Fragmentation and Redemption

Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion

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female flesh was also an integral component of female person. Created and redeemed by God, it was a means of encounter with him. Healed and elevated by grace, it was destined for glory at the Last Judgment. And in that Judgment it rose as female. Although medieval theologians did not fully understand why, they were convinced that God's creation was more perfect in two sexes than in one.

VII

Material Continuity, Personal Survival and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in Its Medieval and Modern Contexts

To twentieth-century non-Christians and Christians alike, no tenet of Christianity has seemed more improbable – indeed, incredible – than the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.[1] Easter sermons in both mainline Protestant and Catholic churches tend to allegorize the doctrine as a parable of the rebirth of the soul or draw on I Corinthians 15 to emphasize the radical change "body" must undergo when, "sown corruptible," it rises "incorruptible." Nonetheless, Christian preachers and theologians from Tertullian to the seventeenth-century divines asserted that God will reassemble the decayed and fragmented corpses of human beings at the end of time and grant to them eternal life and incorruptibility. In this essay I wish to take seriously, rather than explain away, the medieval discussion of bodily resurrection. In doing so, I shall reinterpret a moment in the history of medieval philosophy and locate that moment in its context in religious practice. I shall also suggest that not only the basic concerns of the medieval discussion, but even the materialistic details are relevant to modern problems in ways present-day preachers, believers and skeptics have not understood.

The Medieval Discussion of Bodily Resurrection

Through the doctrinal controversies of the second to fifth centuries C.E., the resurrection of the body was firmly established as an element of the Christian faith.[2] Medieval councils confirmed this. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 required Cathars and other heretics to assent to the proposition that "all rise again with their own individual bodies, that is, the bodies which they now wear..."; and the Second Council of Lyon in 1274 reaffirmed the requirement.[3] Conservative theologians charged with curtailing the more dangerous speculations of the university teachers of their day included among the propositions they condemned in 1277 the idea "that the corrupted body does not return one and the same, that is, does not rise numerically the same."[4] If one argues, as scholars have recently done, that patristic and medieval polemics against heresy were less a quarrel with a clearly existent "other," than a process by which Christians defined themselves through creation of the "other," then one must say that theologians accorded importance, in eschatology, to the doctrine of resurrection not because it was under attack, but because they themselves chose to do so.[5]

In certain ways, eschatology sat uncomfortably among other tenets of scholastic theology. Consideration of "last things" was tacked on at the end of Peter Lombard's basic textbook, the *Four Books of Sentences*, coming rather incongruously after the discussion of marriage. Thus, some later commentators (for example, Giles of Rome) never reached the issue when they composed their Sentence commentaries. Some twelfth-century theologians (for example, Robert of Melun) never considered "final things"; others (for example, Honorius Augustodunensis) raised such issues but in ways that suggest that they did not find the doctrine of bodily resurrection completely compatible with other theological tenets.[6] Thomas Aquinas did not treat eschatology

in detail in the *Summa theologiae*; and modern theologians must turn to the *Supplementum* (put together by a disciple) or to his early Sentence commentary for a statement of his position. Almost all twelfth- and thirteenth-century theologians warned their readers that questions about what the resurrected body would be like might lead to idle, or even heterodox, speculation. As Jacques Le Goff and others have recently reminded us, discussions of bodily resurrection became less frequent as elaboration of the doctrine of purgatory and disputes over the beatific vision increasingly directed the attention of schoolmen and preachers to the state of the soul in the period between death and Last Judgment.[7]

Nonetheless, theologians of the high Middle Ages neither abandoned the doctrine nor ceased to discuss it. Several (for example, Albert the Great and Giles of Rome) wrote treatises about it.[8] Moreover, it came up again and again in quodlibetal disputes;[9] and it provided the occasion for debating certain key philosophical issues raised by Aristotle, the most important being – as we shall see – the question of the unicity or plurality of forms.

What modern readers find most disturbing about medieval discussions is their extreme literalism and materialism. In order to illustrate these characteristics, I shall give a brief summary of the last section of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, which determined the course of debate for hundreds of years. Although an overall principle of organization is difficult to discern in Peter's treatment, his emphasis is clear. He chose to consider final things in a way that gives pride of place to questions of the material reassemblage or reconstitution of the body.[10]

Beginning with the admonition (borrowed from Augustine) that not all questions can be answered, Peter devoted distinction (that is, section) 43 of his fourth book to a discussion of the sound of the last trumpet, concentrating on the question of whether

those alive at that moment must die before being raised. In distinction 44, he turned to such questions as the following: What age, height and sex will we have in the resurrected body? Will all matter that has passed through the body at any point be resurrected? Must bits of matter return to the particular members (fingernails or hair, for example) where they once resided? Will the bodies of the damned as well as the saved rise with their defects repaired? Are aborted fetuses resurrected? How can the bodies of the damned burn without being consumed? Will demons (although incorporeal) suffer from corporeal fire in hell? Distinction 45, after considering where souls reside between death and resurrection and asserting (without explaining) that the blessed will experience an increase of joy in bodily resurrection, turns to lengthy consideration of the usefulness of prayers for the dead. Distinctions 46 and 47 explore in detail God's justice, especially the punishment of the damned. Distinctions 48 and 49 discuss specific questions concerning what we might call the topography and demography of blessedness: Where exactly will Christ descend as judge? Of what quality will light be after the Last Judgment? Will all the elect shine with the same glory, see with the same clarity, and rejoice with the same joy? Distinction 50 returns to details of the condition of the damned and, after considering the question of how the finger of Lazarus (Luke 16.22–26) could touch the tongue of the rich man when both (having died) were without body, repeats Augustine's warning that certain answers cannot be discovered.

As even such brief summary makes clear, the Last Judgment is primarily, to the Lombard, a matter of punishment and reward of exactly the same material stuff that constituted the body during life. The discussion, although almost pictorial in its vividness, is highly unoriginal, mostly borrowed in fact from Augustine's *City of God* and *Enchiridion*, with bits from Gregory, Julian of Toledo,

Jerome, Hugh of St. Victor, Honorius Augustodunensis and the school of Anselm of Laon thrown in. Nonetheless, Peter Lombard appears to have chosen from among the available authorities in such a way as to underline the corporeal experience of the resurrected body.

The Lombard was not alone among twelfth-century theologians in emphasizing the materialism of the risen body. Hugh of St. Victor wondered whether we shall be able to open and close our eyes after the resurrection.[11] Honorius (and Herrad of Hohenbourg who borrowed his discussion) queried what color we will be in heaven and whether we will wear clothes.[12] Guibert of Nogent fulminated against the cults of the tooth of Christ and of the holy foreskin because they implied that Christ had not risen in total bodily perfection and that our resurrection might therefore be defective as well.[13] Several theologians debated whether food taken in by the body during its lifetime would become part of that body and rise at the end.[14]

Such discussion continued throughout the thirteenth century. Schoolmen queried whether the gift of *subtilitas* received by the glorified body meant that that body could be in the same place at the same time as another body. The conclusion that it could be was, of course, suggested by gospel stories of Christ passing through closed doors after his resurrection.[15] Theologians also asked whether we will smell sweet odors or touch other bodies in heaven. Will we eat or taste? The latter question was an extraordinarily difficult one; the indignities of digestion could hardly be ascribed to a glorified body endowed with *impassibilitas*, yet the resurrected Christ had, according to Luke 24.42–43, eaten boiled fish and honeycomb with his disciples.[16]

The question of cannibalism and the resurrection, debated at least since the second century and engaged in new ways in the thirteenth, has seemed to modern commentators the most extrav-

agant and offensive of such materialistic considerations. If human remains were eaten by other human beings, in which person would the common matter rise? By the time of Thomas Aquinas the discussion had become remarkably elaborate. A consensus had developed that digested food does become "of the substance of human nature" and rise at the end of time. Thus, eaten human remains will be resurrected in the person to whom they first belonged; the missing matter will be made up in the second person from the nonhuman stuff he or she has eaten. But what (hypothesized Aquinas) about the case of a man who ate only human embryos who generated a child who ate only human embryos? If eaten matter rises in the one who possessed it first, this child will not rise at all. All its matter will rise elsewhere: either in the embryos its father ate (from which its core of human nature, passed on in the semen, was formed) or in the embryos it ate. Although the cannibalism question had been considered seriously at least since the second century, the issue did not remain the same. To the early Fathers such questions were challenges raised by the enemies of Christianity, against whom one asserted, in answer, the absolute power of God to supplement missing matter in any way He chose. Aquinas, in contrast, insisted on tracking the bits of matter as far as possible through the processes of digestion, assimilation and reproduction before resorting (as he also had finally to do) to divine power to make up the difference.[17]

The Modern Debate over Personal Identity and Survival

Medieval debates about the resurrection of foreskins or eaten embryos have baffled modern historians and theologians.[18] Deeply embarrassed by such materialism and literalism, they have occasionally cited the debates in order to shock or titillate their colleagues,[19] or have, like Renaissance polemicists, used them to

illustrate and condemn scholastic obscurantism. Most frequently, however, scholars have expressed their bewilderment and frustration with medieval arguments by trying to sweep away the offensive details while salvaging something of importance.[20] Twentieth-century treatments of the resurrection usually assert that, while particular aspects of the scholastic debate may be jejune or scientifically outdated, basic questions were at stake.[21]

At first glance, this approach seems promising. The distasteful details of medieval discussion can indeed be stripped away to reveal perennial questions. The doctrine of bodily resurrection does involve fundamental issues of survival and identity still moot in philosophical circles. Nonetheless, further consideration of this tactic suggests that it is misguided. We will not understand either medieval positions or their relevance for modern theological discussion if we strip away the materialist detail. The details of the medieval discussion are exactly the point. I can explain this more clearly if I turn for a moment to modern philosophical discussion.

When we consider current discussions of personal identity and survival, we find that they, too, involve lengthy consideration of cases even their investigators admit to be bizarre. The two most common examples used in philosophical discussions over the past two or three decades are "teletransportation" (the mode of travel used in the TV series *Star Trek*, whereby a person's body pattern is beamed through space in order to rematerialize on another planet) and the operation that we may alternatively call a brain or body transplant.[22] (How we label it, of course, turns out to make a good deal of difference in what we think happens.) One of the most gripping and accessible recent explorations of questions of survival is John Perry's *Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, which purports to be a deathbed conversation with a philosophy teacher from a small Midwestern college who has refused a body transplant operation after a motorcycle accident

because she claims "she" will not survive if her brain occupies a new body.[23] Another such accessible exploration is Robert Nozick's discussion in *Philosophical Explanations* of audience reaction to the film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Nozick points out that viewers see the pods which reproduce and replace the former bodies of characters (but without their emotions), not as murderers of the old selves, but as continuers of them which alter *them* in some fundamental and sinister way.[24]

Brain transplants, interstellar beaming of a body pattern, pods generated by invaders from outer space – speculation about such cases is perhaps no less odd than speculation about the resurrection of Christ's foreskin, about the "teletransportation" of glorified bodies or about the fate of eaten embryos. And the oddness has been noticed. The philosopher J.L. Austin has described discourse in his own discipline as the "constant and obsessive repetition of the same small range of jejune examples."[25] Nancy Struever has said of Bernard Williams' *Problems of the Self* (one of the very best of recent books on the survival question): "[It is] in many ways a wise book, but it is stuffed, literally stuffed, with bizarre examples: there are split personalities, amoebalike fissions of the body, nuclear fusions of minds, brain transfusions – a monstrous zoo seems to be the proper arena of discovery."[26]

Yet, odd though these examples are, they cannot simply be discarded while we seek the perennial questions that lie behind them. This is so for three reasons. First, the examples used in philosophical investigation are sometimes the most time-bound elements of the debate.[27] They may also be the place where popular assumptions and academic discourse touch each other most closely and most specifically. Thus, the historian of contemporary issues may find, in the particular illustrations chosen, the most telling information about historical context. Second, the bizarre examples are part of the discussion; often they bear the weight

of the argument. For example, it is only by careful consideration of the case of teletransportation that we learn whether the philosopher using the example thinks personal identity depends on transported molecules or only on a transferred pattern or form. Third, it is in the examples that we see that current philosophical discussion clings, almost in spite of itself, to the issue of material continuity. It is therefore in the examples more clearly than in the articulated positions that we see the essential similarity of medieval and modern discussion.

Medieval and modern theories of survival are not the same, to be sure. All medieval thinkers held a soul-body dualism; few modern thinkers do. But recent philosophical discussion, unlike that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but like that of the Middle Ages, seems to find it almost impossible to envision personal survival without material continuity. It is the examples chosen by philosophers that make this clear.

By and large, in modern discussions, "soul" has been discarded. Even those, such as Richard Swinburne, who retain a dualist (that is, a body-and-soul) position seem to hold what Swinburne calls "soft dualism" – that is, a position which argues that soul is not reducible to body but does not survive without it.[28] Recent anthologies on the survival question put together for undergraduates represent the "soul position" with the same old article from the fifties – an article that cites psychic research done in the thirties or earlier.[29] Apparently, two theories are viable today: one a version of the memory theory that goes back to John Locke ("I am my continuous stream of memory");[30] the other a theory of material continuity ("I am my body" or – and this is clearly a very different sort of material continuity – "I am a particular part of my body: my brain").[31] While no one thinks that a self is only a body, recent discussion seems to find it difficult to account for identity without some sort of physical continuity.

What is characteristic of both sides in the current discussion is their fascination with the body and with transfer of body parts. Today's philosophers wonder, for example, why we tend to assume that "we" survive if our body is replaced little by little in organ transplants, but not if our entire body is replaced at once. They hypothesize experiments in which we are told that the body we occupy will wake tomorrow devoid of memory and then be subjected to intense pain; they ask whether, under these circumstances, we are afraid for ourselves and conclude that, since we do feel fear, we must assume in some sense that the body is our "self." Drawing on science fiction, they imagine cases in which a body pattern is beamed to another planet and rematerialized, while the original body is left behind; which of the resultant entities (they ask) is the self? In contrast, the sort of evidence that fascinated people at the turn of the century and that could be adduced today (evidence from parapsychological research, for example, or from the near-death experiences documented by E. Kübler-Ross) seldom finds its way into philosophical debate. Whatever money there is to be made in "new age" products or Scientology, indications that disembodied spirits survive death arouse little philosophical interest. Even elaborators of the memory theory either content themselves with answering the difficulties in Locke's formulation pointed out by Joseph Butler in the eighteenth century,[32] or, in fact, expend much energy discussing brain transplants and DNA extractions – that is, material continuity – as a way of explaining or questioning continuity of consciousness. Some recent theorists (Derek Parfit and Robert Nozick, for example) hold that there are a number of hypothetical cases in which I cannot decide whether "I" survive or not. But this latter group of thinkers tends also to devote extensive attention to cases having to do with bodily continuity.[33]

Thus, the most commonly examined and apparently pertinent examples in current philosophical discussion of identity and survival have to do with the place of body. And are these examples really so outré or jejune? I think we can say so only in a rather special sense of the word outré, for these cases are familiar. They are the stuff of popular culture – of TV shows and movies, of articles in the *New York Review of Books* and letters to Ann Landers. Oliver Sacks's superb popularization of research on mind, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, has become not only a best-seller but also an opera.[34] The products of yellow journalism sold in supermarkets feature stories of organ recipients who feel invaded by the persons whose body parts they receive; and responsible medical sociologists take seriously the problems raised by such feelings. The sensationalist plot of a novel published in early 1989, *Broken-Hearted*, revolves around the case of a woman who falls in love with the recipient of her late husband's heart.[35] Many recent movies and TV programs deal with identity and survival, not through stories of ghosts and parapsychic phenomena nor through high-minded tales of heredity and morality, but through fantasies of body exchange and rejuvenation: *The Brain*, *All of Me*, *Maxie*, *Like Father Like Son*, *The Man With Two Brains*, *Heaven Can Wait*, *Chances Are*, the remake of *The Fly*, *Max Headroom* and so on.[36]

What is significant about the attitudes revealed in today's newpaper stories and movies is the underlying assumption that in some way the body is the self. Renée Fox and Judith Swazey's research on the sociological and psychological context of transplants has turned up repeated cases of persons who are convinced that identity is in some way transferred with organs.[37] They report the following remark, made by the father of a boy heart donor to the father of the young girl who received the organ: "We've always wanted a little girl, so now we're going to have her and share her with you."[38] Crammond's study of kidney recip-

ients reports a donor's reaction to the recipient's decision to return to work: "He's being unfair to himself and to me.... After all, it's my kidney.... That's me in there."[39] In the winter of 1987–1988, Los Angeles was shocked by stories of a cryonics group that froze heads with the hope of thawing them later and cloning bodies to accompany them. Accusations were made that the group had actually murdered an elderly woman by turning off life-support systems at the optimum moment for severing and freezing her head. Cryonics adherents claimed, however, that thawing the head now to ascertain whether murder had in fact been committed would murder the woman for all eternity by denying her hope of revival. To such a sect, bodily survival *is* resurrection.[40]

The sensationalist headline from November, 1988, reproduced in Figure 7.1 makes a similar assumption. What is striking here is not the assertion of some sort of immortality but the claim that the soul is in fact physical, that it is *a body*. It is physical continuation of a tiny, weighable fragment of the person that constitutes life after death.

Moreover, none of the repetitive and by no means consistently entertaining movies I list above suggests that the occupation of a body by another personality is simply the substitution of one person for another. Such a plot would imply that the memory/personality *is* the person. Rather, there is, in these fantasies, something disturbing about the new conjunction of mind and body exactly because characters in the film (and presumably the audience) see the body that continues as in some sense the person, who is invaded and threatened by another set of characteristics and memories. In the eighties remake of *The Fly*, for example, the man whose genes are spliced with those of a fly continues in a sense to "be himself" because his genes continue, even after he has also in a sense "become a fly" because he has the body of a fly.[41]

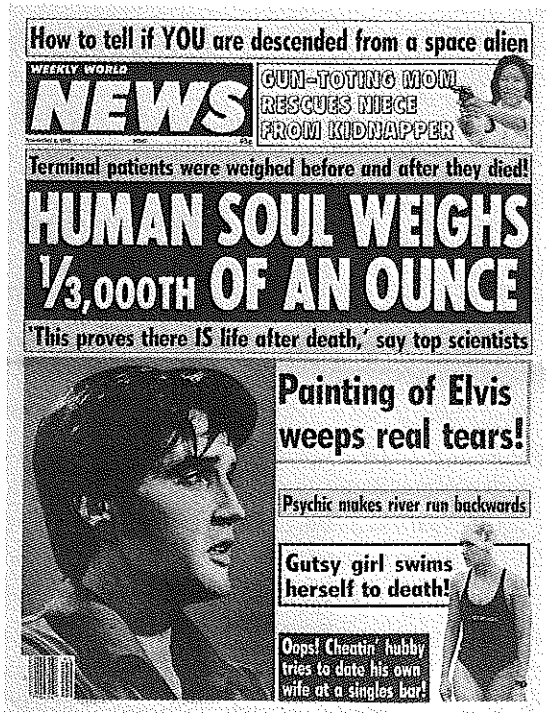

FIGURE 7.1. Cover, *Weekly World News*, November 1, 1988. A modern argument for survival after death emphasizes material continuity.

In their fascination with the bodily aspects of survival and identity, contemporary philosophers are just like the rest of us. Indeed, many of their most bizarre hypothetical cases come from mass culture. The now famous essay on survival by John Perry, for example, is based not only on John Locke and Bernard Williams, but also on a popular novel from 1972 about a brain transplant.[42] Moreover, the particular way in which the question of immortality and survival is posed in philosophical investigations, no less than in fiction, yellow journalism and film, has been precipitated by recent technological developments, with their attendant legal and moral complications – namely, artificial intelligence, organ transplants, brain surgery. Much current philosophical debate takes its departure from the Sperry experiments on epileptics, which offer evidence that the two hemispheres of the brain can exist separately; duplication of individuals through brain fission may be technologically feasible.[43]

One can therefore argue that the general human issues on which the philosophical problem of survival bears (the mind/body problem, the nature of identity, etc.) have not changed much recently. Nor do such general questions seem much closer to philosophical solution. What is in fact most time-bound – and therefore most instructive to us about ourselves – is the precise nature of the outré and jejune examples that apparently fascinate us, moviegoers and philosophers alike. It is the examples to which the philosophers continually refer, rather than their abstract positions, that tell us how far we go toward assuming that material continuity is crucial for personal survival. It is in the examples also that we see reflected the extent to which popular culture has moved away from concern with mind/body dichotomies and turned instead to issues of integrity versus corruption or partition.

Debates of the Medieval Schoolroom in the Context of the History of Philosophy

I wish now to offer a similar analysis of the seemingly outrageous and offensive schoolroom examples of the Middle Ages. Even a brief look at modern philosophy should weaken our resistance to taking seriously such medieval questions as the resurrection of hermaphrodites or of eaten embryos. This modern discussion reminds us, first, that we, too, explore the issue of personal survival through bizarre examples; second, that the examples we use to think with often come from popular culture and exactly for this reason express our deepest hopes and fears; third, that the cases currently under investigation – teletransportation and body or brain transplants – also treat survival and identity as matters involving body continuity or corruption. If the medieval question "Will my discarded fingernails rise again?" seems to us an odd one, we do well to admit the similar oddness of such modern questions as "if Caroline Bynum's brain were transplanted into the body of, for example, Lawrence Stone, who would the resulting person be?"

My thesis about the twelfth- and thirteenth-century theology of the body is twofold and, in both its parts, revisionist. First, much of the debate about the resurrection of the body and about the relation of body and soul revolved not around a soul/body contrast (although the soul and body were, of course, seen as distinct entities in a way they are not by most modern philosophers), but around the issue of bodily continuity. Questions of risen embryos, foreskins and fingernails, of the subtlety of glorified flesh, of how and whether God makes whole the amputee or the fat man, are questions about the reassemblage of physical parts. Scholastic theologians worried *not* about whether body was crucial to human nature, but about how part related to whole – that is, how bits could and would be reintegrated after scattering and

decay. The crucial question to which discussion of the resurrected body returned again and again was not "Is body necessary to personhood?" Medieval theologians were so certain it was they sometimes argued that resurrection was "natural." Peter of Capua suggested, for example, that it was a consequence not of divine grace but of the structure of human nature that body returned to soul after the Last Judgment.[44] The crucial theological question was rather: What accounts for the identity of earthly and risen body? What of "me" must rise in order for the risen body to be "me"? Only by considering the specific examples debated by schoolmen can we see the extent to which, between 1100 and 1320, they were really debating how far material continuity is necessary for identity.

Second, I wish to argue that this issue of bodily continuity (of how identity lasts through corruption and reassemblage) was manifested *as an issue* not merely in the bizarre limiting cases considered by scholastic theologians, but also in pious practice: in the cult of saints and relics, in changes in legal, medical and burial procedures in precisely this period, in the kinds of miracle stories that were popular with preachers and audiences. Thus, I see a connection between actual Church practice and the debates of ivory tower intellectuals; and this connection is easiest to find not in the general philosophical issues such scholars considered, but in the strangest of their specific examples.

The story of philosophical discourse in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is not, of course, usually told as a story in which issues of material continuity, or of part and whole, figure very prominently. The interpretation most of us have learned from the great Catholic historians of philosophy in this century is rather a story of Plato and Aristotle and of theories of soul.[45] It argues that twelfth-century thought was characterized, philosophically speaking, by Platonic dualism – that is, by the view (found especially

in Hugh of St. Victor and Robert of Melun) that the person is the soul, to which body is attached as tool, garment or prison. Modern scholars have thus seen the twelfth-century insistence on bodily resurrection as a somewhat incongruous theological intrusion into a philosophical position that requires escape from body for human perfection.[46] According to this interpretation, the thirteenth-century adoption of Aristotle's definition of the soul as the form of the body (freed from Chalcidius's argument that a form could not be substantial) was a philosophical and theological triumph, undergirding with satisfactory theory for the first time a biblical view of the person as human rather than spiritual. Thomas Aquinas's theory of the human being as a hylomorphic (form/matter) union of soul and body is thus read as a victory over dualism, holding as it does that "the soul... is not the whole person, and I am not my soul."[47] The distrust and, in certain key areas, outright condemnation of Aquinas's ideas in the 1270s and 1280s are seen in this interpretation to stem from suspicion that, exactly in their close union of soul and body, such ideas might threaten the immortality of the soul and lend support to the hated teaching of Averroism.

Only a few perceptive Catholic philosophers read the story a different way.[48] They argue that what Aquinas's teaching actually threatens is *body*, since, in denying the plurality of forms, Aquinas must assert that the soul (our only form) is the form of our bodiliness, too, reducing what is left over to mere primary matter or potency.[49] Although, of course, the body we have at the moment is formed and therefore existing "second matter," *what it is* is, so to speak, packed into the soul.[50]

If we follow up the insight of those Catholic scholars who have seen Aquinas's formulation as threatening body, the history of philosophy looks different. We can then see in the many thirteenth- and fourteenth-century positions that rejected certain details

of Aquinas – theories often called Platonic or Augustinian or Franciscan – an effort to retain both a sense of matter as a real entity teeming with shadowy, potential forms (called in the early part of the period "seminal reasons") and a sense of body, too, as a real entity alongside form, however inextricably the two are bound at the resurrection. It is patently not true (however much passing remarks about "Platonic dualism" may suggest it) that twelfth-, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century thinkers who attributed some independent substantial reality to matter and/or body were inclined to see such entities as unreal or (in a simple, categorical sense) evil.[51] Rather, they agreed with the poet Bernard Sylvestris, who expressed a conception of matter as pregnant, yearning stuff, filled with potential. "Matter," he wrote "the oldest thing [in creation], wishes to be born again and in this new beginning to be encompassed in forms."[52]

Indeed, as historians have sometimes noticed, to their puzzlement, it was those with the sharpest sense of body/soul conflict and the most ferocious ascetic practices (for example, Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi or Angela of Foligno) who had the clearest and most passionate awareness of the potential of body to reveal the divine.[53] Bernard of Clairvaux spoke thus of the joys of bodily resurrection:

> Do not be surprised if the glorified body seems to give the spirit something, for it was a real help when man was sick and mortal. How true that text is which says that all things turn to the good of those who love God (Romans 8.28). The sick, dead and resurrected body is a help to the soul who loves God; the first for the fruits of penance, the second for repose, and the third for consummation. Truly the soul does not want to be perfected, without that from whose good services it feels it has benefited... in every way.... Listen to the bridegroom in the Canticle inviting us to this triple progress:

> "Eat, friends, and drink; be inebriated, dearest ones." He calls to those working in the body to eat; he invites those who have set aside their bodies to drink; and he impels those who have resumed their bodies to inebriate themselves, calling them his dearest ones, as if they were filled with charity.... It is right to call them dearest who are drunk with love....[54]

Expressing a similar notion that body is necessary both for personhood and for eternal bliss, Bonaventure wrote, in a sermon on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary:

> Her happiness would not be complete unless she [Mary] were there personally [i.e., bodily assumed into heaven]. The person is not the soul; it is a composite. Thus it is established that she must be there as a composite, that is, of soul and body. Otherwise she would not be there [in heaven] in perfect joy; for (as Augustine says) the minds of the saints [before their resurrections] are hindered, because of their natural inclination for their bodies, from being totally borne into God.[55]

Henry of Ghent criticized Aquinas's doctrine of the unicity of form because he thought it made the gifts or dowries (*dotes*) of the body merely the consequence of the soul's blessedness. Henry himself held to the theory of a separate *forma corporeitatis* so that the gifts of the glorified body could be understood as real changes *in that body*, not merely as consequences of changes in the soul.[56] Richard of Middleton, like Bonaventure, actually saw the soul's yearning for the body as a motive for the saints in heaven. The blessed around the throne of God pray all the harder for us sinners, he asserted, because these blessed will receive again their own deeply desired flesh only when the number of the elect is filled up and the Judgment comes.[57]

It thus seems to me that a distrust of the strict hylomorphic theory of man and of the doctrine of the unicity of form was endemic in thirteenth-century debate because of a strong pull toward body as substantial – a pull reflected in the theory of resurrection that stressed numerical identity as material continuity. In other words, it was the more conservative, more Augustinian-Platonic thinkers (not the followers of Aquinas) who made body "real" in a commonsense way; and their ideas fit the needs of the pious to experience body as a separate entity that was the locus both of temptation and of encounter with the divine. But even those who departed from theories of material continuity were uncomfortable with, and inconsistent in, their departure. The philosophically elegant new identity theory implied by Aquinas and Giles of Rome and finally articulated by Peter of Auvergne, John of Paris and Durandus of St. Pourçain – a theory that obviated any need to consider material continuity – never caught on.[58] Not only were certain of its consequences explicitly condemned; it was not fully used by its creators, who continued to speak of the resurrected body as reassembled by God from its own tiny bits of dust scattered throughout the universe.

This last point needs further explanation. In the course of patristic discussion, theologians had come to see identity as the heart of resurrection.[59] As John of Damascus said (and scholastic theologians quoted him repeatedly): it is not *re-surrectio* unless the same human being rises again.[60] But what does it mean for a person to be "the same"? In the twelfth century, some felt that only the continuation of exactly the same matter qualified as sameness.[61] Indeed, some thinkers held that nutrition and growth were in a natural sense impossible, because food could never change substance and become flesh.[62] Hence, to Hugh of St. Victor, for example, any growth was a miracle: the growth of Eve from a rib of Adam or of a child from the seed of its father was

likened to the miracle of the loaves and the fishes.[63] By the early thirteenth century most thinkers held that each person possessed a *caro radicalis* (a core of flesh) formed both from the matter passed on by parent or parents to child and from the matter that comes from food.[64] It was this *caro radicalis* that God reassembled after the Last Judgment. Thus, as William of Auxerre argued in the early thirteenth century, summing up previous teaching, there must be material identity for numerical identity: the ashes of Paul must rise as the body of Paul. If matter is somehow lacking, the power of God must make up the deficit by miracle.[65]

This insistence on material continuity raised, as I explained above, a host of problems. If, for example, all our matter comes back (and, on this point, theologians found Luke 21.18 – "Not a hair of your head shall perish" – very troubling), will not the fingernails of those who died as adults be too long in heaven? And, on the other hand, where will the matter come from for those who died in the womb? To these problems, the theory of form as identity, adumbrated by Aquinas and articulated by John of Paris and Durandus, was an elegant solution. Since only substances exist, matter does not exist apart from form: prime matter is potency. When the human being dies, therefore, one cannot say that its body or its matter waits to be reassembled, for *its* body or matter does not exist at all. When the human being is resurrected, the body that is matter to its form (which is also its form of bodiliness because it is its only form) will by definition be its body. The cadaver that exists after we die, like the body that exists before, is second matter – formed matter – but the cadaver is informed not by the form of the soul but by the form of the corpse. Thus, says Durandus, we may not say that God can make the body of Peter out of the body of Paul, because this is nonsense; if it is the body of Paul it is the body of Paul.[66] But God can make the body of Peter out of dust that was once the body

of Paul.[67] And he need take no more or less dust than necessary to make a perfect human body.

This theory could have swept away, as sheer foolishness, the questions of fingernails, foreskins and aborted fetuses over which theologians had puzzled since Tertullian and Augustine. But it did not do so. Instead, its own proponents for the most part failed to use it in their discussions of resurrection. For example, Eustachius of Arras, who appears to understand the argument, in fact held that God created the glorified body from the same dust that body contained earlier.[68] Giles of Rome worried about how matter from several bodies could be understood to be in one resurrected body and devoted much attention to questions about the resurrection of eaten food and flesh – matters in which he would presumably have had no interest if he had gone over completely to a formal theory of identity.[69] Aquinas, who articulated a purely formal theory, pulled back from it in a famous and much debated passage of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, asserting merely the conventional position that people do not have to receive all their previous matter in the resurrection; God can make up the difference.[70] Indeed, in the discussion of eaten embryos, which would not come up if identity were only formal, Aquinas not only made material continuity the principle of identity, he also tipped the scales toward matter in a second way, violating the Aristotelian theory (which he elsewhere adopted) that the father provides form, the mother matter, in conception.[71] Something held the theologians back from using their own philosophy when they came to discussing problems of piety or of physics or of biology.

There appears to have been concern generally in the 1270s that the teachings of Aristotle as interpreted by the Arab commentators might lead not only to denial of the immortality of the soul, but also to denial of the resurrection of the body. Proposition 13,

condemned in 1270, stated that "God cannot give immortality or incorruptibility to a corruptible or mortal thing."[72] Propositions condemned in 1277 included not only the idea that the same body, numerically speaking, does not return,[73] but also other positions in which the issue of bodily identity is implicated: for example, "that God cannot give perpetuity to a mutable and corruptible thing," "that man, through the process of nutrition, can become another numerically and individually," "that one should not take care for the burying of the dead," and "that death is the end of all terrors" (namely, that there is no eternal punishment of the damned).[74] Moreover, certain consequences of the new identity theory and of the connected theory of the unicity of form were also condemned. Controversy erupted in the 1270s over the implication that, if the cadaver is not the body, then Christ's body did not lie in the tomb for the three days between Crucifixion and Resurrection. Not all the events in the course of the debate are clear; but the record shows that the argument that a dead body is just a body equivocally (that is, that the word "body" in the two phrases "dead body" and "living body" is merely a homonym) was condemned at Oxford in 1277. The doctrine of the unicity of form was also condemned in England in March, 1277.[75] As Elizabeth Brown has recently shown, controversy over the unicity of form erupted again in Paris in 1285–1286, and questions about the implications of the doctrine for relic cult were explicitly raised.[76]

We must not make too much of the condemnations. Some were later revoked. And it is important to note that Durandus's identity theory was *not* condemned in the early fourteenth century when other aspects of his teaching were extracted from his Sentence commentary for censure.[77] What is informative for our purposes is the context of the discussion. Theologians themselves related abstruse considerations of the nature of body and

person to such practical matters as burial customs and the veneration of saints.

Since the early days of the twelfth century, schoolmen had seen that the status of Christ's body in the tomb had implications for the cult of the dead. Sentence collections tended to insert entries on prayers for the departed among *quaestiones* concerning Christ's body in the *triduum*, the nature of resurrected bodies generally, or the problem of how food was assimilated in the Garden of Eden.[78] In the later thirteenth century, some charged explicitly that the notion of the equivocality of body threatened the cult of saints. Henry of Ghent argued that the Thomistic position might be heretical, since, in denying continuity of form (the *forma corporeitatis*) between living body and cadaver, it suggested that the relic was not really the saint.[79] John of Paris had to defend himself against critics who maintained that the unicity of form removed all justification for relic cult. In his reply, John not only argued, as theologians had since Augustine, that relics were to be honored because they bring before our memories the life and suffering of the saints. He also held – in what almost amounts to a concession to material continuity – that the "first matter" (which does not quite mean mere potency) in relic and living saint is the same and is glorified in the body.[80] We find a similar inconsistency in Aquinas himself when we look at *Summa theologiae*, pt. 3a, q. 25, art. 6: "Should we worship the relics of the saints?" Beginning with a quotation from Augustine to the effect that bodies are dearly loved garments, temples of the Holy Spirit, aids to memory, and tools for the working of miracles, Aquinas points out that "a dead body is not of the same species as a living body." It is thus to be worshiped only for the sake of the soul that was once united to it. But then Aquinas, contradicting at least the pure formulation of his own identity theory, concludes: "The dead body of a saint is not identical to that

which the saint held during life, on account of its difference of form – *viz.*, the soul; but it is the same by identity of matter, which is destined to be reunited to its form."[81] Not merely a mnemonic device, the body in the tomb is the body that will be joined to the saint in heaven.

Thus, in the late thirteenth century, when the new categories of Aristotelian hylomorphism seemed to make material continuity irrelevant, theorists nonetheless discussed survival and resurrection as if identity of matter – or, to put it another way, univocality of "body" – were necessary. The texts I have just cited suggest that the adherence of theologians to material continuity was owing in part to pious practice. Intellectuals were aware that relic cult implied material continuity; the ordinary folk for whom they (or their pupils) crafted sermons behaved as if the bodies were the saints. And medieval intellectuals apparently preferred philosophical inconsistency to scandalizing the faithful.[82]

Moreover, intellectuals sometimes even promoted veneration of holy bodies. Nor did they see such veneration merely as an aid to memory: it was veneration of the saints themselves. Preaching in the mid-twelfth century, Peter the Venerable, for example, was careful to emphasize that the souls of the saints are around the throne of heaven while their bodies are in churches for reverencing by the faithful; the saints are divided by death into two parts. But Peter nonetheless also spoke as if pieces of dead holy people are already touched by the glory they will attain at the end of time.[83] The "*bodies* of the saints," said Peter, "live" with God. Exhorting his monks on the occasion of a martyr's feastday, Peter argued:

> The divine dignity divides his martyr into equal parts, so that he may retain his soul for himself among the mass of the blessed and give, with marvelous largesse, the relics of his sacred body to be vener-

ated by the faithful still living in the flesh. But suppose someone says: "what does it profit us to honor a lifeless body; what does it profit us to frequent with hymns and praise bones lacking in sense?" Let this kind of thinking be far from the hearts of the faithful.... God, the creator of spiritual and corporeal things,... established the human creature and, in an excellent operation, joined it together from rational spirit and flesh..., one person of man conjoined from [two] diverse substances. And glorifying the unity of the wonderful conjoining with felicity appropriate to the proper nature of each [of the diverse substances], he bestowed justice on the soul and incorruptibility on the body.... Therefore we know the spirits of the just will in the meanwhile live happily in the eternal life which we expect through faith, which he promises who is faithful in his words, and we anticipate for them a future resurrection in their bodies with immortality and in every sense incorruptibility. For this reason we do not debase as inanimate, despise as insensate, or trample under foot like the cadavers of dumb beasts the bodies of those who in this life cultivated justice; rather we venerate them as temples of the Lord, revere them as palaces of divinity, hoard them as pearls suitable for the crown of the eternal king, and, with the greatest devotion of which we are capable, preserve them as vessels of resurrection to be joined again to the blessed souls....

Behold whose bodies you venerate, brothers, in whose ashes you exalt, for whose bones you prepare golden sepulchres. They are sons of God, equal to angels, sons of the resurrection. Hence you should receive them reverently as sons of God, extoll them as equal to the angels with suitable praises, and expect that they will rise in their own flesh as sons of the resurrection. And in this hope I have confidence more certainly than in any human thing that you ought not to feel contempt for the bones of the present martyrs as if they were dry bones but should honor them now full of life as if they were in their future incorruption.... Flesh flowers from dryness and youth

is remade from old age, and if you do not yet see this in your martyr it is supported by sacred authorities; do not despair of the future. Having therefore, dearest brothers, the author of the old law and the new grace, Jesus Christ, who promises to his servants the resurrection of the flesh and the glorification of human substance totally, first through the saints of old and afterwards through himself, and demonstrates [this resurrection] in his own body, we ought to reverence with due honor the body of this blessed martyr as about to be resurrected, as it will be clothed in immortal glory, although we see it as dead....

I say that the bodies of the saints live with God.... And that they live with God innumerable miracles everywhere on earth demonstrate, which miracles are frequently experienced by those who come to venerate their sepulchres with devout minds.... Isaiah says: "Your bones shall flourish [*germinabunt*] like an herb." Therefore because the bones of the present martyr shall flower like an herb, rising to eternal life, because the corruptible shall put on the incorruptible and the mortal the immortal, because this body of a just man snatched up to meet Christ shall always remain with him, who will not, with full affection, bring to be honored in this life what he believes will be elevated in the future glory....

Eighty years later, Caesarius of Heisterbach wrote: "Although the souls of the saints always look upon the divine face, nevertheless they have respect to their bodies, and when they see us devoted to them, they are much pleased."[84]

Bodily Partition and Bodily Incorruption in Medieval Culture

It therefore seems clear that contemporaries were aware of certain connections between the oddest cases debated by theologians and the behavior of ordinary folk. Burial practices, prayers for the

dead and relic cult were sometimes the explicit context for theological debate; theological distinctions sometimes informed sermons composed for church dedications or saints' days.[85] I want to argue, however, that the connection between the outré examples of scholastic debate and the concerns of the pious existed at a deeper level as well. The assumption that material continuity is crucial to identity is an assumption that runs throughout medieval culture; therefore, the theme of part and whole also runs deep. When we look at the way in which ordinary thirteenth-century people behaved, we find there, too, a concern with material continuity and thus with the corruption, partition and reintegration of bodies.

The assumption that the material body we occupy in this life is integral to person and that the event we call death is not a radical break was reflected in legend, folktale and even "science." Many stories that circulated in the later Middle Ages implied that the body was in some sense alive after death. Moralists told of temporary resurrections; hagiographers described dead saints who sat up momentarily to revere the crucifix or eucharistic host; medical writers spoke of cadavers that continued to move or grow while on the embalming table or in the tomb; folk wisdom held that corpses would bleed to accuse their murderers; holy bodies, especially holy female bodies, were sometimes said to exude oil or even milk that cured the sick.[86] Down into the seventeenth century, learned treatises were written by doctors on the *life* of the body after death – a phenomenon that seemed proved to some by the apparent growth of fingernails and hair observed in corpses.[87] The claim that all or part of a saint remained incorrupt after burial was an important miracle for proving sanctity, particularly the sanctity of women.[88] Indeed, in what appears to have some parallels to modern cryonics, alchemists and physicians in the thirteenth century experimented with ways of returning

the body to its pristine state before the fall, convinced that they might thus free it, more or less indefinitely, from decay.[89] Although the development of the doctrine of purgatory and increased discussion of the nature of the soul's condition between death and Last Judgment forced theologians to make it clear that the body is restored and glorified only at the end of time, preachers and teachers sometimes suggested that the ability of the martyrs to withstand pain or corruption was owing to an assimilation of their bodies on earth to the glorified bodies of heaven (see Figures 6.14 and 6.15).[90]

Since the patristic period, theologians had asserted that God could reassemble – even recreate – any body. Neither the jaws of wild beasts nor the swords and flames of executioners could deny resurrection to the martyrs. The fourth-century church historian Eusebius reported that the Romans burned and scattered the bodies of the martyrs of Lyons in order to dash Christian hopes of resurrection.[91] But Christian apologists such as Minucius Felix delighted in claiming such repressive measures to be useless because divine power can renew even pulverized dust.[92] In the early third century, Tertullian hurled in the teeth of heretics and anti-Christian polemicists his confidence that the God who had created the universe could surely reassemble the bodies he had made:

> But that you may not suppose that it is merely those bodies which are consigned to the tombs whose resurrection is foretold, you have it declared in Scripture: "And I will command the fishes of the sea and they shall cast up the bones which they have devoured. . . ." (Enoch 61.5) You will ask, Will then the fishes and other animals and carnivorous birds be raised again in order that they may vomit up what they have consumed. . . ? Certainly not. But the beasts and fishes are mentioned . . . in relation to the restoration of flesh and

blood, in order the more emphatically to express the resurrection of such bodies as have even been devoured....

If God raises not men entire, He raises not the dead. For what dead man is entire, although he dies entire? Who is without hurt, that is without life? What body is uninjured, when it is dead, when it is cold, when it is ghastly, when it is stiff, when it is a corpse?... Thus, for a dead man to be raised again, amounts to nothing short of his being restored to his entire condition.... God is quite able to remake what He once made.... Thus our flesh shall remain even after the resurrection – so far indeed susceptible of suffering, as it is the flesh, and the same flesh too; but at the same time impassible, inasmuch as it has been liberated by the Lord for the very end and purpose of being no longer capable of enduring suffering.[93]

Despite such confidence in divine power, however, the early Christians continued to feel intense concern for proper burial, and writers such as Tertullian and Augustine reassured them that their concern was appropriate and devout.[94] Ordinary believers in the second and third centuries often went to extraordinary lengths to collect and reassemble the dismembered pieces of the martyrs for burial. Eusebius reports that they grieved when they could not return the mutilated pieces of their heroes and heroines to the earth.[95] Moreover, his accounts of martyrdom are accounts not only of personal courage, but also of victory over fragmentation. Speaking of a certain Sanctus, tortured on several occasions, Eusebius writes:

> For when the wicked after some days again tortured the martyr they thought that they might overcome him now that his body was swollen and inflamed if they applied the same tortures,... Yet not only did nothing of this kind happen, but, beyond all human expectations, he raised himself up and his body was straightened in the subsequent

> tortures, and he regained his former appearance and the use of his limbs, so that through the grace of Christ the second torturing became not torment but cure.[96]

Medieval readers loved stories such as Eusebius's and retold them with gusto. In the retelling, horrors became more horrible, even as triumph over pain, decay and fragmentation became more impressive and more improbable.[97] The pious in the thirteenth century, more frequently than in the third, spoke and behaved as if division of the cadaver were a deep threat to person.

The Parisian theologian Gervase of Mt.-St.-Eloi, for example, called even division for the purposes of burial *ad sanctos* a "horrible and inhuman" [*atrocitatem et inhumanitatem*] practice. Gervase admitted that divine power could gather scattered parts, but insisted that it was better to bury bodies intact so they were ready for the sound of the trumpet.[98] Gervase's contemporary, Godfrey of Fountains asserted division to be against reason, nature and desire.[99] In 1299, Pope Boniface VIII legislated against the nobility's practice of dividing bodies for burial and included a prohibition of embalming and boiling bodies (and in certain circumstances moving and reburying them).[100] Fulminating against division as monstrous and detestable, the pope gave no philosophical or theological justification for the condemnation, but simply required burial close to the place of death until the body turned by slow and natural process into dust.[101] Roger Bacon, who probably influenced Boniface and the Italian curia on these matters, argued that putrefaction is simply an "accident" of aging, treatable by proper medical precautions. Because Christ had promised bodily integrity to all at the Last Judgment, persons here below should prepare themselves for it, said Bacon, by striving for moral and physical intactness.[102]

Folktale and vernacular hagiography also expressed revulsion

at bodily partition. Saints frequently effected miracles of healing or of temporary resurrection of corpses, but they sometimes simply reassembled cadavers without bothering to reanimate them. In an Old French life of Saint Barbara, for example, a decapitated head asks a priest for communion and is reunited with its body through the power of the saint (although both parts remain lifeless).[103] The popular story of a leg transplant performed by the physician saints Cosmas and Damian changes in its late medieval retelling to emphasize not only the grafting of a black leg onto a sick white man but also the attaching of the gangrenous white leg onto the corpse of the Moor from whom the original graft was taken.[104] Such tales surely suggest that the intact condition of the body, even after death, had deep significance.

Despite worries about fragmentation, however, division of the body was widely and enthusiastically practiced in the thirteenth century. The culture of ancient Rome had possessed strong taboos against moving or dividing corpses – taboos that were overcome in the Christian cult of relics only over the course of hundreds of years.[105] But by 1300 the practice was widespread of dividing not only the bodies of the saints to provide relics, but also the bodies of the nobility to enable them to be buried in several places near several saints.[106] Boniface's *Detestande feritatis* of 1299, which forbade this practice, was not enforced in the early fourteenth century; and, in 1351, Clement VI decreed that French rulers would no longer need any special exemption for division of the body. By the fifteenth century some popes had their own bodies eviscerated before burial.[107] Indeed, immediately after Boniface's death, opponents charged that he was a heretic because his concern for the fate of cadavers proved, they said, that he did not believe in resurrection.[108]

The early thirteenth century saw the first examples of autopsy to determine cause of death in legal cases; the first official dissections were carried out in medical schools in the years around 1300, for purposes of teaching as well as diagnosis.[109] By the fourteenth century bodies of putative saints were often opened not only for embalming, but also to collect evidence of remarkable austerities or bodily prodigies (such as miraculous fasting, or the "wound of love" in the heart).[110] The same period witnessed the revival of torture as a judicial practice and a significant increase in the use of mutilation and dismemberment to punish capital crimes.[111]

Even artists fragmented the body. Liturgical and artistic treatment of relics came increasingly to underline the fact that they are body parts. In the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, fragments of saints were mostly housed in beautiful caskets, which diverted attention from their exact nature (Figure 7.2). Canonists and theologians debated whether there could be private property in relics, and whether wearing them as talismans or displaying them "naked" was acceptably devout. By the fourteenth century, however, holy bones were owned and worn by the pious as private devotional objects; they were often exhibited in reliquaries that mimicked their shape (for example, head, arm, or bust reliquaries) or in crystal containers that clearly revealed that they were bits of bodies (Figures 7.3, 7.4). In a remarkable picture from Cologne about 1500, which depicts the faithful gathering the fragments of Saint Ursula and her 11,000 virgin companions for burial, the scattered body parts (with their neatly rounded-off edges) seem already to have become the reliquary busts or arm reliquaries in which the faithful will venerate them (Figure 7.5).[112] Depictions of the sufferings associated with the Crucifixion – known as the *arma Christi* and the Five Wounds – came in the later Middle Ages to show Christ's body itself in parts, "put on display [as Sixten Ringbom has said] for the pious beholder to watch with myopic closeness" (Figures 7.6, 7.7).[113]

Artistic or actual, the practice of bodily partition was fraught with ambivalence, controversy and profound inconsistency. As late as the twelfth century, even north of the Alps – the area most enthusiastic about partition of bodies for burial *ad sanctos* – some felt that the gift of body parts was a dubious honor. The English chronicler, Roger of Wendover, tells us that Richard I's grant of his entrails to the Abbey of Charroux in Poitou was taken as a sign of disdain.[114] Some theologians in Paris in the 1280s argued that division of the cadaver was heinous cooperation with the forces of putrefaction because it severed a corpse that still retained its integrity and shape.[115] Although procedures for boiling the body and burying the viscera separately had been developed as early as the tenth century and were (as we have seen) enthusiastically adopted by certain noble families, a number of fourteenth-century wills still directed executors not to divide the body for burial.[116]

Prurient horror often accompanied the division of bodies for scientific or political purposes. The first medical dissections were touched, as Marie-Christine Pouchelle has brilliantly demonstrated, by an extraordinary sense of the mystery of the closed body, particularly the female body, and of the audacity required to open it.[117] Stories such as the legend of Nero's autopsy of his own mother expressed disgust at prying into the body in order to attain medical knowledge (Figure 7.8). Surgery – because it severed flesh – was viewed with ambivalence. The preferred method of curing was adjustment of fluids and humors inside the body, which was understood as a balanced system; physicians, who did not cut or cauterize, had higher status than surgeons, who were in certain ways assimilated to barbers, a social rank below them. So highly charged was bodily partition that torturers were forbidden to effect it; they were permitted to squeeze and twist and stretch in excruciating ways, but not to sever or divide. Chronicle accounts of the use of dismemberment in capital cases

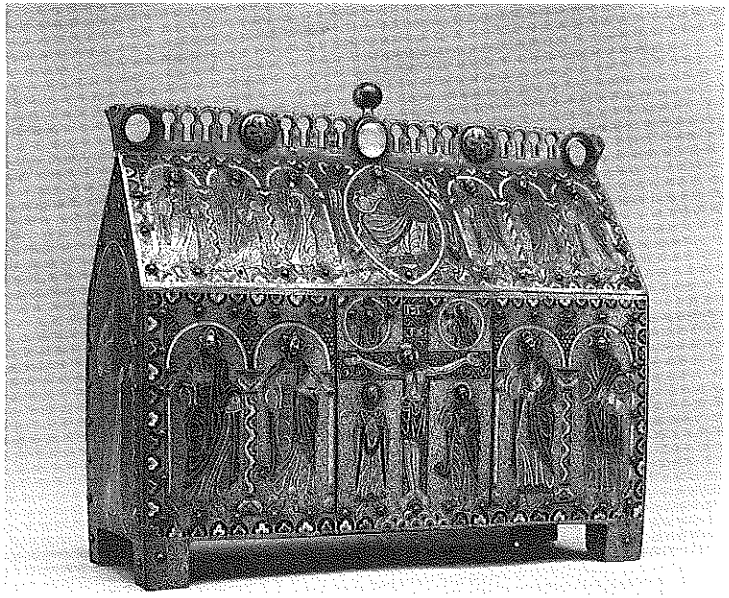

FIGURE 7.2. Reliquary Casket, Limoges (ca. 1180). Medieval reliquaries were often gorgeous containers whose form and decoration diverted attention from the precise nature of the fragments contained within.

FIGURE 7.3. Flemish Hand Reliquary (thirteenth century). In the later Middle Ages, reliquaries came increasingly to underline the nature of the body parts contained inside. This hand reliquary, with crystal windows through which the finger bones may be seen, displays the precise anatomical nature of the relics. The gold sheathing suggests, however, that the fingers already possess something of the incorruptibility of heaven.

FIGURE 7.4. Reliquary monstrance of Saint Francis, Limoges (ca. 1228). Reliquaries sometimes displayed actual bits of holy body to the viewer. In such displays, the bits were surrounded with precious crystal.

make it clear both that it was reserved for only the most repulsive crimes and that the populace was expected to be able to read the nature of the offense from the precise way in which the criminal's body was cut apart and the pieces displayed. Drawing and quartering, or burning (that is, reduction to the smallest possible particles: ashes), were punishments reserved for treason, witchcraft and heresy, particularly when practiced by those of lower social status or inferior gender.[118] R.I. Moore and Saul Brody have convincingly suggested that the scapegoating of lepers about 1300 was owing not only to increased incidence of the disease, but also to conceptualizing of it as living decay and fragmentation. It was because parts broke off the leper's body, because it fragmented and putrefied and became insensate while alive, in other words because it was living death, that it was used as a common metaphor for sin.[119]

Even the saints sometimes opposed their own fragmentation, although without it the central cultic practice of relic veneration could not have existed at all. Moreover, when fragmented, the saints frequently remained incorrupt in their parts.[120] Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogue on Miracles*, from the early thirteenth century, contains a number of stories of relics resisting division.[121] Robert Grosseteste may have forbidden division of his corpse on his deathbed.[122] The holy woman Mary of Oignies, who in a sense fragmented herself while alive by pulling out a large hunk of her hair to use as a device to cure the sick, castigated the prior of Oignies for "cruelly" extracting the teeth of a holy cadaver. After her own death Mary supposedly clenched her teeth when the same prior tried to extract them as relics; when he humbly asked her pardon, however, she shook out a few teeth from her jaw for his use.[123]

Thus, the years around 1300 saw a paradoxical attitude toward partition and mutilation of bodies. On the one hand, there was a

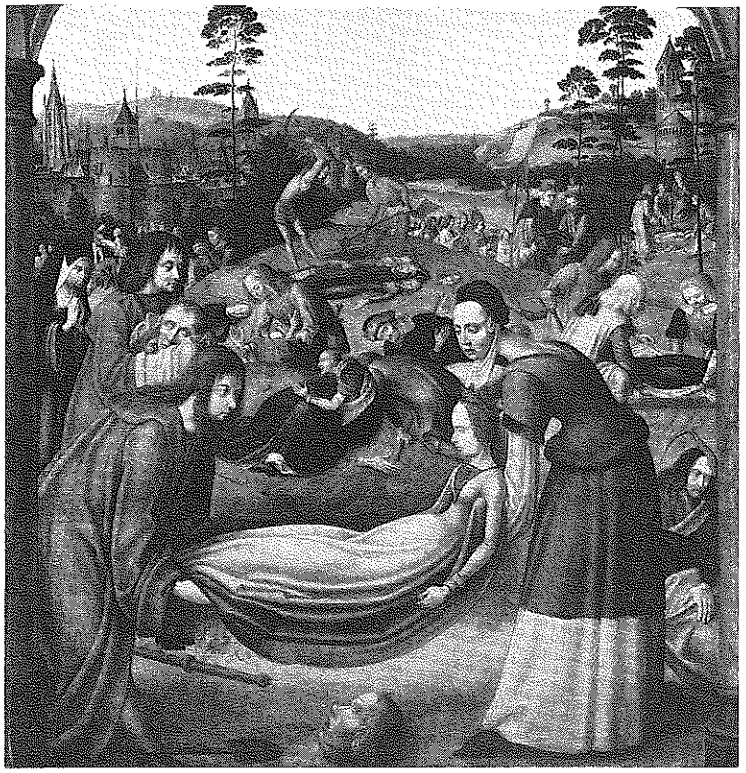

FIGURE 7.5. Master of the Ursula Legend, *The Burial of Ursula and Her Companions*, Cologne (ca. 1500). The story of Saint Ursula and her 11,000 virgin companions, martyred for the faith, was extremely popular in the high Middle Ages, especially in the area of Cologne, where supposed relics of the women were dug up with great frequency. This picture of the burial of Ursula illustrates the medieval concern with reassembling bodies for burial. The carefully collected body fragments, with their neatly rounded edges, already look a good deal like the reliquaries in which they will be preserved.

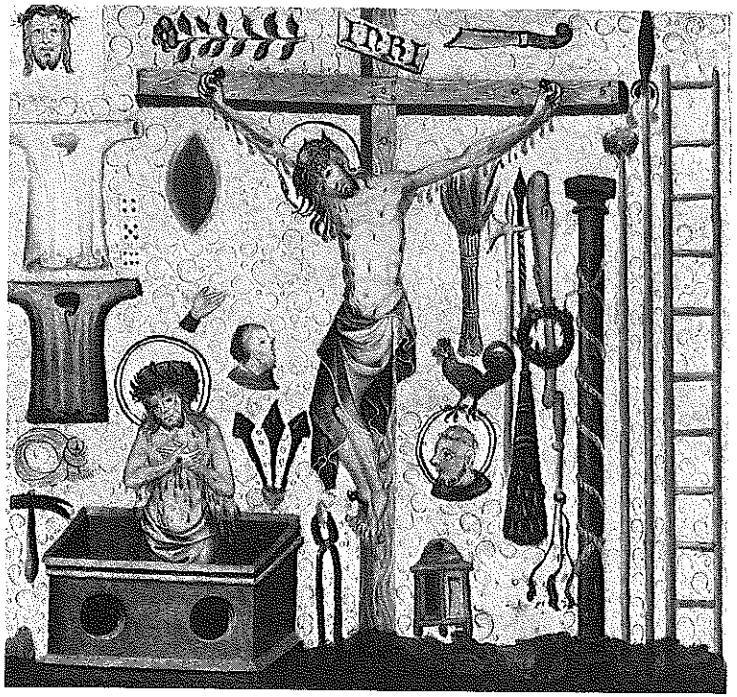

FIGURE 7.6. Cologne Master, *Altarpiece with Cycle of the Life of Christ*, central panel: *Arma Christi* (ca. 1340–1370). In this typical depiction of the instruments used to torture Christ at the Passion, the side-wound is presented as an independent body part. (It is displayed just under Christ's outstretched right arm.) The sexual overtones modern viewers find in such depictions may have been apparent also to medieval viewers, who frequently spoke of entering into Christ's side as into a womb.

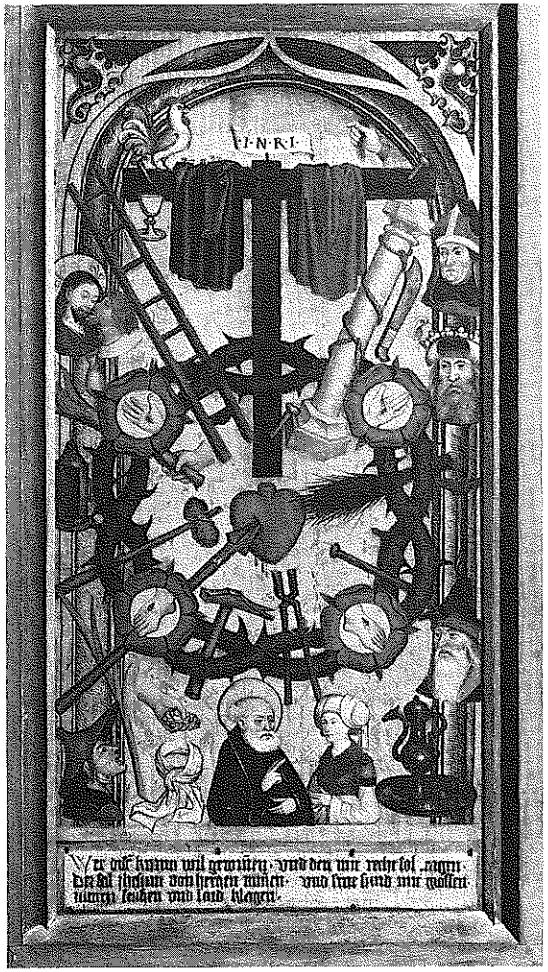

FIGURE 7.7. Daniel Mauch, Buxheim Altar, outer panel: *Arma Christi with the Five Wounds* (ca. 1500). In this depiction of the Five Wounds received by Christ on the cross, the Savior's body disappears entirely, to be replaced by bleeding fragments.

new enthusiasm about dividing bodies for purposes of science, politics and piety. Division could be generative. Because the person was in some sense his or her body, the multiplication of holy body parts seemed pregnant with possibility. The heart of a king or the finger of a virgin made the earth where he or she was buried fertile with saintly or royal power. The greater the number of parts and places in which noble or holy figures resided after death, the greater the number of prayers they received or evoked and the more far-flung their presence.

On the other hand, the cultural assumption that material continuity is crucial to person made fragmentation horrifying as well as generative and didactic. Theologians therefore opposed cremation and partition; physicians tried to preserve corpses forever from crumbling and putrefaction. Displaying the bloody fragments of the executed was a way of underlining their eternal damnation. In the severed quarters of a traitor displayed on castle walls, the person who broke the integrity of community was himself presented broken.[124] Even those reliquaries that flamboyantly announced that fragments were fragments surrounded the precious bits with permanent substances: jewels, crystal and gold. Devotional pictures of Christ's wounds underlined the horror of the Crucifixion by representing Christ himself as fragmented by our sins, but in such paintings *pars* clearly stands *pro toto*; each fragment of Christ's body – like each fragment of the eucharistic bread – is the whole of God.

Altarpieces and miniatures even depicted the general resurrection as a victory over fragmentation. In the eleventh to early thirteenth centuries, artists in the West drew on the iconographic program of the Byzantine Last Judgment to present the regurgitation of body fragments at the end of time (Figures 7.9, 7.10).[125] Although theology stressed that saved and damned alike rise entire and intact at the Last Judgment, the Byzantine iconographic pro-

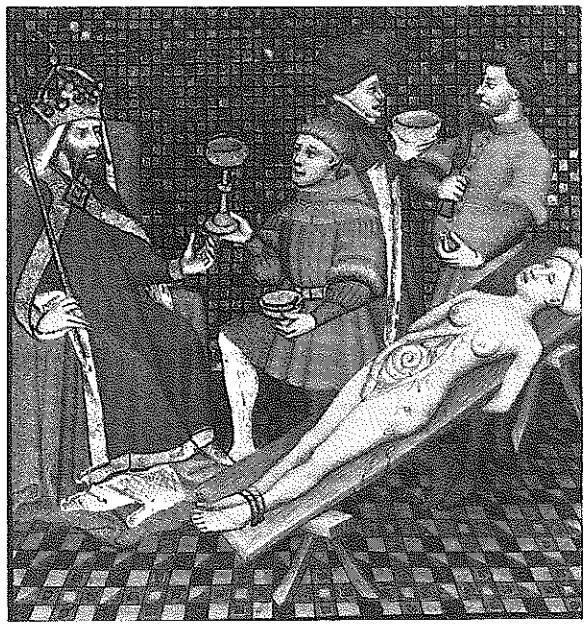

FIGURE 7.8. Nero's Autopsy of his Mother, from a fifteenth-century French translation of Boccaccio's *The Fates of Illustrious Men*, MS Fr. 5139, fol. 290v, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris. In the later Middle Ages, dissection of the cadaver was viewed with horror. The story that the emperor Nero had performed an autopsy on his own mother was taken as proof of his depravity.

FIGURE 7.9. Herrad of Hohenbourg, *Hortus deliciarum*, fol. 251r (ca. 1176–1196; tracings made in the nineteenth century from a destroyed manuscript). This massive encyclopedia illustrates the Last Judgment with motifs drawn from Byzantine art. At the sound of the trumpet, bodies rise from tombs and body parts are regurgitated from the craws of birds and beasts; the saved appear before God not as an indistinguishable mass of humanity, but marked with the specific characteristics of their religious statuses.

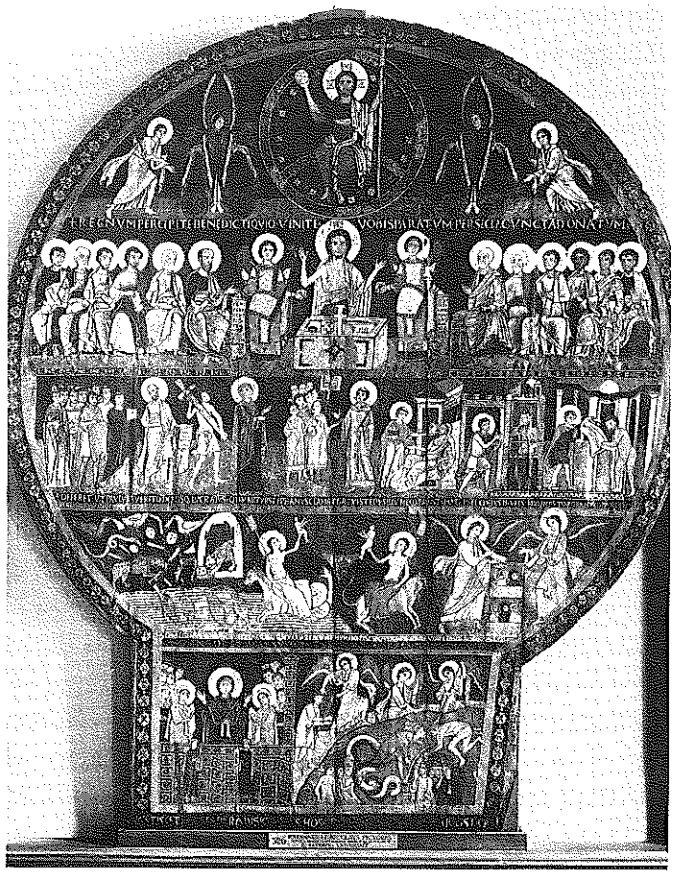

FIGURE 7.10. *Last Judgment* (late eleventh century [?]; now in the Vatican). The band of Latin inscription decorating this panel painting identifies the figures emerging from sarcophagi in zone four as the artists Nicolas and John; it states that they rise "from the dust of the earth." The regurgitated parts, labeled by the inscription "devoured members," are here drawn so schematically that they appear to be bones and skulls rather than the enfleshed body fragments usual in such Last Judgments.

gram makes complex visual use of the theme of part and whole by showing the potentially reassembled (i.e., regurgitated body parts) in the center of a vast, detailed and partially narrative representation, while the damned appear at the bottom right in fragments and the saved are whole and beautiful around the throne of God.[126] The rhythm of the composition associates fragmentation with evil, reassemblage with improvement, wholeness with good (Figure 7.11).[127] So powerful did Western artists find these themes that "Byzantine Last Judgments" crop up as far afield as Iceland.[128] Manuscript illuminations in the Rhineland occasionally separate the motif of reassemblage out from the total iconographic program in ways that emphasize the moment of the last trumpet as a process of reconstitution and revivification (Figure 7.12).[129]

Western artists depicted resurrection as reassemblage quite apart from their use of Byzantine motifs. The most common representation of "last things" showed men and women reborn already whole from the earth; it focused more on judgment than on rebirth (Figure 6.13). But, from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries, the resurrection of the dead was also depicted explicitly as the triumph of whole over part: the gathering together of bones, the reclothing of skeletons, the restoring of exactly those bits of matter scattered at death to the four winds. An eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory, for example, shows bodies at various stages of resuscitation: lying, still wrapped in grave clothes; sitting or standing, entangled in their shrouds; fully alive again, their souls depicted as doves flying in at the mouth (Figure 7.13).[130] The ninth-century Trier Apocalypse shows body parts given up by the sea (Figure 7.14).[131] The miniature (Figure 7.15) accompanying Vision 12, Book 3, of the *Scivias* of Hildegard of Bingen shows more graphically even than Hildegard's words that scattered pieces of human beings leap together when the trumpet sounds. Below the shining blessed, on Christ's right hand, are the

bones from which they rise. Apparently detached human heads roll in the blasts of the four winds. Even Renaissance artists, although they subordinate the moment of resurrection to depictions of heaven and hell, continue occasionally to emphasize resurrection as reassemblage. In the famous Brizio chapel at Orvieto, the Umbrian artist Signorelli represented resurrection as the reclothing of bones with muscle and skin (Figure 7.16). Jean Bellegambe – in an early sixteenth-century altarpiece possibly from Douai, now in Berlin – depicted angels gathering bones and reassembling bodies at the Last Judgment (Figure 7.17).[132] The angel in the background of the picture, collecting body fragments, bears striking resemblance to the gatherers of relics in the Ursula painting (Figure 7.5). The angel in the foreground, who fits bodies carefully together, works both with fragments clothed in flesh and with an arm that is still bare bone.

Indeed, in pious practice and in literature no less than in art, part sometimes becomes whole without reassemblage. Claims that holy bodies do not decay, and especially that parts of holy bodies are incorrupt or intact, represent a widespread concern to cross or deny the part/whole boundary by asserting the part to *be* the whole. In thirteenth- and fourteenth-century saints' lives, synecdoche is more than a figure of speech; metonymy becomes miracle. Not only is incorruption of body evidence for sanctity;[133] the saint is fully present in his or her every part. For example, Mary of Oignies's finger healed others after death just as Mary's physical presence and ministrations had healed in life. Hagiographers regularly spoke of fragments as "whole," of mutilated flesh as "intact"; indeed, such descriptions were frequently the focal point of their stories.

As many recent scholars have pointed out, both the vernacular saints' tales of the high Middle Ages, which contain significant folkloric elements, and the new collections of legends made

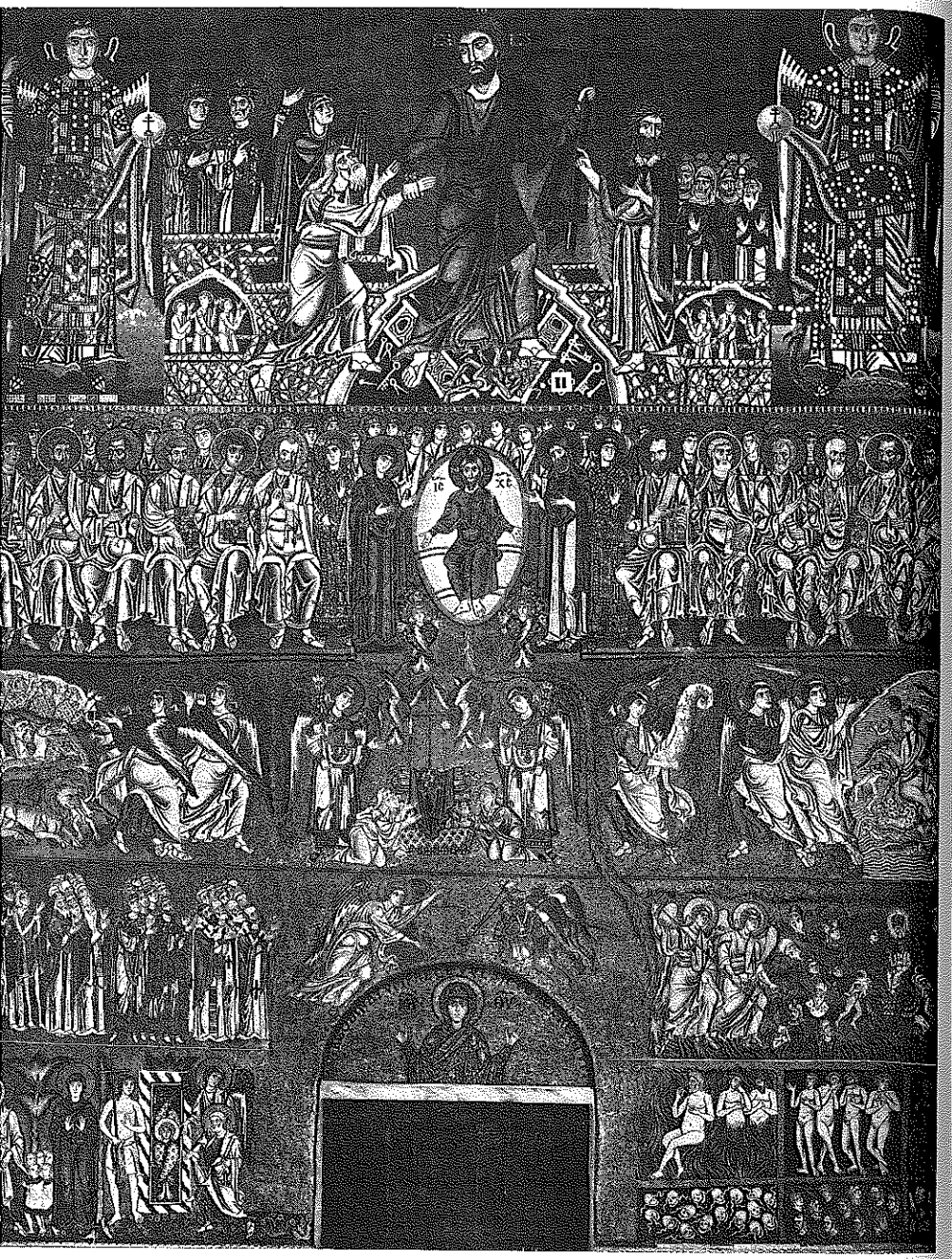

FIGURE 7.11. *Last Judgment*, the Cathedral, Torcello (eleventh century). The great mosaic on the west wall of the Cathedral at Torcello, near Venice, is the best-known example of the so-called Byzantine Last Judgment. It is a powerful depiction of the idea that salvation is wholeness, damnation is decay and partition. The triumph of whole over part is illustrated here not only in the lovely pictures of animals, carrion birds and fishes regurgitating fragments for resurrection, but also in the structure of the entire composition. In the top zone, the blessed rise whole from the tomb, while below them the saints in paradise shimmer in glory. At the bottom right, the deadly sins are represented by worm-eaten skulls (the envious), decapitated heads with large ornamented ears (the avaricious) and fragmented body parts (the indolent). Thus, despite the orthodox doctrine that all rise intact for judgment, the damned are represented in a state of fragmentation that is a symbolic expression of their sins. Heaven is associated with wholeness, hell with partition; redemption is regurgitation and reassemblage.

FIGURE 7.12. Resurrection of the Dead, from a Psalter from Bamberg-Eichstätt, MS 1833, fol. 109v, Stiftsbibliothek, Melk (ca. 1255). In this thirteenth-century German miniature of the resurrection, salvation is clearly represented as a triumph over fragmentation and decay. A corpse rises in its shroud, disentangles itself, and receives the garment of salvation, while other corpses receive their missing parts from the beasts who have devoured them.

FIGURE 7.13. (left) Ivory (eighth century; now in the Victoria and Albert Museum). An Anglo-Saxon ivory depicts the dead at the moment of resurrection in various stages of reanimation.

FIGURE 7.14. (right) The Trier Apocalypse, MS 31, fol. 67r, Stadtbibliothek, Trier (ninth century). This depiction of the resurrection, found in more than one early manuscript of the Apocalypse, perhaps derives from earlier models; it is, however, unconnected to the so-called Byzantine Last Judgment. The parts are clearly represented as given up by the sea. The presence, in this particular version, of three hands suggests that more than one body is being reassembled.

for the use of mendicant preachers agree in their archaizing tendency. Looking to distant events in Christian history and choosing heroines or heroes singularly unsuitable for pious imitation, hagiographers filled their pages with stories of martyrdom and mutilation.[134] The "best-seller" among such works was James of Voragine's *Golden Legend*, at least as popular in the later Middle Ages as the Bible itself.[135] A brief analysis of James's use of language will serve as my final example of the medieval capacity simultaneously to abhor, deny and delight in bodily partition.

Recent studies of James have underlined the brutality of his accounts and his obsession with martyrdom, especially with torture and bodily division.[136] Of the 153 chapters of the *Golden Legend* devoted to saints' days, at least 75 have dismemberment as a central motif.[137] Nonetheless, the point of such tales is not the presence, but the absence of suffering; there are only one or two references in all James's accounts of the early martyrs to the fact that mutilation might hurt.[138] So extravagant, indeed, is the denial of fragmentation, that, as several modern students of hagiography have pointed out, it is hard to say why James finally allows one among a series of lengthy tortures to dispatch his hero or heroine; in any case the actual death is often singularly anticlimactic.[139] What is underlined repeatedly is the reassembling of the fragmented body for burial or the victory of intactness over division. For example, the story of Saint Margaret, bound on the rack, beaten with sharp instruments until her bones were laid bare, burned with torches and plunged into water, describes her body as remaining "unscathed."[140] Burned on the pyre, Saint Theodore renders up his soul, but his body is "unharmed by the fire [*ab igne illaesum*]" and perfumes the air with sweet odor. The wife of Saint Adrian journeys a long distance to join her husband's severed hand with his other remains, which have been preserved, by a miraculous rainfall, from burning. Left by the emperor Diocletian to wolves

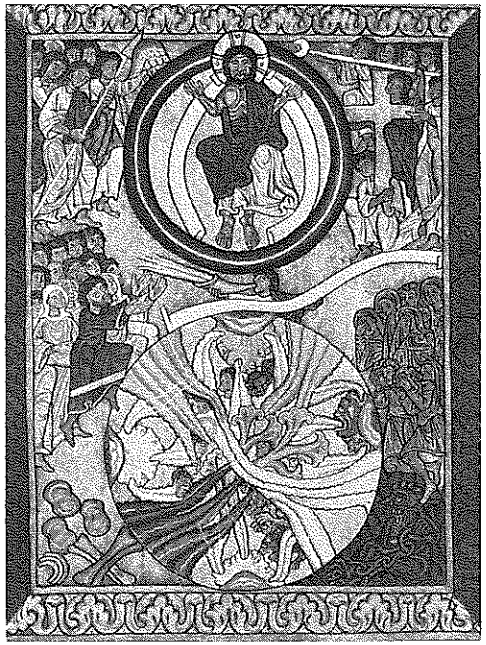

FIGURE 7.15. Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, book 3, vision 12, MS 1, Wiesbaden, Hessische Landesbibliothek (ca. 1165; manuscript lost in 1945). The miniature that accompanies the last vision in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias* graphically depicts the scattered pieces of human beings that come together when the trumpet sounds for the Last Judgment.

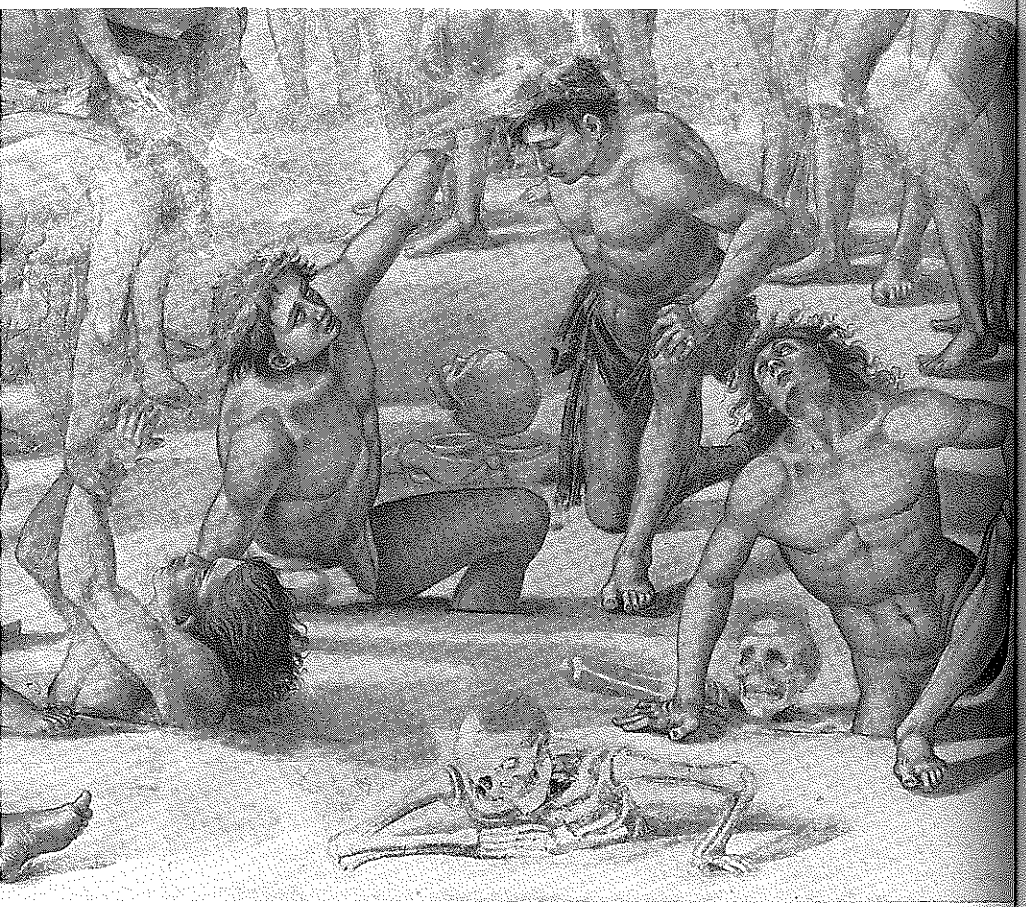

FIGURE 7.16. Signorelli, *The Last Judgment*, detail: *Resurrection of the Dead*, S. Brizio Chapel, Orvieto Cathedral (1499–1504). Although late medieval artists and poets turned increasing attention to the adventures of the soul in purgatory, interest in the resurrection of the fleshly, human body did not abate. This is a famous Renaissance depiction of resurrection as the enfleshing of skeletons.

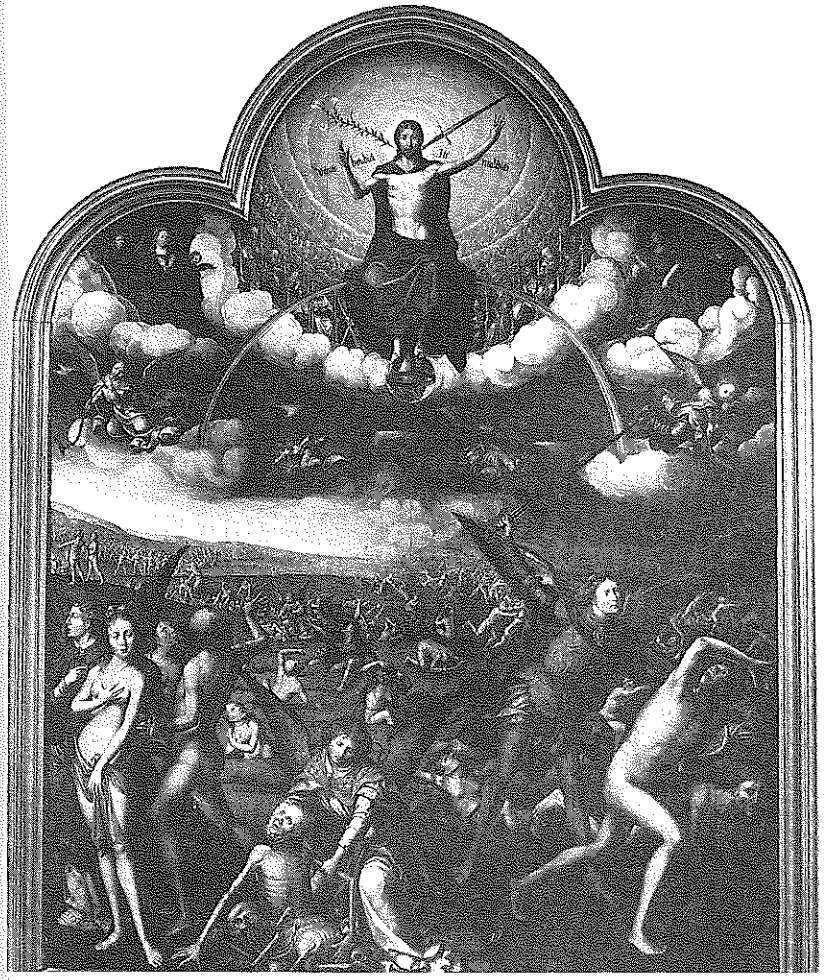

FIGURE 7.17. Jean Bellegambe (d. 1553), *Last Judgment* (Douai [?]; now in the Bode Museum, Berlin). This northern European altarpiece from the early sixteenth century shows angels gathering bones and reassembling bodies at the resurrection.

and dogs, the bodies of two martyrs survive "intact [*intacta*]" until the faithful can collect them for burial.[141] James (or a later interpolator) describes as "unharmed" and "unhurt" Sophia's three daughters, who were fried in a skillet, had their breasts torn off, were stretched on the rack and finally beheaded. In contrast, the emperor Hadrian, who presided over the torture of the three young girls, is said to have "withered away, filled with rottenness [*totus putrefactus*]."[142] Whether or not fragmentation or diminution is characterized as significant (or even in fact as occurring) depends not on what happens to the body physically but on the moral standing of the person to whom the bodily events pertain.

The fact of bodily division is often, in the *Golden Legend*, denied by exactly the account that chronicles it. The words attributed to the martyr James the Dismembered, as he loses his toes, are typical:

> Go, third toe, to thy companions, and as the grain of wheat bears much fruit, so shalt thou rest with thy fellows unto the last day.... Be comforted, little toe, because great and small shall have the same resurrection. A hair of the head shall not perish, and how much less shalt thou, the least of all, be separated from thy fellows?[143]

The message, with its explicit echoes of the Luke 21.18 and I Corinthians 15.42-44, is clear.[144] Dismemberment is horrible, to be sure; and even more horrifying is rottenness or decay. But in the end none of this is horrible at all. Beheaded and mutilated saints are "whole" and "unharmed." Severed toes are the seeds from which glorified bodies will spring. God's promise is that division shall finally be overcome, that ultimately there is no scattering.[145] As one of the more conservative theologians might have said: Material continuity *is* identity; body is univocal; the whole will rise and every part is in a sense the whole.

Anthropologists tell us that all cultures deal, in ritual and symbol, with putrefaction; all cultures strain to mask and deny the horror of the period between "first death" (the departure of breath or life) and "second death" or mineralization (the reduction of the cadaver to the hard remains – that is, teeth and bones).[146] And certainly we can see an effort both to deny – and to give meaning to – the process of decay in thirteenth-century miracles of effluvia and closure, of partition and incorruption. Miracles of holy exuding make oil, milk and blood, whether from cadavers or from the living, curative and therefore generative of life;[147] miracles of extravagant fasting in life and of incorruptibility in the grave assert living bodies to be changeless and cadavers to be without decay. Moreover, theological debates about the survival of hair and fingernails in the resurrection grapple directly with the fragmentation and change we fear in the tomb. Crystal or gold reliquaries that associate body bits with permanence, paintings in which body parts are assimilated to reliquaries or statues, stories in which torture does not divide and body cannot really be scattered because no fragment can ever be lost – such images hide the process of putrefaction, equate bones with body and part with whole, and treat body as the permanent locus of the person.

These medieval attitudes, practices and images have roots hundreds of years old; they may indeed – as anthropologists suggest – reflect cultural constants as old as civilization itself.[148] Their immediate context is not, however, age-old attitudes, but thirteenth-century changes. The later thirteenth century saw a new enthusiasm for bodily partition – for scientific, political and cultic reasons – coupled with new efforts to limit, prohibit and deny it. It is hardly surprising therefore that, in the last decades of the century, as debate erupted over the proper treatment of the cadaver, theologians not only experimented with new theo-

ries of personal identity, but also strove to retain a conception of person to which body, in the commonsense understanding of body, was integral.[149] Nor is it surprising that religious art and literature both detailed the process of reassemblage of parts into whole and, underlining the nature of part *as part*, asserted it to *be* the whole.

Enthusiastic recourse to bodily partition at the very heart of a religion that denied, on the ontological level, that partition occurred at all; prurient fascination with torture and division in a culture that not only articulated opposition to these practices, but also found innumerable euphemisms for them – these aspects of the thirteenth century are profoundly contradictory. Yet, underneath them all lies a deep conviction that the person *is* his or her body. The entire context of thirteenth-century life thus helps us to understand how contemporaries viewed the theological doctrine of bodily resurrection and why they debated it as they did. Resurrection was asserted by theologians and believed by ordinary Christians both because bodily fragmentation was not really a threat and because it was!

My discussion has ranged far afield from the scholastic debates with which it began. But I doubt whether, for all its range, it has succeeded in quelling the doubts and disagreeable sensations such material usually arouses in a modern audience. Some of the philosophical details may still seem far from clear. The theological details and hagiographical stories may remain distasteful. Even the historical conclusions may have no little capacity to shock, in view of the clichés about the spiritualism and dualism of the Middle Ages purveyed in college textbooks. Nonetheless, I hope I have compelled even outraged readers to recognize that the oddest medieval concerns are no more bizarre than modern ones.

Moreover, the opinions of twelfth- and thirteenth-century schoolmen and of late twentieth-century philosophers and medical sociologists have more in common than simply their respective oddity. In their debates about fetuses and fingernails as in their popular preaching and legends, medieval people expressed the understanding that body is essential to person and material continuity to body. A significant group among modern intellectuals does not disagree. It is clear both that questions of survival and identity are not, even today, solved, and that they can be solved only through the sort of specific body puzzles medieval theologians delighted in raising.

In a world where we are faced with decisions about heart (and possibly even brain) transplants, about the uses of artifical intelligence, about the care of Alzheimer's patients and severely birth-damaged infants, we are forced to confront as never before the question: "Am I my body?" Issues of part and whole, of life prolongation and putrefaction, scream out at us from the headlines of the *National Enquirer* as we stand in supermarket checkout lines. We are no closer to definitive answers than were the medieval theologians who considered the resurrection of umbilical cords and fingernails. But, like them, we seem unwilling to jettison the conviction that material continuity is necessary for personal survival. Perhaps then, perusal of the *New York Review of Books*, the *New York Times* science page or the *National Enquirer* – or an evening with *Star Trek* or *Max Headroom* or even *General Hospital* – suggests that we should feel greater respect than we have hitherto evidenced for the sophistication of medieval theologians.