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*Nec silentio praetereundum:*  
The significance of the Miraculous in the  
Anglo-Saxon Church in the  
Time of Bede

by Jonathan Richard Hustler.

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Durham  
Department of History

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- 2 JUL 1998

ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on a study of miracle stories recorded by Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical writers in the early part of the eighth century. It responds to a number of previous works which have concentrated solely on the miracle stories told by Bede, and argues that the stories of all the writers are the product of the historical situation. The idea that such stories were produced in order to respond to claims made in Irish or Continental hagiography, or by Anglo-Saxon paganism, is rejected; instead, we need to accept the assertion of the authors that these events were recorded because they were believed to have happened and to be of historical importance. Therefore, they provide an insight into the way that these authors approached the writing of history; an analysis of those involved in the stories, of the circumstances of the events, and of the likely transmission, suggests a close-knit circle of mainly noble monastics on whom the writers depended for information, and for whom they wrote. The miracle stories disclose that this approach to history was heavily informed by theological ideas, and by the bias of the author and his/her community. Precisely because the miracle material is to modern eyes unusual (if not incredible), these stories enable us better to understand the mind and methods of the writers on whom much of our knowledge early Anglo-Saxon history depends.

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Foreword

This thesis is the result of research conducted on a part-time basis at the University of Durham; I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor David Rollason, for all his encouragement and wise advice. My thanks are also owed to Drs Alan Thacker and Catherine Cubitt, who have permitted me to use unpublished work, and to the staffs of the libraries at the Universities of Durham, Oxford, Cambridge, and the Open University. I am grateful to the Methodist Church for facilitating this opportunity, through the Finch scholarship, which provided a preliminary year of study at the Gregorian University in Rome, through the financial assistance offered by the Division of Ministries and the London North-West District, and through the time permitted me by the Leighton Buzzard & Stewkley and Redcar, Saltburn & Guisborough circuits. The Reverend Maurice Wright is owed thanks for his assistance with various word-processing difficulties, but my greatest debt is to my wife, Lesley, who has lived patiently with this project throughout our married life.

Introduction.

'Quod est dictu mirabile et auditu': The miracle stories  
under consideration and responses to them.

In book five of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede tells the story of an Anglo-Irish mission to the Old Saxons in the 690s.<sup>1</sup> Amongst the priests on this mission were two who bore the same name and were distinguished from each other by their colouring, White Heward and Dark Heward. Despite the official support of the local governor, the Hewalds were not warmly received.

Qui cum cogniti essent a barbaris, quod essent alterius religionis...rapuerunt eos subito et interemerunt...[et] in Hreno proiecerunt...  
Nec martyrio eorum caelestia defuere miracula.  
Nam cum peremta eorum corpora amni, ut diximus, a paganis essent iniecta, contigit ut haec contra impetum fluvii decurrentis, per XL fere milia passuum ad ea usque loca, ubi illorum erant socii, transferrentur. Sed et radius lucis permaximus atque ad caelum usque altus omni nocte supra locum fulgebat illum, ubicumque ea pervenisse contingeret, et hoc etiam paganis, qui eos occiderant, intuentibus. Sed et unus ex eis in visione nocturna apparuit cuidam de sociis suis, cui nomen erat Tilmon, viro inlustri, et ad saeculum quoque nobili, qui de milite factus fuerat monachus, indicans quod eo loci corpora eorum posset invenire, ubi lucem de caelo terris radiasse conspiceret. Quod ita completum est.... fertur autem quia in loco in quo occisi sunt fons ebullierit, qui in eodem loco usque hodie copiosa fluenti sui dona profundat.<sup>2</sup>

This is a narrative that abounds in images and allusions. To anyone read in the Scriptures the motifs of light and water are familiar, both within the common vocabulary of good and evil and with specific references to

the teaching and identity of Christ and his disciples.<sup>3</sup> And to anyone who knows of other miracle stories of the time, or who has read the earlier chapters in the *Historia*, the tale of the two Hewalds seems to be full of echoes. The fountain at the site of the martyrdom reminds us of the story of Alban's death,<sup>4</sup> and the light over the bodies is reminiscent of the discovery of the corpse of Peter, first abbot of Canterbury, and of the story of Oswald's bones at Bardney.<sup>5</sup> The association of the place of violent death with the miraculous has other Oswald overtones, connected to the ground at Maserfelth.<sup>6</sup> Nor is this the first time that the appearance of someone deceased in a vision has been significant in the account of the continental mission; only a chapter previously Bede recounted Boisil's forbidding Egbert's joining the expedition. The communication about the whereabouts of the corpses with one of the other monks through a vision much more closely resembles the account of the discovery of Edwin's body, as it appears in the anonymous *Vita Gregorii*,<sup>7</sup> a work more or less contemporaneous to the *Historia*. Tilmon, the monk who receives the vision, is not an uncommon type; otherwise unevidenced, he was of noble stock, as many monks seem to have been. In sum, although this story is not to be found in any other work of the period, the martyrdom of the two Hewalds can appear as a composition of familiar elements. It is immediately clear that we are not dealing with an isolated example of this sort of anecdote, but with a story

that originates in a particular milieu - told by someone used to such stories, and with in mind an audience that was accustomed to hearing them and by whom he expected to be believed.

So, what is to be made of it? Stories such as this have provoked a number of different reactions. Some modern scholars would implore us to treat this material as sober history, and to note the care with which Bede not only names Tilmon but stresses his virtues, and is unafraid to include a detail that might be verified (the fountain that is said still to be there). Bede, they argue, set himself rigorous standards in his search for material and in testing his witnesses, so we can safely assume that he was not relating something that he did not himself believe to be true. Other students of this sort of material would have us concentrate not on the literal detail but on the spiritual meaning. If we follow this line, we understand that the light over the bodies represents the sanctity of the Hewalds, witnessed even by those lost in ignorant paganism, and we do not so much mind whether the fountain is there or not, but we see it as a symbol of the water of life which the Hewalds offered to the Old Saxons, and which is still there to be drunk. Earlier commentators might have cautioned us away from either approach, encouraging us to dismiss the pious fables with which the eighth-century writers (Bede, regrettably, amongst them as a man of his time) embroidered their material, whilst being grateful

that they are not more numerous than they are. Yet others, however, would want to argue that to see Bede as a man of his time means to accept that he had predecessors in the telling of miracle stories, and it was in his dependence on them (and on one in particular) that the real significance of a narrative such as this is to be found. These, in caricature, are four ways in which the miracle stories told by Bede have been discussed in the past, each of which merits more attention.

'Vituperationis suae dente... adrodet': four 'critical nibblings' at the Bede miracle stories.

Chronologically, the third approach deserves the first treatment. It might be termed the Plummer-Colgrave hypothesis. The attitude of Charles Plummer, the great nineteenth-century editor of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, was one of mystification that Bede not only recorded miracles, but delighted in them to the point of enlarging the number that appeared in one of his sources. Plummer revealed himself to be rationalist sceptic, though he would concede that a small number of mediaeval miracles could not be dismissed as silly, unspiritual, immoral, re-cycled classical myths or coincidences. Bede, he accepted, was a man of a very different temper, and therefore, in accordance with his orthodoxy and piety, infused his work with a belief in the supernatural.<sup>8</sup> Bertram Colgrave, who in many respects followed Plummer, thought the stories

worth more attention. His contribution to the 1935 Festschrift, *Bede, His Life, Times and Writings*,<sup>9</sup> was an analysis of the attitude to the miraculous displayed in the Ecclesiastical History and the Prose Life of Cuthbert. His starting assumption was that, unless one is used to reading mediaeval literature, the miracle stories immediately strike one as odd. To Bede's contemporaries, however, it would have been odder were the stories not there, as Bede and they were influenced by the hagiographical traditions of the time. Colgrave judged that Bede did rather better than some of his peers in restraining his use of this sort of material,<sup>10</sup> but his conclusion remained that Bede was a man of his times and included 'wonder tales' for three reasons - because popular opinion demanded them,<sup>11</sup> because Christianity had to compete with the marvels of Anglo-Saxon paganism,<sup>12</sup> and because this was the age of the cult of the saint, of which miracle stories were an essential part.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Bede was a master story teller who (like, Colgrave maintained, a modern preacher) relished illustrating his work with picturesque anecdotes, which were not always intended to be understood as verifiably factual. It was as if there were in Bede three men, a theologian, an historian and an hagiographer, who were not always in harmony.<sup>14</sup>

Colgrave took the argument further in his 1958 Israel Gollancz lecture.<sup>15</sup> In considering not the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but Bede's hagiographical works, Colgrave

wondered why Bede should have told so many miracle stories in his prose life of Cuthbert and none at all in his history of the abbots of his own house. His conclusion, again, was that the answer was to be found in the hagiography-history tension. Colgrave seems to have been mildly embarrassed that Bede managed to include in his *Vita Cuthberti* more miracles than the anonymous monk of Lindisfarne did;<sup>16</sup> but Colgrave argued that the careful citation by Bede of a witness for every one of his 'new' stories was a way of distancing himself from the dubious nature of this material.<sup>17</sup> This is Bede the hagiographer being influenced by Bede the historian. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the roles are reversed. Only the *Historia Abbatum*, to Colgrave's mind, represents 'pure history'.<sup>18</sup> Why, having reached the heights of respectability, Bede withdrew from them in his later work, Colgrave explained in terms of audience and material.<sup>19</sup> Public taste was not ready for 'the more ascetic type of history', and Bede seems to have accepted the 'miscellaneous mass' of documents, lives of saints and oral tradition at face value.<sup>20</sup>

The reasons why the miracle stories of Bede need not be treated with this sort of embarrassment are set out fully in chapter one of this thesis. But it is interesting to note that the Plummer-Colgrave view has had widespread following. As late as 1973, C. Thomas still felt that the 1935 paper was 'the standard analysis of the content and



purpose of Bede's miracle stories.<sup>21</sup> However, other scholars have looked at the question in different ways. J.T. Rosenthal, in a paper written in 1975, argued that Colgrave's rationalist dilemma 'no longer seems a serious problem'<sup>22</sup> Rosenthal's argument can be summarized as follows: as Bede believed in the miracle stories that he included, there are lessons to be learnt in the uses to which he put his material. The most significant of these is that the number of miracle stories is much greater in the latter two books of the Ecclesiastical History - a third of the pages (Rosenthal calculated), account for fifty-five per cent of the miracles.<sup>23</sup> This coincides with the crucial dividing line of the whole work, the Council of Streoneshalh, after which Bede felt that England was converted, so his subject matter was no longer the battle with paganism or heresy, but 'an elevating form of gossip'.<sup>24</sup> However, Bede approached this 'in-house' material with the same care and precision that he accorded to the rest of his work, so we notice the careful citation of the source for each story. This was in line with the best methodological tradition of the day, followed also by the Anonymous monk of Lindisfarne and by Stephen in the *Vita Wilfridi*.<sup>25</sup> In other words, most of Bede's miracle stories belong to the recent history, so could be checked before inclusion, and were, for the most part, post-conversion. Therefore, the main theme of his history, how the English became Christian, was shown not to depend

on the working of miracles at all, but on rational or spiritual factors.<sup>26</sup> For Rosenthal, the miracle stories were included simply to enliven the text; they cannot, on this reading, be argued to convey much of historical interest.

Leaving aside the vexed question of the sources cited by Bede and his contemporaries, which is explored fully in chapter five of this thesis, there are several weaknesses in Rosenthal's argument. The assertion that for Bede there was a clear dividing line between the 'rational and spiritual', on the one hand, and the 'supernatural', on the other,<sup>27</sup> is questionable, and one for which Rosenthal offers no evidence, except the circular argument that this was so 'judging by the distinction we have been discussing'.<sup>28</sup> As will be argued, this distinction is not one which an eighth-century ecclesiastical writer would have recognized. There is also a slightly puzzling factor which Rosenthal acknowledges but never really discusses. He shares that view that for Bede miracles, even though they appear from the *Historia* to be happening more often in recent years, really belonged to past times and could be expected to diminish in frequency.<sup>29</sup> This is one of the questions explored in the most comprehensive work to date on Bede's miracle stories, L.S. Creider's *Bede's Understanding of the Miraculous*.<sup>30</sup> Creider argued that Bede is to be understood primarily as a Biblical scholar, and that earlier treatments of the subject failed fully to

appreciate his attitudes because they concentrated on the miracles of the historical and hagiographical works.<sup>31</sup>

Creider therefore surveyed both Bede's approach in the hagiographical/ historical works and in his Biblical commentaries, and found a unity of purpose.<sup>32</sup> He argued that, given Bede's understanding of science and the natural law,<sup>33</sup> his philosophy of the nature and purpose of history,<sup>34</sup> and the theological traditions that he inherited and which are reflected in his exegetical works,<sup>35</sup> it made perfect sense for Bede to include miracle stories in his historical writings. They were related to his belief in the providence and omnipotence of God which was his main theological premise, they demonstrated the truth of the orthodox faith, they revealed the sanctity of the saints, they were instrumental in conversion, and they illustrated the rewards of virtue.<sup>36</sup> In this last point, Creider agrees with R.D. Ray<sup>37</sup> and Calvin Kendall<sup>38</sup> that Bede was working with a notion of *Historia* which still conceived it as a branch of rhetoric, the purpose of which was to encourage and edify.<sup>39</sup> Creider, therefore, takes a different view of the conversion and its relationship to the miraculous from that enunciated by Rosenthal, arguing that for Bede miracles were 'an integral part of the conversion process'.<sup>40</sup> Just as the miracles of Jesus and the apostles had demonstrated the truth of their message, so the miracles of latter day saints did the same.<sup>41</sup>

However, the continuity was not as straightforward as

it might have been. Bede's *Historia* was analogous to *Sacra Historia*, not exactly part of it,<sup>42</sup> and therefore, although the miracles of his own age might be similar to those of the Bible, and might be understood in terms of Biblical texts,<sup>43</sup> they differed in their number, quality and purpose.<sup>44</sup> This apparent tension is one which Bede inherited from his mentors, Augustine and Gregory I;<sup>45</sup> Bede's miracles are therefore to be understood partly in terms of the influence on him of the Fathers. But Bede was not afraid to think for himself as he studied and included miracle stories.<sup>46</sup>

In this contention, Creider differs markedly from the proponents of the fourth view mentioned above; that Bede's miracle stories can be explained by his essential unoriginality as a scholar, and in particular, in his dependence on the writings of Pope Gregory the Great. This thesis was first propounded by C.G. Loomis in 1946,<sup>47</sup> according to whom, Bede, 'the father of English hagiography', chose to avoid the most fantastic of wonder tales, such as those recorded much later about Cuthbert or Augustine,<sup>48</sup> and toned down some of his stories until they became 'miracles within the bounds of likelihood'.<sup>49</sup> But above all, Bede did not want to rest on his own authority; according to Loomis, Bede was not an originator of miracle material. His 'orthodoxy led him to depend on recognized types',<sup>50</sup> so he tended to select miracle stories which were in imitation of another holy person, and was especially

reassured if an analogue could be found in the *Dialogi* of Gregory I. 'The papal authority of Gregory the Great could not be questioned';<sup>51</sup> in particular (Loomis argued) Bede's treatment of Cuthbert has to be understood as closely related to the life of Benedict as it is recorded in the *Dialogi*,<sup>52</sup> but the thesis also was applied to the whole of the *Ecclesiastical History*. The problem with a 'catch-all' thesis such as this is that, whilst it cannot be denied that the *Dialogi* were known to Bede, and that he recognized some parallels, the slightest of similarities can be forced to fit the argument. For instance, in dealing with the story of the two Hewalds, with which we began, Loomis concedes that 'miraculous transportation by water is badly represented in both Gregory and Bede', and offers the tale of a ship which sailed for eight days although full of water as the only parallel available from the *Dialogi*.<sup>53</sup>

The influence of Gregory on the English recorders of the miraculous is the theme of chapter two of this thesis; in relation to Bede alone it has been the subject of the most recent contribution to the debate. William McCready's book, published in 1994,<sup>54</sup> is presented as a sequel to his earlier work on Gregory I.<sup>55</sup> McCready's thesis is that Bede has been misrepresented by those who argue that his approach to the miraculous was more discriminating than that of his contemporaries. Whilst Bede was a man of considerable scientific achievement who understood the miraculous as events which defied the perceived natural

order (as did Gregory), he allowed the hagiographical tradition to dictate to him miracle stories for inclusion in his work, because he was 'even more credulous than many other early medieval thinkers.'<sup>56</sup> McCready comes to this conclusion from a consideration of Bede's exegetical works, in which he detects a tendency to accept the literal meaning of the text when earlier commentaries had looked for an allegorical understanding. Even more so than Rosenthal and Creider, McCready gives a great deal of consideration to the issue of sources, offering a statistical analysis to compare Bede's use of witnesses with Gregory's, and concludes that Bede's method (when only the most recent events are under consideration) 'does not match Gregorian practice, [but] it comes close.'<sup>57</sup> However, McCready is scornful of the support that Bede offers for some of his witnesses, noting a tendency to appeal to witnesses notable for their moral rather than their intellectual capacity;<sup>58</sup> whereas for Creider this implies that the issue at stake was always one of veracity rather than probability,<sup>59</sup> McCready's conclusion is that the circumstances of the writing forced Bede to take his witnesses on trust.<sup>60</sup>

McCready's approach at this point widens the debate, by recognizing that the issue of witnesses is bound up with the question of veracity and credulity. Did Bede believe the stories he recorded to be true? Many scholars have assumed that he did. According to Rosenthal, Bede 'believed

in miracles as he knew his own name.'<sup>61</sup> McCready is not so sure. Bede did not believe that the work of an historian was to record untruths, but his commitment to historical veracity was on occasion compromised, and he provides an explanation from the Fathers to justify Bede's position. Although Bede claimed to know, and referred to, Augustine's *De Mendacio*, he does not adopt the patristic position outlined there (and echoed by Gregory) that lying is always sinful and is not tolerated in scripture or history.<sup>62</sup> Rather, Bede was influenced by Cassian and Jerome, who accepted the notion of the justifiable falsehood, and found examples in the Bible, where even the saints 'to make a spiritual point, compromised with the truth'. McCready concludes that 'it should not astonish us to discover that occasionally Bede himself may have done the same'.<sup>63</sup> The issue of the historical reliability of Bede's (and his contemporaries') stories is the subject of chapter five of this thesis. For the present, it is sufficient to note that the core of McCready's argument remains that Bede (his lower standard of veracity notwithstanding) was heavily influenced by Gregory. He accepts wholly the Loomis thesis that Bede used the *Dialogi* as a 'touchstone of authenticity'.<sup>64</sup> Bede was also influenced by Gregory in his exegetical work, and with each writer there is perceived to be a tension. Both implied in their homilies and commentaries that the purpose of the miracle is apologetic and therefore its occurrence is confined to the early

history of the Church, and yet both recorded modern miracle stories. Again, this point will be examined in chapter five, where the relationship of miracles to conversion is explored. McCready's conclusion,<sup>65</sup> that Gregory was justified in believing that he still lived in the early days of the Church whereas Bede did not is not one shared by the present writer, as will be seen.

The final approach to Bede's miracles (offered as the second understanding of the Hewalds story) searches for spiritual meaning within the text. Henry Mayr-Harting typified this way of looking at the stories. Starting from the assumption that Bede's delight in miracles presents 'for many readers of today the chief obstacle to complete sympathy and rapport' with the author of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*,<sup>66</sup> Mayr-Harting adopted the Colgrave position that these stories were partly explained by the 'wider circulation of the book'. Paganism had gone, and the public were to be shown that Christianity was not a poor substitute for the magic of their old beliefs. However, this miracle material was not simply a pandering to public taste. The sources quoted demonstrate that the stories were told within Bede's 'own highly educated circle',<sup>67</sup> and within such a confraternity they were related not just to arouse admiration but with an eye to the spiritual significance. Mayr-Harting concluded that it 'was the moral aspect of miracles which was primarily important to Bede',<sup>68</sup> that is to say, the stories were told to



illustrate what was possible for people who lived close to God.

It is an argument close to that offered by Sr. Benedicta Ward in her paper for the 1973 volume, *Famulus Christi*.<sup>69</sup> From Sr. Benedicta's point of view, Colgrave's hesitation was really misplaced; Bede was by no means unusual in using stories of the miraculous, as most of the great minds of the middle ages did the same.<sup>70</sup> However, it is in contrast to some of those other writers that the subtlety of Bede's attitude is revealed. There is nothing crude in the stories which the Jarrow writer relates and no suggestion that they were used simply to inspire wonder. Bede was interested in the significance, not the external marvellousness, of the miracles. Therefore, fully to understand the Bede miracle stories, it has to be appreciated that Bede used them 'from within', and in three different ways.<sup>71</sup> Firstly, there was a moral dimension - so the audience was exhorted to holiness or warned against sin.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, there was a missionary bias - a miracle story often illuminated the significance of the account of the conversion (as could be argued for the Heward's story with which we began).<sup>73</sup> And thirdly, a story might have an extra dimension peculiar to itself - for example, in the famous story of Caedmon and his sudden acquisition of a singing voice, Bede draws a contrast between Caedmon's verse and that of his peers, to the detriment of the latter; the story is, Sr Benedicta argues, 'a piece of

literary criticism'.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, she identifies an ecclesiological message in the story of Lawrence's scourging by Peter, an anecdote which serves as a sign of papal authority over the English Church.<sup>75</sup>

This is an approach to the Bedan material that has much to recommend it, and which seems especially appropriate to the story of Caedmon, as the number of articles addressing in detail that particular narrative indicates.<sup>76</sup> In brief, Sr. Benedicta and those of like mind understand Bede as a spiritual writer, offering his work to others with a similar schooling, and so miracle stories are included because they enable Bede to draw out some added spiritual meaning from his account. However, the analysis in the *Famulus Christi* paper is based on only three stories, and this selection may be significant, even deceptive, as these are atypical of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a whole. They are three of the fuller miracle stories in the work, and none of them is particularly problematic. Even the most sceptical modern reader would admit that (very occasionally) a frustrated musician (like Caedmon) might suddenly discover within her/himself a talent that s/he did not believe s/he had, that a person at a moment of crisis might (like Lawrence) have an extraordinarily vivid dream (and there have been accounts of physical injuries being manifested in such a way),<sup>77</sup> or that broken heads do sometimes heal more quickly when (as with Herebald) other factors within the sufferer's

life are rectified. Here, because we are not distracted by either amazement or incredulity, it is comparatively easy to recognize the 'inner meaning'. It is less easy to explain those parts of the text, like the Barking cycle, for instance,<sup>78</sup> where story after story makes the same point; but it has to be conceded that there are few occasions when it is not clear that Bede's work offered a spiritual truth to his readers. The same could not be said, argues Sr Benedicta, for other mediaeval historians, such as William of Malmesbury or Florence of Worcester.<sup>79</sup>

But that is to draw the wrong parallel. If the miracles that Bede recorded existed in isolation, as the only example of miracle stories recorded in early eighth-century England, then that he displayed a superior literary talent to that of later writers might be about all that could be said. But the miracles of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* belong to a much wider group of contemporaneous stories not confined to works written by Bede. Colgrave recognized this, although his inference was that in the *Historia Abbatum* and *Historia Ecclesiastica* Bede had somewhat risen above his peers by moving away from 'mere hagiography'.<sup>80</sup> Doubtless, the breadth of Bede's achievement was outstanding, even if we dare assume that other writers produced works which have since been lost on the subjects that Bede tackled. Doubtless also, the style and clarity of Bede's Latin lead us to describe him as a better writer than some of his contemporaries.<sup>81</sup> But it

would be wrong, on those counts, to assume that Bede's attitude to the miraculous was necessarily different from that of other English writers of the time. That Bede dealt with the same subject matter as other writers of the late seventh and early eighth centuries,<sup>82</sup> sometimes told the same stories as they did,<sup>83</sup> and admitted to being dependent on other people's work,<sup>84</sup> lead us to conclude that the Bede stories should not be treated alone. This opinion is strengthened when we note that some of the Bede stories are similar to those told by other authors, although told in relation to different characters or events.<sup>85</sup> Both Creider and McCready, for all that their conclusions differ, treat Bede in isolation; but once he is considered amongst his immediate contemporaries as a recorder of the miraculous, Bede ceases necessarily to be the focus of our attention (although the sheer volume of his work means that he remains the main representative of his age). The question is not, (*pace* Colgrave) 'why did Bede record these miracle stories?'. It is not (*pace* Rosenthal), 'how can we still accept Bede as a serious historian when his work contains this material?'. Nor is it (*pace* McCready), 'how did an outstanding thinker of his time approach this sort of story as Gregory I's disciple?'. Even to ask 'with what spiritual meaning did Bede invest his miracle stories?' (as Ward does), or (to follow Creider) to ask why anyone should be surprised that the author of Bede's scientific and exegetical works believed that there were instances of

miraculous events in his own time, is not to deal with the basic question. The fundamental issue which needs to be addressed in relation to the miracle stories used by Bede is one which recognizes the historical situation in which Bede worked, and therefore needs also to be asked of his contemporaries; it can be formulated as this: given that our major written sources for the early history of the Anglo-Saxons are a mixture of history and hagiography,<sup>86</sup> and given that they include a number of stories of miraculous events (which we would not expect to encounter in a modern historian's writing), what can those stories tell us about the attitude to their subject which the English writers employed? In other words, can we (because they are not a part of what we might usually understand as history) make these miracle stories a window into the minds of the Anglo-Saxon writers?

'Eisque scriptis memorialibus promulget' - the works under consideration.

In the main, this thesis concentrates on stories about miraculous events contained in seven works, all of which were composed in England in the first half of the eighth century.<sup>87</sup> The first of these works, as has already been discussed, is Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. Also by Bede are two versions of the *Vita Cuthberti*, the earlier in verse form,<sup>88</sup> and the other in prose.<sup>89</sup> There is third *Vita Cuthberti*, written by an

anonymous monk of Cuthbert's house at Lindisfarne.<sup>90</sup> Cuthbert's contemporary (we might almost say rival), the controversial ecclesiastic Wilfrid, was also the subject of a *Vita* written by one Stephanus, a monk from his own community.<sup>91</sup> Less prominent in the history of the time than either of the two great bishops was Guthlac, an hermit who died at Crowland in the fens in about 714, and who is known to us through a *vita* written shortly after his death by someone calling himself Felix.<sup>92</sup> Finally, the earliest known life of Pope Gregory I was written in England, by an unnamed resident of the monastery founded by Hild at Streoneshalh.<sup>93</sup>

Apart from the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, these works form something of an homogeneous group, and have been treated as such,<sup>94</sup> along with two other hagiographies which emanated from Wearmouth-Jarrow, each of which rejoices in the title *Historia Abbatum*. One of these<sup>95</sup> is certainly by Bede;<sup>96</sup> the identity of the author of the other (which, because of the dominance of the second abbot, Ceolfrith, in the work is usually referred to as the *Vita Ceolfridi*)<sup>97</sup> has not been established. It has been argued that it is also by Bede, and was an hastily written composition, penned in response to Ceolfrith's departure and death in 716 and later subsumed when the *Historia Abbatum* was written.<sup>98</sup> For our present purpose, these two works stand a little apart from the rest of the group as they are distinguished by the almost complete absence of miracle

stories from their pages, an omission which is in itself interesting, and which may account for the small number of surviving manuscripts, indicating a comparative lack of popularity in the middle ages.<sup>99</sup>

The stories found in those works (with the single addition of a miracle from the monastery of Wenlock)<sup>100</sup> are indexed in the appendices to this thesis, and the conclusions discussed herein are those reached from an analysis of them. Apart from the need to find a more satisfactory answer to the 'problem' of the Bede miracles, they have been selected for two reasons; one is that, as will be seen, there is a considerable area of overlapping, with the relation of stories about the same characters, and even two or three versions of the same stories. The sample therefore provides a basis to test out possible patterns of transmission,<sup>101</sup> and to identify the purpose of the authors.<sup>102</sup> The other reason for controlling the data base in this way was that these are all miracle stories set during the recent history of the Anglo-Saxons;<sup>103</sup> as such, they allow us to see something of the attitudes of our writers to their own past.<sup>104</sup> This does not pretend, however, to be an exhaustive list of the miracle stories recorded in late seventh- or early eighth-century England. Aldhelm related a number of miracle stories in the prose and verse *De Virginitate*, and in the fourth *Carmen Ecclesiastica*, and no attempt to understand the thought of the Anglo-Saxon church of this date on any issue would be

complete without reference to the scholar of Malmesbury. However, all the Aldhelm stories are drawn from the Bible or continental hagiography, so, whilst they illustrate something of the way in which stories were used,<sup>105</sup> because they are not original to England in the way that those in the data base are, they do not convey the same historical pertinence. Similarly, the miracles in the *Vita Felicis* of Bede are not included in the index, in that whilst that work tells us something of Bede's methods,<sup>106</sup> it tells us nothing of the way in which miracle stories originated and were shared in Anglo-Saxon England.

Whilst, as will be seen from the appendix to this thesis, the works from which the stories have been drawn are closely related, precisely how they are so related has been a matter for some discussion. Colgrave believed the earliest of the works to be the Anonymous *Vita Cuthberti*;<sup>107</sup> all that can be said with certainty is that this work was written at the request of Eadfrith, who was bishop of Lindisfarne from 698 to 721.<sup>108</sup> It relates the opening of Cuthbert's coffin and the discovery of his uncorrupted corpse eleven years after his death,<sup>109</sup> and then three further miracles attributed to Cuthbert's posthumous powers, the last of which is said to have occurred 'in praesenti anno'.<sup>110</sup> A reasonable assumption might then be that the work was composed in the first decade of the eighth century, an assumption strengthened by the mention of Aldfrith '...qui nunc regnat pacifice...',



suggesting that the king (who died in 705), was alive at the time of writing.<sup>111</sup> The *Vita* recounts, in a more or less biographical order, Cuthbert's childhood, his youth, during which he served in the army,<sup>112</sup> his vision of the death of Aidan, his later entry into the religious life, his monastic career at Ripon, Melrose and Lindisfarne, his life as a solitary on Farne, his reluctant promotion to the episcopacy, his retirement back to Farne, his death and burial, and (as has been said), the translation of his remains, the discovery of his corpse intact, and a few posthumous miracles. Time and again, the writer claims that there were many other miracles which he was not able to include, for fear of wearying his audience.<sup>113</sup> The work is clearly, as Colgrave showed, dependent on continental models; the *Vita Martini* is quoted extensively, and it is apparent that the writer also knew the *Vita Antonii* and the *Actus Sylvestri*.<sup>114</sup> However, the author's knowledge of these continental lives does not seem to have had a marked effect on the choice and use of miracle stories within the work;<sup>115</sup> it is in the 'conventional' passages (the prefaces and summations) that their influence is shown. The Life is remarkable for the amount of topographical detail that it includes; place names for the sites of miracles are often given (and sometimes descriptions of the landscape), and there is useful information about the pattern of monastic life to be drawn from the accounts of Cuthbert's early career.<sup>116</sup>

Very different in this regard is the *Vita Cuthberti* which Bede wrote in verse. Here there is almost a total absence of such detail, which may be due either (as Levison believed)<sup>117</sup> to the demands of form and metre or (as Lapidge has argued) to the influence of Bede's model for this work, a sixth-century metrical version of the Acts of the Apostles by Arator.<sup>118</sup> The dearth of such useful information is one of the reasons why this work is difficult to date; another is its peculiar manuscript history. Apart from the two main groups of copies, there is one surviving manuscript, the Besançon, which belongs to neither family and is believed by Lapidge to be of an earlier draft of the work.<sup>119</sup> It is possible that the version known in England was the later revision; despite the fact that Bede made it clear that he wrote the poem about Cuthbert first, Alcuin believed that the prose life was the earlier work.<sup>120</sup> The dedication on the poem throws no light on its date either; Bede offers it to John, of whom we know nothing else. Lapidge argues for a dating within the first decade of the eighth century,<sup>121</sup> but as he also notes, the way in which the poem places Cuthbert in a 'timeless, placeless framework',<sup>122</sup> removes most of the clues that would enable us confidently to place the *Vita* in relation to Bede's other works. It is, like much of Bede's poetry, a difficult work to read, full of Biblical and classical resonances, and with an economy of style; it is only with the prose life to hand that some of the chapters

can be understood.<sup>123</sup> Significantly, it has never been translated.<sup>124</sup>

Perhaps Bede's contemporaries also found the poem incomprehensible. That would explain why a prose life was requested, although why Eadfrith (to whom Bede's prose *Vita Cuthberti* is dedicated) should have commissioned the Jarrow scholar as well as one of his own monks to write a life of the Lindisfarne saint is something of a mystery. The solution proffered by W. Berschin maintains that Bede was dissatisfied with the Anonymous author's attempt to produce a companion work to his metrical life, and therefore completed the set himself. Continental saints such as Martin had both a prose and a verse life written in their honour; Cuthbert was to have had the same, but the arrangement of the Anonymous' life did not provide balance to the forty-six chapters of the *Vita Metrica*.<sup>125</sup> The problem with the Berschin theory is that the initiative for the Bede Prose life seems to have come from Lindisfarne, not from Bede.<sup>126</sup> The mystery remains.<sup>127</sup>

Like the Metrical Life, Bede's *Vita Prosaica Cuthberti* includes episodes which are not to be found in the Lindisfarne Life. It lacks some of the detail which the Anonymous author included, although other information, such as an eye-witness account of Cuthbert's last days, is only to be found in the Bede version. To date the Prose Life is again difficult; the dedication to Eadfrith places it between 698 and 721. The only miracle which is recorded

after that which appears as the last in the Anonymous Life can be no earlier than 699-700,<sup>128</sup> and depends on a Jarrow, not a Lindisfarne source. Therefore, although many scholars believe that Bede had the Anonymous Life before him as he composed the Prose Life,<sup>129</sup> and there is some reason to believe that the Bede account was the later,<sup>130</sup> this is not a point on which it is possible to be certain. That there is a larger number of miracle stories in the Bede Life might be taken as a sign of some development of the material;<sup>131</sup> however, as has been noted, the Anonymous maintained that he had chosen his material from a greater range available to him.<sup>132</sup> It is remarkable, given the lack of verbal coincidence,<sup>133</sup> that the order of episodes is the same in all three lives, a fact which strengthens the probability that Bede knew the work of the Anonymous before he wrote either of his own lives.

Bede appears to admit as much in the preface to the Ecclesiastical History:

Inter quae notandum quod ea, quae de sanctissimo patre et antistite Cudbercto vel in hoc volumine vel in libello gestorum ipsius conscripsi, partim ex eis quae de illo prius a fratribus ecclesiae Lindisfarnensis scripta repperi adsumsi, simpliciter fidem historiae quam legebam accommodans, partim vero ea quae certissima fidelium vivorum adtestatione per me ipse cognoscere potui, sollerter adicere curavi.<sup>134</sup>

Despite the lack of acknowledgment in the *Vita Prosaica*, it seems impossible that Bede did not know the Anonymous Life; it would be tortuous to suggest that there was yet another version of events written at Lindisfarne, which has now

been lost. If we need to account for the lack of verbal dependance, the most likely explanation seems to be that Bede had the Anonymous before him as he worked on the Metrical Life, but that he no longer had access to it, or chose not to use it, for the Prose Life, working only from his own poem and other material he had collected.

Another puzzling area of inter-relationship is that created by the overlapping stories in the Ecclesiastical History and the *Vita Wilfridi*. From the Synod of Streoneshalh onwards, Wilfrid was a commanding figure in the English Church of the seventh century. He, therefore, features prominently in the pages of the Ecclesiastical History, and the presentation of so controversial a figure inevitably raises questions of objectivity. Many commentators have asserted that Bede's treatment of Wilfrid is unsympathetic,<sup>135</sup> referring not to any overt antagonism but to 'discreet silences'.<sup>136</sup> But is there any sense in which Bede's presentation of Wilfrid is hostile?<sup>137</sup> It is difficult to make a judgment on this as Bede's Wilfrid stories are scattered in the *Historia*.<sup>138</sup> Certainly, Wilfrid does not receive the loving attention that is accorded to Cuthbert or John of Beverley, but it could be that they are the exception; as Cuthbert's biographer, Bede would have known a great deal about the Lindisfarne saint, and as someone ordained by John might well have felt an affection for the bishop.<sup>139</sup> Yet neither figures in the history of the Church in quite the same way as Wilfrid

does, and therefore it is not surprising that the account of Wilfrid should be distributed as it is throughout the *Historia*. Yet there is a biographical chapter which tells the story of a pious child who went to Lindisfarne at the age of fourteen and rose, through royal patronage, to be bishop of the whole of Northumbria but fell from favour and had to fight to be restored to his (much reduced) see, before his eventual, and remarkable death.<sup>140</sup> The chapter concludes with the epitaph over the tomb of the 'antistes eximius'; the pattern of obituary and epitaph was also followed by Bede in his treatment of Gregory I and Aethelthryth, to neither of whom it has been claimed that Bede had taken a dislike.<sup>141</sup> It is only in comparison to the *Vita Wilfridi* that Bede's treatment appears cold.

The *Vita Wilfridi* is an unashamedly partisan work, the author of which was a member of one of Wilfrid's foundations.<sup>142</sup> This life can be dated with some accuracy to between 710 and 715; the former date being the earlier possibility for the first anniversary of Wilfrid's death (the occasion of the incident with which the book closes)<sup>143</sup> and the latter being the date of the death of Aelfflaed, the ubiquitous abbess of Streonshalh, who is said still to be alive at the time of writing.<sup>144</sup> The identity of the author has been the subject of some debate. There are two extant manuscripts of the work, neither earlier than the eleventh century, in one the author is named as Stephanus, in the other as Heddius Stephanus.<sup>145</sup>

The identification of this author with Aeddi, whom Wilfrid took from Canterbury to York as a singing teacher,<sup>146</sup> was first made by William of Malmesbury, and it would appear that the ascription of the work in one manuscript to 'Heddium Stephanum Monachum Cantuar' is a sixteenth-century interpolation based on William's assumption. It seems safest, therefore, to follow Foley<sup>147</sup> and Kirby<sup>148</sup> and to refer to the author of the work simply as Stephen.

Given that it was written in the period 710-715, it is possible that Bede knew the *Vita Wilfridi*, but he did not acknowledge it as a source in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. At a number of points, it is clear that Bede could not have been working from Stephen's account, but had his own informants for his Wilfrid stories;<sup>149</sup> it is only in the obituary that Bede's summary of Wilfrid's career corresponds closely to what we find in the *Vita*. Gabrielle Isenberg has offered the solution that Bede only came across the *Vita* as he was working on book V.<sup>150</sup> There is, however, no indication that Bede copied verbatim from the *Vita*, and differences remain even between *H.E. V*, 19 and the *Vita*.<sup>151</sup> Bede reports elsewhere that he obtained his information from Acca,<sup>152</sup> and Stephen relied on the bishop of Hexham (who, along with Tatbert, commissioned the work) for some of his material,<sup>153</sup> so many similarities can be explained as due to a common source.

The existence of a biographical chapter in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and a full length *vita* is also the

situation when we consider the miracles attributed to Gregory I. The *vita* written in England in the early eighth century is the earliest extant life of the great pope, and has been the subject of much scholarly debate, particularly on its relationship to the parts of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* concerned with Gregory and Edwin.<sup>154</sup> Alan Thacker believes that Bede knew and used this work, or at least a version of it, possibly in oral form.<sup>155</sup> However, not only do the details of stories used by the two authors differ, it is by no means certain that the writing of the *Vita* pre-dates that of the *Historia*, though it is inconceivable that, were the *Vita* the later work, the author could have had access to Bede's narrative and then reworked it so poorly.<sup>156</sup> The evidence first for the dating and then for mutual independence needs to be briefly rehearsed.

The Anonymous author of the *Vita Gregorii* reveals only a few details about himself in the work. He<sup>157</sup> is an Englishman,<sup>158</sup> a Deiran,<sup>159</sup> and a member of the monastery at Streoneshalh.<sup>160</sup> Other than that, we know nothing. As to the date, there is little that can be said with any certainty; the only manuscript of the *Vita* is of continental origin from the early ninth century,<sup>161</sup> and the earliest use of it is from the 870s.<sup>162</sup> The latest event to which the *Vita* refers is the translation of Edwin's bones to Streoneshalh,<sup>163</sup> which is likely to have occurred sometime in the last quarter of the seventh century.<sup>164</sup>



Colgrave argued that the latest date for composition must have been 714, as he understood the implication of the account of the translation to be that Aelfflaed was still living at the time of writing.<sup>165</sup> This argument is not convincing; it depends on the sentence in which Aelfflaed is mentioned being one of the author's own comments, and it seems unlikely that a monk should need to explain that his own house, 'Streunesalae ...est coenobium famosissimum'.<sup>166</sup> It may be that all that the sentence implies is that Aelfflaed was alive at the time of the translation. Having said that, the writer must have been living within about a generation of the events he records. He claims to have heard the story of the finding of Edwin's remains from a relation of the priest who made the discovery, but was unable to remember all of the details.<sup>167</sup> Colgrave's other argument in favour of a dating as early as 714 was the difference between this work and those of Stephen, Felix, Bede and the Anonymous of Lindisfarne, which he took to show that the influence of continental exemplars, such as the *Vita Martini* or the *Vita Antonii* had not reached England.<sup>168</sup> This is circumstantial, and the *Vita Gregorii* so clearly shows the influence of the other popular continental hagiography, the *Dialogues* of Gregory I,<sup>169</sup> that it is hard to contend that this is a primitive, native form of English hagiography. It might even be possible to argue that some of the theology is 'more advanced' than that displayed in any other author of the time.<sup>170</sup>

An alternative possibility ought to be recognized: far from being the earliest of the lives which we have, the *Vita Gregorii* might be the latest. The cult of Gregory developed in England earlier than it did on the continent, even in Rome where the pope's memory seems to have suffered until the ninth century.<sup>171</sup> The Council of Clofesho in 747 decreed that Gregory should be honoured as a saint each year on March 12th.<sup>172</sup> It is clear that this early English Life was written to promote the cult.<sup>173</sup> Time and again the author suggests that he has hastily gathered what few miracle stories he can find in order that Gregory might be venerated, and claims that his subject was already invoked in the litany of the church and universally acclaimed as a saint.<sup>174</sup> This all smacks of propaganda; is it fanciful to suggest that the monastery at Streoneshalh was the focus of devotion to Gregory, and was instrumental in its promotion either shortly before or shortly after Clofesho? <sup>175</sup>

Another hypothesis might lead to a similar dating. Alan Thacker has shown that it is not only the cult of Gregory that this life propagates, but also that of Edwin, which he maintains was established to rival that of Oswald.<sup>176</sup> The *Vita Gregorii* makes no mention of Oswald; Edwin is the writer's *Christianissimus Rex*.<sup>177</sup> Neither is there any word of the relapse of Northumbria into paganism after Edwin's death or the strategic retreat from the north by Paulinus.<sup>178</sup> If we contrast that with the collective impression given by the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Vita*

*Cuthberti* (in all its versions) and *Vita Wilfridi*, that Northumbria was Christianized through the monks of the Iona-Lindisfarne tradition, we find a possible *Sitz in Leben* for a work of polemic. Was the writer of the *Vita Gregorii* using his opportunity to rescue the first mission to Northumbria from oblivion, to remind his Deiran contemporaries that it was to Gregory, Augustine and Paulinus that they really owed their faith, rather than to Aidan and Oswald? He himself tells us that the events in question occurred 'long before the days of any who are still alive',<sup>179</sup> a phrase which suggests a forgotten past. It is also an assertion that supports the hypothesis of a later dating; that there would have been no-one alive in the 740s who had been born before 628 is certain, but the statement would not be so obviously true if made in about 700.

Of course, if it could be demonstrated that Bede used the *Vita Gregorii* in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* a 740s dating would be impossible. But it seems clear that he did not. Colgrave argued that Bede would not have neglected the additional details offered by the Anonymous, such as the name of Gregory's mother;<sup>180</sup> Thacker does not find this argument conclusive.<sup>181</sup> However, it seems implausible that this work could have been written in a monastery with which Bede had close dealings, whose abbess was one of the sources he used in his *Vita Cuthberti*,<sup>182</sup> about whose first abbess, Hild, he had so much information,<sup>183</sup> and from which

his story of Caedmon originated,<sup>184</sup> and that he knew nothing of it.<sup>185</sup> Coupled with the curious manner in which the stories which the two have in common are told in different ways, to the point that in one instance the Streoneshalh writer's account barely makes sense if the Bede version is not known,<sup>186</sup> the most probable explanation is that neither knew the other's work, and that each drew on different traditions. Thacker believes that in the case of the Streoneshalh life, those traditions were in the form of an ancient Roman *Vita* which has also survived in part in the *Pratum Spirituale* of John Moschus.<sup>187</sup> He posits, somewhat speculatively, that these stories reached Streoneshalh via the east, through the person of Theodore of Canterbury.<sup>188</sup> What has not been explained is why, when Bede made enquiries through Nothelm, this *vita* seems to have been forgotten at both Canterbury and Rome, or why John the Deacon, the first Roman biographer of Gregory of whom we know, used the Bede version of some stories rather than these 'ancient traditions.'<sup>189</sup> Unanswered questions remain.

There are fewer mysteries surrounding the last work in this group, the *Vita Guthlaci*. Again, there can be no certainty about the dating - the work was written at the request of Aelfwald, king of East Anglia until 749, about an hermit who died in about 714. Any date between those two termini is possible, although the implication that Aethelbald of Mercia was at the height of his power places

it after the mid-720s.<sup>190</sup> Thacker has argued that the purpose of the *vita* was to promote the cult of Guthlac, possibly under Mercian control in opposition to the popularity of Fursey in East Anglia.<sup>191</sup> Certainly, there is ample evidence that during the later middle ages Crowland, the site of the hermit's miraculous career, became a major abbey and pilgrimage centre, and the popularity of the *Vita* went hand-in-hand with the growth of the centre.<sup>192</sup>

Thirteen copies of the life survive from before the year 1300, and in the ninth century it was translated into Old English.<sup>193</sup> That Guthlac is not mentioned in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* may not be of great significance. Neither Mercia nor East Anglia is well represented in the later part of the history, and it may not have been until the ascendancy of Aethelbald was established that the cult was seriously promoted. Of the author of this work, little is known. He gives his name as Felix; it is not unreasonable, given the general state of literacy at the time, to assume that he was a monk,<sup>194</sup> possibly of Repton (where Guthlac had received the tonsure).<sup>195</sup> Felix's writing displays a familiarity with a number of writers; he quotes Aldhelm, the Bede prose life of Cuthbert, and Virgil as well as the popular works of European hagiography, the *Vita Pauli*, the *Vita Martini*, the *Vita Antonii*, and the *Dialogi* of Gregory I.<sup>196</sup> Colgrave believed that he was an East Anglian, but his arguments only demonstrate an expectation by Felix that Aelfwald, the dedicatee, would be familiar with his own

history.<sup>197</sup> Thacker claims that the work reveals a Mercian rather than an East Anglian interest.<sup>198</sup> The two witnesses that Felix most often cites - the abbot Wilfrid and the priest Cissa - are otherwise unevidenced.<sup>199</sup> There is nothing in the life to suggest that Felix himself knew Guthlac; his only eye-witness account seems to be of the shrine.<sup>200</sup>

It has, therefore, been possible to define a group (of these eight hagiographical works and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*) from which the miracle stories discussed in this thesis have been drawn. Those stories, of course, cannot be considered in isolation from the wider traditions which shaped them, and, if they are to be considered as historical material, the extent to which they are so shaped must be assessed. For that reason, the first chapter of this thesis considers the background against which these stories need to be seen, by reviewing, firstly, the hagiography of the wider Church that was known to the writers, by asking, secondly, with what concept of the miraculous were our writers, as those schooled in theology, working, and by examining, thirdly, what is known of the paganism which the young, miracle-filled, Christianity which our authors report, is presumed to have replaced. In chapter two, one part of the Christian background is considered in greater detail; the figure of Gregory the Great has been claimed to lie behind the thought of the English church in this area, a claim which needs to be

examined and challenged.<sup>201</sup> Having argued that the degree to which the occurrence and content of these stories is dependent on earlier, written material is not as great as might be supposed, chapter three examines the question of transmission, and posits that both the origin of stories and the apparent imitation of some by others is to be accounted for through their existence in an informal oral tradition before they were committed to parchment. The final two chapters consider what the stories convey, in terms of the theology and spirituality which underwrite them (chapter four), and of the attitude of their authors to the history of their own times (chapter five). It will be concluded that, far from being an unwelcome intrusion which devalue the historical worth of the works in which they are found,<sup>202</sup> the miracle stories are an important source of information about the attitude of the English Church in the early eighth century to its own past.

'Multi igitur a miraculis vitam quidem sanctorum solent considerare': the stories under consideration.

By definition, a miracle is an astounding event which in some way forces us to re-assess our view of reality.<sup>203</sup> That would appear to mean, philosophically, that the range of possible miraculous occurrences is infinite. However, in terms of the literature of the early church and the middle ages, it is possible to classify miracles as falling into definable categories.<sup>204</sup> There has been a number of

attempts to identify these categories; the appendix to this thesis follows (with some modification) that set out by Sr Benedicta Ward in a paper on the *Historia Monachorum*,<sup>205</sup> in which the stories were divided into four groups; the last of these, 'the dreams of the desert', is a type which has only one parallel in the Anglo-Saxon material, and so need not be included here.<sup>206</sup> The remaining three categories are Healings, Revelations, and Nature Miracles.<sup>207</sup> The term 'healing' is used to include all forms of restoration to physical or spiritual health (of people, animals, and, in one case, a place); 'revelations' is a blanket term for all those miracles which, usually without any permanent physical manifestation, reveal the interior life of the saint, or the reality of the afterlife; 'nature miracles' incorporate all instances of power demonstrated over other creatures, over the elements, or over matter. These categories are necessarily broad; each has been divided into sub-types,<sup>208</sup> and occasionally it might be argued that a miracle could equally well be placed in another class.<sup>209</sup> The total number of miracle stories in each work, and the number of each type is shown in the table below:



	<u>Healing</u>	<u>Revelation</u>	<u>Nature</u>
<i>H.E.</i>	22	35	26
(83)	<hr/>		
<i>VAnon.</i>	13	8	10
(31)	<hr/>		
<i>VPr.</i>	18	13	15
(46)	<hr/>		
<i>VMet.</i>	16	10	13
(39)	<hr/>		
<i>VGuth.</i>	4	16	3
(23)	<hr/>		
<i>VGreg.</i>	2	8	4
(14)	<hr/>		
<i>VWilf.</i>	5	7	9
(21)	<hr/>		

According to C.G. Loomis, 'about ninety percent of ... miracles are concerned with the cures of human ills.'<sup>210</sup> That the English works here under discussion do not display anything like so disproportionate a number of healing stories is shown by the table. There are reasons for this; firstly, the Anglo-Saxon material lies at an early stage of the development of miracle seeking. Only later, when large shrines began to operate, and the use of relics became more widespread, did healings begin far to outnumber all other

miracles.<sup>211</sup> Sr Benedicta noted that in the still earlier *Historia Monachorum*, there are 'singularly few' cures.<sup>212</sup> The second reason is related; the Anglo-Saxon stories are primarily concerned with living saints, although there is a number of posthumous miracles. The range, for example, of nature miracles accomplished by a saint during his/her lifetime is necessarily greater than that possible from the tomb. Similarly, although there are some *post mortem* revelations, relics tend not to prophesy.<sup>213</sup> Thirdly, the number of miracle stories does not necessarily equate to the number of miracles believed to have occurred; it is impossible, for example, to include all the 'multiple miracles' (most of them healings) which are reported of the shrine of Chad, the litter of Earconwald,<sup>214</sup> or the many visitors to Crowland.<sup>215</sup>

The appendix to this thesis tabulates an analysis of each story in its constituent parts. The way that the story can be analysed is different for each type. With healing stories, the relevant questions are who (agent) cured whom (beneficiary) of what (affliction), and how (means)? With nature miracles, the information is simply what happened (occurrence) when who (agent) did what (action)? With revelations, analysis is more difficult, and has been restricted to who (visionary) experienced what (content)? With all stories, we also ask about the situation in which the miracle occurred (place and when), and about the reporting of the event (witness and source).<sup>216</sup> Obviously,

it is not possible to gather all the information for every story, and in some cases the absence of information is itself informative.

It would be misleading to pretend that these stories naturally lend themselves to such a breakdown. Some of the difficulties implied in the description of the method suggest that this is not the way in which the stories were intended to be read. Particularly with the *Vita Metrica Cuthberti*,<sup>217</sup> it is clear that the effect of the story, rather than the systematic conveying of information, was of prime importance to the author. It has been maintained that these stories originated in a primitive human belief in the miraculous, and a desire to be impressed by divine action, and in the literary inspiration of earlier stories.<sup>218</sup> The next chapter asks how far it is possible to account for the existence of this material by reference to a background which would have created a popular demand for miracle stories.

Notes to the Introduction

The title quotation is from the *Vita Gregorii Papae* (hereafter *VGreg.*) c.29.

1. *Historia Ecclesiastica* (hereafter *H.E.*) V, 9-11.
2. *H.E.* V, 10.
3. E.g., John 1. 4-5; Matthew 5. 14-16.
4. *H.E.* I, 7.
5. *H.E.* I, 33 & III, 11, respectively.
6. *H.E.* III, 9.
7. *VGreg.* c.16.

The subtitle quotation is from *VGreg.* c.30.

8. Plummer, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (Oxford, 1896), vol.I, pp.lxiv-v. Wallace-Hadrill neatly summed up this attitude as one which 'amounts to this: Bede, a man of his times, must be expected to record miracles; we should be thankful that they so often include interesting historical fact and not bother ourselves about their role in an otherwise carefully thought-out history, for they do not really affect the rest of the matter.' (*Bede and Plummer* (reprinted as the introduction to *Bede's Ecclesiastical History A Historical Commentary*), p.xxiv).

9. 'Bede's Miracle Stories', in ed. A.H. Thompson, *Bede, His Life, Times and Writings* (Oxford 1935) (hereafter *BLTW*), pp.201-229.

10. *Op. cit.*, p.201; cf. J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), p.4, arguing that Bede's restraint was because he did not use the stories to advertise the merits of a particular shrine.

11. Colgrave, *op. cit.*, p.226.

12. *Op. cit.*, p.202.

13. *Op. cit.*, p.226.

14. *Op. cit.*, p.228.

15. 'The Earliest Saints' Lives Written in England', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 44 (1958), 35-60.

16. *Op. cit.*, p.46.

17. *Op. cit.*, p.47. Colgrave over-estimated the attribution of

witnesses; see below, appendix 1.

18. *Op. cit.*, p.59.

19. The evidence that the *Historia Ecclesiastica* would have had a wider audience than contemporary *vitae* is its later popularity and, according to C.W. Jones, the content of its preface (*Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England* (New York, 1947), p.81). Neither argument is conclusive.

20. Colgrave, *op. cit.*, p.60.

21. *Bede, Archaeology, and the Cult of Relics* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1973), p.5.

22. 'Bede's Use of Miracles in "The Ecclesiastical History"', *Traditio* 31 (1975), pp.329-35 (p.329).

23. Rosenthal, p.330, which seems to under-estimate the total number of miracles recorded in the *H.E.*; see below, p.44.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Rosenthal, p.332.

26. Rosenthal, p.333.

27. Rosenthal, p.331.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Yale, 1979.

31. *Bede's Understanding of the Miraculous*, p.7.

32. Creider, p.292.

33. Creider, pp.73-8.

34. Creider, pp.114-28.

35. Creider, p.165.

36. Creider, p.164

37. 'Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*', *Speculum* 55 (1980), 1-21.

38. 'Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*: The Rhetoric of Faith', in ed. J.J. Murphy, *Medieval Eloquence* (California and London, 1978), pp.145-72.

39. Creider, pp.114, 156.

40. Creider, p.289.
41. Creider, p.266.
42. Creider, p.125.
43. Creider, p.283.
44. Creider, p.281.
45. Creider, pp.274-5.
46. Creider, pp.150-1.
47. 'The Miracle Traditions of the Venerable Bede', *Speculum* 21 (1949), 404-18.
48. *Op. cit.*, p.417.
49. *Op. cit.*, p.418.
50. *Op. cit.*, p.405.
51. *Op. cit.*, p.404.
52. *Op. cit.*, p.405.
53. *Op. cit.* p.407.
54. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* (Toronto, 1994).
55. *Signs of Sanctity. Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great* (Toronto 1989).
56. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p.70.
57. *Op. cit.*, p.165.
58. *Op. cit.*, p.72.
59. Creider, p.262.
60. McCready, *op. cit.*, p.73.
61. Rosenthal, p.331.
62. Ray, *Bede, Rhetoric and the Creation of Christian Latin Culture* (Jarrow, forthcoming).
63. McCready, *op. cit.*, p.229.
64. *Op. cit.*, p.230.

65. *Op. cit.*, p.231.
66. *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edition, London, 1991), p.47.
67. *Op. cit.*, p.48.
68. *Op. cit.*, p.49.
69. 'Miracles and History. A Reconsideration of the Miracle Stories used by Bede', in ed. G. Bonner, *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Century of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), pp.69-76.
70. *Op. cit.*, p.70.
71. *Op. cit.*, p.73.
72. *Op. cit.*, p.72.
73. *Op. cit.*, p.73.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Op. cit.*, p.74.
76. E.g., C. O'Hare, 'The Story of Caedmon: Bede's Account of the first English Poet', *A.B.R.* 43 (1992), pp.345-57; D.W. Fritz, 'Caedmon: A Monastic Exegete', *A.B.R.* 25 (1974), pp.351-63; G. Wieland, 'Caedmon, the Clean Animal', *A.B.R.* 35 (1980), pp.194-203.
77. As in, e.g., the accounts of persons receiving the 'stigmata'. See *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1967), vol.VII, 711-13.
78. *H.E.* IV, 7-10.
79. Ward, *op. cit.*, p.75. It has since been argued that the stories attributed to Florence of Worcester rightly belong to his younger contemporary, John (ed. & trans. R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, vol.II (Oxford, 1995), pp.xvii-xviii).
80. 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p.59.
81. B. Ward, *The Venerable Bede* (London, 1990), p.144; Mayr-Harting, *op. cit.*, pp.214-219; K. Crossley-Holland, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (Oxford, 1984), p.158; A. Stacpoole, 'St Bede' in ed. D.H. Farmer, *Benedict's Disciples* (Leominster, Herefordshire, 1980), pp.86-104 (p.86).
82. Most of the works under consideration here are mainly concerned with events in the latter part of the seventh century,

and so inevitably involve some of the same characters.

<sup>83</sup>. E.g., the story of the conversion of Edwin by Paulinus (*H.E.* II, 12, cf. *VGreg.* c.16), or the postponed death of Wilfrid (*H.E.* V, 19, cf. *Vita Wilfridi* c.56).

<sup>84</sup>. *H.E.* praef., III, 19, and IV, 10; *Vita Cuthberti Prosaica* prol..

<sup>85</sup>. E.g., *H.E.* V, 4, cf. *Vita Wilfridi* c.37.

<sup>86</sup>. It is not helpful in relation to eighth-century authors to pre-suppose a distinction between history and hagiography. See below, pp.292-5.

The subtitle quotation is from *VGreg.* prol..

<sup>87</sup>. For editions used of all these works, see the Bibliography.

<sup>88</sup>. Abbreviated throughout to *VMet.*.

<sup>89</sup>. Abbreviated throughout to *VPr.*.

<sup>90</sup>. Abbreviated throughout to *VAnon.*.

<sup>91</sup>. Abbreviated throughout to *VWilf.*.

<sup>92</sup>. Abbreviated throughout to *VGuth.*. There are also two Old English poems relating to Guthlac's life, death and miracles, which have not been used in this thesis. They date from the ninth (or possibly late eighth) century; see J. Roberts, 'An Inventory of Early Guthlac Material', *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970), pp.193-233, and *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book* (Oxford, 1979).

<sup>93</sup>. Since the twelfth century, Streoneshalh has been identified with Whitby; whilst Bede's assertion that the place was thirteen miles from Hacanos fits with the distance from modern Hackness to Whitby, the archaeological evidence is less than completely convincing. It seems safer, therefore, to continue to refer to the monastery as Streoneshalh. See, C. Fell, 'Hild, abbess of Streonaeshalh', in ed. H. Bekker-Nielsen et al., *Hagiography and Medieval Literature: A Symposium* (Odense, 1981), pp.76-99 (pp. 82-4).

<sup>94</sup>. The fullest treatment of the Anglo-Saxon hagiographies remains A.T. Thacker, 'The Social and Continental Background to Early Anglo-Saxon Hagiography' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1976). The same group of works was also discussed by Colgrave, 'The Earliest Saints' Lives written in England', *op. cit.*.

<sup>95</sup>. Abbreviated throughout to *H.A.*.



96. And owned by him in *H.E. V*, 24.
97. Abbreviated throughout to *VCeol*..
98. J. McClure, 'Bede and the Life of Ceolfrid', *Peritia* 3 (1984), pp. 71-84. McClure's argument has been disputed by, e.g., D. Whitelock, 'Bede and His Teachers and Friends', in ed. Bonner, *Famulus Christi*, pp.19-39 (pp.20-1), and *After Bede* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1960), pp.13-14. That scholarly opinion can remain divided on this issue (e.g., I.N. Wood, *The most holy abbot Ceolfrid* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1995), pp.18-19) supports the thesis that Bede needs to be treated alongside his contemporaries.
99. Thacker, 'Social and Continental Background', p.140.
100. Boniface, Ep.10. The numbering of Boniface's epistles used is that of Tangl, which is the usual system followed. The edition cited, however, is that of Giles (see bibliography).
101. Below, pp.161-3.
102. Below, pp.303-4.
103. Chronologically, the earliest miracle stories are those relating to Alban and Germanus, but Bede understood these to have a bearing on the history of his own people.
104. Below, pp.310-49.
105. The miracle stories of the *De Virginitate* have the clearly stated purpose of acting as an example of the fruits of celibacy. Those of the fourth *carmen ecclesiastica* seem to serve simply to extol the fame of the saints of the dedication.
106. T.W. Mackay, 'Bede's Hagiographical Method: His knowledge and use of Paulinus of Nola', in ed. Bonner, *Famulus Christi*, pp.77-92.
107. 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p.37
108. *VAnon.* I, 1.
109. *VAnon.* IV, 14.
110. *VAnon.* IV, 17.
111. *VAnon.* III, 6; Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), p.13.
112. *VAnon.* I, 7. Bede passes over Cuthbert's army career, presenting his vision of Aidan's death as the point at which he decided to enter a monastery (*VPr.* c.4). There is no obvious reason for this discrepancy, which results in two versions of the

story of the horse finding Cuthbert's lunch (*VPr.* c.5, *VAnon.* I, 6).

113. *VAnon.* I, 7 and IV, 18.

114. Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p.42; *Two Lives*, p.62.

115. Below, pp.90-101.

116. Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p.44; see, e.g., *VAnon.* I, 5-6 and II, 7. Creider comments that the *VAnon.* 'is a better source for the history of Cuthbert and seventh-century Northumbria' than the *VPr.*, which, however, 'is the better example of a Saint's Life.' (*op. cit.*, p.131).

117. 'Bede as Historian', in *BLTW*, pp.111-51.

118. 'Bede's Metrical "Vita S. Cuthberti"' in ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason, & C. Stancliffe, *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community* (Suffolk, 1989), pp.77-93.

119. *Op. cit.* p.83. Also *Bede the Poet* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1993), p.13.

120. *H.E. V*, 24; *Versus de Patribus, Regibus et Sanctis Euboricensis Ecclesiae* (hereafter *Versus*), 686-7. (All *Versus* references are identified by line numbers in Godman's edition).

121. 'Bede's Metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*', p.78.

122. *Op. cit.* p.91

123. *Bede the Poet*, p.12.

124. According to Giles, it is a 'dull and heavy composition, and almost verbatim the same as [the Prose Life]', and therefore not worth translating (*The Biographical Writings and Letters of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1845), p.2). For a very different view see Lapidge, *op. cit.*, pp.12-14.

125. 'Opus deliberatum ac perfectum : Why did the Venerable Bede write a second Prose Life of St Cuthbert?', in ed. Bonner et al., *Cuthbert, Cult and Community*, pp.95-102.

126. *VPr.* prol.

127. Other attempts to solve the puzzle include the theory that the Bede Life was written to counter the view of Cuthbert expressed in the *VWilf.*, published after the Anonymous' *Vita* (Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', in ed. Bonner et al., *Cuthbert, Cult and Community*, pp.103-122), that it was to present Cuthbert in closer conformity to continental models of sanctity, (Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary', in *op. cit.*, pp.21-44),

and that Bede's fame was used to add lustre to the burgeoning cult (Rollason, 'Why was Cuthbert so popular', in ed. Rollason, *Cuthbert, Saint and Patron*, pp.9-22).

128. *VPr.* c.46.

129. E.g., Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p.46, *Two Lives*, p.14; McCready, *op. cit.*, p.140; P.H. Blair, *The World of Bede* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1970), p.277; B. Ward, *The Venerable Bede* (London, 1990), p.98.

130. The story of a nun whom Cuthbert healed provides one piece of evidence. In *VAnon*, the woman's relative is 'Aedelwald, qui nunc est praepositus coenobii quod dicitur Mailros' (*VAnon.* IV, 4); Bede calls him 'Edilwaldus...nunc autem abbas coenobii Mailrosensis'. It is, perhaps, also significant that there is no implication in the story of the end of Ecgfrith's reign that Aldfrith was alive at the time of writing (*VPr.* c.24).

131. There are thirty-one miracles recorded in the *VAnon.*, compared to forty-six in the *VPr.*.

132. *VAnon.* IV, 18.

133. According to Plummer, Bede altered the language for 'the mere sake of alteration' (Plummer, vol.I, p.xlvi).

134. *H.E.* praef.

135. E.g., Plummer, vol.II, p.316; Creider, p.137; Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge 1927), p.xii; D.J.V. Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age c400-1042* (London, 1973), p.143.

136. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p.129.

137. Some of Bede's perceived dislike may have been in the eye of the beholder; e.g., Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede and Plummer*, p.xxxii: 'Bede was not as anti-Wilfrid as Plummer was.'

138. Bede summarized Wilfrid's career when he recorded his death (*H.E.* V, 19), but prior to that, Wilfrid appears in *H.E.* III, 18 and 28, IV, 2, 5, 13, and 16, and V, 11.

139. *H.E.* V, 24.

140. *H.E.* V, 19.

141. *H.E.* II, 1, and IV, 19-20, respectively.

142. Which foundation is not known. Kirby believes that Stephen belonged to one of Wilfrid's Mercian monasteries ('Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the "Life of Wilfrid"' (*E.H.R.* 98 (1983), pp.101-14 (p.104)); the traditional identification with the cantor Aeddi

would place him in a Northumbrian houses (*H.E.* IV, 2).

143. *VWilf.* c.68.

144. *VWilf.* c.59. Kirby has argued (*op. cit.*, p.109) that the work must have been revised after 731, as Acca, is confusingly described in the work as 'beatae memoriae' (a phrase usually, though not always, used of the dead) and 'adhuc vivens'. Kirby claims the explanation for this inconsistency lies in the politico-ecclesiastical *putsch* of 731 when Acca was expelled, leading to some revision of the *Vita*. That there are inconsistencies in the life cannot be denied, but they can as easily be attributed to the author simply recording what his sources gave him as they can to a reworking some twenty years later.

145. Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, pp.xiii-xiv.

146. *Op. cit.* p.2.

147. *Images of Sanctity in Eddius Stephanus' 'Life of Bishop Wilfrid', an Early English Saint's Life* (Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter 1992), p.i.

148. 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and "The Life of Wilfrid"', p.104.

149. E.g., *H.E.* IV, 13 and 19.

150. Isenberg's argument is contained in *Die Würdigung Wilfreds von York in der Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum Bedas und der Vita Wilfridi des Eddius* (Munster, 1978).

151. Noted by Kirby, and explained as due to Bede's dependence on the earlier version (*op. cit.*, pp.109-10).

152. *H.E.* III, 13

153. *VWilf.* praef., c.56.

154. The *Vita* digresses to extol the virtues of the first Christian king of Northumbria (*VGreg.* cc.12-19).

155. 'Social and Continental Background', p.78.

156. Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1968), pp.56-7.

157. Thacker is right to note the possibility that the author was a woman; the use of the male pronoun in this thesis has been adopted for simplicity's sake, and not to make any assumptions. ('Memorializing Gregory the Great: the origin and transmission of a papal cult' (unpublished lecture), n.1).

158. *VGreg.* c.6.

159. *VGreg.* c.9.
160. *VGreg.* c.19.
161. Colgrave, *Earliest Life*, pp.63-4.
162. Colgrave, *op. cit.*, p.46. This point could be disputed. John the Deacon (*S.Gregorii Magni Vita*, P.L. 75, 61-242) told the same stories and acknowledged their origin as English, but differences in wording suggest that he might not have known the Northumbrian work.
163. *VGreg.* cc.18-19.
164. The author says that Aethelred was king of Mercia when the translation occurred; Aethelred died in 704, but it is likely that Eanfled, who was born in 626 (*H.E.* II, 9) and was still alive at the time of the translation (*VGreg.* c.18), died before then.
165. Colgrave, *op. cit.* pp.47-8.
166. *VGreg.* c.18.
167. *Ibid.*
168. 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p.50.
169. It is clear that the Anonymous knew of the *Dialogi* and something of their contents, but it remains to be proven that he himself had read them or had access to them. See below, pp.125-6.
170. E.g., *VGreg.* has the only eucharistic miracle of the corpus here under discussion. See below, pp.255-6.
171. Thacker, 'Social and Continental Background', p.40. Thacker argues that there was a nascent cult from the late seventh century, which provided the Streoneshalh author with his material, but that for two centuries the pope's reputation in the city remained in the balance ('Memorializing Gregory the Great', pp.14-17).
172. Const. 17 (Haddan & Stubbs, vol.III, p.390).
173. '...qualiter doctor noster sanctus Gregorius vir ceteris incomparabilis sit, nobis in sanctitate Deo adiuvante, venerandus.' (*VGreg.*, c.3).
174. *VGreg.* cc.3-5, 32.
175. Thacker ('Memorializing Gregory the Great', p.22) argues that c.32 and the existence of *VGreg.* itself witness that Gregory had been granted full liturgical honours in England by the end of

the seventh century. But this argument is circular; if *VGreg.* is later, so might be the veneration, and whilst Thacker cites a number of pre-Viking dedications, he does not claim them to be earlier than c.750.

176. 'Social and Continental Background', pp.56-9.

177. *VGreg.* c.17.

178. *VGreg.* c.16.

179. *Ibid.* (tr. Colgrave).

180. *Earliest Life*, pp.56-9.

181. 'Memorializing Gregory the Great', p.13.

182. *VPr.* c.33.

183. *H.E.* IV, 23.

184. *H.E.* IV, 24.

185. Colgrave argues against this that if the *VGreg.* were later than the *H.E.* the Streoneshalh author would have had access to Bede's work (*Earliest Life*, p.57). It has to be conceded that the hypothesis that the *VGreg.* was written in the 740s rests on the far from impossible assumption that, in the first ten to fifteen years after its completion, the *H.E.* had not reached Streoneshalh.

186. *VGreg.* c.16; cf, *H.E.* II, 12.

187. Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory the Great', p.6.

188. *Op. cit.* pp.18-21.

189. The *S.Gregorii Magni Vita* claims to have been written at the instigation of John VIII because there was no Roman life; the origin of some of the stories in John the Deacon's work is attributed to unnamed English sources (e.g., II, 41 & 44), and John clearly found Bede's form of the common stories (e.g., I, 21) preferable to the form used by the Anonymous, if he knew it.

190. *VGuth.* c.52. Bede recorded that Aethelbald held all of England south of the Humber in subjection in 731 (*H.E.* V, 23); he styled himself *Rex Britanniae* in 736. This hegemony could not have been achieved before the death of Wihtred of Kent (in 725) or the abdication (in 726) of Ine of Wessex. (F. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd ed., Oxford, 1971), p.203).

191. 'Social and Continental Background', pp.305-6.

192. D.H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1978),

pp.184-5.

193. J. Roberts, 'An Inventory of Early Guthlac Material'.
194. But, against this, see S. Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', in ed. R. McKitterick, *The Uses in Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), pp.36-62.
195. *VGuth.* c.20.
196. The quotations (some of them fleeting) are identified in Colgrave's edition, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956).
197. *Felix's Life*, p.16.
198. 'Social and Continental Background', pp.323-4.
199. *VGuth.* prol.
200. *VGuth.* c.51.
201. Above, pp.15-17.
202. G.I. Berlin, 'Bede's Miracle Stories: Notions of Evidence and Authority in Old English History', *Neophilologus* 74 (1990), pp.434-43, contrasts two approaches to the study of early mediaeval historians, one which sifts the improbable out of the writing, and the other which questions 'not the historicity of the events recorded but... the system of assumptions underlying the writing of history and the gathering of evidence' (p.434). The present writer maintains that assessing the 'system of assumptions' must lead back to a review of our perceptions of the historicity of events.
- The subtitle quotation is from *VGreg.* c.3.
203. G. Ashe, *Miracles* (London, 1978).
204. The reason for this is partly that, generally speaking, miracle stories are so connected with questions of theology that their purpose seems primarily to teach the truth through recognizable patterns, rather than to amaze. See B. Ward, '"Signs and Wonders" - Miracles in the Desert Tradition', *Studia Patristica* 17 (1972), pp.539-42.
205. *Op. cit.*. Other schemae include that provided by Loomis, *White Magic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), which, though arguably more comprehensive, eventually breaks down with his twelfth classification ('Miscellanea') including the sub-group, 'unclassified'. An alternative relating specifically to English and Irish material of the early middle ages is to be found in M.A. Steinberg, 'The Origins and Role of the Miracle-Story in Irish and English History and Hagiography, 400-800 A.D..'

(unpublished PhD. dissertation, University of New York, 1978). Because of her stress on the Irish material, Steinberg includes categories (such as maledictions) which scarcely appear in the English sources.

206. Ward, *op. cit.*, p.542. The parallel is the demonic assaults on Guthlac; these stories are about the spiritual life of the saint, so are included as 'revelations' in the present analysis.

207. These are my terms; Sr Benedicta uses 'cures', 'interior kinds of miracles', and 'works of power'.

208. Below, appendices 6-8.

209. E.g., Wilfrid's vision of Michael (*H.E. V*, 19, cf. *VWilf.* c.56) has been classed as a revelation, rather than an healing.

210. 'Hagiographical Healing', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 8 (1940), pp.636-42 (p.636). Loomis based this calculation on a 'study of more than thirty thousand legends of the saints' (*ibid.*). Elsewhere, he claimed that 'the ratio of healing miracles to all other kinds is approximately in a proportion of 100 to one.' (*White Magic*, p.203).

211. On the miracles of the later middle ages, see R.C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims : Popular Beliefs in Mediaeval England* (London, 1977), and B. Ward, *Miracles and the Mediaeval Mind* (Aldershot, 1982).

212. "'Signs and Wonders"', p.540.

213. Posthumous miracles are not excluded from any category. Nature miracles include Germanus' discovery of Alban's blood still on the ground (*H.E. I*, 18), and the green grass of Maserfelth (*H.E. III*, 10); amongst the revelations are the arc in the sky on the anniversary of Wilfrid's death (*VWilf.* c.68), and the appearance of Boisil to Egbert (*H.E. V*, 9). There are many other examples.

214. *H.E. IV*, 3, 6.

215. *VGuth.* c.45.

216. Appendices 1-5.

217. E.g., *VMet.* c.12. Bede tells us nothing of the occasion on which Cuthbert saved his house from burning, but plays with the idea of the ardour of the saint's prayers repulsing the flames of the fire. Such antitheses are a feature of the work (also, e.g., c.35). See C.F. Altman, 'Two Types of Opposition and the Structure of Latin Saints' Lives', *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 6 (1975), pp.1-11.

218. Steinberg, pp.172, 190.



Chapter One'Nec ab re est miraculum enarrare': Why should an Historian  
not include miracle stories?

As we have seen, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* has been edited by those who were embarrassed by the miracle stories it contained. Bertram Colgrave famously mused, 'How is it that one who is supposed to be our greatest mediaeval historian can spend so much time telling wonder-tales?',<sup>1</sup> and provided the answer that Bede was beholden to public opinion.<sup>2</sup> The demand for miracle stories came, Colgrave (and others) believed, from three directions: firstly, the pagan religion of the Anglo-Saxons would have created an expectation of the wonderful, through the legends recorded of its deities, and from the activities of its wonder-workers.<sup>3</sup> Especially during the period of the conversion, the new religion (Christianity) had to demonstrate that it could match the marvellous achievements of that which it sought to replace. This situation in itself was the consequence of a more fundamental reason, that is that the people of the eighth century were far more superstitious than their descendants, and even the learned did not understand laws of cause and effect which are now taken for granted.<sup>4</sup> Christian scholars were prepared to accept in the history they read that which they would not normally expect to happen. This tendency was reinforced by

the third reason Colgrave identified - an hagiographical tradition which obliged authors to illustrate their works with miracle stories.<sup>5</sup> Belief in the miraculous had, by the eighth century, led to the composition of a considerable body of miracle material; and the devotees of any local cult anticipated that the deeds of their saint would match or imitate those of others.

It is this three-fold hypothesis that needs to be tested in this chapter. Firstly, the assumption that a pagan religion existed to provide a rival to the Christianity of the miracle workers is examined. Secondly, an attempt is made to identify the philosophical presuppositions with which our authors worked; what was the Christian understanding of miracle which the eighth-century English Church had received? And, thirdly, the hagiographical background to the stories is surveyed; do the Anglo-Saxon authors demonstrate originality in their miracle material, or merely dependency on stories received from other saints' *vitae*.

'Veteres culturas hominibus tulere': The Pagan Background.

According to Colgrave, '...the peoples of western Europe who accepted Christianity, very often under compulsion, would expect of their new Master and His saints powers no less than they had previously associated with their gods and heroes.'<sup>6</sup> The English were no exception, he claimed, positing an Anglo-Saxon world view in which 'every

bush held its demon and every grove its god'<sup>7</sup> so these pagans had no problem in believing that 'certain chosen people, magicians and medicine-men, should be able to alter events.'<sup>8</sup> The evidence in support of this view, ~~which~~ will be considered in detail later. But it is worth noting first that his assumption that the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons were pagan (if by pagan we mean followers of a religion other than Christianity)<sup>9</sup> is not one that has been universally accepted. An older school of historians (such as Oman and Hodgkin)<sup>10</sup> maintained that whatever pagan practices the Anglo-Saxons might once have followed had either been a minimal obsequience to some god or had not survived the crossing of the North Sea. However, in the 1950s, the increasing evidence of place-names, particularly in the south-east, was thought to point to a widespread and deep-rooted pagan religion, with cult centres named after such Germanic gods as Thunor, Woden and Tiw.<sup>11</sup> Curiously, the more that studies have been made of the place-name evidence, the fewer examples of connections with Anglo-Saxon paganism have been identified.<sup>12</sup> The list grows shorter, being confined to those which include a word believed to refer to a place of worship,<sup>13</sup> or which contain the name of a pagan god.<sup>14</sup> Suggestively, there is no example of the two elements in combination in a single place-name.<sup>15</sup>

Other evidence has been cited as pointing to belief in the Germanic pantheon and the knowledge of related

mythology. The so-called Franks casket has a panel which is believed (in the absence of any caption) to display a scene from the legend of Weland the Smith.<sup>16</sup> However, that this artefact dates from after the conversion is indicated by the inclusion of Christian iconography in the same relief.<sup>17</sup> Amongst the literary sources, the poem *Deor's Lament*<sup>18</sup> and *Waldhere*<sup>19</sup> both bear witness to knowledge of the Weland story, and it seems that the poets expected their audience to have an acquaintance with the legend. But, again, both also assume belief in the Christian God, relying, like *Beowulf*, on a curious combination of Christian and pre-Christian elements. Likewise, the *Dream of the Rood*,<sup>20</sup> a thoroughly Christian work, has within it hints of pagan material.<sup>21</sup> The *Dream* is known to us from a tenth-century manuscript, which would not preclude the possibility that its pagan elements were Scandinavian rather than Anglo-Saxon, but for the fact that one of these elements, believed to be a reference to the legend of the bleeding god Balder, is replicated in runic script on the Ruthwell cross,<sup>22</sup> which probably dates from the mid-eighth century.<sup>23</sup>

Archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon paganism is equally sparse. The excavations at Sutton Hoo have yielded a number of objects which seem to display pagan motifs,<sup>24</sup> but also a number which clearly originated in a Christian context.<sup>25</sup> Work at Yeavinger uncovered what appears once to have been a pagan temple (on the evidence of the debris

from large scale feasts and a single ritual burial),<sup>26</sup> which may have been converted to a church before its eventual destruction by fire.<sup>27</sup> The excavation of cemeteries has failed to produce unequivocal evidence of paganism, partly because there is no easy correlation between inhumation/ cremation or between burials without/ with grave goods and a Christian/ pagan divide,<sup>28</sup> and partly because there is evidence of changes in burial practice throughout western Europe in the early middle ages which were not wholly religious in origin.<sup>29</sup> There are some cremation urns which clearly display a Thunor motif;<sup>30</sup> however, as with the figure of Loki on the Gosforth cross,<sup>31</sup> a combination of Christian and pagan iconography was not uncommon, and may have been used for aesthetic rather than religious motives.<sup>32</sup>

Historians have adopted widely different approaches in the face of this material. Many have followed a cautious path, accepting that there was some pagan worship, but that it would be unwise simply to assume that the gods of the Anglo-Saxons were the same as, and were credited with the same deeds and powers as, the Scandinavian deities of whom we know much more through the ninth-century verse Edda and the twelfth century work of Snorri Sturlusson.<sup>33</sup> The opposite approach was displayed by Branston, in his work *The Lost Gods of England*. His argument was that the only way sense could be made of the fragments of evidence was to assume that the English worshipped the full Scandinavian

pantheon, but these early beliefs had been rigorously suppressed after the conversion to Christianity. If Branston were right, the success of this suppression would be quite astonishing. Our eighth-century Latin sources have little at all to record about the paganism which, Branston claimed, was vibrant and popular less than an hundred years previously. A more moderate approach is displayed by two recent works on the subject; both D. Wilson<sup>34</sup> and H.E. Davidson<sup>35</sup> admit the severe limitations of the evidence, but still maintain that a recognizable Germanic paganism flourished to be replaced by Christianity. All scholars in the field are, of course, working through the veil which, intentionally or not, the Christian monopoly on record keeping in Anglo-Saxon England created.

It was no part of the business of Christian authors to preserve pagan beliefs for posterity. But, surprisingly, that is precisely what Bede appears to have done when, in a much quoted section of the *De Temporum Ratione*,<sup>36</sup> he offers an explanation of the names which the Anglo-Saxons gave to their lunar months, identifies a number of deities otherwise unknown (*Hreda*, *Eostre* and 'the Mothers') and claims September as the month of sacrifice, when excess livestock was slaughtered (presumably the ritual which accounts for the collection of bones at Yeavinger).<sup>37</sup> Bede has been accused of inventing these derivations, in order to explain a nomenclature he had inherited but the significance of which had been lost.<sup>38</sup> Audrey Meaney, in

contradiction of this, argues that the fact that this is the only known reference to these deities and practices indicates its veracity. 'These obscure goddesses Hrethe, Eastre and the Mothers are to my mind convincing because they are so unexpected. And... we must not forget that at the time Bede was writing there must have been many still alive who knew a great deal about the superseded religion, either at first or second hand.'<sup>39</sup>

But that is the curious point. Bede completed *De Temporum Ratione* in 725.<sup>40</sup> Given that the Paulinus' mission was little over an hundred years earlier, and was followed by a pagan reaction after the death of Edwin,<sup>41</sup> this passage is supposed to have been written about the religion of the author's grandparents, if not his own parents. Yet he gives an account of the practices 'antiqui... anglorum populi',<sup>42</sup> and the tone of the whole passage is as if he were recounting a system of no more than antiquarian interest. Settlement in Britain had brought the Saxons into contact with Christianized Romano-Britons, whose faith apparently had no effect on them whatsoever.<sup>43</sup> Why should we not suppose that they sat as lightly to whatever religious systems they had previously known as they did to the Christianity they met here? Is it not possible that by the time of the first Christian mission, whatever beliefs the English had were already discredited if not forgotten? That is the impression which is given by Bede's account of Edwin's council to discuss his conversion.<sup>44</sup> Coifi, who is

described as the 'primus pontificum', revealed that he was disenchanted with his religion. It contained, he reckoned, 'nihil...virtutis... nihil utilitatis'. He also suggested that his was something of a minority pursuit.<sup>45</sup> That Coifi's king, Edwin, was an active and dutiful pagan can be inferred from Bede's statement that he gave thanks to his gods for the safe delivery of his daughter,<sup>46</sup> but Edwin seems to have been unusually thoughtful, possibly a naturally religious man, and, perhaps, an exception to the general rule.

Other references to pagan religion in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* are few and far between. In the letter to Mellitus,<sup>47</sup> Gregory I advised that pagan shrines could be converted for use as churches; this was not a subject, as far as we know, on which the mission to Kent had requested an opinion. Similarly, in his epistle to Edwin, Pope Boniface urged the Northumbrian king to dispense with the worship of idols.<sup>48</sup> It must be asked whether these papal statements really corresponded to the situation in England; it is not at all unlikely that both popes' opinions were coloured by the situation in Italy and their knowledge of classical paganism, especially as the early years of the seventh century was the time when the *fana* of ancient Rome were being converted to Christian use.<sup>49</sup> But we are not entirely dependent on the witness of two popes who never visited these islands for information about English idol worship. There are other references in the *Historia*



*Ecclesiastica*. Redwald maintained an ambivalence about religious matters, keeping a Christian altar alongside one 'ad victimas daemoniorum'.<sup>50</sup> We can only presume that by *daemones* Bede had in mind the goddesses whom he mentioned in *De Temporum Ratione*, or some other lost deity, to whom he airily attaches the name of demon, an association which Christian apologists had often made.<sup>51</sup> According to the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the part of the country where paganism repeatedly posed a threat to Christianity was the territory of the East Saxons. Sabert's death led to the defeat of the initial Christian mission,<sup>52</sup> and the plague of the 660s led to an apostasy under Sighere who brought derelict temples back into use,<sup>53</sup> a rare example of a pagan cult which seems to have operated beyond the circle around the king. This last relapse was short-lived, perhaps another sign that paganism held few attractions. That Cuthbert had to deal with a similar occurrence is reported in the *Vita Prosaica*;<sup>54</sup> again this is set at a time of desperation following an outbreak of plague.

It is untenable to insist that the Anglo-Saxons were not pagan, but the evidence does suggest that what heathen practice there was was not, at least by the time of the conversion to Christianity, widely supported. There is far more evidence of its existence and persistence in the south and east than in Northumbria; for example, there is no identified pagan place-name located in Northumbria or in East Anglia.<sup>55</sup> It appears often to have been only the will

of the king that determined whether a province could be deemed Christian or pagan, and it may well be that there was little religion practised away from the royal palaces.<sup>56</sup> The impression given by Bede and his contemporaries, deliberately or otherwise, is that by the time they wrote whatever pagan beliefs their forebears had followed were moribund. It is unlikely that they were widely popular at the time of the conversion, and although there is evidence of a resumption of some pagan practice following the epidemic of the mid-660s, it is not surprising that in a time of crisis any attempt to ward off an evil was tried. Rather than the ruthless suppression which Branston hypothesized, the evidence of pagan elements creeping into Christian literature and art suggests that the old beliefs, whatever they were, were not deemed to pose a threat to the church.

The situation might be clearer were it possible to draw a distinction between practices which belonged to pagan religion and the wider range of customs of which the church disapproved.<sup>57</sup> Within the latter category comes any form of magic or superstition. Presumably, the implication of the story of the blinded magicians in the *Vita Gregorii*,<sup>58</sup> is that the two characters employed to summon up demons against Gregory were heathens, and the authority of the Christian, who had excommunicated the man who had instigated their attack, was proved superior. But, there is no reason to believe that the story of the conversion of

Northumbria as the same writer tells it points to an active paganism. The two details which have been used to support such a view are the description of Edwin's followers as 'gentilitati non solum, sed etiam et non licitis stricti coniugiis' and the sign of the crow which Paulinus had killed in the same episode.<sup>59</sup> On the first point, we know that Augustine of Canterbury sought advice on the forbidden degrees of consanguinity, without there being any hint that there was religious significance to the Germanic custom.<sup>60</sup> There is no reason to believe that the word 'gentilitatus' denoted a believer in paganism; given the context (the party was on its way to church for catechism) it is more likely that the author simply meant those that had not at that time been baptized. The crow offers a clear example of superstition: 'Quaedam stridula cornix ad plagam voce peiorem cantavit.' The precise meaning of 'ad plagam peiorem' is not clear; Colgrave's translation, 'an unpropitious corner of the sky' seems the most likely.<sup>61</sup> This is simple superstition, and, as Wilson notes, commonplace beliefs need not suggest adherence to any particular religious system.<sup>62</sup>

So, little is found in the miracle stories to suggest that Christian writers had to record miracles (or Christian saints to perform them) in order to compete with the achievements of pagan thaumaturges or the myths of pagan gods. Even some those miracles that have been cited as evidence of a pagan background are not unambiguous. There

is a curious story in the *Vita Prosaica* of Cuthbert, in which the saint, still in his youth, saves a group of monks from a storm in the mouth of the Tyne.<sup>63</sup> Bede records that watching the monks as they struggled to get their rafts back to land there was a large crowd, who refused Cuthbert's suggestion that they should pray for the monks' safety. Their objection was that the monks were those who 'veteres culturas hominibus tulere, et novas qualiter observare debeant nemo novit.' It might be that the old customs were pagan rites and that the monks were blamed for the conversion to Christianity; it might alternatively be that the story is making some reference to the change from Irish to Roman practices which was unpopular.<sup>64</sup> What is curious is that, if we are to believe that the rustics were pagan (or even recent and reluctant converts from a pagan religion), they should wish 'nullius eorum miseratur *Deus*.' It might even be that the objection to the monks was not religious at all; 'cultura' does not have to carry the meaning of a religious system.<sup>65</sup> Might it simply be that the monks had been granted the land, that the locals felt threatened by their way of life, and feared its imposition on them, and so were not sorry to see the monks drown. The story is not paralleled in the Lindisfarne Life, but is in the metrical *Vita Cuthberti*,<sup>66</sup> where, Bede makes no mention to a change of practice at all, as if he expected his readers to know the issues that caused local people to resent the inhabitants of monasteries.<sup>67</sup>

Another story sometimes cited as containing evidence of pagan belief is that of Imma, the noble captured and shackled, but whose chains fell off him every time his brother said mass for him.<sup>68</sup> Whilst this is obviously a Christian story, in the sense that it is making a theological point about the efficacy of the eucharistic sacrifice offered for the deceased, there is an hint at a pagan background. The captor asked Imma why he could not be held: '*...an forte litteras solutorias de qualibus fabulae ferunt, apud se haberet, propter quas ligari non posset.*' It is a passage that has been misunderstood, partly because scholars have been misled by Aelfric's homily in which he spoke of runes as he retold the story.<sup>69</sup> There is no evidence that in the age when Bede wrote, there was any mystical belief in the power of the runic script of itself.<sup>70</sup> The most that Bede's words convey is that Imma was thought to have had some form of spell on his person, and either that by reading or saying it he released himself, or that the parchment containing the charm had some force. No other evidence of these '*litteras solutorias*' has come to light. Any suggestion that this reference is evidence of a lively paganism can be safely disregarded. There is no more reason to believe that the '*litteras solutorias*' were circulated by pagan priests than that they were a form of Christian superstition, or that there was any religious significance at all. Magic, or the belief in magical powers, does not need a religious system in which

to flourish.<sup>71</sup> Whatever lay behind this phrase in the tale of Imma, even the captor who posed the question seems to have known little about it. These were spells about which he had heard rumours, no more.

The only story in the corpus here under discussion which unequivocally witnesses to a lively paganism in the British Isles comes in the *Vita Wilfridi*.<sup>72</sup> Wilfrid, on his return from his consecration, was shipwrecked in Sussex. He and his companions, who numbered some one hundred and twenty, managed to resist the attacks of a much larger pagan army until the tide returned early to re-float their vessel. It is one incident in the battle that points to an active heathen cult in Sussex. 'Stans quoque princeps sacerdotum idolatriae coram paganis in tumulo excelso, sicut Balaam, maledicere populum Dei et suis magicis artibus manus eorum alligare nitebatur.' This chief priest was soon killed by a stone thrown by one of Wilfrid's companions, as a sign that 'Dominus... pro paucis pugnavit.' It could be argued that this story is not the most reliable of evidence; so littered is it with Old Testament references (to Balaam, to David and Goliath, to Gideon, and to three incidents in the life of Moses) that it must be suspected that the narrative has been shaped to fit these prototypes. It must also be noted that this version of Wilfrid's visit to Sussex in the mid-660s does not appear at all in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Both Bede and Stephen agree that Wilfrid returned to the region in

the 680s, and was successful in converting many of the people and in establishing his monastery at Selsey,<sup>73</sup> which suggests a very different form of paganism from the belligerent variety that the bishop had met earlier. But even if Stephen's story is of uncertain veracity, it is unlikely that he fabricated the existence of a pagan priest and, therefore, of lesser priests and a cult. It is perhaps significant that, once again, this strongest evidence is from the south-east of England, and from the post-plague period of the 660s when it appears that pagan religion may have enjoyed something of a revival.

In fact, it is the comparative absence of references to paganism that make those which are included interesting. It is clear that the English writers did not, as, for example, Sulpicius Severus did, see most of their stories as set against a background of pagan opposition. There is a wider reason why this should be the case. As will be argued throughout this thesis, there is an evangelical import to many of the miracle stories recorded in eighth-century England. It was the business of the writers to show the role that divine grace had played in the conversion of their countrymen to Christianity. Many of the stories are themselves a part of the history of the evangelization, celebrating the way in which the gospel was preached and received. But there is no evidence, even if the Scandinavian parallels can be used, that English paganism was a proselytizing religion.<sup>74</sup> Strangely, English sources

throughout the eighth century witness to a vibrant and belligerent Germanic paganism on the continent.<sup>75</sup> Their comparative silence about the situation on their own side of the North Sea suggests that Hodgkin may have been right, and the Saxon pirates left their heathenism behind them.<sup>76</sup> Certainly, if there were cults with which the hagiographers had to compete, wonder-workers whom the saints had to out-perform, or myths which left expectations that Christian miracle stories were designed to fulfil, they have all vanished, especially in the areas in which the works here considered were written, without leaving traces. If we need an explanation for the existence of Christian miracle stories, it is more likely to be found within Christianity itself.

'Narratio fidelium': Miracle and the Christian Faith.

In book five of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede recounted some of the 'plura virtutum miracula' which those who knew him were accustomed to tell about John, bishop first of Hexham, later of York, and commonly known as John of Beverley. The first concerns the cure of a young man, a beggar with whom the bishop had had some acquaintance and whom, during his Lenten retreat one year, he decided to cure.<sup>77</sup> The youth suffered from two complaints. He had no power of speech, and the skin of his head was diseased so that no hair grew. John asked the boy to put out his tongue, and made the sign of the cross over it. He then



proceeded to ask the boy to articulate various sounds after him, until the boy began to talk fluently (and did not stop for the next twenty-four hours). It was clearly perceived to be a marvellous cure. But we might ask how miraculous this event really was. What is the significance of the repetition of sounds? Was John demonstrating that the cure had taken place? Was he enabling the boy to gain confidence in his new powers of speech? Or was he actually curing the boy by teaching him to move his mouth? In a paper on this story, M.J. Cliffe argued that John employed a technique commonly used in modern times for mutism, 'successive approximation'.<sup>78</sup> Although Cliffe concedes that the full use of this method requires repeated and systematic instruction, not simply one attempt, which is all John seems to have had, a question mark might be placed against the idea that this story records something truly miraculous.

That query is strengthened when the story turns to John's treatment of the boy's head. '*Episcopus praecepit medico etiam sanandae scabredini capitis eius curam adhibere.*'<sup>79</sup> According to Bede, it was by the help of the bishop's blessing and prayers that the boy was granted a good skin and a full head of hair, but again, it might be asked, how miraculous is this? That John was willing and able to turn to a physician (presumably a member of his own staff) suggests that the skin complaint was recognized to be curable by non-miraculous means.

~~means~~

A question mark might also be placed against two stories about John's episcopal colleague (or rival) Wilfrid. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica* there is a story about Wilfrid evangelizing the South Saxons.<sup>80</sup> According to Bede, when Wilfrid was driven out of his see by Ecgfrith, he went to Rome, and, when unable to return to Northumbria, remained for a while in Sussex and there converted the people to Christianity. At that time, there had been a drought in Sussex for some three years, but when the people were converted and baptized, the rain began to fall. Bede also mentions that the drought had caused great hardship, some of which Wilfrid had relieved by teaching the people to fish. It would appear that this is a different story from the one which Stephen included in the *Vita Wilfridi*,<sup>81</sup> although the two are very similar.<sup>82</sup> Stephen's story is set a year or two earlier, in Frisia, while Wilfrid was on his way to Rome. Wilfrid was granted permission to preach to the people, and his doing so coincided with an unusually good harvest and better than expected catches of fish. Both authors record that these spectacular events aided Wilfrid's preaching, although Bede suggested that the people were converted (to some degree) before the rains came. Both authors give Wilfrid the credit for the fruitfulness of the land and suggest that his converts did the same, and yet in neither story does Wilfrid pray or perform any action to cause the harvest to increase.

Although the word 'miraculum' is used of neither story, there seems little reason to doubt that both Stephen and Bede would have seen an episode such as this as a miraculous event, and yet to a modern reader it might appear (particularly in the *Vita Wilfridi*) simply to be coincidence.

Although these stories are not called miracles, it is sometimes surprising to discover what is. It has previously been noted that the *Historia Abbatum* of Bede contains no miracle stories, and that the earlier work of the same name has only one account which might be called miraculous, which concerns phenomena which were witnessed around the tomb of Ceolfrith at Langres.<sup>83</sup> So it would seem that there was no tradition of miracles associated with Benedict Biscop. Yet in his sermon on the founder of Wearmouth-Jarrow,<sup>84</sup> preached to the members of Benedict's community, Bede took for his text a passage in which Jesus speaks to his disciples who have left everything to follow him and promises them rewards.<sup>85</sup> This promise, Bede says, was fulfilled in the life of Benedict 'by a manifest miracle'. 'Debet videri....quando patris nostri spiritualia gesta narramus, cui manifesto miraculo Dominus, quod fidelimus suis promisit, adimplevit...'<sup>86</sup> Yet there is still no miracle story told. It would appear that the miracle Bede had in mind was the influence which Biscop had on the church in his native land and the many people whom his ministry affected.

A similar approach is revealed by the author of the *Vita Gregorii*. This work includes a series of miracle stories about Gregory, in the midst of which is inserted a discussion of the Pope's writings.<sup>87</sup> The author begins this part of his account 'Huius denique verius inter cetera viri signum sanctitatis, quod maius est mirandum, omnibus quod in scriptis suis tam preclarum inluxit'. Clearly, Gregory's ability to expound on sacred themes is counted as a miracle. 'Signum sanctitatis' is a phrase frequently used by Gregory I for a miraculous deed;<sup>88</sup> 'maius est mirandum' indicates the response which would be expected of someone learning of a miracle. It could be argued that the use of this term suggests that the author was aware that he was offering as a miracle something which might not immediately be recognized as such by his readers, but it is more likely that this represents a consistency of approach with the rest of the work. The main purpose of the Anonymous of Streoneshalh was to excite his audience's admiration. What exactly it was that was so miraculous in the author's eyes about Gregory's literary output is not clear; he referred vaguely to the pope's wisdom and eloquence,<sup>89</sup> and to his skill (*ingenio*).<sup>90</sup> Finally, he offered another miracle (*signum*) in support of his argument, with a story of how a dove was seen resting on Gregory's head whilst he worked on his Homilies on Ezekiel.<sup>91</sup>

These are not the only instances which give the impression of a wider (or less distinct) understanding of

the miraculous than a modern scholar might offer. So it is fair to ask, 'what understanding of miracle might the English writers of the early eighth century have inherited?'. Miracle stories have always been a part of the Christian tradition.<sup>92</sup> The New Testament records that Christ and his disciples worked miracles, and that the miraculous accompanied the growth of the early church. Space does not permit a full discussion of the various ways in which the miracle stories were treated in the early church, nor of the apparent controversy which some of the claims of Christian apologists generated. Essentially, the main themes of all later discussion were laid out by Augustine, prior to whom debate followed on the lines laid down by the New Testament account. The evangelists use a number of words to describe the miracles of Christ and the apostles, two of which provide most of the elements for an understanding of the stories. One is 'dunamis',<sup>93</sup> meaning 'act of power'; the miracles are an indication of the authority of Christ over creation, and the miracles of the disciples follow from his giving authority to them.<sup>94</sup> The other word commonly used in the gospel for a miracle is 'semeion' (a sign); miracles are given not simply to amaze but to enable the mystery of Christ's identity, and the truth of the gospel, to be disclosed.<sup>95</sup> The two ideas cannot be divorced; the greatest miracle of the New Testament is the Resurrection, which is understood both as sign and as act of power.

These ideas dominate the understanding of miracle as it is found in the apologists.<sup>96</sup> There were three apologetic uses to which miracle stories were put; in a society in which pagan magicians could also produce wonders, the miracles were thought to demonstrate the greater power of the Church, but it is as a sign of the truth of an evangelist's message or a martyr's testimony that the real importance of miracles lies.<sup>97</sup> Again, the two ideas belong together; the 'dunamis' to work miracles operates in order that the gospel or its servant can be authenticated by 'semeia'.<sup>98</sup> Although there was some hesitancy on the part of some of the Fathers to appeal to miracles,<sup>99</sup> and, in the face of Greek philosophy, some difficulty perceived in defending the idea of the miraculous,<sup>100</sup> that miracles operated as both acts of power and authenticating signs in the thought of the church into the fourth century is clearly witnessed in the writing of Arnobius.<sup>101</sup> Just as the

miracles of the apostles had aided the earliest conversions, so in his own time Arnobius saw the occurrence of the miraculous as proving the superiority of Christianity over paganism.<sup>102</sup>

The later fourth century saw a growth in the expectation of the miraculous and the development of shrines to which the faithful came specifically to see miracles. The development was far from universally welcomed. For Vigilantius (whose views are known to us from Jerome's vehement opposition)<sup>106</sup> it was simply not possible for miracles to be worked by the relics of martyrs; the dead, however holy, did not have the power to interfere in human life. Vigilantius was not alone, and even amongst those who did not share his views, there was concern that there might be a growing traffic in relics.<sup>107</sup> That the cult of the miraculous grew was due to the patronage of some of the most influential figures in the fourth-century church. Ambrose, as bishop of Milan, presided in 386 over the establishment of a shrine to the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius, an occasion marked by a number of miraculous events.<sup>108</sup> These events seem to have confirmed in Ambrose's mind that this was a genuine discovery of bones; they also seem to have fitted into Ambrose's desire that a basilica

in Milan should be the equal of one in Rome.<sup>109</sup> These miracles impressed Augustine of Hippo, who witnessed them,<sup>110</sup> and it is with the great African bishop that the lines of development in early Christian thought converge. Like Arnobius, Augustine stressed the importance of contemporary miracles. One of his most significant contributions to the discussion relates to the miracles which followed the translation of the relics of Stephen the proto-martyr to Hippo in about 416.<sup>111</sup> In his account of events at the shrine in recent years, he asked that these and other contemporary miracles should be published abroad, and commended the practice of keeping and circulating records of healings performed at shrines. This is the first evidence of the existence of 'libelli miraculorum', which were to become a feature of many shrines throughout the middle ages. Such publication, Augustine believed, would encourage others to believe in the faith to which the martyrs witnessed.<sup>112</sup> Against those sceptical about the occurrence of such miracles, Augustine crystallized the view which emerged in both Tertullian and Irenaeus. Those who do not believe in the miraculous doubt on account of their having a fixed view of the world, and therefore count miracles as being impossible because they are against nature. Augustine maintained that such a view does not take into account the omnipotence of God. It is only on a misunderstanding of what nature is that a miracle is considered un-natural. By 'nature' what is usually meant is



what is known of the way the world is. A miracle can appear 'contrary to nature' because its occurrence contradicts that knowledge.<sup>113</sup> But if what is meant by nature is the universe as created and ordered by God, then there is nothing contrary to nature about a miracle. It simply represents the bringing out of potential that is hidden.<sup>114</sup> So miracles are not *contra-naturam*. Rather, they are beyond (*supra* or *praeter*) nature as we know it. We might be amazed, but only because we are limited in our knowledge.<sup>115</sup> The main theological premise is the absolute sovereignty of God over His creation.<sup>116</sup>

According to Benedicta Ward, the Augustinian view was to hold throughout the middle ages, and was only refined by the rediscovery of Aristotle and the development of more sophisticated understanding by Aquinas.<sup>117</sup> Certainly, Augustine's view is consonant with the material we have from English writers of the early eighth century. For them, a miracle was simply something which was marvellous, which invited wonder, and therefore pointed those who knew of it towards the activity of God. There is little evidence that the English writers believed what they were recording was 'contrary to nature'. In fact, there is a number of indications that the writers saw their stories as being in a sense more natural than life without miracles.

Augustine had held that the fundamental miracle was creation, and that all others followed from that. The Fall, however, represented a loss of the harmony which humans had

with the created order.<sup>118</sup> The saints of seventh- and eighth-century England are at times presented as restoring that harmony.<sup>119</sup> The famous story of Cuthbert praying at Coldingham is one such example,<sup>120</sup> and there are other Cuthbert stories which hint at the restored sympathy with nature, for instance, Cuthbert's ability to prevent the birds on Farne from eating his crops or stealing the thatch from his roof.<sup>121</sup> Bede, in one of the rare comments on the significance of the miraculous, makes his point explicit:

Qui enim auctori omnium creaturarum fideliter et integro corde famulatur, non est mirandum si eius imperiis ac votis omnis creatura deserviat. At nos plerumque idcirco subiectae nobis creaturae dominium perdimus, quia Domino et creatori omnium ipsi servire negligimus.<sup>122</sup>

Equally clear on this point is Felix in the *Vita Guthlaci* Discussing with his visitor Wilfrid his authority over the birds on Crowland, Guthlac asks, 'Nonne legisti, quia, qui Deo puro spiritu copulatur, omnia sibi in Deo coniunguntur? Et qui ab hominibus cognosci denegat, agnosci a feris et frequentari ab angelis quaerit?'<sup>123</sup> Where Wilfrid is supposed to have read this is never stated; but it

strengthens the view that <sup>saw</sup> the ~~notion of a~~ restoration of the primaeval harmony <sup>as implicit - ca</sup> ~~was an implication of~~ the miraculous ~~seen by~~ ~~a number of writers of the time~~<sup>]</sup><sup>124</sup> Creider rightly argues that for Bede the miraculous is a 'sub-set of grace'<sup>125</sup> and that grace is not set in his thought in opposition to nature 'so much as it transcends it and even restores it.'<sup>126</sup>

According to Richard Swinburne, 'Many people

understand by a miracle.... an event of an extraordinary kind brought about by a god and of religious significance'.<sup>127</sup> Such a definition would be inadequate for many modern philosophers. But it is one with which the English writers of the early eighth century would have been content, not because they were *simpliciores* who had not thought about the subject, but because they had received a world view in which nature remained under the authority of God, where the aim of sanctity was to live in complete cooperation with God, and where the miraculous remained a sign that God's power, however manifested, was greater than human knowledge.

'Miraculum memorabile et antiquorum simile': The Hagiographical Background.

In aqua videlicet elicita de rupe, factum beati patris Benedicti qui idem paene et eodem modo legitur fecisse miraculum, sed idcirco uberius quia plures erant qui aquae inopia laborarent. Porro in arces sitis a messe volatilibus reverentissimi et sanctissimi patris Antonii sequebatur exemplum, qui a lesione hortuli quem ipse plantaverat uno onagros sermone compescuit.<sup>128</sup>

So Bede drew to the attention of the community at Lindisfarne the similarity between two miracle stories that they had given to him for inclusion in his *Vita Cuthberti* and accounts of two of the great heroes of early monastic history. These are not the only incidents in the *Vita Prosaica* for which Bede emphasizes parallels. Cuthbert's conflicts with fire, both real and imaginary, are compared

to stories from Gregory I's *Dialogi*, one of Benedict and the other of Marcellinus,<sup>129</sup> and the account of Cuthbert bringing the ravens to obedience is said to have been 'in exemplum praefati patris Benedicti.'<sup>130</sup> It would appear that the life of Cuthbert was being related, either by Bede or by the Lindisfarne community, in such a way as deliberately to cast over it the shadow of Benedict.<sup>131</sup> Especially interesting is Bede's comment in relation to the water from the rock episode (quoted above), which claims that Benedict's miracle was the greater as more benefited from it. Could it be argued that the purpose of the *Vita Prosaica* was to present the saint of Lindisfarne as a second, but lesser, Benedict? Such a bias might be explained by the apparent tension between the last vestiges of Irish organization and the Roman system favoured by Wilfrid and Biscop, and might also link with the Anonymous of Lindisfarne's comment that Cuthbert set a rule for the monastery. 'Nobis regularem vitam primum componentibus constituit, quam usque hodie cum regula Benedicti observamus.'<sup>132</sup> Was the Bede subtly indicating which rule was superior?

Such a contention is no doubt arguable, but not sustainable. If there were a Benedictine propaganda machine at work, we might expect more explicit comparisons. The three comments mentioned are remarkable because they are atypical, not only of the *Vita Prosaica* but of all the history and hagiography of the period. That the English

writers of the early eighth century were influenced by the traditions of continental hagiography cannot be denied;<sup>133</sup> however, there is surprisingly little evidence that any of them created or shaped stories in imitation of earlier saintly heroes. To prove such a negative is impossible, but a survey of the most important of the saints' lives and histories which would have been read and widely known in the west supports the view that the English writers used the miracle content of their works with a considerable degree of independence.

The prototypical saint's life can be considered to be the *Vita Antonii*.<sup>134</sup> This is hagiography with a clear polemical purpose. Antony (251-356) is presented by his biographer, the bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius, as the pioneer amongst monks, pursuing a calling which led him further and further from human society and closer to God. The result was a life of extreme asceticism and remarkable length, health and power. Antony is reported to have lived to the age of 105, not to have aged during his first twenty years in the desert,<sup>135</sup> and to have been blessed with such sanctity that he was instantly recognizable as a man of marvellous powers.<sup>136</sup> His *vita* was composed in the year or so after his death.<sup>137</sup> That it was his own bishop who wrote it indicates that the Antonine way of life was being officially encouraged;<sup>138</sup> much of the work consists of Antony's conversations with his monks, advising them on the dangers of the solitary life as he urged them to follow his

example.<sup>139</sup> It is clear that the work was seen as propaganda for monasticism; it was translated into Latin before the end of the fourth century by one Evagrius,<sup>140</sup> and this appears to be the version with which it appears the English writers were familiar.<sup>141</sup> The late fourth century was a time when the desert communities were becoming both more popular and more organized, with Pachomius, Jerome, Rufinus, Basil the Great, and Evagrius the Pontic all contributing to the circulation of material about this ideal of Christian living.<sup>142</sup> It is in that context that the *Vita Antonii* has to be understood.<sup>143</sup>

It is not surprising that such a work should contain a series of accounts of miraculous events attributable to its hero. Antony's ascetic career was marked both by his conflicts with demonic powers<sup>144</sup> and terrible visions<sup>145</sup> (from which he emerged unscathed), and by his ability to heal the sick,<sup>146</sup> to subjugate animals to him,<sup>147</sup> to produce water in a dry place,<sup>148</sup> and to know of events before they occur or at a great distance.<sup>149</sup> But for all that, the *Vita* displays something of an ambivalent attitude towards the miraculous. There are repeated statements that the miracles were worked by Christ rather than by Antony,<sup>150</sup> and it is significant that the whereabouts of Antony's mortal remains were concealed,<sup>151</sup> while the late fourth-century cult of the martyrs was generating accounts of miracles at the shrines.<sup>152</sup> In the post-Constantinian Church the opportunities for martyrdom were fewer than

previously, but Athanasius presented Antony as a martyr, both in that he was prepared to die for his faith and in the daily martyrdom of his asceticism.<sup>153</sup> That there was no known burial place suggests that the monks did not want there to be a centre for posthumous miracles. Furthermore, Antony's miracles seem to have been somewhat arbitrary in their achievement. Some, but not all, of those who visited him in the desert were cured,<sup>154</sup> and there is a curious story about two monks dying of thirst when Antony sent water which saved one but was too late for the other.<sup>155</sup> Throughout, miracles are presented as a lesser reason for the esteem in which Antony was held than his asceticism and wisdom.<sup>156</sup>

It is clear that this work was known in England in the early eighth century. Not only is there the comment in Bede's *Vita Cuthberti* already noted, there is also evidence of verbal borrowing from Evagrius' prologue in the Anonymous *Vita Cuthberti*, the *Vita Wilfridi* and the *Vita Guthlaci* (although the latter two might have borrowed from the first author).<sup>157</sup> What is therefore remarkable is how little impression Antony's miracles made on the stories that the English writers told. Whilst many of the deeds of the English saints were the same as those of the Egyptian, there is hardly anywhere that it can be argued that the story was shaped by the later author to emphasize the parallel with Athanasius' account. The Bede comment is unusual in this respect; it is also odd in that there are

other stories of which Bede might have made a similar remark. For example, Antony's vision of the soul of Ammon being carried up to heaven is paralleled by Cuthbert's vision of the death of Aidan,<sup>158</sup> and Bede could have drawn attention to the Antony water from dry ground miracle<sup>159</sup> rather than to Benedict's. In short, whilst it would be pointless to deny that the Antony stories were an influence on the English authors, there was no conscious borrowing and no deliberate policy of shaping their miracle material in imitation of Athanasius'.

B.P.Kurtz argued that whilst the other authors neglected the *Vita Antonii*, Felix modelled his whole work on it.<sup>160</sup> Certainly, the *Vita Guthlaci* is the English work which includes more episodes of encounters with demons and phantasmal visions than does any of the others, and it alone is the life of a simple hermit (rather than an abbot or a bishop who lived as a monk). Kurtz attempted to show that the structure of the *vita* was a deliberate parallel of the *Vita Antonii*, with an account of the saint's youth and vocation being followed by his search for solitude, his self-discipline, his encounters with demons, his miracles and foresight, his popularity and his last words and death. However, there is nothing in the *Vita Guthlaci* to parallel the long discourses of the *Vita Antonii* and several of the distinctive features of Felix's work, such as the role of Bartholomew<sup>161</sup> and the detailed vision of the afterlife,<sup>162</sup> have no source in Athanasius. Thacker has shown that the



*Vita Antonii* was only one of the earlier hagiographies on which Felix drew, and that it was far from neglected by Felix' contemporaries.<sup>163</sup> It is likely that the *Vita Antonii* was a significant influence on the way in which those who knew Guthlac thought of him; a work that was seminal in the history of monasticism and well-known in England might well have inspired those who sought the anchorite existence and, perhaps even subliminally, shaped the way they thought about themselves.<sup>164</sup>

The work which has often been understood as the next popular work of hagiography after the *Vita Antonii* is the *Vita Martini* of Sulpicius Severus,<sup>165</sup> published, apparently, shortly before Martin's death in 397.<sup>166</sup> Like the *Vita Antonii*, this is unashamed polemic, written in support of the ascetical movement within the church. The writer, Sulpicius Severus, was converted to the monastic lifestyle of Martin and Paulinus of Nola (355-431) in the 390s, and became its most zealous proponent.<sup>167</sup> Like Paulinus,<sup>168</sup> Sulpicius was of a wealthy, patrician background and both his work and the growing popularity of asceticism can be understood as a reaction to the pampered lifestyle of the Gallo-Roman nobility, with which Martin himself would not have been unfamiliar, as his father rose through the army to the rank of Tribune.<sup>169</sup> However, this was a development which was resisted in some quarters. Martin's opponents included some of the bishops of his time, and possibly clergy in his own diocese.<sup>170</sup> Clare

Stancliffe has argued that there was a fear, part theological and part arising from ecclesiastical politics, that the extremism of the Martin-Paulinus school of monasticism tended towards Priscillianism.<sup>171</sup> Priscillian had been bishop of Avila, despite there being some suspicion amongst his peers that his views were tainted by the extremism of the Montanists and the heresies of Gnosticism. He was eventually condemned as a magician and executed (c.385), after the more rigorous of his ascetical practices had been condemned at the Synod of Saragossa (380).<sup>172</sup> Martin had been an ally of Priscillian, and had used his favour with the emperor to protect him for some time; after the execution it is not surprising that some of the opposition should be focused on Martin.<sup>173</sup>

The *Vita Martini* is, consequently, a defensive work. Even more so are the letters and two Dialogues which followed its publication. After Martin's death, there were objections to some of the miracle stories that Sulpicius had used, questioning the veracity of the author's information.<sup>174</sup> Sulpicius protests that he is hurt by any suggestion that Martin might not have been able to do the things he is reported to have done.<sup>175</sup> And well might Sulpicius have taken umbrage at the suspicion that he was not a reliable witness.<sup>176</sup> Much more than the *Vita Antonii*, the *Vita Martini* depends on its miracle stories. They are the demonstration of the *virtus* of Martin, the proof that his lifestyle was, despite all that his detractors

maintained, one through which the divine power operated. That the life was published so soon after Martin's death, and that there seem to have been doubts about the miracles even at the time of writing,<sup>177</sup> indicate that the stories were circulating and being debated. Sulpicius and his associates would no doubt have ascribed the doubts expressed to the envy of Martin's fellow bishops,<sup>178</sup> but it is interesting that in the latest of the Martinian works, the second Dialogue,<sup>179</sup> Sulpicius is careful to offer witnesses in support of his stories.<sup>180</sup>

That second Dialogue closes with an appeal that the miracles of Martin be broadcast throughout the world.<sup>181</sup> Certainly, it would appear that by the eighth century the *Vita Martini* was known in England.<sup>182</sup> Quotations from it have been noted in the *Vita Cuthberti* by the Anonymous of Lindisfarne and in the *Vita Guthlaci*.<sup>183</sup> Thacker has held that it was particularly important as a type in Bede's re-working of the Life of Cuthbert, part of the attempt of the Lindisfarne community to establish their saint as a monk-bishop whose reputation would rival that of the prototypical monk-bishop of Tours.<sup>184</sup> The English would have known something of the massive cult of Martin at Tours, and not only as it had been popularized and recorded by the city's sixth-century bishop, Gregory.<sup>185</sup> Martin was a popular saint in Britain before the mission of Augustine. According to Bede, Ninian, the first bishop of the Picts, was buried in his cathedral church dedicated to Martin at

Candida Casa.<sup>186</sup> There was also a Romano-British church in Canterbury consecrated in the name of the bishop of Tours.<sup>187</sup> Devotion to the cult of Martin in these islands seems, therefore, to have been a feature of the British, rather than the English, Church.<sup>188</sup> It would not be at all surprising had English authors, living with a long established reverence for Martin, deliberately seen, and encouraged others to see, their own heroes as imitators of the Martinian virtues. But, for all that, the miracle stories which are to be found in the English narratives are nowhere copies, or even variants, of those Sulpicius tells. There are parallels, but they are few and far from exact. Of course, it could be argued that just as Martin had visions, foretold the future, demonstrated his power over nature and exorcised evil spirits from those possessed,<sup>189</sup> so did Cuthbert or Guthlac; but the material offers more interesting conclusions than simply that one saint's deeds tend to look much like another. A number of specific points can be made about the comparison of the Martinian stories with the English material of three hundred years later.

Firstly, closest parallels exist with those parts of the English corpus which have clear continental origins. For example, there are several stories of saints having power over fire; Mellitus, Aidan and Cuthbert are all credited with having saved a place by turning away the flames from it by their prayers.<sup>190</sup> But the story nearest to that of Martin stopping a fire is that of Germanus

refusing to be moved from the path of the flames.<sup>191</sup> In each story the key features are the confidence of the saint, and his courage in staying in the face of the blaze. Bede's version of the Germanus story is taken almost verbatim from the *Vita Germani* of Constantius,<sup>192</sup> written in the second half of the fifth century.<sup>193</sup> Similarly, Sulpicius has an account of Martin falling down stairs and being treated by an angel in the night;<sup>194</sup> again the closest parallel in the English material is the story of Germanus leaving his sickbed when 'niveis vestibis vidit sibi adesse personam...'<sup>195</sup> There is no verbal borrowing by Constantius or Bede from Sulpicius, but the outlines of the stories are the same - the saint has a fall, he takes to his bed, an angel appears to him in the night (for which there are apparently no witnesses) and the cure is manifested the next day.

Like the later English saints, Martin was credited with a number of miracles which demonstrated his power over nature. In two of the stories, Martin used the sign of the cross in order to cause moving objects to stand still. On the first occasion it was a pagan funeral cortege, on the second a tree felled to fall on him.<sup>196</sup> The Anonymous *Vita Gregorii* has a story about Gregory using the sign of the cross to control his frenzied horse and to blind the two magicians who had cast their spell.<sup>197</sup> Again, the parallel is far from exact; the interesting thing to note is that, once again, we are probably dealing with a continental

source for the story.<sup>198</sup>

It is a story which also emphasizes a second feature of the relationship between the *Vita Martini* and our English sources; something that might be called the 'opposition motif'. Many of the Martinian miracles are performed in a conflict situation, under attack from the devil or from paganism. It is the devil who is Martin's first, and main, opponent. From an early meeting when Martin was a deacon serving Hilary to his deathbed encounter,<sup>199</sup> the devil was never far from Martin. On one occasion, he was even able to boast that he defeated Martin,<sup>200</sup> on another he disguises himself as Christ,<sup>201</sup> and in one story the devil argues theology with the bishop.<sup>202</sup> There is nothing in the English sources to compare with these stories.<sup>203</sup>

Along with the devil,<sup>204</sup> there were various demons that Martin confronted. One of the problems that plagues any discussion of miracle stories is that there is no clear dividing line between curing an illness (which might be presented as an exorcism) and defeating a demon. Although Sulpicius delighted in graphic stories, such as the one in which Martin forced a demon out through the bowels of the sufferer,<sup>205</sup> Martin seems regularly to have performed exorcisms in which the cure was much less dramatic.<sup>206</sup> Here we come somewhat closer to the ways in which the English writers understood the demonic, although exorcisms are not a common feature of the English material. There is only one

such story in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*,<sup>207</sup> and none at all in the *Vita Wilfridi* or the *Vita Gregorii*. Cuthbert is credited by both his biographers with exorcisms, though only two are described in detail,<sup>208</sup> and even in the *Vita Guthlaci*, where the demonic plays a larger role than in any other of the English writings, there are again only two exorcisms recorded.<sup>209</sup>

In the *Vita Guthlaci*, as in the *Vita Cuthberti* (both Bede's and the Anonymous), demons<sup>210</sup> are presented as being the saint's opponents when he first embarks upon his life of solitude. The Cuthbert accounts are both condensed; we are simply told that in order to establish the hermitage on Farne, Cuthbert needed to expel the 'fantasias daemonum'.<sup>211</sup> The encounters between Guthlac and the forces of evil are much more fully described, with malign spirits afflicting Guthlac with despair, urging him to fast to excess, dragging him to the gates of hell, and appearing as wild beasts in order to terrify him.<sup>212</sup> All this seems designed to emphasize the hardship of the saint's calling. The anchorite's existence could not be presented as an easy option, and perhaps, in order to maintain the authority of the community over those who wished to live apart, the dangers had to be exaggerated.<sup>213</sup> To be alone for long periods, and to have survived on the diets that these hermits are reported to have endured, might well have led to hallucinatory experiences.<sup>214</sup> Whatever the origin of the phenomena, the presentation of the desert (or the island

retreat) as a place inhabited by the forces of evil, continues the fourth-century tradition to mark out anchorites as the holy people who displayed their *virtus* for the benefit of others.<sup>215</sup>

Part of the reason for the high profile which Sulpicius gave to the demonic may lie in the pagan background to the *Vita Martini*. Certainly, in Sulpicius' time, paganism was still very much a force in Gaul, as it was not in eighth-century, or possibly even seventh-century, England. Martin is recorded as being the object of murderous intent by his pagan opponents on three occasions,<sup>216</sup> but miraculously surviving all three attempts on his life. There are only two stories in the English material which record assassination attempts successfully averted, and in neither is the motive the resistance of paganism to Christianity. In one of them, there is no miracle involved - Edwin's retainer had positioned himself between the assassin and the king so took most of the blow, and Edwin's recovery from his wound seems to have been quite normal.<sup>217</sup> The religious significance of the incident is only that Edwin then believed that God was on his side against the West Saxons and promised to consider Christianity. The story of Beccel's attempt to murder Guthlac is nearer to Martinian models, but is closer still to another continental parallel.<sup>218</sup> In fact, compared to any of the continental sources, there is very little in the English material to portray saints who needed constantly to



be on their guard against attempts to kill them. Of course, there is a conflict motif that runs through the *Vita Wilfridi*, but most of those who wished Wilfrid harm were his fellow Christians.<sup>219</sup>

The main reason that Martin was threatened in such a way was his violent opposition to paganism. A number of Sulpicius' stories concern Martin engaged in the destruction of pagan idols and places of worship.<sup>220</sup> Stancliffe has questioned whether Martin's activities in this area were legal.<sup>221</sup> He is depicted by Sulpicius as operating outside his own diocese, and up until the 390s, although Christianity was the imperial religion, toleration was extended to paganism (rather more than heretical Christians).<sup>222</sup> That paganism was active in Gaul in Martin's day is borne out by archaeological evidence,<sup>223</sup> and so it was part of Sulpicius' programme to present Martin as a zealous iconoclast, driven far beyond the actions of any of his contemporaries to root out false religion. It could well be that some of the opposition to Martin which has been detected amongst the Gallic episcopacy was on account of his being seen as a fanatic. In short, this was a very different scenario from that in which Paulinus, Aidan, Cuthbert, Wilfrid, John, and the other evangelizers celebrated in English hagiography operated.

If the miracle stories of the English writers do not closely resemble those of Sulpicius, or of Athanasius, the

reason may lie in the fact that the history of seventh-century England was so different from that of either end of the Roman Empire in the fourth century. The English inherited a theological tradition which was comfortable with the occurrence of the miraculous, having used it for apologetic and evangelistic purposes, and an hagiographical tradition which celebrated the miracles of holy men. That the English miracle stories stand apart is due to the way in which these traditions came to be applied within the Anglo-Saxon setting. Central to the introduction of those traditions (as of Christianity itself) was Pope Gregory I; it is with the extent of his influence that chapter two must be concerned.



Notes to Chapter One:

The title quotation is from *H.E.* III, 2.

1. Colgrave & Mynors, p.xxxv.
2. *Op. cit.*, p.xxxvi; cf. 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p.41.
3. 'Bede's Miracle Stories', p.202; Loomis, 'The Miracle Traditions of the Venerable Bede' p.404; Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age*, pp.64-6; cf. H. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, (English Translation, London, 1962), pp.123-4.
4. Colgrave: 'Bede's miracle stories', pp.201-2; Plummer, vol. I, p.lxiv.
5. Colgrave & Mynors, p.xxxvi; Loomis, *op. cit.*, p.404; cf. Delehaye, *op. cit.*, pp.67-78.

The subtitle quotation is from *VPr.* c.3.

6. 'Bede's Miracle Stories', p.203.
7. *Op. cit.*, p.202.
8. *Ibid.*
9. There is a problem of definition here. The word 'pagan' can mean either 'a member of a group professing any religion other than Christianity, Judaism or Islam' or 'a person without any religion.' (*Collins Concise Dictionary*, p.925). The meaning of its synonym 'heathen' is equally confused. Throughout this discussion, I use the words 'pagan' and 'heathen' to denote a follower of a recognizable religious system (i.e., a framework of belief in a god or gods, expressed in some form of worship or sacrificial activity), and the word 'areligious' to indicate someone without any recognizable religious system.
10. R.H. Hodgkin, *A History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. I (3rd edition, London, 1952), p.238; C. Oman, *England before the Norman Conquest* (London, 1910), p.258.
11. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp.99-102.
12. D. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (London and New York, 1992), p.21; K. Cameron, *English Place Names* (London, 1996), p.114.
13. *Hearg or weoh*; Cameron, *op. cit.*, p.115.
14. Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp.116-8.
15. Cameron, *op. cit.*, p.118. Wilson (*op. cit.*, p.18)

argues that this is because the Anglo-Saxons were polytheists, so that each *hearg* would have contained the idols or altars of a number of deities.

16. B. Branston, *The Lost Gods of England* (London, 1957), pp.9-12
17. Ed. Campbell, J, John, E., and Wormald, P., *The Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1982), p.94.
18. K. Crossley-Holland, *The Anglo-Saxon World*, pp.7-8.
19. Crossley-Holland, pp.9-10.
20. Crossley-Holland, pp.200-204.
21. Branston, p.165.
22. While Branston maintained the pagan significance of the runic script, Howlett ('Inscriptions and Design of the Ruthwell Cross', in ed. B. Cassidy (ed.), *The Ruthwell Cross* (Princeton, 1992), pp.71-93) found no pagan overtones, and went so far as to suggest that the quality of the poetry might indicate that the author was Aldhelm.
23. D. MacLean, 'The Date of the Cross', in ed. Cassidy, *op. cit.*, pp.49-70.
24. H.E. Davidson, *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe* (London, 1993), p.20. As the Sutton Hoo ship contained finds which seemed to originate in Scandinavia, and there appear to be parallels with the cemetery at Uppsala (Wilson, *op. cit.*, p160), it is hard to distinguish between native Saxon and imported Norse paganism. See also M.O.H. Carver, 'Kingship and material culture in early Anglo-Saxon East Anglia', in ed. S. Bassett, *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), 141-58.
25. Carver (*The Age of Sutton Hoo* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1992), p.365) argues that the finds represent a pagan reaction to Christianity.
26. B. Hope-Taylor, *Yeavinger: An Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* (London 1977), pp.159-61.
27. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp.46-7.
28. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p.70.
29. C. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity 200-1336* (New York, 1995), pp.51-5.
30. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p.143.

31. Davidson, p.50.
32. Wilson, *ibid.*.
33. E.g., Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age*, p.64, D. Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf* (Oxford, 1951), pp.76-9; Stenton, p.96.
34. Wilson, *op. cit.*
35. Davidson, *op. cit.*
36. *De Temporum Ratione* (hereafter *D.T.R.*), c.15.
37. Hope-Taylor, *op. cit.* p.278.
38. Stenton (p.98) rejects the argument.
39. A.L. Meaney, 'Bede and Anglo-Saxon Paganism'. *Parergon* n.s. 3 (1985), pp.1-25 (p.8).
40. C.W. Jones, *Bedae: Opera de Temporibus* (Cambridge, Mass., 1943), pp.136-7.
41. *H.E.* III, 1.
42. *D.T.R.* c.15.
43. On the state of Christianity at the time of the Anglo-Saxon settlements, see C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to A.D. 500* (London, 1981), pp.240-74. Opinions differ as to the degree to which the Anglo-Saxons displaced the British population. Whereas both Gildas (*De Excidio Britanniae* cc.24-6) and Bede (*H.E.* I, 15-6) claim that the British were either extirpated from the areas of Anglo-Saxon settlement, modern scholarship (e.g., Hope-Taylor, p.150) has tended to stress the continuity of a Roman-British population.
44. *H.E.* II, 13.
45. 'Nullus enim tuorum studiosius quam ego culturae deorum nostrorum se subdidit...' (*ibid.*).
46. *H.E.* II, 9.
47. *H.E.* I, 30
48. *H.E.* II, 10
49. P. Hetherington, *Medieval Rome* (London, 1994), p.34.
50. *H.E.* II, 15. If Redwald were the king for whom the grave goods found at Sutton Hoo were prepared, then two of

the few pieces of evidence about active paganism would refer to one individual.

51. *H.E.* I, 30. On the Christian apologists' identification of *daemones* with the gods of the classical pantheon, see R.M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (London, 1988), p.173.

52. *H.E.* II, V.

53. 'Nam et ipse rex, et plurimi de plebe sive optimatibus..... coeperant fana quae derelicta erant.' (*H.E.* III, 30).

54. *VPr.* c.9.

55. Cameron, *op. cit.*, p.119. Interestingly, it was the south, rather than the north and east, which witnessed a pagan revival in the fourth century; see Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.265.

56. Whether this changed greatly after the official religion became Christianity is debatable; see below, pp.319-20.

57. K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp.55-6.

58. *VGreg.* c.22.

59. *VGreg.* c.15. See A.L. Meaney, 'Anglo-Saxon Idolators and Ecclesiasts from Theodore to Alcuin: A Source Study', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 5 (1992), pp.103-25.

60. *H.E.* I, 27. See J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.34-7.

61. *Earliest Life*, p.97.

62. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp.39-41.

63. *VPr* c.3.

64. It could be argued that this latter explanation is unlikely, given that the event occurred before the death of Aidan. However, the story only occurs in Bede, and this may be a gloss to place Cuthbert on the side of the Romanizers. The idea of ignorant rustics clinging onto Irish ways would fit with Wormald's picture of Wearmouth-Jarrow as a centre of snobbish ultramontaniam ('Bede, "Beowulf", and the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy' in ed. Farrell, *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, pp.32-95).

65. Although it does in *H.E.* II, 13.
66. *VMet.* c.3.
67. If the *VMet.* were written for a Jarrow audience, as the preface to the *VPr.* suggests, the issues involved in the hostility to monks on the banks of the Tyne would presumably be identifiable.
68. *H.E.* IV, 22.
69. Ed. B. Thorpe, *The Homilies of Aelfric* (London, 1846), pp.356-9.
70. R.I. Page, 'Anglo-Saxon Runes and Magic', *Journal of the Archaeological Association* 27 (1964), pp.14-31.
71. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p.39. Against this opinion, see G. Storms: *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague, 1948). Storms argued that the magic displayed in the Leechbook and the Lacnunga demonstrated a connection between pre-Christian religion and the charms. However, his evidence is late - neither charm collection was compiled before the tenth century and his religious parallels come from the twelfth-century Prose Edda. Storms also conceded that the charms he quoted originated in the north and east of England (increasing the possibility that they witness to a later, imported, Scandinavian heathenism).
72. *VWilf.* c.13.
73. *H.E.* IV, 13; *VWilf.* c.41.
74. Davidson, *op. cit.*, p.142.
75. E.g., *H.E.* V, 10; Boniface, Ep.23; see Meaney, 'Idolators and Ecclesiasts'.
76. Hodgkin, *op. cit.*, pp.238-44.
- The subtitle quotation is from *VGreg.* c.13.
77. *H.E.* V, 2.
78. M.J. Cliffe, 'Behaviour modification by successive approximation: Saxon age examples from Bede', *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 30 (1990), pp.367-9.
79. *H.E.* V, 2.
80. *H.E.* IV, 13.
81. *VWilf.* c.26.

82. It is possible that these two stories are in origin versions of one event, and it may be significant that both are attached to places where Wilfrid was remembered as the first evangelist, and where he established a community. However, the details - Frisia as opposed to Sussex, the incidental catch of fish rather than the bishop teaching the skill, and, particularly, the famine in Sussex which has no parallel in Stephen's story - suggest separate, but coincidentally similar, traditions.

83. *VCeol.* c.40.

84. Hom. I, 13.

85. Matt. 19. 27-29.

86. Hom. I, 13.

87. *VGreg.* c.24.

88. McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, pp.65-83.

89. *VGreg.* c.24.

90. *VGreg.* c.25.

91. *VGreg.* c.26.

92. There has been a great deal of literature on the concept of the miraculous in Christian theology; see, e.g., J.A. Hardon, 'The Concept of Miracle from St. Augustine to Modern Apologetics', *Theological Studies* 15 (1954), pp.229-57; E. Dhanis, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un miracle?', *Gregorianum* 40 (1959), pp.201-241; R.F. Holland, 'The Miraculous', *American Philosophical Quarterly* (1965:2), pp.43-57; ed. C. Moule, *Miracles* (London, 1965); E. & M-L. Keller, *Miracles in Dispute* (London, 1969); G. Ashe, *Miracles* (London, 1978); ed. R. Swinburne, *Miracles* (New York, 1989).

93. E.g., Mark 6. 2.

94. E.g., Luke 10. 19, et. al..

95. E.g., John 2. 11.

96. G.W.H. Lampe, 'Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic', in ed. Moule, *Miracles*, pp.203-18.

97. Lampe, pp.203-4

98. Mark 16. 16-20.



99. M.F. Wiles, 'Miracles in the Early Church', in ed. Moule, *Miracles*, 219-34.
100. On Greek and Roman approaches to miracles, see R.M. Grant, *Miracle and the Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam, 1952).
101. E.g., *Adversus Nationes* I, 45.
102. *Adversus Nationes* I, 50.
- 103-105. Not used.
106. Jerome, *Contra Vigilantium*.
107. C. Stancliffe, *St Martin and his Hagiographer. History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983), p.275.
108. Augustine, *Confessiones* IX, 7.
109. Ambrose, Ep. 61.
110. *De Civitate Dei*, XXII, 8.
111. *Ibid.*.
112. *Op. cit.*, XXII, 9.
113. Keller, p.22.
114. *De Trinitate*, III, 7.
115. *De Civitate Dei*, XXI, 8.
116. Keller, pp.24-5.
117. *Miracles and the Mediaeval Mind*, p.3.

118. For the patristic view of the harmony of creation under human government before the Fall, see Bede *In Genesim* I, i,29-30.

119. In this the English writers seem to have followed a line of thought from expressed by Gregory I; *Homiliae in Ezechihelem* II, 5. On Gregory's understanding of the relationship between human beings and the created order, see C Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London, 1988), pp.28-46.

120. *VPr.* c.10, *VAnon.* II, 3.

121. *VPr.* c.21.

122. *VPr.* cc.19-20.

123. *VGuth.* c.39.

124. *VAnon.* III, 5 and *VWilf.* c.26 express the same idea.

125. 'Bede's Understanding of the Miraculous', p.71.

126. *Op. cit.*, p.78.

127. *Miracles*, p.2.

The subtitle quotation is from *H.E.* V, 12.

128. *VPr.* c.19.

129. *VPr.* c.14.

130. *VPr.* c.20.

131. Thacker, 'Social and Continental Background', pp.130-4.

132. *VAnon.* III, 1.

133. The evidence for the view that there was no specifically English school of hagiography, but that the English works were a part of the continental tradition is summarized in Thacker, *op. cit.*.

134. Hereafter *VAnt.*.

135. *VAnt.* c.13.

136. *VAnt.* c.40.

137. F.R. Hoare, *The Western Fathers* (London, 1954), p.xxiv.

138. *Op. cit.*, p.xxxiii.
139. *VAnt.* cc.15-19, 28, 56-58.
140. *P.L.* 73, 127-170.
141. Colgrave, *Two Lives*, p.11; Thacker, *op. cit.*, pp.283, 300-1; B.P. Kurtz, 'From St Antony to St Guthlac', *University of California Publications in Modern Philology* 12 (1926), pp.103-146.
142. P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (London, 1981), p.8; H. Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church* (London, 1963), vol. IV, pp.193-200.
143. Hoare, p.xxiii.
144. *VAnt.* cc. 4, 7-10, 20, 25.
145. *VAnt* cc. 10, 20, 37-38, 51.
146. *VAnt* cc. 24, 28, 35, 36, 42-43.
147. *VAnt* cc. 14, 25.
148. *VAnt* c.27.
149. *VAnt* cc. 30-32, 34.
150. *VAnt* cc. 19, 52.
151. *VAnt* c.59.
152. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp.1-22.
153. *VAnt* c.23.
154. *VAnt* c.28.
155. *VAnt* c.31.
156. *VAnt* c.52.
157. Evag. *VAnt.* praef., cf. *VAnon.* I, 1, and *VWilf.* praef..
158. *VAnt.* c.32, cf. *VPr.* c.4, *VMet.* c.4, *VAnon.* I, 5. It is interesting that Athanasius followed that story with a water miracle attributable to the dead man, as Bede does in the *Metrical Life*.
159. *VAnt.* c.27.
160. Kurtz, *op. cit.*.

161. *VGuth.* c.29.
162. *VGuth.* c.31.
163. Thacker, *op. cit.*, pp.283-91.
164. M.L. Cameron, 'The Visions of Saints Anthony and Guthlac', in ed. S. Campbell et al., *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture* (Toronto, 1992), pp.152-158.
165. Hereafter, *VMart.*. There are other influential works of hagiography, most noticeably the *Vita Pauli* of Jerome and the *Historia Monachorum*, and there are indications that these works were known to, and, in some stylized passages, copied by, the Anglo-Saxon authors. However, space here does not permit a comprehensive review of all the hagiography which would have been known to our authors. *VAnt.* (from the Eastern tradition) and *VMart.* (from the West) provide a representative sample and indicate the way that the English seem generally to have approached earlier *vitae*.
166. Ed. J.Fontaine, *Vie de Saint Martin* (Paris 1967), p.17; Stancliffe, *op. cit.*, p.6.
167. See H. Chadwick (*The Early Church* (Harmondsworth, 1967), p.182) for a negative view of Sulpicius' enthusiasm, and therefore of *VMart.*
168. Brown, *op. cit.*, p.53.
169. *VMart.* c.2.
170. *VMart.* cc. 9, 27.
171. Stancliffe, *op. cit.*, pp.278-96.
172. L. Duchesne, *The Early History of the Church* 3 vols (English Translation, London, 1912), II, pp.422-5.
173. Stancliffe, *op. cit.*, pp.279-296.
174. Sulpicius, Ep. 1.
175. *Ibid.*
176. Sulpicius, Ep. 3.
177. *VMart.* c.24: 'ne quis forte existimet fabulosum'.
178. *VMart.* c.27.
179. There is some confusion over the numbering of the

Dialogues. Here the numbering used by Halm (CSEL, 1) is followed; other scholars have recognized a division within the first Dialogue (making the last work the third Dialogue); see Hoare, p.65.

180. Sulpicius, *Dial.* II, 5

181. Sulpicius, *Dial.* II, 17-18.

182. J.D.A. Ogilvy, *Books known to the English* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p.242.

183. Colgrave, *Two Lives*, p.62; *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, pp.60, 162.

184. Thacker, *op. cit.*, pp.111-19. D.P. Kirby's argument ('Bede and the Pictish Church', *Innes Review* 24 (1973), pp.6-25 (pp.22-3)), that it was through Cuthbert himself that the traditions about Ninian, and presumably about the association with Martin came into Northumbria, raises the interesting possibility that the imitation of Martin may have been in Cuthbert's own mind.

185. Gregory collected miracles of St Martin from all over Gaul to compile the *IV Libri de virtutibus sancti Martini*, in a clear attempt to present devotion to Martin as something more than a local cult.

186. *H.E.* III, 4.

187. *H.E.* I, 26.

188. The historicity of some of Bede's statements has been challenged, but the existence of an early cult of Martin in Britain is effectively defended by P.A. Wilson, 'The Cult of St Martin in the British Isles', *The Innes Review* 19 (1965), pp.129-143. Ninian remains a shadowy figure, but the existence of devotion to Martin in Southern Scotland from the end of the Roman period would be possible without any connection between Ninian and Tours (C.Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp.279-83).

189. The Martinian miracles are usefully catalogued by Stancliffe, *op. cit.*, pp.363-71.

190. Respectively, *H.E.* II, 7, and III, 16; *VAnon.* II, 7.

191. *VMart.* c.14; cf. *H.E.* I, 19.

192. *Vita Germani* (hereafter *VGer.*), c.16.

193. Hoare, *op. cit.*, p.283.

194. *VMart.* c.20.

195. *H.E.* I, 19; *VGerm.* c.16.
196. *VMart.* c.12, c.13, respectively.
197. *VGreg.* c.22.
198. On the origins of the stories in the *VGreg.*, see above pp.34-5, 38-9. Also, Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory the Great', pp.5-8.
199. *VMart.* c.6, Sulpicius Ep. 3, respectively.
200. *VMart.* c.21.
201. *VMart.* c.24.
202. *VMart.* c.22.
203. Whilst both Guthlac and Cuthbert do battle with devils or demons (see nn.204, 210), Satan as a single character nowhere makes an appearance as he does in *VMart.*. A possible exception to this rule is *VGuth.* c.30, where two *zabuli* appear in human form, but one *hostis* vanishes when challenged.
204. Assuming, of course, that all the references to 'Diabolus' are to be translated as 'the Devil'. There is no clear distinction in Sulpicius between 'diabolus' and 'daemon'.
205. *VMart.* c.17.
206. Sulpicius *Dial.* II, 8.
207. *H.E.* III, 11.
208. *VPr.* cc.15, 41; *VAnon.* II, 8, and IV, 15.
209. *VGuth.* cc.41-2.
210. There is another problem of terminology here. Felix eschews the usual word for demon ('daemon') which is used by the Anonymous of Lindisfarne and by Bede, and the alternative diabolus which Sulpicius uses, both as a single and a plural; he prefers 'zabulus' (which, it appears, can mean both Satan and a demon) and 'immundus' or 'malignus spiritus' (which Guthlac confronts both directly and through the possessed).
211. *VPr.* c.17; *VAnon* III, 1.
212. Respectively, *VGuth.* cc.29, 30, 31, 36.

213. On difficult relationships between regular monasticism and the anchorites it sponsored, see H. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* (London, 1984).
214. M. Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp.152-5.
215. So that to have wrestled with demons became the source of spiritual authority. P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), pp.80-101.
216. *VMart.* cc.13-15.
217. *H.E.* II, 9.
218. *VGuth.* c.35. The story resembles one in Greg. *Dial.* II, 8 more closely than it does anything in Sulpicius.
219. The exception is *VWilf.* c.13.
220. E.g., Sulpicius *Dial.* II, 8-9.
221. *Op. cit.*, p.330.
222. The effective prohibition of paganism throughout the empire came with an edict of Theodosius I issued in 391.
223. Stancliffe, *op. cit.*, pp.338-9.

Chapter TwoQuod sanctus docuit nos Gregorius: The influence of Gregory I on the relating of the miraculous in England

If, to a large extent, the theological and hagiographical traditions of miracle story in the antique church converged in the thinking of Augustine of Hippo, and if, as has been argued, it is largely the Augustinian understanding with which the writers of the early eighth century in England operated,<sup>1</sup> there is an obvious channel through which it is likely that they received it, if somewhat refined. No discussion of any aspect of ecclesiastical life in early mediaeval England can ignore the contribution of Gregory I.<sup>2</sup> The *Streoneshalh Vita Gregorii* witnesses to the reverence here accorded to the 'apostle of the English',<sup>3</sup> apparently pre-dating veneration of Gregory in Rome.<sup>4</sup> But Gregory's importance to the English writers was not just on account of the Canterbury mission. Of greater significance was his considerable literary output, much of which was known in England. Bede recounts first amongst his works the exposition of the Book of Job, and then the 'Pastoral' and the homilies on the gospel.

Libros etiam Dialogorum IIII fecit, in quibus rogatu Petri diaconi sui virtutes sanctorum, quos in Italia clariores nosse vel audire poterat, ad exemplum vivendi posteris collegit...<sup>5</sup>

Bede continues the list with the commentary on Ezekiel, the



book of answers to Augustine of Canterbury's questions (which Bede had already included in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*),<sup>6</sup> and Gregory's other letters. It is a passage which demonstrates Bede's acquaintance not only with most of Gregory's works, but also with the pope's circumstances, referring to the pressure from his monks to produce books and to the illness that he suffered.<sup>7</sup>

The question with which this chapter is concerned is the extent to which that passage reveals the knowledge and love of a pope whose influence was felt by the recorders of miracle stories; in other words, we need thoroughly to test the Loomis-McCready thesis<sup>8</sup> that the influence was all-pervasive. There are three stages to that enquiry. Stories which might be thought to betray the influence of the *Dialogi* are examined, and the subtle way in which one story could be used several times, with different internal meanings, is discussed. Prior to that, a question mark is placed against the assumption that Gregory's writings were widely known and revered in England in the early eighth century. But firstly, some examination needs to be made of the idea of a Gregorian tradition of miracle stories. What should we make of the curious collection of anecdotes which the English knew as the *quattuor libri Dialogorum*?

'Seniorum valde venerabilium didici relatione quod narro':  
Gregory's collection of stories.

Perhaps it is significant, in the light not only of

recent work but also after the scepticism expressed about Gregory's miracle stories by earlier commentators,<sup>9</sup> that Bede places the *Dialogi* in the middle of his catalogue of Gregory's works. To Bede's mind, this was not a treatise that was out of place amongst Gregory's exegetical writings, but later commentators have been less certain. Even Dudden, an whole-hearted admirer of the pope, conceded, as he refuted doubts about the authenticity of *Dialogi*, that the doctrine of the work went beyond (but was in harmony with) the doctrine of the *Moralia* or the homilies.<sup>10</sup> There is a clear tension, even within the *Dialogi* themselves, between the stories that Gregory recorded and his own understanding of the significance of the miraculous, a tension which appears all the greater when Gregory's teaching elsewhere is also considered. There are, as Bede noted, four books of the *Dialogi*.<sup>11</sup> In the introduction, the purpose of the work is explained as describing the great saints of Italy and their miracles so that Peter (the interlocutor) and other monks might imitate them. There then follow a series of stories about twelve individuals (book I), a *vita* of the proto-monk Benedict (book II), a miscellaneous collection of stories, most of which demonstrated the power of a Christian saint (sometimes anonymous) over the heathen or heretics (book III), and a series of accounts of posthumous miracles which concludes with an affirmation of the effectiveness of the mass (book IV). Having expended so much time and effort on

these four books, in which the points that the writer makes are reinforced by simply piling miracle story on top of miracle story, it seems odd that Gregory should then apparently devalue what he has been doing:

Si visibilia adtendimus, ita necesse est credamus. Si vero invisibilia pensamus, nimirum constat quia maius est miraculum praedicationis verbo atque orationis solacio peccatorem convertere, quam carne mortuum resuscitare. In isto etenim resuscitatur caro iterum moritura, in illo vero anima in aeternum victura.<sup>12</sup>

The implication of this seems to be that miracles belong to the carnal world; true faith is a spiritual matter, and is therefore on an higher plane. Such a train of thought fits with Gregory's attitudes displayed elsewhere; throughout his writings the dichotomy stressed is between the material and the spiritual, flesh and soul.<sup>13</sup> In some of Gregory's thought there seems to be an attitude to physical reality which is almost Manichaeian in its suspicion.<sup>14</sup> The whole scheme of salvation can only be understood in terms of Christ, God-Man, reconciling the dualism which is inherent in the human condition.<sup>15</sup> Given that that is one of his major theological premises, the *Dialogi* seem somewhat out of place in the corpus of Gregory's writings. Admittedly, there are episodes in which the pattern of sanctity is the ability to force the body into submission, and the manifestation of evil is depicted as the temptation of the flesh. Stories such as the account of Equitius being visited by an angel who made him a eunuch,<sup>16</sup> or of the priest who sent women to dance in Benedict's monastery to

distract his monks,<sup>17</sup> witness to this thread of Gregory's thought. But many of the other stories, whilst in no sense celebrating the carnal aspects of life, seem merely to be about the marvellous triumph of material things over their usual limitations; examples include the inexhaustible supply of wine from Bonafacius' vineyard,<sup>18</sup> the floating iron tool,<sup>19</sup> or the miraculous supply of meal to Benedict's monastery during a famine.<sup>20</sup> For all Gregory's protestations about miracles having a lesser value than spiritual conversion,<sup>21</sup> and even about the spiritual dangers of the miraculous,<sup>22</sup> the *Dialogi* appears to be a collection of miracle stories re-told simply to delight in the miraculous.

It has also been argued that the evidence of inconsistency is not only internal to the *Dialogi*. Whilst Gregory showed himself fond of using miracle stories to illustrate his points in his other writings,<sup>23</sup> there are telling moments in his exegetical works where it is implied that the age of miracles was past.<sup>24</sup> Miracles, in Gregory's thinking, only served to reinforce the preaching of the gospel; they were intended to impress unbelievers, not the converted.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Christians should treat the power to work miracles with some hesitation; Augustine (of Canterbury) was right to delight in the success of his mission, but not in his miracles *per se*:

Gaudeas videlicet, quia Anglorum animae per exteriora miracula ad interiorem gratiam pertrahuntur: pertimescas vero, ne inter signa, quae fiunt, infirmus animus in sui praesumptione

se elevet, et unde foras in honorem tollitur,  
inde per inanem gloriam intus cadat.<sup>26</sup>

This wariness towards the miraculous sits rather ill at ease with the production of a collection of miracles the length of the *Dialogi*. That is one of the factors which has led Francis Clark to conclude that the *Dialogi* are not from the pen of Gregory at all, but a later fabrication, circulated under the great pope's name in order to grant them an aura of authenticity.<sup>27</sup> The apparent theological inconsistency is not Clark's only reason for referring to the 'Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues'; he also maintains that there are historical errors in the work.<sup>28</sup> He notes that there is no evidence (apart from a letter in the *Registrum* of Gregory's correspondence which he dismisses as spurious) to confirm the existence of the *Dialogi* before the 680s,<sup>29</sup> nor even that of any of the characters whose deeds are recorded in them,<sup>30</sup> and argues that the language used in the *Dialogi* is unlike that used in other of Gregory's works.<sup>31</sup> Clark's other points carry less weight - that Gregory was simply too busy to write the *Dialogi* in the years 593-4 when it is generally believed they were composed cannot be proven,<sup>32</sup> and neither can the thesis that Gregory had no information for the areas outside of Rome that the *Dialogi* cover.<sup>33</sup> But Clark accumulates an impressive volume of evidence to represent the *Dialogi* as a tissue of invention mixed with genuine Gregorian material culled from elsewhere in his work.<sup>34</sup>

Not surprisingly, this thesis has been hotly disputed.

Of all the rebuttals of Clark's arguments,<sup>35</sup> the most comprehensive is that of Paul Meyvaert.<sup>36</sup> Meyvaert systematically rejects all the external evidence which Clark marshals,<sup>37</sup> and his linguistic arguments.<sup>38</sup> Meyvaert agrees that the *Dialogi* did not circulate in Gregory's life time, but this was because Gregory himself withheld publication.<sup>39</sup> Gregory was a complex character, so we should not be surprised to see a different side of him<sup>40</sup> in a work not intended for general circulation but written for a few friends in order to demonstrate that the western church did not lag behind the Greeks in the number or the power of its saints.<sup>41</sup>

For William McCreedy there is no theological inconsistency.<sup>42</sup> In the major work on Gregory's approach to the miraculous, he argues that the *Dialogi* demonstrate a fully developed understanding of the purpose of the miraculous in the life of the saint.<sup>43</sup> For Gregory, on this reading, miracles were a demonstration of inner holiness, an *ostensio sanctitatis*.<sup>44</sup> That inner holiness, to which all Christians are called, is the major theme of Gregory's writing. Gregory was primarily a pastoral theologian, whose main concern was the moral reform of the individual.<sup>45</sup> But, as in the *Moralia* on Job, Gregory does not argue, as some have seen the purpose of hagiography to be, that all Christians should imitate the sanctity of the heroes of the *Dialogi*. Rather, the stories are to encourage Christians, and to inspire them to a deeper faith.<sup>46</sup> Here,

McCready's argument differs from Meyvaert's. That the main characters in Gregory's stories are almost all clerics or monks (and in many cases high-ranking clerics or monks) does not suggest that they are only for the ears of those who have also taken vows. They are models of a lifestyle which, it is acknowledged, few can imitate, but from which all can gain inspiration. These paragons of sanctity serve to keep each Christian mindful both of his/her own failures, and of the possibilities of virtue. In this way, the *Dialogi* demonstrate the typical Gregorian concerns - that the spiritual life should avoid the twin (though opposite) dangers of pride and despair.<sup>47</sup>

Such, in brief, is McCready's analysis of the purpose of the *Dialogi*. As is clear, the central thesis of *Signs of Sanctity* is diametrically opposed to the Clark argument that the *Dialogi* are a later forgery.<sup>48</sup> For McCready, it is not inconceivable that a theologian of Gregory's stature could have been responsible for the series of wonder-tales which constitutes the *Dialogi*. He rejects the views of earlier historians, who considered the work a lapse from the usually high Gregorian standards, and were embarrassed by Gregory's credulity.<sup>49</sup> Gregory, he maintained, believed the stories that he recorded.<sup>50</sup> What is more, the tension mentioned above, between statements in Gregory's exegetical works and the content of the *Dialogi*, is more apparent than real.<sup>51</sup> He did not believe that the age of miracles was past; but thought that miracles were relatively less

frequent than in the days of the apostolic church. The one significant exception was the occurrence of miraculous visions, which Gregory believed were actually on the increase in his time.<sup>52</sup> So there is no philosophical inconsistency; Gregory's biblical scholarship, moral agenda and eschatological expectation are all of a piece with the stories of the *Dialogi*.

'Pauca eius de gestis audivimus signorum': the ignorance of Gregory's 'own people'.

Whether scholarly opinion will finally decide with McCready's wholehearted acceptance of the *Dialogi* or Clark's equally wholesale rejection of them is outside the scope of the present discussion. The *Dialogi* were known in England by the end of the seventh century. The reference in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* has already been noticed, and Bede also makes mention of two of their heroes in the prose *Vita Cuthberti*.<sup>53</sup> The earliest reference to the works in England (and according to Clark, one of the earliest anywhere)<sup>54</sup> is in Aldhelm's *Carmen de Virginitate*.<sup>55</sup> The influence of the *Dialogi* on each of these works is considered below.

Oddly, perhaps, the author who might have been expected most to imitate Gregorian stories with Gregorian reasoning, the pope's first biographer, never mentions the *Dialogi* by name. The purpose of the *Vita Gregorii* is explicitly stated as being to set forth 'qualiter doctor



noster sanctus Gregorius vir ceteris incomparabilis sit, nobis in sanctitate Deo adiuvante, venerandus.'<sup>56</sup> In the writer's view it be perfectly legitimate to forward this purpose by accounts of the miraculous.<sup>57</sup> But throughout he is blighted by a shortage of material:

De nostro igitur magistro beato Gregorio ea quae nobiscum ab antiquis fama sanctitatis eius a diversis notavit referamus. In quibus etiam perpauca de multis nos audisse credimus...<sup>58</sup>

It seems that it is partly to excuse this deficiency that the writer falls back on a Gregorian understanding of the purpose of the miraculous. That he cannot provide a great number of miracles should not be taken as an occasion to dispute Gregory's sanctity.<sup>59</sup> Gregory himself taught that not all holy people work miracles. Miracles are only given by God for certain, evangelical, purposes. They are to strengthen faith or to defeat paganism, they are most often given to those who preach to the heathen and, even then, are not as important as the preaching.<sup>60</sup> The writer warns that there is a danger in relying on miracles rather than preaching, a warning with which Gregory would have agreed.<sup>61</sup> But whilst Gregory's comments at the close of book III of the *Dialogi* reflect this understanding, that does not seem to have been the Anonymous' source. It is by no means clear that the *Dialogi* were even known in Streoneshalh. Colgrave, in his edition of the *Vita Gregorii*, identifies only two quotations from the *Dialogi*, both of them from the Preface,<sup>62</sup> but in each case, the phrases are used elsewhere in Gregory's work.<sup>63</sup> There is

only one story which Colgrave claims (rightly) is a version of one told in the *Dialogi*; even in this case, it is hard to believe that the Streoneshalh writer had a copy of the *Dialogi* before him as he wrote.<sup>64</sup> The Anonymous tells of Gregory sentencing a man to hell. The crime of this poor individual was to hide three coins *contra sui regulam monasterii*. The story is confused, as it is not clear at what point the victim of this treatment (a monastic doctor) actually dies; he is sent to hell whilst he is dying but still on earth. Thirty days later, Gregory proved his power showing to the other monks that he had released the man. How this 'showing' happened is not related, and the Anonymous very obliquely refers to the masses by which the dead man gained entry to heaven: 'eius ex eo [inferno] solvit sacrificio, qui fuit inter mortuos liber....'<sup>65</sup> In what might be presumed to be the original version,<sup>66</sup> Gregory tells of an incident in his own monastery in which a monk, by name Justus, and skilled in medicine, had hidden three coins Gregory decreed Justus' excommunication and forbade the other monks to go near him. Thirty days after the man's death, Gregory ordered a daily mass to be said for him, and after this had been done for a further thirty days, the deceased appeared in a vision, to another monk, Copiosus, to confirm that he had been redeemed. Whilst, obviously, these are versions of the same story, the purpose to which they are put differs. Whereas the story in the *Dialogi* is about the efficacy of masses for the dead (a

recurrent theme in Gregory's work), the *Vita Gregorii* offers it as a sign of the power of the saint. That there is no verbal borrowing discernable in the Streoneshalh account, suggests that the author did not have access to the *Dialogi* but knew of the story some other way. In fact, he refers to the existence of the *Dialogi* only indirectly in his introduction to this story: '[Gregorius] in scriptis quoque eius hystoricis de exitu animarum multa narravit miracula.'<sup>67</sup>

It may be that this secondhand, and rather confused knowledge of the *Dialogi* accounts for part of another of the Streoneshalh writer's stories. He tells that Gregory was able to release the pagan emperor Trajan from hell.<sup>68</sup> It is a miracle that seems dubious theologically, as the writer himself realized. But, he claims, it is one that was being told by his fellows: the author states that 'de nostris dicunt narratum a Romanis'. Gregory, having heard an account of the Emperor's exceptional charity, wept that so good a man should be confined to hell. After some time, Gregory was granted an assurance that his tears had caused Trajan's soul to be 'refrigeratam vel baptizatam'. The author was aware that, according to the orthodoxy of the day, only the baptized have any chance of salvation. This certainly was the view of Bede,<sup>69</sup> who, following Augustine, taught that even unbaptized babies were damned.<sup>70</sup> The Streoneshalh writer does not dispute this, but produces the ingenious explanation that of baptism 'genus tertium est

lacrimae'.<sup>71</sup> What the first two kinds of baptism are is not made clear, nor is the origin (if it is not the writer's own invention) of this peculiar doctrine. However, there is a passage in the *Dialogi* in which Gregory discusses the efficacy of masses for the departed. The sacrifice offered with tears had been known to lead to an assurance that the person on whose behalf the mass had been offered was granted salvation.<sup>72</sup> Could it be that this idea had, in some convoluted form, reached the Northumbrians who were retelling the story of Trajan's redemption?<sup>73</sup>

Such an hypothesis would reinforce the impression that Gregory's life and teaching were not particularly well known in England. In addition to the two already discussed, the writer can find only eight other miracle stories about his hero.<sup>74</sup> One of those is a version of a story which Gregory himself told about one of his predecessors.<sup>75</sup> That the Anonymous asks his readership not to be disturbed if they find that he has attributed to Gregory miracles which they know to belong to another saint, because the saints hold their miracles in common, may lead us to believe that he was well aware of what he was doing.<sup>76</sup> For all that Streonshalh was short of material, these ten miracle stories, however they came to be attributed to Gregory, are ten more than Bede included in his brief biography of the great pope.<sup>77</sup> Whether Bede did not know any stories of Gregory's miracles, or knew them and chose not to include them, as unworthy of inclusion in his work or irrelevant,

is something that cannot be answered. On the whole, Bede's knowledge of Gregory seems to have been the more precise. The Anonymous was not wholly ignorant; he was familiar with many of the themes of Gregory's *Moralia* and *Regula Pastoralis*, and with some of the epistles and homilies, as well as much of the biographical detail. But Bede's is a far more systematic presentation of Gregory's life, and shows a greater knowledge of his writings. As to the origin of either writer's information, there can be no certainty.<sup>78</sup> It is likely that Bede drew on what was recorded at Canterbury,<sup>79</sup> or that Nothelm returned from Rome with a biographical summary. Gregory himself provided a few autobiographical details in his introductory letter to the *Moralia*, so it may be that the English writers drew on that. But, generally, the English in the early eighth century seem to have known precious little about 'their apostle'. If both the Anonymous and Bede had to send to Rome, or to scour Gregory's own writings, for information, it seems unlikely that there were any traditions about Gregory preserved in England on which they could draw. This places a question mark against the assumption that the Gregorian influence was paramount in the English church. Loomis' contention that because of his role in the mission to the English,<sup>80</sup> the words of Gregory had an high place in English monasteries, and that appeal to them alone was a guarantor of orthodoxy and credibility is far from certain. The influence that Gregory had on the recording of miracle

stories in England is undeniable; but it is slighter, and more subtle, than either Loomis or McCreedy would have us believe.

'In scriptis...multa narravit miracula': uses of the *Dialogi* stories in England.

It was the belief of E.C. Brewer, propounded throughout his *Dictionary of Miracles*,<sup>81</sup> that every miracle story related in the literature of the Christian era was in some way a variant of a Biblical miracle. It is an attractive thesis, but it is one which begs a more basic question. How can we identify one story with another? Clearly, when Adomnan reported that Columba had turned water into wine, he was deliberately inviting his audience to recognize that this was the same act as Christ himself had performed.<sup>82</sup> But how, without the obvious parallels, and the explicit comment, of that story, can a miracle be identified as imitative of another? That is the question which to a large degree underlies this chapter, as it does any attempt to see the miracle stories of one work as being explicable through their similarity to another. What do we mean when (or if) we say that the Anglo-Saxons used the stories of the *Dialogi*?

One obvious answer is that they retold them, as, for instance, the stories of Cuthbert were retold by Bede in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*<sup>83</sup> or by Alcuin in the *Versus de Patribus, Regibus et Sanctis Euboricensis Ecclesiae*.<sup>84</sup> The

only Anglo-Saxon author to use material from Gregory's accounts of Italian saints in this way was Aldhelm in the prose and verse *De Virginitate*. It appears that Aldhelm re-read the *Dialogi* between the two parts of his *opus geminatum*.<sup>85</sup> In the later (metrical) work, the account of Scholastica's meeting with her brother is repeated, but detached from the mention of two other saintly virgins, Christina and Dorothea.<sup>86</sup> The account of the life of Benedict is expanded, with a series of his miracles briefly recounted. Benedict is credited with raising the dead, healing the deaf, lame and sick, repairing a broken vessel, destroying a goblet holding poison, and recovering an axe-head from the water into which it had fallen. All of these are to be found in book two of the *Dialogi*, to which Aldhelm refers his readers for further information. As in the *Vita Cuthberti Metrica* or the *Alcuin Versus*, the necessary compression (not to mention Aldhelm's idiosyncratic Latin) makes it difficult to find verbal borrowing. But it is clear that Aldhelm viewed both Benedict and Scholastica as paragons of virtue by whom the nuns of Barking ought to be inspired in their own lives. The argument ought not, however, to be pushed too far. Aldhelm makes no greater claims for the heroes of the *Dialogi* than for any of his other models, and he does not draw at all on the other three books of the Gregorian collection.

It is not surprising that Aldhelm should be the

English author who makes the most direct use of Gregory's stories, because it is Aldhelm whose agenda seems to have been closest to Gregory's own. Like Gregory, Aldhelm wrote to encourage those who had embraced the religious life, in his case the nuns of Barking. Like Gregory, Aldhelm displayed a suspicion of the carnal - the main point of *De Virginitate* is that the saints were able to do wonderful things because they were virgins.<sup>87</sup> In having been abstemious with their flesh, they were able to tolerate extraordinary suffering or to display miraculous grace. And, like Gregory, Aldhelm produced examples not so much for imitation as for veneration and inspiration.<sup>88</sup> There was no likelihood of the nuns of Barking being boiled in oil, or suffering the other torments that the apostles are supposed to have survived, but the same virginity was to be prized by them, and the highest achievements of that virginity should inspire them.<sup>89</sup>

It will be argued that this was not the programme that influenced Bede and the other English writers. However, earlier contributions to this discussion have assumed the centrality of Gregory's thought in England and implied that the greatest effect was on Bede. Paul Meyvaert has argued that Gregory's influence on the Jarrow scholar was considerable, but difficult precisely to define.<sup>90</sup> In Bede's earlier works, the debt to Gregory is obvious and acknowledged, but in his more mature writing the effect of Bede's wide reading of the Church Fathers is more clearly



seen. At one point in particular, Bede's ecclesiological views can be shown to differ from Gregory's.<sup>91</sup> Like Gregory himself, Bede was too erudite a scholar only to be influenced by one of his mentors. However, Meyvaert detects some 'stylistic influence'<sup>92</sup> of Gregory on Bede and some 'spiritual affinity' between the two.<sup>93</sup>

Mention has already been made of the two arguments that Bede's understanding of the miraculous was shaped by Gregory's.<sup>94</sup> The Loomis view (that Bede used Gregory as a 'touchstone of authenticity') presents the later writer as a slavish copier, an unimaginative artisan, a monk so fearful of crossing the bounds of acceptability that he clung to Gregory's exemplars as a guarantee of orthodoxy. It does not allow for the way in which (as Meyvaert argues for Gregory's *Dialogi*)<sup>95</sup> content and context influence what a writer does with his stories. Neither Loomis (who portrayed Bede forcing his material into a Gregorian mould) nor McCready (who sees Bede as a lesser disciple of Gregory who occasionally fell into traps which the great man avoided) seems to have considered the possibility that Bede, along with other English authors, had a different purpose in relating miracle stories from that which inspired the *Dialogi*.

Loomis' argument was that the shape and content of the Gregorian stories were copied by Bede. So, for instance, he maintained that the prose *Vita Cuthberti* was modelled on book II of the *Dialogi*,<sup>96</sup> and that no story was included in

the *Historia Ecclesiastica* unless an analogue could be found for it in the writings of Gregory.<sup>97</sup> It is a thesis that can be made to appear crude and arbitrary, without an appreciation of the specialized approach which Loomis had previously developed. For Loomis, the miracle story was an example of 'folk-lore' or 'wonder-lore'. He saw the stories as being related through oral traditions first of all, and assumed that an author such as Bede would have had a range of such material from which to select.<sup>98</sup> Essentially, Loomis argued, there was a limited number of types of miracle story, which could be categorized and which, by the twelfth century had become completely stylized.<sup>99</sup> It was the contribution of Gregory I in the sixth century to lend the stamp of authoritative recognition to those types that he used. The first problem with this (and similar approaches) to the whole question of the miraculous is that it can find 'analogues' in areas where there can be no possible literary connexion. Loomis cited wonder stories told of the Buddha,<sup>100</sup> whilst Z.P. Thundy has tried to claim a story in the Koran as a parallel to the miracle of Caedmon's gift of song.<sup>101</sup> This serves to highlight the second problem, that types become so vague as to be unrecognizable. For instance, Loomis recognized twelve major categories of the wonder-tale, the last of which he termed 'Miscellanea'.<sup>102</sup>

According to Loomis, the 'admission of the inspiration of the *Dialogues* is made at the end of the fourteenth

chapter of St Cuthbert's life.<sup>103</sup> But all that Bede does at that point is to comment that one of Cuthbert's miracles (in which he put out a phantom fire by his prayer) imitated an incident in Benedict's career, and another (the extinguishing of an actual fire in his home village) paralleled a miracle of Marcellinus, one of the saints of the first book of the *Dialogi*. Elsewhere, as has been noted, Bede draws attention of his audience to a parallel with the *Vita Antonii*.<sup>104</sup> All that is proved by these asides is that Bede had read the *Dialogi* and expected that the monks of Lindisfarne would also be familiar with them. Because some of the miracles of Cuthbert resemble some of those of Benedict, because Bede chose to note two such resemblances, and because it is certain that Benedict was a revered figure in the monastic communities of northern England,<sup>105</sup> it is tempting to jump to the conclusion that Bede set out to present Cuthbert as a second Benedict. Tempting, but wrong. The evidence that this was the programme simply is not there. Bede's explicit conclusion in the chapter to which Loomis drew attention is not to do with Benedict, but with the general spiritual meaning of such miracle; to have power over flames, real or fantastical, was a sign that the saint also had conquered the fires of vice. Weaker mortals have more to worry about from the flames of hell. It is a rhetorical flourish which, for all that Gregory might also have said it, does not seem to originate in the *Dialogi*. Why should we assume that Bede

needed to go there for the stories either? Perhaps a more accurate view of Bede's intentions would be gained if his words were taken at face value. Bede wrote of the two fire stories, 'Sicque in duobus miraculis duorum patrum est virtutes imitatus.'<sup>106</sup> Attention is drawn to the Antony and Benedict parallels in similar words: 'Et hic quoque venerabilis Christi famulus in duobus miraculis duorum patrum est facta secutus.'<sup>107</sup> It is as if Bede himself, read in a wide range of earlier hagiography and aware that his audience would also know the stories to which he drew attention, was pleased to notice the parallels, as they strengthened the impression that Cuthbert belongs in the company of the Fathers of monasticism. To suggest that there was a deliberate policy of forcing the Cuthbert material to mimic the deeds of Benedict stretches the evidence, and denies that there is any significance in Bede's deliberately twice drawing out the parallel with two saints' deeds, rather than with those of one.

There is at least one example of a Benedict parallel not being used where it might have been. As in many areas of this discussion, the much larger output of Bede has tended to dominate the view taken of Gregory's influence in England. But the Anonymous of Lindisfarne seems also to have known the *Dialogi*<sup>108</sup> and a comparison between his use of stories and Bede's with possible analogues from the Gregorian material is instructive. For example, Gregory tells that when they were engaged in the building of Monte

Cassino, some of Benedict's monks found a stone which it proved impossible to move.<sup>109</sup> The reason for this was that the devil was sitting on it; Benedict was called and after his prayer and blessing had been given, the stone was moved with ease. Both Bede and the Anonymous tell of Cuthbert constructing himself a dwelling on Farne. According to the Anonymous, Cuthbert expelled demons from the island, and built his own house with huge stones,<sup>110</sup> one of which was of such a size that four monks could not move it; some days later, they realized that Cuthbert had placed it in the wall without assistance.<sup>111</sup> If the Anonymous had Gregory's story in mind at all, he made little use of it. But Bede makes even less of the story. In his account of the establishment of the Farne retreat, Bede describes how Cuthbert constructed for himself a dwelling from turf and undressed stones, some of which were so large 'ut vix a quattuor viris viderentur potuisse levare, quos tamen ipse angelico adiutus auxilio illuc attulisse aliunde et muro imposuisse repertus est.'<sup>112</sup> If the *Vita Metrica* refers to the story at all, it is even more allusively;<sup>113</sup> we are merely told that it would have taken six men to transport the boulders which Cuthbert, with the help of God, placed into the walls alone. It is an interesting comparison; are Bede's condensed sentences distillations of the Anonymous' story, or was the Anonymous turning the comment of those who had witnessed the building on the size of the stones into an anecdote? Whichever is the true explanation, what

cannot be demonstrated is that the writers used an opportunity (which is clearly there) to stress the parallel with Benedict through a miracle story. In fact, they appear to have eschewed the idea.

'Qui idem pene et eodem modo legitur fecisse miraculum': a parallel in detail.

An indication of the way in which the English authors regarded the use of Benedict's miracle stories as models for their own is seen when one of the miracles of Cuthbert is analysed in greater detail. For the story of the saint bringing water from dry ground we have four versions (and a brief mention in Alcuin's *Versus*);<sup>114</sup> it provides, therefore, an opportunity to review not only the way in which an exemplar from one of the monastic fathers was seen to be relevant, but also the differing features which each of the versions includes.

Whether or not it is the original, the Anonymous of Lindisfarne's account of the incident usefully forms a starting point for the comparison.<sup>115</sup> According to this *Vita*, Cuthbert had been moved from his position as prior of Melrose to Lindisfarne, where he established the rule and served (the Anonymous does not say in what capacity) for 'many years'.<sup>116</sup> Then Cuthbert decided to retire to Farne, expelling the demonic forces there, building his home and moving the enormous stone. But there was a shortage of water on the island; it is worth quoting the whole of the

chapter in which the problem and its resolution are described:

Iterum alia die visitantes fratres venerunt ad eum. Quibus ille secundum morem eius primum verbum Dei predicavit, deinde etiam post predicationem cepit dicere, 'O fratres carissimi, scitis quia locus iste pene inhabitabilis est, propter aquae penuriam. Ideo oremus Domini auxilium, et fodite in medio pavimento domus meae hanc saxosam terram, quia potens est Deus de rupe petrina petenti aquam suscitare. Ille enim olim Moysi percutienti virga, de petra aquam sitienti populo dedit. Samsonem quoque de maxillis asini sitiensem potavit.' Fratres vero secundum praeceptum eius foderunt terram. Et, orante eo, statim fontem aquae vive sursum in obviam eius, de saxosa terra erumpere manantem invenerunt. Cuius nos magnam suavitatem dulcedinis usque hodie degustantes cum gratiarum actione probavimus. Ille etiam servus Dei anachorita professus est relatu fidelissimorum agnovi in ea aqua a Deo donata omnis liquoris sibi esse suavitas.<sup>117</sup>

There are several points to note about this account. The Biblical precedents (from Exodus and Judges)<sup>118</sup> for the event are given, not, it is said, by the author but by the worker of the miracle. The context is interesting; Cuthbert orders the monks to do the digging, after preaching to them. The implication is that Cuthbert, in his hermitage, was still exercising authority over others in the community, although we might see in this a picture of the role of the hermit within a monastic community.<sup>119</sup> The monks do the digging whilst Cuthbert prays - the contemplative supporting the active (or rather *vice-versa*). The reason for the miracle is that without a supply of water Cuthbert might not have been able to remain on the island (presumably, prior to this, the monks had been

bringing water to him). As in the Biblical stories, the spring appears immediately. The supply was still in existence at the time of writing, but the writer notes the point to testify to its flavour, which leads on to the last sentence. Whether he means that the water had different tastes at different times, or that with this supply, Cuthbert did not want for any other form of liquid refreshment, is not clear. The implication is that God had provided not only for Cuthbert's necessity but for his greater comfort.

Turning now to the story in Bede's Prose Life, we see some notable differences. The context is more or less the same - Cuthbert 'many years' earlier had been moved to Lindisfarne by Eata, to rule as prior (presumably whilst Eata remained at Melrose).<sup>120</sup> Bede gives a much fuller account of these years than does the Anonymous; he suggests that there was at first some resistance to the imposition by Cuthbert of a (Roman) monastic rule, and digresses not only into the history of Lindisfarne but also into Gregory's instructions to Augustine of Canterbury.<sup>121</sup> However, Cuthbert's authority was enhanced by his personal holiness and his ability to work miracles; his decision to retire into solitude on Farne is presented as a natural progression,<sup>122</sup> and Bede is careful to note that it is made with the blessing of Eata and the other monks.<sup>123</sup> Cuthbert (having driven out the demonic forces which had previously made the place uninhabitable and built his dwelling from



implausibly large stones) increased the decree of separation from the brothers. He had his own dwelling, and they a guest house, not far from which there is a spring. Cuthbert's plan, however, was to make his isolation total; although there was water on the island, he needed it in his house so that he need not emerge to collect it.<sup>124</sup> Bede then describes how this desire was met:

At vero ipsa eius mansio aquae erat indiga, utpote in durissima et prope saxea rupe condita. Accitis ergo vir Domini fratribus, necdum enim se ab advenientium secluserat aspectibus, 'Cernitis,' inquit, 'quia fontis inops sit mansio quam adii, sed rogemus obsecro illum qui convertit solidam petram in stagnum aquae et rupes in fontes aquarum, ut non nobis sed nomini suo dans gloriam de hac quoque rupe saxosa nobis venam fontis aperire dignetur. Fodiamus in medio tuguriunculi mei, credo torrente voluptatis suae potabit nos.' Fecerunt ergo foveam, quam in crastinum emanante ab internis unda repletam invenerunt. Unde dubium non erat hanc orationibus viri Dei de aridissima ac durissima prius terra elicitam fuisse aquam. Quae videlicet aqua mirum in modum primis contenta ripis, nec foras ebulliendo pavementum invadere, nec hauriendo novit deficere, ita moderata gratia largitoris, ut nec necessitati accipientis superflueret, nec sustentandae necessitati copia deesset.<sup>125</sup>

The sequence of events is not identical with that in the Anonymous' account. The monks are summoned by Cuthbert specifically to address this problem; they do not visit him to hear a sermon, and then find themselves digging for water. Bede uses different scriptural allusions - there is no mention of Moses or Samson, but two quotations from the psalms. As in the Anonymous' account, the monks are involved in the digging, although the implication seems to be that Cuthbert also helps. But there is a difference in

the timescale; according to Bede a small pit is dug then left dry, and water discovered in it the following day. Then Bede returns to his main theme of Cuthbert's ever greater solitude, and his holiness, with an account of his washing his visitors' feet and of his increasing refusal to leave his cell. There is no mention of the sweetness of the water, nor of its transformation to other flavours. And it is not stated that the fountain is still there. It is the adequacy of the supply that is stressed; Bede emphasizes that the water was neither exhausted nor overflowed its *foveam*. It might be that the implication of *nec necessitati accipientis superflueret* is that once Cuthbert was no longer living on Farne, the spring vanished.

Bede offers two other versions of the same story. That in the Metrical Life is remarkably brief:

Fontis inops fuerat locus hic, sed sanctus  
 amoenam  
 Excutit insolita precibus dulcedine limpham.  
 Haec sacri media Cuthberti nata sub aula  
 Praebet adhuc cunctis suavem potatibus haustum.  
 Nec mirum haec domini famulum potuisses mereri,  
 Qui quondam, saliente sitim dum pelleret unda,  
 In meracum latices valuit convertere nectar.<sup>126</sup>

Following the condensed narrative of Cuthbert's arrival at Farne, expulsion of the demons and construction of the dwellings,<sup>127</sup> this is the first miracle of Cuthbert's Farne period. There is no mention of Cuthbert's motives, nor of any help he received in digging for water from visiting monks. In fact, there is no digging mentioned. Cuthbert produces the water by his prayers. It is the sweetness and the quality of the water that provides

the main point of interest in this version. The subtitle to the chapter suggests a second miracle, that Cuthbert converted the water into wine, even as he drank it. Presumably, this 'supply in all flavours' is a poetic restatement of the Anonymous' idea about Cuthbert receiving the taste of all drinks from his spring. The last three lines of the Metrical version seem to be a theological justification of the miracle; that the power of God should do this need not be a cause for wonder, as from the first creation of the sea, He could change water into the sweetest of drinks. It is a reflection of the Augustinian theology of the miraculous, that what God does through the saints makes visible powers which are already at work in the universe but are often unseen.<sup>128</sup> It may, of course, be the demands of writing in verse which caused Bede to make changes to the story, but the number and importance of those changes make this a different presentation altogether from that in the Prose Life.

The fourth version of this story is also very different. Bede offers in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* an abbreviated *Vita* of Cuthbert,<sup>129</sup> referring readers to his own prose and metrical lives if they wish to know more.<sup>130</sup> He includes only seven miracle stories, two of which had occurred after the completion of the later *Vita*.<sup>131</sup> The choice of the five that Bede deliberately repeats must, therefore, be significant, as are any changes that appear in the telling. The context for this story is the same,

Cuthbert's move to Farne and the expulsion of demons therefrom, and his embracing of the solitary life. But the presentation is slightly different from any of the other versions. Bede describes Farne: 'Erat autem locus et aquae prorsus et frugis et arboris inops...',<sup>132</sup> which makes the speech of Cuthbert to the monks of Lindisfarne before his departure there, an oration not mentioned in any other rendition of this story, the more significant:

'Si mihi divina gratia in loco illo donaverit, ut de opere manuum mearum vivere queam, libens ibi morabor; sin alias, ad vos citissime Deo volente revertar.'

It is this promise (to return to Lindisfarne if he cannot survive on his own in solitude) that explains the two stories that follow. The narrative of the water from dry ground is paired with the story of Cuthbert growing crops out of season, which also appears in the Prose Life.<sup>133</sup> The sequence of events in the *Historia* is that Cuthbert moved to Farne, then set about building an house; his fellow monks assisted in the construction of a chapel and a common room. It was in this last building that the miracle occurred.

Iussit fratres in eiusdem habitaculi pavimento foveam facere: erat autem tellus durissima et saxosa, cui nulla omnino spes venae fontanae videretur inesse. Quod dum facerent, ad fidem et preces famuli Dei alio die aqua plena inventa est, quae usque ad hanc diem sufficientem cunctis illo advenientibus gratiae suae caelestis copiam ministrat.<sup>134</sup>

This tallies completely with neither the Anonymous' version (as the supply of water is not instantaneous) nor with

Bede's Prose Life (as the water is in the guest house and not Cuthbert's own quarters). But it seems to have taken elements from each earlier account - the hard and stony ground from the Prose Life, and the sufficiency of the supply, lasting to the time of writing, from the Anonymous. It is worth noticing that there is no scriptural allusion and no reference to the deeds of another saint. Bede moves quickly on to the story of the crops grown out of season, a story which, as it is presented both in the *Historia* and in the Prose Life, demonstrated that it was by divine favour that Cuthbert lived his solitary life on Farne.<sup>135</sup> Clearly, that is also the point that Bede shaped the water from dry ground story to make, a conclusion which might lead to speculation that Cuthbert's decision to isolate himself in the way that he did was not one which was viewed entirely sympathetically by all in the English Church.<sup>136</sup>

It is only in the *Vita Prosaica* that Bede compares this story with the one in the *Dialogi* of Benedict bringing water from dry ground. 'In aqua videlicet elicita de rupe, factum beati patris Benedicti qui idem pene et eodem modo legitur fecisse miraculum, sed idcirco uberius quia plures erant qui aquae inopia laborarent.'<sup>137</sup> In the story to which Bede refers, Benedict had established three of his monasteries on an inaccessible mountain top.<sup>138</sup> There being no water there, the monks had to make a difficult and dangerous journey down to a reservoir and back again. They complained to Benedict about this, and the same night

Benedict climbed up to the top of the mountain to mark a place with three stones; the monks were instructed to dig there the next day and, when they did so, water was produced, a supply which was still there in Gregory's time. That Bede could describe this as 'almost the same miracle in the same manner' suggests that it would be wrong even to look for exact parallels. Had Bede wanted to shape this phase of Cuthbert's career around an earlier saint, he could have turned in the *Dialogi* to a story relating to Martin, the hermit of Mount Marsico.<sup>139</sup> Although that story has no monks and no digging, the main thrust of the tale is similar to Bede's conclusion. Martin made his home in a cave, and immediately, water began to trickle from the rock, in precisely the quantity that he needed. This, it would seem, was in order that Martin might continue his eremitical life. The water that Benedict produces does not serve that purpose; that anecdote is about the power of the saint to work miracles and about an abbot's duty of caring for his monks. That Bede should refer to it is not greatly significant, and does not suggest any dependence on the *Dialogi*.

What is remarkable is the use to which a miracle story could be put. There are four versions of one incident, three of them by the same writer, yet each of them brings out the significance of the story in a particular manner. So different are the versions that it is impossible to know whether Bede originally took the story from the Anonymous,

or had an additional, presumably oral, source. That that question remains unanswered does not prevent the reader from seeing the way in which a miracle story can be shaped to fit the author's wider argument or pattern.

The prophetic spirit: 'ventura praedicere, praesentibus absentia nuntiare'.

The wider argument or pattern of the biographer of one English saint might appear to have been to present his hero in the mould of Benedict. In the *Vita Guthlaci*, Felix presents a series of stories describing the saint's prophetic powers, which he introduces with a telling phrase: 'Coepit etiam inter ista vir Dei Guthlac prophetiae spiritu pollere, futura praedicare, praesentibus absentia narrare.'<sup>140</sup> Whether or not he expected his readers to recognize them, Felix' words are reminiscent of a comment in the *Dialogi*,<sup>141</sup> with reference to Benedict's double power of insight. It is a sentence which appears also in Bede's prose life of Cuthbert;<sup>142</sup> whether this is another instance of Bede delighting his Lindisfarne audience by suggesting a comparison with Benedict (which he does little to establish further), or whether (as is more likely) it was merely a well-turned phrase which Bede borrowed from the *Dialogi*, is impossible to tell. With Felix, there can be little doubt that the words were used to establish a parallel with Benedict. At first sight it is odd that such a comment should appear at the point in the work that it

does. Guthlac had already displayed the power of prophecy in foiling an attempt on his life<sup>143</sup> and in retrieving a visitor's lost glove.<sup>144</sup> But the arrangement of material in the *Vita* does not appear always to be in chronological order. Like Adomnan in the *Vita Columbae*, Felix arranges his material thematically; Guthlac's battles with the forces of evil are described in one section,<sup>145</sup> the harmony in which he lived in the natural world forms a second group of stories,<sup>146</sup> next are two of the three healings that are related in detail as occurring in Guthlac's lifetime,<sup>147</sup> and then comes this series the main feature of which is the prophetic insight of the saint.<sup>148</sup>

For almost every story in this last-mentioned group a close parallel can be found in book two of the *Dialogi*. Guthlac was able to tell an abbot that two of his monks were visiting the house of a certain woman, rather than (as he had expected) meeting with him, or (as the abbot thought) elsewhere on business; Benedict knew that two monks had stopped for a meal at a woman's house when they had been outside the abbey.<sup>149</sup> To press home his point, Felix even borrows Peter's comparison with Elisha and Gehazi from the following chapter of the *Dialogi*.<sup>150</sup> In the next story, Guthlac knew of the two flasks of beer hidden by two of his visitors on their way to see him; Benedict knew that one of his visitors had stopped en route to hide a flagon of wine.<sup>151</sup> At the time of his ordination, Guthlac challenged Wigfrith, who had earlier expressed doubts as to



the veracity of the stories of wonder-working, leaving no doubt that Guthlac could only have known of Wigfrith's concerns through a prophetic spirit; Benedict was able to see through the disguise of someone who was sent to test if he was really a prophet.<sup>152</sup> Guthlac prophesied to the messenger sent by Ecgburh that he was to be succeeded by a pagan; Benedict told one of his converts of the suppression of one of his monasteries after his death.<sup>153</sup> Guthlac was able to tell Aethelbald his political future in detail, as Benedict told Totila the Goth leader.<sup>154</sup> Finally, both saints predicted their own deaths.<sup>155</sup> Such a series of close parallels cannot be accidental; as Jones noted, the similarity in some of the stories is so great that 'the author is patently calling attention to the duplication.'<sup>156</sup> There are other similarities between Benedict and Guthlac, for example, each early in his career experienced the hatred of his fellow monks on account of his rigorous asceticism,<sup>157</sup> and each has a pious sister who acts as something of a support.<sup>158</sup> Again, it is tempting to jump to the conclusion that it was a part of Felix' programme to present Guthlac as a 'second Benedict'.

And, again, tempting, but wrong. Despite the similarities in the type, and even in the detail, of many of the prophecy stories, there is no verbal borrowing in the *Vita Guthlaci* from the stories that it parallels in the *Dialogi*. Nor is there much similarity in the careers or achievements of the two saints; Guthlac was not an abbot,

there is no suggestion that he was founding a new order or laying down a rule, and his precise relationship to his monastery is left extremely vague.<sup>159</sup> This is a significant point, because the motif which underlies many of the Benedict stories which Felix imitates is one of obedience. That note is missing in the Guthlac versions. For instance, there is the story which Felix tells of two monks who went to visit a woman rather than accompany their abbot to Crowland,<sup>160</sup> which imitates the Benedict story of the two monks, who stopped for a meal at the house of a woman when they were away from the abbey.<sup>161</sup> The point about the Felix story is that Guthlac perceives the offence, and is able to inform the abbot of it in detail; the issue in the *Dialogi* is that the monks have breached a rule of the monastery - that they should not eat when away from the house if it could be avoided.

A second reason why too much should not be made of any parallel with Benedict is that the *Vita Guthlaci* has in it material which could be argued to be in imitation of other saints. As we have seen, Kurtz argued that the work was shaped after the pattern of the *Vita Antonii*;<sup>162</sup> Colgrave identified verbal borrowing from Jerome's *Vita Pauli*;<sup>163</sup> Thacker draws attention to the range of hagiographical influences on Felix.<sup>164</sup> There is no one saint on whom Felix was modelling Guthlac; the most that can be said is that the author seems to have used stories deliberately to resemble the deeds of another saint but primarily to fit

with his own agenda. In that, though arguably more influenced by continental stories than other writers of the time, Felix was at one with his English contemporaries.

Of course, the *Dialogi* were an influence on the Anglo-Saxon writers, but it would be mistaken to overestimate the extent to which English hagiography was indebted to the examples of *virtus* collected by Gregory I. Accepting that these miracle stories were but one of a number of traditions which Bede and his contemporaries had heard and remembered is not to decry the importance of either Benedict or his biographer to the Anglo-Saxon Church. To what degree the monasticism of seventh-century England can be truly described as 'Benedictine' is a subject of some debate;<sup>165</sup> without a doubt, the trend was towards a closer identification with the rule from Monte Cassino, and towards a greater veneration of Gregory, the Apostle of the English, culminating in the decree of Clofesho. The hagiographers were pleased to point out that the deeds of the saints confirmed that trend.

There is another way in which the influence of the *Dialogi* has been detected; book IV contains a body of material about the afterlife. This visionary content finds echoes in English material, and a complete picture of the influence of Gregory on the writing of miracle stories must include some discussion of those links. Yet the stories in the English works which relate to life *post mortem* need to

be set in the context of a wider debate, which must include the contribution of Irish hagiography, and that of the great pope's namesake and contemporary, Gregory of Tours. Chapter three explores that broader picture - Ireland, Gaul, and Heaven.

Notes to Chapter Two

The title quotation is from *VGreg.* c.8.

1. See above, pp.83-4.
2. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, pp.51-68, provides a useful summary of Gregory's interest in the English Church and the issues involved.
3. *VGreg.* c.6.
4. Colgrave, *Earliest Life*, p.59; Thacker, 'Social and Continental Background', p.40.
5. *H.E.* II, 1.
6. *H.E.* I, 27. There has been some discussion as to whether the *libellus responsionum* existed outside of the *H.E.*. See M. Deanesley & P. Grosjean, 'The Canterbury Edition of the Answers of Pope Gregory I to St Augustine', *J.E.H.* 10 (1959), pp.1-49, and P. Meyvaert, 'Bede's text of the *Libellus Responsionum* of Gregory the Great to Augustine of Canterbury', in ed. Clemoes & Hughes, *England before the Conquest* (Cambridge, 1971), pp.15-33.

7. *H.E.* II, 1.

8. See above, pp.15-19.

The subtitle quotation is from Gregory I, *Dialogi* (hereafter, *Greg. Dial.*), I, prol..

9. A summary of the historical controversy over the *Dialogi* is in F. Clark, *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues* (Leiden, 1987), vol. I, pp.31-45.
10. F.H. Dudden, *Gregory the Great* (London, 1905), vol. I, p.321.
11. Space does not permit a review of the many studies of the *Dialogi* as a whole or in part. Aside from Clark and McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, the major work is J.M. Petersen, *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their late antique cultural background* (Toronto, 1984). Other analyses include W.F. Bolton, 'The supra-historical sense in the "Dialogues" of Gregory I', *Aevum* 33 (1959), pp.206-13; M.McC. Gatch, 'The Fourth Dialogue of Gregory the Great : Some Problems of Interpretation', *Studia Patristica* 10 (1967), pp.77-83; M. Mahler, 'Evocations bibliques et hagiographiques dans la vie de Saint Benoit par Saint Gregoire', *Revue Benedictine* 83 (1973), pp.398-429; J.M. McCulloh, 'The Cult of Relics in the Letters and "Dialogues" of Pope Gregory the Great : A Lexicographical Study',

*Traditio* 32 (1976), pp.145-84; B. Ward, 'The Miracles of Saint Benedict', in ed. Elder, *Benedictus* (Kalamazoo, 1981), pp.1-14; T. Kardong, 'A New Look at Gregory's "Dialogues"', *A.B.R.* 36 (1985), pp.44-63; Penco, G., 'Sulla struttura Dialogica dei Dialoghi di S.Gregorio', *Benedictina* 33 (1986), pp.329-35.

12. Greg. *Dial.*, III, 17.

13. C. Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London, 1988), pp.128-32; G. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1984), p.64.

14. Straw (pp.18-19) stresses that Gregory holds two attitudes together; one sees the spiritual and carnal in opposition, the other sees them in unity. The appearance of Manichaeism is apparent in only some parts, not in the whole of Gregory's work.

15. Straw, pp.148-9.

16. Greg. *Dial.* I, 4.

17. Greg. *Dial.* II, 8.

18. Greg. *Dial.* I, 9.

19. Greg. *Dial.* II, 6.

20. Greg. *Dial.* II, 21.

21. Greg. *Dial.* III, 17.

22. Greg. *Dial.* I, 5; cf. *H.E.* I, 31.

23. McCready, *op. cit.*, pp.20-2; McCulloh, pp.154-5.

24. Greg. *Homiliae in Evangelia* II, 29 and 1, 4.

25. McCready, *op. cit.*, pp.34-8.

26. *H.E.* I, 31.

27. This is the thrust of Clark's argument in *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*.

28. Clark, pp.299-407.

29. Clark, pp.64-93.

30. Clark, pp.49-63.

31. Clark, pp.684-717.

32. Clark, pp.88-90.
33. Clark, p.25.
34. His 'Inserted Gregorian Passages', *op. cit.*, pp.431-579.
35. Clark's work is negatively criticized by McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp.x-xiii; R. Godding, 'Les Dialogues...de Gregoire le Grand. A propos d'un livre recent', *Analecta Bollandiana* 106 (1988), 201-29; P-P. Verbraken, 'Les Dialogues de Saint Gregoire le Grand sont-ils apocryphes? A propos d'un ouvrage recent', *Revue Benedictine* 98 (1988), 272-7.
36. 'The Enigma of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* : A Response to Francis Clark.', *J.E.H.* 39 (1988), 335-81.
37. *Op. cit.*, pp.342-8.
38. *Op. cit.*, pp.367-8, 380.
39. *Op. cit.*, pp.378-9.
40. *Op. cit.*, pp.380-1.
41. *Op. cit.*, p.371.
42. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p.231.
43. *Signs of Sanctity*, p.85.
44. *Op. cit.*, pp.68-71.
45. *Op. cit.*, pp.87-110.
46. *Op. cit.*, p.86.
47. Straw, p.244.
48. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p.xiii.
49. *Signs of Sanctity*, p.2.
50. *Op. cit.*, p.175.
51. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p.85.
52. *Signs of Sanctity*, p.26.
- The subtitle quotation is from *VGreg.* c.3.
53. *VPr.* cc.14, 19. See above, p.87.
54. Clark, vol I, p.163; cf. Meyvaert, *op. cit.*, pp.341-3.

55. M. Lapidge & J.L. Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985), p.122.
56. *VGreg.* c.3.
57. 'Multi igitur a miraculis vitam quidem sanctorum solent considerare, atque a signis sancta illorum merita metiri, et hoc nec inmerito.' (*ibid.*)
58. *VGreg.* c.5.
59. *VGreg.* c.30.
60. *VGreg.* c.6.
61. *Greg. Dial.* III, 17; cf. *H.E.* I, 31.
62. *Earliest Life*, pp.73; Thacker, *op. cit.*, p.303.
63. Clark, p.299.
64. *VGreg.* c.28.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Greg. Dial.* IV, 55.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *VGreg.* c.29.
69. M.T.A. Carroll, *The Venerable Bede: His Spiritual Teachings* (Washington, D.C., 1946), pp.107-9.
70. *H.E.* III, 23; *In Genesim* IV, 440-54. Below, p.252.
71. *VGreg.* c.29.
72. *Greg. Dial*, IV, 58.
73. An alternative explanation is considered below, pp.250-1.
74. Appendix 3. Any calculation of the number of miracle stories in an hagiography is to some extent arbitrary. I have excluded two stories about Gregory's abortive mission to the English (the slaves in the market place and the locust), either of which might have been considered a *signum* by the author.
75. Colgrave, *Earliest Life*, p.153.
76. *VGreg.* c.30.



77. *H.E.* II, 1.
78. Plummer (vol. II, p.389) believed that Bede was copying the *VGreg.*, a view that now commands little support.
79. *H.E.* praef..
80. 'The Miracle Traditions of the Venerable Bede', p.418.  
The subtitle quotation is from *VGreg.* c.28.
81. E.C. Brewer, *Dictionary of Miracles, Imitative, Realistic and Dogmatic* (London, 1884).
82. 'Hoc itaque protum virtutis documentum Christus dominus per suum declaravit discipulum, quod in eadem re initium ponens signorum in Cana Galileae operatus est per semet ipsum.' (Adom. *VCol.* II, 1).
83. *H.E.* IV, 27-32.
84. *Versus*, 688-740.
85. On this phrase for a two-fold verse/prose version of the same material, see *H.E.* V, 18, and comments in ed. Lapidge & Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*, p.98.
86. *Op. cit.*, p.99.
87. M. Lapidge & M. Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979), pp.60-1
88. *Op. cit.*, pp.131-2.
89. *Op. cit.*, p.59.
90. P. Meyvaert, *Bede and Gregory the Great* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1964).
91. On the question of the amount of diversity that could be sustained within the universal church. See *op. cit.*, p.17; also, Meyvaert, 'Diversity within unity, a Gregorian theme', *Heythrop Journal* 4 (1963), 141-62.
92. *Bede and Gregory the Great*, p.15.
93. *Op. cit.*, p.19.
94. Above, pp.15-19.
95. 'The Enigma of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*', p.371.
96. 'Miracle Traditions', p.405.

97. *Op. cit.*, p.410.
98. *Op. cit.*, p.418.
99. *White Magic*, p.133.
100. *Op. cit.*, p.14.
101. Z.P. Thundy, 'The Qu'ran: Source or Analogue of Bede's Caedmon Story?', *Islamic Culture* 63 (1989), pp.105-10.
102. *White Magic*, p.113.
103. 'Miracle Traditions', p.405.
104. *VPr.* c.19; see above, p.86.
105. E.g. *H.A.* c.1.
106. *VPr.* c.14.
107. *VPr.* c.19.
108. J.D.A. Ogilvy, *Books known to the English, 597 - 1066* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p.150.
109. *Greg. Dial.* II, 9.
110. *VAnon.* III, 1.
111. *VAnon.* III, 2.
112. *VPr.* c.17.
113. *VMet.* c.15.

The subtitle quotation is from *VPr.* c.19.

114. *Versus*, 708-9.
115. *VAnon.* III, 3.
116. *VAnon.* III, 1. Colgrave translated 'plures...annos' as 'some years' (*Two Lives*, p.97), possibly because of his knowledge of the *H.E.* account. The difference is significant. See below, n.
117. *VAnon.* III, 3.
118. The writer (or Cuthbert) draws attention to the stories of water being supplied in response to the prayers of Moses and Samson, although his presentation of the Samson parallel was dependent on the Vulgate's apparent misconstruing of

Judges 15. 19.

119. A. Hastings, 'St Benedict and the Eremital Life', *Downside Review* n.s. 68 (1950), pp.191-211, for discussion of the pattern developed by Cassian and Benedict.

120. *VPr.* cc.16-17.

121. *VPr.* c.17.

122. Stancliffe sees the progression towards solitude as one of the key features distinguishing Bede's account from that of the Anonymous. See, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary', in ed. Bonner et al., *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community*, pp.21-44.

123. *VPr.* c.17: '...comitante praefati abbatis [Eatae] sui simul et fratrum gratia...'

124. *VPr.* c.18.

125. *Ibid.*.

126. *VMet.* c.16.

127. *VMet.* c.15.

128. Above, pp.83-4.

129. *H.E.* IV, 27-32.

130. *H.E.* IV, 28 cf. *H.E.* IV, 30,

131. *H.E.* IV, 30.

132. *H.E.* IV, 28.

133. *VPr.* c.19.

134. *H.E.* IV, 28.

135. *Ibid.*; cf. *VPr.* c.19. This self-sufficiency is a part of the definition of an anchorite given in the *Reg. Ben.* c.1.

136. This may be part of the explanation of the Benedict parallel to which Bede draws attention. The rule of Benedict (and Bede mentions no other) was only hesitantly supportive of the ministry of anchorites. Hastings, *op. cit.*, pp.209-11.

137. *VPr.* c.19.

138. *Greg. Dial.* II, 5.

139. Greg. *Dial.* III, 16.

The subtitle quotation is from *VPr.* c.11.

140. *VGuth.* c.43.

141. Greg. *Dial.* II, 11.

142. *VPr.* c.11.

143. *VGuth.* c.35

144. *VGuth.* c.40.

145. *VGuth.* cc.29-35.

146. *VGuth.* cc.37-40.

147. *VGuth.* cc.41-42. The third healing in c.45 seems somewhat out of place.

148. *VGuth.* cc.43-44, 46-49. The story of Guthlac's ordination seems to break the sequence (c.48) but that too is involved with one of the prophecy stories.

149. *VGuth.* c.43; cf. Greg. *Dial.* II, 12.

150. *VGuth.* c.43; cf. Greg. *Dial.* II, 13.

151. *VGuth.* c.44; cf. Greg. *Dial.* II, 18.

152. *VGuth.* cc.46-7; cf. Greg. *Dial.* II, 14.

153. *VGuth.* c.48; Greg. *Dial.* II, 17.

154. *VGuth.* c.49; Greg. *Dial.* II, 15.

155. *VGuth.* c.50; cf. Greg. *Dial.* II, 37.

156. Jones, *Saints' Lives and Chronicles*, p.148.

157. *VGuth.* c.21; cf. Greg. *Dial.* II, 3.

158. *VGuth.* c.50; cf. Greg. *Dial.* II, 33.

159. Presumably, as Felix mentions no other arrangement, Guthlac remained a monk, and Crowland a cell, of Repton.

160. *VGuth.* c.43.

161. Greg. *Dial.* II, 12.

162. 'From St Antony to St Guthlac', *op. cit.*

163. E.g., *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, pp.96, 114, 154.
164. 'Social & Continental Background', pp.302-3.
165. According to Stephen, it was Wilfrid who introduced the *Reg. Ben.* into Northumbria (*VWilf.* c.47), but it '... would be anachronistic to say that Wilfrid was a Benedictine.' (E. Power, 'St Cuthbert and St Wilfrid', in ed. Farmer, *Benedict's Disciples*, pp.52-69 (p.63)). Although Biscop adopted the name of the hero of *Dial.* II, Bede reports that he introduced the monastic customs he learned at Rome and elsewhere (*H.A.* c.4), and implies that Lerins was the greatest influence (*H.A.* c.2).

### Chapter Three

#### Germaniae simul et Hiberniae partes attigit: The wider picture.

To search the English works of the late seventh and early eighth centuries for the influence of Gregory I, or of other earlier hagiographers, in terms of stories replicated with close verbal parallels is to search in vain. It appears that it delighted, perhaps even surprised, those who wrote of them that Guthlac and Cuthbert did things that Antony and Benedict had done, but it cannot be shown that any of the Anglo-Saxons forced their material into a previously used mould. That is not to say, however, that the English writers were not affected by what had gone before. It is merely that the nature and range of influence is broader and vaguer than has been previously suggested. Except in those passages which were made to conform to previous models (such as the copying of large sections of the preface from another work)<sup>1</sup> or which repeated stories which the author openly admitted were to be found elsewhere (as, for example, when Bede included material from the *Passio Albani*, the *Vita Germani* and the Barking *libellus* in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*),<sup>2</sup> there is no part of the corpus here under discussion of which it can be demonstrated that one author wrote a miracle story by copying or amending another's work.<sup>3</sup> Yet there are

undeniable similarities between the miracle stories recorded in England and those previously related elsewhere.

In discounting the possibility of a direct literary influence, the suggestion of oral tradition is brought to the fore. For there to have been such an oral tradition, there must have been a network of communications between the places in which miraculous deeds were likely to have been recorded and celebrated. That such a network existed is beyond question. Even if Bede, as is often remarked,<sup>4</sup> seems never to have travelled further than York in the whole of his life, he knew a number of people who had journeyed more widely, and freely admitted their contribution to his work. In addition to those listed in the preface to the *Historia Ecclesiastica*,<sup>5</sup> Bede also mentions conversations with Acca, Wilfrid, and Adomnan,<sup>6</sup> and, obviously, would have spoken to his own abbots, Benedict Biscop and Hwaetbert. Those five are only a representative sample of the number of men (and women) who were travelling around the British Isles and between Britain and Ireland and the continent. It was by these itineraries, and within the network of monastic institutions that they created and on which they depended, that a miracle story could be carried from one centre to be heard by a monk who was later to write miracle stories himself. When considering an age in which codices were expensive and difficult to produce, it is a wonder that we should expect any other.

This chapter expands and defends that hypothesis. Firstly, the idea of 'oral tradition' needs some examination and explanation,<sup>7</sup> recognizing that it is necessary to rely on the work of specialists in other fields, for example, historians of folklore, psychologists specializing in the study of memory, and (though to a lesser extent) New Testament scholars. It can be objected that there are dangers in assuming that patterns of transmission were the same in seventh- or eighth-century Europe as at other times and in other cultures; however, it can be shown that the way in which the types and structures of stories, but not the verbiage, seem to be reproduced strongly suggests a process of memorizing and retelling.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the framework within this 'oral tradition' could be transmitted needs examination. A study of the sources given for the miracle stories in Anglo-Saxon works demonstrates that most of them came from within an inter-related network of monastic houses,<sup>9</sup> but the history of the travels between Ireland, England and Europe points to a wider geographical range than might at first be suggested. In particular, it will be argued that the *Vita Columbae* of Adomnan demonstrates the effect of oral traditions. Whilst it belongs, without question, to the Irish school of hagiography that was beginning to flower in the seventh century, some of its stories bear a marked similarity to those told in the *Vita Cuthberti*, both by Bede and the Anonymous. Those stories suggest the practice



of, and a motive for, oral transmission and imitation. Then two groups of stories will be studied in detail, both related, in different ways, to life after death, a preoccupation of the early mediaeval mind. Firstly, there is a cluster of stories which record the exhumation of saints' bodies miraculously preserved from decay. These English traditions can be compared with each other and with stories told by Gregory of Tours. Secondly, in the English works there are stories recounting (to use a modern term) 'near death experiences'. The influence of Gregory I and, again, of Gregory of Tours is suggested to lie behind these tales, but we can note the way in which English authors developed their material, and the vehemence with which they maintained, explicitly or implicitly, that what they reported was true.

'Fidelium vivorum viva voce': stories told by word of mouth.

It would be wrong, as D.H. Green has argued,<sup>10</sup> to assume that a written culture (such as might be implied by the existence of the Latin works of the eighth century) excludes the possibility that an oral culture existed alongside it. In fact, the opposite might be true. Whereas the Benedictine rule seems to assume that the monks could read,<sup>11</sup> conditions in Italy may have been different from those in Ireland or England. Bede's suggested methods of inculcating the basics of the faith into those (including

clergy) who were unable to read Latin,<sup>12</sup> and Cuthbert's assertion that Bede's last work was a translation of the first five and an half chapters of the gospel of John into English,<sup>13</sup> suggests that even within the church, most communication was in the vernacular. How many monks could read Latin, as opposed to understand when listening to it, is not known. Neither can we be sure as to the purpose to which works such as the *Vita Cuthberti* were put. Were they read aloud, at meal times, in the evening, or as part of the office? Or were they deposited in the library, as, in effect, a Latin collection of stories which were circulating in English through the monks' conversation?

Those who first developed a theory of oral tradition argued that it was unlikely that stories were memorialized.<sup>14</sup> That, in effect, would be a written tradition without parchment.<sup>15</sup> Rather, an oral tradition means that the outline of a story is committed to the memory with a framework, which remains stable in spite of changes in the wording, or the detail, or even the characters and places. For analysis of this sort of process, the work of V. Propp can be used.<sup>16</sup> Propp studied the form and content of folktales, and argued that there is only a limited number of patterns that can be used in constructing a tale.<sup>17</sup> The characters within a tale have functions which provide the tale with stability, independently of how, where or why the function is performed. So, for example, on this argument the two

stories of Wilfrid functioning as a bringer of fruitfulness are essentially one - that Bede<sup>18</sup> sets the story in the context of the drought ending in Sussex, and Stephen<sup>19</sup> records the event as being in Frisia matters little; in fact, the differences serve to highlight the common point - Wilfrid was remembered as a saint who brought fertility as he brought the gospel. The same pair of stories illustrates another of Propp's points - that the sequence of functions remains the same.<sup>20</sup> Wilfrid, in both accounts, arrives in a place where he has no ecclesiastical authority, is welcomed by the local ruler, preaches to the people who are converted and baptized, and provides an increase in produce and a marvellous catch of fish. In this particular story, it could be argued that there is some uncertainty about the sequence; were the people converted before Wilfrid caused the increase in harvests (as Bede seems to suggest), as a result of the miracle (as Stephen may imply), or simultaneously (as might be understood from both stories)? The difference may simply reflect what the editor (Bede or Stephen) has chosen to do with an oral tradition.

Propp's theory was devised in relation to folklore, in particular, Russian fairy tales. In his later work,<sup>21</sup> he argued that the wonder tale (which he identified as a certain class of folklore) replicated many of the features of the folk tale,<sup>22</sup> and that such tales were transferable<sup>23</sup> (as had happened with some, he believed, from pagan god to Christian saint).<sup>24</sup> In a sense, the wonder tale differs

from other folklore; every story is an ideological phenomenon, that is to say, it reflects the world as it exists in the mind of the teller. Wonder tales display that element more strongly, because they belong to a situation in which cult and ritual encourage stories to be imitated,<sup>25</sup> not simply in order for one saint/god to steal the clothes of another, but because the underlying spiritual truth was of value to the community in which a story was reproduced.<sup>26</sup> Of course, there is a danger of circularity here, and it is not the purpose of this thesis to argue for the wholesale adoption of Propp's views. However, the theory does seem to fit the case in some instances.<sup>27</sup>

A different approach to the subject is that explored by Catherine Cubitt in a recent paper on 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Anglo-Saxon saints'.<sup>28</sup> She draws on the work of a psychologist of memory, Bartlett, and a sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs, to show how 'collective memory' was a vital element in the collection and reconstruction of the stories which made up a saint's memory. Interestingly, three of the works that she cites as being examples of 'shared memory' are the *Vita Ceolfridi*, the *Historia Abbatum*, and Aethelwulf's *De Abbatibus*, which are all notable for the absence, or near absence, of miracle stories. Cubitt argues that within monastic communities there was a process by which the collective memory shaped the stories, perhaps influenced by the use of

readings from monastic *vitae* within the office or in the refectory. In this we are closer to the sort of oral tradition theory which underlay much New Testament scholarship earlier in this century - the form critical studies of Bultmann, Koch, and others,<sup>29</sup> who argued that the earliest Christians preserved the sayings and actions of Jesus within their communities, and that the names by which the gospels are now known refer not to individuals called Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, but to schools. These schools would tell and retell their memories in the form of short narratives (*pericopae*) perhaps reshaping the material around an event, a place, or a well-remembered *logion*.<sup>30</sup> In much the same way, Cubitt sees the Anonymous *Vita Cuthberti* as being shaped by the community at Melrose (and later by that at Lindisfarne), so that it became 'their life'. She points to the way in which much of the material seems to have originated around Melrose, and argues that geographical or topological features provided foci for the community memory. Her objection to the description of oral tradition offered by Propp is that it will not fit the constraints on conversation which existed within the walls of a monastery.

But what evidence is there of these constraints on conversation? The *Regula Benedictina* suggests that the norm within the monastery should be silence,<sup>31</sup> but only proscribes talking after compline, and expressly forbids only 'scurrilitates vero vel verba otiosa et risum

moventia';<sup>32</sup> although it is clear (from the existence of an early manuscript from Worcester)<sup>33</sup> that the Rule was known in England by about 700, we cannot be certain which parts were observed.<sup>34</sup> The Rule also makes a virtue of the *stabilitas* of the monk,<sup>35</sup> which would make the idea of monks venturing forth to admire the topography round which stories were woven no more likely than (if the Rule were so interpreted and strictly observed) the casual exchange of anecdotes. However, it is clear that there were possibilities for such an exchange of travellers' tales and reminiscences, whatever the monastic rule was. That these conversations were serious need not be doubted, and the witness to it that we have seems to suggest that it was conducted between resident and visitor in a monastery. There are several examples: Bede's letter to Egbert implies that they had lengthy discussions whilst Bede was visiting that monastery.<sup>36</sup> Felix records that Guthlac had visitors, such as the unnamed abbot, who 'ut adsolebat, ad verbocinium praefati viri devenire proposuit'.<sup>37</sup> Herebert was accustomed to visit Cuthbert in order to hold 'conloquium';<sup>38</sup> Aelfflaed and Cuthbert were apparently both free to journey to Coquet Island for discussion.<sup>39</sup> Further examples could be taken almost at random from the *Historia Ecclesiastica*; it is clear from the analysis of the sources given for miracle stories that many of Bede's stories came to him by word of mouth.<sup>40</sup> If we discount the five replicated from his own *Vita Cuthberti*, there are

seventy-eight miracle stories in the *Historia*. It is clear that in seventeen cases, Bede was working from a written source. With one story, he seems to have access to both a *libellus* and an oral account.<sup>41</sup> There are thirty stories of which we can be reasonably sure that Bede received his information by word of mouth, and a further thirteen for which this seems the more likely explanation.<sup>42</sup> Together, they make up fifty-five percent of the sample under consideration; written sources (of which we can be sure) contribute only twenty-two percent. In other words, it seems clear that most stories found their way into the Ecclesiastical History because someone, often more than one person, talked to Bede about them.

'Relicto natali': exiles and pilgrims in the sixth to eighth centuries.

In his discussion of the miracles of Oswald, the saintly king of Northumbria, Bede includes a story of a man suffering from the plague.<sup>43</sup> The sick man (a monk) appealed to Willibrord that he might use the relics of Oswald to effect a cure. Willibrord placed in water a chip from the stake on which the king's head had been placed by Penda after the battle of Maserfelth. The monk not only recovered from his illness, but also increased his devotion: 'totoque ad Deum corde et opere conversus, omnibus ubicumque perveniebat, clementiam pii Conditoris, et fidelis eius famuli gloriam praedicabat.' Bede does not give the name of

the monk, and we know nothing of his subsequent career.<sup>44</sup> But the phrase 'omnibus ubicumque perveniebat' suggests that he did not spend the rest of his days confined to his monastery; the story was spread. It was also spread by the other character in the story. Willibrord told Acca, who was Bede's source for this miracle. The location of the event was in Ireland, though precisely where is unspecified. And in the same chapter, Bede records that Willibrord had witnessed miracles worked through the relics of Oswald in Frisia. The clear impression is given of an exchange of Oswald stories; travelling clergy would rejoice to find a saint from their own homeland celebrated in another area, and would collect and pass on anecdotes of the saint's posthumous deeds.

The eleven miracle stories associated with Oswald after his death are the largest group relating to any saint included by Bede in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and show a wide geographical spread of places where the events are said to have occurred. There are two stories of healings at Maserfelth, at the spot where Oswald was killed.<sup>45</sup> The location of Maserfelth remains an unresolved question; from the twelfth century it has been identified with Oswestry, on the England-Wales border. There is good reason to accept that identification, although other possibilities have been argued.<sup>46</sup> There is another story related to the site at Maserfelth, which Bede records as having become a place of pilgrimage, and where the grass was greener than



elsewhere,<sup>47</sup> but the name of the place where dust carried from the site of the death proved to be unaffected by fire is not given; all that can be said is that it was within a day's journey at most of the battle-site. There are three stories relating to the translation of Oswald's bones (minus his head, which was kept at Lindisfarne and his arms which were at Bamburgh) to Bardney in Lindsey.<sup>48</sup> The occurrence of one story in Ireland has already been noted, as has the comment by Acca that there were stories told in Willibrord's monastery in Frisia. The hands of the king were kept at Bamburgh, where they were preserved without corruption into Bede's own time, in accordance with the prophecy of Aidan.<sup>49</sup> The site of Oswald's battle to secure his throne at Heavenfield, where he set up the cross as his standard, was also a place renowned for miracles,<sup>50</sup> and moss from that cross cured broken arm at nearby Hexham.<sup>51</sup> Finally, there is a story from the monastery of Selsey (in Sussex), which recounts a boy's vision of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, the introduction of masses in honour of Oswald, under whose protection the monastery apparently was, and the passing of the plague from that monastery with no victims other than the visionary.<sup>52</sup>

Selsey was a Wilfridian foundation; the source of this last story was Acca, to whom Bede was also indebted for the stories from Frisia, Ireland and Hexham. Alan Thacker, in a paper on the growth of the cult of Oswald in England and on the continent,<sup>53</sup> speculates that the adulation of the

saint, and the distribution of his relics, may have been a deliberate policy of Wilfrid's followers. He suggests that the reason for their involvement lay in the complex political situation in Northumbria following the death of Aldfrith in 705; Wilfrid's quarrel with Eadwulf (whom he had previously supported)<sup>54</sup> led to his alliance with Osred, the legitimate successor, and therefore with the Oswald line. His promotion of the Oswald cult was not unrelated to his restoration following the Synod of the Nidd.<sup>55</sup>

For Thacker, the occurrence of Oswald miracles over a wide geographical area is evidence of a concerted policy to establish Oswald as the premier royal saint of England. In the early eighth century, this development was in its infancy. It originated, Thacker suggests, as a secular and royal phenomenon, only later (and, if Bede correctly indicates the pattern of events, somewhat reluctantly) to be taken over by churchmen.<sup>56</sup> His argument that Bede depended on two groups of sources, the Wilfridians and the monks of Bardney, may suggest that the area over which the stories originated is not as wide as might be implied by the text. However, Thacker's belief that Bardney promoted the Maserfelth miracles rests on his unproven assumption that Maserfelth was in Lindsey.<sup>57</sup> Assuming Maserfelth is in Wales, the remarkable thing about these stories is the number and geographic range of them, which (incorporating Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Frisian, and British beneficiaries) crosses all racial divides. It points, however, to a common

feature - a monastic circle which carried stories from one monastery to another. Thacker is right to note that some of the stories, namely those relating to Maserfelth, originated in a non-ecclesiastical setting, and, which is rare for inclusion in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, none of the characters involved was a cleric. However, Bede's phrase to describe his source, 'a majoribus audivimus',<sup>58</sup> implies that the stories were preserved within monastic circles.<sup>59</sup>

In the case of the Oswald stories, it is mainly the Wilfridian paruchia which makes up the circle. But Wilfrid and his companions were not the only clerics who travelled widely, and (no doubt) conversed freely. It seems more than likely that in the journeys made between England, Ireland, and the continent, miracle stories were collected and exchanged, so that the way in which Bede collected his material, for example, about John of Beverley in conversation with the bishop's former deacon Berthun,<sup>60</sup> was typical of exchanges which were taking place in monastic houses all over Europe. That there were regularly those who came and went, and almost certainly stayed in religious communities, is beyond question. Wilfrid's journeying is well recorded. He stayed in Lyons on his way to and on his return from Rome, he was consecrated to the episcopate in Paris, and his journey to his appeal in Rome was via Frisia, Dagobert II's territory in Eastern Francia, and Campania. Presumably, it was *en route* to his second appeal

in Rome that he and Acca stayed with Willibrord in Frisia and heard stories of Oswald's miracles.<sup>61</sup>

Wilfrid's excuse for some of his time in Gaul was that there was no possibility of a valid ordination to the episcopate in Britain.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Augustine seems to have needed to return to Arles to be consecrated.<sup>63</sup> This was the second of at least three visits to that city, Augustine having travelled originally via the churches of Gaul (to whose bishops he carried letters from Gregory I),<sup>64</sup> and later going there again.<sup>65</sup> The letter by which we know of that third visit raises the question of the relationship between the churches of Gaul and those of England.<sup>66</sup> Far from there being any hint that Augustine was under the authority of any Gallican metropolitan, as might be implied by the political situation, the church in Arles is advised to ensure that its hospitality is presentable should Augustine visit. On the other hand, the *libellus responsionum* makes it clear that Augustine's position as metropolitan only applied to the church in Britain.<sup>67</sup> What is clear is that Gregory envisaged, and Augustine seems to have had, a close working relationship with the churches in Gaul, and that there was frequent contact. It was *ad partes Galliae* that Justus and Mellitus fled from the persecution that followed the death of Aethelberht,<sup>68</sup> and the canons of a council of Paris in 614 record the attendance of Justus and of Peter of Dover.<sup>69</sup> That Augustine found on his arrival a Frankish bishop already at the court, and that he

was commanded by Gregory to take with him into Kent 'de gente Francorum interpretes', suggests that the church was only to build on contact between England and Gaul that was already close.<sup>70</sup>

The political relationship of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms with their neighbours on the continent is a complex question, to which the full answer is likely always to remain somewhat opaque.<sup>71</sup> The Merovingian rulers clearly believed that their hegemony extended over Southern England. That it predated Aethelberht's marriage to Bertha is indicated by a statement of the 550s recorded by Precopius that the king of the Franks ruled over 'Brittia'.<sup>72</sup> According to Stenton, it is more than likely that the submission of the Kentish Jutes to Frankish rule was enforced because of their association with the continental Jutes. Sometime after 561 Chilperic asserted his authority over the 'Euthiones'.<sup>73</sup> The marriage alliance with Bertha was a diplomatic tie, but clearly implied Aethelberht's inferiority to his (by then probably deceased) father-in-law, Charibert (Chilperic's brother). The hegemony may not only have applied to Kent (however great Aethelberht's own authority over his neighbours south of the Humber was).<sup>74</sup> That Redwald was subservient to Aethelberht is implied not only by Bede's assertion of the extent of the Kentish king's rule,<sup>75</sup> but also by his half-hearted acceptance of Christianity.<sup>76</sup> Redwald's son, Sigbert, bore a Frankish name,<sup>77</sup> and spent his early years

in Gaul, in exile from his father and brother.<sup>78</sup> The idea that East Anglia also fell within the Frankish hegemony, or at the very least was ruled by a king, either Redwald or Sigbert, with very close links with the Merovingian court, is reinforced by the discovery of Frankish coinage in the Sutton Hoo treasure ship.<sup>79</sup> It cannot be claimed that England north of the Humber was at any stage subject to Frankish rule. That Edwin's sons were sent for safety to Gaul is suggestive,<sup>80</sup> but may merely imply that the Merovingians maintained a family interest in the grandchildren of one of their princesses. Part of the problem is that hegemony is a vague concept. How rigorously Frankish overlordship over any part of the British isles was exercised remains unknown.<sup>81</sup> What is of interest in the present discussion is the fact, rather than the precise nature, of the political contact that the claim to suzerainty implies, and the ecclesiastical contacts which appear to have followed from it.

Shortly after Augustine's arrival in England, there seems to have been an increase in Frankish missionary activity, including the sending of preachers to the British Isles. According to Alcuin, a Frank named Richardius went from Ireland as an evangelist 'in ultramarinas Britanniae', but we are not told where or to whom he preached.<sup>82</sup> Better documented are the careers of Felix and Agilbert. According to Bede, Felix came 'de Burgundiorum partibus' to be commissioned by Honorius as evangelist to, and first bishop

of, the East Angles.<sup>83</sup> According to Bede, the mission in East Anglia was Felix's own initiative. Similarly, Agilbert appears to have come to the West Saxons without invitation; 'sponte ministerium praedicandi adsumens'.<sup>84</sup> His career was less happy than Felix's, and he was to be replaced by Wine. The problem was the language barrier; Agilbert, by nationality a Gaul, came to England from Ireland, and apparently could not communicate with the West Saxons.<sup>85</sup> Wine, who had been ordained in Gaul, seems to have been a Saxon. At least he spoke the language, which satisfied Cenwalh, until the king quarrelled with his second bishop also. There is a recurring pattern during many phases of the conversion; the returning King, having been converted whilst in exile, initiates the introduction of the Christian faith amongst his people with aid from bishops from overseas. Such exiles were a common feature of Anglo-Saxon political life, and of importance in shaping the history of the church as well as that of the royal family. The resulting mix of political and ecclesiastical contact between the Anglo-Saxons and neighbouring kingdoms both within the British Isles and on the continent was a fertile ground for the transmission of miracle stories, as is indicated by the number which involve exiled aethelings. Aethelbald's involvement in the propagation of the cult of Guthlac is a late instance of the pattern.<sup>86</sup> The most famous examples are Edwin's vision, later confirmed by Paulinus, whilst he was in fear of his life in East

Anglia,<sup>87</sup> and Columba's appearance to Oswald the night before the battle of Heavenfield.<sup>88</sup> The conversion of the English needs to be understood against this background of frequent contact, at the level of royalty, with both Gaul and the Irish.

The precise nature of relationships between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Irish remains a grey area. It is clear that there was particularly close contact between the Bernicians and the kingdom of Dal Riata, part of which was in Ireland and part in Scotland.<sup>89</sup> Within the territory of Dal Riata stood the monastery of Iona, but the allegiance of that house seems to have remained with the Ui Neills, presumably through the family ties of Columba and succeeding abbots.<sup>90</sup> Despite that, there is evidence of Northumbrian patronage of Iona, at least up to the middle of the seventh century, and of a close interest being taken by the Iona community in affairs in Bernicia.<sup>91</sup> Oswald was not the only, nor even the first, Northumbrian aetheling to have found sanctuary amongst the Dal Riata.<sup>92</sup> It would appear that there was little unusual about Adomnan's visit to Northumbria in 686. He was used as an ambassador to secure the release of prisoners captured by Ecgfrith in 684, but this was also the occasion on which he brought the *De Locis Sanctis* to King Aldfrith, and, if Bede can be believed, he must have spent some time in England learning the error of his ways over Easter.<sup>93</sup> Once again, we see a mixture of ecclesiastical and political concerns; it is



worth also noting that the *De Locis Sanctis* was derived from what Adomnan learned from Arculf, 'Galliarum episcopus', though, admittedly, Arculf's visit to Iona was by accident rather than design.<sup>94</sup>

Other contact between the churches of Ireland and Gaul which has a bearing on the transmission of miracle stories was by design rather than accident. Whilst Augustine was making his way from Italy to the British Isles, the gospel was also being carried eastward by Irish *peregrini*. The most famous, and the best documented, of these missionary enterprises, was that of Columban, whose controversial career resulted in the formation of a *familia* of monasteries, principal among which were Luxeuil, Annegray, Fontaines, Bobbio, St Gall and Faremoutiers.<sup>95</sup> That there were close links between the last of these establishments and the Anglo-Saxons is clear from the account of the life of Earcongota.<sup>96</sup> Another Irish monastery in Neustria at this time was Peronne, which owed its foundation to Fursey, the Irishman who settled in East Anglia and later in Gaul. 'Peronna Scottorum' seems to have remained uninfluenced by the Columbanian group of houses,<sup>97</sup> as it might appear the Columbanians were separate from native Gallic monasticism.<sup>98</sup> But there are signs of interaction, such as the appointment of Aigulf, a protégé of Columban, to reform Lérins,<sup>99</sup> which had been viewed as the training centre for monks in southern Gaul, and where Wilfrid spent some time. With Wilfrid we get a picture of the range of influences to

which a travelling cleric might be exposed; he was to be influenced by both Dalfinus,<sup>100</sup> brother of Aunemundus of Lyon who had links with Luxeuil, and Agilbert of Paris (the former bishop of Wessex), for whom he spoke at Streoneshalh.<sup>101</sup>

In short, therefore, stories are likely to have circulated freely within the English, Irish and Frankish churches. It would be wrong, therefore, to discount the influence of *vitae* or *historiae* with which no direct literary connexion can be found in the English works. Not only is it likely that English monks might have heard something of the content of Jonas' *Vita Columbani*, something of the enormous variety of miracle stories recorded by Gregory of Tours may have found its way by word of mouth back to England. In addition to the miracles in the *Decem libri Historiarum*, Gregory wrote seven books specifically as collections of miracles - four books *De virtutibus beati Martini episcopi*, the *Liber in gloria Martyrum Beatorum*, the *Liber de passione et virtutibus Sancti Juliani martyris*, and the *Liber in gloria Confessorum*.<sup>102</sup> To these is commonly added the *Liber vitae Patrum*, which is no more than another anthology of miracle stories. According to Gregory, Gaul in his time was a region in which every place had its own miracle traditions. For example, in addition to the material he found in Sulpicius Severus (which related miracles of Martin worked, for the most part, around Tours), Gregory unearthed

accounts of Martin's wonderful deeds in the vicinity of Clermont, of Saintes, of Bordeaux, and of Langres.<sup>103</sup> As bishop of Tours, it was in Gregory's interest to build up the reputation of his patron saint, but his writing may reflect a society in which miracle stories abounded. Gregory may have been superstitious and unduly credulous in what he recorded,<sup>104</sup> but there must have been others who shared his credulity, and given the geographical range of Gregory's material, particularly of the stories in the *Vita Patrum*, it would not be at all surprising if some of it were carried across the channel.

It is much more difficult to discuss the possibility that the Anglo-Saxon writers (or raconteurs) were influenced by Irish material in this period. The dating of Irish saints' lives, abundant though they are from later periods, cannot be made with any great certainty. The manuscript evidence makes it difficult to assign to any *vita* a date prior to the eleventh century.<sup>105</sup> Part of the problem is the lack of development in the genre in Ireland; 'seventh-century texts are practically indistinguishable from twelfth-century ones.'<sup>106</sup> Only three works can with any certainty be dated to the seventh century, and none immediately after that.<sup>107</sup> Cogitosus' *Vita Brigidae* is probably the earliest surviving Irish saint's life,<sup>108</sup> although it seems to depend on earlier traditions, which are also in an Anonymous Life.<sup>109</sup> There are also two Lives of Patrick, Muirchu's, which was written between 661 and

700,<sup>110</sup> and the *Collectanea* of Tirechan, which must also be dated to about the same time.<sup>111</sup> None of these lives seems to have had any literary effect on the Anglo-Saxon material, and it is hard to argue that they represent collections of oral traditions which were known outside of Ireland. Irish hagiography seems to have thrived better outside of its native soil, although it is arguable if the *Vita Fursei* or Jonas' *Vita Columbani* are 'Irish' rather than continental hagiographies. Adomnan, for his *Vita Columbae*, is therefore accorded by a number of historians 'pride of place... among Irish hagiographers.'<sup>112</sup> Some scholars have maintained that the *Vita Columbae* was influential in Anglo-Saxon lives, such as the anonymous *Vita Cuthberti*.<sup>113</sup> However, within the wide range of influences and contacts described here, it might equally well be the case that Adomnan carried Anglo-Saxon traditions to Iona, rather than offering Irish stories for imitation in England. That hypothesis can be examined in detail.

'Vir sanctus in insula commanens' : common ground between Cuthbert, Guthlac and Columba.

To readers used to the English hagiography represented by the *Vita Wilfridi*, *Vita Guthlaci*, and the two prose versions of the *Vita Cuthberti*, the record which the ninth abbot of Iona made of the life and deeds of his first predecessor appears to be a very different piece of work.

There is no biographical structure to the work; the miracles are not episodes within the framework of a life story. Strangely, for the *vita* of the founder of a monastic community, we are not even told how or why Columba came to Iona.<sup>114</sup> The biographical detail of Adomnan's second preface to the work is barely enlarged at all by what follows. Columba was of noble birth, and we are told the names of his parents; from an early age he was a pious child, but it was when he was forty-one that '*de Scotia ad Britanniam pro Christo perigrinari volens enavigavit.*'<sup>115</sup> The arrangement of the work that follows is thematic rather than chronological. The first book, '*de profeticis revelationibus*', records instances of Columba foretelling the future or knowing about events in far distant places ('*ab annis iuvenibilibus... ventura praedicere, praesentibus absentia nuntiare*').<sup>116</sup> Book two is introduced as '*de virtutum miraculis*' and book three as '*de angelicis visionibus*'. However, the distinctions are not maintained with any consistency, Adomnan (or a later scribe) noting that miracles are often accompanied by prophetic utterance.<sup>117</sup>

However, within this unusual arrangement of his material, there is much to show that Adomnan did not work in isolation from other traditions. Quotations from, or allusions to, the works of both Sulpicius Severus<sup>118</sup> and Gregory I<sup>119</sup> have been identified by Adomnan's editors. There is also a consciousness that Adomnan was writing

within a biblical tradition, as many of the stories have distinct echoes of the miracles of Christ,<sup>120</sup> or of Elijah and Elisha,<sup>121</sup> though without direct quotations from the Vulgate. This is also true of the Anglo-Saxon works,<sup>122</sup> and reinforces the suggestion that miracle stories were not written with earlier exemplars in front of the author, but that hagiographers relied upon their memories for scriptural allusions. If that is how they treated the Bible, which it cannot be doubted that they heard as lectures, it is not unlikely that that is also how they treated the lives of other saints, having heard miracle stories either read aloud or through informal conversation.

Adomnan records in the *Vita Columbae* that he visited King Aldfrith of Northumbria in 686 and again in 688.<sup>123</sup> The work must therefore have been written some time between 688 and Adomnan's death in 704. According to the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Adomnan spent very little of that time in Iona,<sup>124</sup> where internal evidence suggests the *Vita Columbae* was written.<sup>125</sup> The implication of this is that Adomnan would only have been on Iona long enough to write the *Vita Columbae* in 704. But Bede may have been mistaken in his belief that Adomnan spent the last sixteen years of his life touring Ireland in a crusade for the Roman dating of Easter.<sup>126</sup> He seems only to have visited Ireland three times whilst he was abbot of Iona - once after his first visit to Northumbria, with the released captives, once in 692 apparently on family business, and lastly in 697 to

promote his law, the *Cain Adomnain*.<sup>127</sup> This promulgation took place at the Synod of Birr, which may be the occasion to which Adomnan referred in one of his miracles. He tells how a prayer to Columba succeeded in changing the direction of the wind to enable him and his companions to return to Iona 'post everniensis sinodi conductum.'<sup>128</sup> a phrase which suggests a recent meeting, of which Adomnan expected his readership to be aware. If this assumption is correct, the *Vita Columbae* can be dated with confidence to the period 697 - 704.<sup>129</sup>

The number of miracle stories relating to Columba which Adomnan managed to collect is far greater than that in any contemporary Anglo-Saxon works. Including every prophecy and vision, there are an hundred and twenty miracles recorded in the pages of the *Vita Columbae*. This compares starkly with the twenty-one in the *Vita Wilfridi*, the twenty-three in the *Vita Guthlaci*, or the thirty-one in the Lindisfarne *Vita Cuthberti*. Even by comparison with some continental models, the number seems large; Gregory of Tours may have presented a similarly impressive picture of Martin as a patron saint who confirmed his position by wonderful deeds, but Adomnan, unlike Gregory, depended little on miracles performed *post mortem*. Given the quantity of material that Iona had, it is not surprising that there should be some parallels with English stories. But those that there are bear examination.

The first miracle which Adomnan records in full is a

posthumous one; on the eve of the battle of Heavenfield, Columba appeared in a dream to Oswald:<sup>130</sup>

Ossvaldus.... sanctum Columbam in visu videt  
 forma coruscantem angelica cuius alta proceritas  
 vertice nubes tangere videbatur. Qui [Columba]  
 ... haec confirmatoria contulit verba,... dicens,  
 'Confortare et age viriliter. Ecce ero tecum...'

It is a scene which draws, as Adomnan noted, on the encouragement offered by God to Joshua,<sup>131</sup> although it is the words of the saint rather than the vision which are drawn from this source. The episode is also reminiscent of the conversion of Constantine at the Milvian Bridge. As in that story,<sup>132</sup> the vision occurs the night before the battle, the visionary is triumphant the following day, and the result is the conversion of the victor's army, and his realm, to Christianity. In the context of the *Vita Columbae*, the story is somewhat audacious. Oswald is compared (implicitly) to Constantine: 'totius Brittanniae imperator a deo ordinatus est'.<sup>133</sup> Columba is presented not only as the mouthpiece of the divine will, but also as having influenced the heavenly plan: 'Hac enim vice mihi dominus donavit ut hostes in fugam vertantur tui.' It is remarkable that this is the only example offered by Adomnan of a miracle that Columba is supposed to have worked on a number of occasions. It suggests that Adomnan wanted to emphasize the influence of Columba over English politics; his exaggeration that 'nam usque in id temporis tota illa Saxonia gentilitatis et ignorantiae tenebris obscurata erat' points to the way in which the monks of Iona wanted



the history of the Anglo-Saxons to be understood.

A similar story exists in the *Vita Guthlaci*. After the saint's death his friend and visitor, the exiled aetheling Aethelbald, came to his tomb, and spent the night in the place where he had stayed during Guthlac's lifetime. As he fell asleep he was granted a vision.

...Extimplo beatum Guthlacum coram adstantem  
angelico splendore amictum prospicit dicentem ei:  
'Noli timere, robustus esto, quia Deus adiutor  
tuus est; propterea veni ad te, quia Dominus per  
intercessionem meam exaudivit preces tuas.'<sup>134</sup>

Guthlac continued to promise that Aethelbald's days of exile were near their end and that he would come into his kingdom within a year. That there are differences between the two stories is undeniable; the circumstances are not the same in that Aethelbald knew Guthlac and prayed for his help, whereas Columba had to tell Oswald who he was. But the similarities are noticeable - each story features an Anglo-Saxon prince in exile, in each the saint appears with a great light and in angelic splendour, the prince is told that he will inherit his kingdom, and this outcome is attributed to the will of God in response to the prayers of the saint. Felix does not mention the Joshua story, but the words he attributes to Guthlac are close to those of the Vulgate ('esto robustus... noli timere'). Given the clear political implications of the Adomnan story, it is not unreasonable to ask whether a similar claim were being made for the community of which Guthlac was patron. Aelfwald, king of East Anglia (to whom the work is dedicated)<sup>135</sup> is

assured that although he may be subject to the Mercian Aethelbald,<sup>136</sup> the Midlander's hegemony only exists because of the higher authority exercised through Guthlac, the patron of an East Anglian shrine. There is no verbal borrowing in the Guthlac story from Adomnan; again, if there is a link it was created by oral transmission.

There is a number of other ways in which the *Vita Guthlaci* is reminiscent of Adomnan's work. Both saints are of noble birth (which may have been true of other saints, but more is made of it by Adomnan and Felix). Both become, to some extent, hermits, and receive a series of visitors in their solitude. Both are credited with prophetic or visionary powers. And there is one other miracle attributed to both saints - the ability to save parchment from water. The details of the two stories are so different that it is unlikely they bear more than a distant relationship to one another.<sup>137</sup> But maybe it would be wrong to underestimate the significance of the story; to a scholar such as Adomnan or Felix, the loss of a piece of parchment, and the hours spent writing upon it would be no light matter, so this would be a miracle worthy of imitation.

The comparison between Columba and Cuthbert is perhaps more obvious than that with Guthlac, and the motive is clearer. Lindisfarne could be perceived as a rival to Iona for a position of primacy within the Northern Church. As has been shown, the *Vita Columbae* must have been written at about the time that the stories which went to make up the

three extant Lives of Cuthbert were being collected, perhaps at the same time as the *Vita Metrica* was composed. So it is difficult to establish who copied whom. The more likely explanation is that Iona influenced Lindisfarne. In 686, Cuthbert was still alive. Even by 688, it is unlikely that many stories about him were circulating widely, whereas Adomnan may well have boasted of Columba in Northumbria, perhaps at Jarrow. The alternative hypothesis cannot be discounted, however. It might be that within a year of his death, Cuthbert's fame was already such that Adomnan would have heard of it, and what he heard convinced him of the need to make the activities of his own patron better known. This may be what lies behind the comment that 'minima de maximis per populos fama de eodem beato viro divulgata dispersit.'<sup>138</sup>

Like Guthlac, both Cuthbert and Columba knew the date of their death some time before its occurrence.<sup>139</sup> This was one of the few miracles that Bede included of Cuthbert in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. There are three other *ante mortem* Cuthbert stories in this abridged *Vita*.<sup>140</sup> Cuthbert rids Farne of the demons that possessed it prior to his arrival, he brings water out of stony ground, and he produces food for himself in spite of the grain being sown out of season. All three are achievements with which Columba is also credited. Cuthbert's water miracle has already been discussed at length.<sup>141</sup> The Columba story is notably different. In defence of his assertion that Columba

had power over the elements, Adomnan included a series of stories about water, one of which concerned Columba being asked to baptize a child. There being no water in the vicinity, Columba prayed and blessed the face of a rock. Immediately, water poured out and the saint performed the baptism.<sup>142</sup> The details are different from the Cuthbert story - the water in this miracle is not for drinking, there is no digging involved and the production of water is instant. But Adomnan's conclusion to his story is 'ubi hodieque fonticulus sancti nomine Columbae pollens cernitur'. So both saints were credited with having produced a stream which was still available.

Bede immediately follows his account of the water from rock with a story about Cuthbert growing barley out of season.<sup>143</sup> This story seems at first sight to make the same point as the previous one - that the divine will was made clear and Cuthbert was right to remain on Farne. It is surprising, therefore, that there should be such duplication. The story can be briefly retold. Cuthbert had been provided with seed, but his first attempt at a crop had failed to produce anything. He therefore asked for some barley (*hordeum*) from which, despite the lateness of his sowing, he did grow a crop. The Columba story differs in many respects.<sup>144</sup> Columba had ordered his monks to collect some wattle from a layman, Findchan, and in return to take six measures of barley (*hordeum*). Findchan was puzzled by Columba's instruction that he is to sow this grain.

'Quomodo post medium esteum tempus seges seminata contra huius naturam terrae proficiet?' However, persuaded by his wife to plant the seed, he was able to harvest it, as the saint prophesied, in early August. The differences - Cuthbert is growing his own food, whereas Columba's role is to provide the grain and the advice; Bede gives us no precise dates for the times of sowing and harvest; there is no failed first attempt to grow food in the Columba story - make it clear that there was no literal copying. But the fact that Bede included this story in the *Historia*, as he had in the *Vita Prosaica* although it does not feature in the Anonymous Life, suggests that it was important to him. Combined with the water from rock story, there is an obvious parallel with the book of Exodus suggested, in that both food and drink are provided by the saint as they were by Moses. It may well be that Bede's knowledge that Columba was credited with such a pair of miracles influenced his judgement at this point.

Pre-eminent *de virtutum miraculis* of Columba, Adomnan placed the conversion of water into wine.<sup>145</sup> He tells that when Columba was still a deacon, he had to assist a bishop at a eucharist for which there was no wine. By drawing water from the well and praying over it, Columba produced wine for the ceremonies. Adomnan, as if fearing that the full significance of this story might not be grasped, twice noted that in this way the saint imitated the first miracle of Christ. There is a story of Cuthbert turning water into

wine, although Bede does not include it in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It is a miracle that appears differently in the three versions of Cuthbert's life.<sup>146</sup> In both the Anonymous and the Metrical *vita*, the deed is only mentioned in the context of the water miracle, and then in a compressed, if not confused, manner. Bede may have felt more keenly the importance of having this miracle explicitly celebrated in the saint's record. Not only was it the proto-miracle of Christ,<sup>147</sup> with the two echoes of Exodus it completes the Christian imagery of the Dominical sacraments - water (of baptism), bread and wine (of the eucharist). Bede's story<sup>148</sup> cannot have been modelled on Adomnan's. It concerns a visit to a convent where Cuthbert asked for water to drink, the water was then tasted by two of the monks and discovered to have the flavour of wine. Bede's source for this story is given as one of the two monks involved, who had later been at Wearmouth. So this represents a Jarrow-Wearmouth tradition rather than a Lindisfarne one; but that both the earlier lives mention the ability of the saint to convert water into wine, it is perhaps significant that Bede found and used this story.

This is not the only occasion when Bede seems at pains to make a parallel with Columba. It is remarkable how many of Bede's stories are reminiscent, in outline if not in verbiage or detail, of the *Vita Columbae*. Columba saw souls being taken up to heaven; so did Cuthbert.<sup>149</sup> Columba was able to predict the future careers and military defeats of

Kings; Cuthbert did the same.<sup>150</sup> Columba knew whether a battle was won or lost although he was some distance away; the same was boasted of Cuthbert.<sup>151</sup> Columba could cure individuals by blessing bread which was mixed with water and given to the afflicted; cures were effected in precisely the same way by Cuthbert, though in his absence.<sup>152</sup> Columba predicted the provision of food by miraculous means, and that also was a miracle attributed to Cuthbert.<sup>153</sup> Both Columba and Cuthbert were believed to be able to predict the occurrence of plague;<sup>154</sup> like Columba, Cuthbert was able to send items of his to help those in need, without needing human agency to inform him of the necessity;<sup>155</sup> calm weather around both Iona and Lindisfarne was correctly forecast.<sup>156</sup>

It is worth noting that most of these stories are paralleled in the Anonymous, and that the remainder are mentioned in passing by that writer.<sup>157</sup> However, that in itself suggests that although these were Lindisfarne traditions, it was Bede who saw that it was important to demonstrate that the range of Cuthbert's miraculous powers was as great as that of Columba. J-M. Picard has argued that Adomnan wrote his *Vita Columbae* with an Anglo-Saxon audience at least partly in mind.<sup>158</sup> He sees the reason as being that the Irish Church was on the defensive against 'attacks from the Roman mission'<sup>159</sup> and his desire to restore to Iona some of 'the prestige that it was losing'.<sup>160</sup> It may also have been that Adomnan saw a

possibility to assert a political influence. Aldfrith, king of Northumbria at the time the *Vita Columbae* was written, had been in exile on Iona up until 685.<sup>161</sup> To remind the king of the greatness of Iona's patron saint would be to remind him of his debt to that community. It was a challenge that those who treasured the memory of Cuthbert could not ignore. The question of how closely Cuthbert was identified in the regime that was ousted in 685 will be discussed more fully in chapter five. For now, it is sufficient merely to wonder if Bede was not somewhat disingenuous in his discussion of Columba, when he wrote, 'de cuius vita et verbis nonnulla a discipulis eius feruntur scripta haberi. Verum qualiscumque fuerit ipse, nos hoc de illo certum tenemus, quia reliquit successores magna continentia ac divino amore regularique institutione insignes'<sup>162</sup> Bede probably knew more about Columba than the excellence of the abbots who succeeded him. But it was not in his interest to say so, if he wanted to triumph the cause of Cuthbert. Whilst he appears to have been dismissive of what was said ('feruntur') it is not unlikely that he took notice of it, and allowed it to shape his portrayal of the saint of Lindisfarne. But there was one of Cuthbert's greatest miracles which was not rivalled on Iona, and to that we now turn.

'Quasi adhuc viveret' : the bodies that did not rot.

Bede reports that eleven years after Cuthbert's death,



the monks on Lindisfarne wanted to exhume his body, to wash the bones and to rehouse them in a more accessible shrine, presumably in order to attract pilgrims, rather as Lichfield had established a shrine for Chad.<sup>163</sup> Eadbert, the bishop agreed to this, and commanded that the translation take place on March 20th, the anniversary of Cuthbert's first burial. So the monks set about their task:

Fecerunt autem ita, et aperientes sepulchrum, invenerunt corpus totum, quasi adhuc viveret, integrum et flexibilibus artuum compagibus multo dormienti quam mortuo similis; sed et vestimenta omnia, quibus indutum erat, non solum intemerata verum etiam prisca novitate et claritudine miranda parebant.<sup>164</sup>

Bede takes the whole of this account, virtually word for word, from his Prose Life; it is much fuller than the brief version offered in the Anonymous Life, to which we shall return. The Cuthbert story, however, is perhaps the wrong place to begin when discussing the miracles of uncorrupted bodies. Cuthbert was neither the first nor the last saint of whom this miracle was recorded in seventh- and eighth-century England. Nor was England the first country in which this phenomenon was believed to occur.

C.G. Loomis studied instances of uncorrupted bodies,<sup>165</sup> and claimed that this is a common motif in both black and white magic. In some societies the miracle would be viewed as sinister, but in the Christian literature of early mediaeval Europe it was celebrated as a sign of sanctity. There may, Loomis conceded, be truth in some of the stories, as it is possible that a form of adipocere in

cold and damp places caused the flesh to decay much more slowly than might otherwise have been expected. Out of such a natural accident, Loomis suggested, a folklore of religious significance was woven. Whilst such stories were not unknown to writers in classical times, with examples being recorded in Greece in the second century,<sup>166</sup> if there was a tradition by which the English church was influenced, it was more recent and closer to home. Gregory of Tours tells at least four stories of corpses being found intact long after they might have been expected to rot. Unlike the English writers, Gregory offers a wide range of corpse miracles. There is a dead body which seizes a grave robber,<sup>167</sup> a grave on which the snow cannot fall,<sup>168</sup> coffins that move closer to each other,<sup>169</sup> and corpses that embrace.<sup>170</sup> This sort of prodigy does not seem to have been recorded in England; but two accounts that Gregory gives of corpses being discovered without corruption may have been influential.

The two accounts are both in the *Liber Vitae Patrum*. In the first,<sup>171</sup> Gregory tells that his great-grandfather, Gregory of Langres, was renowned for his holiness, and that many wanted to visit his tomb. Some time after his death it was realized that the site of the tomb was less than ideally accessible to pilgrims, so the bishop decided to build a new apse to the church in which it could be housed. At the time of the translation, a liturgical occasion for which the clergy and a choir had been gathered, the lid

accidentally fell from the coffin to reveal that the face of the saint bore no marks of decay, and closer examination revealed that the body and vestments were in a similarly pristine condition. The second story concerns the abbot Brachio of Menat,<sup>172</sup> who was granted foreknowledge of his death, and asked that he should be buried at a certain place. It took two years for an oratory to be built on the chosen site, and when the translation took place, it was discovered that the body was still intact. So there emerges a pattern - an holy man dies, a decision is made to move the cadaver from its original burial place sometime later, a group of clergy or religious is involved in the exhumation and re-interment, and during the removal the corpse is found to be in the same state as it was when it was buried.

There are six accounts in the English sources of the discovery of an uncorrupted corpse. The first, chronologically, is Bede's account of Aethelburh.<sup>173</sup> She became abbess of Faremoutiers, where she was involved in the building of a new church when she died. Seven years after her death, it was resolved to abandon the building project altogether. Aethelburh was already interred in the uncompleted church, so it was decided to remove her body.

*Et aperientes sepulchrum eius, ita intemeratum  
corpus invenere, ut a corruptione concupiscentiae  
carnalis erat immune.*

The idea that the miracle was a sign of the virginity of the deceased is one which is echoed in the story of

Aethelthryth, as it is briefly mentioned by Stephen.<sup>174</sup> It is once again Bede who offers a full account of the discovery.<sup>175</sup> Aethelthryth was abbess of Ely at the time of her death, and was buried with the rest of the community. Sixteen years later, her sister and successor, Saexburh, decided to give the body a tomb in the abbey church, and made arrangements for the removal. Bede describes an elaborate ritual; some sort of awning was erected over the original grave, outside of which a choir stood singing. Wilfrid (one of Bede's sources for this story) appears to have been present in a liturgical capacity, although he had no authority to minister in East Anglia. The abbess and those who had expected to find bones in the coffin discovered a corpse free from corruption, which was washed and re-interred. The story has all the elements of a deliberate imitation of one of the translations in Gaul. Surely it is more than a coincidence that Saexburh and Aethelthryth had another sister, Aethelburh.<sup>176</sup>

Perhaps here we can detect a motive for the relating of these stories. Faremoutiers could boast a saintly abbess, a daughter of Anna of East Anglia, whose body was found free of corruption; it would enhance the status of Ely if the same story were heard of its founder. Maybe the Cuthbert story was told to present the saint as at least the equal of Aethelthryth, and Lindisfarne as a centre of no less importance than Ely. The fullest version of that story is in Bede's *Vita Prosaica*,<sup>177</sup> and differs very

little (save for the inclusion of a poem) from that in the *Historia*. In the *Vita Metrica*,<sup>178</sup> Bede simply records that the translation occurred, and the uncorrupted corpse was discovered, and links it to a verse in the psalms,<sup>179</sup> 'nec sanctum dabis, alte, tuum corrupta videre'.<sup>180</sup> The Anonymous' account is equally brief.<sup>181</sup> He speaks of a council at which it was agreed that the translation should take place, and of the finding of the intact body on when the grave was opened. An interesting difference is the role of the bishop. According to the Anonymous, the decision to move the body was made by the elders ('a decanibus'), but permission was obtained from the bishop ('a sancto episcopo Eadberhto licentia data'). Again, we may be dealing with a recognized liturgical practice, for which official sanction was necessary. Bede was more interested in the date. The translation was ordered by Eadbert to be on March 20th. Because that date was in Lent, Eadbert was on retreat, and therefore could not be a part of the ceremony.<sup>182</sup> It would appear that Bede needed to marry a tradition about Eadbert's asceticism with the miracle story he had inherited.

The other uncorrupted corpse story in the *Historia* concerns Fursey.<sup>183</sup> Bede obtained it from a *libellus* about the saint, which appears to be the *Vita Fursei*,<sup>184</sup> although the Bedan account is not a verbatim copy of the *Vita* version.<sup>185</sup> The details, however, agree. Earchinwald, the mayor of the palace in Neustria and Fursey's patron,

undertook two reburials of the saint. The first took place twenty-seven days after the death, when the new church of Peronne was built. Four years later the body was moved to another part of the church, and a shrine constructed. On each occasion the body was discovered to be 'immaculatum et integrum'.<sup>186</sup> Again we have the pattern, of a deliberate decision to rehouse the body and the wonder being discovered. And again, we are in Gaul.

Alan Thacker has posited the thesis that the cult of Guthlac existed in deliberate opposition to that of Fursey,<sup>187</sup> also in East Anglia. That Felix also tells of an uncorrupted corpse supports this.<sup>188</sup> It may also be that Crowland wanted a miracle which rivalled that told of Ely, no great distance away. Felix also related that Aethelbald thought it worth endowing the shrine around the uncorrupted body; Crowland seems to have been on the border of his kingdom and East Anglia (over which, as has been noted, he claimed suzerainty). The proximity to the site of the miraculous discovery of the intact body of Aethelthryth, the royal saint of the East Angles, suggests that politics may well have had a part to play in the promulgation, perhaps even in the creation, of this story. The account itself is dependant on the Bede story of Cuthbert for some of its vocabulary.<sup>189</sup> But what Felix adds is significant. The discovery is made on the occasion of the re-interment of the body, at the instigation of Pega, Guthlac's sister:<sup>190</sup>

Transactis enim sepulturae eius bis senis mensium orbibus, inmisit Deus in animum sororis ipsius, ut fraternum corpus alio sepulchro reconderet. Adgregatis ergo fratribus presbiterisque, necnon aliis ecclesiasticis gradibus, die exitus ipsius aperientes sepulchrum, invenerunt corpus totum integrum, quasi adhuc viveret.<sup>191</sup>

The assembly of clergy is mentioned as if it is only to be expected; the body was being moved, so it was necessary that there should be an host of monks and priests present.

There is an air of artifice about this narrative, as if the discovery of the uncorrupted body was stage-managed in some way. Did Pega already know that the body of her brother could be displayed 'integrum' when she invited the various ranks of clergy to be present for the opening of the tomb? Loomis' idea about adipocere would apply equally to Crowland as it did to Ely. And it is not impossible that the bodies were embalmed or treated to prevent decay. This may be another way in which the Frankish traditions of Gregory of Tours display an influence. Gregory tells a story of the coffin of an unknown woman.<sup>192</sup> The church in Clermont in which she had been buried suffered from lack of repair, so much so that a section of the roof collapsed and fractured the lid of her coffin. Her body and clothes were revealed to be untouched by any decay. This became a locally known wonder, and many went to view the sight. But Gregory is (for him) remarkably sceptical: 'I believe that she was buried in spices'. The possibility that saints' bodies were embalmed cannot be discounted; the evidence that Cuthbert really was free from corruption into the

later middle ages is considerable, so a naturalistic explanation is possible. Whether the 'discovery' was by accident or design, by the time of Guthlac's enshrinement, the whole process had become an established part of the way that an individual's sanctity was proven. David Rollason has suggested,<sup>193</sup> that the miracle of incorruption might not be the most important feature of some of these stories. He points to the account of the translation of the two abbots of Monkwearmouth, Sigfrid and Eosterwine.<sup>194</sup> There is clearly a ritual, and, as with Cuthbert, and possibly Aethelthryth, there is episcopal permission and blessing for the translation, but only bones, and not uncorrupted bodies are involved. However, Jarrow-Wearmouth was to have its own undecayed corpse story. Ceolfrid, at the time of this ceremony, was on his way to Rome, but fell ill and died at Langres.<sup>195</sup> A later tradition tells that his body was preserved uncorrupted. Bede lamented the fact that Ceolfrid had died and been buried on foreign soil, and that some of his monks had chosen to remain with him.<sup>196</sup> Alcuin, however, was able to record that Ceolfrid did not remain at Langres:

Cuius [Ceolfridi] corpus erat post tempora multa  
repertum  
integrum penitus, patriamque exinde reductum.<sup>197</sup>

Perhaps Alcuin is hinting that there was another formal ceremony of translation, when the decision had been taken to repatriate the saint's remains. It is fitting that it should be from Langres that Ceolfrid returned to England,



as it was there that we heard of the first instance of a religious ceremony in which an intact corpse was discovered. Ceolfrid's last journey followed the route that an oral tradition had taken some time before him, as the latest instance in a pattern of miracle story that seems to have originated in Gaul but become established, popular, and the subject of imitation, in England.

'Corpusque remansit inane': Near-death experiences.

In the fifth book of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede recounts a series of experiences in which individuals had been granted knowledge of the life that awaited them beyond the grave.<sup>198</sup> The words with which Bede introduces the first of these indicate his awareness that this was not an unprecedented phenomenon: 'His temporibus miraculum memorabile et antiquorum simile in Brittania factum est.'<sup>199</sup> To precisely what miracles of the ancients Bede thought this one compared has been a matter of some debate. McCready suggests that the closest classical cognate is the vision of Thespesius as recorded by Plutarch;<sup>200</sup> it is more likely that Bede had in mind stories recorded in the Biblical Apocrypha, although there is none that seems to be followed closely either in the narrative of Drythelm's apparent death and return to life, nor in the detail of his vision. This is not surprising; once again, it demonstrates that to Bede and his contemporaries, the similarity of miracle stories was conceived in general terms.

Despite being the longest miracle story in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the much discussed Dryhthelm story can be briefly summarized. One night, sometime before 705, a layman living in Northumbria, fell ill and died. The following morning he awoke, disposed of his property, left his wife and family, and entered the monastery of Melrose, where he lived a life of rigorous asceticism. He used to tell that in the night he was dead he had a vision, in which he witnessed scenes in purgatory, in hell, and in paradise.<sup>201</sup> He was made aware of a fourth place (heaven itself), when he was called back and, after his guide explained the meaning of what he had seen, he returned to his body.

Whatever Bede meant by *antiquorum simile*, there are other examples of visions of the afterlife closer to Bede's own time. Boniface, writing to Eadburh in 716, told of a monk of Wenlock who died and returned to life.<sup>202</sup> This account bears a number of resemblances to the Dryhthelm story; both men apparently die and rise to life again, both tell of a vision experience in which they saw hell, both report that the afterlife has four levels. Different views have been taken of the relationship between the Wenlock story and that of Dryhthelm,<sup>203</sup> with some scholars maintaining Bede's dependence on Boniface, others Boniface's use of an earlier version of the Bede story, and some arguing that the differences exclude the possibility of any direct dependence. Bede himself also included the

story of Fursey, taken from an earlier *vita*.<sup>204</sup> Fursey received the vision whilst he was still alive. Unlike Drythelm, he saw only the fires of hell. But, although Fursey was burned by one of the fires, he was not destined for eternal damnation, unlike the visionaries in Bede's other two stories of this type. The first was a noble in the service of Cenred, king of Mercia.<sup>205</sup> Having lived a far from exemplary life, he refused to confess on his deathbed, and was visited by representatives of both heaven and hell. Each delegation brought a book, containing respectively his good and his evil deeds, and, the latter being by far the larger, the man died knowing where he was heading. The second was a monk whom Bede claimed to have known, although, unusually, Bede does not tell us of which community he was a member.<sup>206</sup> Having failed to live by the rule, he died after having a vision of hell, excommunicate, and was buried without the customary rites.

There is a number of points to note about these stories. One is that his witnesses are of the highest calibre. In the case of Fursey, Bede had the *Tibellus*, to which he repeatedly made reference, and the testimony of a monk of his own monastery.<sup>207</sup> With Drythelm, a monk named Haemgils is mentioned as having spoken to Drythelm, but Bede also reports that the vision was recounted to Aldfrith, king of Northumbria, and that Melrose, where Drythelm 'used to relate' his vision, was then governed by Aethelwold (bishop of Lindisfarne at the time of

writing).<sup>208</sup> The vision of the military officer of Cenred was first told to the king, and came to Bede from Pehthelm, the monk from Malmesbury who became bishop of Whithorn.<sup>209</sup> For his final story, Bede's only source seems to have been his own knowledge of the man. For some reason, it appears that Bede was more than usually careful to make clear that what he related he had received on the best authority. A second point is that the didactic purpose of these stories could not be made more obvious. The story of the Mercian concludes, 'Hanc historiam... simpliciter ob salutem legentium sive audientium narrandum esse putavi.'<sup>210</sup> Drythelm was apparently selective in those whom he would tell of his vision, but, 'multisque et verbo et conversatione saluti fuit',<sup>211</sup> which, Bede maintained, was the reason for such occurrences. The worldly monk's fate had become known: '[hoc est] longe lateque diffamatum multos ad agendam et non differendam scelerum suorum paenitudinem provocavit'.<sup>212</sup> Bede quotes Gregory the Great in support of all this; it was he who had taught that an individual might know of their own impending damnation 'non pro se ista, cui non profuere, sed pro aliis...'<sup>213</sup>

That Bede had Gregory in mind as he retold these stories is not surprising. Bede clearly knew the fourth book of the *Dialogi*, which contains a series of stories relating to visions, either of those who had died, or about death and the afterlife. There are four which can be classified as, to use Zaleski's phrase, 'otherworld

journeys'.<sup>214</sup> The first concerns a man named Repartus, who died, but came back to life to say that he had seen the fires of hell being prepared for the local priest.<sup>215</sup> He sent word to the church but was too late as the cleric was already dead. The second story is that of a Spanish monk named Peter, who died and saw the flames of hell, but was allowed to return to life to reform his life, an opportunity which he took.<sup>216</sup> Immediately after that, Gregory included the story of Stephen, whom he and Peter both knew, who died and found himself at the entrance to hell before being sent back to his body on the grounds that he was the wrong Stephen.<sup>217</sup> However, at the time that this happened, a soldier had a near-death experience.<sup>218</sup> He saw a black and smoking river, on one side of which was a beautiful land in which houses were being built, according to Gregory's interpretation, by the good deeds of those for whose eternal habitation they were intended.<sup>219</sup> Over the river there was a bridge, and the soldier witnessed Stephen being pulled towards the river. The message that all this is intended to convey is clear enough, and it is reinforced by a series of other stories describing ways in which the fate of the wicked is made apparent just before or after their deaths.

Gregory I is not the only continental writer to include this sort of material. Gregory of Tours related the story of the abbot Salvius,<sup>220</sup> who died but returned to life whilst on his funeral bier. He later told his monks

that he had been taken up to heaven (which he described in some detail) but was returned to earth in order to complete his life's work. This story differs from those of Gregory I and Bede in that it is only heaven that Salvius sees; there is no corresponding portrayal of infernal torment. In fact, this story is closer to some of the modern 'near-death experiences', of which recurrent features seem to be that the person visualizes him/herself reaching a place of peace and light,<sup>221</sup> but is, reluctantly, returned to the body.<sup>222</sup> Gregory I was clearly therefore the closer parallel, and perhaps the greater influence on the Anglo-Saxon writers. The idea that a visionary could be granted a glimpse of hell is something that occurs in other writers. Felix describes in detail the way in which Guthlac was set upon by demons and dragged to the very gates of hell.<sup>223</sup> Guthlac does not die, and the vision is reminiscent of the experience of Fursey, who was defended by angels as Guthlac was defended by Bartholomew.<sup>224</sup> Clearly, the *Vita Fursei* was an influence on Felix, as Colgrave demonstrated.<sup>225</sup> But Felix does not borrow from that life, nor from any other that has been noticed, in his description of Guthlac's torment. It seems that when he told of this experience, he either chose to use his own words or had an independent narrative on which to rely.

The same is true of Bede's triptych of stories in book five of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. McCready argues that Bede was heavily influenced by the *Dialogi* stories, on

which he drew creatively for the edification of his own public.<sup>226</sup> He maintains, for example, a link between Bede's story of the errant monk and Gregory's case of mistaken identity,<sup>227</sup> on the grounds that both victims were craftsmen (Bede's monk a carpenter, and the 'right Stephen' a blacksmith), and the common use of the name Stephen. But the Stephen to whom Bede refers is the Stephen of the Acts of the Apostles, which, given his double exegetical treatment of it, Bede knew extremely well. He compares the vision that the proto-martyr received at the moment of his death of those who were in heaven with the monk's description of those Caiaphas and his co-conspirators who were in hell.<sup>228</sup> These seem tenuous links from which to argue, as McCready does, that Bede's story is 'no more than a pastiche of elements drawn from the *Dialogues*'.<sup>229</sup> It is more likely that Bede's story represented a genuine tradition, and that it and the others in book five of the *Historia* were stories that were widely told in Bede's own day. The popularity of such stories continued into the ninth century. In the *De Abbatibus*, Aethelwulf includes the story of Merhtheof,<sup>230</sup> a brother of his own house, so presumably he is recounting a story that he has heard at first hand. This man died, and was taken before an heavenly tribunal, but condemned to hell on the grounds that he had broken a promise to his first wife (whom he met in his vision) not to marry again after her death. After pleading from his sons, he was allowed back to earth to atone for

his crime.<sup>231</sup>

Alcuin retold the tale of Drythelm, which he clearly drew from Bede, although the necessity of recasting it in verse involved significant changes to the vocabulary.<sup>232</sup> He also included a much later instance of a near death experience, with the story of three visions associated with one *iuvenis* of the church in York.<sup>233</sup> In the first, the man saw an angel with a book that he was able to read. In the second, the man died and was taken into heaven, where he met many people, 'sed maxime sanctae illius ecclesiae laetos agnovit alumnos.'<sup>234</sup> The third vision was of the man's death, when another monk saw his soul collected by an individual from heaven in a shining garment. There are several points of interest in this narrative. One is that it reminds us that the visions of the afterlife were, to writers of the eighth and ninth century, only a few of a much larger number of miracles associated with death, dying, heaven and hell. In a sense, the story of the thane of Cenred is not a near-death experience as the others are. It is more the corresponding miracle to the story of the men in white who went to Brie to collect Earcongota,<sup>235</sup> or that of Chad's visitors a week before his death.<sup>236</sup> These stories have numerous parallels in the Anglo-Saxon literature and elsewhere. They show, not so much the influence of any earlier hagiographer, but the state of mind in a society in which heaven and hell were understood as proximate realities and were much discussed. The quality



of witnesses offered by Bede for his stories <sup>237</sup> suggests very strongly that Bede believed what he was relating to be true, and expected his audience to share that attitude.

It would appear that that was the case for most, if not all, of the miracle stories under discussion. That some of the stories were similar to those told of others in other places cannot be denied, but its significance should not be over-estimated. Behind the stories clearly lies a form of oral transmission which caused the great deeds of the saints to be widely known. With the instances of uncorrupted corpses it may well be that this interchange of stories was a factor in the development of a pattern of cultic behaviour, and it may also be that to know of the hero of one monastery performing a miracle was a spur to those in another place to record the same of their own saint. That does not mean that, for example, only Cuthbert or Columba grew corn out of season and the other story was fabricated; but it does mean that the parts of a saint's biography most likely to be remembered were those which could be offered in parallel to another. That stories were recorded, and perhaps even shaped, to that end, does not mean that they were fabricated.

However, two of the ninth-century stories do look like fabrications. Alcuin's account of the young man of York seems to be intended to serve a purpose within the poem, as a closing assurance of the piety of the saints of York and their place in heaven.<sup>238</sup> Its position at the very end of

the work is significant. Much the same point can be made about the dream of Aethelwulf in *De Abbatibus*.<sup>239</sup> In his dream, the poet recounts that he saw into heaven (which he describes with imagery drawn from the Biblical books of Ezekiel and Revelation) and met there his distinguished teachers. It seems likely that these are artistic artifices, perhaps not even intended to be believed literally, but created to strengthen the credibility of that which has gone before. The writers are making theological points - that the holy men of their churches are now worshipping in heaven and continuing to care for those who have taken their places. If that be the case, it raises the question of how any of these stories of visions is to be understood, and what place they have in works of history? It is this tension between historical and theological meaning which will be explored in the next two chapters. In chapter four, the spiritual significance of miracle stories will be examined; what were the theological understandings that writers expected their audiences to share and to which they wanted to contribute by the use of miracle stories? And then, in chapter five, questions of historical veracity and bias will be addressed, and consideration will be given to the way in which the miracle stories helped to shape the picture that writers gave their contemporaries, and us, of their own recent past.

Notes to Chapter Three.

The title quotation is from *H.E.* III, 13.

1. E.g., *VWilf.* praef., with extensive verbatim borrowing from *VAnon.* I, 1 (Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, pp.2, 150).
2. *H.E.* I, 7; I, 17-21; IV, 7-10.
3. The most likely instances of this are *H.E.* V, 14, which McCready argues is a 'literary artifice' based on Greg. *Dial.* IV, 36 (*Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp.189-92. For a rejection of this argument, see below, p.210), and *H.E.* V, 4, a John of Beverley story which closely resembles one of Cuthbert (*VAnon.* IV, 3; cf. *VPr.* c.29, *VMet.* c.23), but for which Bede gives an eyewitness as his source.
4. E.g., A. Stacpoole, 'St Bede the Venerable, Monk of Jarrow', in ed. Farmer, *Benedict's Disciples*, pp.87-88; D Whitelock, 'Bede and his Teachers and Friends', pp.19-20.
5. A useful survey of the sources in the *H.E.* praef. and their reliability is D.P. Kirby, 'Bede's Native Sources for the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 (1965-6), pp.341-71.
6. Respectively, *H.E.* III, 12; IV, 19; V, 15.
7. I use the term 'oral tradition' simply to describe stories carried by word of mouth from one place to another. Strictly speaking, the phrase should be 'oral history', as 'tradition' implies something passed on from a previous generation, and many of these stories were put into writing within a few years of their first telling. See J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1985), p.28.
8. Particularly as it might be assumed that the language in which the stories were conveyed was the vernacular.
9. See appendices 1 - 5.

The subtitle quotation is from *H.E.* praef..

10. *Medieval Listening and Reading* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.10-12.
11. E.g. *RegBen.* c.33. Green (*op. cit.* p.30) makes this point, but it is difficult to ascertain how widely observed or known the Rule was in England at this time.
12. *Ep.ad Ecg* c.5.
13. *Ep. ad Cuthwin.* Cuthbert's comment about Bede

translating Isidore into English implies that Bede taught in the vernacular.

14. Green, *op.cit.*, pp.5-7.

15. Green, *op. cit.*, p.6; T. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* (Oxford, 1988), pp.22-5. We seem to be close here to the idea of 'oral formulaic' rehearsing which may have lain behind the composition and transmission of *Beowulf*. On this, see R. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry. It's Nature, significance and social context* (Cambridge, 1977), pp.67-70, and P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf", and the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in ed. Farrell, *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, pp.32-95 (p.36). The issue is an highly complex one (see M Richter, *The Oral Tradition in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 1994)), and there is a lack of satisfactory terminology (see D.H. Green, 'Orality and Reading: the State of Research in Medieval Studies', *Speculum* 65 (1990), pp.267-80).

16. Propp's views are found in *Morphology of the Folktale* (2nd edition (E.T.), Indiana, 1968) and *Theory and History of Folklore* (E.T., Minneapolis, 1984).

17. *Morphology*, p.20.

18. *H.E.* IV, 13.

19. *VWilf.* c.26.

20. *Morphology*, pp.20-1.

21. *Theory and History*.

22. *Op. cit.*, p.74.

23. *Op. cit.*, p.80.

24. *Op. cit.*, p.86.

25. *Op. cit.*, p.119.

26. *Op. cit.*, p.120.

27. E.g., stories of uncorrupted corpses from a number of monastic houses in seventh-century England (below, pp.196-204).

28. I am grateful to Dr Cubitt for allowing me to use her paper before its publication, and whilst a part of it still exists in note form, because of which, I avoid citing page numbers for individual points.

29. See R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*

(English Translation, Oxford, 1963), for a background to the methods.

<sup>30</sup>. The method fostered a scepticism, which saw stories as developments of the sayings of Jesus; Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p.230.

<sup>31</sup>. *RegBen.* c.6.

<sup>32</sup>. *RegBen.* cc.42, 6.

<sup>33</sup>. In the Bodleian Library, Hatton 48. On this, see P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England* (Cambridge, 1990), p.201-3.

<sup>34</sup>. This is the age of the *Regula Mistra*, e.g., *VAnon.* III, 1. See H. Mayr-Harting, *The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St Benedict and Social Class* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1976), p.6). On the lack of definition in monastic organization, see S. Foot, 'What was an early Anglo-Saxon monastery?', *Monastic Studies*, pp.48-51.

<sup>35</sup>. *RegBen.* prol..

<sup>36</sup>. *Ep. ad Ecg.*, c.1.

<sup>37</sup>. *VGuth.* c.43.

<sup>38</sup>. *VAnon.* IV, 9.

<sup>39</sup>. *VAnon.* IV, 10.

<sup>40</sup>. See Appendix 2.

<sup>41</sup>. *H.E.* III, 19.

<sup>42</sup>. E.g., no sources are given within the stories of Cedd, but in the preface Bede records that he learned of his career from the monks of Lastingham.

The subtitle quotation is from Jonas, *Vita Columbani* (hereafter, *Jon. VCol.*) I, 3.

<sup>43</sup>. *H.E.* III, 13.

<sup>44</sup>. Neither it is entirely clear who gives the man the chip. Both the grammar and what is known of his career suggest that it is Willibrord; however, it could equally well be read as being Acca (whose words to Bede are reported *verbatim*).

<sup>45</sup>. *H.E.* III, 9.

<sup>46</sup>. C. Stancliffe, 'Where was Oswald killed?', in ed. C.

Stancliffe & E. Cambridge, *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford, Lincs., 1995), pp.84-96.

47. *H.E.* III, 10.

48. *H.E.* III, 11-12.

49. *H.E.* III, 6.

50. *H.E.* III, 2.

51. *Ibid.*.

52. *H.E.* III, 14.

53. A. Thacker, '*Membra Disjecta: the Division of the body and the Diffusion of the Cult*', in ed. Stancliffe & Cambridge, *op. cit.*, pp.97-127. Also, D.P. Kirby, *St Wilfrid at Hexham* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1975), pp.26-32.

54. *VWilf.* c.59.

55. *VWilf.* c.60.

56. '*Membra Disjecta*', pp.109-12.

57. The argument is summarized in Stancliffe, *op. cit.*.

58. *H.E.* III, 9.

59. According to Kirby, *op. cit.*, p.5, these oral traditions were 'panegyric in nature, and extremely localized,...[and] extremely fragile.' As Stephen and Bede both relied on sources of note within the Wilfridian circle, it is hard to envisage too much damage having been done to the stories before they were recorded.

60. *H.E.* V, 2.

61. *H.E.* III, 13.

62. *VWilf.* c.12.

63. *H.E.* I, 27. The Anonymous of Streoneshalh disagrees, believing that Augustine was consecrated by Gregory before he left Rome. This may simply be an error; however, part of the Streoneshalh writer's programme was to present Gregory as the direct apostle, through Edwin and Paulinus, of Northumbria, and not to acknowledge any Kentish or Frankish influence in the conversion.

64. *H.E.* I, 24.

65. There is some confusion over whether Augustine made two

or three visits to Gaul. See R.A. Markus, 'The Chronology of the Gregorian Mission to England: Bede's Narrative and Gregory's Correspondence', repr. in *From Augustine to Gregory the Great* (London, 1983), X.

66. *H.E.* I, 28.

67. *H.E.* I, 27.

68. *H.E.* II, 5.

69. I Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony in England', in ed. Carver, *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, pp.235-41 (p.240).

70. *H.E.* I, 23. Bede may have over-emphasized the degree to which Augustine was responsible for the conversion of Kent. In *H.E.* II, 5, it is implied that Aethelberht was already a Christian by 597.

71. For exposition of the view that Merovingian influence in England and in the English Church was much greater than is implied by Bede, see J. Campbell, 'The First Century of Christianity in England', repr. in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp.49-67, Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), pp.38-42, and Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London, 1994), pp.159-80. Wood rejects Barbara Yorke's argument that the mission of Augustine was an attempt by Aethelberht to establish independence from Francia (*Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), p.178).

72. Wood, 'The Merovingian North Sea' (*Occasional Papers on Medieval Topics I* (Alingås, Sweden, 1983)), p.12.

73. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p.59.

74. The extent of Aethelberht's *imperium* is far from clear; see N. Higham, *An English Empire* (Manchester and New York, 1995), pp.47-52. According to Kirby, it was only with Frankish assistance that Aethelberht established himself in Kent (*Earliest English kings*, p.34).

75. *H.E.* I, 25.

76. *H.E.* II, 15

77. Wood, 'Merovingian North Sea', p.14.

78. *H.E.* III, 18.

79. I.Wood, 'Frankish Hegemony', p.241; A.C. Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (London, 1986), p.86.

80. *H.E.* II, 20.

81. 'All in all the evidence, though slight, is consistent with the idea that the Merovingians looked upon their northern neighbours as inferiors who were worth keeping an eye on.' (Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p.178).
82. Alcuin, *Vita Ricardii I*, 6.
83. *H.E.* II, 15.
84. *H.E.* III, 7.
85. Itself a sign that Frankish hegemony did not extend to Wessex.
86. *VGuth.* c.50.
87. *H.E.* II, 12; *VGreg.* c.16.
88. Adomnan *Vita Columbae* (hereafter Adom. *VCol.*) I, 1.
89. H. Moisl, 'The Bernician Royal Dynasty and the Irish in the Seventh Century', *Peritia* 2 (1983), pp.103-26.
90. A. Ritchie, *Iona* (London, 1997), pp.47-56.
91. Adom. *VCol.* I, 1; Moisl, p.109.
92. Moisl, pp.115-6.
93. *H.E.* V, 15. On the issue of Bede's reliability here, see J-M. Picard, 'Bede, Adomnan, and the writing of History', *Peritia* 3 (1984), pp.50-70.
94. *H.E.* V, 15.
95. The main sources for Columban's life are Jon. *VCol.* and his own writings, (in G.S.M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera* (Dublin, 1957)). Also, Metlake, G., *The Life and Writings of Saint Columban* (Philadelphia, 1914); P. Riche, 'Columbanus, his followers and the Merovingian Church', in ed. Clarke & Brennan, *Columbanus and Merovingian Monasticism* (B.A.R. International Series 113, 1981), pp.59-72.
96. *H.E.* III, 8.
97. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p.191.
98. Wood, 'A prelude to Columbanus: the monastic achievement in the Burgundian territories', in ed. Clarke & Brennan, pp.3-32.
99. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p.189.



100. *H.E.* V, 19.
101. *VWilf.* c.10.
102. For editions of Gregory's works, see the bibliography.
103. R. Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), p.136.
104. W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (Princeton, 1988), pp.135-53.
105. The principal collections of saints' lives, the *Codex Salmanticensis*, *Codex Kilkenniensis*, and *Codex Insulensis*, are compilations of the twelfth century or later.
106. D. O'Croinin, *Early Medieval Ireland* (London, 1995), p.210.
107. 'No Latin life of an Irish saint composed in Ireland can be confidently dated after 700 but before the late eleventh century' (R. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives. An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1991), p.17).
108. *Op. cit.*, p.208.
109. L. Bieler, 'The Celtic Hagiographer' *Studia Patristica* 5 (1962), 243-65 (pp.246-7); K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: An Introduction to the Sources* (London, 1972), p.227.
110. L. Bieler, 'Miurchu's Life of St Patrick as a work of literature', *Medium Aevum* 43 (1974), pp.219-33.
111. Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979), pp.41-3.
112. O'Croinin, p.208.
113. Thacker, *Social and Continental Background*, pp.95-6, 106; D.A. Bullough, 'Columba, Adomnan and the Achievement of Iona (part I)', *Scottish Historical Review* 43, (1964), pp.111-30 (pp.129-30).
- The subtitle quotation is adapted from Adom. *VCoI.* III, 10.
114. It is only later tradition that associated his departure from Ireland with guilt for his involvement in the battle of Cul Drebene (Ritchie, *op. cit.*, p.32; A.O. & M.O. Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (Oxford, 1991) p.xxx).

115. Adom. *VCo1.*, sec. praef..
116. Adom. *VCo1.* I, 1.
117. Adom. *VCo1.* II, 1. The sentence in question is missing from one of the ninth century manuscripts (Anderson, *op. cit.*, p.95).
118. E.g., Adom. *VCo1.* sec. praef..
119. E.g., Adom. *VCo1.* I, 1.
120. E.g., Adom. *VCo1.* II, 2; II, 12; II, 19.
121. E.g., Adom. *VCo1.* II, 32.
122. Most of the identifiable biblical quotations in the English *vitae* are from the psalter, clearly the part of the Bible the writers knew best.
123. Adom. *VCo1.* II, 46.
123. *H.E.* V, 15.
125. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p.xlii.
126. Picard, 'Bede, Adomnan and the Writing of History', p.63.
127. Picard, 'The Purpose of Adomnan's "Vita Columbae"', *Peritia* 1 (1982), pp.160-77 (p.161).
128. Adom. *VCo1.* II, 45.
129. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p.xlii; Picard, 'Purpose', pp.169-75.
130. Adom. *VCo1.* I, 1.
131. Joshua 1. 1-9.
132. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* I, 28-9.
133. Adom. *VCo1.* I, 1.
134. *VGuth.* c.52.
135. *VGuth.* prol..
136. According to *H.E.* V, 23, Aethelbald ruled over all of England south of the Humber.
137. *VGuth.* c.37, cf. Adom. *VCo1.* II, 8 & 9.

138. Adom. *VCol.* praef.. It is impossible to know how widely the first Life of Columba, by Cumme, circulated, or to what extent Adomnan copied it in his own work (Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp.188-90).
139. *VGuth.* c.50; *H.E.* IV, 29 (*VAnon.* IV, 9; *VPr.* c.28); Adom. *VCol.* III, 23.
140. *H.E.* IV, 28.
141. Above, pp.137-45.
142. Adom. *VCol.* II, 10.
143. *H.E.* IV, 28.
144. Adom. *VCol.* II, 3.
145. Adom. *VCol.* II, 1.
146. Above, pp.139-42.
147. Only in the Johannine account (John 2. 1-11).
148. *VPr.* c.35.
149. Adom. *VCol.* III, 8, 10, 11. 12 et al.; cf. *V.Pr.* c.34.
150. Adom. *VCol.* I, 8; cf. *VPr.* c.24.
151. Adom. *VCol.* I, 7; cf. *VPr.* c.27.
152. Adom. *VCol.* II, 4; cf. *VPr.* c.31.
153. Adom. *VCol.* II, 18; I, 35; cf. *VPr.* c.12.
154. Adom. *VCol.* II, 4; cf. *VPr.* c.27.
155. Adom. *VCol.* II, 13; cf. *VPr.* c.23.
156. Adom. *VCol.* I, 4; cf. *VPr.* c.11.
157. *VAnon.* IV, 18.
158. 'Purpose', pp.165-73.
159. *Op. cit.*, p.173.
160. *Op. cit.*, p.166.
161. *VAnon.* III, 6.
162. *H.E.* III, 4.

The subtitle quotation is from *H.E.* IV, 30.

163. *H.E.* IV, 3.

164. *H.E.* IV, 30.

165. 'The Folklore of the Uncorrupted Body', *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 48 (1935), pp.374-80.

166. Loomis seems to be referring to the legend that Zeus commanded that the body of Attis should not corrupt. P. Levi (trans.), *Pausanias: Guide to Greece* (Harmondsworth, 1979), III, 17.5.

167. *Gloria Confessorum* (hereafter *G.C.*) c.61.

168. *G.C.* c.71.

169. *G.C.* c.31.

170. *G.C.* c.41.

171. *Vita Patrum* (hereafter *V.P.*) VII, 4.

172. *V.P.* XII, 3.

173. *H.E.* III, 8.

174. '... cuius corpus vivens ante impollutum post mortem incorruptum manens adhuc demonstrat' (*VWilf.* c.19).

175. *H.E.* IV, 19.

176. *H.E.* III, 8.

177. *VPr.* c.42.

178. *VMet.* c.38.

179. Ps. 15(16). 10 (Vulgate); this sense is lost in English translations dependent on the Hebrew rather than the Septuagint.

180. The possible theological interpretations of this miracle are discussed below, pp.237-9.

181. *VAnon.* IV, 14.

182. *VPr.* c.42.

183. *H.E.* III, 19.

184. Hereafter *VFurs.*

185. *VFurs.* c.30.
186. *Ibid.*
187. *Social and Continental Background*, pp.305-6.
188. *VGuth.* c.51.
189. A rare instance of such borrowing in a miracle story.
190. The number of these translations which depended on the initiative of the family is remarkable, though not perhaps of great import.
191. *VGuth.* c.51.
192. *G.C.* c.34.
193. *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), p.93. Rollason also discusses the possibility that the bodies were embalmed to ensure their preservation, pp.39-41.
194. *H.A.* c.20.
195. *H.A.* c.21.
196. *Ibid.*
197. *Versus*, 1299-1300.
- The subtitle quotation is from *Versus*, 1620.
198. *H.E.* V, 12-14.
199. *H.E.* V, 12.
200. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p.182.
201. On the use of the term paradise, see chapter 4, n.1.
202. Boniface, Ep. 10. On the date of this letter, see P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England* (Cambridge, 1990), pp.246-9.
203. McCready, *op.cit.*, p.184; Sims-Williams, p.250.
204. *H.E.* III, 19.
205. *H.E.* V, 13.
206. *H.E.* V, 14.
207. *H.E.* III, 19.

208. *H.E. V*, 12, cf. 23.
209. *H.E. V*, 13, cf. 23.
210. *H.E. V*, 13.
211. *H.E. V*, 12.
212. *H.E. V*, 14.
213. *H.E. V*, 13.
214. *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of near-death experiences in medieval and modern times*, (New York & Oxford, 1987).
215. *Greg. Dial.* IV, 32.
216. *Greg. Dial.* IV, 37.1-4
217. *Greg. Dial.* IV, 37.5-6.
218. *Greg. Dial.* IV, 37.7-13.
219. *Greg. Dial.* IV, 38.1.
220. *Decem Libri Historiarum* (hereafter *H.F.*) VII, 1.
221. Zaleski, pp.123-7.
222. *Op. cit.*, pp.143-6.
223. *VGuth.* cc.31-33.
224. *VFurs.* c.7.
225. *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, p.84.
226. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp.193-4.
227. *Op. cit.* p.192.
228. *H.E. V*, 14.
229. *Op. cit.* p.192.
230. *DeAb.* c.11.
231. The offence seems to have been to break his promise to his wife. There was no prohibition on the widowed re-marrying, but the church's interest in the possibility of inheriting led some to discourage the practice, which may be something that lies behind this story. J. Goody, *The*

*Development of the family and marriage in Europe*  
(Cambridge, 1983), pp.60-8.

232. *Versus*, 867-1007.

233. *Versus*, 1603-48.

234. *Versus*, 1624-5.

235. *H.E.* III, 8.

236. *H.E.* IV, 3.

237. *Ibid.* for the account of Cedd collecting Chad's soul,  
where Bede writes of Egbert, 'hoc, quod tantus vir dixit,  
quia verum sit, esse non possit incertum,'

238. *Versus*, 1623-4.

239. *DeAb.* c.22.

Chapter Four

Interioribus bonis et exterioribus caelesti gratia ditasse:  
the theological content of the miracle stories.

Bede, telling the story of Dryhthelm, and Boniface, relating that of the monk of Wenlock, were not only recording, for their contemporaries or for posterity, the details of an event which they thought of interest and believed had happened, but also, making an implicit theological statement, that they believed that the consequence of the way a person lived his or her life was existence after death in one of four places. Hell, purgatory, paradise, and heaven are all theological concepts,<sup>1</sup> as are judgement, punishment, and reward. That much is obvious. What is more, there is an evangelistic impulse underlying these and similar stories; they were recorded and retold to disseminate some doctrinal teaching, not to propagate academic theology but to make more widely known the belief of the church that without repentance there was no hope of heaven. It is possible to argue that the purpose of some other miracle stories was didactic in that sense, although with many it is clear that there was no such impulse, but it is universally true that to record any miracle story is to make a theological statement. The writer says, in effect, 'I believe that in a peculiar or unusual way, the hidden things of God were revealed through



this episode.' This chapter endeavours to explore the theological content of the miracle stories under consideration. Firstly, some attempt is made to sketch in the theological background. There is no such thing as a systematic theology from Anglo-Saxon England, not because none has survived so much as because the concept is anachronistic. But we can place the beliefs of the Anglo-Saxon authors in their historical context, and then set the miracle stories against the theological environment of which we know. Five groups of stories will be examined, according to the area of doctrinal belief that they reflect. Stories demonstrating concern with the afterlife form the first group. Miracles displaying hints of sacramental theology are examined next, and then those which involve a belief in prayer or in 'sacramentals'.<sup>2</sup> The fourth group consists of miracles which involve the use of relics, and finally, the doctrine of election is considered in relation to those stories which most clearly hint at it.

'Pariter tractantes fidem rectam et orthodoxam exposuimus':

Bede and the orthodoxy of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

Plurima quapropter praeclarus opuscula doctor  
edidit, explanans obscura volumina sanctae  
Scripturae.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Alcuin begins his tribute to Bede, placing the Jarrow monk's theological works at the head of his achievements, in much the same way as Bede had seen himself as primarily

a Biblical scholar.<sup>4</sup> The survival of so many of his exegetical works strongly suggests that Alcuin's contemporaries shared his view of the Jarrow scholar; all the commentaries listed in the last chapter of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* are extant (only the 'capitula lectionum', whatever they were, are lost). This almost complete collection contrasts sharply with the lack of theological work from other scholars or schools in Anglo-Saxon England. The works of Aldhelm, whilst replete with Biblical allusions and grounded in theological ideas, do not include any exegetical treatment, nor any discussion of doctrine. Neither Lindisfarne nor Streonshalh has left any detail of the theology taught in its school. There does survive a series of Biblical commentaries from Canterbury, which can be confidently dated to the period 650-750, recording some of the exegetical teaching of Theodore and Hadrian.<sup>5</sup> These, however, are of sparser detail than the Bede's commentaries, so it remains safe to conclude that if we need a plumb line against which to test the rectitude of the doctrine of a miracle story, it is from Bede the exegete that the standard must be found. Whilst it might be objected that one theologian seems a poor representative sample by which to judge the beliefs of the age, there is a number of reasons why it is safe to treat Bede in this way.

The first is that there was a unity of scholarship in Anglo-Saxon England. Not that the works produced in each of the great centres of learning which seventh- and

eighth-century England could boast were not very different from each other - the 'hermeneutic' style and the peculiar syntax and vocabulary adopted by Aldhelm contrasts with the limpid style and clear structure preferred by Bede.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, students of patristics conventionally favour a distinction between the Antiochene method of exegesis and the Alexandrian. Whereas the Canterbury commentaries adopt the former, with the emphasis on the literal meaning of the text,<sup>7</sup> Bede was adept at finding allegorical interpretations, as his mentors Gregory the Great and Augustine of Hippo had done (although he also displayed his interest in the philological meaning).<sup>8</sup> Bede's method of textual study is discussed more fully below. The point for now is simply to note that the (largely Greek) exegetical method of Canterbury can be contrasted with the (entirely Latin) method used at Jarrow-Wearmouth.<sup>9</sup>

These obvious differences can blind us to the fact that Bede was really in only the second generation of scholarship in the English Church. Whatever had been done at Malmesbury or at Lindisfarne under Irish influence, the real flowering of learning seems to have followed the arrival of Theodore and Hadrian in 670.

Et quia litteris sacris simul et saecularibus, ut diximus, abundanter ambo erant instructi, congregata discipulorum caterva scientiae salutaris cotidie flumina inrigandis eorum cordibus emanabant.

This 'happiest of times' had the result that

quicumque lectionibus sacris cuperent erudiri, haberent in promptu magistros qui docerent.<sup>10</sup>

Amongst those who travelled along this 'river of scholarship' were Aldhelm,<sup>11</sup> Tobias of Rochester,<sup>12</sup> John of Beverley,<sup>13</sup> Ofter of Streonshalh,<sup>14</sup> and Albinus, who succeeded Hadrian as abbot at Canterbury;<sup>15</sup> it is worth remembering that it was with Benedict Biscop that Hadrian and Theodore journeyed to England in 669-70,<sup>16</sup> and no doubt there were others, whose names we do not know, who later were responsible for the teaching of monks or ordinands. The result must have been that the orthodox faith, which Theodore was so eager to ensure was held throughout the English Church,<sup>17</sup> was disseminated through a group of scholars with a common link to the Canterbury school.

That suggests a second reason why Bede can be fairly used to represent the beliefs of his day. Scholars have noted Bede's passion for orthodoxy, and the way in which he saw himself as a defender of credal rectitude against all manner of heresy.<sup>18</sup> His Christmas Day sermon<sup>19</sup> is a classic example of a central doctrine defined both in terms of positive content and against the heresies which Bede abhorred.<sup>20</sup> It would appear that in this he was entirely in step with his contemporaries. His reports that Theodore's first priority was to ensure the orthodoxy of his fellow bishops<sup>21</sup> are confirmed by Aldhelm.<sup>22</sup> Theodore, arriving in England having previously been an ambassador in the controversies which raged between Rome and Constantinople,<sup>23</sup> may have worried unnecessarily, as there seems to have been little danger of any major doctrinal

error in England. Pelagianism, the only heresy ever seriously to have taken hold in Britain, was no longer a force; in *In Genesim*, for example, Bede tones down the anti-Pelagian remarks of his main source, Augustine of Hippo.<sup>24</sup> Also illuminating is Bede's introduction to his account of the Synod of Hatfield,<sup>25</sup> convened by Theodore to establish the English Church's position in relation to the ongoing dispute between the Greek and Latin Churches on the monothelite controversy.<sup>26</sup> Bede, misunderstanding the detail of the, admittedly highly complex, issue, and not recognizing the high esteem in which Theodore was held as an authority on the subject,<sup>27</sup> records that the synod met in order to keep the church clear from the errors of Eutyches, the propagator of the monophysite heresy, which had been condemned by the Tome of Leo some two hundred years previously.<sup>28</sup> Bede's mistake is another indication that the doctrinal disputes which had so torn apart the churches of the east in the previous four hundred years were largely unknown and irrelevant in England. With no question of dogma to defend or deviation to refute, Anglo-Saxon polemic tended to focus on outward signs of orthodoxy - the date of Easter or the shape of the monastic tonsure.<sup>29</sup> In short, Bede stands as the orthodox representative of a thoroughly orthodox national church.

A sign of Bede's orthodoxy is the 'striking rapidity' with which his works were copied and circulated, both in England and on the continent.<sup>30</sup> Alcuin's tribute to the

'praeclarus doctor' quoted above reflects the enthusiasm for Bede's writings during the Carolingian renaissance, an enthusiasm which lasted until the eleventh century.<sup>31</sup> There has been some suggestion that this popularity abroad contrasted with a lack of respect for Bede's scholarship in Britain; R.W. Southern claimed that whilst Bede's works were used abroad during the ninth century they were largely unknown in England until their reintroduction after 1066,<sup>32</sup> and B. Capelle believed that 'Bede était encore pour ses contemporains, un inconnu'.<sup>33</sup> Whence comes the evidence for this view is unclear. That the earliest surviving manuscripts of Bede's exegetical works are almost entirely continental is more a result of the turmoil in England and widespread destruction of the monasteries during the ninth century, than due to a deliberate neglect of Bede,<sup>34</sup> and the idea that Bede was a minor figure whose name was not known outside of Jarrow-Wearmouth is hard to sustain in the face of the considerable contacts that Bede maintained, his close and friendly relationship with Ceolwulf, or his being commissioned by the monks of Lindisfarne to write a *Vita* of their principal saint.

So, what can be said of the theological output of this 'candela ecclesiae'? Firstly, and obviously, that his theology was entirely Biblical. The centrality of the Bible in all Bede's studies ('omnem meditandis scripturis operam dedi')<sup>35</sup> cannot be overstated, so his theological reflections are to be found not in works of philosophical

contemplation, but commentaries and homilies. The two are closely related in form and purpose; the sermons at times seem to be little more than extracts from commentaries on a gospel passage,<sup>36</sup> with a structure that varies little - an introduction to the content of the lection, a verse-by-verse exegesis, and a final summation with some moral or practical application. Similarly, Bede's commentaries are usually in the form of notes on each verse. It is the content, rather than the form, which is interesting. There is no need here to rehearse the list of Bede's exegetical works, nor to discuss the arguments over comparative dating.<sup>37</sup> Whilst it is clear that in some (presumably earlier) works, Bede seems wholly dependent on earlier authorities, fewer citations of Augustine, Gregory, Jerome or others in (presumably later) works would appear to indicate a wider reading and a more synthetic approach; it is not that there is any real development in doctrine - this is still an wholly orthodox approach based on the Fathers of the Church. For example, the *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum*, written some years after the original *Expositio*,<sup>38</sup> corrects matters of typological or philological detail, not theological assumptions. On one point where Bede's original exegesis had been challenged, his somewhat irate response is that he was quoting (without attribution) from Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps it is also suggestive to notice the books on which Bede did not comment. His strength as an exegete was on the Old

Testament, which gave full rein to his typological imagination.<sup>40</sup> His approach to the New Testament was admittedly hesitant,<sup>41</sup> and he never offered commentary on the Pauline epistles, arguably the books which contain most systematic theology, preferring instead to reproduce the wisdom of Augustine.<sup>42</sup>

It has already been stated that the Bede commentaries differ from those of Canterbury as the Alexandrian tradition from the Antiochene. This is not entirely a fair summation. The Alexandrian method (following Origen) was largely typological, with little regard for the literal meaning of the text. Bede inherited a greatly modified form of this approach through the great Latin Doctors, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory I, but he also had an interest in the factual detail of the Scriptures. As Bede himself argued, there were four ways in which a text could be understood;<sup>43</sup> his commentaries at times concentrated on the historical event (or literal meaning) with details of places or dates, at times on hidden allusions to gospel events or the sacraments (the allegorical meaning), at times on the moral instruction that could be drawn for his readers' edification (the tropological meaning), and at times on hints of heavenly rewards, the ways in which earthly reality reflected future glory (the anagogical meaning). Given that Bede does not forewarn his readers which method he will adopt, and that the whole system depends on Bede's conviction that, in effect, the Bible is a commentary on



itself, it is only in passing that credal statements are made or implied. What the method makes clear is the belief that there is a unity about the whole of life; for example, the corruption of the sons of Eli (I Samuel 2. 23-5) is used by Bede to look forward to the opposition to Jesus of the Pharisees, and to castigate those who falsely profess to be Christian, as well as being treated as an historical fact of great importance for the future history of Israel.<sup>44</sup> This inherent unity which is a key to the way in which the miracle stories can be treated.<sup>45</sup> An anecdote in an history or hagiography can, as much as comment in an homily, point to a theological truth.

'Laetitia huius saeculi luctu miscebatur': the understanding of death and the afterlife.

One of the most famous passages in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* recounts the great council called by Edwin to discuss his conversion to Christianity.<sup>46</sup> Bede records the speech of only one of the laymen present, who compares an human life with the flight of a sparrow which might come into the great hall through one window and leave through another:

'Ipso quidem tempore quo intus est hiemis tempestate non tangitur, sed tamen parvissimo spatio serenitatis ad momentum excursu, mox de hieme in hiemem regrediens tuis oculis elabatur. Ita haec vita hominum ad modicum apparet; quid autem sequatur, quidve praecesserit, prorsus ignoramus. Unde, si haec nova doctrina certius aliquid attulit, merito esse sequenda videtur.'

Whether this speech represents an opinion expressed at the

time, or Bede's recreation of what might have been said,<sup>47</sup> it reflects what must have been a common concern in seventh-century England. Plague wreaked its devastation at intervals, perhaps particularly within monastic communities, as the *Vita Ceolfridi* and the *libellus* from Barking testify.<sup>48</sup> Amongst the class that met in Edwin's great hall, death on the battlefield was unlikely to be many years away, and political assassination was not unknown.<sup>49</sup> Small wonder, therefore, that the major concern a religion was asked to address, accepting as a fact the brevity of life, was what followed it and what came before. *Quid praecesserit* does not seem to have interested the monastic writers greatly (except in terms of the connected doctrine of election, which is explored below). *Quid sequatur* was a major theme in miracle stories, and one which was reflected in a number of different motifs - the uncorrupted corpse, the vision of a death and its accompanying signs, and the prayer to be spared from dying unprepared. Underlying these are two theological themes - the doctrine of the resurrection of the body and the belief in future judgement.

In the last chapter some of the tales of corpses being discovered uncorrupted after burial were examined. It would appear that the theological meaning which authors of this group of stories believed they conveyed was not uniform. With some, the miracle was perceived as a sign of *ante-mortem* purity, with others it signified the continued

power of the saint, presaging posthumous miracles.<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere, there is an insight into belief about the nature of the resurrection body. The doctrine of corporeal resurrection is a difficult one; its confident expression in the first generation of Christianity<sup>51</sup> gave way to increasing uncertainty as the delayed *parousia* raised concerns about the state in which bodies would be before their resurrection.<sup>52</sup> This concern was addressed in part by the Church's prohibition on cremation (although in this Christians may only have been following a change in Roman practice)<sup>53</sup> and on the division of corpses, so that the body was kept in one piece and one place to await the last judgment. During the first four centuries, the question of precisely how and in what form God would raise human bodies was periodically discussed.<sup>54</sup> Bede (along with his contemporaries presumably) accepted the view, articulated by Augustine, that at the general resurrection, the body would be restored to its perfect state,<sup>55</sup> expounding this belief in his sermon on Christ's second resurrection appearance in Luke's gospel.<sup>56</sup> Even the wounds which we suffer before our death will be healed, according to Bede; that Christ was able to show his wounds to his disciples was for the sake of their faith and an exception to the general rule. This means that there are two possible interpretations of Bede's account of Aethelthryth (whose physical disfigurement was mysteriously found to have vanished when her coffin was opened).<sup>57</sup> Either, it was an

indication that the saint was already fit for the resurrection (and therefore her soul was definitely not in hell or purgatory), or it carried the suggestion that the restoration indicated the last judgment was near at hand.

Although it is not unlikely that Bede expected an imminent end to the world, as did his mentor Gregory I, it is impossible to be certain on the point.<sup>58</sup> What appears to have happened in the early church is that the necessary agnosticism on the time of the end, and the difficulty in articulating a doctrine of corporeal resurrection had given way to a greater interest to the fate of souls which were temporarily separated from their bodies. As Bynum puts it, 'although the doctrine of a physical return at the end of time was not discarded by mainstream Christians, hope concentrated increasingly on the soul's ascent to heaven.'<sup>59</sup> So, alive to this tension, the English sources abound with miracle stories that appear designed to provide an assurance that the souls of holy people were taken into glory. That is the import behind much of the *libellus* of Barking. The light that indicated where the bodies were to be buried may have been understood as a sign of preparedness for the general resurrection,<sup>60</sup> the conversation of a nun with a monk who had died a year previously,<sup>61</sup> and that of Tortgyth with Aethelburh<sup>62</sup> indicate a belief in a continuity of the religious community and the relationships that sustained it after death, and the vision of a glorious body heralding

Aethelburh's imminent death was a confirmation (though none were needed) that she was entering the heavenly homeland:

nemo qui eam noverit dubitare debeat, quin ei  
 exeunti de hac vita caelestis patriae patuerit  
 ingressus.<sup>63</sup>

The account of Earcongota's death<sup>64</sup> contains many motifs which were used by the hagiographers to indicate the passing of a soul from this life into glory. Earcongota is visited by men dressed in white (as was Sebbi shortly before his death),<sup>65</sup> and at the time of her death a chorus of angels was heard (a feature also of the death of Guthlac),<sup>66</sup> causing members of her community to emerge to see her soul being taken up into heaven (as Hilda's soul was seen to be carried away, and Chad's was collected Cedd).<sup>67</sup> That Bede recognized the significance of the imagery here is clear - his comment that Earcongota's death occurred at night is reminiscent of his exegesis of Revelation 21.<sup>68</sup> It is interesting that the Earcongota account comes from Faremoutiers, a Columbanian foundation; the second book of the *Vita Columbani* contains a series of accounts of deaths accompanied by signs of entry into heaven. An angelic choir was heard as Sisestrude died,<sup>69</sup> an unseen companion conversed with Gibitrude shortly before her death,<sup>70</sup> and heaven was seen to open to welcome Blidemundus,<sup>71</sup> to mention but a few examples. It would appear that in the eighth century, these motifs had become common property for English hagiographers; Bede, for example, was able, in his account of Cuthbert learning of

the death of Aidan, to use one of them, the vision of a soul being taken up to heaven (accompanied by an angelic chorus and a light of unusual brightness) for another hagiographical purpose, the call to the monastic life.<sup>72</sup> Whilst both the Anonymous' account and Bede's metrical version dwell on the details of the vision, and the later discovery that it related to Aidan's death,<sup>73</sup> Bede's ability to move beyond that in the prose life strongly suggests that the imagery needed little explanation.

Many of those whose deaths were accompanied by these signs had been forewarned that they were shortly to die. These stories seem to have been designed (in answer to the unnamed noble's concern) to reassure the reader that death was (at least for the virtuous) nothing to be feared. When Cuthbert told Herebert that he, Cuthbert, was shortly to die, the Cumbrian solitary asked and was permitted to die at the same time.<sup>74</sup> Guthlac approached his death with eagerness: '*decursis huius vitae terminis ad infinita gaudia spiritus transtolli malit.*'<sup>75</sup> A saint who was saved from death must therefore have been spared for a reason; Wilfrid was granted an extra four years in order to reclaim his possessions.<sup>76</sup> The tension is made explicit by Adomnan, who records that Columba was disappointed that he had to live a further four years because of the prayers of the churches on his behalf.<sup>77</sup>

Of course, there were those who could not be sure what the other side of the grave held for them; Bede tells the

story of Ethelhun and Egbert, who were both at the point of death during the plague.<sup>78</sup> Egbert's prayer that he should be spared was granted, although Ethelhun had wished that they both should die, as he, Ethelhun did. Egbert spent the rest of his life 'in magna humilitatis, mansuetudinis, continentiae, simplicitatis et iustitiae perfectione', in fulfilment of his vow to live 'perfectius ex tempore castigaret, vel in bonis se operibus habundantius exerceret'. In effect, he lived as if permanently within the sacrament of penance, and to the relationship between miracle stories and sacramental theology that we must now turn.

'Vinum quod dominus Jesus ad sua misit peragenda misteria':

#### Miracles and Sacraments

In his letter to Acircius, Aldhelm comments that 'septiformis sacramentorum numerus sacrosanctis testamentorum oraculis frequentissime adstipulatur.'<sup>80</sup> Were Aldhelm to have listed the seven sacraments that he had in mind, it would be an illuminating statement; Aldhelm's interest, however, was the mystical significance of the number seven, not defining the rites of the church. Sacramental theology was still developing during the early middle ages; it was not until the thirteenth century that it was determined that Baptism, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, Confirmation, Marriage, and Penance, were the seven sacraments. Therefore, in the infant Anglo-Saxon

church there was some vagueness on the subject. Bede, for example, saw the ministry of the word as a sacrament,<sup>81</sup> and in *De Temporibus* he termed the date of Easter a 'sacramentum'.<sup>82</sup> It is a looseness of terminology which mirrors the lack of definition surrounding the concept of miracle. Benedicta Ward captures this aspect of Bede's thought when she speaks of him seeing the world 'shot through with divinity'.<sup>83</sup> The word *sacramentum* itself is one which was only to acquire a precise meaning at a later date; in the same letter to Aldfrith,<sup>84</sup> Aldhelm speaks of the *sacramenta* of the details of the flood account in Genesis, by which he appears to mean the 'mysteries' or 'sacred meaning'.<sup>85</sup> All of which urges caution when talking about the Anglo-Saxon understanding of the sacraments at this date. However, the two dominical sacraments can be treated with some certainty, and there are miracle stories in which Baptism and the Eucharist feature prominently. A third sacrament (which may not have been regarded as such in eighth-century England), Penance, can be seen in the background at least of a number of stories, and needs to be treated in some detail. It is useful to examine the questions that this raises first.

T.P. Oakley, writing of the penitentials of Theodore, Bede, and Egbert, observed that the 'very prominent position of penance amongst the Christian Anglo-Saxons naturally favored the extensive use of penitential codes.'<sup>86</sup> So, he argued, in the time of Theodore, and



possibly earlier, there was some use of public penance and extensive use of private reconciliation in England.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, Oakley's appears to be an wholly circular argument. That the penitentials offer guidance for priests and penitents is seen as evidence for the widespread use of the sacrament. That the sacrament was widely used was the reason for the production of the codes for confessors. Even if it could be conclusively demonstrated that Theodore, Bede, and Egbert all did produce penitentials, it would still not follow that they were generally used. But there is considerable doubt over the authenticity of some Anglo-Saxon codes. That which has been ascribed to Egbert (bishop of York) appears to have suffered considerable modification through continental transmission,<sup>88</sup> and that circulated under Bede's name is almost certainly not English.<sup>89</sup> Even the Theodore Penitential cannot be accepted without question, as there is a complete absence of early English manuscript evidence.<sup>90</sup> What is more, there is little evidence that the concerns of the penitentials featured as an issue in the eighth-century church;<sup>91</sup> as Laistner argued, 'if Bede really was interested in the "practical aspects of penance" he successfully concealed the fact in his genuine works'.<sup>92</sup> Bede's and his contemporaries' miracle stories support Laistner's assertion that the primary meaning of *poenitentia* was 'repentance' (an inward and genuine sorrow for a sin committed) rather than 'penance' (as a rite of the

Church).<sup>93</sup>

Few stories about Cuthbert are retold in modern accounts of his life with more relish than that of his nocturnal prayer in the sea at Coldingham and the otters who warmed and dried him.<sup>94</sup> The main import of the story is not about the sympathy that existed between the saint and wild animals, although that common hagiographical motif obviously had some bearing on its inclusion, but the effect that was felt by the unnamed monk who witnessed the event. He was stricken not only with fear at what he had seen, but with bodily sickness. According to the Anonymous 'tota nocte coangustus prope mortem accederat'. The monk ('cum lacrimis')<sup>95</sup> approached Cuthbert to ask for forgiveness, which the saint granted. We might want to ask, in the context of a discussion of the sacrament of penance, whether it was as a priest,<sup>96</sup> as a monastic senior,<sup>97</sup> as the wronged person, or as a saint that Cuthbert's forgiveness was asked; in this instance, the third seems the most likely answer. But Bede's theology is clear - the pardon, like the cure, was from God.

Aeger adest vati, supplex genibusque volutus  
Se poscit domino prece commendare profusa...  
Tum prece languorem pellit culpamque relaxat.<sup>98</sup>

There is a number of elements in this story typical of the treatment of penance in the English sources. One is the association of repentance with mortality. In the vast majority of the stories which mention the need for contrition or amendment of life, illness or approaching

death provide the occasion. In the story of the deathbed vision of judgement, Cenred kept encouraging his favoured noble 'ut confiteretur et emendaret ac relinqueret scelera sua, priusquam subito mortis superventu tempus omne poenitendi et emendandi perderet.'<sup>99</sup> The message of that story seems to be that to leave penance to the last moment is ill-advised; the implication of the king's conversation with the dying man may also be that confession in illness was a common occurrence, and viewed by the Germanic warrior as tantamount to cowardice:

Ad quem ingressus rex (diligebat enim eum multum) hortabatur, ut vel tunc, antequam moreretur, paenitentiam ageret commissorum. At ille respondit non se tunc velle confiteri peccata sua, sed cum ab infirmitate resurgeret, ne exprobrarent sibi sodales, quod timore mortis faceret ea quae sospes facere noluerat.

The accusation of cowardice is one that is rebutted in Bede's account of the death of Sebba, king of Essex.<sup>100</sup> Sebba entered a monastery at the end of his life, already sick; but consciousness of his royal rank meant that he did not wish anything undignified about the manner of his death to be witnessed by more than a handful of clerics. Sebba's life was already meritorious, but the point is still made that amendment in time of mortal sickness did not diminish the stature of a Saxon of high standing. On the contrary, even Sebba's coffin was miraculously enlarged as heaven greeted him.

In other stories, it is a specific sin for which forgiveness needed to be sought before illness could be

cured. Aebbe diagnosed that Irmingburga was sick because her husband, Ecgfrith, was unjustly holding Wilfrid in custody; the bishop's release and the recovery of the queen coincided.<sup>101</sup> Aldfrith was less fortunate; he also fell ill on account, Stephen records, of his failure to accept the judgment with which Wilfrid had returned from Rome. It was a connexion that Aldfrith is said to have acknowledged:

Qui statim, ut erat sapientissimus, agnoscens, ab apostolica potestate perculsum se esse, poenitentia ductus, confessus est peccatum suum, in Wilfrithum episcopum contra apostolicae sedis iudicia commissum.<sup>102</sup>

That Aldfrith's hope that he should recover in order to right the wrong he had done was not realized does not seem to have perturbed Stephen. It was not only that illness was sent as punishment on those who despised Wilfrid, it was also that imminent death focussed their minds on what they had done, and encouraged them to seek reconciliation. The story that Stephen tells of Theodore's confession to Wilfrid and Erconwald has about it the air of a sacramental rite:

... cum Theodorus archiepiscopus in senecta uberi frequenti infirmitate anxius est, ad Lundoniam civitatem Wilfrithum et Erconwaldum sanctos episcopos ad se invitavit. Venientibus illis archiepiscopus sapienter totius vitae suae cursum cum confessione coram Domino pure revelavit...<sup>103</sup>

And Wilfrid's absolution also sounds as if it belongs to an accepted form of penance, again begging the question whether he acts as priest or victim:

'Det tibi Dominus et sanctus Petrus apostolus remissionem omnis controversiae in me commissae, et ero pro tua confessione orans pro te amicus in

perpetuum.'

Magnanimity, presented by Stephen as a principal feature of Wilfrid's sanctity, is the second element in the story of the monk who spied on Cuthbert. The power to forgive sin seems peculiarly to be vested in the saints.<sup>105</sup> Whether or not he was in holy orders at the time,<sup>106</sup> Cuthbert, on preaching tours from Melrose, often heard confessions, according to Bede:

Porro Cuthberto tanta erat docendi peritia,  
tantus amor persuadendi quae coeperat, tale  
vultus angelici lumen, ut nullus praesentium  
latebras ei sui cordis celare praesumeret, omnes  
palam quae gesserant confitendo proferrent, quia  
nimirum haec eadem illum latere nullomodo  
putabant, et confessa dignis ut imperabat  
poenitentiae fructibus abstergerent.<sup>107</sup>

The realization that the holy man already knows the sin can act as the spur to confession. With Guthlac, both before and after ordination, this is the repeated pattern. Beccel was moved to confession when Guthlac forestalled his plot to murder him; Guthlac 'illius culpae veniam indulsit'.<sup>108</sup> the two clerics who hid their flasks on the way to see him were surprised by the hermit's knowledge of their deceit and begged forgiveness; Guthlac 'veniam indulsit'.<sup>109</sup> Wigfrith was embarrassed to be reminded that he had suggested that Guthlac might be a 'pseudo-sanctitatis simulator'; he threw himself to the ground 'supplexque veniam precatus, sese peccasse fatetur', but Felix omits to mention whether or not pardon was granted.<sup>110</sup> Absolution does not seem to be an issue for Felix, as we are also not told whether the two clerics who preferred the house of a

certain widow to Guthlac's company were forgiven; it was only after the abbot revealed the details that Guthlac had given of their offence that they confessed.<sup>111</sup>

The last story sets the issue of sin and forgiveness in the context of monastic discipline, which is where it was first and most frequently set in a formal ritual.<sup>112</sup> Although not about confession and absolution, it is appropriate here to notice the implication of Bede's curious tale of the uncooked goose,<sup>113</sup> which does not appear in the Anonymous. Bede related that some monks went to visit Cuthbert on Farne, and were told, before they left, to cook and to eat a goose. The monks, having plenty of food, chose not to do so, but were prevented from leaving the island by a storm which lasted a week. Only when Cuthbert returned to them to discover the goose still uneaten, and they began to cook it, did the storm abate. This is the first story told of Cuthbert after he retired to Farne, so it serves to inform the reader that Cuthbert's spiritual authority was not lessened by his no longer exercising his episcopal office. It is to *viris sanctis* that Bede wants to call his audience to obedience, not to those holding any particular rank in the church.

More important than the person to whom confession was made in Anglo-Saxon thinking was the attitude of the sinner, a third element displayed by the monk of Coldingham. Tears, according to Bede, were a mark of true repentance.<sup>114</sup> Egbert 'conpunctus memoria peccatorum suorum

faciem lacrimis abluerat' as he prayed not to die;<sup>115</sup> Beccel confessed to Guthlac 'lacrimabili voce';<sup>116</sup> it was with a 'flebili voce' that an Irish monk begged for a relic of Oswald to save him from dying unprepared.<sup>117</sup> Monastic legislation echoes this expectation of weeping over sins;<sup>118</sup> the response that the community of Coldingham should have made to the prophecy of Adamnan was 'ieiunia, fletus et preces'.<sup>119</sup> Adamnan might be seen as the typical penitent; this is a rare clear piece of evidence for the practice of private confession (though for a particular sin, not as part of regular life), as Bede relates the rather pathetic tale of this Irishman sentenced to fasting and prayer as he waited for the priest who never came back to limit his penance. But the story of Adamnan also reveals a final point about the tears of penitence - they were at times offered by proxy. Adamnan wept for Coldingham, sorry for the punishment that they had brought upon themselves.

The most famous, and confusing, example of these tears is the story of Trajan's redemption in the *Vita Gregorii*.<sup>120</sup> Gregory's prayers were accompanied by 'lacrimarum fluentia', with the result that the good pagan was released from hell. The author's explanation that this was tantamount to Trajan having been baptized ('cuius tertium genus est lacrimae'), as the essential for salvation

was baptism, is clearly heterodox. This statement may, as O'Loughlin and Conrad-O'Briain have argued, be derived from a common metaphor in the Eastern Church in which public penance was described as a 'second baptism' or 'a baptism of tears'.<sup>121</sup> The introduction of penance in the second-century church was necessary to address the problem of post-baptismal sin; like baptism, penance was a public rite, in which the humiliated penitent was received back into the privileges of church membership which s/he (usually by apostasy) had forfeited. By the eighth century, this practice had been abandoned, and would have been unknown to the writer of the *Vita Gregorii*; and although it is possible that this accounts for the use of that particular metaphor, what is surprising about this story is not the mention of baptism but the notion that a pagan could be granted salvation in this manner.

The story also suggests some lack of clarity surrounding the understanding of baptism. That Bede held an high view of the sacrament is clear throughout his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. He follows Ambrose



in explaining the identification of the church's latter-day baptism with that of the apostles, despite the difference in formulation,<sup>123</sup> and stresses that baptism is both a washing in water for the forgiveness of sin and a means by which the Holy Spirit is received.<sup>124</sup> Sacramental theology cannot, of course, be separated from ecclesiology,<sup>125</sup> and it was Bede's view, following Cyprian and Augustine, that there can be no salvation outside of the Catholic Church.<sup>126</sup> Logically, if that baptism is the means of entry into the Church, it follows that there is no salvation for the unbaptized,<sup>127</sup> even children, a view shared by the Anonymous of Streoneshalh.<sup>128</sup> This rather harsh doctrine (inherited from Augustine)<sup>129</sup> lies behind two stories. Bede tells that after Cedd's death, a group of his monks from Essex moved to Lastingham, but were wiped out by the plague. Only one of them survived, a small boy, who many years later discovered that he had been preserved from dying unbaptized. His survival and salvation were attributed to the prayers of the deceased bishop.<sup>130</sup> Stephen tells of a child who was dead when his mother presented him for baptism, but whom Wilfrid revived and christened.<sup>131</sup> The sequel was that the boy was later forcibly entered into a monastery, despite his mother's attempts to conceal him from Wilfrid's agents. Bede, himself placed in a monastery at a tender age, may well have approved.

There are two stories in which belief about baptism

may be confused. In the *Vita Guthlaci*,<sup>132</sup> baptism apparently features as a means of healing. Guthlac is brought a demoniac to cure, his parents having tried a number of other ecclesiastical agents with no success. Guthlac spends three days in prayer and then 'sacrati fontis undis abluit [eum]'. One must presume that this means that Guthlac baptized the boy, a presumption which strengthened by the practice of *exsufflatio*, blowing on the candidate,<sup>133</sup> which rid him of the 'malignus spiritus' which had been troubling him. The problem is the implication that the demoniac had been baptized before; Felix records that his parents had taken him to a number of shrines 'ut a sacerdotibus episcopisque sacratis fontibus lavaretur'. None of the clergy was able to exorcise the boy; whether they attempted to do so by baptism or not is still not made clear; it could be that what Felix was implying is that because they could not cure him first he had still not been baptized, but that is not the impression the passage gives.

The question of a second baptism lies at the heart of another story, that of Herebald.<sup>134</sup> This 'immensely interesting story's<sup>135</sup> is recorded by Bede as from Herebald's own mouth, and recounts how, as a young cleric, he disobeyed the order of his bishop, John, not to race his horse, fell when his mount stumbled, and hit his head against a stone. He lay unconscious, with a temporary shelter over him, whilst John prayed all night; in the

morning, the bishop woke him, enquired about the circumstances of his baptism, revealed that the priest by whom Herebald had been baptized was one whom John had forbidden to officiate, commenced baptismal instruction, and performed the *exsufflatio*. Herebald told Bede that he began to recover at that moment, the wound to his head was treated by the *medicus*, and, after he had regained his health, he was re-baptized. Although this is described as a *miraculum*, it is not the cure wherein the miraculous lies, but the entire episode which is understood as remedial of Herebald's imperfect initiation and disobedience. The stone was the only one in the field and 'casuque evenit, vel potius divina provisione ad puniendam inobedientiae... culpam,' that Herebald's horse should throw him in that very place.<sup>136</sup> There are a couple of puzzling details about the procedure of the baptism; that Herebald needs a fresh course of instruction is strange, given that he is a member of John's household, and the *exsufflatio* precedes the washing, rather than following it, as in the Guthlac story.<sup>137</sup>

The main difficulty that this story presents is that Herebald was baptized for a second time. It is clear from Bede that the eighth-century English Church shared the understanding that baptism is irrepeatable;<sup>138</sup> one of the results of the schisms of the third century was a recognition that even the baptism of heretics had to be accepted by the Catholic Church.<sup>139</sup> It would appear,

however, that the English took some convincing, judging by the letters of Pope Zacharias to Boniface.<sup>140</sup> That baptism was irrepeatably is only implicit in Bede's exegesis,<sup>141</sup> so we might conclude that it was an issue to which he had not given a great deal of thought; it is hard to imagine that he would have included this story if he felt that it reflected badly on the bishop who had ordained him and whom he deeply admired. It is worth noting that Alcuin abbreviated the story when he came to retell it; perhaps aware of the irregular theology at which Bede had hinted, Alcuin credited John with the cure of the man by prayers and with his blessing.<sup>142</sup>

The comparative silence on the subject of baptismal theology reflects the fact that, essentially, the Church's mind has not altered since the middle of the second century. By contrast, eucharistic doctrine evolved considerably in the early middle ages, but there is little in the English material to reflect that development. There is only one eucharistic miracle included by the Anglo-Saxon writers, the story in the *Vita Gregorii*, in which the woman who had made the bread for the mass could not conceal her amusement at being offered it back with the words 'Corpus Domini'.<sup>145</sup> Gregory responded by refusing to communicate her, and then, ordering the people to pray 'ut Christus filius Dei vivi dignaretur ostendere an verum corpus eius esset, ut ait, illius sacrosanctum sacrificium ad

confirmandum incredulitatem eius quae huic erat incredula sacramento.' The pope produced the host which he had withheld, and discovered it to be 'digituli auricularis particulam sanguilenti'.<sup>146</sup> Further prayer restored the host to its usual appearance, and the woman made her communion. It seems unlikely that this story implies anything approaching a doctrine of 'transubstantiation';<sup>147</sup> such a notion appears to have been foreign to English writers, if Bede's comments can be taken as typical:

... cum eiusdem beatae passionis ad altare memoria replicatur, cum panis et vini creatura in sacramentum carnis et sanguinis eius ineffabili spiritus sanctificatione transfertur: sicque corpus et sanguis illius non infidelium manibus ad perniciem ipsorum funditur et occiditur, sed fidelium ore suam sumitur in salutem.<sup>148</sup>

The eucharist is a spiritual recapitulation of Golgotha; it is the memory of the passion, not the passion itself that is replicated. As the church moved from the high language of the real presence used by Ambrose in the fourth century, with the introduction of the words *mutari* and *transfigurare*,<sup>149</sup> to the defining conflict between Radbertus and Ratramnus in the mid-ninth century, when the consecrated host was identified with the crucified and risen body,<sup>150</sup> Bede seems to stand in a conservative position, using the less definite verbs *consecrare* and *transferre*.<sup>151</sup>

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Another area of theological development was in the efficacy of the mass, and in particular in masses offered for the departed. This was a doctrine in which Bede fervently believed;<sup>153</sup> it is clear that he knew the fourth book of Gregory I's *Dialogi* which defends the practice, and offers examples of its benign effects.<sup>154</sup> According to Cuthbert, one of Bede's last requests to the monks of Jarrow was for them 'pro eo missas et orationes diligenter facere,'<sup>155</sup> as in the prologue to the *Vita Cuthberti Prosaica* Bede had asked the monks of Lindisfarne, in return for his efficiency in completing the work they had commissioned,

ut...ita vos quoque ad reddendum mihi vestrae intercessionis praemium pigri non sitis... et me defuncto pro redemptione animae meae quasi pro familiaris et vernaculi vestri orare et missas facere.<sup>156</sup>

That such masses were offered on Lindisfarne and at Jarrow-Wearmouth, at least for members of the community,

suggests that the practice would have been followed in most, if not all, monasteries. According to Bede, the popularity of such masses increased after the story of Imma (the nobleman who could not be chained) became known.<sup>157</sup> The story is similar to those in the *Dialogi*, in particular to the tale of an unnamed man who was captured in battle and whose chains fell from him whenever his wife had masses said for him.<sup>158</sup> Bede's story is not a mere replication of the short Gregorian anecdote, as McCready suggests. There is a number of elements in it which witness to an English tradition, such as the historical detail of the battle in which Imma fell, the suspicion of magic (discussed in chapter one), and the concern over Imma's rank and the ransom paid for him. McCready argues that Bede distorts the Gregorian theology, by making the mass no more than a spell.<sup>159</sup> But Bede was not arguing a doctrinal point; rather he wanted to encourage a practice which was already becoming popular in England, the theology of which would, by Tunna and others offering the mass, be known. McCready does not consider this different objective; Gregory was discussing theology with a fellow cleric and placing a number of caveats on offering masses for the departed,<sup>160</sup> Bede was urging the laity, presumably those of similar rank to Imma, to offer money, prayers, or masses for departed relatives. Nor is McCready right to object that Bede's theology on this point is less subtle than Gregory's. Whereas Gregory had maintained that masses for the dead

only availed for those whose sins were not too great,<sup>161</sup> Bede was more pragmatic; at whatever stage of the afterlife the deceased was, the prayers of others could do no harm:

vel certe prius amicorum fidelium precibus,  
 eleemosynis, ieiuniis, fletibus, hostiae  
 salutaris oblationibus absoluti poenis, et ipsi  
 ad beatorum perveniunt requiem.<sup>162</sup>

The mass does not stand alone in Bede's thinking, either here or in the story of Imma; the sacraments are part of the whole ministry of the Church, founded in prayer and expressed also in what later came to be called 'sacramentals'. It is to these, and the part they play in the miracle stories, that we now turn.

'Consueta arma orationum' : Intercessions and Sacramentals.

In his commentary on Nehemiah, Bede remarked that the prayers and grief of Nehemiah over the ruined state of Jerusalem indicated the degree of mourning and intercession of the saints occasioned by the ruin and desolation of souls caused by sin.<sup>163</sup> This belief, that constant prayer was an integral part of the charity shown by the Church and its members, both militant and at rest, underlies a great deal of his teaching, and explains both his belief in the efficacy of masses for the departed, and stories of the intercession of departed saints working for the safety of members of their community, such as that of Cedd preserving the life of the boy at Lastingham,<sup>164</sup> or Oswald interceding for Selsey.<sup>165</sup> Prayers were not only to be offered by the saints, but by all Christians;<sup>166</sup> the constant aim of



prayer was the eternal salvation of the pray-er,<sup>167</sup> or of those for whom s/he prayed.<sup>168</sup> Bede's own prayer life, as Carroll has argued, was essentially monastic, centred around the daily office.<sup>169</sup> Benedicta Ward has shown how, because of the focus on the psalms which made up the office, and the way in which he absorbed not only the psalms themselves but also the 'hedgehog style' of Cassian (with the psalms applied to the monk's own needs), prayer operated in Bede's thought as an antidote to the trouble of the world.<sup>170</sup> No easy discipline, therefore, it required faith, patience, humility, and perseverance.<sup>171</sup>

It is in that context that the prayers of holy people served to illustrate the effectiveness of intercession. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, there are several stories of saints achieving wonderful things simply by prayer. Ethelwald rescued some monks of Lindisfarne from a storm when he 'flectebat genua sua ad patrem Domini nostri Iesu Christi pro nostra vita et salute precaturus',<sup>172</sup> adopting the physical posture which Bede recommended for prayer in times of dire need.<sup>173</sup> Germanus' prayers stilled a storm,<sup>174</sup> Aidan's turned flames away from Bamburgh,<sup>175</sup> Chad's cured a sick boy.<sup>176</sup> Other works offer similar examples. Cuthbert is credited with the rescue of the monks struggling on the River Tyne,<sup>177</sup> the preservation of his nurse's house from fire,<sup>178</sup> and arranging that Herebert should die when he did,<sup>179</sup> all by the power of his praying. It is not only the great saints whose intercessions prove

effective; in a number of stories the monastic community, or a group of monks, achieves a miracle through its prayers. Stephen tells of concerted prayer bringing Bothelm back from the dead after his terrible fall,<sup>180</sup> and of the way in which the whole *paruchia* interceded for Wilfrid during his illness.<sup>181</sup> Bede presents Cuthbert's response to the prayers made for him as an act of faith; the community at Melrose spent the night praying for his life and health, and when Cuthbert heard of it in the morning,

'Et quid iaceo?' inquit. 'Neque enim dubitandum est, quia tot taliumque vivorum preces Deus non despexerit. Date baculum et caligas.'

And with that, he got up.<sup>182</sup> The connexion between these miracle working prayers and the regular life of devotion geared to seeking personal salvation is made explicit by Bede in one story. Mellitus, although sick, was able to save part of the city of Canterbury from fire, as an outward sign of the reality of his inner spiritual life:

Et quia vir Dei igne divina caritatis fortiter ardebat, quia tempestates potestatum aeriarum a sua suorumque lesione crebris orationibus vel exhortationibus repellere consuerat, merito ventis flammisque mundialibus praevalere et, ne sibi suisque nocerent, obtinere poterat.<sup>183</sup>

Sometimes, prayers were accompanied by a tangible sign. Both Bede and the Anonymous tell of a visit that Cuthbert made to a certain village, where he had established a small community of nuns. One of them had been ill for almost a year, so Cuthbert, in response to the requests of her companions, anointed her with oil; her recovery, which doctors had been unable to effect, began

immediately and was complete within a matter of days.<sup>184</sup> As an account of a miraculous healing the story is unremarkable. But it is the only story of its kind in our sources. Except for this one instance, which Bede either obtained from the Anonymous or from Aethilwald, the Anonymous' source, there is no mention of a cure being achieved through the administration of consecrated oil. This contrasts with Bede's commentary on James 5. 14-18, the first Biblical evidence of the practice of anointing the sick.<sup>185</sup> Bede gives the impression that unction was widely used in ministry to the sick, quoting Innocent I's ruling that it could be administered by the laity as well as by priests, provided that the oil was blessed and used only with the bishop's authority. Cuthbert was only doing what should have been a regular part of his episcopal ministry. Whether or not such unction was regarded as a sacrament is not clear; Carroll maintains that Bede believed that it was a sacrament,<sup>186</sup> but that is not stated in the exegesis of James 5, and in the western church as a whole, the sacramental status of the rite was only acknowledged after revisions during the Carolingian period restricting its administration to the clergy.<sup>187</sup> Nor is it clear whether what Bede, and presumably his contemporaries, believed about the effectiveness of anointing. The implication of James 5, and of Bede's commentary, is that healing should follow the application of oil, but Bede makes the most of the qualifications, that the sin of the

sufferer should be acknowledged, and that the power of prayer is connected to the virtue of the person offering it. So it might be argued that the reason for the inclusion of the story of the nun of *Bedesfeld* is that it demonstrated the power of Cuthbert, as saint rather than as bishop.

That idea needs to be questioned in the light of similar stories in the *Vita Cuthberti* of both authors. The story comes in the midst of a series of miracles which are effected through Cuthbert blessing either the sick person or something which was then administered to him or her. In the first, Cuthbert is asked to bless water to be given to the wife of a nobleman.<sup>188</sup> The man expresses the opinion that this form of blessing is necessary, either for her return to health, or to assist her eternal salvation if she were to die, which seems an adequate summation of the theology of healing of the Anglo-Saxon Church. In the Anonymous' third story in the series,<sup>189</sup> it is in the action of Cuthbert's blessing that healing is located, as he cures a young man. Bede's version differs slightly, in that he omits (surprisingly, given the exegesis of James 5) the Anonymous' emphasis on the sins of the man requiring forgiveness.<sup>190</sup> The next story is included by both authors also; Cuthbert pronounces health for a sick child.<sup>191</sup> In the Anonymous' rendering, it is by blessing the child that the cure is achieved, whereas in Bede's Cuthbert is portrayed blessing the mother and kissing the child. Each

author also tells one story not included by the other. The Anonymous has an account of a servant being healed through the administration of blessed water; the details, and the request of the *comes* who came to ask for the bishop's help, are almost identical to those of the story of the noble's wife.<sup>192</sup> Bede tells the story of a nobleman named Hildmer who was cured from his sickness when he was given some bread that had been blessed by Cuthbert.<sup>193</sup>

All these stories describe the use of 'sacramentals', that is, the means whereby healing is conveyed is through objects or actions which resemble the sacraments - blessed water (reminiscent of baptism), blessed oil (of confirmation),<sup>194</sup> blessed bread (resembling the eucharist). It is also significant that the stories are set within Cuthbert's active episcopal ministry,<sup>195</sup> rather than within the monastery. In that, they resemble the stories included by Bede in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of John of Beverley. Two of John's miracles occur in the context of his consecrating a church. In the first, the sick wife of the *comes* whose church John had consecrated was cured when she had drunk some of the water (*aqua benedicta*) used in the dedication ceremonies.<sup>196</sup> The account is remarkably similar to one of those told of Cuthbert; the cure is achieved in the same way, the water is administered not by the bishop but by an assistant, and attention is drawn to the same Biblical parallel (the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law).<sup>197</sup> The John story, however, ties the

healing more closely into the ordinary episcopal ministry through the water that is used. In the next chapter, John was taken to the servant of the patron of the church, over whom he prayed and pronounced a blessing, and to whom he later, when the man was showing some sign of recovery, sent a glass of wine which he had blessed. This made the recovery immediate.<sup>198</sup>

The connexion between the miracle working of the bishop and the ministry that was expected of him may be significant. Apart from the testimony of Bede, we know little of John. The stories in the *Versus* of Alcuin are simply copied from the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>199</sup> But it is possible to speculate that Bede may have had his reasons for wanting to authenticate John's ministry, and possibly that of Cuthbert also. Both of them were appointed to the northern sees which were created from the subdivision of Wilfrid's diocese of York;<sup>200</sup> those, like Bede, in favour of the implementation of Theodore's reform, and the full Gregorian plan for two provinces each of twelve dioceses,<sup>201</sup> had an interest not only in demonstrating that those who exercised ministry in place of Wilfrid were holy men worthy of the office, but also that the ministry itself was important. Mayr-Harting speaks of a post-Hertford church that was divided between the 'Gregorians', led by Theodore, who emphasized the need for close pastoral care of a diocese, and therefore favoured smaller units, and the 'Gaulish party', led by Wilfrid, who wanted the grander

style of episcopal government witnessed in Lyons.<sup>202</sup> There can be little doubt that Bede was a 'Gregorian'; the miracle stories which he repeated from Cuthbert's and John's communities serve to suggest the spiritual benefits of more episcopal ministry.<sup>203</sup> It is one of the significant differences between those stories which describe the use of 'sacramentals' and those in which a relic is seen to work a miracle. To some extent, 'sacramentals' belong to the 'ordinary' in the life of the church, even if the miracles that come from them do not. Relics belong to the extraordinary, and merit separate examination.

'Quanta fides in Deum, quae devotio mentis': Sanctity, Faith and Relics.

In the first book of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede includes an report of the mission of Germanus to purge the British Church of Pelagianism. For the most part, this account is taken from the *Vita Germani* of Constantius.<sup>204</sup> Both writers record the devotion of the bishop of Auxerre to the Romano-British proto-martyr, Alban, but Bede diverges from Constantius to tell how Germanus visited the shrine:

ubi Germanus omnium apostolorum diversorumque  
martyrum secum reliquias habens, facta oratione,  
iussit revelii sepulchrum, pretiosa ibidem munera  
conditurus.<sup>205</sup>

For good measure, he took away with him some of the soil from the site of the martyrdom on which the blood was still visible. It would appear that this saintly theologian was a

dealer in the relic trade, always carrying about his neck a *capsulum* of relics.<sup>206</sup> Two hundred and fifty years later, relics were still being brought into Britain; Bede tells how Benedict Biscop returned from his journeys to Rome, to enrich the English Church

...quod reliquiarum beatorum apostolorum  
martyrumque Christi abundantem gratiam multis  
Anglorum ecclesiis profuturam advexit.<sup>207</sup>

Such relics were housed in churches to provide a focus for prayer. They are seen to be in use within a story which itself describes the use of more recent relics. After Cuthbert's death a boy was brought to Lindisfarne for exorcism; his ravings stopped after he had drunk some water which contained earth from the place where Cuthbert's body had been washed before its enshrinement. The boy gave thanks for his recovery 'ad reliquias martyrum'.<sup>208</sup> Such relics seem to have been an important symbol for the Anglo-Saxon Church, linking it visibly with the early church (of the apostles and martyrs), and so the dedication of any new church building may well have involved the use of relics.<sup>209</sup>

Germanus' visit to England was in the aftermath of what appears to have been an explosion in the popularity of the cult of relics. As we have seen,<sup>210</sup> Ambrose and Augustine were excited by the discovery of the relics of Gervase and Protase and the miracles that were attending them. It would appear that, at this stage, miracle-working relics were usually, if not exclusively, those of



martyrs;<sup>211</sup> Ambrose seems to have seen the miracles as proof that Gervase and Protase perished on account of their faith.<sup>212</sup> During the fifth century, posthumous miracles, rather than martyrdom, became the standard for sanctity, an evolution which was complete by the sixth century; in Gaul, at least, there was the expectation that the relics would display their *praesentia* (or power), particularly on major cultic occasions.<sup>213</sup> This notion of *praesentia* seems to have been important in the development of the idea of relics. Gregory I was, as McCready has shown, hesitant about the whole question of relics;<sup>214</sup> he thought of posthumous miracles as occurring at or near the a saint's corpse.<sup>215</sup> The rest of the Christian world, however, believed that a fragment of a relic, however small, or however tangential, contained the full *praesentia* (and power to work miracles) of the saint.<sup>216</sup> The Anglo-Saxon Church inherited a belief in the importance of relics, and the expectation that the bodies of holy people would become instruments of *virtus*, to such an extent that it was rare for an Anglo-Saxon writer to feel the necessity to explain why relics were collected.<sup>217</sup> Bede records, without comment, that dust was taken away from Chad's tomb,<sup>218</sup> that splinters from Erconwald's litter were widely used in healing,<sup>219</sup> and that an hollow was worn in the ground where pilgrims took the soil from the site of Haeddi's death.<sup>220</sup>

This last example contains an hint at a theology of the relic; whereas it was a commonplace that a relic should

witness to the sanctity of the life of the deceased *ante mortem*,<sup>221</sup> there is a number of stories which suggest the importance of the death, rather than the life, of the saint in question. The site of Oswald's death was renowned as a relic, and dust taken from there resisted fire,<sup>222</sup> as did the pillar of the Bamburgh church against which Aidan was leaning when he died.<sup>223</sup> Somehow, the early Christian association of relics and martyrdom may be responsible for this. But with both Oswald and Aidan, there is a specific link between the saint's deeds in his lifetime and the miracles worked by his relics. The last story that Bede tells of Aidan is of his prayers working to preserve Bamburgh from fire,<sup>224</sup> and in discussing the miracles of Oswald, he records that it was appropriate that the site of his death should be a place of healing, who had always helped the sick and the poor during his lifetime.<sup>225</sup>

The link between the sanctity of a life and the efficacy of a relic need not be *post mortem*. There are three stories in the sources of relics of living saints being used. Felix tells of a demoniac who was taken to Guthlac and cured by wearing the saint's belt. He retained this piece of clothing, and suffered from his affliction no more.<sup>226</sup> The story is told in a curiously taciturn manner; there is no mention of where Guthlac is when this miracle takes place, so it is not impossible that it is posthumous miracle that has somehow been misplaced in the sequence. That cannot be the case with the second of these stories,

again from the *Vita Guthlaci*.<sup>227</sup> On this occasion, a man suffers an infection after getting a thorn in his foot; Guthlac prays for him, and then wraps him in the shawl that he usually wears when praying, which serves to eject the troublesome thorn. The third story is the curious account of Aelfflaed's disappearing girdle which Bede included in the *Vita Prosaica*.<sup>228</sup> Aelfflaed was ill, but was cured when the gift of a linen belt arrived from Cuthbert and she wore it. Later, one of her nuns was suffering with a headache, so the girdle was wrapped around her head and the nun felt better. The girdle was then put away in its box.

Quam cum post dies aliquot abbatissa requireret, neque in capsula eadem neque usquam prorsus potuit inveniri. Quod divina dispensatione factum intelligitur, videlicet ut et per duo sanitatis miracula Deo dilecti patris sanctitas appareret credentibus, et deinceps dubitandi de sanctitate illius occasio tolleretur incredulis. Si enim eadem zona semper adesset, semper ad hanc concurrere voluissent egroti, et dum forte aliquis ex his non mereretur a sua infirmitate curari, derogaret impotentiae non salvantis, cum ipse potius esset salutis indignus.

It is a fascinating and important passage, and one of the few pointers to an understanding of the cult of relics that we have. According to Bede, miracles from relics are not automatic. They depend to some extent on the attitude of the person using them, and in particular to the faith of the person. This point is implied in a number of the other relic stories: the unnamed Irishman who was cured by a fragment from the stake on which Oswald's head was impaled, was first advised by Willibrord that the cure would be effective "si firmo corde credideris";<sup>229</sup> a man with a

sore eyelid placed on it some of the hair cut from Cuthbert's corpse, 'credens suum oculum capillis viri Dei, quibus adtactus erat, ocius esse sanandum'.<sup>230</sup> This understanding is not confined to Bede: the Anonymous tells of a monk of Lindisfarne who asked to be taken to the tomb of Cuthbert, '"sperans in Deum pura fide, mente fideli...";<sup>231</sup> a blind man arrived at Crowland asking for a relic, for '"Scio certe et confido, quia si aliquid de rebus ab eo sacratis lumina mea tetigerit, cito sanabor...";<sup>232</sup> a nun with a diseased arm asked to be allowed to wash it in the water used for the ablutions on Wilfrid's body, because, '"Credo enim indubitata fide, hanc meam manum incurvatum et brachium longo tempore emarcuatum...Deo volente, posse sanari."<sup>233</sup> Even the wholly atypical story of Gregory causing relics to drip blood emphasizes the importance of faith, with Gregory telling the doubters 'ut supra per orationem Deum... orandum ut fides esset adfirmanda.'<sup>234</sup>

That this theology was influenced by Gregory is indicated by the similarity between Bede's discussion of Eadbert's tomb and the comments at the end of book II of the *Dialogi* which stress the context of faith in the achievement of miracles.<sup>235</sup> Bede also emphasizes in the Eadbert account the continuity between the life and death of the saint who is credited with relic-miracles: 'Sed et indumenta quae sanctissimum corpus eius vel vivum vel sepultum vestierant a gratia curandi non vacant.'<sup>236</sup> Relics

of living saints seem to have been accepted without especial comment; the only Biblical instance of this is passed over by Bede in his *Expositio* on Acts, and only examined in the *Retractatio* because the precise meaning of the word *simincinthia* interested him.<sup>237</sup> Relics were significant, like all posthumous miracles, because they pointed to the continued *virtus* of sanctity. As Bede wrote of Oswald, 'Nec mirandum preces regis illius iam cum Domino regnantis multum valere apud eum, qui temporalis regni quondam gubernacula tenens magis pro aeterno regno semper laborare ac deprecari solebat.'<sup>238</sup> The concluding chapters of the *Vita Wilfridi* display much the same belief; as the saint had supported his *paruchia* in prayer during his life, he had not abandoned them at his death. The way in which Stephen developed this theme points towards another theological concept, that of election.

'Quos praedestinavit...': *Sancti* and *Electi*

The faith of the Wilfridian clerics that their master was still with them after his death was confirmed, according to Stephen, in dramatic fashion on the anniversary of his death. A solemn commemoration was held, at which all the bishops and abbots of the *paruchia* came together, and went in the evening to say compline, when,

... statim in caelo signum admirabile viderunt,  
quod est candidum circulum, totum coenibium  
circumdantem, quasi per diem arcus coeli absque  
variis coloribus.<sup>239</sup>

This is more than simply a *post mortem* miracle, like the

common motif of light at the time of death. It is deliberately reminiscent of the narrative of Wilfrid's birth, at which a fire is seen to burn, as a sign that the child coming in to the world was destined to be a light to the churches of Britain.<sup>240</sup> Just as Wilfrid was predestined to be a great bishop, so, in Stephen's thinking, were his monasteries chosen within God's purpose. To what extent the doctrine of election underlies the *Vita Wilfridi* is a debatable point. W.T. Foley has argued that one of the Biblical statements of the doctrine controls the whole work, with a fourfold pattern describing the ways in which Wilfrid was predestined, called, justified, and glorified.<sup>241</sup> Whilst it cannot be denied that the purpose of Stephen's writing is to defend his hero as a chosen instrument of God, the quotation from Romans is only one of a number with which the first chapter is replete,<sup>242</sup> and other Biblical ideas are introduced at different stages throughout the book. The structure of the work seems to be dictated, arguably to an extent not seen in any contemporary *vita*, by the biographical detail.<sup>243</sup> The same quotation is also used by Felix,<sup>244</sup> and it might be possible to argue that all four elements are also reflected in the material of that life. However, to do that is to try to force the material into patterns which were not in the author's mind. In eighth-century hagiography and history, the doctrine of election is a general assumption; it underlies the story that is being told, and Biblical images

are used to reinforce it.

Bede's exegetical works demonstrate the centrality of this doctrine, and also the way in which scriptural parallels were used. Whilst the idea that the Church was a chosen people emerges from the New Testament, the implications were fully worked out by Augustine, who stressed that, following Adam, humankind was destined for damnation on account of original sin, and that redemption was only possible for those to whom God chose to grant it.<sup>245</sup> Bede followed these ideas; in his commentary on the Song of Songs he asserted, against Julian of Eclanum, the utter depravity of humanity, interpreting the work as an allegory of Christ's choice of the church,<sup>246</sup> and in *In Genesis* he enunciated the belief that the whole drama of salvation was foreseen by God in the creation of the world.<sup>247</sup> The doctrine referred not only to the redeemed in general, but also to individuals within the great scheme; Bede, for example, repeatedly refers to the predestination of Paul in his discussion of the apostle's conversion.<sup>248</sup> The idea of specific election is strengthened in Bede's method by the application of terminology from one chosen group to another; Paul's use about himself of Jeremiah's phrase, *me segregavit de utero matris meae*, is twice noted with approval by Bede, whilst the language of priesthood in the Old Testament is appropriated to the Church on several occasions.<sup>249</sup>

The fundamental difficulty with the notion of election

for Christian theologians is the composition of the elect is known only to God. There are, however, moments when the invisible becomes visible, and it can be claimed with certainty that someone is one of the *electi*. This seems to be the idea that underlies miracle stories in all the works. Of greater interest to the hagiographer was the way in which a miracle could signal out the saint and presage his future greatness. A prodigy at the time of birth was an instance of this; the example of Wilfrid has already been noted. Guthlac's birth is announced by the sign of an hand at the door;<sup>250</sup> Columba's mother was told of his future greatness before he was born, and his guardian saw the baby with a light over him.<sup>251</sup> Other miracle stories make the same point; all three versions of the *Vita Cuthberti* tell of the three year old who became upset when the young Cuthbert was playing rough games, protesting that it did not accord with his future position.<sup>252</sup> For the Anonymous of Streoneshalh, the issue is the inescapability of election; Gregory's attempts to evade the responsibilities of the Petrine office were foiled when a bright light shone for three days above his hiding place.<sup>253</sup>

Gregory's letter to Augustine implies that the ability to work a miracle is itself a sign of election, quoting the words of Christ to the disciples that their joy was not to be in their miracles but '*...quia nomina vestra scripta sunt in caelo*'.<sup>254</sup> Felix makes a similar point about Guthlac's birth prodigy:



Alii...ex divino praesagio ad manifestandum nascentis gloriam illud prodigium fuisse perhibebant. Alii vero sagacioris sententiae coniecturis promere coeperunt hunc ex divina dispensatione in perpetuae beatitudinis praemia praedestinatum fore.<sup>255</sup>

Miracles, therefore, are not a *sine qua non* of the elect.

As Gregory wrote to Augustine:

Non enim omnes electi miracula faciunt, sed tamen eorum nomina omnium in caelo tenentur adscripta.<sup>256</sup>

Both Bede, in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and the Anonymous of Streoneshalh, had it as a part of their purpose to celebrate that amongst the elect were numbered some of their own nation. To make this point, Bede adopts language of the Old Testament to apply to the English,<sup>257</sup> and it is arguable that a story common to both might almost be treated as a miracle.<sup>258</sup> Gregory's puns on the words *Angli*, *Deira*, and *Aella*, are presented by the Anonymous as an example of the saint's incomparable foresight. What the story does, as Bede's discussion of the name of Heavenfield does,<sup>259</sup> is to take into history the common technique from Biblical commentary of pointing to the *mysterium* contained in a name.<sup>260</sup> The doctrine of election underlies the whole of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, so the miracle stories exist primarily not to serve the propagation of theology but as elements in a coherent historical picture. That is the hypothesis tested in the next chapter.

According to Creider, the relationship of a miracle to faith is a complex one. We need to ask to what does a story

witness, what are the reasons for believing it, and what is the response of the individuals involved.<sup>261</sup> Thus far, Creider's argument is sound. However, it is not only the fact but also the content of faith to which the miracle stories witness; it would appear that the theological ideas were contained within the stories rather than being added by the redactor. It is from the young Anglo-Saxon church that a developing understanding of the rites and practices of the church, of grace and faith, and of sanctity and relics, are preserved, not in text-book theology, but in the accounts of the miraculous.

Notes to Chapter Four

The title quotation is from *H.E.* IV, 13.

1. The word 'paradise' is here used to mean a garden of waiting, as in the third stage of Drythelm's vision (*H.E.* V, 12). Bede used it in this sense in *Hom.* I, 2, speaking of the blessed waiting in paradise to appear before the face of God when reunited with their bodies. The noun *purgatorium* was not coined until the twelfth century (J. Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory* (E.T., Chicago and London, 1994), p.3), but as Augustine spoke of an *ignis purgatorius* (e.g., *Enchiridion* XVIII (69); Goff, pp.68-78), it is not anachronistic to use the term.

2. I use the term 'sacramental', although it did not appear until the twelfth century, to denote those sacred signs which resemble the sacraments, or are extensions of them or preparations for them, and which are connected with human or ecclesiastical activities, e.g. the blessing of water for the dedication of a church. The efficacy of sacramentals is claimed through the intercession of the Church, and are thus distinguished from sacraments whose efficacy is claimed through the priesthood of Christ present in them. (J.D. Crichton, 'Sacramentals', in ed. A. Richardson and J. Bowden, *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (3rd ed. London, 1983), p.515.)

The subtitle quotation is from *H.E.* IV, 17.

3. *Versus*, 1306-8.

4. *H.E.* V, 24.

5. Ed. B. Bischoff & M. Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, (Cambridge, 1994).

6. See, e.g., on Aldhelm, ed. M. Lapidge & J. Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985), p.3, and on Bede, T.R. Eckenrode, 'The Venerable Bede and the Pastoral Affirmation of the Christian Message in Anglo-Saxon England', *Downside Review* 99 (1981), pp.258-78 (p.273).

7. Ed. Bischoff & Lapidge, p.247.

8. B. Ward, *The Venerable Bede*, pp.46-9.

9. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, pp.204-9.

10. *H.E.* IV, 2.

11. Aldhelm, Ep. 2 (*Prose Works*, p.154).

12. *H.E.* V, 23.
13. *H.E.* V, 3 (assuming, with Lapidge (*Biblical Commentaries*, p.268), that John's medical knowledge came from sitting at Theodore's feet).
14. *H.E.* IV, 23.
15. *H.E.* V, 20.
16. *H.A.* c.4.
17. E.g., at the Synod of Hertford (*H.E.* IV, 5), 'Rogo... dilectissimi fratres, propter timorem et amorem Redemptoris nostri, ut in commune omnes pro nostra fide tractemus.'
18. C. Jenkins, 'Bede as Exegete and Theologian' in *BLTW* pp.152-200; B. Ward, *op. cit.*, p.44; M.T.A. Carroll, *The Venerable Bede: His Spiritual Teachings* (Washington D.C., 1946), pp.94-6; Stacpoole, 'St Bede', p.92; B. Capelle, 'Le rôle theologique de Bede le Venerable', *Studia Anselmiana* 6 (1936), p.13.
19. *Hom.* I, 8.
20. P.J. West, 'Liturgical Style and Structure in Bede's Christmas Homilies', *A.B.R.* 23 (1972), pp.424-38.
21. *H.E.* IV, 5 & 17.
22. Ep. 4 (*Prose Works*, p.155); there is some disagreement as to whether this letter refers to the Synod of Hertford (672) or Hatfield (679).
23. M. Lapidge, 'The career of Archbishop Theodore', in ed, M. Lapidge, *Archbishop Theodore* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.1-29.
24. C.W. Jones, 'Some Introductory Remarks on Bede's Commentary on Genesis', *Sacris Erudiri* 19 (1969-70), pp.115-98 (p.116).
25. *H.E.* IV, 17.
26. For a summary of the issues, and discussion of the third Council of Constantinople, see *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* vol.IX, pp.1067-8; also P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, (1910) vol.IV, pp.489-99. M. Lapidge provides an outline both of the controversy and of Theodore's involvement in it in *Biblical Commentaries*, pp.70-80.
27. Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries* p.141.
28. Leo, Ep. 28.

29. *H.E.* III, 25, V, 21; Aldhelm, Ep. 4; *VWilf.* c.10. On the tonsure, see E. James, 'Bede and the Tonsure Question', *Peritia* 3 (1984), 85-98.
30. Carroll, p.64.
31. Capelle, pp.18-23.
32. *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford, 1970), p.8. Against this see A. Gransden, 'Bede's Reputation as an Historian in Medieval England', *J.E.H.* 32 (1981), pp.397-425.
33. Capelle, p.18.
34. M.L.W. Laistner & H.H. King, *An Handlist of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca, New York, 1943), pp.2-3.
35. *H.E.* V, 24.
36. Bede's homilies, in two books (*H.E.* V, 24) are all on texts from the gospels. There is some confusion over numbering; that followed here refers to the edition by Hurst.
37. Ward (*op. cit.*, pp.51-78) and Brown (*Bede the Venerable*, ch.3) both offer summations of the commentaries. Also, R.D. Ray, 'What do we know about Bede's Commentaries?', *Recherches de theologie ancienne et medievale* 49 (1982), 5-20.
38. In *Retractatio* praef., Bede records of the *Expositio*, 'ante annos plures... conscripsimus'. See Laistner, *Baedae Venerabilis: Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractatio*, pp.xiii-xvii, for the dating of these works, wherein the common assumption that the *Retractatio* was written after *H.E.* is convincingly dismissed.
39. *Retractatio* II, 6.
40. Ward, *op. cit.*, p.66.
41. *Op. cit.*, p.51.
42. *H.E.* V, 24.
43. *De Tabernaculo* I, 6. Bede did not originate this fourfold understanding, but drew on Cassian. See B. Ward, *op. cit.*, p.49. Jones (*op. cit.*, pp.140-50) argues that Bede had a variety of exegetical methods, of which Cassian's was one.
44. *In I Samuelem* I, 2.23.

45. R.D. Ray, 'Bede, the Exegete, as Historian', in ed. G. Bonner, *Famulus Christi*, pp.125-40.

Subtitle quotation is from *VWilf*. c.62.

46. *H.E.* II, 13.

47. Bede does not give a source for his story of the Witan (which is not paralleled in *VGreg.*).

48. *VCeol*. c.14, *H.E.* IV, 7, respectively. On the plague in early mediaeval Europe, see J-N. Biraben & J. le Goff, *Biology of Man in History* (Baltimore & London, 1975).

49. The question of social class is examined by H.R. Loyn, 'Kings, Gesiths and Thegns', in ed. Carver, *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, pp.75-9, and P. Wormald, 'Bede, *Beowulf*, and the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in ed. R.T. Farrell, *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1977), pp.32-95.

50. For the first, e.g., Aethelthryth (*VWilf*. c.19, cf. *H.E.* IV, 19); for the second, e.g., Cuthbert (*H.E.* IV, 30, cf. *VAnon.* IV, 14). As both examples demonstrate, the theological interpretation attached to the original story, not to its retelling.

51. E.g., 1 Cor. 15. 51-53, 1 Thess. 4. 13-18.

52. Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Carnis*, c.63. On the uncertainty to which Tertullian was responding, see C. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption, Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1991), pp.265-9.

53. C.W. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, (New York, 1995), p.51.

54. Bynum, *Resurrection* (pp.1-114) discusses the development of the doctrine up to the end of the fourth century. There is at present no survey of the doctrine in the early middle ages, a scholarly gap which Bynum promises to plug.

55. Augustine, *Enchyridion* XXIII, 88-9.

56. *Hom.* II, 9.

57. *H.E.* IV, 19.

58. G. Bonner (*St Bede in the Tradition of Western Apocalyptic Commentary* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1966), p.5) and Mayr-Harting (*Coming of Christianity*, p.217) argue

for a sense of millenarian expectation in Bede. McCready argues forcefully against this view (*Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp.89-97.)

59. Bynum, *Resurrection*, p.14.
  60. *H.E.* IV, 7.
  61. *H.E.* IV, 8.
  62. *H.E.* IV, 9.
  63. *Ibid.*
  64. *H.E.* III, 8.
  65. *H.E.* IV, 11.
  66. *VGuth.* c.50.
  67. *H.E.* IV, 23 and IV, 3 respectively. The accounts differ somewhat in that the nun sees Hilda's passing in a dream, the use of common imagery is significant.
  68. *Explanatio Apocalypsis* XXI, 23; cf. *H.E.* III, 8.
  69. Jonas *VCol.* II, 11 (cf. II, 14 & 17).
  70. Jonas *VCol.* II, 12.
  71. Jonas *VCol.* II, 6.
  72. *VPr.* c.4.
  73. *VAnon.* I, 5; *VMet.* c.4.
  74. *H.E.* IV, 29.
  75. *VGuth* c.50.
  76. *VWilf.* c.56.
  77. Adom. *VCol.* III, 22.
  78. *H.E.* III, 27.
- The subtitle quotation is from Adom. *VCol.* II, 1.
80. *Ep. ad Acircium* (Giles, 1, p.217)
  81. Carroll, p.132.
  82. Levison, 'Bede as Historian', p.114; *De Temp.* c.15.

83. 'Miracles and History', p.71.
84. The identification of the king of Northumbria (685-705) with the eponymous Acircius was made by R. Ewald (MGH AA vol.XV, p.61).
85. *Ep. ad Acircium*. (Giles, 1, p.217).
86. T.P. Oakley, *English Penitential Discipline and Anglo Saxon Law in their joint influence*, (1st A.M.S. Edition, New York, 1963) p.104.
87. *Op. cit.*, p.77.
88. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care in England in early Anglo-Saxon England', in ed. J. Blair & R. Sharpe, *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (London 1992), pp.137-70 (p.158).
89. *Ibid.*. Also, M.L.W. Laistner, 'Was Bede the Author of a Penitential?', *Harvard Theological Review* 31 (1938), 263-74.
90. J.T. McNeill & H.M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York, 1990), pp.179-182.
91. The canons of Clofesho, however, suggest a more extensive use of penance, see Thacker, *op. cit.*, p.162.
92. *Op. cit.*, pp.267-8.
93. *Op. cit.*, p.268.
94. *VAnon.* II, 3, *VMet.* c.8, *VPr.* c.10.
95. *VPr.* c.10. *VAnon.* has 'flebili voce'.
96. Our sources do not state when Cuthbert was ordained priest. Below, n.106.
97. Cuthbert was *praepositus* of Melrose at the time.
98. *VMet.* c.8.
99. *H.E.* V, 13.
100. *H.E.* IV, 11.
101. *VWilf.* c.39.
102. *VWilf.* c.59.
103. *VWilf.* c.43.



105. In an earlier age, the practice (or miracle) of exorcism may have caused the association of the holy man with the forgiveness of sins. P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (London, 1981), pp.106-13. This is one respect in which the holy man came to be replaced by organized monasticism, with its private penance (Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), pp.80-101 (p.101)); the English stories reflect this tension between the charismatic and the institutional.

106. Bede is frustratingly vague on this point. Cuthbert's visit to a village is described as that of a *clericus vel presbiter* (*VPr.* c.9). According to *VAnon.* (II, 5), Cuthbert went from Melrose to preach and to baptize, but Bede does not mention Cuthbert baptizing before his election to the episcopate. Is the truth that Cuthbert was not ordained when at Melrose, and that a clergyman of a later generation (such as Bede) would see his administering the sacrament of penance (which in effect he was doing), and perhaps even his preaching, as irregular? See C. Cubitt, 'Pastoral Care and conciliar canons: the provisions of the 747 Council of Clofesho', in ed. Blair & Sharpe, *op. cit.*, pp.193-211. Thacker notes that Bede did not confine pastoral ministry to the ordained ('Social and Continental Background', pp.192-3), but Carroll (*Spiritual Teachings*, p.165) argues that Bede taught that confession to laypeople was the exception not the rule, and only for minor sins. Bede's comments in *VPr.* c.9 echo *H.E.* III, 26, in describing the ministry of the Lindisfarne monks, where confession is not mentioned.

107. *VPr.* c.9.

108. *VGuth.* c.35.

109. *VGuth.* c.44.

110. *VGuth.* c.47.

111. *VGuth.* c.43.

112. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care' p.157; Metlake, *Saint Columban*, pp.112-3

113. *VPr.* c.36.

114. Carroll, p.162.

115. *H.E.* III, 27.

116. *VGuth.* c.35.

117. *H.E.* III, 13.

118. *Reg. Ben.* c.20; *Poenitentiale Theodori*, c.8.
119. *H.E.* IV, 25. It is perhaps significant that both the Adamnan and the Ethelhun-Egbert stories are from an Irish background, as the Irish practice of private confession was in advance of the English (McNeill & Gamer, pp.23-50).
120. *VGreg.* c.29; also above, pp.126-7.
121. T. O'Loughlin and H. Conrad-O'Briain, 'The "baptism of tears" in early Anglo-Saxon sources', *A.S.E.* 22 (1993), pp.65-84.
122. Not used
123. *Expositio X*, 48.
124. *Expositio I*, 5.
125. *Expositio II*, 41.
126. *Hom.* I, 23.
127. Carroll, p.102.
128. *VGreg.* c.29.
129. Augustine, *Contra Julianum*, V, 44. See also, S. Foot, '"By water in the Spirit": the administration of Baptism in early Anglo-Saxon England', in ed. Blair & Sharpe, pp.171-92 (p.188).
130. *H.E.* III, 23.
131. *VWilf.* c.18.
132. *VGuth.* c. 41.
133. Still part, according to Colgrave (*Felix's Life*, p.188), of baptism in the Roman Catholic Church, before revision of the *Rite for Christian Initiation* in 1972.
134. *H.E.* V, 6.
135. Ward, 'Miracles and History', p.75.
136. *H.E.* V, 6.
137. *VGuth.* c. 41.
138. Augustine, *De Baptismo*, V, 17,
139. Augustine contradicted Cyprian's view that baptism

- outside the Catholic Church was invalid (*De Baptismo*, VI, 1).
140. Boniface, Epp. 68 & 80.
141. E.g., *Expositio*, XIX, 5.
142. *Versus*, 1179-1204.
- 143-4. Not used.
145. *VGreg.* c.20.
146. *Ibid.*. Precisely what this means is not clear; the important thing seems to be the blood, as a sign of the spiritual reality.
147. Pace Colgrave, *Earliest Life*, p.152.
148. *Hom.* I, 15.
149. Ambrose's views are expressed in *De Sacramentis* and *De Mysteris*.
150. Ratramnus, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*.
151. Carroll (pp.121-8) overstates the realism of Bede's view.
152. *VGreg.* c.21.
153. Carroll, p.114.
154. *Dial.* IV, 58-59.
155. *Cuthberti epistola ad Cuthwin*.
156. *VPr.* prol..
157. *H.E.* IV, 22.
158. *Dial.* IV, 59.
159. *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p.143.
160. *Dial.* IV, 59; McCready, *op. cit.* p.144.
161. McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, p.109.
162. *Hom.* I, 2.

The subtitle quotation is from *VWilf.* c.62.

163. *In Ezram et Neemiam* III, 83-92.

164. *H.E.* III, 23.

165. *H.E.* IV, 14. This story was, apparently, a later addition to *H.E.*, suggesting a developing belief; see M. Lapidge, 'Textual Criticism and the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England' (*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 73 (1991), pp.17-45 (p.27)).

166. *In Lucam* V, 18.1.

167. E.g., the prayer that closes the *H.E.*. Carroll, pp.51-2, 198-9.

168. E.g., *Hom.* II, 6, in which the hearers are encouraged to pray for those outside the church.

169. Carroll, p.200.

170. Ward, *Bede and the Psalter*, (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1991), pp.8-10.

171. *Hom.* I, 22.

172. *H.E.* V, 1.

173. Carroll, p.205.

174. *H.E.* I, 17.

175. *H.E.* III, 16.

176. *H.E.* III, 23.

177. *VPr.* c.3.

178. *VAnon.* II, 7; *VPr.* c.10.

179. *VAnon.* IV, 9; *VPr.* c.28.

180. *VWilf.* c.23.

181. *VWilf.* c.62.

182. *VPr.* c.8.

183. *H.E.* II, 7.

184. *VPr.* c.30, *VAnon.* IV, 4.

185. *In Ep. VII Cath. V*, 14-18.
186. *Spiritual Teachings*, p.189.
187. *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, p.590.
188. *VAnon.*, IV, 3; *VPr.* c.29.
189. *VAnon.*, IV, 5.
190. *VPr.* c.32.
191. *VAnon.* IV, 6, *VPr.* c.33.
192. *VAnon.* IV, 7 (cf. *VPr.* c.25).
193. *VPr.* c. 31.
194. *VAnon.* IV, 5.
195. There is some confusion over the dating of these stories. In *VAnon.* and *VMet.* they precede the account of Egfrith's death, in the *VPr.* they follow it. *VAnon.* adds to the confusion by referring in IV, 3 to a *Comes Aldfridi regis* and in IV, 7 to *Ecgfridi regis comes*.
196. *H.E.* V, 4.
197. *VAnon.* IV, 3; *VPr.* c.29.
198. *H.E.* V, 5.
199. *Versus*, 1207-9.
200. *H.E.* IV, 12.
201. *Ep. ad Ecg.* c.9.
202. *Coming of Christianity*, pp.130-6.
203. A distinction close to that identified by Wallace-Hadrill as existing in Bede's mind between the *res* of the visible church and the *signa* of the church of the saints (*Historical Commentary*, pp.xxvii-xxviii).
- The subtitle quotation is from *H.E.* III, 9.
204. *H.E.* I, 17-20, cf. *VGer.* cc.12-19, 25-7.
205. *H.E.* I, 18.
206. *H.E.* I, 18, cf. *VGer.* c.15
207. *H.A.* c.6.

208. *VPr.* c.41. *VAnon.* IV, 15 has 'ad reliquias sanctorum'.
209. Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p.25.
210. Above, pp.82-3.
211. R.C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims* (London, 1977), pp.23-4.
212. Ambrose, Ep. 61.
213. Brown, *Cult of Saints*, pp.87-8.
214. *Signs of Sanctity*, p.89.
215. *Dial.* II, 38.
216. Brown, *op. cit.*, p.88.
217. C. Thomas, *Bede, Archaeology, and the Cult of Relics* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1973), p.7.
218. *H.E.* IV, 3.
219. *H.E.* IV, 6.
220. *H.E.* V, 18.
221. E.g., *H.E.* III, 13.
222. *H.E.* III, 9-10.
223. *H.E.* III, 17.
224. *H.E.* III, 16.
225. *H.E.* III, 9.
226. *VGuth.* c.42.
227. *VGuth.* c.45.
228. *VPr.* c.23.
229. *H.E.* III, 13.
230. *H.E.* IV, 32.
231. *VAnon.* IV, 16.
232. *VGuth* c.53 .
233. *VWilf.* c.66.

234. *VGreg.* c.21.

235. *VPr.* c.43, cf. *Greg. Dial.* II, 38.

236. *VPr.* c.43.

237. *Retractatio* XIX, 12.

238. *H.E.* III, 12.

The subtitle quotation from Romans 8 is used by both Stephen (*VWilf.* c.1) and Felix (*VGuth.* c.27)

239. *VWilf.* c.68.

240. *VWilf.* c.1.

241. This is the central argument of *Images of Sanctity* (Lewiston, 1992).

242. Stephen also refers to the call of Jeremiah, the theophany of Moses at the burning bush, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the Sermon on the Mount.

243. It will be argued in chapter 5 that some miracle stories seem to have been arranged, and possibly even re-dated, to present a particular version of recent history.

244. *VGuth.* c.27.

245. Augustine's views on human depravity and the sovereignty of grace in predestination permeate his works; see, H. Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers* (Oxford, 1970), pp.192-213.

246. *In Cant. Cant.*, prol..

247. *In Gen.* I, 10.

248. *Retractatio* IX, 11-12.

249. *Retractatio* IX, 12 & 27; on the use of priestly imagery for the Church, see *In Ep. VII Cath.*, VII, 2 or *De Tabernaculo*, I.

250. *VGuth.* c.5.

251. *Adom. VCol.* III, 1-2; cf. *Jon. VCol.* I, 1.

252. *VPr.* c.1, *VAnon.* I, 3, *VMet.* c.1.

253. *VGreg.* c.7.

- 254. *H.E.* I, 31.
- 255. *VGuth.* c.8.
- 256. *H.E.* I, 31.
- 257. *H.E.* I, 15 & 22.
- 258. *H.E.* II, 1; *VGreg.* c.9.
- 259. *H.E.* III, 2.
- 260. Ward, *The Venerable Bede*, p.70
- 261. Creider, pp.251-66.



Chapter Five

'Quasi Verax Historicus' : The Historiographical content of  
the miracle stories.

Modern scholars have often asked how a historian as careful and as critical as the Venerable Bede could have incorporated so much 'hagiographical' material into his 'historical' work - especially into his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Hagiography, after all, offends modern sensitivities, and the use of it suggests that Bede was either a gullible dupe or a willing liar.<sup>1</sup>

So Willard Dickerson summarizes the perceived problem which has been encountered throughout this thesis, that the miracle material<sup>2</sup> is an unwelcome intrusion into an historical narrative, and devalues the utility of the writing for later historians. As Dickerson goes on to argue, Bede would have seen things very differently, as the miracle stories served to reinforce the impression which he was seeking to create, that the history of his own people was to be understood as part of the divine purpose.<sup>3</sup> As was argued in chapter four, the miracle material accords with the theological beliefs of the time, among which must be counted the doctrine of election. But we can go further; the writer of miracle stories had no reason to approach his sources with the prejudicial scepticism of our own generation, as for him the stories were a part of the history. The distinctions with which the material has been approached, be they Dickerson's 'hagiography / history', Jones' 'factual / ethical truth',<sup>4</sup> or Colgrave's 'sober

history / wonder tales',<sup>5</sup> need to be jettisoned. They would not have concerned the Anglo-Saxon writers, and there is little reason why they need concern us.<sup>6</sup>

In his autobiographical summary at the end of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede seemed to consider the words *vita* and *historia* interchangeable.<sup>7</sup> He groups as 'histories of the saints' the 'lives' of Felix, Anastasius and Cuthbert; the next item in the list is the 'history' of the abbots of his own monastery, although that work itself begins 'incipit vita....'. But this is not just a matter of nomenclature. Bede and his contemporaries recognized a unity in 'sacred history'; that which they recorded was, in effect, an extension of the history recorded in Scripture,<sup>8</sup> and so they had no hesitation about using miracle stories as vehicles for the typology that they found in the Bible itself. The most obvious examples of this tendency occur in the *Vita Wilfridi*. The fantastic fire which greets Wilfrid's birth links the saint to Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3), to the appearance of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), and to the Gospel reference to a light not hidden under a bushel (Matthew 5.15).<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in the second miracle story, when Wilfrid is ambushed on the coast of Sussex and his retinue hold off an attack until the tide makes an early return to save them,<sup>10</sup> Stephen makes reference to the Balaam episode (Numbers 22), to David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17), to Gideon (Judges 7-8), and to three incidents in the life of Moses (Exodus 5,

Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 24). Throughout the work there is an underlying Elijah typology, with Irmingburg unflatteringly cast as a latter day Jezebel,<sup>11</sup> and with the healing of Bothelm compared to the raising of the widow of Zarephath's son (1 Kings 17.17-24).<sup>12</sup> The repeated light motif, in the birth narrative,<sup>13</sup> in the illumination of Wilfrid's prison cell,<sup>14</sup> and in the portent after his death,<sup>15</sup> is explicitly indicated to represent Christ the light of the World.<sup>16</sup> Foley has argued that the pattern of the *vita* was designed to be a deliberate imitation of the life of Andrew the Apostle, and that this reflects Wilfrid's own self-understanding,<sup>17</sup> but he concedes that a similar case could be made that the life was modelled on that of Simon Peter.<sup>18</sup> It would also be possible, as has been noted, to argue for an 'Elijah script' underlying Stephen's understanding of his hero.<sup>19</sup> What it all seems to indicate is not that Stephen had any one Biblical model, but that he wrote in an environment in which he could be confident that his work would be recognized to continue the themes with which his audience was familiar from their knowledge of Scripture. His history was an extension of the history of Israel and the early Church.

Another reason to dismiss the distinction between history and hagiography as anachronistic is to be found in the method used by and the motivation of the authors, as a comparison of the preface to the *Historia Ecclesiastica* with that to the *Vita Cuthberti* indicates. In both, Bede

writes of his care to check his sources, of the dedicatee having had an opportunity already to peruse the work, of his intention that his writing should inspire the readers to greater faith and devotion, and of his hope that prayers might be made for him. Taken together with the unitary purpose suggested by the summary of works at the end of the *Historia*, it seems perverse to believe that Bede suffered from the academic schizophrenia which some have wished to diagnose.<sup>20</sup>

The miracle stories are but one ground for believing that Bede was not alone in this view of the unity of scholarship. The similarity of his *Vita Cuthberti* to that of the Anonymous of Lindisfarne, the ways in which those works are comparable with the others here under consideration, and the manner in which all the works are informed by the writers' theology, suggest that Bede reflected an understanding common at the time. Hagiography was history; it was part of the account of God's dealings with humankind and of humans' dealings with one another. He (or she) who composed the *vita* of a saint, complete with an account of whatever miracles that saint had worked, was *verax historicus*.

'Alioquin tacere quam falsa dicere maluissem': miracles and veracity.

That the miracle stories are not out of place in the works which contain them is clear; but their particular

nature means that they can be analysed as a separate genre, an analysis which not only yields useful historical information,<sup>21</sup> but points to the way in which our writers approached their material. It is an approach which may not have been confined to those who worked with ink and parchment; as we have seen, the oral transmission of the stories was responsible for much of the internal meaning.<sup>22</sup> Prior to the examination of the way in which the miracles show us the shape of historical writing, it is useful to survey what is known of the way in which the stories were gathered, and of the sources who are quoted as testifying to their veracity.

Analysis of the sources for the miracle stories is less straightforward than might at first appear. In the appendices to this thesis, the source for each story is given in as far as it can be ascertained.<sup>23</sup> In many cases that presents no problem, as either the author has stated his authority for the story in context of the telling, or the witnesses cited in the foreword can be assumed to have related individual stories. For example, Felix only once quotes an authority for an individual story, that being Beccel, Guthlac's long-time companion on Crowland,<sup>24</sup> although even here it is not clear that the story was told directly to Felix. In the prologue, however, we are told that the writer gleaned his information from a number of reliable witnesses who knew Guthlac, chief amongst whom were an abbot Wilfrid, who appears as a character in a

number of the stories,<sup>25</sup> and the priest Cissa, who inherited Guthlac's hermitage after his death.<sup>26</sup> We can therefore assume that it was via one of these two, or from Beccel, or from another of those who had dealings with Guthlac, and who were known both to Felix and Aelfwald (the dedicatee),<sup>27</sup> that the accounts of those miracles at which none of them is recorded as being present came, presumably because Guthlac himself told them,<sup>28</sup> or because they heard it from someone else who was present.<sup>29</sup> However, we cannot presume that any of those was present at the birth of the saint; Felix' authority for that story seems to be 'vagabundus rumor'.<sup>30</sup>

The policy adopted by the Anonymous of Lindisfarne was somewhat different. There is no introduction to the main sources used at the beginning of the work, but throughout there are references to those from whom he heard the stories. In only twelve of the thirty-one miracle stories is the source listed at that point;<sup>31</sup> however, it is not difficult to ascertain the origin of most of the others. Seven of the 'unsourced' took place on Lindisfarne or Farne, and were witnessed by members of the Anonymous' own community;<sup>32</sup> five took place during Cuthbert's ministry in the wider community,<sup>33</sup> and it is clear that his catechizing or baptizing missions were rarely, if ever, accomplished solo. That leaves only seven stories. Cuthbert's prophecy of the death of Ecgfrith was made to Aelfflaed,<sup>34</sup> who is cited by the Anonymous as his authority for another

story.<sup>35</sup> The cure of Hildmer's wife occurred whilst Cuthbert was *praepositus* of Lindisfarne, and although we are not told that he was accompanied by monks when he responded to the noble's plea for help, there is no reason to believe that he went alone.<sup>36</sup> The account of Herebert sharing Cuthbert's death is more problematic, as only the two of them could have known the content of their conversation, and neither could have testified afterwards to the accuracy of the prophecy.<sup>37</sup> The other three stories all date from Cuthbert's early years,<sup>38</sup> and only in the case of the vision of Aidan's soul ascending into heaven, were other mortals present.<sup>39</sup> There are indications that Cuthbert spoke about his own experience of the miraculous; the story of the child prophesying about his future greatness is attributed to Tumma and others having heard it from the saint himself,<sup>40</sup> and, in both the story of the angel curing his knee and the miraculous gift of bread, the Anonymous mentions that Cuthbert spoke to others of his dealings with angels.<sup>41</sup>

In short, with the exception of those last two miracles (for which the source was probably Cuthbert himself), and the shared death (which is likely to have been based on something Cuthbert said before he died), there is nothing in the Anonymous *Vita* for which a source is not implied or stated. That high standard of reporting seems to have been required on Lindisfarne, if Bede's preface to his prose life is to be believed. After stressing the care that he

had taken to ensure that there were those prepared to testify to what he was reporting, Bede continued:

Quorum etiam nomina in ipso libro aliquotiens ob certum cognitae veritatis inditium apponenda iudicavi, et sic demum ad scedulas manum mittere incipio. At digesto opusculo sed adhuc in scedulis retento, frequenter et reverentissimo fratri nostro Herefrido presbitero huc adventanti, et aliis qui diutius cum viro Dei conversati vitam illius optime noverant, quae scripsi legenda atque ex tempore praestiti retractanda, ac nonnulla ad arbitrium eorum prout videbantur sedulus emandavi...<sup>42</sup>

The draft had also been sent to the *seniores* at Lindisfarne, so that they might amend and approve it. To the implication of this statement we shall return; for now it is pertinent to note those stories in which Bede does name his source.

There are forty-six miracles recorded in the Prose Life, including all those in the Anonymous' version of events.<sup>43</sup> In those thirty-one 'duplicates', Bede gives his source six times. In only two cases is the source quoted the same as that used in the earlier version;<sup>44</sup> like the Anonymous, Bede records that the cure of a nun, was related by her relation, Aethilwald of Melrose,<sup>45</sup> and that the healing of a nobleman's servant came from another servant, now a monk, although only Bede provides the name, Baldhelm.<sup>46</sup> Whereas for the incident with the otters and the prying monk's subsequent cure, the Anonymous cited a monk of Melrose (Plegils), Bede has a source from Coldingham.<sup>47</sup> Herefrith is given as Bede's authority for the story of Wahlstod's cure at Cuthbert's deathbed, which



the Anonymous claimed to have known from the cured man,<sup>48</sup> and for the problematic story of the lunch that Cuthbert's horse found, Bede quotes a monk of Wearmouth, Ingwald, who maintained that he had heard it from Cuthbert himself.<sup>49</sup>

For the fifteen stories which are not to be found in the Anonymous' life, Bede is more careful to state his sources. For five of them, Bede's informant was Herefrith, who claimed to have heard the three stories about the girdle that disappeared from Aelfflaed,<sup>50</sup> and provided Bede with the narrative of Boisil's prophecy and Cuthbert's recovery from illness;<sup>51</sup> we might also presume that he was the source for the story of Boisil's prophecy about Eata.<sup>52</sup> Surprisingly, there is another Melrose source, Sigfrith, mentioned when Bede relates the story of Boisil's marvellous foresight on the occasion of Cuthbert's arrival.<sup>53</sup> The story of the uncooked goose is credited to Cynimund, one of the monks involved.<sup>54</sup> It is noteworthy that Bede took care to name his authority on this occasion since, as we have seen, for most of the stories on Farne both authors seem happy not to be specific. For three stories,<sup>55</sup> Bede had sources within his own community, although none of them is named. His confrere who was responsible for the story of the monks rescued from drowning did not claim to be there, but Bede argues that those from whom he learned it were simple rustics.<sup>56</sup>

The remaining four stories clearly presented some difficulties in the provision of a source. Bede includes an

anecdote, which (like that of Cuthbert turning water into wine)<sup>57</sup> was probably known to the Anonymous but not included by him; in it a *gesith* named Hildmer was cured when he drank water in which had been placed some bread that had earlier, and presumably for a different purpose, been blessed by Cuthbert.<sup>58</sup> Bede does not give a source; presumably, Hildmer was a figure already well enough known at Lindisfarne for the story to be credible without any attestation.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Bede's understanding of the psalm sung at the time of Cuthbert's death being prophetically fulfilled in the unspecified difficulties which the community underwent the following year would only have told the audience something that they already knew, if perhaps presenting it in a new way.<sup>60</sup> To Cuthbert's driving the birds from his crops there were no witnesses;<sup>61</sup> Bede records that the story had come from Cuthbert's own mouth. He makes a similar claim when relating the episode of the angelic visitor whom Cuthbert entertained at Ripon;<sup>62</sup> whereas the Anonymous attributes the story to 'trustworthy witnesses', Bede reports that Cuthbert talked about his own miracles, as the final unsourced miracle, Cuthbert's prophecy of the plague on Lindisfarne, indicates.<sup>63</sup> This miracle is only included because Cuthbert himself talked about it in a sermon; how Bede came to hear of it, we are not told.<sup>64</sup> The question that this then seems to have raised in Bede's mind is whether it was proper for a saint to tell others of his wonderful deeds, although this is

clearly not an issue of veracity. The danger was not that the stories might be unreliable, but that such boasting was less than humble. Bede offers a double defence: that it was for the good of others that he should tell them of the benefits of his faith,<sup>65</sup> and that Cuthbert was modest enough sometimes to talk of his own miracles in the third person, as if they were someone else's.<sup>66</sup> That Bede should have wrestled in this way with a problem implied by, but not tackled in, the Anonymous' *Vita*, and that he should take such care to provide attestation for stories not in the earlier account, suggest that either the instructions of the community or his own precision caused him to take especial care to demonstrate that what he had written was credible.

Stephen, in the *Vita Wilfridi*, was much less careful to state his sources. Although in the preface he asserted, 'Neque enim me quicquam audaci temeritate, nisi quod compertum et probatum a fidelibus sit, scripsisse arbitrentur...',<sup>67</sup> the words are almost entirely drawn from the Anonymous *Vita Cuthberti*, so might be taken as a formulaic introduction rather than a statement of fact; who these faithful people were is not reported. On only three occasions is the source unequivocally stated in the context of the story; Aebbe, wife of the *praefectus* of Broninis, is said to have recounted the narrative of her own healing,<sup>68</sup> the royal abbesses Aelfflaed and Aethilberg told Stephen of Aldfrith's death, which was interpreted as divine

punishment for his maltreatment of the bishop,<sup>69</sup> and Stephen himself witnessed the arc in the sky on the anniversary of Wilfrid's death.<sup>70</sup> However, this paucity of attestation is more apparent than real. For many of the other stories it is possible to deduce that Stephen's source was one of the monks who were with Wilfrid at the time, and that may have been enough for those who commissioned the work. This is very much a life written within and for a monastic *paruchia*, almost certainly composed within a few years of Wilfrid's death, possibly as early as 710.<sup>71</sup> The closing chapter tells us that in that year there was a great meeting of the Wilfridian brotherhood, and it could be that it was there that Stephen was asked to undertake the writing, and that there he collected his information. So close to events,<sup>72</sup> and to those who told him of them, he appears to have felt that he did not need to name names, unless his sources be outside the *paruchia*, as were the distinguished females whom he cites. After all, as this *vita* was both for Wilfrid's *familia* and from Wilfrid's *familia*, its purpose seems to have been to tell them that which they already knew.<sup>73</sup>

Precisely the same is implied in the preface to Bede's Prose Life of Cuthbert. Eadfrith seems to have commissioned the *vita* in order to have a record of the stories already circulating in the community, perhaps even to have them subjected to some sort of test of their trustworthiness.<sup>74</sup> It might be that here we find the answer to the puzzle of

why Bede was asked to write the prose life at all.<sup>75</sup> Was it deemed by the community at Lindisfarne more fitting for a notable outsider to have given authority to their claims by checking and recording the life of the saint whose cult they were promoting, than for their pretensions to rest on the word of one of their own? It is hard to see how such an hypothesis can ever be proven, but it does provide one solution to the mystery.<sup>76</sup>

The same rigorous standard of investigation was applied by Bede to his material for the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>77</sup> The introductory chapter lists the authorities on which Bede's account depended in order that it might be believed.<sup>78</sup> But named sources for individual stories are offered from time to time. As Rosenthal pointed out,<sup>79</sup> this practice is more prevalent in the latter part of the work, but that may simply be that it was more difficult to find living witnesses to earlier events.<sup>80</sup> However, it is often possible either to identify a written source which Bede does not mention,<sup>81</sup> or, as with Felix, to link the sources listed in the preface with individual stories.<sup>82</sup> So, for example, Bede does not give his source for the miracle of light above the tomb of Peter, the healing of the blind man by Augustine, Lawrence's scourging by the apostle Peter, or the occasion when Mellitus changed the direction of the wind to save Canterbury from fire,<sup>83</sup> but the first of the acknowledgements in the preface is to Albinus of Canterbury, 'auctor ante omnes atque auditor', who

'...diligenter omnia quae in ipsa Cantuariorum provincia vel etiam in contiguis eidem regionibus a discipulis beati papae Gregorii gesta fuere, vel monimentis litterarum vel seniorum traditione cognoverat.'<sup>84</sup> We might also assume that the story of Paulinus and Edwin came from Bede's Canterbury source, having been related after Paulinus' return to Rochester.<sup>85</sup>

The sources for each of the miracles in books III to V, as far as they can be identified are listed in the appendix. Given that Bede tells his readers that he has had informants for events in the regions of the East, South and West Saxons, Mercia, the East Angles, Lindsey and Northumbria,<sup>86</sup> and that in a number of cases Bede includes the name of his source as he relates the story,<sup>87</sup> there is no miracle story in the whole of the *Historia* for which we are unable at least to make a guess at Bede's source. There is a small number of problem areas. Bede does not give an authority for the narrative concerning Earcongota at Faremoutiers;<sup>88</sup> Wallace-Hadrill was probably right to posit a Frankish source.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Bede does not name his Streoneshalh source, but we might assume that his excellent sources for the John of Beverley may have been responsible for the accounts of Hild and Caedmon also.<sup>90</sup> It is difficult to identify a source for the stories from Ireland and that of the two Hewalds;<sup>91</sup> these may have been related by Willibrord to Acca, there may have been an unacknowledged Irish source, or it may be that Lastingham

preserved the traditions about Ecgbert.<sup>92</sup>

That the citation of reliable witnesses assisted an author's credibility is shown by the Anonymous of Streoneshalh. It is obvious that the *Vita Gregorii* was composed in the teeth of a shortage of evidence.<sup>93</sup> Only for the account of the discovery of Edwin's corpse and the vision of spirits visiting their bodies on the battle-field is a source identified, an unnamed monastic who was related to Trimma, the visionary.<sup>94</sup> For the anecdote of the dove resting on Gregory's head, a *familiaris* of Gregory's household is quoted, although the writer is extremely vague as to how it reached him.<sup>95</sup> This is the case with most of the stories; phrases such as 'fertur a videntibus', 'vetus relatio', 'quidam de nostris dicunt...'<sup>96</sup>, are as specific a reference as the Anonymous seems able to offer. The only story for which we are certain of the source (the one drawn from the *Dialogi* and acknowledged as such) is so ill-told that it is impossible to believe that the writer had access to the work.<sup>97</sup> There is no acknowledgement in the prologue of those who had provided information; the Anonymous only reveals that his sources were 'ancient and diverse'.<sup>98</sup> The result is that the whole work seems to struggle against a conscious lack of credibility.

All of this suggests that for the eighth-century writers the issue of factual veracity was important. They appear happier with their material if their audience could be told whence it originated, and happier still if the

witness was a priest or religious. The view of history which seems to lie behind every one these works is that it is a record of 'what we believe about ourselves'. Perhaps that is what Bede meant when he used the phrase that has excited so much comment, 'vera lex historiae'.<sup>99</sup>

Little is served by rehearsing the complicated arguments that have been conducted over the meaning of those three words, from Plummer's assertion that they indicated the credulity with which Bede accepted what he heard from his sources,<sup>100</sup> through Jones' attempt to divorce the 'true law' from literal truth,<sup>101</sup> to Ray's identification of Bede's understanding with the principles of rhetoric and the teaching of Jerome and Isidore.<sup>102</sup> All that need be noted here is that there is no reason to believe that any of our writers, with the possible exception in one instance of the Anonymous of Streonshalh,<sup>103</sup> recorded anything that they themselves believed to be false.<sup>104</sup> The writer of the *Vita Gregorii* attempts to assure his readers of the truth of his account, but apologizes that he has been dependent on the 'vulgata' for his information, rather than on eye-witnesses.<sup>105</sup> Not, generally speaking, that common report was something to be despised. One of the conventions of the stylized prologues is that the readers will have already heard many of the miracles that are to be related from the 'sermo referentium'.<sup>106</sup> The task of the historian, as is made clear by Bede in the preface to the *Vita Prosaica*, was to



test and verify that report. The history thus produced may not be inerrant,<sup>107</sup> but if the historian has examined as far as he is able the *fama vulgante* which he has collected, and has shown good reason to believe it, he has fulfilled the *vera lex historiae*. For this purpose, the moral character of the witnesses cited was not irrelevant, and the fact that almost all of them are religious indicates that these were the people whose word fellow ecclesiastics could trust.<sup>108</sup>

As Sr Benedicta Ward concludes from her study of mediaeval miracle stories, '[miracles] are intimately associated with the society in which they take place'.<sup>109</sup> In seventh- and eighth-century England, that society was monastic. The index of locations of miracle stories in the appendix shows the dominance of 'monastic situations', a term used with some hesitancy; 'monasterium' is a noun avoided by some scholars of this period because it is felt that it implies the Benedictinism of the later middle ages, not the variety of religious life practiced in the seventh and eighth centuries.<sup>110</sup> For the present purpose, a 'monastic situation' is identified as the scene of a miracle if it be (a) within the confines of a monastery,<sup>111</sup> (b) within an abbey church,<sup>112</sup> or (c) outside any ecclesiastical setting but in the company of monks and part of a monastic errand. Taking those criteria, all of the works locate their miracles within 'monastic situations' to an overwhelming degree.<sup>113</sup> The most difficult to analyse,

and the one least likely to conform to the trend, given the different nature of its material, is the *Vita Gregorii*; even here, six of the fourteen stories are set in a monastery or church, and two on a journey to church with other clergy. In the *Vita Guthlaci*, all but one of the miracles occurs on Crowland, (which, for reasons developed below, can be classed as a monastic setting).<sup>114</sup> Of the forty-six Cuthbert stories indexed, thirty (sixty-five per cent) occur in monastic buildings and eight others in the company of monks. Despite the pattern created by his peregrinations, of the miracles associated with Wilfrid eight (thirty-eight per cent) are said to have occurred in monasteries, and five in the company of his monks on the journeys.<sup>115</sup> The *Historia Ecclesiastica* provides a wider range of material and situations, but still forty-five (fifty-four per cent) of the stories are set within monasteries or churches, and a further eighteen in other monastic situations. Whilst it is possible to argue for a narrower definition of 'monastic situation', the impression left by these figures reinforces that shown by the analysis of the beneficiaries of miracles and the overwhelming majority of religious amongst the identifiable sources; that miracles were related, recorded, and expected to occur in monastic communities.

The way in which these stories need to be understood, therefore, is as 'monastic history'. Conventionally, a monastic history would be understood as a narrative which

recounted the foundation and achievements of an house or order. Bede's *Historia Abbatum* is the nearest to such a work that eighth-century England has to offer. But the term might be used in a broader sense to mean 'history as recorded in monasteries'. The dominance of the monastery in the content, context and transmission of the miracle story in eighth-century England strikes the reader from every analysis, and points to the setting in which our written sources for the seventh and early eighth centuries were composed. This is 'monastic history' not because it is about the development of orders or houses (although to a degree it is), but because the dependence on monastic sources, the exchange of stories through monastic circles, the dominance of monastic situations as the scene of the history, the involvement of religious or those to whom they were closely related in the events recorded, and the fact that all our authors were (least surprisingly) in monasteries, alert us to the way in which the monastic context has influenced the writing.

'Societas eorum qui Christo... famulantur': Miracles and 'Monastic History'.

'Plures in gente Nordanhymbrorum, tam nobiles quam privati, se suosque liberos depositis armis satagunt magis, accepta tonsura, monasterialibus adscribere votis...' <sup>116</sup> So Bede records the state of Northern English society as he put down his pen. His final comment leaves us uncertain as

to whether he considered this rush into the monasteries to be a good or bad thing. 'Quae res quem sit habitura finem, posterior aetas videbit.' However, the Letter to Egbert, written not much later, indicates that the proliferation of monasteries alarmed Bede considerably, as some were not really religious houses but sinks of iniquity and glorified tax- or draft-dodges.<sup>117</sup> That he did not say as much in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* suggests either that Bede did not want to air this private concern publicly or that many pursued a religious vocation from purer motives. On whatever scale and for whatever reason it occurred, this enthusiasm for the cenobitic life need not surprise the reader of the *Historia*. Bede told the story of his people in part as an history of the development and expansion of monasticism in England; even the most cursory reading leaves the impression that the conversion of England had been achieved by monks (or at least those who lived in some form of community)<sup>118</sup> and was followed by the establishment of monasteries all over the country. To what extent the monastery was the agent of pastoral care in the first centuries of Christian life in England (as in Western Europe generally)<sup>119</sup> is the subject of debate. The curious silence in our sources about the existence of secular priests suggests that pastoral care was only exercised through those who lived in some sort of community, and it has been argued that each monastery had a district for which it was pastorally responsible, as a precursor to the

minster, or mother churches of the Norman era.<sup>120</sup> Clearly, there were laity in the monastic church of Jarrow to hear some of Bede's homilies, and to receive baptism;<sup>121</sup> clearly also, some monks (Boisil and Cuthbert are obvious examples) engaged in what might be called 'the cure of souls' in the area near their monastery.<sup>122</sup> But that does not necessarily imply that every monastery was responsible for regular parochial ministry, nor that every church in the country was served by clerics who lived in community.<sup>123</sup> The confusion is largely due to the terminology; it is not clear what difference is implied between an *ecclesia* and a *monasterium*,<sup>124</sup> and that which was in Latin called a *monasterium* (and in Old English a *mynster*) could be a church served by a number of priests living under some semi-communal life, or an house of professed monks following the Benedictine rule or something that resembled it closely.<sup>125</sup> As Sarah Foot puts it, 'early Anglo-Saxon monasticism was characterized by its diversity of practice.'<sup>126</sup>

The present discussion does not aim to judge the 'minster hypothesis' one way or the other. The issue is really one of the weight that can be given to the written sources. Certainly, Bede envisaged that the *monasteria* were the key to the establishment of effective pastoral ministry over areas of the country that were not being served,<sup>127</sup> but Bede's attitudes were conditioned by his own monastic background and by the ideas of Gregory I.<sup>128</sup> Those working

on the Anglo-Saxon penitentials have shown that they represent an attempt to impose upon the laity a monastic discipline;<sup>129</sup> how much these ideas reflect the reality of pastoral activity, as opposed to the vision that existed in the minds of bishops, will perhaps never be known. Because our sources are overwhelmingly monastic, and because the ideal pastors that they portray were monks or monk-bishops, such as Cuthbert,<sup>130</sup> it is tempting to conclude that pastoral ministry was entirely in the hands of monastic institutions. What the debate emphasizes is that the early Christian history of England as we have it recorded cannot be understood except as an history of monastic institutions, their interchange and their interdependence. The miracle stories encapsulate that approach, and serve to highlight the degree to which it confined the eighth-century authors.

Some of the works here under consideration are obviously, and explicitly, monastic histories in the sense that they trace the history of a monastic community. The anonymous *Vita Ceolfredi* and *Historia Abbatum* are transparent examples; their purpose was to celebrate the existence of Wearmouth-Jarrow by an account of its creation and glorification. Similarly, a central purpose in Stephen's *Vita Wilfridi* is to expound the privilege that was his of being a member of one of Wilfrid's communities, whether that was Oundle, Hexham or Ripon. Less overtly, the Anonymous of Lindisfarne wrote with pride of Cuthbert who

gave his house its rule, and described the translation of the corpse as a moment of significance in the life of the community. It is clear also that there were other works, many now lost, written to celebrate the life of an house - Bede's reference to 'the little book' as his source for the stories from Barking is significant in this respect, as it not only indicates the likely existence of other such *libelli*, but also points us to the continent and to Columbanian connexion.<sup>131</sup> The *Vita Columbani* is the exemplar for this form of history, extolling the life of a *paruchia* by recording the *virtutes* of its leading members.

It might be argued that other works are not obviously monastic in that sense. But it is still the view from the monastery that dominates. The Anonymous of Streoneshalh's concentration on Edwin as much as on Gregory is explained by the existence of the shrine to the first Christian king adjacent in the monastery church to the altar dedicated to Gregory.<sup>132</sup> The pride with which he reports the way in which Trimma was directed to his monastery, 'quod est coenobium famosissimum Aelflede',<sup>133</sup> is part of his explanation of the fact that the Church of St Peter at Streoneshalh was a mausoleum for the Deiran royal family.<sup>134</sup> His description of the monastery church also having an altar to Gregory is a clue to the composition of the *vita*, in that it celebrated in literature that to which the monastery was accustomed liturgically.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, the *Vita Guthlaci* seems at first sight not to owe anything

to the needs or programme of a particular monastery. We do not even know of what house Felix was a member,<sup>136</sup> and, from his time as an anchorite Guthlac seems to have had little to do with Repton, where he was professed. But, as has been shown, Guthlac's miracles occurred in the context of a constant stream of religious coming to consult him whilst he was alive,<sup>137</sup> and there was a distinctly monarchical gathering at the translation of his body.<sup>138</sup> There was an abbey on the site of Guthlac's hermitage in later years, the only monastery left in the East Midlands after the Danish devastations of the ninth century.<sup>139</sup> According to the forged charter of Pseudo-Ingulf,<sup>140</sup> and to Orderic Vitalis, in a self-contradicting account from the twelfth century, Aethelbald was responsible for its foundation of Crowland;<sup>141</sup> that is a late and unreliable witness, but it is clear from Felix that the Mercian king was responsible for the initial bejeweling of the shrine.<sup>142</sup> Felix also records the dedication of a church at the time of Guthlac's priesting,<sup>143</sup> a church which would have continued to be staffed in some way. The implication of Guthlac's prophecy to Ecgburh is that Cissa would replace him as an anchorite,<sup>144</sup> but it is hard to marry that with indications that Pega installed herself after her brother's death as custodian of the shrine.<sup>145</sup> On the whole it does not seem unreasonable to claim that the *Vita Guthlaci* belongs to this class of monastic history; if it were not intended simply as propaganda for the cult, or for



a newly established *monasterium* on Crowland, it may have originated within whatever community had oversight for the shrine.<sup>146</sup>

Even the *Historia Ecclesiastica* must be understood as a monastic history. The predominance of monks amongst its characters and the proportion of the work dedicated to descriptions of monastic foundations are remarkable. Augustine was dispatched to England, from Gregory's monastery in Rome, as an abbot with a group of monks (he was only later to be consecrated bishop);<sup>147</sup> Northumbria was evangelized from Iona, through the establishment of Lindisfarne.<sup>148</sup> It is striking not that the great bishops of Bede's account, Aidan, Cuthbert, Wilfrid, Chad, Cedd, were all sons of monastic schooling, and all operated in or with some form of monastic community, but that there seems to have been no other training available and no other *modus operandi*.<sup>149</sup> Such was the extent of monastic domination of ecclesiastical affairs that Streoneshalh seems to have exercised control over episcopal appointments in York for a while.<sup>150</sup> Bede praised his Christian royalty for the foundation of religious houses, with Ely, Streoneshalh, Barking, and Brie being the leading examples.<sup>151</sup> All of this helps to make sense of Bede's plan for the evangelization of Northumbria;<sup>152</sup> the planned expansion of a monastic church was to his mind the logical continuation of the history of English Christianity to that date.

The miracle stories fit into this pattern and serve to

illustrate, at times more clearly than other episodes might, the understanding of the past which the reader was invited to share with the writer. The story of Aidan and the fire that threatened Bamburgh can be seen as a typical part of this history.<sup>153</sup> Aidan, the great Irish evangelist, watched the attempted destruction of Bamburgh by Penda, the Mercian king, and prayed for the safety of the city; in answer to his intercession, the wind changed direction and forced the Mercians into retreat. Bede draws from the story the message that the city of Bamburgh, and by implication the Northumbrian kingdom, enjoyed divine protection, but an anecdote like this can also be perceived to have other meanings. It gives a memorable picture of the monk, at his prayers, removed from the world of political and military conflict and yet still able to influence it, and it serves to link Aidan into a long chain of saints who had power over the elements, possibly reminding the audience of examples of continental saints who could control the wind or save property from fire,<sup>154</sup> but, more significantly, relating to two earlier stories in the *Historia* - that of Germanus causing a fire to be extinguished and that of Mellitus achieving the same at Canterbury.<sup>155</sup> In this way, the anecdote serves to place Aidan in the company of the defender of orthodoxy from pre-Anglo-Saxon days and one of the missionaries who accompanied Augustine. In other words, in terms of English church history, it provides an element which not only unifies the Irish and Roman traditions and

grants the Northern mission the same status as the earlier evangelization of the south, but expresses a continuity with the fourth-century British church.<sup>156</sup>

Given that the story was designed to operate in these three ways, it is pertinent to question its historical accuracy; there is no other record of Penda laying siege to Bamburgh, so it is not inconceivable that Bede might have invented, or at least embroidered, the anecdote. But the fact that he told the story suggests that it must have been possible; even if no-one in Bede's audience could remember the day when Penda's army sat at the gates of the Bernician capital, none would have thought it incredible, and, given the likelihood that Oswald met his end fighting deep within Mercian territory,<sup>157</sup> that Penda should have raided so far is not improbable; all the evidence suggests that the *Bretwaldas* (in as far as we can trust the concept)<sup>158</sup> only held power until a single military defeat wrested it from their control,<sup>159</sup> so an attack of this nature, aimed at ending Bernician hegemony by striking at its heart, would be of considerable importance historically. Bede thus places his saint, through the miracle, at the centre of the political history of his *gens*, expressing the belief that the survival of Oswy's rule was in the purpose of God.<sup>160</sup>

This way of understanding political history was one of the three strands. Two other strands are identifiable in this story: firstly, this is conversion history, implicitly reflecting other events in the account of the coming of the

English to faith, and celebrating Christianity's survival in the face of the pagan threat. Secondly (although in this case a lesser feature) this is monastic history as usually understood - history of and for the hero's institution; not only was this an incident of which Lindisfarne could be proud, it was part of their past, so closely linked was the community (especially in Aidan's time) with the royal family at Bamburgh.<sup>161</sup> Each of these three elements, and their appearance in other miracle stories, needs further examination.

'Si Deus regnum concedisset': political history punctuated by miracles.

If we examine a list of those involved in the miracle stories, be they as the agents of miracles, those on the receiving end, or those who witnessed or reported them, two points emerge. One, as has already been noted, is that they were almost all priests, monks or nuns. The other is that those who were not religious were almost all, as far as we can establish, of noble or royal birth, as were many of those in orders.<sup>162</sup> It is not surprising that within such a grouping there should be an informed interest in the political situation of the day and contact with the royal family or the local nobility.<sup>163</sup> That both the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Guthlaci* were dedicated to kings is indicative of the close relationship that existed between monasteries and their local rulers. Guthlac was of

royal blood,<sup>164</sup> Cuthbert's possession of an horse his military service point to an aristocratic background,<sup>165</sup> and Wilfrid and Biscop were at court before they pursued ecclesiastical careers.<sup>166</sup> Although it does not appear that there was anywhere in England a tendency to use monks in the machinery of government, as was the case with Iona and the kings of the Dal Riata,<sup>167</sup> it is clear that leading monks, bishops and abbesses were often close to the centre of political power. It may be that the Anglo-Saxon church copied the British in this respect; the slaughter of the monks by Aethelfrith at Chester suggests that Bangor was used for support by the Welsh leadership.<sup>168</sup> Far from being isolated in their monasteries away from all worldly distractions, the monks of seventh- and eighth-century England were no strangers to the evolving political situation.

But the twentieth-century scholar is. To write a political history of England in the period under discussion is no easy task;<sup>169</sup> anyone working in the field acknowledges an heavy dependency on Bede's *Historia*, but it was not the purpose of that work to present a narrative of power as we would understand political history. Neither is such a narrative attempted here, but, however briefly, an outline need be sketched.<sup>170</sup> The island of Britain was, we can say with safety, settled by the Germanic tribes from some time in the early fifth century onwards, although in what numbers is a matter of some debate.<sup>171</sup> Different

groups established themselves and their own organization in areas of the country, and began to stake out their borders against each other and the Celtic peoples around them.<sup>172</sup> By some process there emerged five major groupings or kingdoms - Kent, Northumbria, East Anglia, Wessex and Mercia.<sup>173</sup> But these are generalizations - Northumbria was an uneasy alliance of Deira and Bernicia, and there were lesser kingdoms of the South Saxons, the East Saxons and Lindsey to which our sources refer, as well as tribal groupings, such as the Magonsaeta or Wocensaeta, which seem to have existed within kingdoms as recognizable units. Between those five main kingdoms the balance of power shifted throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Kent seems to have held some sort of dominance at the time of Augustine's mission in 597;<sup>174</sup> the hegemony then moved to East Anglia, under Redwald, and thence to Northumbria until the 660s, although Northumbria never seems to have been able to subdue Kent. From then onwards until the time of Bede's death there was no one kingdom exercising supremacy over the others; the Northumbrians held sway in the north and Mercia was the leading power south of the Humber.<sup>175</sup> Mercian authority reached its zenith under Aethelbald (in the first half of the eighth century)<sup>176</sup> whereafter it was the rising potency of Wessex that was to respond to the decline of the North and East and the invasions of the Norse to achieve supremacy. It appears that single battles could be of great significance during this period. Oswald's

victory at Heavenfield established him not only as ruler of the Northumbrians but also as 'Bretwalda',<sup>177</sup> apparently undoing at a stroke all that Cadwalla's defeat of Edwin at Hatfield had achieved. Similarly, two battles, the one at the Trent in 678 and Nechtansmere in 685, are reported as having forever ended Northumbrian domination over, respectively, England South of the Humber and Northern Britain.<sup>178</sup>

Monastic history saw this confusing and not always well documented pattern of political history as being firmly within the purposes of God. For example, whatever it might have meant to forge a diplomatic alliance between Deira and Kent, providence was clearly at work in enabling Eadbald to foist his niece, and her religion, on Edwin.<sup>179</sup> In a sense, the authors of monastic history stood back from the internecine rivalry which seems to have been a feature of politics in this period. For example, that Oswald and his brothers may well have been part of the coalition that overthrew Edwin in 634<sup>180</sup> was not of interest to Bede, whose emphasis was that Oswald continued the Christianizing of Northumbria as God's chosen successor to Edwin. An whole series of miracle stories serves to emphasize the 'election' of Oswald,<sup>181</sup> the preservation of which was clearly the responsibility of monastic communities. Iona maintained the legend of Columba's appearance to the young prince the night before the battle,<sup>182</sup> whilst Hexham promoted the cult of the Heavenfield cross.<sup>183</sup> Of

particular interest is the story Bede tells of the monks of Bardney refusing to accept Oswald's remains.<sup>184</sup> Not only does it tell us something about the development of the cult memory of the Northumbrian king, it also points to the way in which monastic history could put a gloss on political situations. The enshrinement of the bones at Bardney had been at the instigation of Osthryth, Oswald's niece and wife of Aethelred of Mercia. The reluctance of the monastery's inhabitants was 'quia etsi sanctum eum noverant, tamen quia de alia provincia ortus fuerat, et super eos regnum acceperat, veteranis eum odiis etiam mortuum insequabantur.' It took the miraculous appearance of a pillar of light shining over the bones all night to persuade them. Bardney was a leading monastery 'in provincia Lindissi'. The early history of this small political entity (little more than modern Lincolnshire) is obscure, but during the seventh century it appears to have been alternately ruled by Northumbria and Mercia, and to have been within the area where the border was contested.<sup>185</sup> After Oswald's death, Lindsey had reverted to Mercian rule and, apparently, did not remember the hegemony of Northumbria with affection. The story of the bones is an attempt by 'monastic history' to have the turbulent situation of the province understood as being within the providence of God.

What this story impresses upon the reader is the way in which history was seen as the province of powerful



individuals; dominion appears to have been held personally, and its continuation from one generation to another was dependent on the character of the individual successor. There was, apparently, no right of primogeniture, nor even of hereditary succession. It was not always the case that a kingdom was passed on intact to the next king; there is a number of instances of some sort of co-ruler arrangement, although precisely what these meant in each case is not clear.<sup>186</sup> The division of a kingdom, except in cases where a *sub-regulus* was designated (possibly in an attempt to ensure the succession), usually indicated a time of weakness. A strong kingdom needed a strong single king; which is presumably why Bede could view with understanding, if not with equanimity, the murder of Oswin,<sup>187</sup> which is presented in one of the most ambivalent miracle stories in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*; Aidan is said to have prophesied that Oswin would not long survive in the rough world that kings had to inhabit, "numquam enim ante haec vidi humilem regem... non enim digna est haec gens talem habere rectorem."<sup>188</sup>

If effective political power needed to be concentrated in the hands of an individual, there was good reason to dispose of one's rivals; whenever a king was replaced, those closest to the late ruler would often go into exile. It was therefore not uncommon for a royal court to be sheltering (for its own ends) a pretender to another throne, and there could be many such with a claim.<sup>189</sup>

Again, monastic history put its own gloss on these periods of exile, often to mark them as examples of the influence of God or of particular saints in the histories of kingdoms. The fullest example of this is the account of Edwin's stay at Redwald's court;<sup>190</sup> the young prince's survival in the face of all Aethelfrith's attempts to bribe or bully Redwald into disposing of him is presented as part of God's plan, later revealed to Paulinus, for his restoration. Similarly, a major theme of the *Vita Guthlaci* is the relationship between the hermit and Aethelbald, the fugitive Mercian claimant. Aethelbald's successful evasion of Ceolred's attempts on his life and his achievement of the throne are told by Felix as in accord with the divine dispensation.<sup>191</sup> "Non in praeda nec in rapina regnum tibi dabitur, sed de manu Domini obtinebis" may well express the monastic view of the way that earthly power was disposed.<sup>192</sup>

It bears repeating, however, that monastic historians were less interested in events on the political stage than in the story of the conversion or examples of sanctity. For Adomnan, the real significance of Columba's appearance to Oswald on the eve of Heavenfield was not that the Bernician became 'totius Brittanniae imperator' as that 'usque in id temporis tota illa Saxonia gentilitatis et ignorantiae tenebris obscurata erat', a situation Oswald was destined to remedy.<sup>193</sup> Similarly, the reasons for the assassination of Sigbert are obscure, and in telling the story Bede seems

to be wrestling with a tradition that does not quite make sense to him theologically.<sup>194</sup> Sigbert died at the hands of two of his own retainers; their explanation was that he was too lenient with his enemies, so they murdered him. One of the two, however, was unlawfully married, and the king's death was seen as the consequence of his disobeying the order of his bishop and continuing to associate with the man. Whilst recording the fulfillment of Cedd's prophecy, Bede stressed that it was because of his Christian virtue that Sigbert met his end.

It must be asked whether monastic history actually distorted the facts of an event. We can explore this through the difficulties of the kingdom of Northumbria and the interaction of political events with the miracle traditions of two saints, Wilfrid and Cuthbert. Because our writers (or their friends) were themselves close to the events they reported it has been argued that their record is coloured.<sup>195</sup> What the miracle stories seem to demonstrate is the view that was taken in the monasteries of the major political changes in the twenty years before 705, maybe to the point of concealing the true significance.

In about the year 634, two boys were born into the ranks of the Northumbrian nobility. Their radically different personalities were to give the lie to the belief that monasticism can be defined in terms of the personalities who embrace it. A study of the lives of Cuthbert and Wilfrid forces one to the conclusion that there is no particular pattern of traits that characterizes the monk.<sup>196</sup>

Dom Edmund Power, in celebrating the contribution to English monasticism of two of Northumbria's bishops, expresses the popular and conventional view - that Cuthbert pursued the solitary vocation, typifying the man of prayer, only reluctantly drawn to accept high office, and that Wilfrid played ecclesiastical politics, forcing his contemporaries to accept his own understanding of church order, and suffering for his own intransigence. It is not, it must be confessed, a view wholly inconsistent with the impression given in the *Vita Wilfridi*, the two *Vitae Cuthberti*, and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. But if we focus on the events of the year 685, another, less other-worldly view of Cuthbert appears.

Some time in 684, Cuthbert met with Aelfflaed on Coquet Island,<sup>197</sup> and predicted that Ecgrith would be dead within a year and that his successor would be his illegitimate brother, Aldfrith. Aelfflaed raised the question of Cuthbert's elevation to the episcopate (the implication of the narrative is that Ecgrith wanted her to sound out the solitary on the matter), and Cuthbert responded that he was reluctant to accept the appointment, but saw it as inevitable. The following year, Ecgrith was killed fighting in Pictland, and Cuthbert was consecrated. But when we ask in precisely what order those events occurred, the picture looks more interesting. Cuthbert was persuaded to accept his new office by a delegation of 'rex ipse praefatus una cum sanctissimo antiste Trumvine necnon et

aliis religiosis ac potentibus viris'.<sup>198</sup> Although all three *vitae* are silent about it, and although the *Historia* initially recorded that 'unanimò omnium consensu ad episcopatum ecclesiae Lindisfarnensis eligeretur',<sup>199</sup> Cuthbert was appointed to the see of Hexham, as the same chapter of the *Historia* notes a few lines later. The exchange of sees was, according to Bede, arranged with Eata at Cuthbert's request.

According to the Peterborough manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 'King Ecgfrith commanded Cuthbert to be consecrated as bishop, and Archbishop Theodore consecrated him bishop for Hexham at York...'<sup>200</sup> That the election had been at Ecgfrith's initiative fits with the accounts of the meeting at Coquet, and points to a close relationship between the two men. This is borne out by the accounts of Ecgfrith's death; the king died campaigning against the Picts, disregarding the advice of his new bishop.<sup>201</sup> Both Bede and the Anonymous record Cuthbert's knowledge of the defeat as miraculous; according to the earlier version, the bishop was sight-seeing in Carlisle when he became aware that the battle had been lost.<sup>202</sup> Bede elaborated this account, with Cuthbert visiting the Queen and telling her to make preparations to escape.<sup>203</sup> Both writers associate this with another miracle, the prophecy that Cuthbert made of his own and Herebert's death, the implication of the Anonymous' placing of the story being that Cuthbert and Herebert conversed on this visit to

Carlisle, and that it was then, some twenty-two months before their deaths, that Cuthbert said that they would not see each other again.<sup>204</sup> The *Vita Prosaica* revealingly dates this miracle to a second visit by Cuthbert to Carlisle, 'non multo post tempore', at which he consecrated the queen, Ecgfrith's widow, to the religious life.<sup>205</sup> She was not the only person retiring to a monastery after Nechtansmere; Trumwine, a figure closely associated with Ecgfrith and his expansionist plans north of the border, was to spend the rest of his days at Streoneshalh.<sup>206</sup> This looks very much like a new regime disposing of those most closely associated with its predecessor; as Cuthbert was one of those, it could well be that it was at this point that he was translated to Lindisfarne, a diocese of less importance than Hexham. D.P. Kirby interprets the succession of Aldfrith as a continuation of the rule of Oswy's dynasty, and suggests that Aelfflaed would have welcomed the outcome;<sup>207</sup> but that Aldfrith was Ecgfrith's and the abbess' brother does not necessarily mean that he was their friend. This was not a family, as the rebellions against Oswy had demonstrated, noted for filial or fraternal loyalty.<sup>208</sup> Bede explained the death of Ecgfrith as divine retribution for his needless and savage attack on the Irish the previous year; he also noted that one of the consequences of Nechtansmere was the independence of the Irish in Britain from Northumbrian rule. It does not seem at all unlikely that, far from being in self-imposed exile

on account of his love of books, Aldfrith was, like Oswald before him, biding his time on Iona, until an alliance of Picts and Irish rid him and themselves of the hated Ecgfrith. Cuthbert, closely associated with the king, suddenly lost the high position he had just gained. The miracle stories suggest a greater degree of disinterest and control on the saint's part than might have been the case.

Stephen's explanation of 685 is that Ecgfrith's period of military success came to an end because he had quarrelled with Wilfrid, just as his earlier achievements had been due to his obedience to his bishop. This is one of the cruder confusions of *post hoc-propter hoc* that this sort of historical writing achieves,<sup>209</sup> but is similar to the way in which Stephen accounts for Caedwalla's establishment of his authority in Wessex.<sup>210</sup> It is also the approach followed in dealing with Aldfrith. Wilfrid appears initially to have benefited from the change in regime in Northumbria,<sup>211</sup> but his alliance with Aldfrith was unhappy and short-lived. According to Stephen, divine judgement dealt with this intransigent and uncooperative king,<sup>212</sup> as it had dealt with Aelfwine before him.<sup>213</sup> But, in a series of otherwise unevidenced episodes, Stephen explains the eventual restoration of Wilfrid for the last few years of his life. Aldfrith's successor, Eadwulf, only reigned two months, before a conspiracy put Osred, the infant son of Aldfrith on the throne.<sup>214</sup> Aelfflaed (who, as well as being an important source of information for both Bede and

Stephen, had been a major political player),<sup>215</sup> seems at this point to have changed sides, on account of Aldfrith's death-bed conversion to the cause of Wilfrid. Stephen then relates a miracle - that the siege of Bamburgh had been relieved when Osred's supporters had vowed that if successful they would restore to Wilfrid his possessions.<sup>216</sup> The similarity with the Aidan story may be significant, but there is little subtlety in Stephen's approach. A king blessed by God from his viewpoint was a pious king, that is to say, one who favoured Wilfrid. However, that Wilfrid only retained Ripon and Hexham,<sup>217</sup> and the episcopal see at Hexham,<sup>218</sup> suggests that he was a spent force and that this was the best compromise his renewed political influence could gain him.<sup>219</sup>

Stephen presents his hero as a latter-day Joseph, a man of God destined to be an adviser to kings.<sup>220</sup> Only for three short periods, around 664, from 669-78, and after 704, did Wilfrid have any real power in Northumbria. For some time in the 680s, Cuthbert (who had, interestingly, been expelled from Ripon by Wilfrid's first patron, Alfrith)<sup>221</sup> was the ecclesiastic whose advice the royal family sought. Neither of them was successful in exercising any political influence for very long. The miracle stories (many of which seem to originate with Aelfflaed) may have been designed to screen that fact.



'Pro quorum salute collata sunt': the miraculous and the conversion of England.

Whilst he was right to note that the number of miracles recorded in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* is far greater in the later chapters of the work, it is difficult to follow J.T. Rosenthal in his inference that miracle stories therefore belonged in Bede's mind to the period after the English had embraced Christianity or his assertion that Bede presented the conversion, 'almost wholly without the use of or resort to miracles'.<sup>222</sup> His assessment needs to be challenged in two respects; on the one hand, Rosenthal assumed that only the first half of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is an history of the conversion, and, on the other, he concluded that the comparative absence of the miraculous from the earlier chapters indicated that Bede felt that miracles were 'to enrich [and] to revitalize' God's dispensation 'not to prove it'.<sup>223</sup> An alternative reading would see the whole of the *Historia* as being the story of the conversion, leading to the triumphant conclusion that 'Hic est inpraesentiarum universae status Britanniae....dominicae incarnationis anno DCCXXXI. In cuius regno perpetuo exultet terra, et congratulante in fide eius Britannia...'<sup>224</sup> That the conversion is the crucial theme of the work is stressed as miracle stories are told at critical junctures.

One of the puzzles about the distribution of miracle stories in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is why some saints

seem to be unrepresented in the register of wonder workers. One such is Augustine, a silence which is all the more perplexing as we know that Bede had excellent Canterbury sources and, from a letter of Gregory that is included in the work, that Augustine and his companions were believed at the time to be working miracles.<sup>225</sup> Bede is clear that these miracles played a part in securing the conversion of Aethelbert and his counsellors: 'At ubi ipse etiam inter alios delectatus vita mundissima sanctorum et promissis eorum suavissimis, quae vera esse miraculorum quoque multorum ostensione firmaverunt, credens baptizatus est...'.<sup>226</sup> The answer may simply be that the Canterbury community took the sanction of Gregory not to fall into conceit on account of the miracles to heart, to the point of suppressing the memory of the wonderful deeds of the early days.<sup>227</sup> But one story was communicated to Bede, that of the conference Augustine held with the British bishops.<sup>228</sup> Whilst Augustine seems to have been tactless in his dealing with the indigenous church in some respects, Bede emphasizes that the Roman mission was the means by which the Anglo-Saxons were destined to receive the faith. At the conference, Augustine invited the British to join with him in the evangelization. The two sides were unable to agree on the details of their unity, so a contest was proposed to settle the argument; a blind Englishman (the race is significant) was presented, but the British bishops failed to restore his sight.

...tandem Augustinus iusta necessitate compulsus flectit genua sua ad Patrem Domini nostri Jesu Christi, deprecans ut visum caeco quem amiserat restitueret, et per inlumptionem unius hominis corporalem in plurimorum corde fidelium spiritualis gratiam lucis accenderet. Nec mora, inluminatur caecus, ac verus summae lucis praeco ab omnibus praedicatur Augustinus.<sup>229</sup>

The meaning of the story is transparent; like the tale of the martyrdom of the Hewalds,<sup>230</sup> the episode operates as a picture of the conversion. Augustine is the one who, despite the obstinacy of the British church, is to bring the light of salvation to the *gens Anglorum*.

These stories fit into a tradition of the use of miracle stories which Bede received from one of his continental sources. Constantius' *Vita Germani* describes the journey of the bishop of Auxerre to Britain to combat Pelagianism, a journey which began in quiet water with a favourable wind but later encountered a violent tempest.<sup>231</sup> Germanus stilled the storm with a sprinkling of holy water. Bede, atypically, followed Constantius' explanation of the storm as due to the activity of demons, and retained the implied parallel between the calm restored to the channel and that brought by orthodoxy to the British church.<sup>232</sup> Constantius also provided Bede with a story very close to the one told of Augustine; in the midst of the debate with the Pelagians, Germanus was presented with a child who was blind. He responded to the entreaty of all to cure her (the Pelagians declined to attempt to do so) by placing a small container of relics on her eyes, 'quos statim evacuatos

tenebris lumen veritatis implevit.'<sup>233</sup> The implication is that it was not only physical sight of the girl that was granted through the 'lumen veritatis'.

Two points emerge: that miracles were of significance in achieving the conversion and that the stories reflect the ways in which truth replaced error. The account that the *Vita Gregorii* gives of the conversion of Northumbria is of interest in this respect. The author offers a confused version of the miracle which Bede also describes as crucial in persuading Edwin to convert, the vision that he had whilst in exile which was later revealed to Paulinus.<sup>234</sup> Mayr-Harting may be right to interpret the story as an allegory of how Paulinus freed Edwin from the dependency on Redwald that his restoration from exile had created;<sup>235</sup> what is more important is that the miracle removed many of Edwin's doubts about the change of religion. The story serves another purpose - to emphasize that Edwin was returned to power by divine providence, in order that Christianity might be brought to Northumbria.<sup>236</sup> As we have already seen, for the Anonymous of Streonshalh, the line between the miraculous and the non-miraculous is far from clear; Paulinus' killing a crow whilst the king was on his way to be catechized seems to operate in the same way as some of the miracles do - it helps to persuade the witnesses of the truth of the message, and it illustrates the replacement of the senseless and ugly by grace and truth.<sup>237</sup>

Similar to the stories of Augustine or the Hewalds are

those told of Wilfrid's evangelization in Sussex and in Frisia.<sup>238</sup> Again, these are miracles which assist in the task of conversion by confirming the truth of the preaching, and which reflect the spiritual understanding of what has happened.<sup>239</sup> But, perhaps alert to the danger that conversion, even (maybe especially) if accompanied by miracles, could be short-lived, Bede relates another tale from Sussex. Shortly after the establishment of Wilfrid's monastery in Selsey, the plague devastated the area. Acca reported to Bede that Oswald appeared to a boy in the monastery to prophesy that he would be the only fatality. The prophecy proving reliable, word of it spread, and 'Ex qua nimirum visione multi, qui haec audire potuerunt, et ad exorandam in adversis divinam clementiam et ad salutaria ieiuniorum remedia subeunda sunt mirabiliter accensi.'<sup>240</sup> Rosenthal argued that comments like this one and that at the end of the story of Imma's chains<sup>241</sup> indicate a post-conversion Britain, and were about the increase of faith;<sup>242</sup> but this view underestimates the fragility of the conversion. As Bede and his contemporaries knew, the new religion had to penetrate Anglo-Saxon society;<sup>243</sup> the danger of apostasy, particularly at a time of plague, was real.<sup>244</sup> It was a part of conversion history that miracles should not only accompany the first arrival of the faith in an area, but also help in its maintenance.

First among stories serving this purpose must be reckoned that of Laurence's scourging by Peter in a vision.

At a critical moment, this miracle not only keeps the Roman mission alive in Kent but resulted, once Laurence had shown him his wounds, in the conversion of Eadbald.<sup>245</sup> As Sr Benedicta Ward has pointed out, the symbolism of the story is that it is the patron of the Roman church who assaults Laurence;<sup>246</sup> Bede's theme, she maintains, is the authority of the Christian Church, centred on Rome. That is indeed true, but it might be that the story is making a slightly different point; in displaying his wounds to Eadbald, Laurence convinced the king that they were dealing with a force too great for resistance. Was Eadbald, whose position was not as strong as that of his father,<sup>247</sup> prepared to risk a quarrel with Rome, especially if, as may well have been the case, the Augustinian mission had had Merovingian support behind it?<sup>248</sup> To the pious, however, another theme would be discernible - that the work of evangelization was something of God, which humans were unable to frustrate. The point is, interestingly, made in reverse in a story about the mission to the continent.<sup>249</sup> Ecgbert, the English priest in exile in Ireland, was one of those intending to evangelize the continental Angles and Saxons. However, another monk received a vision of Boisil commanding him to tell Ecgbert not to go, because his ministry was within the Ionan communities. Ecgbert ignored the warning, although it was twice given, but a storm prevented him from sailing, so he remained in Ireland. That the elements could be used providentially is reflected in the detail that it was a

chance storm which landed Wilfrid in Frisia.<sup>250</sup> His success there contrasted with the earlier failure of Witbert,<sup>251</sup> but Bede's conclusion to the account of that abortive mission is that although the evangelization of the Frisians was a priority (and the next chapter records the more profitable ministry of Willibrord),<sup>252</sup> Witbert still had useful work amongst his own people to do.

It is clear that writers in the early eighth century could themselves remember a time when the initial evangelization was still under way; Bede, nearing the end of his life, felt that the process was not complete, and would not be until the Gregorian plan of ecclesiastical organization had been set in place.<sup>253</sup> The Anonymous of Lindisfarne records Cuthbert's missions from Melrose as being to baptize,<sup>254</sup> it is clear that in large areas of the south-west of England there was little or no Christianity before the activity of Wilfrid in the 680s,<sup>255</sup> and even Guthlac, whose *vita* seems to be set at a time when the faith was widely accepted, was succeeded in his hermitage by a first generation Christian.<sup>256</sup> But this is not the impression that many modern scholars give of the conversion; the common view is that by the 660s, with the acceptance of Christianity by Wulfhere, and the Synod of Streoneshalh marking the coalescence of the northern and southern missions, the new religion was firmly established.<sup>257</sup> The reason for this view is to be found in the way in which some of the evidence of conversion blurs the picture. As the

study of the miracle stories repeatedly confirms, Christianity was received firstly, and possibly mainly, by the aristocracy.<sup>258</sup> J. Campbell argued that Bede, unlike Stephen, gave a false impression of the state of the church in his own day. The seventh century had, he maintained, seen a revival of Romanesque culture in both Britain and Gaul, and in England this had led to the establishment of a very large number of monasteries, the development of learning, and to the creation of an enormously wealthy church.<sup>259</sup> The necessary prerequisite for that had been accomplished in the conversion of most of the royal houses by ca.660 and the acceptance, through Theodore, Biscop and Wilfrid, of the authority of Rome. Similarly, Wormald, arguing from the charter evidence, points out that 'the most immediate social result of the conversion was massive landed investment in the church.'<sup>260</sup> Whilst this might all point to a wealthy church, even to a well established church, it tells us nothing about the way in which the evangelization of the great mass of the population had been accomplished, if accomplished it had been. The impression remains of a religion restricted (as the paganism it supplanted had been)<sup>261</sup> to the ranks of the landed *comites* of the king. Bede's concern,<sup>262</sup> as expressed in the letter to Egbert, was not to deny the reality of the church's wealth, but to highlight the need for more evangelization, consisting of such basic measures as the recitation of the Creed and the Our Father.<sup>263</sup> R.M.T. Hill noted that a lack of clergy probably



meant that the spread of Christianity was in the hands of the laity to some extent,<sup>264</sup> and the evidence in the penitentials that adult baptism was, if not the norm, still frequently practised, also points to a church still in the first stages of evangelization.<sup>265</sup>

In which case, we can see the miracles of Cuthbert in context: 'plebem rusticam verbo praedicationis simul et opere virtutis ad caelestia vocaret'.<sup>266</sup> The words *opere virtutis* might simply mean that Cuthbert's piety and personal devotion impressed his hearers; but *virtus* was so often used in the sense of the power to work miracles, and Cuthbert so widely celebrated as a thaumaturge, it is difficult to believe that Bede did not have in mind a series of miraculous deeds accompanying the preaching of the gospel. Whether or not this was the first time that this area had been evangelized is not clear; but once we accept that the miracle stories are told of a ministry in the context of a people barely, if at all converted, then we see that other stories might well be a part of the conversion history. One example from Cuthbert's episcopal ministry makes the point: both the Anonymous and Bede tell how during a visitation, when Cuthbert was preaching and confirming, a young man was carried to him, and how the bishop responded to the request to heal him. In both the *Vita Metrica* and the Anonymous Life the story is told to emphasize a parallel with one of the miracles of Christ;<sup>267</sup> but the *Vita Prosaica* displays a different approach.<sup>268</sup> Bede (in both his

accounts) makes the Anonymous' paralytic a youth on the point of death, and (in the *Vita Prosaica*) develops the topography of the story. Although this wild and mountainous region had been evangelized, there was no continuance of ministry there; Cuthbert had to preach in a temporary structure for lack of a church, and that this was for two days before the confirmations suggests a period of catechizing.<sup>269</sup> In this context, the miracle story can be understood as a picture of the conversion - the people are like the youth, on the point of (spiritual) death, until the marvellous ministry of Cuthbert restored them. Perhaps unwittingly, Alcuin's summary of the story encapsulates Bede's view of the ministry of the evangelist:

...quomodo iuvenem moriturum forte viator  
repperit, orando cui reddidit ipse salutem.<sup>270</sup>

A young church, needing to be nurtured and recalled to the way of salvation, is a theme running through more of the miracle stories than is at first obvious. As the letter to Egbert confirms, that was the view from the monastery.

'Cellam Dominus fratrum decoravit honore' : miracles and the monasteries' understanding of their own history.

The consistent argument of this thesis has been that the miracle stories were recorded by monks who heard them (in the main) from other monks about wonderful deeds experienced or witnessed by monks through the ministry of saints who were monks and then wrote them down, often for the benefit of more senior monks.<sup>271</sup> Of course, that

generalization cannot be sustained in every case, but it applies in the majority of instances. It is not surprising, therefore, that as well as telling something of the story of the conversion, and recording something of the political history of the period, these authors were also recounting the histories of their own (and each other's) houses. That many of the works containing miracle stories were written, at least in part, to extol the life of a monastery or a group of monasteries has already been noted,<sup>272</sup> and it is possible to argue that a number of the stories seem to indicate a cult rivalry between different houses, as each claimed similar miracles for their saint or their shrine.<sup>273</sup> But just as both political history and conversion history influenced the telling of miracle stories in more subtle ways, so in their use of this material the eighth-century authors reveal to us something of their own agenda. The miracle stories can be shown to form a part of the way in which the writer wanted the origins of an house or *paruchia* to be understood, and in some cases it is clear that there was more than one interpretation of a community's past.

Many religious houses associated their foundation with a miraculous occurrence. Crowland existed, according to the *Vita Guthlaci*, both because Guthlac had wrestled with the demons there<sup>274</sup> (rather as Cuthbert had driven them from Farne and Cedd had consecrated Lastingham),<sup>275</sup> and because Aethelbald wanted to show his gratitude for Guthlac's assistance during his exile.<sup>276</sup> Although here expressed

miraculously, it would appear that Crowland, like a large number of other monasteries, celebrated its royal foundations. The case of the monks of Bardney and the remains of Oswald illustrates how the marriage of members of different dynasties could leave a community with divided loyalties.<sup>277</sup> Two examples demonstrate how different authors could use miracle stories to give weight to alternative interpretations of the origins of a monastic community, and therefore its allegiance. The first is Streonshalh. In his biographical chapter on Hild, Bede describes the foundation of the monastery as the crowning glory of her life's work.<sup>278</sup> Her close association with the East Anglian royal family and her desire to enter the monastic life are described, before Bede goes on to relate her foundation of an unidentified site on the River Wear,<sup>279</sup> transfer to Hartlepool, and eventual establishment of Streonshalh. Bede does not inform the reader who granted the land for this foundation, but the implication of his account of the Synod, wherein the king seems to treat it as a personal possession, suggests that Oswy must have been the benefactor.<sup>280</sup> Bede stresses Hild's association with Aidan, and thus sets her activity in the context of the second (Irish) mission to Northumbria. Three miracle stories told to conclude the chapter all focus on Hild's personal sanctity; her mother had a dream before her birth of a bright light shining all over Britain, and at her death members of her community, both at Streonshalh and at Hacanos (some thirteen miles

away) were granted visions of her passing. Thus the centrality of Hild to the life of her monastic *paruchia* is stressed.

But the author of *Vita Gregorii* never mentions her.<sup>281</sup> He tells the story of the discovery of Edwin's remains and their entombment at Streonshalh but describes the monastery as 'coenobium famosissimum Aelflede'.<sup>282</sup> The significance for the writer of Aelfflaed was that she was the daughter of Eanfled (rather than of Oswy) and the granddaughter of Edwin; the interment of the bones in the church of St Peter alongside those of Gregory serves to link the house with the first (Roman) mission to Northumbria.<sup>283</sup> The vision material is used to add weight to this interpretation of the monastery's past, so that the *vita* does not simply celebrate the existence of the Northumbrian 'Eigenkloster', but sets it firmly within that part of the kingdom's heritage which is Edwinian, Roman and Deiran, rather than that which is Oswaldian, Irish and Bernician.

A similar subtle manoeuvring is discernible when we turn to traditions associated with the Wilfridian *paruchiae*. Both Kirby<sup>284</sup> and Thacker<sup>285</sup> have argued that Wilfrid's foundations were, after 705, promoting the cult of Oswald. Bede included a number of stories which suggested that the monks of Wilfrid's foundations were under the great king's special protection. Oswald's posthumous appearance at Selsey is one;<sup>286</sup> that Bede was given some of his Oswald material by Acca reinforces that impression.<sup>287</sup> In his account of the

cult centre at the Heavenfield cross,<sup>288</sup> Bede mentions that the monks of Hexham were responsible for the first worship there, and tells the story of one of the brothers being cured of a broken arm by some moss taken from the cross. Either the monastery boasted two monks by the name of Bothelm in the early eighth century, or one individual was somewhat accident-prone, as Stephen's account of the foundation of Hexham includes the story of Bothelm falling from a great height whilst the building was in progress and Wilfrid restoring him to life when he was thought to be dead.<sup>289</sup> Bede mentions nothing of the foundation of Hexham; his only acknowledgement of its connexion with Wilfrid is his report that it was to this see (not house) that Acca succeeded on Wilfrid's death.<sup>290</sup> According to Stephen, Hexham was a gift from Aethelthryth, with whom Wilfrid had a close association.<sup>291</sup> The building of the church seems to have taken place in the 670s; Bede's first mention of the place is that it was the seat of Eata when he was appointed bishop for Bernicia.<sup>292</sup> The effect is once again that the monastery is placed by each author in a different tradition. That there was real tension between these two is also illustrated by the history of Ripon, which Alfrith treated it as if it remained his personal possession, giving it first to Eata<sup>293</sup> and later to Wilfrid.<sup>294</sup> In that context, the two stories which definitely belong to Ripon are significant. Bede tells that Cuthbert served as guestmaster there and was visited by an angel, a story which subtly

praises the quality of religious observance there under Eata.<sup>295</sup> Stephen tells that on the anniversary of Wilfrid's death, the monks came together and witnessed a light in the sky over Ripon, a sign that the house was still under the bishop's protection.<sup>296</sup>

The theme of protection is reflected in other stories. It would appear that a miracle story was a practised way to reassure a community of its place within the purposes of God, despite the vicissitudes that might be afflicting it. The unsuccessful attack on Oundle is a story of that type, as not only does the monastery refuse to be burned, but an angel appears to repulse the attackers, who soon meet their end.<sup>297</sup> It is possible to argue that the series of miracles surrounding Wilfrid's imprisonment is told by Stephen with reference to the immunity of the whole community from the interference of secular rulers. After it had proved impossible to keep the bishop in darkness, and one of his gaolers had relinquished his responsibilities because Wilfrid had cured his wife, and no chains had been made that could shackle the captive, and, finally, Irmingburg had fallen ill, the king's aunt, Aebbe, informed Ecgfrith that he had to release the bishop, because Wilfrid had the papal authority on his side.<sup>298</sup> Presumably, whilst Acca was still bishop of Hexham, Stephen could feel that the *paruchia* was fairly secure, but his stories were a statement of faith in the higher power that protected them from the tergiversations of temporal rulers.

It might be that a similar point is made in one of Bede's Lindisfarne stories. After Cuthbert's death, there was a period of disturbance at the monastery, though of precisely what nature we are not told.<sup>299</sup> Bede tells only one story of Ethelwold, who had taken over Cuthbert's hermitage on Farne; in it, some monks who had visited him were sailing back to the larger island when the sea became rough. Ethelwold's prayers for them were answered by a lull in the storm of such a length that it enabled the monks to reach their destination safely. We have already seen that storm-calming stories were used by our authors to reflect other events.<sup>300</sup> It is surely not coincidence that from a time remembered on Lindisfarne as difficult, the one miracle story to emerge tells of an hermit whose prayers brought the monks safely through a squall.

One of the great enemies that monastic life feared was an outbreak of the plague, and justly so, given the tendency of disease to spread to all the residents of a place. The stories from Barking seem designed to comfort a community that had experienced a particularly virulent and traumatic outbreak.<sup>301</sup> The story of Cedd saving a small boy at Lastingham is clearly designed to indicate the way in which that community felt that it continued to be under its founder's protection.<sup>302</sup> Small boys seem to be a necessary feature of a monastery's plague history - Selsey had one, Barking had one, Lastingham had one, and (in the famous story which may or may not be about Bede) Wearmouth-Jarrow



had one who helped to maintain the prayer life of the community.<sup>303</sup> The detail may be wholly insignificant, but it seems, like other common motifs,<sup>304</sup> to point to monasteries finding similar ways of coming to terms with the difficult episodes in their own past.

N. Howe has argued that for the Anglo-Saxons, from the time of their settlement in England onwards, myths played an important part in their self-understanding;<sup>305</sup> the myth was an important psychological tool in enabling the English to achieve their identity and to own their past. Each of the hagiographical works of the time, and the various traditions on which Bede drew in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, demonstrate a similar process; the monasteries were developing their understanding of who they were and whence they had come. The miracle stories were an important part of that process, as they illustrated a divinely ordained genesis for a community, validated the claims of an house to be as worthy a place of prayer or of pilgrimage as any other, and offered the hope of a future under the continued protection of their patron. All, as the fire at Coldingham served sombrely to remind them, as long as they maintained the life of prayer and service which was their vocation.<sup>306</sup>

That the same sort of approach influenced the attitude of our writers to events outside of the monastery has filtered through the miracle stories. It might be argued that this is not so much 'monastic history' as simply ecclesiastical history written by monks. What the miracle

stories demonstrate is that the role of the monastery in the minds of the writers cannot be discounted; the miracle stories of Gregory of Tours, for example, show different emphases. Gregory appears to have systematically visited shrines in order to collect stories; he was not part of a monastic network which provided him with them. The location of many, if not most, of Gregory's stories are cult centres, and the recipients of the saint's *virtus* as likely to be lay as religious. Gregory can be treated as an ecclesiastical historian; for all its secular material, the *Historia Francorum* is seen through the eyes of a churchman, and one so bred in an ecclesiastical circle that he cannot imagine any other viewpoint. But there is a perceptible difference between that approach and the view of the English writers of a century later. The impression that the miracle stories reinforce is of an almost entirely monastic church in England. Whether or not that was the case is the subject of some debate; what the miracle stories help to identify is the way in which the writers of the few sources that we have recorded not only what they believed to have happened, but the biases and prejudices which resulted from their membership of an educated, aristocratic, monastic elite.

Notes to Chapter Five.

1. W.W. Dickerson, III, 'Bede as literary architect of the English Church: another look at Bede's use of hagiography in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *A.B.R.* 45 (1994), pp.93-105 (p.93).
2. By 'hagiography' Dickerson means the marvellous or the supernatural. It is not so much the presence of the panegyric in the *H.E.* that concerns him as the use of stories which modern scepticism would discount.
3. Dickerson, p.97.
4. 'Bede as early medieval historian', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 4 (1946), pp.26-36 (p.31).
5. Colgrave & Mynors, pp.xxxiv-xxxv.
6. 'With Bede, as with Gregory of Tours (and many more), the differentiation between hagiography and history is otiose' (W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (Princeton, 1988), p.245.
7. *H.E.* V, 24.
8. R.D. Ray, 'Bede, the Exegete, as Historian', in ed. Bonner, *Famulus Christi*, pp.125-140; G. Olsen, 'Bede as Historian: The Evidence from his Observations of the Life of the First Christian Community at Jerusalem', *J.E.H.* 33 (1982), pp.519-30; Ray, 'Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*', *Speculum* 55 (1980), pp.1-21; J. McClure, 'Bede's Old Testament Kings', in ed. P. Wormald, *Ideal and Reality* (Oxford, 1983), pp.76-98; W.T. Foley, '*Imitatio Apostoli*: St Wilfrid of York and the Andrew Script', *A.B.R.* 40 (1989), pp.13-31; J. Davidse, 'The Sense of History in the Works of the Venerable Bede', *Studi Medievali* 3rd series, 23 (1982), pp.647-95; Creider, 'Bede's Understanding', pp.125-9.
9. *VWilf.* c.1.
10. *VWilf.* c.13.
11. *VWilf.* c.24.
12. *VWilf.* c.23.
13. *VWilf.* c.1.
14. *VWilf.* c.36.
15. *VWilf.* c.68.

16. *VWilf.* c.36.
17. '*Imitatio Apostoli*', pp.17-8.
18. *Op. cit.*, pp.30-1.
19. 'Script' is the technical term, drawn from psychology, that Foley uses for a 'life plan' (*op. cit.*, p.13).
20. E.g., P.H. Blair, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation and its Importance Today* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1959), p.10.
- The subtitle quotation is from *VAnon.* I, 2 (and is also to be found in *VWilf.* prol.).
21. Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p.41; also Wallace-Hadrill, *Historical Commentary*, p.xxiv.
22. Davidse (*op. cit.*, p.695) argues that it was Bede's original contribution to write from the monastic view of history, but that ignores the work of his contemporaries and the content of his sources.
23. Appendices 1 - 3.
24. *VGuth.* c.50.
25. *VGuth.* cc.39-40.
26. *VGuth.* c.48.
27. *VGuth.* prol..
28. As must surely be the case with the vision material (*VGuth* cc.27-34, 36).
29. *VGuth.* c.45 suggests that there was rarely no-one apart from Guthlac on Crowland; c.35 records that Beccel installed himself as Guthlac's servant. If the work is arranged thematically, rather than chronologically, then this first mention of Beccel need not necessarily mark the point before which he was absent.
30. *VGuth.* c.9.
31. The stories recorded in *VAnon.* I, 3; II, 3, 4, 5; III, 3; IV, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15.
32. See *VAnon.* III, 1, 2, 4, 5; IV, 14, 16, 17.
33. *VAnon.* II, 6, 7; IV, 3, 8. The earlier stories date from before Cuthbert was transferred to Lindisfarne, but the Anonymous had at least three Melrose sources, Tydi,

Pleggils, and Aethilwald, so we can assume that they were responsible for that information.

34. *VAnon.* III, 6.
35. *VAnon.* IV, 10.
36. *VAnon.* II, 8; Hildmer must have been in contact with the monastery, so the story would have been preserved on Lindisfarne.
37. *VAnon.* IV, 9. An alternative explanation is that this story originated as an interpretation of events after the two deaths.
38. *VAnon.* I, 4, 5, 6; II, 2.
39. *VAnon.* I, 5.
40. *VAnon.* I, 3.
41. *VAnon.* I, 4; II, 2.
42. *VPr.* prol..
43. Assuming the stories of the building on Farne are essentially the same (see note 67 below). On the comparative use of sources in the *VAnon.* and the *VPr.*, see McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp.157-62; as will be seen, my analysis differs from McCready's in some respects.
44. Bede also mentions that the priest present when Cuthbert saved the Pictish sailors told others about the event, but does not give his name (*VPr.* c.11, cf. *VAnon.* II, 4).
45. *VPr.* c.30, cf. *VAnon.* IV, 4.
46. *VPr.* c.25, cf. *VAnon.* IV, 7.
47. *VPr.* c.10, cf. *VAnon.* II, 3.
48. *VPr.* c.38, cf. *VAnon.* IV, 12.
49. *VPr.* c.5, cf. *VAnon.* I, 6.
50. *VPr.* c.23.
51. *VPr.* c.8.
52. *VPr.* c.8.
53. *VPr.* c.6.

54. *VPr.* c.36.
55. *VPr.* cc.3, 35, 46.
56. *VPr.* c.3; the somewhat snobbish assumption is that they did not have the imagination to lie.
57. *VPr.* c.35, cf. *VAnon.* IV, 18.
58. *VPr.* c.31, cf. *VAnon.* IV, 18.
59. Hildmer also appears in *VPr.* c.15 (cf. *VAnon.* II, 8).
60. *VPr.* c.40.
61. *VPr.* c.19.
62. *VPr.* c.7, cf. *VAnon.* II, 2.
63. *VPr.* c.27.
64. Bede seems to have had a different source from the Anonymous for the Carlisle episodes.
65. *VPr.* c.19.
66. *VPr.* c.7.
67. *VWilf.* praef.
68. *VWilf.* c.37. We might also infer that she is the source for the story of the light in c.36. She is not to be identified her with the Aebbe of c.39, so we have no source for the story of Irmingburg's recovery.
69. *VWilf.* c.59. The point about these witnesses is not to make the account credible, but to vindicate Wilfrid and to justify his influence over Osred.
70. *VWilf.* c.64.
71. See above, p.33.
72. Stephen may have been with Wilfrid on some occasions; D.P. Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the "Life of Wilfrid"', *E.H.R.* 98 (1983), pp.101-14 (pp.103-4).
73. T.J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography* (Oxford, 1988), pp.19-22.
74. It is instructive to consider the way in which Bede presents the miracle of the huge stone much more vaguely than the Anonymous does (see above, pp.136-7). Dare we speculate that this was Bede's 'compromise position',

including material valued at Lindisfarne, but which he could not verify?

75. Above, pp.

76. Rollason, 'Why was St Cuthbert so popular?' in ed. Rollason, *Cuthbert, Saint and Patron* (Durham, 1987), pp.9-22 (p.18).

77. Discussions of the sources for the miracles of the *H.E.* include McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp.162-5, Rosenthal, 'Bede's Use of Miracles', pp.329-33 and Colgrave, "Bede's Miracle Stories", pp.205-7.

78. *H.E.* praef..

79. Rosenthal, p.331.

80. McCready, *op. cit.*, p.165.

81. E.g., the *Passio Albani* (W. Levison, 'St Alban and St Alban's', *Antiquity* 15 (1941), pp.337-59).

82. Appendix 2.

83. Respectively, *H.E.* I, 33; II, 2; II, 6; II, 7.

84. *H.E.* praef..

85. *H.E.* II, 12. Therefore, rather than (McCready, *op. cit.* p.165) the miracles for book II being entirely unattested, we can identify Bede's source for all of them.

86. *H.E.* praef..

87. *H.E.* III, 12, 13, 15, 19; IV, 3, 7-10, 14, 19, 22, 25, 32; V, 1, 2-5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19.

88. *H.E.* III, 8.

89. *Historical Commentary*, p.102.

90. *H.E.* IV, 23-4. John was educated at Streoneshalh, and the appointment of Wilfrid II as his successor at York suggests that he maintained close contact with the monastery.

91. *H.E.* V, 9-10.

92. *H.E.* IV, 3.

93. See above, pp.124, 127.

94. *VGreg.* cc.18-9.

95. *VGreg.* c.26.
96. Respectively, *VGreg.* cc.17, 21, 29.
97. *VGreg.* c.28. See above, pp.123-7.
98. *VGreg.* c.5.
99. *H.E.* praef.. For a summary of the discussion of this phrase, see McCready, *op. cit.*, pp.195-213.
100. Plummer I, p.xlv.
101. C.W. Jones, *Saints Lives and Chronicles*, pp.83-5.
102. Ray, 'Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*'; also Ray, *Bede, Rhetoric and the Creation of Christian Latin Culture* (1997 Jarrow Lecture, forthcoming).
103. *VGreg.* c.30, 'si quid horum que scripsimus de hoc viro non fuit...' may refer to *VGreg.* c.21, which relates a miracle of Leo rather than of Gregory.
104. B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind* (Aldershot, 1982), p.215.
105. *VGreg.* c.30.
106. *VAnon.* I, 1, cf. *VWilf.* praef.. Colgrave's translation, 'popular report', suggests a wider circulation for these stories prior to writing than was probably the case. Although the origin of the expression is *VAnt.* prol., I would identify 'sermo referentium' with the mainly monastic oral tradition described in chapter 3, above.
107. *H.E.* praef..
108. G.I. Berlin, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', *Neophilologus*, 74 (1990), pp.434-43 (p.441).
109. Ward, *op. cit.*, p.215.
110. S. Foot, 'What was an early Anglo-Saxon Monastery?', in ed. J. Loades, *Monastic Studies* (Bangor, 1990), pp.48-57.
111. I.e., the area covered by the monastery, rather than simply the building itself; so, e.g., with respect to Cuthbert, it includes Farne, the beach at Coldingham, and the 'possession' of Streoneshalh (*VPr.* c.34).
112. It would seem that most (if not all) earlier churches monasteries were attached to monasteries; I distinguish those from new foundations (such as those blessed by John



of Beverley).

113. In Appendices 1 - 5 'monastic situations' are identified by +.

114. The exception is *VGuth*, c.5.

115. We might expect one other (Theodore's foreknowledge of his death) to have occurred in a monastery, but that is not stated (*VWilf*, c.43).

The subtitle quotation is from Bede, *Ep. ad. Ecg.*, 4.

116. *H.E.* V, 23.

117. *Ep. ad Ecg.*, 11-13.

118. Whilst there is no mention of Paulinus being in any sort of company, it is hard to believe that he was sent north entirely on his own (and we know of the deacon, James (*H.E.* II, 16)). Similarly, Aidan appears to have been dispatched alone from Iona, but Bede, summarizing his virtues, mentions 'omnes qui cum eo incedebant, sive adtonsi seu laici...' (*H.E.* III, 5).

119. T.L. Amos, 'Monks and Pastoral Care in the Early Middle Ages', in ed. T.F.X. Noble & J.J. Contreni, *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, 1987), pp.165-180.

120. Ed. Blair & Sharpe, *Pastoral Care before the Parish*, p.5. In support of the thesis that monasteries were the foci of organized pastoral care, see also, S. Foot, 'Parochial Ministry in early Anglo-Saxon England: The role of monastic communities', in *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay* (*Studies in Church History* 26) (Oxford, 1989), pp.43-54, and A. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care in early Anglo-Saxon England', in ed. Blair & Sharpe, pp.138-170.

121. Thacker, *op. cit.*, pp.140-1.

122. E.g., *VPr*, c.9.

123. For a critique of the thesis that pastoral care was the exclusive duty of the inmates of *monasteria*, see E. Cambridge and D. Rollason, 'Debate: The pastoral organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a review of the "Minster Hypothesis"', *E.M.E.* 4 (1995), pp.87-104.

124. Cambridge & Rollason, p.89.

125. G.W.O. Addleshaw, *The Pastoral Organization of the Modern Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle in the Time of Bede*

- (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1963), p.9.
126. 'What was an early Anglo-Saxon monastery?', p.54.
127. *Ep. ad Ecg.*, 10.
128. A. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in ed. P. Wormald, *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 1983), pp.130-53 (pp.132-5).
129. A.J. Frantzen, 'The tradition of penitentials in Anglo-Saxon England', *A.S.E.* 11 (1982), pp.23-56; Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal', pp.147-8.
130. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal', pp.136-43.
131. On similarities between Jon. *VCoI.* and the Barking *libellus*, see above, pp.239-40.
132. *VGreg.* c.19.
133. *VGreg.* c.18. Although the Latin is somewhat clumsy, this has to be reported speech rather than the writer's own description of the house of which he was a member. See above, pp.35-9.
134. *VGreg.* c.19; Thacker calls it the 'Eigenkloster' (*op. cit.*, p.143).
135. Thacker, 'Social and Continental Background', p.53.
136. It is conceivable that Felix was not a monk, but it is highly unlikely. See above, p.40.
137. E.g., *VGuth.* cc.39, 40, 43, 44, 46, 47.
138. *VGuth.* c.51. Felix seems to expect his readership to know to what *monasterium* or *paruchia* the 'adgregatis.. fratribus presbiterisque' belong. Pega (described as 'sancta Christi virgo' and 'famula Christi') is clearly living some sort of religious life, but again, we are not told where.
139. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p.456.
140. Haddan & Stubbs III, pp.296-8.
141. Ed. M. Chibnall, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford, 1969), pp.xxv-xxix, 338.
142. *VGuth.* c.51.
143. *VGuth.* c.46.

144. *VGuth.* c.48.

145. *VGuth.* c.53.

146. Which house that might have been is not known. Repton (given its royal foundation and the interest shown in the cult by Aethelbald) is the most likely candidate; Ely was not far distant (and the *Vita* was written for an East Anglian king); we do not know where Ecgburh (another East Anglian) was abbess, but her interest may be significant.

147. *H.E.* I, 23.

148. *H.E.* II, 5.

149. The arguable exceptions to this rule, Agilbert and Wine, were both, significantly, from Gaul.

150. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', pp.149-50.

151. Respectively, *H.E.* IV, 19; III, 24; IV, 6; III, 8.

152. *Ep. ad Ecg.*, 10.

153. *H.E.* III, 16.

154. E.g., *VMart.* c.14; *Greg. Dial.* I, 6.

155. *H.E.* I, 19 and II, 7 respectively.

156. The inclusion of the story of Alban's blood (*H.E.* I, 18) suggests that this continuity was an important idea for Bede.

157. C. Stancliffe, 'Where was Oswald killed?', p.93.

158. N.J. Higham, *An English Empire* (Manchester and New York, 1995), pp.47-73.

159. D.J.V. Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age* (London, 1973), pp.113-8.

160. The story has no date, so it could have been in the time of either Oswy or Oswald; the most likely period would be shortly after Maserfelth, before Oswy was securely established. Given the other bloodthirsty episodes in the *H.E.*, it seems naive to interpret 'vide, Domine, quanta mala facit Penda' as an expression of humanitarian concern; the evil consisted in opposing a Christian King.

161. *H.E.* III, 17.

The subtitle quotation is from *VWilf.* c.60.

162. There are exceptions to that rule, but where the social standing of a non-noble character is given, it is often as the servant of someone of higher standing, e.g., Baldhelm, who had been a servant to Sibba (*VAnon.* IV, 7, *VPr.* c.25).
163. On defining nobility, see H.R. Loyn, 'Kings, Gesiths and Thegns', in ed. Carver, *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, pp.75-9, and his *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1962), pp.199-223.
164. *VGuth.* c.2.
165. *VAnon.* I, 6-7.
166. *VWilf.* c.2, *H.A.* c.1.
167. E.g., Adomnan's mission to Northumbria to secure the release of prisoners after Nechtansmere (Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, p.x1).
168. *H.E.* II, 2.
169. D.P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), p.xii; Stenton, p.ix; ed. S. Bassett, *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), pp.3-4.
170. There are many modern histories of the early centuries of Anglo-Saxon England. J.N.L. Myres, *The English Settlements* (Oxford, 1985) surveys the sources for the period; B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990) and ed. S. Bassett, *op. cit.*, survey the origins of each of the many kingdoms; Higham, *English Empire* discusses the period of Kentish supremacy and the evidence of the problematic Tribal Hidage; Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, focusses particularly on the difficulty of the source material and the chronological questions.
171. N.J. Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1992), argues against the notion of a mass-migration and maintains that the conquest consisted of the imposition of a Germanic nobility with their own form of estate tenure on a British population. If he were right, it would explain the limited 'cast list' of the miracle stories; however, the archaeological evidence suggests a substantial displacement of the native population by large numbers of Anglo-Saxons. D.P. Kirby, *The Making of Early England* (London, 1967), p.30, maintains that the settlement was a mass migration; see also Myres, pp.21-9.
172. Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp.20-3, argues that the names of kingdoms refer primarily to tribes not to places.

173. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (composed in the late ninth century) gives the impression of five kingdoms; from Henry of Huntingdon it has been common to recognize seven, including Essex and Sussex, as the so-called 'heptarchy'.
174. Bede claims that the first king to hold the *imperium* was Aelle of Sussex, followed by Caelin of Wessex (*H.E.* II, 5).
175. Although the battle of the Trent (*H.E.* IV, 21) seems officially to have ended Northumbrian pretensions in Mercia (Stenton, p.85), Kirby (*Earliest English Kings*, p.114) argues that Oswy had little power over Wulfhere after 664.
176. *H.E.* V, 23; D. Dumville, 'Essex, Middle Anglia and the Expansion of Mercia in the South-East Midlands', in ed. Bassett, *Origins*, 123-40.
177. Adom. *VCoI.* I, 1.
178. *H.E.* IV, 21 and 26, respectively.
179. *H.E.* II, 9.
180. Kirby, *op. cit.*, p.84.
181. *H.E.* III, 2, where even the name Heavenfield is accorded prophetic significance
182. Adom. *VCoI.* I, 1.
183. *H.E.* III, 2.
184. *H.E.* III, 11.
185. B. Eagles, 'Lindsey', in ed. Bassett, *Origins*, 202-12.
186. Examples include Northumbria under Oswin and Oswy (*H.E.* III, 14), Penda and Peada in Mercia (with Peada as 'sub-regulus' of the Middle Angles (*H.E.* III, 21)), and the three sons of Saebert of Essex (*H.E.* II, 5).
187. *H.E.* III, 14.
188. *Ibid.*. According to R.M.T. Hill, 'Holy Kings - the Bane of seventh-century society', in ed. D. Baker, *Church, Society and Politics* (Oxford, 1975), pp.39-43, this may well be Bede's opinion of kingship.
189. D. Dumville, 'The aetheling: a study in Anglo-Saxon constitutional history', *A.S.E.* 8 (1979), 1-33.
190. *H.E.* II, 12; *VGreg.* c.16.

191. *VGuth.* cc.49, 52.
192. *VGuth.* c.49.
193. Adom. *VCol.* I, 1.
194. *H.E.* III, 22.
195. W. Goffart, 'The *Historia Ecclesiastica*: Bede's Agenda and Ours', *Haskins Society Journal* 2 (1990), pp.29-45; Kirby, 'Northumbria in the Time of Wilfrid', in ed. Kirby, *St Wilfrid at Hexham*, pp.1-34.
196. E. Power, 'St Cuthbert and St Wilfrid', in ed. Farmer, *Benedict's Disciples*, pp.52-69 (p.52).
197. *VAnon.* III, 6; *VPr.* c.24; *VMet.* c.21.
198. *H.E.* IV, 28; cf., *VAnon.* IV, 1, *VPr.* c.24.
199. *H.E.* IV, 28.
200. Ed. & trans. M. Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1996), p.39.
201. *H.E.* IV, 26.
202. *VAnon.* IV, 8.
203. *VPr.* c.27.
204. *VAnon.* IV, 9.
205. *VPr.* c.28.
206. *H.E.* IV, 26.
207. *Earliest English Kings*, p.106; 'Northumbria in the time of Wilfrid', p.19.
208. *H.E.* III, 24. Kirby, *op. cit.*, p.103.
209. *VWilf.* c.19.
210. *VWilf.* c.42.
211. *VWilf.* c.44. Precisely to what extent Wilfrid was restored is not clear. Stephen mentions that Wilfrid became abbot of Hexham and Ripon again, and bishop of York; Bede mentions also that in 687 Wilfrid was given responsibility for Lindisfarne (*H.E.* IV, 29), presumably for the unhappy year following Cuthbert's death (*VPr.* c.40).

212. *VWilf.* c.58.
213. *VWilf.* c.24.
214. *VWilf.* c.59.
215. Cuthbert's prophecy on Coquet Island was that Aelfflaed would accommodate herself to Aldfrith: Ecgfrith 'habebit enim successorem quem germana ut ipsum Egfridum dilectione complectaris' (*VPr.* c.24).
216. *VWilf.* c.60.
217. *Ibid.*
218. *H.E.* V, 20.
219. Stenton, pp.144-5. W. Goffart, 'Bede's Agenda and Ours', p.36, see things somewhat differently.
220. *VWilf.* c.42.
221. *H.E.* III, 28.
- The subtitle quotation is from *H.E.* I, 31.
222. 'Bede's use of miracles', p.330.
223. *Ibid.* p.331.
224. *H.E.* V, 23.
225. *H.E.* I, 31.
226. *H.E.* I, 26.
227. I.N. Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English', *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp.1-17 (p.17).
228. *H.E.* II, 2.
229. *Ibid.*
230. *H.E.* V, 10; see above, pp.6-7.
231. *VGer.* c.13; cf. *H.E.* I, 17.
232. *VGer.* c.14; cf. *H.E.* I, 17. N. Howe, *Migration and Myth-making in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven and London, 1989).
233. *H.E.* I, 18; cf. *VGer.* c.15.
234. *VGreg.* c.16; cf. *H.E.* II, 12.

235. *Coming of Christianity*, p.67-8.
236. The Anonymous has the stranger, whom Edwin promises to obey, 'cum cruce Christi coronatus'.
237. *VGreg.* c.15.
238. *H.E.* IV, 13; *VWilf.* c.26.
239. E.g., Bede's comment, 'Quo beneficio multum antistes cor omnium in suum convertit amorem... cuius ministerio temporalia bona sumserunt.' (*H.E.* IV, 13).
240. *H.E.* IV, 14.
241. *H.E.* IV, 22.
242. 'Bede's use of miracles', p.231.
243. B. Ward, 'Bede and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons', *Word and Spirit: a Monastic Review* 7 (1985), pp.34-46 (p.35).
244. *VPr.* c.9.
245. *H.E.* II, 6.
246. 'Miracles and History', p.74. See also in connection with this story, K. Lutterkort, 'Beda Hagiographicus: Meaning and Function of miracle stories in the *Vita Cuthberti* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', in ed. Houwen & MacDonald, *Beda Venerabilis* (Groningen, 1996), pp.81-106 (pp.100-2). I disagree with his assertion that the story has a primarily literary background.
247. Higham, *English Empire*, p.59.
248. I.N. Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English', *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp.1-17.
249. *H.E.* V, 9.
250. *H.E.* V, 19.
251. *H.E.* V, 9.
252. *H.E.* V, 10.
253. *Ep. ad Ecg.* c.9.
254. *VAnon.* II, 4-6.
255. *H.E.* IV, 13-15; *VWilf.* cc.41-2.



256. *VGuth.* c.48.
257. E.g., D.J.V. Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age c.400-1042* (London, 1973), p.86; Rosenthal, p.330.
258. P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf", and the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy' in ed. R.T. Farrell, *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1977), pp.32-95 (p.57).
259. 'The First Century of Christianity in England.', *Ampleforth Journal* 76 (1971), pp.12-29 (repr. in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*).
260. *Bede and the Conversion of England : The Charter Evidence* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1984), p.1.
261. Above, p.69. Also, Wormald, *op. cit.*, p.55.
262. Mayr-Harting points out that Bede's view seems essentially 'classless' (*The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St Benedict and Social Class* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1976)), pp.11-14. We could speculate that a lack of noble blood (or possibly British birth) denied him preferment, and gave him a concern for the evangelization of the lower classes.
263. *Ep. ad Ecg.* c.5.
264. *The Labourers in the Field* (The Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1974), p.15.
265. Foot, 'By water in the spirit', p. 176.
266. *H.E.* IV, 27.
267. *VMet.* c.26; *VAnon.* IV, 5. The Biblical parallel suggested, particularly in *VAnon.*, with the emphasis on forgiveness, is Mark 2. 1-12.
268. *VPr.* c.32.
269. 'Nuper regeneratis in Christo' might mean that it was on this occasion that the local people were baptized.
270. *Versus*, 721-2.
- The subtitle quotation is from *De Ab.* c.20.
271. The term 'monk' is used here in the broader sense of someone committed to the religious life; it does not imply life by a particular rule, nor assume either gender, nor exclude any rank.
272. Above, pp.189-90.

273. Above, pp.199-200.
274. *VGuth.* cc.25-7.
275. *VPr.* c.17, cf. *VAnon* III, 1; *H.E.* III. 23; although there is not miracle associated with this last instance, it is clear that it was the process of consecration which made the place habitable. See P.H. Blair, *The World of Bede* (2nd edition, London, 1990), p.140.
276. *VGuth.* cc.51-2.
277. *H.E.* III, 11.
278. *H.E.* IV, 23. For a summary of the evidence relating to Hild, see C.E. Fell, *op. cit.*.
279. That Bede does not give the name of this foundation is peculiar, considering that it could not have been many miles from either part of Jarrow-Wearmouth. It suggests that it did not long survive Hilda's departure, and that Bede's source for his earlier part of this biography was not of the best quality. Fell, pp.81-2.
280. *H.E.* III, 25. Colgrave assumed that the site was part of the grant made on the occasion of the consecration of Aelfflaed (*H.E.* III, 23; Colgrave & Mynors, p.290n.); Fell (pp.85-6) is not persuaded.
281. Fell, pp.96-7, posits the existence of a (now lost) *vita* of Hild, composed at Streonshalh shortly after the saint's death. If correct, that supposition points to two traditions of the house's background maintained in the same place.
282. *VGreg.* c.18.
283. *VGreg.* c.19.
284. 'Northumbria in the time of Wilfrid', p.26.
285. '*Membra Disjecta*', pp.107-11.
286. *H.E.* IV, 14.
287. *H.E.* III, 13.
288. *H.E.* III, 2.
289. *VWilf.* c.23. The incident is not very miraculous; the broken bones were treated by *medici*, and Bothelm was not actually dead, only thought to be so.

290. *H.E.* V, 20.
291. *VWilf.* c.22. Wilfrid's involvement with Aethelthryth is also clear from *H.E.* IV, 19.
292. *H.E.* IV, 12.
293. *VPr.* c.7.
294. *VWilf.* c.7. Stephen does not mention the ejection of Eata and Cuthbert so that the gift could be made; Bede is tactful enough not to mention that the monks for whom the Melrose contingent was forced to make way were Wilfrid and his followers (*VPr.* c.8). See C. Stevens, 'St Cuthbert: Crisis in Northumbria', *Cistercian Studies* 24 (1989), pp.280-92 (pp.288-90).
295. *VPr.* c.7; cf. *VAnon.* II, 2. Significant Bede mentions the foundation of the monastery, which the Anonymous does not.
296. *VWilf.* c.68.
297. *VWilf.* c.67.
298. *VWilf.* cc.36-39.
299. *VMet.* c.40.
300. See above, p.334.
301. *H.E.* IV, 7-10.
302. *H.E.* III, 23.
303. *VCeol.* c.14.
304. E.g., foreknowledge of death or marvellous lights.
305. *Migration and Myth-making.*
306. *H.E.* IV, 25.

## Conclusion

### Nec Silentio Praetereundum: The importance of the Miracle Stories

In an important paper on Bede's exegetical work, Judith McClure demonstrated that *In Genesim* was written with the pastoral care of the Anglo-Saxons in mind.<sup>1</sup> The theology underlying this approach developed Augustine's doctrine of predestination, and saw the Anglo-Saxons as an elect people,<sup>2</sup> an understanding which, as we have seen, also permeated the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It is clear that this idea of election was also held by Stephen in the *Vita Wilfridi*.<sup>3</sup> It is primarily for this reason that Bede could write 'memorable quoddam factum esse constat, quod nequaquam silentio praetereundum arbitror', and then introduce into his history a tale so apparently irrelevant, and, to modern eyes, incredible, as that of Imma and his chains.<sup>4</sup> Even when recalling a defeat for his own (Northumbrian) people, Bede was making the point that God was on their side. Of course, the agenda is never presented as crudely as that, but it is clear that the miraculous was used as a way of shaping the understanding of history which the Anglo-Saxon writers sought to convey to their audience.

As others have argued, the existence of these stories was to some extent dependant on precursors from the Bible, as well as from Ireland and (to the greatest extent) the

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continent, but, as the comparisons undertaken here demonstrate, that should not blind us to the way in which the Anglo-Saxon miracle stories were used independently of any exemplar. There is little, if any, evidence of verbal borrowing from earlier hagiography within the miracle stories; there is no evidence that the stories were produced in order to counter the claims of paganism, and it would appear that where the English saints were seen to imitate the great heroes of European hagiography, this was a secondary agenda for the writers of the stories. If the stories need any further explanation than that they were believed to have happened (and Creider is right to state that plausibility was not an issue),<sup>5</sup> their occurrence can be accounted for by the coming together of three factors.

Firstly, the stories originated in a theological climate in which they made perfect sense. It is not merely that the rational scepticism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had no place in the time of Bede; more importantly, whilst the miracle stories were, by definition, seen to be marvellous, there was a fluid sense of what constituted a marvel. Heavily informed by Augustine, the English writers saw no division between the natural and the supernatural;<sup>6</sup> rather they believed that omnipresent divine grace was occasionally made more apparent in a surprising way. The point about miracles seems simply to have been that they were extraordinary, and, therefore, worthy of record. Although the *Vita*

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*Gregorii* witnesses to an expectation of the miraculous within a work of hagiography, the absence of miracles from the *Historia Abbatum* makes it clear that the English did not regard the miraculous as a *sine qua non* of a saint's *vita*. Hagiography celebrated those who had responded to the higher calling of sanctity, not the lesser achievement of miracle-working.<sup>7</sup>

The Anonymous of Streoneshalh tends to mislead with his impression that miracles were simply a sign of sainthood. The theological agenda with which the Anglo-Saxons worked was far more developed than that. The miracle stories record their doctrinal thinking on a number of points, from the importance of canonical obedience to the value of masses for the dead, and reveal to us a young church with a vivid sense of heaven and hell as proximate realities, a belief in the absolute necessity of at least three sacraments (Baptism, Eucharist, and Penance), and a faith in the value of the activities of ministry (the power of a blessing, the potency of holy water, the effectiveness of intercessory prayer, and the efficacy of preaching). They may, occasionally, reveal some slightly unorthodox practices, such as re-baptism or the lay administration of penance, and some confused theology; but the few examples of this run counter to one of the main themes, which is that the miraculous demonstrates the truth of orthodox, evangelical belief. In short, the miracles point us to the understanding of the relationship between God and human

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beings; true faith, rightly administered within the fellowship of the catholic church, was the key to salvation. Stories, such as that of Herebald, which made the point dramatically, could not be passed over in silence.<sup>8</sup>

Part of this theological agenda concerned the relationship of the miraculous to the conversion. Writers who had imbued the Augustinian theology of grace were aware that to be brought to faith was a gift of God.<sup>9</sup> So miracle stories serve two functions; they point to the divine activity in engineering the conversion, and they illustrate the benefits of becoming Christian. It is in this context that the Biblical symbolism with which the writers were familiar is adopted; the sight given to Augustine's blind man, the fountain marking where the Hewalds died, the enhanced fertility of Frisia after the preaching of Wilfrid,<sup>10</sup> all draw on conventional Christian imagery of light, water, and life. The authors presented the conversion as neither dependent on miracles nor achieved entirely without them; their theology taught them to expect that conversion and the miraculous should go together, and that is what they recorded.

The second circumstance is that the stories were generated in the context of peregrination. It might well be that none of the early eighth-century authors left his monastery more than once or twice, but the material which they gathered depended on those who, for one reason or

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another, were well-travelled.<sup>11</sup> The similarity of some stories with a complete lack of verbal dependance can be explained by the existence of an 'oral tradition' which these itinerants generated. It is hard to judge how widespread a knowledge of Latin, or even a basic literacy, was; but it seems fair to assume that this was still largely an oral culture, with most conversation conducted in the vernacular. Perhaps we should take the Anonymous of Streonshalh at his word, and visualize him interrogating those who came from the continent or from Canterbury, for half-remembered stories of Gregory. What we shall never know is how much of the written record existed before it was committed to parchment; were there two forms of the story of Edwin's conversion? Or did both Bede and the Anonymous craft the best they could from the distant recollection of an exile in East Anglia and a stranger who returned as Paulinus?<sup>12</sup>

It is apparent that these interchanges of stories fathered imitation, and perhaps a cult rivalry, between the main centres of monasticism. The similarity between some of the stories told of Faremoutiers and those of Barking cannot be accidental; neither is it likely that Lindisfarne by chance remembered things of Cuthbert similar to those which Adomnan recorded of Columba. The exhumation of bodies, discovered, to great rejoicing, to be free from decay, suggests the engineering of the miraculous to follow the cult of another saint, and possibly points to the

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influence of Gaul. Our sources also witness to the beginnings of a new form of pilgrimage, the arrival at the shrines of those who sought healing from an entombed saint. Perhaps the answer to the mystery of why some saints of this period are without miracle traditions is to be found simply in the wish of the monastery not to be worn away, like the battlefield at Maserfelth, by those collecting holy dust.<sup>13</sup>

The third circumstance is the monastic background itself. Whilst for some monasteries a miracle, or a series of miracles, formed an important part of their own history, it is easier to imagine the monasteries without the miracles than the miracle stories without the monasteries which treasured them. The dominance of religious amongst those involved in the action or the witnessing and relating of miracles is remarkable.<sup>14</sup> Once the content of the stories is analyzed, it becomes clear that a distinctly monarchical voice is speaking. In as much as the miracle stories can be defined as 'hagiographical', they are traditions which enable a monastery to own the memory of a saint; in as much as they are 'historical', they demonstrate the view from the cloister window of the state of the nation and its past.

In that, a new question of the reliability of the works which contain the stories is raised. It is not, as has been so often said, how can we take seriously history which includes episodes so apparently 'supernatural'? To

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the monastic mind, used to stories of wonders accompanying preaching and watching the development of posthumous cults, the miraculous was simply a fact of life. The question is rather, can we trust our sources given that this unusual genre of stories within them show how deeply conditioned they were by their monastic environment? Or are we blinded, for example, to what happened in 685, because our sources were mainly interested in the way in which Cuthbert, Aelfflaed, or Wilfrid (all monastic founders or reformers), could be presented as major political players? Is the story of Augustine's Oak designed to obscure the contribution of the British clergy to the process of evangelization? Was there really a terrible epidemic that swept the country in 664, or do the stories of Barking and Lastingham impose their own past on our view of the whole? Did the conversion reach beyond a small noble-monastic clique, or do the characters of the miracle stories represent a cross-section of the church? Were there really no secular clergy in Anglo-Saxon England, or is it simply that the monastic saints and their followers are the only ones of whom we hear?

That need not suggest that the miracle stories are valueless as an historical record, nor that they devalue the works in which they are to be found. On the contrary, they serve to contain useful historical information, reminding us of the social, political and material realities of their time.<sup>15</sup> And more than that, they reflect

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ideas about the history of which they are a part, revealing more starkly than sober political history could do, the historiographical presuppositions with which their authors were working. Lutterkort (in the most recently published approach to Bede's stories) concludes, 'we should be fully aware... that to disparage miracle stories as being merely naive is an anachronistic approach which obstructs careful investigation of texts which in reality can provide us with a great deal of information.'<sup>16</sup> That information opens for us a better understanding of the minds of some of our main sources for the early centuries of Anglo-Saxon England. Far from being an intrusion into the works that contain them, they are a key to a fuller appreciation of them; that is why they are *nec silentio praetereunda*.

Notes to the Conclusion

1. 'Bede's "Notes on Genesis" and the training of the Anglo-Saxon Clergy', in ed. K. Walsh & D. Wood, *The Bible in the Medieval World* (Oxford, 1985), pp.17-30.
2. C.W. Jones, 'Some Introductory Remarks on Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp.124-7.
3. Above, pp.272-3.
4. *H.E.* IV, 22.
5. 'Bede's Understanding', p.262.
6. Creider sees it as belief in a continuum of grace (*op. cit.*, p.59).
7. *H.E.* I, 31.
8. *H.E.* V, 6.
9. The implication, by contrast, is that repentance is an act of will (e.g., *H.E.* V, 13).
10. Respectively, *H.E.* II, 2; *H.E.* V, 10; *VWilf.* c.26.
11. D. Whitelock, 'Bede and His Teachers and Friends', in ed. Bonner, *Famulus Christi*, pp.19-39 (pp.20-2).
12. *H.E.* II, 12; cf. *VGreg.* c.16.
13. *H.E.* III, 9.
14. See the appendices, in which those individuals known to be in religious orders are identified by (R).
15. Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', pp.41-5.
16. Lutterkort, K., 'Beda Hagiographicus', in ed. Houwen, L.A.J.R., & MacDonald, A.A., *Beda Venerabilis* (Groningen, 1996), pp.81-106 (pp.105-6).

### Appendices

The following tables summarize information from the analysis of the miracle stories discussed in this thesis.

Certain symbols are used throughout these tables:

(R) indicates that the character mentioned was a religious.

(N) indicates someone of noble (or royal) status.

(Y) indicates someone described as *infans* or *adulescens*.

(L) indicates a character not in holy or religious orders, and of no other identifiable status.

(S) indicates a servant.

(D) indicates posthumous activity.

\* indicates information from another part of the work containing the story.

\*\* indicates information identified by editors of works.

+ indicates a 'monastic situation' (see above, pp.308-9).  
*VPr.*, *VMet.*, and *VAnon.* have been further abbreviated to *VP*,  
*VM*, and *VA*, respectively.

Indications of status are always given relevant to the time in question, e.g. a miracle may be witnessed by a servant (S) who then becomes a monk (R) and acts as the writer's source.

The term 'witness' (in appendices one to five) refers to someone stated to have been present at the time of the miracle and to have spoken of it later; 'source' is the oral

or written account on which the writer depended.

The number of entries in the tables does not correspond to the total number of miracle stories; to avoid unnecessary repetition, a number of stories belonging to the same place and time and from the same witnesses and source have been grouped together (e.g. *VPr* c.23). In appendices six, seven and eight, the miracles of Cuthbert are treated together, with differences in the accounts noted where necessary.

Appendix OneIndex of Places, Witnesses, Sources, and Time References in  
the Cuthbert Stories

This table lists the miracles of the *Vita Prosaica* in the order in which they occur in that work. Where the same story appears in the *Vita Anonyma*, the comparable details are shown on the following line. There is no citation of witnesses and sources in the *Vita Metrica*, so that work has not been included in this table.

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Child's prophecy of Cuthbert's future sanctity	Not given	(R) Cuthbert	(R) Trumwine	Cuthbert 8 years old.	VP 1
	Not given	(R) Cuthbert	(R) Tuma and Elias	Cuthbert 8 years old	VA I, 3
Cuthbert's knee cured by an angel	Not given	(Y) Cuthbert	Not given	Cuthbert still a child?	VP 2
	Not given	(L) local rustici:	(R) anon- (Jarrow)	Cuthbert a child of eight	VA I, 4
Cuthbert changes the wind	River Tyne +			Cuthbert still a boy	VP 3
Ascent of Aidan's soul	Not given	Not given	Not given	At night (before Cuthbert a monk)	VP 4
	Near River Leader	Not given	Not given	At night (during Cuthbert's youth)	VA I, 5
Cuthbert is provided with food	Loedra or Aloent in some ass	(R) Cuthbert	(R) Ingwald (of Wearmouth)	Before Cuthbert a monk	VP 5
	Near Chester-le-Street		Not given	Cuthbert a young layman	VA I, 6
Boisil's prophecy about Cuthbert	Melrose +	(R) Sigrith	(R) Sigrith	Cuthbert's arrival at Melrose	VP 6
Food from an angel	Ripon +	(R) Cuthbert	Not given	Early days of Ripon (Cuthbert guestmaster)	VP 7
	Ripon +	(R) Cuthbert?	: fidelissimi testes:	Cuthbert a neophyte	VA II, 2
Boisil's death and Cuthbert's recovery	Melrose +	(R) Cuthbert	(R) Herefrith	Not given	VP 8
Prophecy of Eata's death	Melrose +		Not given	Three years before the event	VP 8



<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Otters & cure of monk	Coldingham + Coldingham +	(R) Monk of Coldingham (R) Monk of Coldingham	Not given (R) Plecgils	While Cuthbert at Melrose While Cuthbert at Melrose	VP 10 VA II, 3
Prophecy of food and calm weather	In Pict territory + Midgarvi (Pictland) +	(R) two monks (R) two monks	Not given (R) Tydi, one of the monks	Christmas/ Epiphany (year not given) Epiphany, whilst Cuthbert at Melrose	VP 11 VA II, 4
Cuthbert fed by an eagle	Not given + River Teviot	(V-R) Cuthbert's companion (Y) boy with Cuthbert	Not given (R) Tydi	Whilst Cuthbert at Melrose Whilst Cuthbert at Melrose	VP 12 VA II, 5
Phantom fire extinguished	Not given + Inter montana:	(V-R) companion of VP 12? Not given	Not given Not given	Same as VP 12 Preaching tour from Melrose	VP 13 VA II, 6
Cuthbert checks a fire	Not given + Hyringaham	(L) Cuthbert's foster-mother? (L) Kenswith, Cuthbert's foster-mother	Not given Not given	Cuthbert at Melrose Same time as II, 6	VP 14 VA II, 7
Cuthbert exorcises Hildmer's wife.	Hildmer's house Hildmer's house	(L) The woman (L) The woman	Not given Not given	Cuthbert at Melrose Cuthbert prior of Lindisfarne	VP 15 VA II, 8
Demons expelled Building of hermitage	Farne + Farne +	Not given Not given	Not given Not given	Establishment of hermitage Establishment of hermitage	VP 17 VA III, 1
Cuthbert moves huge stones Cuthbert moves a huge stone	Farne + Farne +	(R) Lindisfarne monks (R) Four Lindisfarne monks	Not given Not given	Establishment of hermitage Establishment of hermitage	VP 17 VA III, 2
Water from dry ground	Farne + Farne +	(R) Lindisfarne monks (R) Lindisfarne monks	Not given :fidelissimi:	Establishment of hermitage Establishment of hermitage	VP 18 VA III, 3

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Birds kept off crops	Farne +	(R) Cuthbert	Not given	Establishment of hermitage	VP 19
Cuthbert's ravens	Farne + Farne +	(R) Cuthbert (R) Cuthbert ?	Not given (R) those who had seen the land	Establishment of hermitage In Cuthbert's first 2 or 3 years on Farne	VP 20 VA III, 5
Sea brings wood	Farne + Farne +	(R) Lindisfarne monks (R) Lindisfarne monks	Not given Not given	Establishment of hermitage Establishment of hermitage	VP 21 VA III, 4
Healings by, and disappearance of, Cuthbert's belt	Streoneshalh? +	(R) Aelflaed	(R) Herefrith	During Cuthbert's lifetime ?	VP 23
Cuthbert predicts Ecgrith's death	Coquet Island + Coquet Island +	(R) Aelflaed (R) Aelflaed	Not given (R) Aelflaed ?	A year before Ecgrith's death A year before Ecgrith's death	VP 24 VA III, 6
Cuthbert heals a noble's servant	Between Melrose & Lindisfarne Near River Tweed	(S) Baldhelm (S) anon. servant	(R) Baldhelm (R) Lindisfarne monk (= witness)	Cuthbert newly a bishop. One of Cuthbert's preaching tours	VP 25 VA IV, 7
Knowledge of Ecgrith's death	Carlisle Carlisle	(R,L) anon. priests & laity (R) Cuthbert's clergy	Not given (R) surviving eyewitnesses	At the time of Nechtansmere On the Saturday of the battle	VP 27 VA IV, 8
Return of pestilence foretold	Farne +	(R) Cuthbert (in a sermon at Carlisle)	Not given	One Christmas whilst Cuthbert on Farne	VP 27
Herebert's death	Carlisle + Carlisle ? +		Not given Not given	Between Ecgrith's death and Cuthbert's return to Lindisfarne Time of Ecgrith's death ?	VP 28 VA IV, 9

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Cuthbert heals a noble's wife	Not given + Kintis (unidentified) +	(R) Cuthbert's priest (R) Beta (a priest)	Not given Not given	Preaching/confirmation tour Reign of Aldfrith ?	VP 29 VA IV, 3
Cuthbert cures a nun	Anon. village + Bedesfield	(R) Aethilwald (R) Aethilwald	(R) Aethilwald abbot Melrose (R) Aethilwald prior Melrose	Not given Not given	VP 30 VA IV, 4
Hildmer cured with bread	Hildmer's house	(L-N) Hildmer's friends	Not given	Not given	VP 31
Cuthbert heals a dying youth	A remote settlement +	Not given	Not given	Preaching/confirmation tour	VP 32
Cuthbert cures a paralytic boy	Abse, between Carlisle & Hexham +	Many people present	(R?) Penna (an eye-witness)	Preaching/confirmation tour	VA IV, 5
Cuthbert cures an infant	Not given + Medilwong +	(R) Cuthbert's priest (R) Tydi	Not given (R) Tydi	Preaching/confirmation tour Preaching/confirmation tour	VP 33 VA IV, 6
Vision of man carried to heaven	Estate on Aelfflaed's monastery + Ossingdun	(R) Aelfflaed & a priest (R) Aelfflaed	Not given (R) Aelfflaed	Just before Cuthbert retired Whilst Cuthbert a bishop	VP 34 VA IV, 10
Water into wine	A nunnery near the Tyne +	(R) two monks of that house	(R) one of the witnesses, later a monk of Wearmouth	Cuthbert's last episcopal tour	VP 35
The Uncooked goose	Farne +	(R) Cyniaund et al.	(R) Cyniaund	After Cuthbert's retirement	VP 36
Monk cured of diarrhoea	Farne + Farne +	(R) Wahlstod (R) Wahlstod	(R) Herefrith Not given	Cuthbert's last days Cuthbert's last days	VP 38 VA IV, 12
Troubles at Lindisfarne predicted	Lindisfarne +	(R) Lindisfarne Monks	(R) Herefrith	Cuthbert dying	VP 40

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Cure of a demoniac boy	Lindisfarne + Lindisfarne +	(R) Lindisfarne monks (R) Lindisfarne monks	Not given (R) Tydi ?	Soon after Cuthbert's death After the 11 year exhumation	VP 41 VA IV, 15
Cuthbert's uncorrupted corpse	Lindisfarne + Lindisfarne +	(R) Lindisfarne monks (R) Lindisfarne monks	Not given Explanation of shoes and cloth in church	March 20th (exactly 11 years after burial) Eleven years after Cuthbert's death	VP 42 VA IV, 14
Cure at Cuthbert's tomb	Lindisfarne + Lindisfarne +	(R) Lindisfarne monk (R) Lindisfarne monk	Not given Not given	More than eleven years after death More than eleven years after death	VP 44 VA IV, 16
Monk cured by Cuthbert's shoes	Lindisfarne + Lindisfarne +	Not given Not given	Not given Not given	After Cuthbert's death In the year of writing	VP 45 VA IV, 17
Cure of Felgild's face	Farne +	(R) Felgild	(R) a priest of Jarrow and Felgild	At least 12 years after Cuthbert died.	VP 46

Appendix Two

Index of Places, Witnesses, Sources, and Time References in  
the *Historia Ecclesiastica*

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REF.</u>
Alban dries up a river	Verulanium (the river Coln)	A crowd present	<i>Passio Albani</i> **	Not given	I, 7
Alban's executioner loses his eyes.	Verulanium	The <i>tudex</i>	<i>Passio Albani</i> **	Not given	I, 7
Alban produces a stream	Verulanium	A crowd present	<i>Passio Albani</i> **	Not given	I, 7
Germanus stills a storm	Not given		<i>Vger.</i> **	Germanus: first visit to Britain	I, 17
Alban's blood seen on the ground	Verulanium		<i>Passio Albani</i> **	Germanus: first visit to Britain.	I, 18
Germanus cures a blind girl	Not given	Crowd present	<i>Vger.</i> **	Germanus: first visit to Britain	I, 18
Flames do not touch Germanus' house	On the return from St Alban's	Crowd present	<i>Vger.</i> **	Germanus: first visit to Britain	I, 19
Germanus is cured by an angel	Not given		<i>Vger.</i> **	Germanus: first visit to Britain	I, 19
The Alleluia Battle	Not given		<i>Vger.</i> **	Germanus: first visit to Britain	I, 20
Germanus cures Elafius' lame son	Not given		<i>Vger.</i> **	Germanus: second visit to Britain	I, 21
Light above the tomb of Peter	Amfleet (Gaul)		Canterbury *	Not given	I, 33
Augustine heals a blind man	Augustine's Oak +		Canterbury *	At meeting with British bishops	II, 2
Lawrence's scourging by St Peter	Canterbury, in the church +		Canterbury *	After the death of Aethelbert	II, 6
Mellitus saves Canterbury from Fire	Canterbury		Canterbury *	Not given (619-24) ?	II, 7

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REF.</u>
The vision of Edwin and Paulinus			Canterbury *	Precise dates not given	II, 12
Cure of Bothelm's broken arm	Hexham +	(R)monks of Hexham	Acca *	Ante paucos annos (620s?)	III, 2
Oswald's hands preserved uncorrupted	Bamburgh		Common report	Still intact at the time of writing	III, 6
Earcongota knows the date of her death	Brie (Gaul)	(R)Earcongota	Common report (Gaul)	The day before her death	III, 8
Angelic chorus at Earcongota's death	Brie (Gaul)	(R)monks of Brie	Common report (Gaul)	At night, near dawn	III, 8
The sweet smell of Earcongota's body	Brie (Gaul)	(R)monks & nuns of Brie	Common report (Gaul)	Third day after death	III, 8
Aethelburh's body found uncorrupted	Brie (Gaul)	(R)monks of Brie	Common report (Gaul)	Seven years after her death	III, 8
Horse cured of frenzy where Oswald died	Maserfelth	Anon. traveller	(R)'a maioribus:	Shortly after 641	. III, 9
Cure of a girl where Oswald died	Maserfelth	(L) anon.	(R)'a maioribus:	Shortly after 641	III, 9
Green grass where Oswald died.	Maserfelth	A Briton	Acca *	Shortly after Oswald's death	III, 10
Soil from Maserfelth resists fire	Not far from Maserfelth	A Briton	Acca *	Shortly after Oswald's death	III, 10
A column of light over Oswald's bones	Bardney +	(R)Aethelhild & Bardney monks	Acca *	Not given	III, 11
Oswald's <i>virtus</i> cures a demoniac	Bardney +	(R)Aethelhild, the abbess	Acca *	After c. 679?	III, 11
Cure of a boy at Oswald's tomb	Bardney +	(R) Bardney monks	(R)monk of Bardney	Some years before the time of writing	III, 12

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REF.</u>
Oswald's relics cure a monk of plague	Ireland +	(R) Willibrord	(R)Acca	Not given - pre 690. Time of plague	III, 13
Aidan foresees the murder of Oswin	Not given	(R)Anon. Irish priest	Lindisfarne	650-1	III, 14
Aidan predicts and calms a storm	Somewhere off the east coast	(R) Utta	(R) Cynewund	At the time of Eanflad's arrival	III, 15
Aidan saves Bamburgh from fire	Farne/ Bamburgh		Lindisfarne *	Not given	III, 16
Aidan's buttress twice resists fire	Near Bamburgh		Lindisfarne *	651-5	III, 17
Fursa's Near-death Experience	Burgh Castle (East Anglia) +	(R)Fursa told a monk of Jarrow	Vita Furse	Sigeberht king of E.Anglia (631-4)	III, 19
Fursa's body discovered uncorrupted	Peronne (Gaul) +		Vita Furse	27 days / 4 years Post mortem	III, 19
Cedd predicts Sigeberht's death	Essex		(R)Lastingham monks	Not given (c.657)	III, 22
Plague survivor at Lastingham	Lastingham +		(R)Lastingham monks	664 or shortly after	III, 23
Egbert escapes Death	Rathnelgisi (Ireland) +		(R)An old priest	During the plague of 664	III, 27
Prediction of Chad's death	Lichfield +	(R)Owine	(R)Trumbert	7 days before Chad died	IV, 3
Vision of Chad's death	Ireland	(R)Higeald	Cyneberht/ Lastingham *	Time of Chad's death	IV, 3
A madman healed at Chad's tomb	Lichfield +		Lastingham *	! Nuper:	IV, 3
Light where Barking nuns to be buried	Barking +	(R)Barking nuns & 2 monks	Barking Isidellus	During a plague (?664)	IV, 7



<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REF.</u>
Esica calls Eadgyth to her death	Barking +		Barking Ibbellus	664 plague	IV, 8
A nun is told that she will die	Barking +	(R)Barking nuns	Barking Ibbellus	664 plague	IV, 8
Vision of Aethelburh's death	Barking +		Barking Ibbellus	Not given	IV, 9
Tortgyth's vision of Aethelburh	Barking +		Barking Ibbellus	Three years after Aethelburh's death	IV, 9
A paralyzed nun granted her death	Barking +		Barking Ibbellus	Shortly after Aethelburh's death	IV, 9
A woman's sight is restored	Barking +		Barking Ibbellus	Sometime after Aethelburh's death	IV, 10
Sebbi's coffin increases in length	London	(R/N)Waldhere Sighard & Swefred	(R) Canterbury *	694 *	IV, 11
Sebbi's vision of approaching death	London	(R): Waldhere	(R) Canterbury *	694 *	IV, 11
Wilfrid ends a drought	Sussex		Acca *	c. 678	IV, 13
Plague passes from Selsey	Selsey +	(R) Monks of Selsey	Acca *	Shortly after Selsey's establishment	IV, 14
Ethelthryth prophesies the Plague	Ely +		Common report	Presumably some time in the 670s	IV, 19
Ethelthryth's Uncorrupted Body	Ely +	(R)Wilfrid, Cynefrith et al.	(R) Wilfrid	16 years after death	IV, 19
Chains cannot hold Imma	Somewhere in Mercia	(N)Imma	Those whom Imma told	After the battle near the Trent (679)	IV, 22
Bregusid's dream of Hild's greatness	Not given	(N)Bregusid, Hild's mother	Not given	614	IV, 23

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REF.</u>
Hild's death revealed to a nun	Streoneshalh +	(R)Anon. Streoneshalh nun	Not given	The hour of Hilda's death	IV, 23
Hild's death revealed at Hackness	Hackness +	(R)Bega (nun of Hackness)	Not given	The night of Hilda's death	IV, 23
Caedmon's gift of Song	Streoneshalh	(R/N) Hild and a reeve	Not given	Before 680 ?	IV, 24
Caedmon's foreknowledge of death	Streoneshalh +	(R)Streoneshalh monks	Not given	Not given	IV, 24
The fire at Coldingham foreseen	Coldingham +	(R)Aebbe & Coldingham monks	(R)Eadgisl (Jarrow)	After 681 ?	IV, 25
Cuthbert knows when his death is near	Lindisfarne/Farne +	(R)monks (from Cuthbert)	Lindisfarne	On his retirement	IV, 28
Cuthbert produces water	Farne +	(R)Lindisfarne monks	Lindisfarne	Beginning of Cuthbert's solitude	IV, 28
Cuthbert's late barley	Farne +	(R)Lindisfarne monks	Lindisfarne	Beginning of Cuthbert's solitude	IV, 28
Herbert shares Cuthbert's death	Carlisle		Lindisfarne *	Implied 687	IV, 29
Cuthbert's body uncorrupted	Lindisfarne +	(R)Eadbert & Lindisfarne monks	Lindisfarne	Eleven years after Cuthbert's death	IV, 30
Stroke victim cured at Cuthbert's tomb	Lindisfarne +	(R)Baduthegn	Lindisfarne	Not given	IV, 31
Cuthbert's relics cure a swollen eye	Dacre +	(R)anon- beneficiary	(R) witness	Three years before time of writing	IV, 32
Ethelwald calms a storm	Farne +	(R)Lindisfarne monks	(R)Gunfrith	Not given	V, 1
John cures a young man	Near Hexham +	(R) John's clergy	(R)Berthun	The second sunday in Lent	V, 2

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REF.</u>
John cures an abbess' daughter	Watton (in Deira) +	(R) Abbess & John's clergy	(R) Berthun	After John became bishop of York	V, 3
John cures Puch's wife	2 miles from the abbey	(R) John's clergy	(R) Berthun	At the dedication of a church	V, 4
John cures a servant	Not given	(R) John's clergy	(R) Berthun	At the dedication of a church	V, 5
John cures Herebald	Not given	(R) John's clergy	(R) Herebald	Not given	V, 6
Theodore's foreknowledge of death	Not given	(R) Theodore's associates	Canterbury *	Long before 690 (when he died)	V, 8
Storm confirms Boisil's message	Ireland +	(R) anon. monk	Not given	Not given	V, 9
The Heward's bodies carried upstream	Old Saxon territory	(R) Tilmon	Not given	Not given	V, 10
Fountain where the Hewalds died	Old Saxon territory		Common report	Not given	V, 10
Light over the Hewalds' bodies	Old Saxon territory	All in the area	Not given	Not given	V, 10
Drythelm's near-death experience	Northumbria (Incuneningum)	(L) Drythelm & wife	(R) Haengils	In Bede's lifetime	V, 12
A noble has a vision of judgement	Mercia	(N) Cenred	(R) Pethhelm	704-9	V, 13
A monk has a vision of hell	Bernicia +	(R) monks of unnamed house	(R) Bede	: Nuper:	V, 14
Wilfrid's vision of Michael	Meaux (in Gaul) +	(R) Acca	(R) Acca	Wilfrid's last journey from Rome	V, 19

Appendix Three

Index of Places, Witnesses, Sources, and Time References in  
the *Vita Gregorii*

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Column of light over Gregory	Rome	People of Rome	Not given	Time of election	VGreg. c.7
Promise of Edwin's succession	East Anglia		:Antiquitus traditur:	Whilst Edwin in exile	VGreg. c.16
Vision of a swan	Not given		:fertur a videntibus:	At Paulinus' death	VGreg. c.17
Trimma finds Edwin's bones	Anon. monastery + (in the south)	(R) Trimma	(R) Trimma's relation Anon (Streoneshalh)	During the reign of Aethelred	VGreg. cc.18-19
Spirits visit their bodies	Edwin's first burial place	(R) Trimma or his relative	(R) Trimma's relation	Not long before the time of writing.	VGreg. c. 19
Eucharistic miracle	Rome (in church) +	Worshippers	:antiquorum fertur:	Not given	VGreg. c.20
Relics prove their reality	Rome (in church) +	Worshippers	:vetus relatio:	Not given	VGreg. c.21
Frenzy of an horse cured	Rome (on the way to mass) +	(R) Gregory's clergy	Not given	Not given	VGreg. c.22
Gregory blinds two magicians	Rome (on the way to mass) +	(R) Gregory's clergy	Not given	Not given	VGreg. c.22
Gregory cures a king	Not given		Not given	Not given	VGreg. c.23
Dove on Gregory's head	Gregory's house +	(R) a 'familiaris':	Not given	Whilst Gregory writing Hom. in Ezek	VGreg. c.26
Gregory kicks his successor	Not given		Not given	Not given	VGreg. c.28

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
A monk condemned and saved	Gregory's monastery +	(R) Gregory	Not given	Not given	VGreg. c.28
Gregory saves Trajan's soul	St Peter's church +		Not given	Not given	VGreg. c.29

Appendix Four

Index of Places, Witnesses, Sources, and Time References in  
the *Vita Wilfridi*

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Fire at Wilfrid's birth	Not given	(L) local people	Not given	Wilfrid's birth (634)	<i>WWilf.</i> c.1
The escape from Sussex	Sussex	(R) Wilfrid's monks	Not given	Return from consecration in Gaul	<i>WWilf.</i> c.13
Wilfrid restores a child to life	<i>Ontiddanufri</i> (unidentified)		Not given	Before Wilfrid's exile	<i>WWilf.</i> c.18
Ethelthryth's uncorrupted body	Ely + **		Not given	Not given	<i>WWilf.</i> c.19
Healing of Bothelm	Hexham +	(R) Wilfrid's monks	Bothelm ?	Construction of Hexham	<i>WWilf.</i> c.23
Alfwin's death predicted	York ?		Not given	Exactly a year before Alfwin's death	<i>WWilf.</i> c.24
Fertility of Friesland	Friesland	(R) Wilfrid's monks	Not given	Journey to Rome	<i>WWilf.</i> c.26
Wilfrid's cell illuminated	<i>Indroninis</i> (unidentified)	(L) The 'custodes'	(R) Aebbe ?	Return from Rome	<i>WWilf.</i> c.36
Healing of Aebbe	<i>Indroninis</i>	(N) Aebbe, wife of a 'praefectus'	(R) Aebbe	While Wilfrid imprisoned	<i>WWilf.</i> c.37
Wilfrid cannot be chained	Dunbar		Not given	While Wilfrid held by Ecgrith	<i>WWilf.</i> c.38
Illness and cure of Irainburg	Coldingham +	(R) Aebbe (of Coldingham)	Not given	While Wilfrid in Dunbar	<i>WWilf.</i> c.39
Theodore's foreknowledge of death	London	(R) Wilfrid and Erconwald	Not given	Before Wilfrid's return north	<i>WWilf.</i> c.43
Wilfrid's Vision of Michael	Meaux (in Gaul)	(R) Acca	Not given	On the last journey from Rome	<i>WWilf.</i> c.56



<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Aldfrith's death	Northumbria	(R) Aelfflaed, Aethilburg et al and Aethilburg	(R) Aelfflaed and Aethilburg	705	VWilf. c.58-9
Relief of siege	Bamburgh	(N) Berhtfrith	Not given	Between the death of Aldfrith and accession of Osred.	VWilf. c.60
Wilfrid restored to health	On the way to Hexham +	(R) Wilfrid's monks	Stephen ?	4 years after the Meaux incident	VWilf. c.62
Sound of birds at Wilfrid's death	Oundle +	(R) Wilfrid's monks	Not given	On the Thursday Wilfrid died, and when the body was washed	VWilf. c.65-6
Bacula's robe cures a nun's hand	Not given +	(R) Cynithrith	Not given	Not given	VWilf. c.66
The house that cannot be burned	Oundle +	(N) attackers	Not given	After Wilfrid's death	VWilf. c.67
Attackers of Oundle perish	Not given		Not given	Soon after Oundle attacked	VWilf. c.67
White Arc in the sky	Ripon +	(R) Wilfrid's monks	Stephen	Anniversary of death	VWilf. c.66

Appendix Five

Index of Places, Witnesses, Sources, and Time References in  
the *Vita Guthlaci*

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<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Vision of an hand at Guthlac's birth	Not given		Not given	Days of Aethelred	VGuth. c.5
Bartholomew rescues Guthlac	Crowland +	None (apparently)	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Guthlac's early days as an hermit	VGuth. c.29
Guthlac is tempted by two devils	Crowland +	None (apparently)	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Not given	VGuth. c.30
Bartholomew appears at the jaws of hell	Crowland +	None (apparently)	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	A few days after c.30	VGuth. cc.31-2
Guthlac resists a fantastic British army	Crowland +	None (apparently)	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	In the time of Cenned	VGuth. c.34
Guthlac forestalls attempt on his life	Crowland +	(R) Beccel	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Not given	VGuth. c.35
Apparition of wild beasts	Crowland +	None (apparently)	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Same time as c.35	VGuth. c.36
A parchment is not harmed by water	Crowland +	(R) anon. 'famulus Dei'	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Not given	VGuth. c.37
Guthlac tells swallows where to nest	Crowland +	(R) Wilfrid	(R) Wilfrid	Not given	VGuth. c.39
Guthlac restores gloves stolen by jackdaws	Crowland +	(N/R) Aethelbald & Wilfrid	(R) Wilfrid	While Aethelbald an exile	VGuth. c.40
Guthlac cures a demoniac	Crowland +	(L) Hwaetred (East Angle)	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Not given	VGuth. c.41
Guthlac cures a madman	Crowland +	(N) Ecga (Mercian)	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Not given	VGuth. c.42
The deceit of two clerics exposed	Crowland +	(R) unnamed abbot	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	When Guthlac began prophesying	VGuth. c.43

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>WHEN</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Guthlac knew of two flasks of beer	Crowland +	(R) two monks	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Same time as c.43	V6uth. c-44
Guthlac cures a man of an infected wound	Crowland +	(N) Oba (Mercian), et al.	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Guthlac at the height of his fame	V6uth. c-45
Guthlac knows an earlier conversation	Crowland +	(R) Haedda and clergy	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Ordination of Guthlac and consecration of Crowland	V6uth. cc-46-7
Guthlac's prediction about his successor	Crowland +	(R) Ecgburh	(R) Cissa *	Some time after his ordination	V6uth. c-48
Guthlac tells Aethelbald his future	Crowland +	(N) Aethelbald	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	While Aethelbald an exile	V6uth. c-49
Guthlac's foreknowledge of death	Crowland +	(R) Beccel	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	After fifteen years on Crowland	V6uth. c-50
Light and sweet smell as Guthlac died	Crowland +	(R) Beccel	(R) Wilfrid/ Cissa *	Around Easter; after 15 years on Crowland; before & just after death.	V6uth. c-50
Guthlac's uncorrupted body	Crowland +	(R) Pega & a group of clerics	Not given	First anniversary of Guthlac's death	V6uth. c-51
Guthlac appears to Aethelbald	Crowland +	(N) Aethelbald	Not given	Night, Aethelbald in exile, After Guthlac's death	V6uth. c-52
A blind man cured by consecrated salt	Crowland +	(R) Pega	Not given	Some time after Guthlac's death	V6uth. c-53

Appendix SixIndex of Types, Agents, Beneficiaries, Afflictions, and  
Means in Healing Miracles.

In this table the stories of healing miracles are listed according to type, with similar stories, as far as possible, placed together. Four types have been identified; the largest group, the healing of physical (Phy.) complaints, has been subdivided according to the affliction. The other three types are healings of demon possession (Ex.), revivification (Rev.), and an healing by an happy death (Eut.).

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>BENEFICIARY</u>	<u>AFFLICTION</u>	<u>MEANS</u>
H.E. I, 18	Germanus	(Y.N) 10 year old girl	Blindness	Prayer, invocation of the Holy Trinity, and application of relics.
H.E. II, 2	(R) Augustine	Anon. (Angle)	Blindness	Prayer, and immediate cure (after others had failed).
VGuth. c.53	(R) Guthlac(D)/Pega	Anon. 'paterfamilias'	Blindness	Application of a solution of salt consecrated by Guthlac.
VN 42	(R) Cuthbert (D)	Anon.	Blindness	Prayer and contact with Cuthbert's cloak
H.E. IV, 10		(N) wife of a 'comes'	Blindness	Prayer in the graveyard restored a sudden loss of eyesight.
H.E. I, 21	Germanus	(Y.N) Son of a local chief	Lameness	Placing of hand over crippled knee
VP 2; VA I, 4; VM 2	An angel	(L) Cuthbert	Lame knee	Application of a poultice.
H.E. I, 19	(Vis) An angel	Germanus		Refusal of treatment. Vision of a man in white garments.
VMlif. c.23	(R) Wilfrid	(Y.R) Bothelm	Fall from great height	Prayers of the monks, blessing of Wilfrid, bandages of 'medici'.
H.E. V, 6	(R) John	(R) Herebald	Injuries	Prayer and rebaptism
H.E. III, 2	(N) Oswald (D)	(R) Bothelm (Hexham)	Injury	Moss brought from the cross, placed in clothing. Healing noticed later.
VGuth. c.45	(R) Guthlac	(N) Oba (Mercian)	Wound	Being wrapped in Guthlac's prayer mat removed the thorn and swelling.
VP 32; VA IV, 5; VM 26	(R) Cuthbert	(Y) anon. young man	Paralysis	Cuthbert's prayer and blessing.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>BENEFICIARY</u>	<u>AFFLICTION</u>	<u>MEANS</u>
Wwlf. c.37	Phy.	(R) Wilfrid	(N) Aebbe	Paralysis	Prayer and sprinkling with holy water
VP 23	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert(abs)	(R-N) Aelflaed	Sickness	Wearing a belt sent by Cuthbert.
VP 23	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert(abs)	(R) nun of Streoneshalh	Pain	Cuthbert's belt placed around the head.
Wwlf. c.66	Phy.	(R) Wilfrid (D)	(R)anon. nun	Crippled arm	Touching the robe on which Wilfrid's corpse was washed.
VP 45; VA IV, 17; VM 43	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert (D)	(Y-R) anon.	Paralysis	Wearing Cuthbert's shoes.
H.E. IV, 31	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert (D)	(R) Baduthegn	Stroke ?	Prayer, & sleep at the tomb
VP 30; VA IV, 4; VM 24	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert	(R) nun (anon.)	Pain	Anointing with holy oil.
H.E. V, 3	Phy.	(R) John	(R) Cwenburg	Pain & swelling	Prayer and blessing
VP 10; VA II, 3; VM 8	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert	(R) monk of Coldingham	Shock?	Confession and pardon (after spying on the saint).
H.E. III, 12	Phy.	(N) Oswald (D)	(Y-R) a monastic boy	Sickness	Sitting by Oswald's tomb.
H.E. III, 9	Phy.	(N) Oswald (D)	:Neptem: of an innkeeper	Sickness	Sleeping that the place there Oswald died.
VP 31; VM 25	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert(abs)	(N-L) Hildær	Sickness	Drinking water in which was bread that had been blessed by Cuthbert.
H.E. V, 4	Phy.	(R) John	(N) wife of Puch, a :comes:	Sickness	Drinking & washing with water used in dedicating a church.
H.E. V, 5	Phy.	(R) John	(S) servant of Addi, :comes:	Sickness	Prayer and blessing by John. Drinking wine blessed by John.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>BENEFICIARY</u>	<u>AFFLICTION</u>	<u>MEANS</u>
<i>U</i> Greg. c. 23	Phy.	(R) Gregory	(N) King of Lombards	Sickness	Prescription of a change of diet.
<i>VP</i> 38; <i>VA</i> IV, 12; <i>VN</i> 35	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert	(R) Walhstod	Dysentery	Touching Cuthbert( <i>VP</i> ); being touched by Cuthbert( <i>VA</i> );being with Cuthbert ( <i>VN</i> ).
<i>VP</i> 33; <i>VA</i> IV, 6; <i>VN</i> 27	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert	(Y) unnamed boy	Plague	Blessing and kiss.
<i>VN</i> prol.	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert (D)	(R) Bede	Problem in tongue	Not given
<i>H.E.</i> III, 27	Phy. (Vis)		(R.) Ecgbert		Prayer, with tears. Vision to Ethelhum confirmed the answer.
<i>VP</i> 8	Phy.		(R) Cuthbert	Plague	Melrose monks pray for Cuthbert, who leaves his bed on hearing of it.
<i>VN</i> Wlf. c.62	Phy.	(R)Wilfrid's monks	(R) Wilfrid	Sickness	Prayers of the community
<i>VP</i> 44; <i>VA</i> IV, 16; <i>VN</i> 41	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert (D)	(R) priest of Willibrord ( <i>VP, VA</i> )	Sickness	Prayer at the tomb
<i>H.E.</i> III, 23	Phy.	(R) Cedd (D)	(Y.R) A monastic boy	Plague	Prayer at the shrine ?
<i>H.E.</i> III, 13	Phy.	(N) Oswald (D)	(R) Monk (Irish)	Plague	Drinking water with a splinter of stake on which Oswald's head had been displayed after Maserfelth.
<i>VP</i> 46; <i>VN</i> 46	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert (D) Ethelwold	(R) Feigild	Tumour	Contact with a piece of the vellum used by Ethelwold to line Cuthbert's cell.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 32	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert (D)	(R.Y) Monastic youth	Tumour	Application of hair cut from Cuthbert's corpse.



<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>BENEFICIARY</u>	<u>AFFLICTION</u>	<u>MEANS</u>
H.E. V, 2	Phy.	(R) John	Anon. young man	Dumbness & scurvy	Sign of the cross on the tongue and teaching sounds for the speech, attention of 'medici' and prayers of John for the head.
VP 25; VA IV, 7.	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert	(S) servant of a 'comes'	Not given	Water, blessed by Cuthbert, poured into the mouth.
VP 29; VA IV, 3; VM 23	Phy.	(R) Cuthbert	(N) wife of a 'comes': VA calls the 'comes' Hemma	Not given	Water blessed by Cuthbert sprinkled on and drunk by the woman.
H.E. III, 9	Phy.	(N) Oswald (D)	An horse	Frenzy	Rolling on the ground where Oswald was killed.
VGreg. c.22	Phy.	(R) Gregory	An horse	Frenzy after spell.	Sign of the cross.
H.E. IV, 3	Ex.	(R) Chad (D)	Anon.		Spending the night at the tomb.
VP 15; VA II, 8; VM 13	Ex.	(R) Cuthbert	(N) wife of Hildmer	Epilepsy ?	Cuthbert perceives the nature of the complaint and prophesies a cure.
VP 41; VA IV, 15; VM 40	Ex.	(R) Cuthbert (D)	(L-Y) Anon boy		Dust on which the water from the washing of Cuthbert's corpse had been poured, mixed with water and poured into the boy's mouth.
VGuth. c.41	Ex.	(R) Guthlac	(N) Hwaetred (E. Angle)		Prayer and fasting for 3 days, followed by baptism and exsufflatio.
VGuth. c.42	Ex.	(R) Guthlac	(N) Ecga (Mercian)		Hearing Guthlac's belt
H.E. III, 11	Ex.	(N) Oswald (D)	Anon.		Approach of soil from site of washing of Oswald's bones.
VP 17; VA III, 1; VM 15	Ex.	(R) Cuthbert	Island of Farne	Inhabitable on account of demons	Not given(VA); prayer and fasting*(VP); sign or structure of cross(VM).

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>BENEFICIARY</u>	<u>AFFLICTION</u>	<u>MEANS</u>
H.E. IV, 9	Ent.	(R) Aethelburh (D)	(R.N) Nun (of Barking)	Paralysis	Prayer beside Aethelburh's body, leading to her death.
Wulf. c.18	Rev.	(R) Wilfrid	(Y) Eadwald		Prayer and laying on of hands.

Appendix SevenIndex of Types, Visionaries, and Content of Miracles of Revelation.

In this table the stories of prophetic utterance or visionary experience are listed according to type. The types identified are:

Prophecy - a record of a statement of an event in the future or at a distance, subsequently confirmed.

Vision - a sighting of an heavenly or demonic being.

V.A.L. - a vision of the afterlife, which as a literary form is significant enough to be classified separately.

Apparition - a phantasmal occurrence, with the appearance of a physical reality.

Post. sign - sensory experiences relating to the death of an individual.

Natal sign - visionary occurrence at the birth of a saint.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>VISIONARY</u>	<u>CONTENT</u>
<i>Wulf.</i> c-43; <i>H.E.</i> V, 8	Prophecy	(R) Theodore	( <i>Wulf.</i> ) Theodore says that he knows that he is soon to die 'secundum Domini revelationem'. ( <i>H.E.</i> ) Theodore knew by a revelation the age to which he would live.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 24	Prophecy	(R) Caedmon	Request for viaticum indicating awareness of imminent death.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 11	Prophecy	(N.R) Sebba	Vision of three men in white promising a painless death, three days later.
<i>H.E.</i> III, 8	Prophecy	(R) Earcongota	Vision of men in white, come to collect a 'golden coin from Kent'. Understood as prediction of her death.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 28.	Prophecy	(R) Cuthbert	Foreknowledge of own death. (Only <i>H.E.</i> treats this as a separate story from that of Herebert.)
<i>VGuth.</i> c-50	Prophecy	(R) Guthlac	Prediction of own death eight days in advance.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 19.	Prophecy	(R) Ethelthryth	Prediction of the plague, own death, and number of other deaths.
<i>VP</i> 8, 22; <i>VH</i> 20	Prophecy	(R) Boisil	Boisil knows that he has a week to live, so instructs Cuthbert in the faith and prophesies his future career.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 8	Prophecy	(R) Nun of Barking	Vision of a dead monk, and correct prediction of own death the next day.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 14	Vision	(Y.R) boy in Selsea	Vision of Peter and Paul, predicting his own death but no others, because of the prayers of Oswald (D).
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 8	Prophecy	(Y.R) Esica, boy of 3	At point of death, Esica calls the name of a nun, who dies the same day.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 3	Prophecy	(R) Chad/ Owine	Owine hears song of angels; Chad explains that he had been told he had seven days to live.
<i>VP</i> 28; <i>VA</i> IV, 9; <i>VH</i> 30;	Prophecy	(R) Cuthbert	Herebert asks to share Cuthbert's death. Cuthbert prays and predicts it will be granted.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 29.			

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>VISIONARY</u>	<u>CONTENT</u>
<i>Wulf.</i> c.24	Prophecy	(R) Wilfrid	Prediction of the mourning for Alfwín a year before his death.
<i>H.E.</i> III, 14.	Prophecy	(R) Aidan	Prediction of Oswin's violent death.
<i>H.E.</i> III, 22	Prophecy	(R) Cedd	Prediction of Sigbert's death at the hands of the nobles whom Cedd had forbidden Sigbert to visit.
<i>VP</i> 24; <i>VA</i> III, 6; <i>VM</i> 21	Prophecy	(R) Cuthbert	Prediction to Aelflaed of the death of Ecgrith in battle and succession of Aldfrith.
<i>VP</i> 8	Prophecy	(R) Boisil	Boisil foresees the plague, and Eata's death from dysentery
<i>VP</i> 34; <i>VA</i> IV, 10; <i>VM</i> 31	Prophecy	(R) Cuthbert	Cuthbert in a trance 'sees' the accidental death of a monk, and prophesies correctly that the details will be confirmed the next day.
<i>VP</i> 27; <i>VA</i> IV, 8; <i>VM</i> 29	Prophecy	(R) Cuthbert	Cuthbert, although in Carlisle, knows of Ecgrith's defeat at Mechtansmere
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 23	Prophecy	(R) Begu	Vision of Hild's death, at the time, but 13 miles away.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 23	Prophecy	(R) Anon. nun	Vision of Hild's soul ascending to heaven with angels
<i>VP</i> 4; <i>VA</i> I, 5; <i>VM</i> 4	Prophecy	(L) Cuthbert	Cuthbert sees a soul taken into heaven; he discovers later that Aidan died that night.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 9	Prophecy	(R) Tortgyth	Vision of bright shining body drawn by golden cords up to heaven, shortly before death of Aethelburh.
<i>V6uth.</i> c.49	Prophecy	(R) Guthlac	Prediction of Aethelbald's restoration.
<i>V6uth.</i> c.44	Prophecy	(R) Guthlac	Guthlac reveals his knowledge of flasks hidden by his visitors.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>VISIONARY</u>	<u>CONTENT</u>
VGuth. c.43	Prophecy	(R) Guthlac	Guthlac knows whereabouts of an abbots two clerics.
VGuth. cc.46-7	Prophecy	(R) Guthlac	Guthlac reveals his knowledge of Wigfrith's earlier remarks.
VGuth. c.35	Prophecy	(R) Guthlac	Guthlac knows of Beccel's plot to kill him.
VGuth. c.40	Prophecy	(R) Guthlac	Prediction of the return of a pair of gloves stolen by jackdaws.
VGuth. c.48	Prophecy	(R) Guthlac	Prophecy to Egburgh that his successor will be a pagan.
VP 1; VA I, 3; VM 1	Prophecy	(Y) child of 3	The child cries during a game, and persuades Cuthbert to stop playing because of his future as a bishop.
VP 6	Prophecy	(R) Boisil	Boisil describes Cuthbert (at first sight?) as 'servus Dei'.
VP 27	Prophecy	(R) Cuthbert	Cuthbert tells monks of Lindisfarne that he predicted the pestilence.
VP 40; VM 37	Prophecy		The psalm sung as Cuthbert dies predicts the troubles of the community in the following year.
VGreg. cc.18-19	Vision	(R) Trimma	Trimma dreams (scourging in the third) telling Trimma to find the bones of Edwin and to take them to Streoneshalh.
H.E. II, 6	Vision	(R) Lawrence	Vision of St Peter, who beats Lawrence to stop him fleeing England; visible marks left by the whip.
VGreg. c. 16; H.E. II, 12	Vision	(N) Edwin/ (R) Paulinus	(VGreg) Edwin sees a man in a vision, promising future success if he obeys him. Paulinus reminds him of this. (H.E.) Paulinus is granted knowledge of a vision that Edwin had had years earlier, and uses the sign of an hand on the head to fulfil it.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>VISIONARY</u>	<u>CONTENT</u>
V <sup>Greg.</sup> c.19	Vision	(R) Triama	Vision of four souls of those killed at Heathfield visiting their bodies.
V <sup>Greg.</sup> c.26	Vision	(R) 'familiaris': of Gregory	A white dove is seen resting on Gregory's head as he worked.
H.E. IV, 24	Vision	(L) Caedmon	Vision granting the ability to sing.
W <sup>Wilf.</sup> c.56; H.E. V, 19	Vision	(R) Wilfrid	Wilfrid recovers from illness after a vision of St Michael in which he is promised four more years of life.
V <sup>Guth.</sup> c.52	Vision	(N) Aethelbald	Dream of Guthlac promises Aethelbald's restoration (after prayer at Guthlac's tomb).
H.E. IV, 9	Vision	(R) Tortgyth	Witnesses hear Tortgyth's half of a conversation with Aethelburh (deceased).
V <sup>Greg.</sup> c.29	Vision	(R) Gregory	Gregory weeps for the soul of Trajan, and it is revealed that Trajan is saved.
V <sup>Guth.</sup> c.30	Vision	(R) Guthlac	Vision of two demons, tempting Guthlac to excessive asceticism.
VP 7; VA II, 2; VM 7	Vision	(R) Cuthbert	Cuthbert welcomes a stranger to Ripon. The stranger vanishes, leaving three leaves but no footprints,
V <sup>Guth.</sup> c.29	Vision	(R) Guthlac	Vision of Bartholomew ends Guthlac's period of despair.
V <sup>Greg.</sup> c.28	Vision	(R) Gregory	Gregory sentences a monk to hell, then secures (and shows) his release.
Bon. Ep. 20.	V.A.L.	(R) Anon. of Henlock	Experience of leaving the body, a fourfold vision of the afterlife, specific details about the eternal fate of some individuals.
H.E. V, 12	V.A.L.	(L) Drythelm	Apparent death; four-fold vision of the afterlife.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>VISIONARY</u>	<u>CONTENT</u>
H.E. III, 19	V.A.L.	(R) Fursa	Two experiences of being taken out of the body; vision of the fires of hell.
H.E. V, 13	V.A.L.	(N) 'comes' (Mercian)	Vision of judgment in terms of books of good and evil deeds.
H.E. V, 14	V.A.L.	(R) monk (Bernician)	Vision of hell and future punishment.
VGuth. cc.31-3	V.A.L.	(R) Guthlac	Guthlac is carried to the jaws of hell by an army of demons, but Bartholomew appears to rescue him.
VWulf. c.36	Apparition	Wilfrid's captors	Bright light in Wilfrid's cell.
VGreg. c.7	Apparition	People of Rome	Gregory's hiding place indicated by a column of light.
VGuth. c.34	Apparition	(R) Guthlac	Apparition of an attack by a British army.
VGuth. c.36	Apparition	(R) Guthlac	Vision of wild beasts.
VP 13; VA II, 6; VH 11	Apparition	(R) Cuthbert	After water fails to extinguish flames, Cuthbert realizes that they are an illusion.
VWulf. c.1	Natal sign	Local people	Phantasmal flames when Wilfrid born.
VGuth. c.5	Natal sign	Local people	Sign of human hand in sky when Guthlac born.
VGreg. c.17	Post. sign	Not given	Paulinus' soul seen to leave his body in the form of a swan.
H.E. III, 8	Post. sign	(R) nuns of Brie	Sweet smell when Earcongota's gravestone raised, three days after burial.
H.E. III, 8	Post. sign	(R) monks of Brie	Sound of angelic choirs; a great light; vision of a soul being led to heaven at time of Earcongota's death.



<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>VISIONARY</u>	<u>CONTENT</u>
<i>Wulf.</i> c. 68	Post. sign		On the anniversary of Wilfrid's death, an arc is seen by some monks. It is later seen by all the <i>fanzia</i> .
<i>Wulf.</i> cc.65-6	Post. sign	(R) Wilfrid's monks	Sound of birds at the time of Wilfrid's death and while the body prepared for burial.
<i>Wuth.</i> c.50	Post. sign	(R) Beccel	Fiery light in Guthlac's house, and sweet smell immediately before and after his death.
<i>Wceol.</i> c.40	Post. sign	(R) Monks of Jarrow/ Langres.	Sweet odour and bright light in the church after Ceolfirth was entombed there.
<i>H.E.</i> III, 11	Post. sign	(R) Monks of Bardney	Column of light over Oswald's remains when left outside the monastery.
<i>H.E.</i> I, 33	Post. sign	Locals at Boulogne	Light over interred body every night until translation.
<i>H.E.</i> V, 10	Post. sign	(R) Tilmon (L) local Saxons	Light over the Hewalds' bodies; its significance revealed to Tilmon in a vision.
<i>H.E.</i> IV, 7	Post. sign	(R) Barking nuns	Light reveals where the site of the cemetery should be.

Appendix EightIndex of Types, Agency, Action and Occurrence in Miracles  
over Nature

In this table the stories of miracles in which creatures or materials behave in a manner contrary to their usual nature are listed according to type. The types identified are:

Animals - stories involving non-human creatures.

Weather - stories of power over the elements.

Military victory - battles won or lost miraculously.

Injury - stories in which harm is inflicted.

Preservation, from decay, fire, or water.

Physical - inanimate objects behaving contrary to their properties.

Production - miraculous appearance of food or water.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>OCCURRENCE</u>
VP 20; VA III, 5; VM 18	Animals	(R) Cuthbert	Speaking to birds	Ravens bring a gift of fat after reproof for damaging house.
V6uth. c.39	Animals	(R) Outhlac	Speaking to birds	Birds nest where Cuthlac advises.
VP 19; VM 17	Animals	(R) Cuthbert	Speaking to birds	Birds banished from Cuthbert's crops
VP 12; VA II, 5; VM 10	Animals	(R) Cuthbert	Prediction	Eagle brings a fish as Cuthbert predicts.
VP. 10; VA II, 3; VM 8	Animals	(R) Cuthbert	Praying in sea	Otters warn and dry Cuthbert
H.E. I, 17	Weather	Germanus	Invocation of Christ & Trinity / sprinkling water/ prayer	Storm stilled. (cf. Mark 4. 35-41).
H.E. III, 15; VM 5	Weather	(R) Aidan	Prayer/ Pouring oil	Aidan predicts the storm and provides oil to calm it.
H.E. V, 1	Weather	(R) Ethelwald	Prayer	Storm off Farne calmed.
VP 3; VM 3	Weather	(L) Cuthbert	Prayer	Wind direction changed to assist struggling monks.
VP 36	Weather	(R) Cuthbert	Orders to monks	Storm around Farne will not abate until monks cook and eat a goose.
VP 14; VA II, 7; VM 12	Weather	(R) Cuthbert	Prayer	Cuthbert's foster-mother's house preserved from fire.
H.E. III, 16	Military victory/ weather	(R) Aidan	Prayer	Bamburgh saved from Penda's attempt to burn it.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>OCCURRENCE</u>
<i>W</i> ilf. c.13	Military victory/ weather	(R)Wilfrid & clergy	Prayer	Tide returns early to rescue Wilfrid.
<i>H.E.</i> I, 20	Military victory	Germanus	Hiding and shouting Alleluia	Battle won by British.
<i>W</i> ilf. c.60	Military victory	(N) Berthfrith	Making a vow	Siege of Bamburgh abandoned.
<i>W</i> ilf. c.67	Military victory / injury	(R) Wilfrid (D)		Attackers of Oundle blinded and, killed.
<i>H.E.</i> I, 7	Injury	(L) Alban		Alban's executioner's eyes fall out.
<i>W</i> ilf. c.59	Injury	(R) Wilfrid ?	None	Aldfrith's sickness and death.
<i>W</i> ilf. c.39	Injury	(R) Wilfrid	None	Irminburg ill whilst Wilfrid in prison.
<i>V</i> Greg. c.22	Injury	The Holy Spirit		Blinding of magicians who tried to injure Gregory.
<i>V</i> Greg. c.28	Injury	(R) Gregory (D)	Kicking in the head	Death of Gregory's successor.
<i>H.E.</i> I, 18	Preservation	Alban (D)		Soil still red from the blood where Alban died.
<i>V</i> Guth. c.37	Preservation	(R) Guthlac	Words of encouragement	Stolen parchment found balanced on reeds, touched but unharmed by water,
<i>H.E.</i> I, 19	Preservation	Germanus	Refusal to be moved	Flames did not touch Germanus' house
<i>H.E.</i> III, 10	Preservation	(N) Oswald (D)		Dust from Maserfelth preserves a beam from fire.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>OCCURRENCE</u>
VWilf. c.67	Preservation	(R) Wilfrid (D)		Place where Wilfrid died (or his corpse was washed) cannot be burnt.
H.E. III, 17	Preservation	(R) Aidan (D)		Post against which Aidan died twice resists fire.
H.E. II, 7	Preservation	(R) Mellitus	Lying in path of flames/ prayer	Canterbury saved from fire
H.E. IV, 30; VP 42; VA IV, 14; VM 38	Preservation	(R) Cuthbert (D)		Cuthbert's body found undecayed after eleven years.
H.E. IV, 19; VWilf. c.19	Preservation	(R)Aethelthryth(D)		Aethelthryth's body found undecayed after sixteen years.
H.E. III, 19	Preservation	(R) Fursa (D)		Fursa's body found undecayed, after 27 days, and after four years.
H.E. III, 8	Preservation	(R) Aethelburh (D)		Aethelburh's body found undecayed after seven years.
VGuth. c.51	Preservation			The body appeared in the state it had been when buried.
H.E. III, 6	Preservation	(R) Aidan/ (N) Oswald (D)	Prophecy	Oswald's hand remained undecayed.
H.E. V, 10	Physical	(R) Hwalds (D)		Hwalds bodies carried 40 miles upstream.
VWilf. c.38	Physical	(R) Wilfrid	None	Chains cannot be made to fit Wilfrid.
H.E. IV, 22	Physical	(R) Tunna	Saying mass	Imma cannot be chained
VP 17; VA III, 1-2; VM 15	Physical	(R) Cuthbert		Building constructed of huge stones (VM, VP) Stone too large for four monks to life, moved by Cuthbert alone.

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>OCCURRENCE</u>
H.E. IV, 11	Physical	(N-R) Sebbi (D)		Coffin increases in size.
VP 23	Physical	(R) Cuthbert (abs)		Girdle which cured Aelflaed disappeared.
VGreg. c.20	Physical	(R) Gregory	Prayers of people	Eucharistic host appears as a piece of a finger.
VGreg. c.21	Physical	(R) Gregory	Prayers of people	Cloth relics bleed when cut.
H.E. I, 7	Production	Alban	Eyes lifted to heaven	Appearance of a ford.
H.E. I, 7	Production	Alban	Prayer	Appearance of a stream.
H.E. IV, 28; VP 18; VA III, 3; VM 16	Production	(R) Cuthbert	Prayer and digging	Supply of water on Farne
H.E. V, 10	Production	(R) Hewardls (D)		Stream appeared at place of martyrdom
H.E. III, 10	Production	(N) Oswald (D)	Dying	Grass at Maserfelth unusually green
H.E. IV, 28	Production	(R) Cuthbert	Sowing of seed	Barley grown out of season
H.E. IV, 13	Production	(R) Wilfrid	Preaching	End of drought in Sussex.
VM&L. c.26	Production	(R) Wilfrid	Preaching	Large harvests in Frisia
VP 35	Production	(R) Cuthbert	Tasting the water	Water turned into wine
VP 5; VA I, 6; VM 6	Production	(N) Cuthbert	Adherence to fast (VP)	Cuthbert's horse finds food

<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>AGENT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>OCCURRENCE</u>
VP 21; VA III, 4; VH 19	Production	(R) Cuthbert	Prayer (VA)/ Prediction (VP)	Mood needed by Cuthbert delivered on the tide (after monks forgot it)
VP 11; VA II, 4; VH 9	Production/ weather	(R) Cuthbert	Prayer	Discovery of three pieces of dolphin meat. Storm abates as Cuthbert predicted.

Abbreviations

<i>A.B.R.</i>	<i>American Benedictine Review</i>
<i>Adom. VCol.</i>	<i>Adomnan, Vita Columbae</i>
<i>A.S.E.</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>BLTW</i>	Ed. Thompson, A.H. , <i>Bede, His Life, Times and Writings</i> (Oxford, 1935).
<i>CCSL</i>	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout, 1954-)
<i>Colgrave &amp; Mynors</i>	Ed. & trans. Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R.A.B., <i>Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> (Oxford, 1969).
<i>CSEL</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1866-)
<i>DeAb.</i>	Aethelwulf, <i>De Abbatibus</i>
<i>D.T.R.</i>	Bede, <i>De Temporum Ratione</i>
<i>E.H.R.</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>E.M.E.</i>	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
<i>Euse. H.E.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>G.C.</i>	Gregory of Tours, <i>Liber in gloria Confessorum</i>
<i>Giles</i>	Ed. Giles, J.A., <i>Patres Ecclesiae Anglicanae</i> (London, 1843-5)
<i>G.M.</i>	Gregory of Tours, <i>Liber in Gloria Martyrum Beatorum</i>
<i>Haddan &amp; Stubbs</i>	Ed. Haddan, A.W. and Stubbs, W., <i>Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland</i> 3 vols. (Oxford, 1871).
<i>H.E.</i>	Bede, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum</i>
<i>H.F.</i>	Gregory of Tours, <i>Decem libros historiarum</i>
<i>J.E.H.</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>Jon. VCol.</i>	Jonas, <i>Vitae Columbani discipulorumque eius</i>
<i>King</i>	Ed. & trans. King, J.E., <i>Bede Opera</i>



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- MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica  
 AA Auctores Antiquissimi  
 SRM Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum
- PL Ed. Migne, J.A., *Patrologia Latina Cursus Completus* (Paris, 1844-64)
- Plummer Ed. Plummer, C., *Baedae Venerabilis Opera Historica* 2 vols (Oxford, 1896)
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- SC Sources Chretiennes (Paris, 1942-)
- VAnon.* *Vita Cuthberti* (by an anonymous author).
- VAnt.* Athanasius, *Life of Antony*
- VCeol.* *Historia Abbatum* (by an anonymous author).
- Versus* Alcuin, *Versus de Patribus, Regibus et Sanctis Euboricensis Ecclesiae*
- VGreg.* *Vita Gregorii papae* (by an anonymous author).
- VGuth.* Felix, *Vita Guthlaci*
- VMart.* Sulpicius, *Vita Martini*
- VMet.* Bede, *Vita Cuthberti Metrica*
- V.P.* Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae Patrum*
- VPr.* Bede, *Vita Cuthberti prosaica*
- VRic.* Alcuin, *Vita Richardii*
- VWilf.* Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*

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