

Nobler Before God: Virginity and the Pelagian Controversy

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Theology

The consecration of Demetrias as a virgin in 413 CE stands out as a minor yet wholly significant skirmish in the Pelagian controversy. The virgin herself, though of the noble *gens Anicci*, is in many ways a silent character in the conflict because her own words and deeds are not recorded beyond her consecration. In the textual evidence she is acted upon by her would-be spiritual advisors who include the heaviest Christian thinkers of the day: Augustine, Jerome, and the ‘arch-heretic’ Pelagius. The Anicci, while in exile from Italy after Aleric’s sack of Rome in 410 CE, remain one of the most august and influential families in the late empire; they are also the descendants of a senatorial family which dates back to the Republican period. Demetrias herself is the daughter of Anicia Juliana (Juliana) and the consul Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius, and granddaughter of Proba.¹ Her mother and grandmother were the recipients of occasional letters from Augustine as well as a significant work addressed to Juliana from 414: *De bono viduitatis (The Excellence of Widowhood)*.² The three holy men take a serious interest in Demetrias’ decision to reject the married life, but in different ways. While Jerome and Pelagius offer letters of instruction in the interest of preserving her virginity and virtue, Augustine addresses his letter to Juliana and Proba rather than to Demetrias herself.³ The issue of Demetrias’ consecration is also taken up in *The Excellence of Widowhood*

¹ For details on the gens Anicci see A.H.M. Jones, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1: 468. See also the footnote in B.R. Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), II: 30, which claims based on Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a Biography*. (London, 1967) 340, 456, 462, that Proba was Demetrias’ great-aunt. Rees suspects the work done by Brown is correct. See also *The Excellence of Widowhood* §29 where Augustine calls Proba the mother of Juliana. I am not able to make a claim for either side, but the traditional consensus lies with Jones.

² See Augustine *Ep. 130, 131, 150, 188*, and *The Excellence of Widowhood*. I have referred to the English translation of Augustine in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. Ray Kearney, (New York: New City Press, 1999), corrected where appropriate.

³ Pelagius, *Epistula ad sacram Christi virginem Demetriadem* (PL 33:1099-1120), 9.3. The English translation is available in Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters*, 35-70. Jerome, *Ep. 130*, (NPNF 6, 260-272).

partly in relation to Juliana's own decision to commit herself to widowhood.⁴ What is known of Demetrias comes from the texts of her spiritual guides. As such, this literary "Demetrias" has certain qualities evident in her characterization in the extant texts from both Augustine and Pelagius. I shall here examine the functional characterizations of Demetrias in Augustine's *The Excellence of Widowhood*, supplemented by his short letter, and Pelagius' letter *Epistula ad sacram Christi virginem Demetriadem (To Demetrias)*.

While Augustine's letter was addressed to Proba and Juliana and *The Excellence of Widowhood* was sent to the latter, both of these noble women solicited from Pelagius his *To Demetrias* as a means of instruction for the young virgin. Pelagius in fact calls their request a "command" for a "letter sent across the sea."⁵ Demetrias is characterized by both authors as [1] female, [2] noble, and [3] wealthy.⁶ These three attributes are archetypes in themselves but together they form the textual archetype of "Demetrias" similarly situated in the texts of Augustine and Pelagius. The act of being consecrated as a virgin also affects Demetrias, since her virginity is a lens through which her three attributes are refracted and take on new and Christianized meaning. Augustine has the preformed label of *virgo* in mind which he applies to Demetrias and her three-fold worldly attributes. He has already formulated this conception in *Holy Virginity*, his companion piece to *The Excellence of Marriage*, which is based heavily on Augustine's reading of Paul.⁷ Pelagius similarly imposes models on the virgin, though his are less of his own fashioning and pulled more readily from the Hebrew Scriptures and the growing trend of the consecration of virgins which was the counterpoint to the predominately male fourth-century monastic explosion.⁸ Both authors use these constructs to show a Demetrias who, having been consecrated, is now [1] a perfect female, [2] more/most noble, as well as [3] divested yet spiritually wealthy.

Pelagius' letter is important for scholarship both because of its heavy theological content and also because it is one of the few extant pieces that can be

⁴ There are elements from *Ep. 150* which will be incorporated into the analysis of Demetrias because it dates from the same period and family and it will help to flesh-out some of Augustine's thoughts.

⁵ *To Demetrias* 1.2.

⁶ Andrew S. Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity." *Church History* 69, no. 4 (Dec. 2000): 724.

⁷ *Holy Virginity* §11.11, Augustine sees the consecration of a virgin as the beginning of their dedication to God.

⁸ One of the best texts on the early monastic movement remains Dewas Chitty, *The Desert a City*, (New York: SVS Press, 1966). For the consecration of female virgins in the fourth-century see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 259-284.

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confidently attributed to him. The major themes of the work include the characteristic “Pelagian” exhortations on the ability of humans to do the will of God by “the good of nature” but in praxis have failed because of man’s “long habit of doing wrong,” which Augustine would take as a denial of Original Sin and a sign of human pride.⁹ His characterization of Demetrias occurs in his own words and instructions to the virgin and in the Biblical figures which Pelagius provides as paradigms for behavior. In regards to Demetrias’ womanhood, she is already set in a very rigid place in Roman society. As the ‘inferior’ sex in the Greco-Roman mindset, a woman of marriageable age was expected to be married and bear children for the distinct and all-important purpose of preserving the social order.¹⁰ Through the lens of virginity, however, the rules of womanhood are drastically altered. Demetrias is expected to “be more splendidly adorned than anything else” because she is a “bride of Christ.”¹¹ The comparison here is between the adornment and cosmetic preening of a woman for her husband and the same process for Christ as the bridegroom. “Your bridegroom,” he says, “requires no less adornment on your part,” since the whole church is to be perfect just as a virgin is expected to be most perfect.¹² She is to wear “works of holiness,” her “virginal soul,” as necklace, and adorn her ears with scripture, for scripture instructs perfectly.¹³

As the perfectly adorned bride of Christ, Demetrias remains a woman, but in a transcendent sense. She is the perfect female who is neither tempted to sin nor tempts others to sin. Among the Biblical paradigms Pelagius uses for correct behavior are the Patriarchs and examples of righteous men from Genesis, including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, and Joseph.¹⁴ Joseph is especially important because there exists a dichotomy in his story between the continent Joseph and his “master’s wife” who desires him sexually. The Egyptian woman acts as a ‘woman of the world’ by tempting, while Joseph is righteous and a ‘man of God’ by his refusal. Here he defies human frailty by not yielding to sexual desire as well as resisting the proper social behavior of a slave who should submit

⁹ *To Demetrias* 9.1, 8.3; cf. Augustine, *The Excellence of Widowhood* §18.22: “...what one is trying to get people to do is entirely possible for a human being to do by the power of free will alone, without the help of any gift from God (as if the will could be free to perform any good work, if it were not made free as a gift from God).”

¹⁰ Brown, *The Body and Society*, 8-10, 16-17. For the Greek (specifically Attic) roots of these gender roles see J.A.C.T., *The World of Athens: An Introduction to Classical Athenian Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 146-159.

¹¹ *To Demetrias* 24.2; cf. Brown, *The Body and Society*, 270-274.

¹² *To Demetrias* 24.3.

¹³ *To Demetrias* 24.4, 23.2.

¹⁴ *To Demetrias* 5.1-5.

to the will of his owner. For Demetrias, Joseph is an example of her own submission to the will of God rather than that of a husband.

Late in the letter Pelagius creates another male/female dichotomy between Eve and the Apostle Paul. Eve is mentioned first in 25.2, and her role is completed in 25.4. Her first appearance is as a blessed figure because she had a “place in paradise,” just as Demetrias has a place in the Rule of God (*regnum coelorum*—literally “rule of the heavens,” the Matthean phrase for “Rule of God”); however she was then overcome by the devil and could not remain in paradise.¹⁵ Paul, on the other hand, was not “ignorant of [the devil’s] designs,” and could guard against him (2 Cor 2:11). Demetrias should then make use of Paul’s weapons: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Spirit.¹⁶ For this righteousness, Paul is a paradigm of right behavior while Eve is an example of weakness and human patterns of behavior contrary to the will of God. It is worth noting that the only two females mentioned as archetypes are *negative* archetypes offset by the presence of a positive male counterpart. In both cases Demetrias is exhorted to imitate the males as a paradigm of behavior rather than the ‘weaker’ females.

Augustine’s *The Excellence of Widowhood* is not meant for the instruction of Demetrias directly, but it addresses her mother’s vow of widowhood. Augustine offers his previous work, *Holy Virginity* for Demetrias’ education.¹⁷ Even so, his characterizations of Demetrias follow similar lines as those of Pelagius, though without the emphasis on the goodness of humankind and “long habit of doing wrong.”¹⁸ As a female, and a young female just of marriageable age, Demetrias is not even addressed directly in either Augustine’s *The Excellence of Widowhood* or *Ep. 150*, but rather she is spoken to through her guardians. Of course it is worth noting that both Proba and Juliana were patrons of Augustine’s writings (i.e., his spiritual clients). In Augustine’s writings Demetrias is “spoken about” rather than “spoken to” as with Pelagius. This is an oddly ‘worldly’ sign of her femininity, but as a *sanctimoniam virgalem* we must again see the shift in archetypes for Demetrias. Augustine uses nearly the same ‘adornment’ analogy for Demetrias (and her mother) that Pelagius does, speaking of cosmetics for the sake of men as “improper,” but instead lauds Demetrias’ “virginal integrity” as “spiritual beauty.”¹⁹ He implies the same bridal adornment (in spirit) as Pelagius for the

¹⁵ *To Demetrias* 25.2, “Qui invidit Evaē paradisum, quanto magis invidet tibi regnum coelorum?”

¹⁶ Eph 6:10-17; cf. Is 59:17.

¹⁷ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §29.

¹⁸ *To Demetrias* 8.3, “quam longa consuetudo vitiorum...”

¹⁹ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §24. Cf. *To Demetrias* 24.2-4.

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consecrated that would otherwise be devoted to the flesh.²⁰ Augustine also speaks directly of womanhood, comparing virginity to the earthly life of wives and saying:

It is richer and more fruitful happiness not to become big with child but to grow great in mind (*mente grandescere*); not to store milk in the breast but ardor in the heart; not bring forth earth through travail (*non visceribus terram*), but heaven through prayer.²¹

In each case, Augustine suggests Demetrias has chosen the more holy option.²² By foregoing the *traditional* womanly traits, Demetrias is fulfilling her humanity and womanhood in Christ.

The Excellence of Widowhood contains a further inversion of womanhood and the ‘ideal’ of childbirth. Should Demetrias have chosen marriage rather than holy virginity, Augustine postulates that both Juliana and Proba, “would both have been ashamed of being mothers,” thereby associating childbirth and marriage with something not simply undesirable but also *shameful* and countercultural.²³ This option seems anti-female in the Roman mindset since the whole structure of society depends on young women bearing (legitimate male) children early, but Augustine makes Demetrias a woman to be imitated; in fact she is the ideal woman.²⁴ “May many *famulae* imitate their mistress,” Augustine says, imparting his hope that slaves and servants will imitate the noble and also that those of like rank and even higher status might follow Demetrias to virginity to be children of the Rule of God rather than bear children. Strange is the virtual absence of Marian themes in the letter as well as in Pelagius’ epistle. In *The Excellence of Widowhood*, however Augustine does make the comparison, saying “she has become what Mary was” just as Juliana prays like Anna.²⁵ This Marian theme can be seen as corresponding with Augustine’s somewhat disturbing statement about childbirth being shameful: since Mary was a virgin, childbirth for her was in no way shameful, but marriage and the products of marriage involve concupiscence. The meaning of this passage should be viewed as relative to virginity, making childbirth ‘shameful’ only compared to the unparalleled virtue of virginity in

²⁰ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §10.13.

²¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 150.

²² See *The Excellence of Widowhood* §4.6, for the hierarchy of virginity, marriage, and widowhood.

²³ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §24: “If you had seen her [Demetrias] marry... I think that you and she [Proba] would both have been ashamed of being mothers.” See also *Holy Virginity* §9.9.

²⁴ Brown, *The Body and Society*, 7.

²⁵ §16.20, “*facta est illa quod Maria.*”

Augustine's hierarchy.²⁶ Despite the praiseworthy view of this consecrated "womanhood," Augustine retains his Roman view of the household, so even as holy women, Juliana and Demetrias are under the mastery of a male. Juliana is "Christ's widow," while Demetrias is "Christ's virgin"; these titles emphasize the nature of femaleness in late Rome where women are very formally dominated by the *pater familias*.²⁷ For these women the "guardian" role is filled by Christ and not by a living relative.²⁸

In terms of nobility (*nobilis*), Pelagius lauds Demetrias' as both "noble and rich," but also as one who "spurns both nobility and riches."²⁹ He spends very little time on the subject of her earthly lineage and the scant references he does make are qualified by her spiritual nobility as being far greater than her descent from consuls or even her potential to beget consuls.³⁰ Pelagius has made a switch based on his subject's virginity from a 'noble family' to 'noble conduct,' which is preferable in terms of the Rule of God. The honor of her "Anician blood" is not diminished, but fulfilled in "holy conduct," so that she may compete with the best of her family's worldly deeds by her commitment to God and works of mercy.³¹ The honor of her "Anician blood" is in effect "transferred" to her soul because she has overcome vice. Pelagius has treaded lightly here in praising the *gens Anicii* as great in the world since they are his patrons and by virtue of the request for such a letter of instruction, rather close to him in many respects. Though he is acting in the role of the pedagogue to Demetrias, Pelagius is clearly a dependent and wholly subordinate client, at least in terms of worldly existence. The actual client in each letter from Pelagius, Jerome and Augustine plays the spiritual patron.³² It is only after the Anicii left North Africa in 415 that Pelagius began to be named directly by his opponents, which suggests that he was a highly successful 'spiritual patron'

²⁶ See also *The Excellence of Widowhood*, §20.25, for the proper desires that the Christian soul ought to pursue. Augustine also uses Marian themes in *Holy Virginity* §4.4, 5.5, 6.6.

²⁷ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §16.20. cf. Brown, *The Body and Society*, 7-32, 260-262. See also "pater potestas" in the OCD3. Pelagius' use of "bride of Christ" amounts to the same thing, since the husband is *pater familias* and *dominus* to the wife.

²⁸ This is perhaps an echo of the Vestal Virgins who were wards of the state (under the *pontifex maximus*) and the goddess, though admittedly with significant Christian eschatological connotations incongruous with Roman cults. See Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *A Sourcebook*, vol. 2 of *Religions of Rome*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 202-204.

²⁹ *To Demetrias* 1.1.

³⁰ See 1.2: "already noble in the world, she [Demetrias] desires to be even nobler before God..."

³¹ *To Demetrias* 22.1-2, "...et illustre Anicii sanguinis decus, ad animam transferantur."

³² For a further discussion of this role reversal see Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias."

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for the noble family.³³ In a departure from Pelagius' praise of nobility, he also seems to espouse a kind of destruction of earthly hierarchy looking forward to the parousia when such things "are thus to be dissolved."³⁴ The sack of Rome is an example of the fragile state of human order when during such a disaster "(s)lave and noble were on the same footing," leaving only the spiritually noble unafraid of death, just as they will be at the *eschaton* (the end time).³⁵ In the spiritual and eschatological hierarchy Demetrias has a place and she is now part of the spiritual nobility rather than the Roman elite.³⁶

Augustine pays very little mention to the august nobility of the Anicii, and his comments about status are really in regards to Demetrias' "higher choice" of a life of perpetual virginity. He calls her decision to reject marriage as a bride of Christ "more glorious" than were she to produce "manly consuls."³⁷ This statement is, however, qualified by the acknowledgment that their "blood" in itself has a certain merit. Demetrias is "greater and more splendid," than her famous family members, and her "higher choice" actually enhances the status of the Anicii without the aid of any male husband or offspring to win battles or honor. When Augustine commends Juliana for consecrating herself to widowhood, he goes so far as to say that her daughter's virginity outstrips Juliana as well as "makes up for" her marriage and conception of children.³⁸ This strange idea feeds into his tripartite schema where marriage is good, widowhood is better, but virginity is best.³⁹ The aforementioned comparison between Mary and Demetrias and Juliana and Anna also speak to their spiritual nobility since Augustine has set each of them up in terms of New Testament archetypes of piety and obedience.⁴⁰ In *Ep. 150*, Augustine affirms the newness of Demetrias' nature when he calls her "noble by birth, more noble by sanctity," putting her into the upper echelon of a hierarchy of holiness, but without demolishing the importance of her earthly lineage as Pelagius does. He instead identifies Demetrias as having an active role in God's plan for

³³ Peter Brown, "Patrons of Pelagius: the Roman Aristocracy between East and West." *Journal of Theological Studies* 21.1 (April 1970): 65. Peter Brown suggests that the *Anicii* protected Pelagius from direct attack while they were in exile from Rome.

³⁴ *To Demetrias* 30.1.

³⁵ *To Demetrias* 30.1-2.

³⁶ There is no sense here that Pelagius saw the earthly order as representative of the Heavenly taxis, as was most clear in the East during the fifth century. For further study see Robert Taft, S.J., *Through their own Eyes: Liturgy as the Byzantines saw it*, (Berkley, CA: InterOrthodox Press, 2006).

³⁷ "more glorious"- "*incomparabiliter gloriosius*."

³⁸ *The Excellence of Widowhood*, §8.11, "*Gratias autem Domino, quoniam peperisti quod esse noluisti et virginitas prolis tuae compensavit dispendium virginitatis tuae.*"

³⁹ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §4.6.

⁴⁰ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §16.20, Lk 1:38, 2:36-38.

final judgment and a place in Salvation History because she is entitled to sing “the hymn that the Apocalypse tells us only virgins can sing” at the *eschaton*.⁴¹

As an heiress to the *gens Anicii*, the virgin is also quite wealthy in a world where the disparity between rich and poor seems reminiscent of the chasm between the torment of the rich man and Lazarus at the bosom of Abraham (Lk 16:19-31).⁴² Pelagius again changes the paradigm for Demetrias’ wealth from a wealthy noble to a divested virgin. For her, “(l)et honors be rejected, riches despised,” for they are transitory like a “shadow” or an “insubstantial dream.”⁴³ Pelagius goes so far as to ask that the virgin withdraw even from the corporeal works of mercy because her ability to do them is derived from her vast wealth (Mt 25:40). These tasks are to be left to her grandmother and mother on her behalf so that she might devote “all your zeal and care to the ordering of [her] way of life,” of contemplation, abstinence, fasting, and study of the scriptures. In this manner Demetrias will “cease to feel [herself] a rich woman.”⁴⁴ By being physically divested, or at least humble as a virgin rather than the wife of a man with high standing on the *cursus honorum*, she is made an ascetic martyr. As a result, for Pelagius she will even become the greatest member of her family without gaining any further wealth except for the Rule of God.⁴⁵

Augustine’s discussion of wealth is more intimately coupled with Demetrias’ and her family’s nobility. It is not only a “more fruitful happiness,” to be a virgin than to marry, but it is also “richer” (*überior*), though this word also plays into themes of fertility and even childrearing.⁴⁶ The type of wealth that Demetrias possesses is imbedded in her virtue as a woman to be imitated as well as the very idea that she would be automatically imitated because of her high rank in society by those of lower, similar, and higher rank.⁴⁷ *The Excellence of Widowhood* contains a more direct exhortation on wealth, but predictably it is negative. “(L)ove of riches must be extinguished,” Augustine tells Juliana, who along with her daughter is wealthy in the world, but with the vows of widowhood and poverty

⁴¹ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §24; cf. Rev 14:4-5, 15:2-5.

⁴² James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 188-193

⁴³ *To Demetrias* 29.

⁴⁴ *To Demetrias* 22.1.

⁴⁵ *To Demetrias* 14.1.

⁴⁶ See F.P. Leverett, *Latin Lexicon*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Peter Reilly Company, 1931), s.v. “*über, überis*: adj., rich (in something), fruitful, copious.” The noun form, *über, überis*: a teat, udder, the breast itself; from the Greek οὐθαρ - cf. LSJ, *udder, breast*. I see this as a play on words which was lost in translation.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *Ep.* 150.

come a devotion to be divested of worldliness.⁴⁸ To extinguish “love of riches,” also indicates rather clearly the existential shift that Augustine wants to illustrate to Juliana about her daughter and herself. They have both left the realm of Rome and Roman North Africa. They ought not to see themselves as exiles from the civilized world of Rome, but instead inhabitants of the Rule of God, at least contingent on their remaining faithful to their respective vows.⁴⁹ Augustine’s previous hope that slaves and other nobles will imitate Demetrias, not out of envy for the “lofty rank” of the Anicii, but out of want for similar holiness. Even this hope speaks to the wealth and influence of the *gens Anicii* in two ways; there is the obvious worldly influence which would posit their example as a powerful one in the ancient world, and also the massive spiritual gains in holiness which Demetrias has availed herself and her family. That holiness is its own archetype of a ‘shining light’ set on the hill of nobility for all people to see and seek.⁵⁰ In contrast to Pelagius’ clearer distinctions between worldly and holy paradigms, Augustine sees merit in combining the two to serve a greater purpose of fulfilling “the pre-ordained number of saints.”⁵¹

The essence of Demetrias’ womanhood, as it played out in the pens of her most famous spiritual patrons, lies in the spiritual realm and has a distinctly eschatological character. Her attributes as [1] a perfect female, [2] more/most noble, and [3] divested yet spiritually wealthy are clearly delineated in both Augustine and Pelagius’ writings. [1] As a female committed to virginity, Demetrias can focus on spiritual development of her mind and soul rather than attend to a husband or children. Augustine’s inversion of womanhood shows her clearly as an *ideal woman* without the basic Greco-Roman ideal of the obedient and fertile wife. Pelagius’ ‘transcendent woman’ is a Demetrias who can surpass the weakness of her gender by means of commitment to Christ. With Paul as the example, Demetrias’ future behavior can be ‘manly’ and righteous giving her an enhanced social position on par with men (though perhaps only in the Rule of God). [2] The virgin’s nobility, after her consecration, is also directly related to her status in the world, but holds ‘virginity’ over ‘society.’ Her ‘spiritual nobility’ gives her a humble position which results in exultation in the Rule of God. Augustine considers her a credit to her family, perhaps as one who celebrates a triumph through God’s victory rather than a victory over men. [3] Demetrias is therefore not to act like a wealthy person, but to exercise fasting, prayer, and study of Scripture, as well as remain single. This is not out of need or necessity, but out of

⁴⁸ *The Excellence of Widowhood*, §21.26. Cf. *To Demetrias* 28, “[Demetrias] will receive the kingdom of the heavens and will abide with Christ forever.”

⁴⁹ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §11.14.

⁵⁰ Mt 5:14-16.

⁵¹ *The Excellence of Widowhood* §23.28

her choice of holy virginity since the Anicci could certainly provide Demetrias with a substantial dowry and she should have little trouble finding a high-ranking husband. Forgoing the dowry and betrothal separates her from the Senatorial elite and marks her family as distinctly Christian during a period of turmoil within living memory of Symmachus' petition to Valentinian II for the restoration of 'pagan' rites asking, "Who is so friendly with the barbarians as not to require an Altar of Victory?"⁵²

Overall, these two lines of commentary from Augustine and Pelagius provide a snapshot of a very important stage in the life of a Roman woman of Senatorial rank. They are also indicative of how Christian values are meant to change worldly paradigms of behavior where virginity, having always been prized for fertility, is now only ideal when perpetuated. Christ is the ultimate patron and *dominus* for Demetrias whose consecration marks a significant shift in how she is perceived and indeed ought to perceive the world. These are writings which, though minor in that they pertain to the ascetic instruction of a teenage girl, are also important since they represent the opening salvos in the Pelagian controversy which would plague Augustine in some form for the rest of his life. With so much scholarship already completed on where Augustine and Pelagius were at odds theologically it is curious to see how the two seemed to harmonize over the results of Demetrias' consecration. The two authors, who were from different cultural (though both Roman), and theological (though still catholic) backgrounds, came to use essentially the same terms for womanhood and the meaning of a sanctified life on earth, though where the ability and desire for such a pious life originated is, for each, another matter entirely.

⁵² "Ambrose: Dispute with Symmachus," *Medieval Sourcebook*, 1996, <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/ambrose-sym.html>> (29 January 2009).

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