Reading between the lines: Old Germanic and early Christian views on abortion

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PREFACE

My parents wanted their children to go to school and learn, and they sent us to good schools and filled the house with books. Even though the move from the States to The Netherlands was not always easy, they remained confident that in the end everything would turn out all right. It did, even though Dutch and English are still a muddle in my head.

I took the long road to the university, but it was a road filled with good and inspiring teachers: Tjebbe Westendorp, J.J. Westerbeek, W. Zeldenrust and Evert Wiesenekker. ‘Wies’ congratulated us, the M.O.-B English night students, at the beginning of each new school year for ‘making it back’. Later, when studying Old Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Utrecht - just before the department was shut down - I was again fortunate to have very good teachers: Floor van der Rhee, H.T.J. Miedema and last but not least Niek Zelders.

This dissertation was started at the Promotie Werkplaats Vrouwen in Amsterdam, and Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Tette Hofstra turned out to be the ‘ideal’ promotores: patient (when I attended a conference or wrote an article against their advice), hard-working, kind and ‘fast’: everything I sent them was read and sent back by return of post with stimulating and thought-provoking comments, suggestions and notes I greatly benefited from. Throughout the years and more than a thousand emails we found ourselves becoming friends.

Many scholar-friends greatly helped and encouraged me, and sent me preprints, books and unpublished versions of their work: Orlanda Lie, Monica Green, Ann Hanson, Palvi Pahta, Louise Cilliers, Ria Jansen-Sieben, Ria Lemaire, Oebele Vries and Clare Pillsworth, to name a few. Marijke van der Bijl passed away before she could start helping me with my medieval Latin puzzles, but other dear friends - notably Wilken Engelbrecht, Erika Langbroek and Rob Brouwer - patiently helped me again and again and again. Members of the Vereniging van Oudgermanisten, especially Han Nijdam and Sándor Chardonnens, helped me in various ways, and generously shared their work with me.

The Dutch University Libraries and the Dutch National Library are treasure-houses. Many, many librarians helped me find material, sent me photocopies and PDF’s of articles I needed. The librarians in Leyden and Groningen are especially customer-friendly, and the Dutch National Library in The Hague not only allows us ‘buitenpromovendi’ to access digital journals and publications at home, but it is also extremely prompt in sending interlibrary loans. For my librarian friends in Utrecht at the Humanities Library and the Law Library - especially Bertine Bouwman, Liduine Smit-Verheij, Jan Hastrich, Marianne Pothoven and Marianne Roelofs - nothing was too much trouble. They regularly went beyond the call of duty, ‘kidnapping’ books, picking them up, returning them, making photocopies, letting me borrow books that were not on loan, etc.

And then there were the delays: on the one hand ‘mantelzorg’, taking care of aged parents, sick friends and old cats, and on the other computers that regularly caused trouble. Without Einhard Engelbrecht, my computer-specialist and friend, this dissertation would never have been completed. The same goes for Kasteel Slangenburg and its kind ‘gastvrouwen’, where Thea van der Linden and I often went in order to work uninterruptedly.

My (girl-)friends were always ready to help in some way. Some cooked, took me to the movies, the sauna, out to dinner or for a walk or a swim, some just dropped by with a kind word, listened, drank cups of tea and glasses of wine, or were simply there for me, and others helped my with the ‘end-product’: Bertine Bouwman, Jacqueline de Ruiter, Thea van der Linden, Liduine Smit-Verheij, Marianne Pothoven, Fabiola van Dam, Jeannette van Ditzhuijzen, Swaaas (Françoise Huissoon), Hansje and Bert Okken-Kloosterboer, Greet Kuulkers-Jungman, Lola Engelbrecht, Marianne Roelofs, Erika Langbroek, Claudette Baar-de Weerd, Monika Diederichs, Lilian Vos, Tineke Pikaar, Annelies van Popta, Linda Wilkens, Lucie van Gansewinkel, Tineke Groot, Ine Peters, Sjaak Aben, Mia Coolen and Rita Zoutenbier.

My family - parents, brothers and sisters and uncle Toon - were curious, interested and full of support and faith. And at home Frank and the cats loved me, took care of me and supplied warmth.

This dissertation is dedicated to my (girl-)friends, family and my ‘long-suffering’ Odysseus.