem, nescit modum . . . quia nec dilectio tam moderamine agitur quam uoluntate, nec tam composite loquitur quam affectuose.”

⁸⁶ Van Rossum, “*Adest meliori parte*,” 146.

Thierry.⁸⁷ Bynum writes: "Alongside the theory of women as inferior, we find an increasing presence in later medieval literature of images taken from uniquely female experiences (childbearing, nursing, female sexual surrender or ecstasy), of female characteristics or experiences used to describe males, and of actual female figures." Especially in the twelfth century, as Bynum notes, both the cult of the Virgin and devotion to the Magdalene grew significantly and made frequent use of this maternal imagery.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, veneration of the Virgin and the Magdalene was already beginning to acquire substantial significance in Goscelin's time, as seen in his contemporaries, including Anselm of Canterbury and Bishop Gundulf of Rochester.⁸⁹

In his use of maternal imagery, then, Goscelin is part of a new trend that valued the power of female spirituality. Yet he applied maternal metaphors as often to himself as to Eve. He warned Eve that she should "only carry out very carefully the advice that at the time I was pouring into your ears as if I were giving birth."⁹⁰ He also asked Eve "never to forget in Christ the labor pangs and birthing of Goscelin."⁹¹ Quoting Isaiah, he informed her that he wants to comfort her in the same way that a mother might comfort her sons and later wrote: "I gave birth to you and loved you [*et ad hoc peperit te ac dilexit*]."⁹² At the very end of book 4 he called Eve "O sweet offspring of my soul [*o dulcis partus anim[a]e me[a]e*]."⁹³ Even so, Goscelin also inverted this maternal imagery. In a reference to Augustine's *Confessions* he described how Monica's tears saved Augustine from the sins of paganism and heresy and brought him to salvation.⁹⁴

It appears that Goscelin also intended that Eve should play Monica's role as mother and intercessor and save Goscelin from sin. Accordingly, he repeatedly asked Eve to pray for him. In this way she might act as his intercessor, as Monica did for Augustine and as the Virgin could act as intercessor for all Christians. His connection to Eve, Goscelin believed, would result not only in his salvation but also in reunion with Eve in paradise. Medieval women often appeared as intercessors or guides for their male confidants. The twelfth-century Anglo-Saxon anchoress Christina of Markyate acted as

⁸⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 112–15.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 136–37.

⁸⁹ On Anselm see Sally N. Vaughn, "Saint Anselm and His Students Writing about Love: A Theological Foundation for the Rise of Romantic Love," in this issue. On Gundulf see *The Life of Gundulf, Bishop of Rochester*, ed. Rodney Thompson (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1977), 56.

⁹⁰ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 103 (28): "Modo exerce attentissime, quod tunc ut parturiens instillabam auri tu[a]e."

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 121 (45): "postremo ut uiscerum et partus Goscelini in Christo nunquam obliuiscaris."

⁹² *Ibid.*, 111–12 (36); Isaiah 66:13–14.

⁹³ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 206 (116).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 108 (33).

intercessor for four different men who appeared in her *vita*: an Augustinian canon named Sueno, her fellow hermit Roger, an anonymous cleric, and the abbot Geoffrey of Saint Albans.⁹⁵ Anselm also acknowledged Ida of Boulogne as an intercessor in his correspondence with her.⁹⁶

Goscelin expressed the resolution between his feelings of anguish and the existence of distant friendship through symbols of martyrdom in the final section of book 1 under the heading “The hope of the bereft [*spes orbatorum*].” There he described the suffering caused by separation from loved ones and friends as “a part of martyrdom [*pars est martyrii*].” To console Eve he told her: “The more wounds you suffer in loving the true loved ones in God here, the more joy you will feel in meeting them in the eternal mansion.”⁹⁷ He instructed Eve to call on Christ whenever she felt her former affections “rise [*surrexerit*].” Thus, he peacefully concluded that he and Eve had enjoyed their time together but that she must move on: “We have seen each other and talked together enough; we have feasted together also and banqueted; we have participated in ceremonies and taken pleasure sufficiently in the mercy of the Lord, if only anything could be enough for love.” He determined that in the end “by separating us for a brief period, He [God] has called us to inseparable joy.” Even then, Goscelin noted the special nature of their relationship in bittersweet words: “It is rare, moreover, that we have found even two souls filled with a single spirit who have lived together always.”⁹⁸ Goscelin ended this first book of his treatise by drawing on numerous examples of Christians who had been separated in life but were united in heaven. For instance, he recounted the story of the early Christian brother and sister Sabinus and Sabina, who, after being separated in life because of persecution, were reunited in heaven.⁹⁹ Goscelin, it seems, had finally come to terms with the situation in which he unwillingly found himself, and he let Eve go, for the following books are nothing more than instructions for her new life, although they were, of course, given out of love.

Goscelin of Saint Bertin modeled his friendship with Eve of Wilton on a variety of sources. He borrowed from early Christian friendships such as those shared by Jerome, Augustine, and others. He also looked to the Bible for inspiration, especially to John’s assertion that “God is love.” At

⁹⁵ Talbot, *The Life of Christina of Markyate*.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Anselm, Ep. 114, in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1946–61), 3:249.

⁹⁷ Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, 118 (42): “Tanto gaudentius in perhenni mansione ueros dilectos colliges, quanto hic uulneratus in Deo dilexeris.”

⁹⁸ Ibid., 118 (42): “Satis inuicem uidimus, satis collocuti sumus, conuiuati quoque et epulati, sollemnizati et iocundati satis in misericordia Domini, si modo quicquam satis esse posset caritati. . . . [A]c tandem, ad modicum dirimens, ad gaudium inseparabile nos uocauit. . . . Raro denique inuenimus uel duas animas unanimi spiritu afflatas simul perpetuo cohabitauisse.”

⁹⁹ Ibid., 119–20.

the same time, the description of his friendship was deeply personal, and he strove to reconcile his despair regarding the loss of his friend with the need for self-sacrifice. While trying to continue his role as Eve's tutor at a distance by working to provide her with a practical guide for the anchoritic life, he also presented Eve as a pious, intelligent, and capable woman whose personal connection with God might serve as Goscelin's conduit to Christ. The friendship that Goscelin described was "ennobling love" in every sense of Jaeger's definition, and it raised both Eve and Goscelin in spiritual worth. Goscelin's love for Eve, as he expressed it in the *Liber confortatorius*, was neither romantic nor erotic; instead, his passion for Eve was that of a fellow Christian, a teacher, and a mother but, above all, that of a friend.