

Ill and Impaired Bodies in a Ninth-Century Liturgical Commentary: Amalarius' *Liber Officialis* Through the Lens of Disability Studies¹

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This paper seeks to locate the ninth-century liturgical commentary, the *Liber Officialis* by Amalarius of Metz, in scholarly discourse concerning disability and sickness. By analysing five distinct moments in the text where Amalarius specifically writes about a bodily ailment or impairment and its consequence on the affected person's experience of Mass, I will argue that Amalarius' interpretation of the liturgy is shaped by a desire to normalize and de-stigmatize any medical conditions that might have been seen in a negative light by other members of the congregation. The fact that the celebration of Mass is the context in which everything occurs is particularly important, for, as I will show, certain physical conditions can be considered disabilities therein but would not be construed as such under other circumstances or in different settings. Where applicable and non-anachronistic, I will also draw on terms and concepts developed by scholars of modern disability studies and expand upon them so that we may consider how a text written almost twelve centuries earlier can contribute to our understanding of perceptions of illness and impairment throughout history.

Background Information on the *Liber Officialis* and Existing Scholarship

Amalarius of Metz (d. c. 850 CE) is remembered today for his exceptionally innovative interpretations of the Roman Catholic liturgy. His innovation, unsurprisingly, made him a target for accusations of heresy,

1. I would like to thank Professor Katherine Williams for recommending sources that have been of great value to this essay. Much gratitude also goes to Professor John Haines, out of whose seminar class this essay developed. Finally, I thank my anonymous reviewer for many helpful suggestions and corrections.

and he was forced out of his position as Archbishop of Lyon in 838. As Christopher Jones explains, Amalarius applies methods of biblical exegesis to his analysis of the significance of prayers, songs, physical gestures, and material objects – such as priestly vestments – with the result that “liturgical performance has been abstracted and flattened, as it were, into a page of expoundable text for ‘reading’.”² His treatment of the liturgy as “a kind of alternative scripture”³ prompted opponents, such as Florus of Lyon, to accuse him of eschewing proper doctrine in favour of his personal, over-active imagination.

The *Liber Officialis*, Amalarius’ main work on the liturgy, is comprised of four books the contents of which were finalized around 835.⁴ In the broader context of Church history, the *Liber Officialis* was written less than fifty years after Emperor Charlemagne released his *Admonitio Generalis* (789), in which he outlined his plans for standardizing the use of the Roman rite throughout his newly-conquered territories, supplanting local rites, such as the Gallican, as well as converting non-Christians to Christianity. Charlemagne’s use of liturgy and religious unity as tools for preserving a coherent and manageable political body was continued by his successor, Louis the Pious. Scholar Yitzhak Hen emphasizes Louis’ incorporation of liturgical performances into his agenda of “royal image-building,” having litanies recited and hymns sung when celebrating a military triumph, and maintaining the presence of rituals at his court so that his kingship appeared not only legitimate but divinely-sanctioned.⁵ As religious spectacle helped bolster regal authority, Louis’ reign, during which Amalarius wrote his *Liber Officialis*, was marked by a concern for regularity in liturgical practice. This period saw a surge in commentaries that directly explained how each rite and ceremony was to be performed. Compared to these works of straightforward

2. Christopher Jones, *A Lost Work by Amalarius of Metz: Interpolations in Salisbury, Cathedral Library, MS. 154* (London: Boydell Press [for the Henry Bradshaw Society], 2001), 4.

3. Jones, *A Lost Work by Amalarius of Metz*, 6.

4. Celia Chazelle, “Amalarius’s *Liber Officialis*: Spirit and Vision in Carolingian Liturgical Thought,” in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Giselle de Nie, Karl F Morrison, and Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 327-359.

5. For an in-depth study on the political role that liturgy played in the ninth century, see Yitzhak Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy in Frankish Gaul to the Death of Charles the Bald (877)* (London: Boydell Press [for the Henry Bradshaw Society], 2001).

exposition, Amalarius' allegorical interpretations were unusual.⁶

Regarding the order of contents in the *Liber Officialis*, the first book is centered on the Easter cycle, starting from Septuagesima, the third week before Lent, all the way through Paschal Time, which ends with the celebrations of Pentecost. The second book discusses the various clerical offices, such as exorcists (2.9), acolytes (2.10), and deacons (2.12), as well as the symbolism of different vestments, like the archbishop's pallium (2.23). The third book, which is the focus of this essay, deals extensively with the Mass. Attached to the end of this book are several letters, out of which I will only be examining one, which is addressed to a man named Guntard and contains a defence of Amalarius' idiosyncratic habit of spitting after ingesting the Eucharist. The fourth book consists of an analysis of the Divine Office – the services that comprise a liturgical day, namely Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline – mixed with some miscellaneous items that refer back to those previously expounded in the first three books.

Existing scholarship on the *Liber Officialis* has approached it from a number of different angles. Celia Chazelle accounts for Amalarius' discursive style and recurrent statements that his ideas come from the Holy Spirit or his own mind by making comparisons to the practices of monastic ruminative meditation.⁷ Others place the work within discussions of Christian drama and the links between liturgical ceremony and theatrical performance. For example, the bishop, being the vicar of Christ, is seen as a divine actor who plays a role that recalls "the office which Christ performed on earth when incarnate,"⁸ while deacons, sub-deacons, and acolytes are actors who fill the parts of prophets, wise-men, and scribes, respectively.⁹ Amalarius' downfall at the Council at Quierzy in 838 as it relates to the problem of theatre's perceived associations with paganism is brought up in an article by Donnalee Dox.¹⁰ Amalarius' controversies, notably surrounding his ideas on Christ's *corpus triforme* when writing about the Eucharist, receives attention from

6. Discussed in Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy*.

7. Chazelle, "Amalarius's *Liber Officialis*."

8. O.B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1965), 48.

9. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama*, 49.

10. Donnalee Dox, "The Eyes of the Body and the Veil of Faith," *Theatre Journal* 56, no. 1 (2004): 29-45.

Christopher Jones, who shows that the seemingly unorthodox division of Christ's body results from Amalarius' conflation of ecclesiological language dealing with the body of the Church and christological language used when speaking about the Lord's assumed humanity and substance.¹¹ Other studies on the text seek to determine how the *Liber Officialis* either reflects or does not reflect actual Church practices during Amalarius' time.¹²

I have yet to find, however, any study that reads the *Liber Officialis* through the lens of disability studies and, it seems to me, there is currently no work of scholarship that links Amalarius to the theme of sickness or impaired bodies. Thus, I would like to make the first step toward putting Amalarius' writings and the critical theories and approaches of disability studies together in an academic forum. At the same time, I hope that this paper will add something useful to the current field of medieval disability studies. Although already encompassing the study of literary texts, legal documents, medical treatises, social history, theology, and hagiography,¹³ within this field it is still difficult to find material that deals with liturgy proper – including how the texts are arranged, the musical instruments used, and the external motions of the worshipping body – and with liturgical commentaries.¹⁴

Edward Wheatley provides an excellent overview of how Christianity and disability intersected in the Middle Ages. In defining the “religious model of disability,”¹⁵ he outlines how “the church's control of the discursive

11. Jones, *A Lost Work by Amalarius of Metz*, 153-164.

12. See John Gibaut, “Amalarius of Metz and the Laying on of Hands in the Ordination of a Deacon,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 2 (1989): 233-240.

13. Several books cover a wide range of these fields and genres. For a recent study that focusses on medieval Spain, see Connie L. Scarborough, *Viewing Disability in Medieval Spanish Texts: Disgraced or Graced* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2018). Two other recent works include: Sally Crawford and Christina Lee, eds., *Social Dimensions of Medieval Disease and Disability* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014), and Christian Krötzl, Kateriina Mustakallio, and Jenni Kuuliala, eds., *Infirmity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Social and Cultural Approaches to Health, Weakness, and Care* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2015).

14. One essay that discusses early-modern English liturgy and cognitive disability is Mardy Phillipian, Jr., “The Book of Common Prayer, Theory of Mind, and Autism in Early Modern England,” in *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, ed. Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2013), 150-167.

15. Edward Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 10.

terrain of illness and disability grew out of New Testament theology,¹⁶ Christ's miraculous healings, and the idea that bodily nuisances were caused by sin and spiritual defects, although this last point may have been overemphasized by modern historians.¹⁷ Wheatley mentions that, in medieval visual art and narratives about saints, a patient's infirmity is not the object of concern in itself, but a means for a saint to prove his or her holiness by curing it. Simultaneously, the patient's faith in the healer is ultimately more important than the wholeness of the body.¹⁸ The primary form of disability that Wheatley discusses is blindness, and he situates it in a liturgical context when pointing out that, "from the twelfth century through the remainder of the Middle Ages, the laity partook of the Eucharist through only their sense of sight."¹⁹ Healthy members of the congregation who could see the elevation of the host by the priest directed their gaze onto God himself and were able to benefit fully from communion in this way without being required to confess their sins beforehand. On the contrary, confession had to be made before oral ingestion of the Eucharist, for fear of anyone receiving the Lord's body unworthily.²⁰ Since communion through sight was not an option for the blind, physical impairment put one's spiritual well-being at a disadvantage.

Wheatley cites two miracle narratives – one from Jean Gobi's *Miracles de Saint Marie-Madeleine* and another from *The Life and Gests of S. Thomas Cantilupe* – through which we can see how disability and liturgy coincided in the minds of medieval writers. In the first story, a man who lost his eyesight in the grueling environs of prison enters a church and meditates upon the body of Christ in the host. However, he fervently desires to behold it not only with his spiritual vision but with his literal sight, prizing the latter as more efficacious in producing an intense and immediate experience of sacred materiality. God grants his prayer and he regains the use of his eyes. In the second story, a blind man who was once a servant to Saint Thomas prays to the Virgin Mary for his eyesight, hoping that he could

16. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, 10.

17. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, 14.

18. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, 11.

19. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, 15.

20. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, 15.

once again behold the host during Mass. After ten days, he is cured.²¹ In both stories, bodily infirmity presents obstacles to the reception of divine goods. Only heavenly intervention can remedy the situation. The liturgy itself only matters in these stories to demonstrate that the disabled cannot participate in it fully. The rituals, as well as those who plan and lead them, are indifferent to those who are physically different. Until divine powers take away the disability altogether, the liturgy is not accommodating to the disabled or capable of incorporating them into the community of physically-sound congregants.

However, a fresher perspective may be shown if we consider how Amalarius interprets the Roman liturgy as an accommodating system of worship and refutes the notion that disabilities are obstacles that block the faithful from God's gifts. Of course, use of the word "accommodating" may appear anachronistic to some, since accommodation is a relatively modern term that presupposes a society's recognition of a disabled community. Medieval scholars have pointed out that "disability," as we understand the term, was not a clearly defined concept in the Middle Ages and that such an over-arching word for the categorization of bodies did not exist. Regarding this subject, Jonathan Hsy writes that "there has always been variation across human bodies and the range of capacities (physical and mental) that individuals can claim, but the meanings associated with various kinds of embodied experience vary by time and place."²² At the same time, "impairments such as blindness or deafness did not necessarily carry negative connotations."²³

Although the fully-formed idea of "disability" might not have been in Amalarius' mind as he composed his commentary, his awareness that liturgical performances are just as much physical exercises as spiritual ones leads him to acknowledge the multiplicity of subjective experiences that belong to the variety of bodies engaged in religious celebrations. The spectrum includes those who are missing an entire sensory faculty, as well as those who suffer chronic pain that interferes with their ability to partake in or concentrate on the ceremonies. Amalarius' repeated references to the

21. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, 17-18.

22. Jonathan Hsy, "Disability," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, ed. David Hillman and Ulrika Maude (New York: Cambridge UP, 2015), 33.

23. Hsy, "Disability," 33.

sick, impaired, and physically different in his work show how he considers their experiences at Mass to be no less meaningful than those of people with healthy bodies. Furthermore, by incorporating imagery of those whom we would call “disabled” today into his explications of Church rituals, Amalarius justifies the presence of defective bodies with their special status as essential instruments of exegesis, therefore ascribing to them more sanctity than stigma. While “accommodating” might be a term that is twelve centuries *avant-la-lettre*, Amalarius’ vision of the liturgy is one that demonstrates spiritual richness being tied with physical diversity.

Deafness and Its Metaphors

Amalarius considers the presence of deaf persons in the congregation when he interprets the significance of the choir, whose harmonious voices symbolize the unity of the Christian community on earth and in heaven:

Let the cantors here consider the meaning of their symphony. Through it, they urge people to persist in the unity of the worship of a single God. And even if a deaf person were present, the cantors would make the very same point through their arrangement in the well-ordered choir, such that those who cannot grasp the unity with their ears may grasp it with their sight.²⁴

According to this passage, the aurally-impaired would find compensation in visual elements of the liturgy, for the same religious import contained in the choir’s singing could be found in its physical layout without any diminishment. Amalarius, thus, optimistically suggests to his deaf readers that they are not as disabled as one might first imagine, since the obstacle comes with its own accommodation. Furthermore, Amalarius opens up the possibility of deaf people possessing a special advantage over their hearing fellows when he quotes a sentence from Saint Augustine’s *The City of God*

24. Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, trans. Eric Knibbs (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2014), 3.3.5. Knibbs provides a clear, literal translation of the Latin original. I will be using Knibbs English translation whenever I quote Amalarius, but I will engage with specific Latin words when their nuances are significant to my analysis. For those who wish to read the original Latin, the passage is as follows: “Hinc tractent cantores quid significet simphonia eorum; ea ammonent plebem ut in unitate unius Dei cultus perseverent. Etiam si aliquis surdus affuerit, idipsum statu illorum in choro ordinatissimo insinuant, ut qui auribus capere non possunt unitatem, visu capiant.”

relating to the biblical David, who founded the cantors' office. This occurs just above the already cited passage and reads, "But David was a man skilled in song, who loved musical harmony not with vulgar delight, but with faithful will."²⁵ This quote reminds the reader that music, although it can be used to praise God and communicate a sense of harmony, can also be improperly enjoyed and abused when the listener has a view to feeling sensual pleasure instead of increasing holy desires. While those with perfect hearing may still be tempted to listen to music with "vulgar delight" and be led astray during Mass, the deaf are free from such temptations and would benefit spiritually from the ceremony by only using their eyes.

Despite all of these positive suggestions, a problem soon arises when deafness is used tropologically, as a metaphor for spiritual dullness and insusceptibility to the reforming powers of liturgical materials that are being read or sung. Amalarius likens those who lack feelings of compunction during the lector's reading to deaf persons who require curing. When cast in a metaphorical light, deafness becomes a crippling disability that could potentially jeopardize one's hope for salvation. After he states that the lector's reading teaches the "law of Moses and the entire ancient record,"²⁶ which should be understood as the "first principles through which we learn about God ... and basic ideas of piety,"²⁷ he turns his attention to those who remain unmoved by it. He writes, "but if there is yet someone who is deaf, and grows listless with the ears of his heart stopped up, let the cantor come to him with his sublime trumpet, in the manner of the prophets, and let him sound a sweet melody in his ears; perhaps he will be stirred."²⁸ Declaring that music "has a kind of natural power for moving the spirit," Amalarius poses that a song accomplishes through the sweetness of its melody more than what a simple speech can through persuasiveness of prose.²⁹

25. "Erat autem David vir in canticis eruditus, qui armoniam musicam non vulgari voluptate, sed fideli voluntate dilexerit..." (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.3.4).

26. "...lex Moysi et omne vetus instrumentum" (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.11.8-9).

27. "...elementis et religionis exordiis, Deum discimus" (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.11.8-9).

28. "At si adhuc aliquis surdus, obturatis auribus cordis, torpescit, veniat cantor cum excelsa tuba, more prophetarum, sonetque in aures eius dulcedinem melodiae; forsan excitabitur" (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.11.8-9).

29. "Musica habet quandam naturalem vim ad flectendum animum..." (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.11.14).

We now run into the following conundrum. Regarding deafness as a real, physical impairment, although different remedies were suggested over the course of the medieval period – some of them religio-magical – general opinion was that the condition could not be reversed.³⁰ When deployed as a religious metaphor, though, deafness both can and ought to be cured over time in order to attain spiritual and moral edification. Since the act of listening is a prerequisite for such edification, it requires a person to possess unimpaired hearing, and those who are physically deaf are automatically barred from the benefits of song. Amalarius' metaphor, besides being inapplicable to the deaf, has the dangerous effect of depicting the deaf as incapable of spiritual improvement. If a deaf individual happens to be hardhearted, and only the music of the cantor has the power to reverse the situation, then he or she will always remain so. Despite this, Amalarius has a solution for this problem and it lies in his use of synaesthetic rhetoric, which I will explain below.

When describing how the cantor's song is supposed to move listeners to compunction, Amalarius writes the following:

We said that those who are in some way deaf to the epistle are stirred by the responsory; let us explain how the obedient should benefit from the responsory at that moment. During the reading the listener is fed, in a certain sense, like an ox; for the ox is fed to do the work of husbandry.... And the cantor is like the plowman who calls out to the oxen to drag the plow more cheerfully. The cantor is one of those whom Paul speaks about: 'We are God's helpers.' The oxen are those who respond to the head cantor. Again, Paul speaks of them: 'You are God's husbandry.' The earth is furrowed as the oxen drag the plow when the cantors, drawing their innermost breath, drag forth a sweet voice and present it to the people. Through this voice they goad their own heart, as well as the hearts of others, to tears and to the confession of sins, as if laying bare the hidden parts of the earth.³¹

30. Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking About Physical Impairment During the High Middle Ages, c.1100-1400* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 102.

31. "Diximus quod excitentur per responsorium qui sunt quodammodo surdi ad epistolam; dicamus qualiter oboedientes ilico proficiant per responsorium. In lectione pascitur auditor, quasi quodammodo bos; ad hoc enim pascitur bos, ut in eo exerceatur opus agriculturae.... Cantor enim est quasi bubulcus, qui iubilat bubus, ut hilarius trahant aratrum. Cantor est de his de quibus dicit Paulus: 'Dei adiutores sumus' [1 Cor 3:9]. Boves sunt qui respondent primo cantori. De quibus iterum dicit: 'Dei agricultura estis' [1 Cor 3:9]. Trahentibus bobus aratrum, scinditur terra, quando cantores, intimos anhelitus commoventes, trahunt dulcem vocem et proferunt

Those who are deaf to the epistle are clearly meant to be understood metaphorically as insensible to the lessons contained in the reading, but given Amalarius' awareness of those who are literally deaf, when expounding the visual significance of the choir, it is likely that he, in this passage, has not forgotten about those who are unable to process aurally the epistle or responsory. In fact, Amalarius transforms the experience of hearing music into one of seeing visual images. The cantor's voice ceases to resemble sound and takes on the shape of a plow-line in the ground, which a deaf person would be able to envision and recognize. The extended metaphor of agricultural activities is highly graphic, illustrating the progress of the soul as a rich mental spectacle that anyone who is familiar with scenes of farm work would easily recall to mind. Those who are unable to hear the music can, by reading Amalarius' text, picture the roughness of ox hooves dragging along the earth and the cutting of the plow into the soil, and imagine this same roughness being used to "goad their hearts." The scene also awakens the olfactory and taste senses, since the people are invited to see themselves as oxen given food in preparation for labouring for divine reward. Amalarius uses language in such a way that allows the deaf to "hear" the cantor's voice through sight, touch, smell, and taste. Sound is no longer restricted to the ears as a result of Amalarius' synaesthetic interpretation of music.

The emphasis on sight and seeing is made stronger when one considers what Amalarius writes immediately afterward to explain how the responsory is uniquely helpful to the preacher:

Letters are copied so that, through them, what has been lost by forgetfulness might be committed to memory. Similarly, we recall through an image what can be committed to our memory within. In the same way, the preacher is in some sense admonished, through the responsory, to practice the teaching that preceded in the reading...³²

Amalarius' multi-layered metaphor, likening the song to written words and to images that ultimately fulfil a moral purpose, fits what could also be

ad publicum, qua corda suorum sive ceterorum compungunt ad lacrimas, sive ad confitenda peccata, quasi secreta patefaciendo terrae" (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.1.20-22).

32. "Ideo scribuntur litterae, ut per eas memoriae reddatur quod oblivione deletum est. Simili modo ex pictura recordamur quod interius memoriae commendari potest. Ita et responsorio ammonetur praedicator quomodo doctrinam, quae praecessit in lectione, exercent" (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.1.22-28).

the agenda of a deaf individual who reads this text, which is performative in that it accomplishes exactly what it describes. While it is debatable whether a deaf-born person in the ninth century would have learned to read Amalarius' work well enough to understand its full import,³³ literate individuals who once had good use of their hearing faculties that they later lost due to illness, injury, or age could have read the letters of the passages quoted, remembered their past experiences of hearing sound, and also enjoyed the additional value of the husbandry images so vividly described.

Moreover, the stress that Amalarius lays on recalling and committing images to memory is highly reminiscent of meditative *ruminatio*, an activity during which “biblical verses and ideas that [one’s] mind had acquired from other texts elucidating biblical doctrine, such as patristic exegesis, were supposedly ‘invented’ or recalled to memory.”³⁴ One of the higher purposes of meditation is to arrive at one’s personal understanding of divine mysteries and sacred texts after prolonged reflection, guided by the Holy Spirit, and mental synthesis of arguments gleaned from sacred sources. Amalarius’ metaphors involving oxen and plowed fields, inspired by the quote he cites from 1 Corinthians 3:9 (“You are God’s husbandry”), suggest that his interpretations of the responsory are the product of his own *ruminatio* upon Scripture and, in fact, are exercises of the intellect rather than of any corporeal sense. While the preacher listens to the music of the cantors and has an experience that only resembles that of a person who reads letters to boost one’s memory or recalls images to reinforce it, the deaf could read the actual letters of Amalarius’ meditations and turn over in their minds the images that he offers to use as fodder for their own *ruminatio*es.

33. Scholars have evidence that monks in Benedictine monasteries often used hand signals instead of audible speech to communicate, as they took vows of silence to avoid the distractions of idle conversation. Jonathan Hsy, writing about the Cistercians – an order founded in the eleventh century, decades after Amalarius lived – comments that they developed a simple sign language “to convey basic needs (signs for items of food or actions like ‘pray’ or ‘read’), but because this code was intended to restrict communication it did not develop a fully expressive grammar” (see Hsy, “Disability,” 30). Rosamond McKitterick lists local monasteries and ecclesiastical schools as places of instruction in the Carolingian era, but it would be too great a leap into speculative territory to assume that deaf boys would have learned to read Latin cohesively from those using monastic sign language. For more on Carolingian literacy, see McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

34. Chazelle, “Amalarius’s *Liber Officialis*,” 334.

Amalarius' synthesizing of Pauline epistles and his theories on music are an example for the deaf, who could rely on reason, memory, and inspiration to form similar enlightening conclusions. The deaf are no longer to be seen as being at a disadvantage, since they can achieve, via the spiritual act of meditation upon music and with the help of images supplied by the Bible, what perfectly healthy individuals can achieve from physically hearing.

The Spitting Priest and Problems of Excess

Deafness is not the only physical condition that Amalarius de-stigmatizes in the *Liber Officialis*, for in his letter to a young man named Guntard, he defends his own phlegmatic constitution and habit of spitting immediately after consuming the Eucharist. He begins his letter with the following lines:

My son, I remember that you asked me, with your considerable ability, why I do not govern myself with greater caution to avoid spitting directly after I have consumed the sacrifice. You added that you have not seen other priests doing this – that is, spitting right after they have eaten the Eucharist.... Now that I am travelling, I have become worried about your affection and that some false suspicion remains in your heart – as if I were acting wantonly and contrary to our standards of piety, and as if you were not persisting in an error of ignorance.³⁵

From this passage, one can see two kinds of bodies being compared and contrasted: the individual body with its own idiosyncrasies, and the collective body of the priesthood that is bound together by uniformity of action and behaviour. Guntard accuses Amalarius of violating the pious image that priests ought to bear in their bodies, for when he spits, he momentarily represents only the image of his ailing body. Guntard reveals in his objection that he both subconsciously does not see and consciously does not wish to see the sick body for what it is. By objecting that he has not seen other priests spitting, he automatically connects spitting to the roles and functions

35. “Fili mi, recordatus sum percontasse pollens ingenium tuum, quare non me cum maiore cautela custodirem ne ilico post consumptum sacrificium spuere. Addidisti quod non videres ceteros sacerdotes hoc facere – id est statim spuere post comestam Eucharistiam.... Iam in itinere degens, aporiatus sum tua dilectione, ne aliqua suspicio remaneret tibi falsa in pectore – quasi ergo proterve hoc agerem contra nostram religionem et neque remaneres in aliquo errore ignorantiae” (Amalarius of Metz, “Letters,” in *On the Liturgy*, 6.1-2).

of the priest. The appropriateness of the action is based on how it fits-in with established forms of priestly decorum. Therefore, sickness becomes invisible as a medical condition and seen only as bad priestly behaviour that he, then, actively stigmatizes. To understand how Amalarius refutes Guntard's accusations of impiety, I will refer to the work of two scholars, Tory Vandeventer Pearman and Roger E. Reynolds, whose respective essays on the grotesque, disabled body and the *imago Dei* contribute to my argument that Amalarius defends his sick body in a paradoxical fashion. On the one hand, he embraces the image of his sick body in order to throw into question his contemporaries' notions of correct priestly behaviour during Mass. On the other hand, he dislocates the grossness of his sickness from his own body and relocates it to the psyche of his accuser, Guntard.

In her essay "'O Sweete Queyntel!': Pregnancy and the Disabled Body in the *Merchant's Tale*," Pearman discusses the status of women's bodies in Chaucer's lifetime (c. 1342-1400) as disabled, disabling, and grotesque. Focusing on medieval physiological beliefs, Pearman points out that the female body was perceived as a weaker, incomplete, and mutilated form of the male body.³⁶ Relying on Aristotelian theories that women lack the warm humours needed for a strong, dominant, masculine constitution, the female body was understood to be disabled from birth. However, Pearson also shows that the same body, driven by its self-insufficiency, possessed a disabling power capable of upsetting male dominance, for writers, such as Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, ascribed to the woman's *pudenda* a voracious hunger that, if not properly contained and controlled, threatened to draw out the vital fluids of a male partner and cause his debilitation.³⁷ The disabled/disabler status of the female body is epitomized by its grotesqueness when pregnant, evidenced by its corpulent swelling.

Pearman refers to the theory of the grotesque developed by Mikhail Bakhtin:

Images of the grotesque body concentrate on the lower strata of the body and the mouth – it is through the mouth and out of the bowels that the grotesque body is able to take in and expel other 'bodies,' thus signifying its incompleteness.

36. Tory Vandeventer Pearman, "'O Sweete Queyntel!': Pregnancy and the Disabled Body in the *Merchant's Tale*," in *Disability in the Middle Ages*, ed. Joshua R. Eyler (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 28.

37. Pearman, "'O Sweete Queyntel!'" 29.

Everything about the grotesque centres on excess; as such, images of the grotesque body focus on eating, drinking, defecating, giving birth, and dying. As a result, the fecundity and excess of the grotesque body link the grotesque with the female body.³⁸

The link between the grotesque and the disabled has already been suggested by Nicholas Vlahogiannis, who attempts to reconstruct what disability *avant-la-lettre* might have meant in classical antiquity. Drawing on instances where an individual would have been culturally perceived as shameful or weak, he proposes that scholars “incorporate appearance and socially ascribed abnormalities, such as polydactylism, left-handedness, old age, obesity, impotence, and even those who are socially ill-positioned, such as beggars, the poor, the homeless, the ugly and the diseased,”³⁹ under the heading of disability, in that “the distinction between the able-bodied and the disabled in this broad sense is constructed into what is socially seen as who does and who does not fit into the perceived notion of acceptable community.”⁴⁰ The wide range of conditions covered indicates that disability is not merely dictated by considerations, such as limited functions of one’s body, but one’s reduced capacity to be a conforming member of a public body, whether that be an entire city-state or a smaller confraternity that has its own rules concerning what the norm should be. According to this interpretation of disability, the grotesque, maternal body is disabled in as far as it is seen to bear excess and be in constant flux. It thus “undermines all that is static and transgresses all that is defined” when compared to its male counterpart.⁴¹

While Pearman attributes to the female body the combination of disability, disabling power, and grotesqueness, I suggest that these three concepts can equally be applied to Amalarius’ spitting body in the context of the Mass celebration. Of course, it may seem at first like a gross stretch to link Chaucer’s sexual, female body with Amalarius’ phlegmatic one, but I wish to consider how bodies throughout the medieval period that were seen as inferior, disruptive, or grotesque – either by prevailing scientific theories or by social conventions – can be understood as exceptional in similar ways.

38. Pearman, ““O Sweete Queynte!”” 29.

39. Nicholas Vlahogiannis, “Disabling Bodies,” in *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity*, ed. Dominic Montserrat (London: Routledge, 1998), 17.

40. Vlahogiannis, “Disabling Bodies,” 18.

41. Pearman, ““O Sweete Queynte!”” 37.

The grotesqueness of Amalarius' body is the reason for his disability, the nature of which I will explain below, yet that same grotesqueness becomes a tool for disabling established norms in the priestly community and asserting the validity of individual imperfections in the clerical context.

The grotesqueness of Amalarius' body lies in his visible excess of phlegm. He himself tells Guntard, "My son, if I were able to avoid spitting long enough to satisfy your objections, ... I would certainly do so."⁴² Elsewhere in the letter, he describes his physical state as forcing him to "expel noxious and overabundant humours,"⁴³ reinforcing the image of excess and overflow. At the same time, a parallel can be drawn between the medieval opinion of needing to control the excessive sexuality of the female body and Guntard's opinion, as quoted earlier, that Amalarius ought to control his excess humours and "govern himself with greater caution to avoid spitting." Amalarius' grotesque condition is cast in the light of disability when he considers that one of Guntard's possible objections against his spitting might concern the likelihood of his "ejecting the body [he] has consumed," thereby rendering the benefits of the Eucharist void.⁴⁴ Amalarius' excess of phlegm, though inconsequential in situations outside of Mass, hypothetically becomes a disability during communion when it raises the risk of preventing him from receiving the healing properties of Christ's body. Amalarius' supposed disability is therefore situational, in that his condition would only be a disability under a particular circumstance. While Amalarius guesses that the possibility of such a disability forms one of Guntard's concerns, he quickly dispels the notion that he is disabled by his phlegm. Instead, he uses the grotesqueness of his body to empower his own image as a priest, and to challenge the preoccupation that Guntard and his contemporaries have with the outward forms of priestly behaviour.

Guntard's objection, as stated in the beginning of Amalarius' letter, consists in his unfamiliarity with Amalarius' behaviour. No other priest spits after eating the Eucharist. Therefore, Amalarius' gesture is seemingly

42. "Fili mi, si potuissem me abstinere tamdiu a sputo, quamdiu satisfacerem tuis, ... hoc ultro curarem..." (Amalarius of Metz, "Letters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.9).

43. "humores nocivos et nimium abundantes sepius fore necesse exire ab homine" (Amalarius of Metz, "Letters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.8).

44. "...quasi sumptum corpus simul cum sputo proiciam" (Amalarius of Metz, "Letters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.7).

disrespectful and ought to be unacceptable. In his essay, “The Imago Christi in the Bishop, Priest, and Clergy,” Reynolds explains that, from as early as the fifth century and extending into the Carolingian period, the specific liturgical roles of each member of the clergy were meant to parallel a specific moment in Christ’s life on earth.⁴⁵ Texts called “ordinals of Christ” were produced that listed each role, and out of those that Reynolds includes in his study, the majority of them agree with each other about which events in Christ’s life are linked with which order of clergy. The role of the doorkeeper was performed by Christ when he beat down the gates of hell, the sub-deacon’s duty of preparing the wine and bread used for Mass finds its parallel in Christ’s miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana, and the priest’s role of blessing the bread was completed by Christ when he himself blessed and broke bread before his disciples at the Last Supper.⁴⁶ One can see that the function of the priest is strictly fixed on the limited scope of what occurred in a particular section of Scripture. The form of priestly behaviour is expected to be a copy of what Christ is supposed to have done in the Bible. As the Gospels never describe Christ expelling phlegm during the Last Supper, Amalarius’ gesture is painfully conspicuous and ruins the sacred re-enactment of the biblical event with his grotesqueness. However, Amalarius challenges the contemporary norm of associating priesthood so rigidly with the bread-blessing scene and sanctions the presence of his grotesqueness with proof of Christ’s grotesqueness found elsewhere in Scripture.

Amalarius embraces his grotesque, sick body when he tells Guntard that his phlegm has a divine counterpart in the Gospels. He writes:

Without the rebuke of pious men, we do what Christ did for our salvation, as the Gospel teaches: “The Lord made mud from his spit, and he smeared it over the eyes of the man who had been born blind” [John 9:6]. And again, according to Mark: “He put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue” [Mark 7:33].⁴⁷

45. Roger E. Reynolds, “The Imago Christi in the Bishop, Priest, and Clergy,” in *A Companion to Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*, ed. Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 140.

46. Reynolds, “The Imago Christi in the Bishop, Priest, and Clergy,” 152.

47. “Sine vituperatione religiosorum hominum, agimus quod Christus egit pro salute nostra, docente Evangelio: ‘Lutum fecit Dominus ex sputo, et linivit oculos caeci nati’ [John 9:6]. Et iterum secundum Marcum: ‘Misit digitos suos in auriculas, et expuens tetigit linguam eius’

In this passage, Amalarius indicates that his condition, far from being worthy of stigma and out of place in the process of Mass, belongs very much to the process of salvation. Christ's spit, which proceeded from his mouth "for our salvation" is just as valuable as the blood that proceeded from his wounds on the cross, which he shed also to the same effect. The grotesque expulsion of excessive humours, which Guntard accuses of being impious, only seems so to him because he has ceased to recognize things associated with Christ's image outside of the forms confirmed in the ordinals. If he would only look past the routinely practiced forms of behaviour, he would remember that not only is spitting compatible with Christ's image, it is associated with his miracles of healing and renewal. Thus, Amalarius challenges the notion that priests can only preserve the image of Christ in their bodies by following one outward form of conduct, while demonstrating how the body marked by sickness is equally capable of mirroring the sacred *imago* in a unique manner that is still supported by Scripture.

Amalarius de-stigmatizes his phlegmatic condition by also relocating the centre of grotesqueness from his own body to the psyche of Guntard. When refuting Guntard's possible objection that spitting would cause him to lose part of the Eucharist and render its healing powers ineffective, Amalarius argues that it is not their business to quibble about how and where the Lord's body moves in the physical world. "It is our responsibility to wish and beg the Lord for a pure heart; it is his responsibility to pour his body through our cavities and vessels unto our eternal salvation.... His body dwells on earth when he wanted it to and when he wants it to."⁴⁸ It is better, according to Amalarius, not to probe into the "mysteries of divinity that cannot be grasped by us,"⁴⁹ but make one's good disposition and charitable inclinations the foci of one's concern. Guntard's obsession with digestion of the Eucharist and precision as to how the human body engages with Christ's body is in itself a grotesque moment of excess where thoughts of the body overflow past the limits set by human intellect and divine mystery.

[Mark 7:33]" (Amalarius of Metz, "Letters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.4).

48. "Ita vero vestrum est velle et precari Dominum cor mundum; suum est corpus suum per artus et venas diffundere ad salutem nobis aeternam.... Suum corpus, quando voluit et quando vult, in terra versatur" (Amalarius of Metz, "Letters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.11).

49. "... mysteria sunt divinitatis quae capi non possunt a nobis..." (Amalarius of Metz, "Letters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.14).

inclinations the foci of one's concern. Guntard's obsession with digestion of the Eucharist and precision as to how the human body engages with Christ's body is in itself a grotesque moment of excess where thoughts of the body overflow past the limits set by human intellect and divine mystery. Amalarius tells Guntard to rein in and control his physicality-centric mind, just as Guntard previously advised Amalarius to control his urge to spit. The language that Amalarius uses to reprimand Guntard and describe the latter's state of mind also suggests an excess of physicality, as he writes that it is not for them to wonder if the Eucharist "is taken up to heaven or kept in our body until the day of our burial, or is exhaled into the air, or leaves our body with our blood, or is emitted through our orifices."⁵⁰ Guntard's concern regarding the cleanliness of the body, which he thinks is threatened by the act of spitting, is also criticized by Amalarius, who tells him that his opinions are the result of his sensibilities being sinfully "puffed up" (*inflati*),⁵¹ which conveys imagery of excess and grotesqueness.

Guntard's objection to Amalarius' spitting conforms with the reaction readers may have when reading the passage on grotesqueness written by Pearson, in which the entering and exiting of bodies through the mouth, the processes of eating and defecating, as well as the graphic imagery of gross corpulence are enumerated. This passage is particularly apt when applied to the idea of eating, spitting, and digesting the Eucharist. However, Guntard's guilt, as discerned by Amalarius, is much more deserving of repugnance and censure. Amalarius, by shifting grotesqueness onto Guntard's psyche, shows that Guntard is now the one with a disability, as his soul's corpulence prevents him from understanding moral truth and impairs his judgment. Amalarius' phlegmatic sickness, on the other hand, being free from sin and associated with Christ's own healing powers, is freed from stigma.

In direct contrast to Amalarius' excess-marked body being regarded as disabled and defective by Guntard, Amalarius elsewhere shows that the body that is, as a result of malady, incapable of producing excess can also be in danger of stigmatization and, therefore, needs to be defended. This

ters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.14).

50. "non est mihi disputandum utrum invisibiliter assumatur in caelum, aut reservetur in corpore nostro usque in diem sepulturae, aut exhaletur in auras, aut exeat de corpore cum sanguine, aut per poros emittatur..." (Amalarius of Metz, "Letters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.15).

51. Amalarius of Metz, "Letters," in *On the Liturgy*, 6.8.

occurs when he discusses the significance of bowing during prayer:

The purpose of the bowing of the deacons has been explained, in accordance with the measure of my laborious study – excepting that it is customary for an inner prayer to be expressed through bodily posture. Thus Augustine in his book to Paulinus *On the Care to be Had for the Dead*: “For those who pray arrange their members as befits supplicants, when they kneel, when they extend their hands or even when they lie prostrate on the ground, or whatever else they do that is visible – though their invisible will and the intention of their heart is known to God, and as the human spirit is bent toward him, he does not need these signs. Yet, through these signs, man rouses himself all the more humbly and fervently toward prayer and lamentation.... Nevertheless, if someone should be restrained somehow, or even bound, such that he cannot do these things with his limbs, it does not follow that the interior man does not pray; he is stretched out before God’s eyes in that most secret room where he feels compunction.”⁵²

From this passage, we can see that bowing, stretching, and all other outward actions that Amalarius quotes from Augustine are excessive in the sense that they are not needed by divine eyes to see the state of the supplicant’s heart. They are superfluous movements produced by the body to increase or maintain the intensity of one’s emotional appeal to God. While Amalarius’ grotesque, humoral overflow betrays an unwell body that appears to hinder itself from receiving the nourishment of the Eucharist and looks conspicuous vis-à-vis the healthy priests who show no such excess, the body that is not well enough to exhibit a physical overflow of devotion – prostration and mournful poses assumed in such a way that the body appears grotesque, base, and lowly, in order to emphasize its inferiority when compared to the divine majesty – appears less devout, and is also conspicuous vis-à-vis bodies that are salubriously excessive. Augustine and, by extension, Amalarius do not explicitly use such words as “sick,” “weak,” or “impaired,” but refer to those

52. “Secundum modulum lucubrationis meae, demonstratum est quid velit inclinatio diaconorum – excepto quod oratio interna solet demonstrari per habitum corporis. Unde Agustinus in libro ad Paulinum De cura agenda pro mortuis: ‘Nam et orantes de membris sui corporis faciunt quod supplicantibus congruit, cum genua figunt, cum extendunt manus vel etiam prosternuntur solo, et si quid aliud faciunt visibiliter – quamvis eorum invisibilis voluntas et cordis intentio Deo nota sit, nec ille indigeat his indiciiis, ut animus ei pandatur humanus. Sed his magis se ipsum excitat homo ad orandum gemendumque humiliter atque ferventius. ... Verumtamen, si eo modo quisque teneatur, vel etiam ligetur, ut haec de suis membris facere nequeat, non ideo non orat interior homo; et ante oculos Dei in secretissimo cubili, ubi compungitur, sternitur” (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.28.5-8).

who are unable to bow as “restrained” (*teneatur*) and “bound” (*ligetur*) from using their limbs. As one may recall, Guntard objects to Amalarius’ spitting by telling him that he ought to control his urges and refrain from ejecting excess phlegm. Here, Augustine’s language of being bound and restrained indicates that physical infirmity – whatever condition it may be – is the very bridle that controls the excess of pious physicality. Reacting to the group of people that might regard infirm faithful who cannot kneel as less devoted worshippers, both writers make it clear that no ailment can render them “disabled” from appearing full of compunction before God, since it is the soul and not the body that God examines.

Two instances of excess have now been presented, in which the sick individual is susceptible to censure for showing either too much or too little at a given moment in liturgical celebration. The infirm body, originally seen as an outlier by physically “normal” congregants, is given a place of belonging among worshippers by Amalarius, who interprets excess or lack thereof with an accommodating attitude. He also normalizes the defective body in liturgy when he attributes signs of sickness to the speaker in the offertory, *Vir erat in terra*. The presence of excess is especially relevant to this portion of his commentary:

The historian’s words are contained in the offertory;⁵³ the words of Job, ailing and sorrowful, are contained in the verses. His ailing breath is neither healthy nor strong, and he is accustomed to repeat his incomplete statements often. The author of the office, to remind us through feigned imitation of the ailing Job, repeated the words frequently, in the manner of those who are sick. In the offertory respon[se], as I said, the words are not repeated, because the historian who wrote the history was not sick.⁵⁴

Amalarius chooses to read sickness into the offertory’s form, construing repetition as a symptom of an unwell body. Rather than interpreting

53. To avoid confusion, when Amalarius says “offertory” in this passage, he is only referring to the first part of the chant that is sung from a third-person perspective. The chant as a whole, which contains the first-person perspective “verses” of Job, is also called an offertory.

54. “Verba historici continentur in offertorio; verba Iob aegroti et dolentis continentur in versibus. Aegrotus cuius anhelitus non est sanus neque fortis, solet verba imperfecta saepius repetere. Officii auctor, ut affectanter nobis ad memoriam reduceret aegrotantem Iob, repetivit saepius verba more aegrotantium. In offertorio, ut dixi, non sunt verba repetita, quia historicus scribens historiam non aegrotabat” (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.39.1-2).

once again good things, made so forcefully by the text's form, is "paralleled and even surpassed by the music which transforms these outcries into a most stirring crescendo of expressiveness."⁵⁹

The extraordinarily high number of repeats in the *Vir erat* is an evocative representation of bodily excess. Job's ill health, characterized by his irregular breathing and increased physical struggle to compensate for the lack of smoothness in his speech with verbosity, is mirrored by the overflow of words that cover the page. In one sense, the offertory's excess seems contained and restrained, due to it being a structured piece of textual and musical composition in which the words and notes are arranged to conform with the overall liturgical programme and sung harmoniously by cantors who exercise control over their voices. However, the sense of unchecked excess is also strong, since almost every other word is repeated in the verses, contrary to the expected patterns of repetition. The sevenfold repetition of "that it might see good things" (*ut videat bona*), sung in a moving crescendo, would have impressed listeners and evoked strong affective responses that come less easily from hearing readings or chants that lack such formalistic touches.

Amalarius seeks to rouse affective piety in fellow congregants by stirring their empathy for Job's mental and spiritual turmoil through accessing his tormented physicality. The excessive body that he conjures as part of his liturgical exegesis is also the image that quickens devotion among the faithful. By extension, I suggest that making the sick body a site for self-identification would also make healthy congregants less likely to look down on worshippers with physical deficiencies as people who cannot attain the same level of spiritual fulfilment.

If we look back at the passage containing Amalarius' explanation of the offertory, we see that the author of the office composed the verses with repetition *qua* "feigned imitation of the ailing Job" and "the manner of those who are sick." Although the words of Job are in the first-person and should be imagined as spoken by Job himself, the true speaker is the author, who assumes the role of Job through mimicking the symptoms of his condition. The author's mimesis is an exercise of empathy, for he puts himself in Job's place and reproduces his laments as one who shares the same sick body. The authenticity of his imitation is marked by its excess, which, when put to

59. Apel, *Gregorian Chant*, 367.

music – already established to have the natural power of goading hearts to confession and compunction – would cause listeners to feel vicariously Job’s pain and momentarily inhabit his troubled physicality.

Scriptural Prosthesis

My interest in excess and the grotesque now leads me to the last section of this paper, where I first discuss Amalarius’ interpretation of the *Kyrie eleison*. As the part of Mass where everyone involved in the liturgical ceremony asks God for mercy, he writes the following:

The Lord’s mercy must precede each of the priests’ private prayers for three reasons that readily occur to me: One is so that the priest’s mind may be made calm to attend to those things that he speaks with his mouth; a second is so that he may be worthy to address God, insofar as that is possible for human nature; and a third is so that, if he is afflicted with some bodily nuisance and the breath prays without the mind, the Lord may look down upon him not in anger, but in the judgment of mercy.⁶⁰

Here, a kind of grotesqueness arises that is similar to that of Guntard. While Guntard’s excessive consideration for physicality and bodily cleanliness overflows into and impairs his spiritual judgement, the sick priest is distracted from his meditations by excessive sensations caused by his “bodily nuisance.” The priest’s illness is another example of what I call a situational disability. His physical malady, which might not cause him any trouble in a different context, is a serious hindrance during Mass, since his absence of mind could incur God’s wrath. Examined from this point of view, Amalarius interprets the *Kyrie* as a form of accommodation and accessibility service, providing a channel by which divine mercy could reach a person whose bodily state otherwise prevents him from acquiring it. Looking at this passage, I would argue that Amalarius is again trying to de-stigmatize illness in the context of Mass and to give the sick body a legitimate place in the liturgy.

60. “Ante omnem orationem specialem sacerdotum necesse est praecedere misericordiam Domini, propter tres causas quae mihi in promptu occurrunt. Una est, ut serenetur mens sacerdotis ad ea intendenda quae ore dicit; altera, ut dignus sit loqui Deo, quantum ad naturam humanam pertinet; tertia, quod si, tedio aliquo corporali affectus, spiritus sine mente oraverit, Dominus non in furore suo respiciat super illum, sed in iudicio misericordiae” (Amalarius of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 3.6.4).

Just as Amalarius de-stigmatizes and even adds glory to his phlegmatic nature by drawing upon scriptural evidence of Christ's own acts of spitting, he also normalizes other forms of sickness by enlisting the help of Scripture. In his original Latin text, Amalarius writes that, if the priest's illness becomes too distracting, his "spiritus sine mente oraverit" (spirit/breath prays without the mind), which is meant, in this context, to be read as a negative consequence. Knibbs' translation of "spiritus" into English as "breath" emphasizes the physicality of respiration and heightens the disconnect between senseless motions of the body and the incorporeal mind with which a person would contemplate and grow closer to God. To pray with only the body and not the mind suggests the repetition of a standard routine that is done simply for the sake of its completion and out of obligation, rather than the development of a deep, personal relationship with God that edifies the individual's soul. However, those who are familiar with Scripture – as Amalarius must have been – would recognize the phrase "spiritus sine mente oraverit" from another context, in which its meaning is a lot less negative.

In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul characterizes the speaking of tongues as praying without the mind. He writes, "For, if I pray in a strange tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful" (*spiritus meus orat, mens autem mea sine fructu est*). He continues, "What then? I will pray with my spirit and I will pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit and I will sing with my mind."⁶¹ Insofar as teaching and communal learning are concerned, he tells his readers that speaking in tongues is useless, for nobody can benefit from listening to speech that he or she cannot understand. The word "spiritus," which is more appropriately translated here as "spirit" than "breath," signifies the innermost part of an individual that receives divine inspiration from God and is often regarded as antithetical to the gross earthliness of the flesh. For the spirit to pray without the mind suggests that the former's activity transcends the realm of rational thought to which the mental processing and comprehension of language would belong. One might even recall here how Augustine defines prayer as a "continued pious

61. "Nam, si orem lingua, spiritus meus orat, mens autem mea sine fructu est. Quid ergo est? Orabo spiritu, orabo et mente; psallam spiritu, psallam et mente" (1 Cor. 14:14-15 VUL). Translations of this and other Bible passages into English are my own.

emotion towards Him to whom we pray,”⁶² placing the nucleus of the action in one’s sustained disposition and desire for God, instead of speech and logical articulation. Paul makes it clear that speaking in tongues, although it would not contribute to the intellectual growth of one’s peers, does solidify one’s private relationship with God. This is evidenced by earlier lines of the letter: “For he who speaks in a strange tongue does not speak to all, but to God,”⁶³ and “He who speaks in a strange tongue edifies only himself.”⁶⁴ The speaker of tongues, in the context of private prayer and devotion, still benefits from his activity when he prays solely with his spirit, even though he is encouraged to sing and pray intelligibly in a public setting.

The positive aspect of praying “*spiritu sine mente*” is emphasized by Rosamond McKitterick, who discusses the retention of the Latin language in the liturgy when vernacular speech would have been much easier for laypeople to understand. The reason for this is stated by Ambrosiaster in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, where he writes that “the spirit, as a result of his baptism still knows what he is praying: that is the spiritual value of a Christian’s prayer is not dependent on its intellectual value.”⁶⁵ Not only does the spirit possess more knowledge than the mind by deriving its knowledge from inner, divine operations brought about by God after the receipt of a sacrament, but this commentary by Ambrosiaster also shows that every layperson who took part in liturgical ceremonies without any familiarity with the Latin language must have prayed with the spirit and without the mind numerous times throughout his or her own lifetime. This form of praying is no longer reserved for private moments of inspiration, but also normalized in public spaces. Hence, praying “*spiritu sine mente*” is a sure way of establishing closeness with God and engaging in an intensely deep connection with him. Considering his knowledge of the Pauline epistles, which he frequently cites throughout his *Liber Officialis*, Amalarius’ decision to use the words “*spiritu sine mente*” when describing the sick priest’s condition suggests that he does not wish to make the danger of God’s

62. Augustine of Hippo, “Letter 130: To Proba,” in *Letters of Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo*, trans. J.G. Cunningham, ed. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1875), 142-166.

63. “qui enim loquitur lingua non omnibus loquitur, sed Deo.” (1 Cor. 14:2 VUL).

64. “qui loquitur lingua semetipsum aedificat.” (1 Cor. 14:4 VUL).

65. Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 147.

wrath appear too great. While the contextual meaning of the phrase is a negative one, implying that the priest's prayers are empty words spoken out of habit and closing him off from God, the scriptural significance of the phrase offers a sense of redemption and hope, evocative of the closeness of the individual to God during a session of speaking in tongues.

Amalarius' method of incorporating biblical allusions in order to remedy what would have been a dismal liturgical situation can be seen as a kind of textual "prosthesis," an idea elaborated upon by scholar Julie Singer in her essay on the fourteenth-century poet Guillaume de Machaut's poem *Voir Dit*.⁶⁶ Singer demonstrates how its one-eyed protagonist fills his verse heavily with images of round forms, such as the sun and wheel of Fortune, to create a textually "prosthetic" body-part that resembles the shape of an eye in his attempt to make whole what is lacking in his physical form.⁶⁷ This notion of a textual prosthetic can be applied to Amalarius' ninth-century text, since the biblical lines and their context rise immediately into the mind of the reader, who can then compare the priest's absent-minded prayer, rendered so by illness, to a divinely-assisted prayer where the operations of the mind are of secondary importance compared to those of the spirit. The sick priest's apparent lack of spiritual grace is made up for and even made plentiful by the prosthetic attachment of Saint Paul's words and meaning. Thus, Amalarius associates sickness with hope and leniency, as opposed to a fault that deserves punishment.

66. For a detailed discussion of the concept of textual prosthesis, see David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

67. Julie Singer, "Playing by Ear: Compensation, Reclamation, and Prosthesis in Fourteenth-Century Song," in *Disability in the Middle Ages*, ed. Joshua R. Eyler (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 50.