Creating a *gens Anglorum*: Social and Ethnic Identity in Anglo-Saxon England through the Lens of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*

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This thesis examines of the role of Bede in the creation of an English national identity by considering the use, re-use and transmission of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* across the Anglo-Saxon period. Bede's exemplary and providential history had created an image of an idealised past to inspire change in the present, and these models resonated with writers throughout this period. This study engages with the legacy of Bede's text by surveying a wide range of case studies from across Anglo-Saxon England with attention to a broad spectrum of generic, geographical and political contexts from the eighth to the early eleventh centuries, in Latin and vernacular English.

Written in Latin as historical prose narrative in early eighth-century Northumbria, we see the work being used later in that century in a very similar context by Alcuin in his *York Poem.* In the ninth century the use of the text followed the shifting political hegemony of Anglo-Saxon England south through Mercia, where it was probably translated into English, and into Wessex where it was mined as a source for the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* In both of these texts, we see the *Historia* being used to respond to viking invasion in distinct ways, as the vernacular narrative emphasises teaching and evangelism while the annals promote the military and political successes of Wessex. In the late tenth century, the Latin history is used as an important source in the vernacular homilies and hagiography of Ælfric. Using and supplementing Bede's pantheon of saints from across England, Ælfric's work prescribes a nationalised Christianity, which mirrors the growth of English identity, as the West Saxon cultural and political hegemony expands more deeply into the geographical and conceptual collective of peoples and kingdoms known to him as *Engla land*.

These case studies demonstrate that Bede's work remained influential throughout the period, with later writers consistently returning to the original text, re-interpreting his work to suit their own contexts and ideological needs.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

The Venerable Bede, writing in eighth-century Northumbria, famously wrote in Book I, Chapter 15 of

his *Historia Ecclesiastica gens Anglorum,* that in the year 449:

> *Tunc Anglorum siue Saxonum gens, inuitata a rege praefato, Brittaniam tribus longis nauibus aduehitur…*
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> *Aduenerant autem de tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus, id est Saxonibus, Anglis, Iutis. De Iutarum origine sunt Cantuari et Uictuarii, hoc est ea gens quae Uectam tenet insulam, et ea quae usque hodie in prouincia Occidentalium Saxonum Iutarum natio nominatur, posita contra ipsam insulam Uectam. De Saxonibus, id est ea regione quae nunc Antiquorum Saxonum cognominatur, uenere Orientales Saxones, Meridiani Saxones, Occidui Saxones. Porro de Anglis, hoc est de illa patria quae Angulus dicitur, et ab eo tempore usque hodie manere desertus inter prouincias Iutarum et Saxonum perhibetur, Orientales Angli, Mediterranei Angli, Merci, tota Nordanhymbrorum progenies, id est illarum gentium quae ad boream Humbri fluminis inhabitant, ceterique Anglorum populi sunt orti. Duces fuisse perhibentur eorum primi duo fratres Hengist et Horsa, e quibus Horsa postea occisus in bello a Brettonibus hactenus in orientalibus Cantiae partibus monumentem habet suo nomine insigne. Erant autem filii Uictgisli, cuius pater Uitta, cuius pater Uecta, cuius pater Uoden, de cuius stirpe multarum prouinciarum regium genus originem duxit.*
>
> At that time the race of the Angles or Saxons, invited by Vortigern, came to Britain in three warships…
>
> They came from three very powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. The people of Kent and the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight are of Jutish origin and also those opposite the Isle of Wight, that part of the kingdom of Wessex which is still today called the nation of the Jutes. From the Saxon country, that is, the district now known as Old Saxony, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. Besides this, from the country of the Angles, that is, the land between the kingdoms of the Jutes and the Saxons, which is called *Angulus*, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrian race (that is those people who dwell north of the river Humber) as well as the other Anglian tribes. *Angulus* is said to have remained deserted from that day to this. Their first leaders are said to have been two brothers, Hengist and Horsa. Horsa was afterwards killed in battle by the Britons, and in the eastern part of Kent there is still a monument bearing his name. They were the sons of Wihtgisl, son of Witta, son of Wecta, son of Woden, from whose stock the royal families of many kingdoms claimed their descent.[1]

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[1] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, in *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and J.N.L. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969) I:15, 50-51. All references and translations from the *Historia Ecclesiastica* are from this edition.

From Bede's time to ours, this portrayal of the Anglo-Saxon migration, the *adventus Saxonum*, has loomed large as the cornerstone of English identity. The legacy of this statement is largely due to the authority of Bede, who gained enduring renown as scholar and exegete, and who gives a date to an otherwise mysterious invasion scenario, shrouded in the mists of prehistory.[2] Its mythic power continues to be shown in that his date is still used some thirteen centuries later as the starting point for English origins. By recording an otherwise oral legend, Bede in effect moved the migration of the Anglo-Saxons from the realm of legend, into the realm of written history.[3] Because Bede not only named the people involved in this migration, but also gave details of their homeland and where they settled, his depiction has dominated our sense of English history, and driven our understanding of borders and regional identities in the Anglo-Saxon period.[4] It has also stimulated much academic inquiry into the issues of invasion and settlement, largely unchallenged by any other written source.[5]

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[2] The other important source for the *adventus Saxonum* is Gildas' *Liber Querulus De Excidio Britanniae,* used by Bede himself as his primary source. However, Gildas' text is not the one which is invoked for the beginnings of English history, as his depictions are shadowy, difficult to date, extremely polemical, and represent the Saxons as God's scourge: *ferocissimi illi nefandi nominis saxones deo hominibusque inuisi* (fierce and impious Saxons, a race hateful both to God and man), Gildas, *Liber Querulus De Excidio Britanniae*, in *The Ruin of Britain*, ed. Michael Winterbottom, and trans. John Morris (London: Phillimore & Co., Ltd., 1978) Ch 23-25, quote at Ch. 23.1, 97. There are other references to the post-Roman invasion of Britain, but these are from continental sources, such as Procopius, in *De Bello Gothica* IV:20 and the *Gallic Chronicle, s.a.* 452. Cf. Nicholas Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons* (Guildford: Seaby, 1992), 153-157; Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle," *ASE* 12 (1995): 24; Ian Wood, "The End of Roman Britain," in *Gildas: New Approaches*, ed. Michael Lapidge and David Dumville (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1984); and Rolf H. Bremmer, "The Nature of the Evidence for a Frisian Participation in the *Adventus Saxonum*," in *Britain 400-600: Language and History*, ed. Alfred Bammesberger and Alfred Wollmann (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1990), 354-356.

[3] Cf. Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 60-61. There has been much debate on the accuracy of Bede's list of invading peoples, for example see Sims-Williams, "Settlement of England," 5 and 24; David Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend," *History* 62 (1977): 192; and Bremmer, "The Nature of the Evidence," 354-359. Many scholars have accepted Bede's account of the *adventus* as largely accurate, for example: David P. Kirby, "Bede's Native Sources for the Historia Ecclesiastica," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 (1965-6): 341-371; David P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 12-14 (but with caution); Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend," 173-92; and Peter Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1990), 26. Others believe that this represents an 8th c rather than a 5th c reality, for examples, see Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, Third ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 10-11; Barbara Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity: A Case Study of Anglo-Saxon Practice," in *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), 85; and Ian Wood, "Before and after the Migration to Britain," in *The Anglo-Saxons: From the Migration Period to the Eighth Century - an Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. John Hines (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), 42s and 51. Others see it masking a more complicated picture, such as Clare Stancliffe, "The British Church and the Mission of Augustine," in *St. Augustine and the Conversion of England*, ed. Richard Gameson (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 108-111; and Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd ed. (Avon: The Bath Press, 1991), 71 and 102-108.

[4] Eric John, "The Point of Woden," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 5 (1992): 129; and Nicholas Brooks, *Bede and the English* (Jarrow Lecture: 1999) 11-12.

[5] However, archaeology does present some contrasts with Bede's invasion scenario. For example, see Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death: Burial Rites in Early England* (Thrupp, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2000), 158; Andrew Tyrrell, "Corpus Saxonum: Early Medieval Bodies and Corporeal Identity," in *Social Identity in Early*

This study will examine the role of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (hereafter *HE*) in the creation of an English national identity by going beyond Bede's own description of the origins and destiny of his people, to discern the effect of his rhetoric on later periods. For the purpose of this inquiry, the accuracy of Bede's narrative in recording real events is not important. Rather, this discussion will focus on the depth of Anglo-Saxon acceptance of the ethno-religious identity Bede articulates for them, and its enduring legacy throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. It seeks to engage with this legacy by examining how Bede's text both shaped English identity, and was itself re-worked by the shifting social and political contexts from the early eighth century to the late tenth century as an English political identity gradually emerged. This study is not meant to be a comprehensive exploration of this very broad topic, but will engage with it through a series of case studies, representing a range of responses to Bede's text as both a source and as a conceptual model with attention to the effects of generic, political, geographical and ecclesiastical changes in context.

In order to do this, it is important to first understand the depth of Bede's depiction of the English origin myth, the breadth of his model and the layers of meaning with which it was infused. In recording the Anglo-Saxon migration, Bede invokes a connection between the Anglo-Saxon people with their homeland in Germany, and the traditions of that land and its people.[6] He also ties the Angles, Saxons and Jutes to one another, in that they are depicted in a shared migration with shared descent from Woden.[7] Bede's use of extant oral traditions regarding the Anglo-Saxon origins and migration probably prompted contemporary credibility in his portrayal, and it was cultural familiarity

Medieval Britain, ed. W.O. Frazer and A. Tyrrell (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 145-155; and Michael E. Weale, Deborah A. Weiss, Rolf F. Jager, Neil Bradman, and Mark G. Thomas, "Y Chromosome Evidence for Anglo-Saxon Mass Migration," *Mol. Biol. Evol.* 19, no. 7 (2002): 1008-1018. For discussion, see Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 157; and Nicholas Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria: AD 350-1100* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, Inc., 1993), 61-65.

[6] There is some debate over the time frame of this migration, and whether these groups were culturally and ethnically distinct from one another in Germany or later in Britain. Cf. Wood, "Before and After," 42; and John Hines, "Philology, Archaeology and the *Adventus Saxonum Vel Anglorum*," in *Britain 400-600: Language and History*, ed. Alfred Bammesberger and Alfred Wollmann (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1990), 28-29.

[7] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 22; and Stephen J. Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 62-66. See also J.N. Stephens, "Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*," *History: The Journal of the Historical Association* 62 (1977): 5.

with these ethnogenetic models which helped to contribute to the longevity of his version of events.[8] In this migration myth, it is Bede who tells the Anglo-Saxons where they came from.

Bede also gave them a sense of where they were going by placing the story of the Anglo-Saxons within providential Christian history. He does this by placing both their past and future within a teleological trajectory, which lent emphasis on their important role as Christians in the present. One way in which he explained the past was by expanding on Gildas' polemic of the Saxons as God's scourge. The British cleric Gildas (c.500-570) was Bede's main source for the invasion, and in his jeremiad he had strongly reprimanded the Britons for their sinfulness, pointing to the *adventus Saxonum* as God's punishment for their lack of faith.[9] Bede follows this ideology, and for his own purposes expands on it.[10] For example, in reporting that Vortigern invited the Saxons to Britain to help defend the Britons, Bede also adds the comment:

> *Quod Domini nutu dispositum esse constat, ut ueniret contra inprobos malum, sicut euidentius rerum exitus probauit.*

> As events plainly showed, this was ordained by the will of God so that evil might fall upon those miscreants.[11]

Also, Bede records that the Britons had failed to share their faith with their new pagan neighbours, *quae historicus eorum Gildas flebili sermone describit* (which their own historian Gildas describes with doleful words).[12] However, to this he adds that the Anglo-Saxons were favoured by God, so:

> *non tamen diuina pietas plebem suam, quam praesciuit, deseruit; quin multo digniores genti memoratae praecones ueritatis, per quos crederet, destinauit.*

God in His goodness did not reject the people whom He foreknew, but He had appointed much worthier heralds of the truth to bring this people to the faith.[13]

By extending the story as he read it in Gildas, Bede not only justified the *adventus Saxonum,* but was also able to show that the pagan Anglo-Saxons were already known to God (*praesciuit*) and were therefore his agents scourging the heretical Britons.[14] However, this was just the first step in fulfilling God's plan for the Anglo-Saxons.

The next step in this plan was of course the Anglo-Saxon conversion to Christianity. In this conversion, Bede establishes an identity for them which transcends the familiar lines of Germanic origin myth, and the role of the pagan as an instrument of divine retribution, to create an identity which was ethno-religious.[15] This begins with Gregory the Great being moved by divine intuition upon meeting Angle slaves in the market in Rome.[16] According to Bede, Gregory was saddened by the fact that these handsome boys were *paganis adhuc erroribus essent inplicati* (still entangled in the errors of paganism)*,* and that upon being told that their people were named *Angli,* he responded, '*Bene,*' because '*nam et angelicam habent faciem, et tales angelorum in caelis decet esse coheredes* (Good... they have the face of angels, and such men should be fellow-heirs of the angels in heaven)*.*'[17] In this statement Bede has Gregory suggest the possibility of a separate, Christian inheritance (*coheredes*), outside of that offered by their pagan ancestors. As a result of this meeting, he sends the Augustinian mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons, and in effect they are reborn as a Christian people through God's will and ready for the next phase in God's plan for them.[18]

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[13] *HE* I:22, 68-69. Importantly, Bede follows this statement with his chapter on the Augustinian mission. Cf. Stancliffe, "The British Church and the Mission of Augustine," 110 and 132-133; and Lucas Quensel-von Kalben, "The British Church and the Emergence of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 10* (1999): especially 89.

[14] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 50-51.

[15] The meaning of 'Germanic' here and elsewhere in this study reflects Bede's own terminology and meaning within the *HE.*

[16] The reference to the *praedicare uerbum Dei* is at *HE* I:23, 68.

[17] *HE* II:1, 132-135.

[18] H.E.J. Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," *Journal of Religious History* 11 (1980-1): 504; Andrew H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2005), 303-307; Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 48-50; Brooks, *Bede and the English,* 22; and Patrick Wormald, "Bede and the 'Church of the English'," in *The Times of Bede*, ed. Stephen Baxter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 207-228.

In incorporating both Germanic and Christian origins in the ethnogenesis of the Anglo-Saxons, Bede creates an ethno-religious identity for them as Germanic Christians. This identity uniquely qualifies them to fulfil their redemptive role and take the light of their faith back to their German homeland and to their pagan continental 'cousins'. They do this because it was known that:

> *Quarum in Germania plurimas nouerat esse nationes, a quibus Angli uel Saxones, qui nunc Brittaniam incolunt, genus et originem duxisse noscuntur; unde hactenus a uicina gente Brettonum corrupte Garmani nuncupantur. Sunt autem Fresones, Rugini, Danai, Hunni, Antiqui Saxones, Boructuari.*

> There were very many peoples in Germany from whom the Angles and Saxons who now live in Britain, derive their origin; hence even to this day they are by a corruption called *Garmani* by their neighbours the Britons. Now these people are the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and *Boruhtware*.[19]

The conversion of other Germanic peoples had the potential to fulfil the promise of both the Germanic and Christian aspects of their ethnogenesis, and charged the Anglo-Saxons with a destiny to bring other Germanic peoples into Christendom. The duality of identity which Bede demonstrates for the Anglo-Saxons also establishes them as a people separate from the British Christians who had been indigenous to the island, and their pagan German cousins who had not yet been enlightened by Christianity.

Modern scholars have been no less engaged with Bede's story of Anglo-Saxon ethnogenesis than were the Anglo-Saxons, and the issue of identity in Bede's *HE* has led to a vibrant and robust discussion among scholars. Scholars widely recognise that Bede's intention in writing his history was not only to explain and justify the Anglo-Saxon hegemony in Britain, but also to give it divine ordination by advocating a collective Christian identity which superseded the more realistic tribal affiliations. This idealised ethno-religious identity has often been interpreted as the seed of a later collective political identity in the unified *Engla lond* of the tenth century.[20] According to H.E.J. Cowdrey, writing in 1980, it was Bede who was responsible for the creation of the *gens Anglorum,* in

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[19] *HE* V:9, 476-477.
[20] Patrick Wormald, "*Engla Lond:* The Making of an Allegiance," in *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience*, ed. Patrick Wormald (Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1999), 371-382; Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 45-82; and Sarah Foot, "The Making of *Angelcynn:* English Identity before the Conquest," *The Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series, no. VI (1996): 25-49.

that he articulated a unity for the Anglo-Saxons that had not yet come to pass, instigating a perception of collective identity and suggesting a collective purpose for them as one people under God. Writing their history in five books like those of the Pentateuch, Bede also demonstrated that this ethno-religious identity was the will of God, drawing a sharp contrast between the idealised behaviour of the early Anglo-Saxon Christians, and the reprobate Britons who had fallen from God's favour.[21] In 1983, Patrick Wormald followed up Cowdrey's theory, showing that Bede had formulated an identity for the Anglo-Saxons that had its roots in the ethnogenesis of the Germanic past, and its future in a unified Christianity.[22] Shortly after this, Michael Richter demonstrated that the term *Saxones* was the most common contemporary nomenclature for the collective of Germanic peoples in Britain, and that Bede's preference for the term *Angli* was a conscious continuation of Gregory the Great's use from his 'discovery' of the Angle slaves and throughout the Augustinian mission. Therefore this choice in nomenclature was part of a concerted effort on the part of Bede who when writing, Richter demonstrated, even changed the wording of his source text from the more common *Saxones* to his preferred term, *Angli*.[23]

In 1994, Patrick Wormald wrote of the Anglo-Saxon period that 'an ideologically engendered allegiance is indeed the key to the antiquity and resilience of the English state.'[24] Part of this ideology, he suggested, worked by creating a common enemy, preferably one who was not godly. Using biblical models in order to create a contrast between the heretical Britons with the perceived orthodoxy of the Anglo-Saxons, Bede was able to create an image of the Anglo-Saxons as a people 'chosen' for God's special favour. In using the collective term *Angli* to refer to Germanic peoples in Britain, he effectively linked them all to the Anglo-Saxon Church, which had been established by the

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[21] Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 501-523.
[22] Patrick Wormald, "Bede, the *Bretwaldas,* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 103-104. Cf. Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 80-2; Pohl, "Ethnic Names and Identities," 8-19; and Merrills, *History and Geography*, 303-307. For Germanic origin myths in general, see Wolfram, "*Origo Et Religo:* Ethnic Traditions and Literature in Early Medieval Texts," 72-3; Pohl, "Conceptions of Ethnicity," 15-17; Walter Pohl, "Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity," in *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 122-125.
[23] Michael Richter, "Bede's '*Angli*': Angles or English?," *Peritia* 3 (1984): 99-113. Cf. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, 50-51 and 54.
[24] Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 361.

Gregorian mission and so connected them with papal Rome. This gave the Anglo-Saxons a prescription for unity that would ultimately arch over all other allegiances.[25] Nicholas Brooks, in 1999, accepted Wormald's idea that English unity had been sponsored by Bede, pointing out that while sometimes Bede's usage of Anglian terminology did refer to a specific regional affiliation, most often he used it to connote a collective identity.[26]

Clearly, Bede had recorded an origin myth for the Anglo-Saxons that differed from Germanic tradition in that it was firmly rooted in both the Germanic pagan world – with the shared sea crossing and legendary founding brothers – and in the Christian election by Gregory to convert the *gens Anglorum*.[27] Andrew Merrills, drawing on the work of Edmond Faral and Robert Hanning, pushed Bede's ethnographic language still further, saying that Bede had also effectively used biblical paradigms to link the identities of the Britons and Anglo-Saxons with those of Old and New Testament tradition.[28] By creating a set of parable-like stories, with a basis in the historical traditions of the people, he was able to establish an analogy between the Britons' obstinacy in refusing a new revelation of their faith (Roman orthodoxy concerning Easter and tonsure) with the Jewish unwillingness to accept Christ. According to Merrills, 'to Bede's mind, the British rejection of the joys of this spiritual symbiosis represented a wilful perversion of divine will,' and was therefore deserving of punishment.[29] He, again drawing on the work of Robert Hanning, also related the Britons' perceived unwillingness to offer Christian enlightenment to the pagan Anglo-Saxons with the Jewish refusal to convert the Gentiles. Because of the British obstinacy, they fell out of favour with God, and the Anglo-Saxons were called upon to redeem Britain, and thus they enjoyed a special relationship

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[25] Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 361 and 373-79.
[26] Brooks, *Bede and the English,* 6-7. Contra: Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 273-288 and 297; Walter Goffart, "Bede's History in a Harsher Climate," in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Morgantown: University of West Virginia Press, 2006), 213 and 223-226; and Steven Fanning, "Bede, Imperium, and the Bretwaldas," *Speculum* 66, no. 1 (1991): 20-22.
[27] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 303-305.
[28] Cf. Hanning, *Vision of History*, 70.
[29] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 281.

with him.[30] According to this theory, in setting up this 'chosen' status for the *Angli*, Bede charges this special people with a mission to convert their continental cousins, which he proudly details in V:9.[31]

Overall, scholarly discussion of Bede's role in establishing a national consciousness among Anglo-Saxons has shown that while Bede did not portray early Anglo-Saxon unity in any realistic way, he did create a notion of national identity that shaped the imagination of his later audience, in that the *HE* became 'a sort of ideological leaven' for later notions of unity and supremacy.[32] Eager to hearken back to the unity of the rose-coloured past that Bede had portrayed, later Anglo-Saxons, such as King Ælfred (849-899) and Bishop Æthelwold (909–984), saw the work as a sort of text book on Anglo-Saxon history and tradition. Bede had articulated what later politics sought to embody, and his narrative was the starting point for later ideas about national unity. For example, Sarah Foot and David Pratt have demonstrated that the idealised picture of English Christian unity created by Bede was summoned by Ælfred when he wanted to 're-create' the collective identity of the Bedan past in order to unify the Anglo-Saxons against the Danes in the ninth century.[33] Also, Benedictine reformers of the tenth century, such as Æthelwold and Ælfric, capitalised on the status of Bede as a patristic authority in their attempts to apply Bede's representation of early English monasticism to their own contemporary church, giving the Benedictine reform movement in Britain a uniquely English character which differed from that on the continent.[34]

It is these ideas of a historical Bedan ideal that this discussion will focus on. This study seeks to push beyond the well-explored territory of national identity in the *HE,* in an attempt to further our understanding of how Bede's later audience read, interpreted and used Bede's constructions to supplement and support their own ideas about the role of English identity, and how it was used to

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[30] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 303-307; and Hanning, *Vision of History*, 70-83.

[31] David Rollason, *Bede and Germany* (Jarrow Lecture: 2001) throughout.

[32] Alfred P. Smyth, "The Emergence of English Identity, 700-1000," in *Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 2002), 41.

[33] Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 38-49; and David Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great*, (C.U.P., 2007), 106-107 and 110-111. See also Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 376–7.

[34] For example, see Joyce Hill, *Bede and the Benedictine Reform* (Jarrow Lecture: 1998) throughout; and Mechthild Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1999), 122 and 291.

redefine and shape Anglo-Saxon culture through the period.[35] By looking at the work and how it was interpreted and transmitted across the sweeping changes that occurred in the nearly three centuries which followed, the *HE* can be used as a lens by which to explore the often subtle changes in the expression of Anglo-Saxon identity across the period as it was copied, translated and re-worked into a variety of genres and milieus.

This discussion will explore the power of Bede's message for later Anglo-Saxons by examining how the *HE* informed and validated the works of later writers as hegemony passed through the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex. This exploration will be conducted through a series of case studies, in which works from across the geographical, historical and generic span will be examined to better understand the endurance of Bede's ideas, and how they evolved along with the social conditions and relationships of Anglo-Saxon England.[36] In doing so, it will become clear that the *HE* cultivated a large range of audiences and purposes as it was read and re-interpreted in ways that were authoritative but also flexible, being religious and political, in Latin and Old English, for both clerics and laity.

Chapter Two examines the *HE* itself in greater depth, expanding on the points summarised briefly above in an attempt to understand Bede's ethnographic premise, the importance of his model, and the link between the Anglo-Saxon Church and the cohesion and diversity of wider Christendom.[37] His representation of the religious and ethnic makeup of early Anglo-Saxon society can help further our understanding of perceptions of race, culture and religion in early eighth-century England. This chapter will also help to establish the vocabulary of Bede's ethnography and

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[35] Contra: Stephen J. Harris, "Bede, Social Practice, and the Problem with Foreigners," *Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association: Essays in Medieval Studies* 13 (1996): 99-102; and Walter Goffart, *Rome's Fall and After* (London: Hambledon Press, 1989), 283-4. The topic of the *HE* and national identity in post-Conquest England is very important and interesting in this context, but this is not the place to discuss it.

[36] Sharon M. Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2010), 216 demonstrates that this approach is necessary, because 'around thirty-five named or anonymous Old English authors either translated Bede's works into English or used Bede as a source of knowledge'.

[37] Cf. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, 43 and 48; Paul Meyavert, "Diversity within Unity: A Gregorian Theme," *Heythrop Journal* 4 (1963): 141-162; Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 11, 28 and 49-71; and Pohl, "Ethnic Names and Identities," 19 and 24-25.

the providential nature of history writing in this period, creating a better understanding of the ways in which his rhetoric and historical model was interpreted in later periods.

Chapter Three demonstrates two very different ways of re-interpreting Bede's text in order to validate regional identities within the later contexts in which it was received. One of these re-interpretations was conducted later in the eighth century by Alcuin, another Northumbrian who used the narrative as a source for his Latin praise poem on York, the *Versus de patribus, regibus et sanctis Eboracensis ecclesiae.* This use of Bede's narrative history to inform Alcuin's poem serves to demonstrate the importance of Bede's authority in interpreting the heroic past into another resolutely Christian schematic. The poem uses Bede's own context to garner authority for a work that was self-consciously Northumbrian, but focused more specifically on the political and ecclesiastical hegemony of the city of York. Alcuin removed the wide perspective of the narrative in order to focus specifically on York as both the royal seat of Northumbria and the home of the archbishopric. In doing this, the ethnic groups so important in the *HE* are used to lend majesty to ancestral kings of York who, like those Anglo-Saxons of the *HE,* had gained their prestige due to the strength of their Germanic ancestors and their divinely inspired migration to Britain.

As the influence of Northumbria waned, Bede's own influence continued to be felt, his narrative moving with the dominion of power southward. An example of this is the interpretive re-use of the narrative as the backbone of the ninth-century vernacular *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* In this text Bede's authority is called upon in order to inform and authorise an overtly political set of annals. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* continues Bede's legacy by using his narrative as a source for heroic tradition, deeply rooted in a Germanic ancestry which had brought to Britain its strength and heroism in the migration. Using the *HE* as a starting point, the chronicler(s) shifted the account in order to showcase the military superiority of the Anglo-Saxons, as their unity is defined not just by their Germanic ancestry and adherence to English Christianity, but also in the contrast this creates between them and the politically and militarily inferior *Walas* (Britons) on the one hand, and the *hæþen Deniscan* ('heathen Danes') on the other.

Chapter Four discusses the striking way in which the *HE* was reinterpreted in its translation from Latin into the vernacular in the ninth century. This translation was conducted according to a strict purpose, under which it was reshaped in order to promote the hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon Church even further. While focused sharply on its exemplar, the translator(s) of the *Old English Bede* edited the ethnographic narrative so that irrelevant or potentially disruptive elements fade from view. The effect is a notion of a unified Anglo-Saxon Church which provided leadership for its people, so that the importance of Anglo-Saxon Christianity within the narrative is sharpened and strengthened. Probably translated in a Mercian ecclesiastical milieu, the *Old English Bede* was received and copied under the auspices of the Ælfredian court, which again capitalised on the authority of Bede. Augmented there, it became associated with vernacular texts which proclaimed the hegemony of the West Saxon royal house. More than likely, only those who had actually read the Latin version of the *HE* would have realised that the Old English translation was different than Bede's own text, and it appears to have been the working version of the *HE* across the tenth century, which is a period in which there is much less evidence for the use of the Latin version of the text.

The authority of Bede endured, and the messages of the *HE* continued to resonate with Anglo-Saxons of the tenth and eleventh centuries. While the spiritual identity that Bede had advocated emerged as a political identity, his exemplary model continued to be called upon in order to reconcile and explain contemporary events. Both the *HE* and the *OEB* were invoked as exemplary history, and yet underwent changes relevant to their contemporary use. As Chapter Five will demonstrate, the *HE* continued to be mined for hagiography and this case study will consider its use by Ælfric, who used Bede's saints and stories for his own collections of hagiographies and homilies. By moving carefully chosen parts of Bede's text into the vernacular, Ælfric made them accessible to a wider audience, mediated through his knowledge and guidance. In this period Bede, and by extension the *HE*, stood as an authoritative representation of the early Anglo-Saxon Church, and was called upon to demonstrate its purity and potency which was believed to have peaked under the

guidance of Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus (602-690), as Bede had represented it.[38] This idealised high water mark of Anglo-Saxon Christianity was called upon by the English Benedictine reformers to provide the model for tenth to eleventh-century Christian behaviour, and to provide guidance in an era of instability when England was under the threat of sustained Danish attack and settlement.

It is through this wide array of expressions in purpose and meaning that the Anglo-Saxons give insight into their own relationship with Bede's narrative, Anglo-Saxon origins, and the unfolding of an Anglo-Saxon national identity across the period. As these case studies aptly demonstrate, the *HE* remained hugely influential throughout the period, with later writers consistently returning to the original text for inspiration and exemplary history, re-interpreting his story to suit their own contexts and ideological needs. Repeatedly returning to Bede's representation of Anglo-Saxon national identity, and the past that he neatly laid out for them, later generations used the *HE* to understand and articulate their beginnings as a unified people and ultimately as an English nation. This rhetoric of unity withstood the many challenges it encountered across the period, and it is a testament to the credibility, authority and flexibility of Bede's account which allowed it to become different things in different contexts and under different pens.

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[38] For example, see *HE* IV:2, 332-337. Cf. Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 377.

Chapter Two:

Social and Ethnic Identity in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*

The study of social and ethnic identity in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* is well-trodden ground, and many scholars have interpreted the work and its meaning, to various ends. It is a testament to the coherence and complexity of Bede's history that its readers continue to engage with it on many levels and learn from it. The *HE* has been valued across the thirteen hundred years between his and our time, but has been read very differently, depending on the context of the reader. Modern scholarly discussion of Bede, his work and his themes is wide and diffuse. However, in the last thirty years there has been a revolution in our understanding of the use of history in the medieval period, and a movement away from the scientific understanding of medieval history that pervaded in the nineteenth century. In this period scholars had understood history, including the *HE,* to be a result of empirical observation and a record of fact, therefore Bede's history was believed at face value, without consideration of his wider purposes for writing the narrative.

More recently however, scholars have come to understand that history writing in the medieval period was much more complicated than these scholars had appreciated. This history was often an expression of Christian theology and morality within a teleological framework. Believing that all events were the unfolding of God's plan, and that the study of events in the past were a way of understanding this plan, medieval historians wrote history within a providential model which put God's will at the centre of all events.[39] Within this framework, medieval historians used exemplary models in order to add meaning to these events, and to teach greater connection with the will of God.[40] Bede was no exception. In connecting the events of the past with direct action in the present,

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[39] Hanning, *Vision of History*, 14-15 and 24-25; Roger Ray, "Bede, the Exegete, as Historian," in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Gerald Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976), especially 125; James Campbell, "Bede I," in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, ed. James Campbell (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 1-26; James Campbell, "Bede II," in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, ed. James Campbell (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 29-42, especially 31; Roger Ray, "Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*," *Speculum* 55, no. 1 (1980): 13; and Merrills, *History and Geography*, 238-239.
[40] Nicholas Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in Context* (London: Routledge, 2006), 31-35.

Bede proposed a vision of salvation in the future. In this, he sought not only to record the past, but also to imbue it with deeply teleological meaning.[41]

While his work was intended to give the Anglo-Saxons a sense of their role as a Christian people, and their importance in the fulfilment of God's will, it was also written on a practical level: in order to convey his own ideals for reform within Anglo-Saxon Christianity.[42] As we shall see, part of this revolution in the study of Bede has come through the fruitful comparison of his history with both his exegesis and his contemporary letter to Bishop Egberht.[43] It is in this letter in particular, written as personal correspondence and outside of the historical genre, that we can see Bede's hopes for his contemporary church and better understand the reality behind his ideals, as they appear in the *HE*.[44] It is through an engagement with contemporary ideas and issues that modern scholarship has connected with the work of Bede, and its various levels of interpretation.

This thesis explores the reception and re-interpretation of the *HE* in Anglo-Saxon England*,* and expects that the later writers in the case studies presented here would have understood the deeply teleological trajectory of Bede's model, which they reworked in order to convey their own messages to their contemporaries. This chapter draws on the ground breaking research in Bede studies over the last three decades in order to open up Bede's own purposes in recording this history, and the way in which he used exemplary history within a providential model to advocate his own ideals. In doing so it focuses on how his terminology was determined by biblical precedents, which suggested ethnic paradigms in order to frame religious identity, and caused him to detail the

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[41] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 73; Ray, "Bede, the Exegete, as Historian," 125-136; Barbara Yorke, "The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: The Contribution of Written Sources," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 10 (1999): 26-27; Roger Ray, "Who Did Bede Think He Was?," in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 18; and Alan Thacker, "Bede and the Ordering of Understanding," in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 44.

[42] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 244-245; Alan Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace Hadrill*, ed. P. Wormald with D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 130-153.

[43] Campbell, "Bede I," 18-19 and 23-24; Judith McClure, "Bede's Old Testament Kings," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. P. Wormald, D. Bullough And R. Collins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 76-98; R.A. Markus, *Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical Historiography* (Jarrow Lecture: 1975) 10-12; Ray, "*Vera Lex Historiae*," 1-21; and Ray, "Bede, the Exegete, as Historian," 125-136.

[44] Bede, *Letter of Bede to Egbert, Archbishop of York*, in *English Historical Documents, Vol.1 (c.500-1042)*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (London: O.U.P., 1968) No. 170, 799-810.

movement of the peoples of Britain toward Christendom in ethnic language. It is this rhetoric that resonates with later writers, captures the imagination of later generations and is re-used for their own spiritual and political aspirations.

Exemplary History

The purpose of Bede's work is clearly given in the dedication at the beginning of the work. It famously tells us that:

> *Siue enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemoret de prauis, nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor siue lector deuitando quod noxium est ac peruersum, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognouerit, accenditur.*

> Should history tell of good men and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evil ends of wicked men, no less effectually the devout and earnest listener or reader is kindled to eschew what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pursue those things which he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God.[45]

In this opening, it is clear that his work was meant to provide conspicuous models for emulation and rejection by the Christian community, and he does so through what James Campbell has called 'a gallery of good examples'.[46] While the record of details was of absolute importance in understanding the full meaning of an event, it was the moral significance of these events which were imparted for the edification of the audience. Therefore events in Bede's history are reinterpreted to fulfil his didactic purpose. The clearest typologies for individuals displayed within the text are those of Christian kingship and evangelist bishops.

The models submitted for good kingship were probably written with particular relevance to Bede's own king, Ceolwulf. Importantly, the preface states that the work is dedicated to him, and in this preface Bede cleverly uses the art of flattery not only to encourage the king's good favour towards him, but also to subtly coax him into taking note of the examples established within the narrative. Bede does this by telling Ceolwulf his pleasure in knowing that:

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[45] *HE* Preface, 2-3.
[46] Campbell, "Bede I," 25.

> *non solum audiendis scripturae sanctae uerbis aurem sedulus accommodas, uerum etiam noscendis priorum gestis siue dictis, et maxime nostrae gentis uirorum inlustrium, curam uigilanter inpendis.*

> not content merely to lend an attentive ear to hear the words of Holy Scripture, you devote yourself to learn the sayings and doings of the men of old, and more especially the famous men of our own race.[47]

This statement suggests that the king indeed *should* be interested in both the events of biblical history and those of their own people. Thus, he caters to the king's enthusiasm (*sinceritatis amplector*) by providing this work as an outlet for his scholarly interest, detailing the history of their people and using biblical models that the king would understand, Bede praises and encourages the king for his concern for the spiritual well-being of all his people. Therefore Ceolwulf knows that he must

> *historiam memoratam in notitiam tibi simul et eis, quibus te regendis diuina praefecit auctoritas.*

> wish to see my *History* more widely known, for the instruction of yourself and those over whom divine authority has appointed you to rule.[48]

This is important, in that he is not only asking for the king's support of his text but also, he is telling the king that he has a didactic responsibility to see that his people read it, so that they too can benefit from his message.[49] This makes it clear that the work was also meant for a wider audience than just the king's immediate circle.[50]

Using biblical models, Bede's positive examples of kingship focused on strong kings who were integral to the consolidation of a disparate collection of tribes into a peaceful and unified kingdom. In these examples, it is strong military leadership, morality and judicious governance that ensures the safety of the people at large, and can be contrasted with the breakdown in social order highlighted in his Letter to Egberht.[51] Like the Israelites, despite their struggles to maintain control

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[47] *HE* Preface, 2-3.
[48] *HE,* Preface, 2-3.
[49] Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 146.
[50] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 72 has suggested an audience 'focused on élite personnel, with a ratio of approximately two-to-one clerical to royal, but with other groups seriously underrepresented.' Cf. Campbell, "Bede I," 22; Campbell, "Bede II," 38; and Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 142.
[51] Bede, *Letter to Egbert*, 800-810. David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2003), 188-190; and Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 132-133.

over their kingdoms and their rivals, godly Anglo-Saxon kings were instruments in the divine plan for unity and peace.[52] As Judith McClure has shown by comparing the *HE* with Bede's *Commentary on Samuel*, he uses his kings to illustrate an important didactic point: that working in unison with the will of God would ensure the prosperity of both king and kingdom.[53] The examples which Bede presents in the *HE* include kings Æthelberht, Edwin, Oswald and Oswiu who are shown as God fearing and therefore powerful, successful kings who were able to expand their royal *imperium* and bring various peoples within Britain under their Christian leadership and the safety it provided.[54] King Egfrith on the other hand, is shown losing his life and *spes coepit et uirtus regni Anglorum* (the hopes and strength of the English kingdom) when he acted counter to the warning of God's prophet, Cuthberht, and therefore went against the will of God himself.[55] Because kings represent their people, and the relationship between them was conceptually relative to that between God and his children, kings within the narrative have a particular responsibility for providing a strong moral example and providing leadership, which fulfilled their role in the divine order.[56]

In this temporal mirror of the relationship between God and his children, good kings are evident by their ability to cultivate *imperium. Imperium* is often translated as 'over lordship', but in Bede's usage it often carries a spiritual as well as political dimension. Steven Fanning has shown that Latin sources from throughout the late classical and early medieval periods use the word *imperium* to describe a particular type of kingship: that which encompassed many different *gentes* under a single *regnum. Imperium* however, was a specific type of *regnum* whose jurisdiction was large enough to incorporate peoples who were traditionally tied to another kingship, and were therefore

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[52] McClure, "Bede's Old Testament Kings," 82 and 90.
[53] McClure, "Bede's Old Testament Kings," 91.
[54] *HE* II:5, 148-150. On Æthelberht: *HE* I:25-26, 72-78 and *HE* II:5, 148-150; on Edwin: *HE* II:9, 162-166; *HE* II:12-15, 174-188 and *HE* II:20, 202; on Oswald: *HE* III:1-3, 214-218, *HE* III:5, 228 and *HE* III:6-7, 230-232; and on Oswiu: *HE* III:24, 288-294 and III:25, 298 and 304-306 and *HE* IV:5, 348. Cf. McClure, "Bede's Old Testament Kings," 88-9.
[55] *HE* IV:26, 426-429, quote on 428-429. Contra: Merrills, *History and Geography*, 280 claims that Bede lays the blame on bishop Wilfrid, which contradicts and negates his favourable (if reticent) treatment of the bishop elsewhere.
[56] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 71-2; and McClure, "Bede's Old Testament Kings," 90-1.

members of another *gens*.[57] In Bede's usage, a king with an *imperium* ruled a collection of different peoples, bringing disparate peoples together under one rule. The ability to do this was a sign of God's favour, and this model could be pushed to resemble a particular type of evangelism, because ideally these kings brought many people under the protection and guidance of good Christian kingship, and into the fold of Christendom.[58] Using it in this way helped to justify the subjection of other peoples, and perpetuated Bede's own ideas about the ideal of unity and conformity with a single rule.[59] Bede's most valuable model kings, Edwin and Oswald, are shown not only bringing Christianity to their people, but also expanding their Christian *imperium* over other Angles, Britons, Scots and Picts.

In concert with Bede's ideology for good Christian kingship, there are also many exemplary models of ecclesiastical idealism in the *HE*. In his letter to bishop (later archbishop) Egberht, Bede is appalled that there are many bishops who took money from their parishioners without fulfilling their obligation to preach to them. He admonished the bishop, asserting that both Christian teaching and clerical poverty was expected of those who followed in the footsteps of the apostles. The lord had told his apostles to 'preach, saying "The kingdom of heaven is at hand",' but also advised them: "freely have you received; freely give. Do not possess gold, nor silver."[60] Bede's answer to his own dismay at the failure of his contemporary clergy to preach was to make evangelism the central to the theme of the *HE*.[61] In the narrative, the conversion of each Anglo-Saxon kingdom is detailed carefully, as they are ministered to by great evangelists for the faith, and the triumph of the narrative is in the Anglo-Saxon ability to provide evangelists to the wider world.[62] According to Bede, preaching and teaching was the paramount objective for the clergy, as it is through this preaching

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[57] Fanning, "Bede, Imperium, and the Bretwaldas," 8-14 and 19. See also, Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 71-73.
[58] Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 517-523. For a different interpretation of the evidence, see Brooks, *Bede and the English,* 20-22.
[59] Rollason, *Bede and Germany,* 20.
[60] Bede, *Letter to Egbert*, 802; and Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 130-131.
[61] Rollason, *Bede and Germany,*15.
[62] Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1050* (New York: Longman, 2001), 42-43.

that the people were guided away from heathenism and heresy and toward a closer understanding of God and his will. [63]

Bede's best examples of great evangelists include Cuthberht and Aidan. These men were idealised representations of bishops who did not let their position cloud their commitment to poverty, humility, instruction and evangelism. Both men can be seen painstakingly administering the faith to all, and making great personal sacrifices to do so. They are shown voluntarily travelling long distances on foot to bring the faith to the most rural areas of Northumbria, undergoing long periods of fasting and penance to bring themselves in line with the will of God, and cultivating poverty in the face of great opportunities for wealth.[64] Likened to Pope Gregory's own models in his *Regularis Pastoralis*, they balanced their pastoral duties against their own need for seclusion to contemplate the will of God, and did so with great humility.[65] These models would have been in sharp contrast with the behaviours which Bede decried in his letter, where he asked Egberht to make bishoprics more manageable in order to increase the peoples' access to their clergy, to encourage his flock to eschew material wealth, and towards greater chastity.[66]

In representing idealised versions of these holy saints, Bede carefully constructs their stories so that they are beyond reproach, and in complete contrast with his contemporaries.[67] Aidan appears as both extremely humble and learned; as both ascetic and evangelist.[68] Importantly, he is a great teacher and *in tantum autem uita illius a nostri temporis segnitia distabat* (his life was in great

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[63] See for example, *HE* II:2, 332-337 on Theodore; *HE* III: 3, 218-220 and *HE* III:5, 226-228 on Aidan; *HE* III:28, 316 on Bishop Chad; *HE* IV:13, 372-376 on Bishop Wilfrid; *HE* IV:21, 408-410 on Hild; *HE* IV:25-28, 432-438 on Cuthberht; *HE* V:9, 474-480 on Egbert; and V:10, 480-482 on Willibrord.

[64] David P. Kirby, "The Genesis of a Cult: Cuthbert of Farne and Ecclesiastical Politics in Northumbria in the Late Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46, no. 3 (1995): 384; James Campbell, "Elements in the Background to the Life of St Cuthbert and His Early Cult," in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), 4-18; and Markus, *Bede and Ecclesiastical Historiography*, 12.

[65] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 55; and Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 133-136, and 140-142.

[66] Bede, *Letter to Egbert*, 134 and 140-142.

[67] Kirby, "Cuthbert of Farne and Ecclesiastical Politics," 384-385; and Alan Thacker, "Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Cuthbert," in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and Community to 1200 AD*, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), 117-122.

[68] *HE* III: 3, 218-220 and *HE* III:5, 226-228. Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 144; and Clare Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish* (Jarrow Lecture: 2003) 1.

contrast to our modern slothfulness).[69] Likewise, according to Alan Thacker, Cuthberht represents the 'finest fruit of the conversion initiated by Gregory the Great.'[70] The idealism of Bede comes through in how Cuthberht is shown travelling to the rural and far reaches of Britain, often barefoot, in order to teach his congregation.[71]

As these examples show, Bede chose to focus his history on the kings and clergy who provided models that were applicable to his contemporaries. He tells us very little about his own times, instead choosing to draw examples from a glorified past. This can perhaps be most clearly seen in his portrayal of the golden age of the Anglo-Saxon Church, where his religious vision for his people and their church is best expressed in his description of the Archbishopric of Theodore:

> *Neque umquam prorsus, ex quo Brittaniam petierunt Angli, feliciora fuere tempora, dum et fortissimos Christianosque habentes reges cunctis barbaris nationibus essent terrori, et omnium uota ad nuper audita caelestis regni gaudia penderent, et quicumque lectionibus sacris cuperent erudiri, haberent in promtu magistros, qui docerent.*

> Never had there been such happy times since the English first came to Britain; for having such brave Christian kings, they were a terror to all the barbarian nations, and the desires of all men were set on the joys of the heavenly kingdom of which they had only lately heard; while all who wished for instruction in sacred studies had teachers ready at hand.[72]

It is here that we find the height of Bede's vision for Anglo-Saxon England.[73] Peace and unity were enjoyed by all the Christian people, as their kings were strong and kept them safe under their pious leadership. The archbishop and his assistant Hadrian were not only sent as direct representatives of Rome, but were also humble enough to travel personally to every region teaching the correct faith and sharing their extensive knowledge of biblical teaching and languages. In this passage, it appears that everyone had access to papal Rome and its edicts, and the disparate kingdoms were united under one Church, as Theodore *isque primus erat in archiepiscopus, cui omnis Anglorum ecclesia manus dare consentiret* (was the first of the archbishops whom the whole of the English Church

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[69] *HE* III:5, 226-227.
[70] Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 144-5. See also, Markus, *Bede and Ecclesiastical Historiography*, 7.
[71] *HE* IV:27, 432.
[72] *HE* IV:2, 334-335.
[73] Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 377.

consented to obey).[74] This is the image Bede visualised for his own people, and their church, and aspired to in writing the *HE.*

As these examples demonstrate, scholars have developed a nuanced way of interpreting the information that Bede provides which is careful to understand the back story of events in the past, and their connection with Bede's own contemporary context. Because Bede was writing history in order to provide exemplars for the present, often the details are less significant in their historicity than they are for what they are meant to represent to his audience.

Early medieval history writing also often involved a deep teleology based on a providential model, where all historical events are linked to God's will and read as a message to the people. So within this Christian historical tradition, every event is steeped in meaning for the audience. With this in mind, we will look at the way in which Bede uses classical and medieval conventions of ethnography to depict the role of entire *gentes* within this providential history and exemplary model, and try to disentangle his ideal from reality.

Biblical Ethnography

For modern scholars, Bede's portrayal of social and ethnic identity is tantamount to understanding cultural relations between the various peoples of early England, because there are few other sources that encompass the range, depth and clarity of his narrative history. Nineteenth-century scholars had straightforwardly believed Bede when he wrote of Anglo-Saxon history from the paganism of migration to the triumph of their unified Church. According to this reading of Bede, Anglo-Saxon Christianity had united the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, who had been individual tribes during their fifth-century migration, into a single Christian people who had produced missionaries and converted many of the pagan peoples of their homelands in the late seventh and eighth centuries. The conversion of Anglo-Saxon England had been the result of foreign missionaries – some Irish but

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[74] *HE* IV:2, 332-333.

mostly Roman – because the Anglo-Saxons had largely eradicated the British population which was too devastated and disheartened to engage with the Anglo-Saxons and their Church.

However, more recent scholarship has shown that Bede's representation of the relationship between the peoples of Britain is again based on biblical models and his own contemporary purposes. Therefore looking to the *HE* for a realistic portrayal of ethnic identity is fraught with difficulty, because Bede's higher purpose in his use of ethnic paradigms is to edify his Church and people, based on biblical precedents.[75] Significantly, Bede writes his history in five books, inviting comparison to the Pentateuch itself, which told of the sons of Abraham and the establishment of the people of Israel.[76] He furthers this comparison by introducing Britain as the home of the peoples of five languages: English, British, Irish, Pictish, and Latin (the language of all Christians).[77]

In the ethnographic sketches he gives for each of these peoples, the identities depicted are ultimately religious; religious identities couched within ethnographic paradigms.[78] He begins their description by detailing separate origin myths for the Britons, Scots and Picts all in the very first chapter.[79] In their separate migrations to Britain, it is evident that none among the Britons, Scots or the Picts were indigenous to the island. Also, these divergent traditions demonstrate their ethnic division from one another, and demonstrate their individual relationship with the will of God, epitomised in their separate languages. Bede's description of the arrival of the three groups of Germanic invaders is told fourteen chapters later. Removed from the other ethnic groups in his re-telling of origin myths, these three tribes are depicted in contrast as loosely unified by their simultaneous arrival in three ships from Germany, their shared language, and their mutual ancestry

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[75] Ray, "Bede, the Exegete, as Historian," 126.
[76] Ray, "Bede, the Exegete, as Historian," 134.
[77] On the importance of language in the making of national identity, see Janet Thormann, "The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Poems and the Making of an English Nation," in *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen and John D. Niles (Gainesville: Florida University Press, 1997), 62; and Patrick Wormald, "Anglo-Saxon Society and Its Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1991), 17-19. For more on the residual Latinity of the Britons at the *adventus Saxonum*, see Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 196-197; and Thomas Charles-Edwards, "Language and Society among the Insular Celts AD 400-1000," in *The Celtic World*, ed. Miranda J. Green (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 715-17.
[78] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 274-279.
[79] *HE* I:1, 16-17.

from Hengest and Horsa.[80] Not only is their migration to Britain told separately from that of the Britons, Scots and Picts, it is also awarded special significance by answering to the call of God, and in response to his ire over the sinfulness of the Britons.[81] The separation of the migration of the Anglo-Saxons from those of the other peoples stresses their importance and individuality within God's plan, a process which Nicholas Howe has said gave 'canonical form to the migration myth', and which resonated with Anglo-Saxons throughout the period.[82]

In addition, like the Pentateuch each book of the *HE* was constructed so that it dealt with an event of great significance in the development of the people's relationship with God and his plan for them.[83] Bede focused his narrative firmly on the *gens Anglorum*, who like the Israelites had travelled to a Promised Land and were guided by the wisdom of God out of the ignorance of heathenism and into communion with his plan.[84] The work ends with Bede surveying his own contemporary setting and considering the now largely Christian land that had been redeemed by following the will of God, inviting comparison with Moses surveying the Promised Land. But, where Moses had gotten Israelite Torah law from God, the Anglo-Saxons had received New Testament law from papal Rome.[85] This allowed the *Angli* to move from the Old Testament phase of learning and discovery of God - which had helped them to reconcile their faith with their pagan past - and to move closer to the inheritance of a New Testament revelation of the faith, and fuller understanding of their part within God's plan.[86]

Over the course of his narrative, Bede carefully crafts this collective identity for the Germanic people of Britain, in the form of *Angli.* According to him, the Britons were driven to the fringes of Britain by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, nomenclature that he develops out of existing

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[80] See *HE* I:15, 48-50. Cf. Chapter One above, 5-6; and Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 64.
[81] *HE* I:14, 48.
[82] Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 121.
[83] Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 503; and Ray, "Bede, the Exegete, as Historian," 134.
[84] McClure, "Bede's Old Testament Kings," 95.
[85] Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 503.
[86] Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 116-117.

eighth-century Germanic migration myths.[87] These three tribes were the strongest of Germany (*aduenerant autem de tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus*) and were also related, according to late eighth-century convention, to the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, continental Saxons and *Bructeri*.[88] In detailing their arrival in Britain, Bede clearly states that the Angles left no ancestors behind on the continent. Therefore, their migration to Britain was complete.[89]

Over the course of Book One, the Jutes appear by tribal name progressively less within the text, while the *Angli* remain commonly linked with the *Saxones* within the action of the narrative. For example, Bede states that the *Anglorum siue Saxonum gens* were invited by King Vortigern into Britain to help protect the Britons from their enemies, and those to whom the British never preached are the *genti Saxonum siue Anglorum*.[90] By Book Two however, the references to the Saxons become fewer, and *Angli* becomes the tribal name of choice. Bede's patchy description of the *adventus Saxonum,* its separation from the origin myths of the other peoples of Britain, and the fluidity of the Bede's early nomenclature for the Germanic peoples occurs intentionally, because according to Bede's narrative, the true birth of the *gens Anglorum* was not in pagan Germany. Rather, Bede sets up a turning point in the narrative, and in the history of the English, at the very beginning of Book Two, by telling of Pope Gregory the Great's divinely inspired discovery of pre-Christian Angle slaves for sale in the Roman market.[91] It is Gregory's divine intuition which gives the Germanic collective their name, *Angli,* and marks them as 'chosen' for the redemption of Britain.[92] For Bede, the origin of the *Angli* truly began with their being *de ira eruti et ad misericordiam Christi*

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[87] *HE* I:15, 52, John Hines, "The Becoming of the English: Identity, Material Culture and Language in Early Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 7 (1994): 50; Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 85; and Wood, "Before and After," 42. Contra: John Moreland, "Ethnicity, Power, and the English," in *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 33-43.

[88] *HE* V:9, 476.

[89] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 6.

[90] *HE* I:15, 50 and *HE* I:22, 68.

[91] *HE* II:1, 132-134. Cf. Chapter One above, 9.

[92] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 303. See also Stephens, "Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*," 4. The reference to Gregory's 'divine intuition', *praedicare uerbum Dei,* is at *HE* I:23, 68. 'Chosen' here is used in the sense that the Anglo-Saxons were selected as agents within God's plan (to redeem Britain and convert Germany). This is not meant to imply that Bede thought that they had somehow monopolised the affections of God. Bede is clear that all peoples belonged to God, hence the drive to return them into his care through evangelism. Cf. Rollason, *Bede and Germany*, 21-22.

vocati (snatched from the wrath of Christ and called to his mercy).[93] This is the only point within the narrative where he notes the special physical characteristics of the *Angli*: *candidi corporis ac uenusti uultus, capillorum quoque forma egregia* (fair complexions, handsome faces, and lovely hair), which suggests that these are representative of all Angles.[94] That he includes this description here is important, because in recording their racial appearance, along with examples of their distinctive language, Bede's origins for the Christian *gens Anglorum* echoes the Classical formula of ethnography, complete with a unique etymology based on Gregory's name puns.[95] Bede's portrayal of the exchange between the pagan Angles and their apostle marks them as a special *gens*, as Gregory recognised immediately; too beautiful to be doomed to Hell, and already singled out for divine favour.[96]

Importantly, the contemporary and anonymously written Whitby *Life* of Gregory also records this encounter, independently of Bede.[97] The Whitby version is a very similar account of the story, which suggests that this was a common story in early eighth-century Northumbria, and displays the reverence which the Northumbrians had for Gregory as their apostle. However, in the Whitby account the Angles are not slaves; instead they actually enjoy Gregory's hospitality and speak directly to him in Latin.[98] This suggests that Bede chose to represent the Angles as slaves perhaps as an indication of their status as pagans, enslaved by their lack of Christian enlightenment.[99] It also shows that Bede chose to include their distinctive language and appearance within his re-telling in order to strengthen his portrayal's connection to an ethnographic formula.

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[93] *HE* II:1, 134-135.
[94] *HE* II:1, 136-137. Note that this is the only time where Bede remarks on the appearance of any person or people.
[95] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 306.
[96] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 48-50.
[97] Anonymous, *Vita Gregoriae*, in *The Life of St Gregory*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968) Chs. 9-13.
[98] *Vita Gregoriae*, Ch. 9.
[99] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 47.

Bede's agency within his re-telling of the story is clear and as Michael Richter has shown his use of Gregory's nomenclature *Angli* was also a conscious decision.[100] Bede's use of the term was probably prompted by his own encounter with the story of the Angle slaves, and in reading Gregory's letters (incorporated in the narrative), which always refer to the Germanic people of Britain as *Angli,* regardless of actual kingdom or tribal affiliation.[101] The idea to use this nomenclature can be seen developing across his later work. For example, when writing his *De Temporibus* (c.703)*,* Bede refers to the Germanic inhabitants of Britain as both Angle and Saxon interchangeably*,* saying for example *Anglorum gens in Brittaniam venit* (the people of the Angles came to Britain) while the *Saxones in Britannia fidem Christi suscipiunt* (Saxons in Britain accepted the faith of Christ).[102] This seems to be typical of his wider usage of the terms until later, in his *Explicatio Apocalypsis*, when he made a decided switch to strictly *Angli* as his standard nomenclature for the Christian Anglo-Saxons from that point on.[103]

It is in the *HE* that the full potential of this nomenclature is realised and the term *Angli* is associated with their special role within British Christian history.[104] Gregory's writings indicate that he imagined the *gens Anglorum* as one people before God. Bede seems to have internalised this idea, and ultimately gave it some sense of reality.[105] For Bede, who knew Gregory's own work well, there is no question that Gregory was divinely prompted to bring the Angles into Christendom, and it is this invitation that opened up the Germanic people to their divine destiny as missionaries of the faith.[106] This election by Gregory, and the subsequent Augustinian mission, not only prompted

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[100] Richter, "Bede's '*Angli*': Angles or English?," 99-114. See also Nicholas Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," *Haskins Society Journal* 14 (2003): 33.

[101] Brooks, *Bede and the English,* 13-14; Patrick Wormald, "Bede, 'Beowulf,' and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England: Papers Presented in honour of the 1300th anniversary of the birth of Bede* no. British Archaeological Reports 46 (1978): 32-95; and Wormald, "Bede and the 'Church of the English'," 207-228.

[102] Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, in C. W. Jones (Turnhout: 2010), and Faith Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time,* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999) 221 and 226; and Brooks, *Bede and the English,* 19.

[103] Richter, "Bede's '*Angli*': Angles or English?," 99-114.

[104] Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 501.

[105] Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 124-5. See also Wormald, "Bede and the 'Church of the English'," 213; Richter, "Bede's '*Angli*': Angles or English?," 101-3 and 109-111. For an alternative explanation of Bede's terminology, see Goffart, *Narrators*, 236; Goffart, "Bede's History in a Harsher Climate," 203-226; and Harris, "Social Practice," 99-102.

[106] Bertram Colgrave, "Introduction," in *Gregory the Great* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968), 1.

Anglo-Saxon Christianity, but also brought the Anglo-Saxons into the fold of papal Rome, and ultimately away from both paganism and the error of Irish Christianity. Without Gregory's divinely inspired intervention, the Anglo-Saxons could never have fully realised God's plan for them.

By using the term *Angli* to refer to all the Germanic people in Britain, whether they were Saxons, Jutes, Frisians or Danes, Bede rhetorically smoothed over the differences between them, and placed them all within a collective identity that was both ethnic and religious. As the narrative unfolds, these *Angli* move closer to orthodoxy, and therefore further along an ethno-religious continuum toward unity with wider Christendom, which, in Bede's vision, would eventually include the *Fresones, Rugini, Danai, Hunni, Antiqui Saxones*, and *Boructuari* of Germany; those whom Egberht sought out as related to the Anglo-Saxons and in need of conversion.[107] Out of his use of the term *Angli,* Bede created a spiritual identity that, like that of the Israelites, marked them as special to God. Also, the special nature of their relationship with God gave these new apostles a mission to act upon in order to bring the disparate peoples of Germany under the protective umbrella of Christendom.[108]

Bede also employed ethnic language in order to describe the other peoples of Britain, and their own relationship with God and his will. This is most clear in Bede's references to British religious identity. In sharp contrast to his depictions of the *Angli,* the Britons of the *HE* represent the anti-thesis of divine harmony because they were out of sync with the dictates of papal Rome. This isolated them in their heretical understanding of the faith, thus they were schismatics and a source of disunity.[109] In maintaining their ancient practices, despite the orthodoxy issued by Rome to the contrary, they denied the updated revelation of their faith, and ultimately denied the will of God. So,

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[107] *HE* V:9, 476. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, 48.
[108] Hanning, *Vision of History*, 88 and 124-125.
[109] For example, *HE* II:20, 204 and V:23, 560. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 99; Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 502 and 506-507; Higham, *Northumbria*, 11-113; and Leslie Alcock, *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests in Northern Britain AD 550-850* (Edinburgh: Polestar AUP Ltd., 2003), 9, 45 and 136-144. Contra: Nora K. Chadwick, "The Battle of Chester: A Study of Sources," in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. K.H. Jackson and N.K Chadwick (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1963; reprint, 1964), 170-180.

maintaining Biblical precedents, Bede likened them to the Jews who denied Christ because of their inability to accept the new revelation of God's will.

Bede's derogatory depiction of the Britons is influenced by what he had read in the *Liber Querulus De Excidio Britanniae* of the fifth-century Briton Gildas, which had also sought to understand God's will, but in response to the *adventus Saxonum.* For Gildas, the Saxons represented God's scourge, and he saw the horrors of the Saxon invasion as God's retribution for the sins of his people.[110] Bede focused on this point and extended Gildas's vision by portraying the pagan Anglo-Saxons not as God's scourge against the reprobate Britons, but rather as the agents of Britain's redemption. Therefore, the ghastly invasion scenario that Gildas describes is calmly explained away by Bede: this rough treatment was necessary, and ordained by God, because the Britons had lost God's favour, and incurred his wrath.[111] In Gildas' portrayal of events, the Romans had brought Christianity to Britain, and it was the Britons' inability to appreciate this gift which made them unworthy of it.[112] Bede expands on this point: because the Britons would not reject their traditional form of Christianity for that of Rome, they are worse than pagans.[113] Because they stood against the unity he advocated, they are in violation of God's will.[114] This severe judgment against the Britons is compounded when Bede also expands on the reproach of the Britons by Gildas, *historicus eorum* (their own historian), that *inter alia inenarrabilium scelerum facta* (in addition to other unspeakable crimes) they had also done nothing to convert the Anglo-Saxons.[115] However, according to Bede, God had special plans for the *Angli*. Although he had given up on the Britons, he did not neglect the

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[110] *HE* I:22, 68-69. Hanning, *Vision of History*, 71 goes so far as to suggest that Gildas was the inspiration for Bede's text. Cf. Nicholas Higham, "Historical Narrative as Cultural Politics: Rome, 'British-Ness' and 'English-Ness'," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. N. Higham (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 73; and Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 49-71.
[111] *HE* I:15, 52.
[112] Higham, "Historical Narrative," 74-5.
[113] For example, see *HE* II:2, 140-142, *HE* II:20, 204 and *HE* V:22, 554. This in contrast with the Picts in *HE* III:4, 224 and the Irish in *HE* V:22, 554.
[114] See *HE* II:4, 146 where Laurence mentions in a letter to the Irish that their Bishop Dagan would not eat with the Romanists, nor would he eat in the same place where they ate. Aldhelm, *Letter to Geraint (C.705)*, in *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (Rowman and Littlefield: D.S. Brewer, 1979) 158 records a similar practice among the Britons of Cornwall.
[115] *HE* I:22, 68. Cf. Stancliffe, "The British Church and the Mission of Augustine," 134-137; and Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 33; and Nicholas Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. Julia M.H. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 221, n.2, and 232-242.

needs of the Anglo-Saxons, and therefore inspired Gregory to initiate the Roman mission to Britain.[116]

The Universal Church

The idea of Rome is historically and conceptually significant in Bede's history – both as the capital of the former empire and as the Apostolic See, where the papacy represented God's will on earth. This can be seen in two very small examples, such as how Bede begins the history of Britain with Julius Caesar's arrival and how Bede locates the island geographically as north-west, articulating a view where Rome, as the Imperial capital and later the papal see, is the centre of the known world and Britain is on the periphery.[117] As the narrative unfolds, Bede shifts the importance from the Imperial capital by breaking Britain's ties to Imperial Rome and thus its relationship with the Britons by describing the Roman withdrawal. After this tie is thoroughly severed, he establishes Britain's new relationship with papal Rome, beginning with the arrival of the Gregorian mission.[118] This helps to undermine the importance of British Christian tradition and strengthen the bonds between the Anglo-Saxon Church and the Apostolic See.

The centrality of papal Rome in the creation of the Anglo-Saxon ethno-religious identity is made most clear in Bede's portrayal of the Synod of Whitby.[119] The decisions made here ushered in sweeping change throughout the Anglo-Saxon Church, and created another sharp turning point for Christianity in England.[120] Devoting a large amount of text to the controversy surrounding the departure between the religious practices of the Irish and British Christians from that of Rome, as

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[116] *HE* I:22, 68. For a different understanding of the people involved in this passage, see N.J. Higham and W.T. Foley, "Bede on the Britons," *Early Medieval Europe* 17, no. 2 (2009): 169-171.

[117] Cf. *HE* I:2, 20; and Nicholas Howe, "Rome: Capital of Anglo-Saxon England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 1 (2004): 149-151.

[118] *HE* I:13, 36 and *HE* I:25, 72.

[119] *HE* III:25-26, 294-311.

[120] Many scholars contend that the importance of this event was exaggerated for an eighth-century audience. Cf. Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 510-511; Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 105-111; and Merrills, *History and Geography*, 236 claims it is given 'eccentric prominence'. However, there is much evidence that Bede was not mistaken in its importance. For example, see *Stephen of Ripon, Vita S. Wilfridi,* in *The Life of St Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1985) Ch. 10, 21 and Ch. 12, 25 and Goffart, "Bede's History in a Harsher Climate," 223-224; Higham, "Bede on the Britons," 156; Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 4-6; and Clare Stancliffe, *Bede and the Britons* (Whithorn: Friends of the Whithorn Trust, 2007), 25-37.

well the resolution of the controversy at the synod, Bede is eager to show the break between Irish

Christianity's influence among the Anglo-Saxons, and the shift to complete adherence to the

authority of papal Rome.[121] The synod provides the point from which the *gens Anglorum* become

converts to the universal Church and missionaries for it, as it allows them to recognise their role

within God's plan.[122] As a result Anglo-Saxon Christianity is inextricably tied to papal Rome, and this

tie became an important way of expressing Anglo-Saxon identity.[123] The verdict of this synod was to

have a resounding effect on the relationship between the Irish and British Churches on the one hand

and the Romanist Anglo-Saxons on the other, creating a sense of anxiety and zeal that shaped the

ecclesiastical politics of the English Church thereafter.

At the time of the synod, Irish and British Christians adhered to their own religious

traditions, inherited from their patron saint Columba, and thus they celebrated Easter according to

the ancient computations of Anatolius, who wrote before the Council of Nicea, rather than the

updated method used by the Roman Church – that of Victorius.[124] This divergence of practice, along

with their Celtic tonsure and baptismal rite, eventually brought accusations of heresy from some,

and by the time of the synod in 664, they were considered by many to be schismatics.[125] As a result

of King Oswiu's decision to follow Roman practice at the synod, those clerics who chose to continue

practicing the Celtic traditions regarding Easter and tonsure were forced out of the Anglo-Saxon

Church. Although Bede emphasises the unity of the Church after the synod, Clare Stancliffe has

shown that there was actually much instability and anxiety related to the divisions over this issue,

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[121] *HE* III:25-26, 294-310.

[122] *HE* III:28, 314-316, V:9-11, 474-486, and *HE* V:22, 552-554. Cf. Wood, *Missionary Life*, 42-45; Merrills, *History and Geography*, 241; and Rollason, *Bede and Germany,* 15 and 21.

[123] Cf. Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 221-247.

[124] The Irish and British also used an 84 year cycle for the determination of Easter which was falsely attributed to Anatolius, while the Romans used a 19 year cycle. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 104 and 109.

[125] The use of the word 'Celtic' here as collective nomenclature for the indigenous culture of the British Isles is used as a general term for this culture, but is not meant to raise assumptions regarding ethnic unity. While its use is problematic, in what J.R.R. Tolkien, "English and Welsh," in *Angles and Britons*, *O' Donnell Lectures* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963), 29 has called 'a magic bag, into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come,' this is not the place to engage with the debate over this terminology, as it has been discussed at length in Kathleen Hughes, "The Celtic Church - Is This a Valid Concept?," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1 (1981):1-20; Wendy Davies, "The Myth of the Celtic Church," in *The English Church in Wales and the West: Recent Work in Archaeology, History and Placenames*, ed. Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane (Oxford: Oxbow, 1992), 12-21; and Smyth, "English Identity," 30-33. Bede's reference to the Celtic tonsure and baptism occur at *HE* II:2, 138 (see also 139, n. 3) and in recording Ceolfrith's letter to King Nechtan in V:21, 546-548.

and that friends and supporters of the Celtic clerics were also threatened with ex-communication, even those in high positions of authority.[126]

Thus, we must understand Bede's portrayal of the synod and its aftermath as cautious, and this shapes his careful construction of this climax in the narrative, so that it demonstrates the Anglo-Saxons' wide and complete acceptance of conformity with the universal Church.[127] Bede's re-telling had to carefully balance this overt devotion to the Roman cause with his clear appreciation of the Irish mission. In some places within the narrative, Bede almost seems to suggest that it was the synthesis of Irish and Roman tradition that had converted England and made English Christianity work.[128] As Henry Mayr-Harting has pointed out, 'the adaptation of episcopal organisation to the tribal and largely non-urban character of Anglo-Saxon society was one which the Romans could not effect; but the Irish were well qualified to do so, and it was in substance perpetuated by Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury', under whose episcopacy Bede shows the golden age of the English Church.[129] Likewise, Bede's prime examples of good Christian behaviour, Aidan, Cuthberht and Oswald, were all heavily steeped in Irish Christianity.[130] However Bede's sentiments toward the positive aspects of Irish Christianity had to be carefully guarded, as certain members of his audience remained hostile toward the Irish aspect of Anglo-Saxon Christianity.[131]

Walter Goffart has noted that the chapter following Bede's version of the Whitby synod was an 'appendix' to the story of the synod, where he details how good natured the Irish were about

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[126] Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 6-8.
[127] See especially *HE* III:25, 306-309, and III:26, 309-311.
[128] For example, see *HE* III:3, 218-221; *HE* III:17, 264-267; *HE* III:21, 278-281; and *HE* III:26-27. Michelle Ziegler, "Oswald and the Irish," *The Heroic Age* 4, no. Winter (2001): http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/4/ziegler.html>; Thomas Charles-Edwards, "Bede, the Irish, and the Britons," *Celtica* 15 (1983): 42-52; Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 2; James Campbell, "The Debt of the Early English Church to Ireland," in *Ireland and Christendom: The Bible and the Missions*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 332-346; and Alan Thacker, "Bede and the Irish," in *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk and Northumbrian*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: 1996), 31-59.
[129] Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*,101 see also, 69.
[130] For example, see *HE* III:3, 218-230, IV:25-29, 430-446, *HE* V:15, 504-508, and contrast with Bede's comments on Egbert's actions against the Irish in *HE* IV:26, 426-428. See also, Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, in *Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. Charles Plummer (Oxford: O.U.P., 1896) Ch. 15, 379-380; Nora K. Chadwick, "The Celtic Background of Early Anglo-Saxon England," in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. K.H. Jackson and N.K. Chadwick (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1964), 334; and Markus, *Bede and Ecclesiastical Historiography*, 7 and 12.
[131] Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 25.

their ousting from the Northumbrian church.[132] Here it is indeed significant that immediately after detailing the ministry the Colman was leaving behind, the very next chapter opens with a report of an eclipse and the sudden outbreak of plague in Northumbria and Ireland.[133] This abrupt shift in tone is no accident, and Bede could have recorded those events anywhere in that chapter, or with similar events elsewhere. Here he is surely offering a subtle commentary on the disruptive nature of the synod itself within Northumbria, although he portrays it as a unifying event for the Anglo-Saxon Church.

According to Nick Higham, the recapitulation and preface of the *HE* were added in an atmosphere of defence because of the reservations of his peers over his overt appreciation of the Irish mission within the body of the text.[134] This helps to explain Bede's unusual amount of detail regarding his sources in the preface, all of which were suitably orthodox (or he claims as hearsay and therefore justifiable as important examples of *vera lex historiae*).[135] Higham also points out that the events listed in the recapitulation at the end of the narrative show little resemblance to the actual text of the *HE* which they are supposed to represent. In fact, it appears that events listed in the recap are largely skewed to undermine the role of the Ionan mission in the conversion of Northumbria, while the role of Roman missionaries is emphasised. Therefore, someone who read through the recap would not realise the importance of the Irish in the rise of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, which Higham believes was done as a defensive measure against complaints among the readers of his first draft.[136] It appears that Irish monasticism was only useful as a good example as

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[132] *HE* III:27, 310-312.
[133] Goffart, "Bede's History in a Harsher Climate," 223, he however sees this as proof of Bede's agency in the narrative, rather than underscoring the importance of the synod.
[134] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 82-86.
[135] Ray, "*Vera Lex Historiae*," 12; and Ray, "Bede, the Exegete, as Historian," 129-130.
[136] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 82-87, and 94. This anxiety is also reflected in the death speech of Cuthberht, in the Bede, *VCP,* Ch. 39, 145-155. Cf. Kirby, "Cuthbert of Farne and Ecclesiastical Politics," 395-397; Clare Stancliffe, "Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary," in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and Community to 1200 AD*, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), 28; Catherine Cubitt, "Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Early Anglo-Saxon Saints," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2000), 43-47; and Thacker, "Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Cuthbert," 119-122.

long as it conformed to the ideals of the universal Church. Perhaps even using Aidan as such an important model was a brave move for Bede in such a climate.[137]

Bede also put considerable effort into relieving his hero Cuthberht of his possible association with schismatics by representing Cuthberht's conversion to Roman practice as absolute, despite his archetypal asceticism, usually associated with the Irish Christianity practiced in both his home monastery of Melrose and in his bishopric at Lindisfarne.[138] Here Bede portrays Cuthberht's acceptance of the Roman tradition in order to acknowledge its primacy, while his adherence to the asceticism of the Irish traditions demonstrates the possible synthesis between the two tenets of the faith.[139] In order to do this, Bede carefully modelled his account of Cuthberht on Gregory's *Life*, altering what he found in the anonymous *Vita Cuthberti,* to show that Cuthberht, like Gregory, was renowned for his ability to balance the eremitic and communal lives.[140] Bede placed Cuthberht alongside Gregory and Augustine as another outstanding missionary, bishop and ascetic, showing that he had the ability to navigate from the Irish tradition, and into the Roman, without losing any of the humility and asceticism of Irish monasticism.[141]

So, it is in his depiction of the synod of Whitby that Bede shows the Anglo-Saxon Church as finally being brought into firm alignment with the doctrine of papal Rome and the universal Church. Eradicating the last vestiges of heresy, the Anglo-Saxon church surges forth into a closer relationship with wider Christendom, clearing the stage for Archbishop Theodore's golden age, where education peaked and order prevailed, creating an ideal environment for the realisation of God's plan: the Anglo-Saxon missions.[142] He details the work of Anglo-Saxon missionaries, such as Willibrord, the Hewalds, and Swithberht, among the peoples of pagan Germany, which mirrors the Anglo-Saxon

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[137] Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 144-146; and Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 25-27.
[138] Stancliffe, "Pastor and Solitary," 21-44, especially 40-42; Thacker, "Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Cuthbert," 112; and Cubitt, "Memory and Narrative," 44-47.
[139] Campbell, "Bede II," 30; and Markus, *Bede and Ecclesiastical Historiography*, 7 and 12.
[140] Stancliffe, "Pastor and Solitary," 28; and Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 130-153.
[141] Bede, *VCP* in Bertram Colgrave, *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*, ed. B.Colgrave (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), Ch. 21, 225-227. Cf. Kirby, "Cuthbert of Farne and Ecclesiastical Politics," 384-389.
[142] *HE* IV:1-2, 328-337; *HE* V:9-11, 474-487; *HE* V:21, 532-553; and V:22, 552-555; Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, 10; and Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 377.

migration from Germany, where they return as Christians to share the faith.[143] From this point in the narrative forward, the Anglo-Saxon Church realises its potential to widen the scope of Christendom in producing evangelists, saints, and martyrs for the faith.

Also, after Whitby, and the shedding of the Irish customs within the Anglo-Saxon Church, Bede's stage is clear for Egberht's triumphant conversion of Iona to Roman Christianity.[144] This peregrination of the Anglo-Saxon Egberht symbolically mirrors the early conversion of Northumbria by the Irish Aidan, and the establishment of Roman primacy within the ancient heart of Celtic tradition is another one of the crowning achievements of the Anglo-Saxon Church.[145] By demonstrating their acceptance of the primacy of papal Rome in response to the efforts of Egberht in 716, it becomes clear that the Irish were not only evangelists willing to bring Christianity to the Anglo-Saxons, but were also willing to accept a new revelation of their faith from these converts, and therefore accept their place within the divine plan:

> *Quoniam gens illa, quam nouerat scientiam diuinae cognitionis libenter ac sine inuidia populis Anglorum communicare curauit; ipsa quoque postmodum per gentem Anglorum in eis, quae minus habuerat, ad perfectam uiuendi normam perueniret.*

> Since that race had willingly and ungrudgingly taken pains to communicate its own knowledge and understanding of God to the English nation; and now, through the English nation, they are brought to a more perfect way of life in matters wherein they were lacking.[146]

This depiction of the Irish casts further doubt and isolation on Britons who continued to refuse the orthodoxy offered by Rome.[147] In Bede's narrative, despite their similar religious traditions, the Britons and the Irish have a very separate salvation story. This can be seen in the contrasting statement he makes about the Britons who:

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[143] *HE* V:9-11, 474-487. Cf. Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 108-142.
[144] *HE* III:27, 310-315; and V:22, 552-555. It is also soon after the Whitby synod that Bede shows the Irish as a people ultimately redeemed as the Irish monk Adamnan was able to convert most of the Irish churches to the orthodoxy of Rome, and not long after that the Cornish and Picts followed suit. *HE* V:15, 504-507; V:18, 514; and V:21, 532. Note that Adamnan gained knowledge of the Roman practice through his relationship with Northumbrian King Aldfrith.
[145] Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 112.
[146] *HE* V:22, 554-555.
[147] Charles-Edwards, "Bede, the Irish, and the Britons," 42-52.

> *…nolebant Anglis eam quam habebant fidei Christianae notitiam pandere, credentibus iam populis Anglorum, et in regula fidei catholicae per omnia instructis, ipsi adhuc inueterati et claudicantes a semitis suis…*

> …would not proclaim to the English the knowledge of the Catholic faith which they had, and they still persist in their errors and stumble in their ways… while the English are not only believers but are fully instructed in the rules of the catholic faith.[148]

In their rejection of the universal Church accepted by all the other peoples of Britain and Ireland, the Britons were alone in their heresy, and in this final book of his history Bede is again given an opportunity to justify their oppression in religious terms.

Ultimately, according to Bede, the Anglo-Saxons proved to be better Christians than the Britons, and were therefore more worthy of holding Britain, because they had turned to the true faith, and were willing to share it in an imitation of the apostles; ultimately carrying orthodoxy to the Irish and Picts, and the promise of Christianity back to their ancestral homeland.[149] Like the Israelites of the Old Testament, Bede's *Angli* are the triumphant heroes of the narrative. They are represented making the right decision at the Synod of Whitby, and effectively overcome the obstacle the Britons represented, and were therefore able to move forward toward within their destiny as evangelists of the 'true' faith.[150] On the other hand, the Britons had not only refused to share their faith with others, but also rejected the next revelation of the faith, and the unity it offered.[151]

The Role of the Britons

As we have seen, for Bede the Britons represent disunity, which justifies their oppression. They are an example of the cost of disunity, and thus God's disfavour, representing everything negative within Bede's narrative.[152] His representation of events can be seen as largely reflective of wider attitudes toward Celtic Christianity, using what Nicholas Brooks has called 'ecclesiastical nationalism'.[153] Our sources suggest that the differences between these two avenues of Christian tradition were often framed in ethnic terms and although not entirely accurate historically, they do

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[148] *HE* V:22, 554-555.
[149] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 240-244.
[150] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 281.
[151] *HE* I:22, 68; *HE* II:20, 204; *HE* V:22, 554; and Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 83-4.
[152] Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 506-507.
[153] Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 233.

reflect Anglo-Saxon attitudes toward the political and military realities of the late seventh and early eighth centuries.[154]

The Anglo-Saxons became progressively more militarily and politically dominant across lowland Britain in the seventh and eighth centuries. In so doing, many scholars believe that they dispossessed the native political structures of the Britons and lived as an elite warrior aristocracy, under whose leadership the Britons continued as a large population of labourers.[155] The continued expansion of the Anglo-Saxons westward and northward into the lands of the Britons had led to years of conflict, heavy warfare and often wary relations between the two peoples.[156] There are flashes of this tension in early British works, such as in the battle between the Goddodin (*Votadini*) and the Angles of Bernicia in *Y Goddodin,* and the depiction of Anglo-Celtic warfare in the *Historia Brittonum*.[157]

Bede is able to use this contemporary social stratification within his narrative as a device portraying the will of God, allowing him to justify their oppression, and perhaps even to advocate it. This can be seen in the bias he shows in narrating the conflict between the two peoples. He sets up a myth of eradication for the Britons, which perhaps best illustrated in the symbolic tale of Augustine's Oak.[158] In this tale, which immediately follows Gregory's discovery of the Angle slaves, Augustine

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[154] See for example, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, Chs. 10, 12 and 17, 20-23, 24-25 and 36-37. Felix, *Vita Sancti Guthlaci Auctore Felice*, in *Felix's Life of St Guthlac,* ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1985) Ch. 34, 108-111.

[155] Cf. Rollason, *Northumbria*, 108; Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 31; Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 189-191; and Higham, *Northumbria*, 75, 99-100 and 111.

[156] Cf. Catherine Hills, *Origins of the English* (Cambridge: Duckworth, 2003), 9-55; and Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 58-62, 69-73 and 114.

[157] The scholarship on this relationship is vast, therefore a small sample on these works will have to suffice. For the *Y Goddodin,* see Kenneth Jackson, *The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969). Cf. John Hines, "Welsh and English: Mutual Origins in Post-Roman Britain?," *Studia Celtica* XXXIV (2000): 99-100; Thomas Charles-Edwards, "The Authenticity of the Gododdin: A Historian's View," in *Astudiaethau Ar Yr Hengerdd: Cyflwynedig I Syr Idris Foster Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru*, ed. Rachel Bromwich and R. Brinley Jones (1978), 44-71; and John T Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneurin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997). On the *Historia Brittonum,* see Nennius, *Historia Brittonum*, in *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. John Morris (London and Chichester: Phillimore & Co., Ltd, 1980), especially Chs. 30, 36-38, 42-47, 50, 56-57 and 61-65. Cf. David Dumville, "Nennius and the *Historia Brittonum*," *Studia Celtica* 10/11 (1975/6): 78-96; and David Dumville, "The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*," *Arthurian Literature* 6 (1986): 1-26. For the Welsh tradition regarding the Anglo-Saxons in general, see Rachel Bromwich, "The Character of the Early Welsh Tradition," in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. K. H. Jackson and N.K. Chadwick (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1963), 83-136; Kenneth Jackson, "Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria," in *Angles and Britons: O'donnell Lectures* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963), 60-84; and Chadwick, "The Celtic Background of Early Anglo-Saxon England," 324-329.

[158] *HE* II:2, 134-143.

meets British bishops near the Severn in order to try to bring them into communion with the Roman mission.[159] Here, the British bishops fail to miraculously heal a blind Anglo-Saxon, where Augustine easily succeeds, thus proving the superiority of his relationship with God and symbolically foreshadowing the Roman mission's enlightenment of the Anglo-Saxons with spiritual truth. Unable to fully grasp the importance of this, the British bishops ask a respected British anchorite if they should accept Augustine's overtures. The anchorite tells them that if Augustine stands upon their entry, then he is a humble servant of God, and only then can he be trusted. Augustine does not stand when they enter, and the Britons refuse to follow him. Symbolic of their obstinacy, their adherence to the words of an anchorite of the old tradition is also symptomatic of their unwillingness to accept the new laws of God.[160] Augustine prophesies doom for the obstinate Britons, which comes to pass at the Battle of Chester with the slaughter of the Bangor monks by Æthelfrith, their physical death prefiguring their spiritual death, symbolising the passing of God's favour to the *Angli.*[161]

Leslie Alcock has suggested that Bede's relish in relating Æthelfrith's annihilation of the Bangor monks at Chester carried a 'wholehearted endorsement of "ethnic cleansing" or genocide.'[162] In contrast, the British king Cadwallon's harrying of Northumbria in the wake of Edwin's death is portrayed as Cadwallon's unholy lust for violence, where he attempted to *ac totum genus Anglorum Brittaniae finibus erasurum se esse deliberans* (wipe out the whole English nation from the land of Britain), rather than framed in terms of his reciprocal vengeance for the expansionist policies of Edwin and his predecessors.[163]

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[159] Damian Tyler, "Early Mercia and the Britons," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. N.J. Higham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 93 has suggested that these bishops represented the kingdom of the Hwicce, and indicate an early 7th century British power structure there.
[160] Stancliffe, "The British Church and the Mission of Augustine," 121-134.
[161] Hanning, *Vision of History*, 80-83.
[162] *HE* II:2, 140-143; and Alcock, *Kings and Warriors*, 136. Cf. Rollason, *Northumbria*, 55-60; and Chadwick, "Battle of Chester," 80-2.
[163] *HE* II:20, 204-205. See also *HE* III:1, 214-215; Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 99; and Higham, *Northumbria*, 111.

British political and social inferiority, and the animosity (or at best apathy) of the Anglo-Saxons towards them, appears to have been a phenomenon across the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, a point also made clear in other earlier and contemporary works.[164] However, modern scholarship has shown that while these sources do portray a very real reflection of the perceptions of the Britons and their social inferiority in Anglo-Saxon England, the erasure of the Britons has more to do with their assimilation than their annihilation. Animosity towards the Britons, based on ethnic and religious differences, was one aspect of this and led to their being largely edited out of the record, obscuring their importance in such historical aspects as the agricultural continuity from sub-Roman Britain into Anglo-Saxon England, the place of British Christianity within Anglo-Saxon religion, and the intermarriage between the two cultures.[165] The effect of these omissions is compounded by the fact that it was these very practices that contributed to the wide assimilation of the Britons into Anglo-Saxon society, and therefore the slow disappearance of their autonomous identity.[166] Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that their language seems to have been largely submerged within that of English, which borrows surprisingly few words from the native language, and the nearly total replacement or Anglicising of British place-names.[167] The use of English appears to have

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[164] Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, Chs. 23.3-24.4; *Historia Brittonum,* Chs. 43-44, 46, 50, 56, 61-65 (NB: many of these chapters have a very different perspective and list many more British victories than the account given by Bede); *The Laws of Ine* 23.3, 24.2, 32, 33, and 74, 398-407; *Vita Wilfridi, e*specially Chs. 17 and 18, 36-37 and 40-41; and Felix, *Vita Sancti Guthlaci Auctore Felice*, in Ch. 34, 108-111. Cf. Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Routledge, 1997), 137-138; Rollason, *Northumbria*, 58-59 and 90-93; Higham, "Bede on the Britons," 154-185; and the collected essays in Nicholas J. Higham, ed., *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), especially Martin Grimmer, "Britons in Early Wessex: The Evidence of the Law Code of Ine," 102-114; and Oliver J. Padel, "Place-Names and the Saxon Conquest of Devon and Cornwall," 215-230.
[165] Rollason, *Northumbria*, 108; Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 31; Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 189-191; Hills, *Origins of the English*, 9-55; Nicholas Brooks, "From British Christianity to English Christianity: Deconstructing Bede's Interpretation of the Conversion," in *Conversion and Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and Nicholas Howe (Tempe, Arizona: ACMRS, 2006), 4-7, 12-13 and 30; Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 58-62, 69-73 and 114; and Higham, *Northumbria*, 75, 99-100 and 111.
[166] Cf. Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 232-237; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 138-139; and Simon Meecham-Jones, "Where Was Wales? The Erasure of Wales in Medieval English Culture," in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 28.
[167] Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1953), 7-23; Kenneth Jackson, "The British Language During the Period of the English Settlements", in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border,* ed. K.H. Jackson and N.K. Chadwick (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1955), 64; Charles-Edwards, "Language and Society," 730-733; Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place Names and the History of England* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1997), 96-99; Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 190-195; and Higham, *Northumbria*, 100-101. However, Tolkien, "English and Welsh," 20 and 31-34 suggests that both languages had profound effects on one another, although the affect of Welsh on English is much more subtle. See also, Duncan Probert, "Mapping Early Medieval Language Change in South-West England," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. N.J. Higham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 234-243. Contra:

been so pervasive in the Anglo-Saxon territories that outside of those territories, in the more remote parts of Britain in the north and west, the lands were divided into pockets of Celtic culture and language; in Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, and Strathclyde. Meanwhile, within Anglo-Saxon England, the Britons and the Brittonic language appear to have been largely enculturated into Anglo-Saxon cultural dominance.[168]

It has become very clear that Bede oversimplified the relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons, and that rather than eradicating the Britons, the Anglo-Saxons actually absorbed them into their own culture.[169] Artefacts from that period actually indicate an overlap of expression among the peoples of Britain, suggesting high levels of symbiosis between the cultures.[170] It is also important to consider that Welsh legend, although late, also records that Edwin had spent some of his time in exile at the court of Cadfan, the British king of Gwynedd, and Cadwallon's father.[171]

Nicholas Brooks has convincingly argued that by using the cultural imperialism of papal Rome, offering an outside identity accessible to all levels of society, and promising peace and unity,

Richard Coates, "Invisible Britons: The View from Linguistics," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. N.J. Higham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 172-191.

[168] Cf. Heinrich Harke, "Early Anglo-Saxon Social Structure," in *The Anglo-Saxons: From the Migration Period to the Eighth Century - an Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. John Hines (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), 149-150; Heinrich Harke, "Invisible Britons, Gallo-Romans and Russians: Perspectives on Culture Change," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. N.J. Higham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 57-60 and 66-67; Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 242-243; and Kalben, "The British Church and the Emergence of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms," 89-97.

[169] For example, see Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 106-107, 111 and 139; Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 149-180; Tyler, "Early Mercia and the Britons," 93; Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800* (Cambridge C.U.P., 1990), 54-85; Steven Bassett, "How the West Was Won," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 11 (2000): 107-118; and Brooks, "British to English Christianity," 1-30.

[170] Cf. Merrills, *History and Geography*, 229; Hines, "Welsh and English: Mutual Origins in Post-Roman Britain?," 88-98; Chadwick, "The Celtic Background of Early Anglo-Saxon England," 323-352; Barnard Wailes and Amy L. Zoll, "Civilisation, Barbarism, and Nationalism in European Archaeology," in *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, ed. Phillip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1995), 26-31; Lloyd Laing, "Romano-British Metalworking and the Anglo-Saxons," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. N.J. Higham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 42-56; Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 235; Brooks, "British to English Christianity," 13 and 30; and Martin Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1992), 54-87. For a general overview of the artistic output attributed to this period, see Jane Hawkes, *The Golden Age of Northumbria* (Morpeth, Northumberland: Sandhill Press, 1996), especially 56-103.

[171] The earliest form of this legend is recorded in the tenth-century *Annales Cambriae*, in *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. John Morris, and trans. John Morris (London: Phillmore & Co., Ltd., 1980) *s.a.* 629. Cf. *Historia Brittonum*, Ch. 63; Nora K. Chadwick, "The Conversion of Northumbria: A Comparison of Sources," in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. K.H. Jackson and N.K. Chadwick (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1963; reprint, 1964), 148-155; and Michelle Ziegler, "The Politics of Exile in Early Northumbria," *The Heroic Age* Autumn/Winter, no. 2 (1999): <http://www.heroicage.org/issues/2/ha2pen.htm>.

Canterbury, as the centre of the Anglo-Saxon Church, offered a religious identity that overarched the ethnic identities of the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and ultimately British.[172] According to Brooks, the irony of the Anglo-Saxon Church was that 'in imagining that English church history began with the Roman mission at Canterbury in 597, they were assisting, indeed encouraging, British cultural amnesia.'[173]

While Bede may have advocated this 'cultural amnesia', which would have strengthened the cause of Anglo-Saxon unity, reconsideration of Bede as a historical source indicates that the Britons were actually very active in the early politics and diplomacy of Anglo-Saxon England. For example, Bede himself tells us that Penda commanded an army led by thirty *duces,* many of which are now believed to have been British, and also vividly describes the alliance between Penda and Cadwallon, which demonstrates both kings' greater interest in eradicating a common enemy over affiliations of religious or ethnic identity.[174] Similarly, we can see that British names appear in his historical record at many different levels of society, such as the lowly monk Cædmon, Cadwalla, king of Wessex, and the humble bishops Cedd and Chad (Ceadda) which indicates that there are many unknown – and perhaps unknowable - stories regarding the role of the Britons in Anglo-Saxon society.[175]

Also complicating this picture is the fact that our extant records are from aristocratic or very learned sources, giving us very limited insight into the language and lives of the lower classes. That there is more to the story is corroborated in Bede's story of Imma, a Northumbrian aristocrat who was captive in Mercia and tried to pass himself off as a *pauper.* Because his manner of speaking gave away his rank, this provides us with some insight into the differences in the language of the common person, perhaps influenced by the low status of the Celtic language in no small way.[176]

Perhaps most telling, is that despite Bede's own protestations concerning the lack of interest among the British Christians to share their faith, it is in fact Bede himself who tells us that

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[172] Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 221-247. See also, Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 124-129.
[173] Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 246.
[174] *HE* III:24, 290. See also *Historia Brittonum,* Chs. 57, 63, 64 and 65; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 105; and Tyler, "Early Mercia and the Britons," 92-101.
[175] Higham, *Northumbria*, 31; and Wood, "Before and After," 45-6.
[176] *HE* IV:22, 402. Cf. Tolkien, "English and Welsh," 28.

Æthelberht's Frankish queen Bertha worshipped at the British church at St. Martin's in Canterbury before the arrival Augustinian mission, about the role of British clergy in the consecration of bishop Chad and about the work of the Briton Ninian as an evangelist among the Picts.[177] Here it is clear that Bede's myth of the eradication of the Britons owes more to his didactic and providential model than a clear portrayal of social reality.[178]

Conclusion

The overarching theme of the *HE* is that peace and security comes through unity. Unity was God's will, and he favoured those who endeavoured toward this goal. The universal Church symbolised Christian unity and brought disparate peoples together, the ultimate expression of which was mission, as it fostered greater harmony of faith among the various peoples. According to Bede's portrayal, the history of Britain demonstrated God's favour for those who furthered this accord. On one hand, good kings were those that mirrored God's relationship with his children by expanding their *imperium* and bringing people together under one judicious and secure Christian rule. On the other, good ecclesiastics acted in accord with the authority of the universal Church, and worked tirelessly to teach and preach in order to bring the people into closer communion with God and Christendom. All paths to true salvation began with the acceptance of the authority of the universal Church, which entitled entry into and unity with Christendom.

Christendom was an empire of many different peoples who lived according to God's will. However, in Bede's history there was a note of discord, as the rebellious Britons threatened to ruin his vision of a united Christian peoples of Britain. While accordance with God's will depended upon the actions of individuals, Bede uses biblical terminology to show this movement in terms of entire *gentes,* binding ethnic and religious identities in such a way as to obscure the differences between

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[177] *HE* III:4, 222 and *HE* III:28, 316. Bassett, "How the West Was Won," 107-118; and Probert, "Early Medieval Language Change," 32.

[178] For more on the British Church's role in converting the Anglo-Saxons, see Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, 70-78

them.[179] Each of the peoples of Britain did have their own traditions and culture, and different ways

of accessing the Truth within God's plan for them, their path to salvation ultimately led to the same

place: the acceptance of the orthodoxy of the universal Church and unity with wider Christendom.[180]

Where the modern reader understands ethnic terminology to a large degree in terms of

biology, Bede's use of these terms was much more mutable: tied to the expression of tradition and

religious ideas, to the loyalty of a people to authority, and subject to change as history continued to

unfold. Therefore, it is a moot point whether all of those whom Bede encompassed under the term

Angli were racially Germanic. Given the large numbers of Britons left in Northumbria after its

conquest by the Anglo-Saxons, Bede himself may not have been an ethnically 'pure' Angle.[181] There

is nothing to be gained in imposing a modern, biological notion of ethnicity onto Bede's portrayal of

religious identity. As far as Bede, Cuthberht, Cædmon, or Cadwalla of Wessex subscribed to the faith

of the universal Church, they were members of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, and were therefore eligible

to claim that identity. Religious affiliation was the only true diacritical marker for inclusion (and

exclusion) in Christendom. A prime example of this can be seen in Bede's story of the British saint

Alban. According to Bede, when brought before the judge, Alban is asked who his parents are, and

what race (*generis*) he is. Alban responds:

> *Quid ad te pertinet qua stirpe sim genitus? Sed si ueritatem religionis audire desideras,*
> *Christianum iam me esse Christianisque officiis uacare cognosce.*
>
> What concern is it of yours to know my parentage? If you wish to hear the truth about
> my religion, know that I am now a Christian and am ready to do a Christian's duty.[182]

As this example demonstrates, it did not matter what people Alban claimed as his own, as long as he

prescribed to the right faith. The use of Alban here, and the fact that he had come to be revered by

Anglo-Saxons and absorbed into their Christian traditions, demonstrates how other British Christians

could be and were integrated into Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

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[179] Wood, "Before and After," 51.
[180] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 274-279.
[181] Higham, *Northumbria*, 75.
[182] *HE* I:7, 28-31.

While Bede sets up an identity for the Anglo-Saxons that was ethno-religious, Christian and Germanic, the Anglo-Saxon Church was not the exclusive preserve of the Germanic people. Important figures from papal Rome such as Augustine, Theodore, and Hadrian are shown making their own migration over the sea to Britain, and lending their expertise to the creation and unity of the *gens Anglorum*.[183] By the same token, the Irish contribution to Anglo-Saxon Christianity could not be left out of the history of their Church.

Thus, it seems very likely that the British who accepted the teachings of the universal Church were subsumed into the *Angli* in assimilation so complete, that there is little record of them – because they appear not as Britons, but *Angli.* While Bede's ethnic terminology is biblical, it is also reflective of contemporary society, where the Britons really were being subsumed into the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. That this enculturation was complete can be seen by the lack of evidence for British Christianity inside of Anglo-Saxon England, and how Brittonic speech in this region disappeared, as the Britons decided to take the language of prestige.[184]

Bede's text was well-received. His vision of a united *gens Anglorum,* and their mission to turn their pagan continental 'cousins' to Christian brethren was not lost on his audience.[185] Both of the earliest versions of the *HE* that are extant, the Moore manuscript, *Cambridge University Library, Kk. 5.16,* written as early as 737, and the St. Petersburg Bede, *St. Petersburg Public Library, Q.v.l. 18*, completed no later than 747, were in use on the continent by the mid-eighth century. It is probable that their arrival there was prompted by Anglo-Saxon missionary networks, and the ability of these missionaries to identify with Bede's text.[186] The many manuscripts still extant from the continent, which indicate the widespread use of the M-text throughout Europe in the early Carolingian period, are highly suggestive of Bede's influence in this context. For example, *Namur, Public Library, Fonds*

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[183] Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 65-66; Susan Reynolds, "What Do We Mean by 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Anglo-Saxons'?," *The Journal of British Studies* 24, no. 4 (1985): 404.
[184] Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 193-198.
[185] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 21.
[186] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 21; and Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 151. The Moore manuscript is believed to have been a direct copy of Bede's own original, written possibly as early as 737, and taken to Aachen by the end of the eighth century.

de la ville II is an eighth-century manuscript that was a particularly early witness to the continental popularity of the text. *Wolfenbuttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek Weissenburg 34,* along with E, *Wurzburg, Universitatsbibliothek M. p. th.f. 118,* are related to that text, and all three were copied on the continent from another Northumbrian text which is now lost, early in the Carolingian period.[187] There is also a fragment which exists as *New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M 826,* written in a ninth-century Anglo-Saxon hand, as well as *Bern, Burgerbibliothek 363,* which appears to have been collected by a 'continental scholar with an insular background'.[188] Another continental version of the M text is *British Museum, Harley 4978,* and at least three other copies are mentioned in continental catalogues of the ninth century.[189] In addition, there are hints of another family of manuscripts at Fulda, from the late eighth-century C-recension of the text.[190]

In addition to this manuscript evidence of the text on the continent, there are also extant letters asking for the works of Bede among the missionaries there.[191] Connected to the use of the *HE* at Fulda, Boniface also uses Bede's Anglian terminology to refer to his own people in his letters.[192] His use of this terminology is all the more surprising considering his homeland is in British *Saxonia* and he recognises the kinship of the Anglo-Saxons and the continental Saxons.[193] He may have been consciously following Gregory's usage, although Nicholas Brooks believes this usage may have been the result of his having read the *HE* himself, or perhaps that this terminology was promoted by

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[187] R.A.B. Mynors, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* ed. Colgrave and Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969) 'Textual Introduction', xliv-xlv; and Charles Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica* vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 'Introduction', lxxxvi-lxxxvii. Cf. Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (New York: O.U.P., 2006), 148-150.

[188] Mynors, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 'Textual Intro', xlv-xlvi; and Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 136-138.

[189] These were at Lorsch, Murbach and Reichenau Abbeys. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, 'Introduction', xcviii-c; and Mynors, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 'Textual Intro', lxv.

[190] These are *Kassel Landesbibliotek, theol.2*, the early ninth-century *Kassel Landesbibliotek MS Anhang 19.5, folio I,* and the St. Gall copy known as *Stiftsbibliotek 247.* Mynors, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, lxv.

[191] For example, Boniface's *Letter to Egbert, archbishop of York* (746-747) *EHD,* no. 179, 757-758; his Letter to Hwætberht (746-747), *EHD,* no. 180, 759; Lul's Letter to Coena (Æthelberht, archbishop of York) (767-778), *EHD,* no. 188, 768; and there is also the letter from Cuthberht, abbot of Wearmouth to Lul (764), *EHD,* no. 185, 765-766 which indicates a high demand for Bede's works coming into Wearmouth. In this context consider also Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 38-40 where his assertion is that Boniface knew of the *HE,* and is thinking of it specifically in his Letter to Bishop Nothelm (736), *EHD,* no. 171, 745-746.

[192] For example, Boniface's Letter to the whole English race, appealing for the conversion of the Saxons (738), *EHD,* no. 174, 747-748; Letter of Boniface and seven other missionary bishops to Æthelbald, king of Mercia (746-747), *EHD,* no. 177, 751-756; and Letter of Boniface to the priest Herefrith (746-747) *EHD,* no. 178, 756-757.

[193] Boniface's Letter to the whole English race, appealing for the conversion of the Saxons (738), *EHD,* no. 174, 747-748.

Canterbury.[194] He also points out that Boniface's correspondents also used this terminology consistently, suggesting that the regular use of *Angli* to describe the Germanic peoples of Britain became common among ecclesiastics of the eighth century.

Of course, it is in its Anglo-Saxon context that Bede's work shaped Anglo-Saxon perceptions of unity and ethnicity. However, early versions of the Latin text are rare in England, and the only M-recension text extant that appears to have remained in England is *British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. xiv*.[195] There are more C-recension manuscripts which stayed in England, and are believed to have been written using Albinus' own copy as their exemplar in Canterbury.[196] Two of these offer evidence of demand for the narrative in an Anglo-Saxon context: the eighth-century *London, British Museum Cotton Tiberius C. II*, and the eleventh-century *Oxford, Bodleian Library Hatton 43 (4106)*, while two others appear to be pre-conquest versions of the text, *Winchester Cathedral Library I, Cambridge Trinity College R.7.5. (743)* and *Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 163 (2016)*.[197]

In its English context, the influence of Bede's text is more evident by the reception and re-use of the text, rather than by its rate of survival.[198] As we shall see, by articulating an ethno-religious identity for the Anglo-Saxons, although a spiritual aspiration in his own time, Bede gave later generations the words by which to express their own political aspirations. Also, by establishing such a work of exemplary history, he gave a disparate collection of kingdoms a catalogue of stories to inspire religious and ethnic pride, ultimately helping to create the kind of cultural unity that his work sought to convey. As we shall see, his work continued to engage its audience on various levels as they applied his teachings to their own contemporary contexts and reworked it for their own purposes.

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[194] Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 37-41 and 44; and Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, 50-51. Cf. Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 122 and 129.

[195] This is a copy of the St. Petersburg Bede which Gneuss has dated to the mid-eighth century, and Lapidge to the early ninth. Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, Arizona: MRTS, 2001), no. 367.

[196] One of these was translated in Old English in the ninth century, and is the original exemplar to the *OEB.*

[197] Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 377; and Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 143-145.

[198] Also important to consider in terms of reception is the theory that the *Historia Brittonum* was written to counter the *HE* with a positive account of the Britons and their relationship with God. Cf. Higham, "Historical Narrative," 76.

Chapter Three:

Bede's Vision of Spiritual Unity across the Eighth and Ninth Centuries

Before turning to the vernacular translation of the *HE,* this chapter will take an opportunity to explore two case studies which used the *HE* within two very different genres than that of Bede. These two texts also demonstrate not only the effect of genre on the presentation and re-use of Bede's models, but also represent the shifting geographical, political and linguistic contexts in which the text was used across the eighth and ninth centuries. In the first case study, we will consider the use of the *HE* in the later eighth century by Alcuin as the primary source for his Latin urban praise poem on York, advocating that city as an Episcopal and royal centre. In the second, we will consider the use of Bede's text in the anonymously compiled Common Stock of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in the late ninth century, borrowed from the ecclesiastical history to form the framework of overtly political and militaristic historical annals. These two texts will demonstrate the looming importance of Bede's formative history as both an authoritative voice and as a didactic and providential model for the Anglo-Saxons, as well as help us to examine the continuity of Bede's foundation myth as it continued to be carefully crafted by these later writers to suit their own contexts and purposes.

The York Poem

The first case study under review is Alcuin's *Versus de patribus, regibus et sanctis Eboracensis ecclesiae* (*The Bishops, Saints, and Kings of York*), written in the later eighth century.[199] Known as the *York Poem* (*YP),* as much as two-thirds of it borrow directly from the *HE* and Bede's *vitae S.*

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[199] The date of the *York Poem* has not been determined beyond all doubt. Wilhelm Wattenbach's assertion that it was written 780-782, prior to Alcuin's move from Northumbria to the Carolingian court, has been widely accepted, although in the poem's most recent edition, Peter Godman, *Alcuin: The Bishops Kings and Saints of York* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), xlii-xlvii, has submitted the possibility that it may have been written from the continent in the 790s. However, while Donald Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism: Alcuin's 'York Poem' and the Early Northumbrian *Vitae Sanctorum*," in *Hagiographie Cultures Et Sociétés: Iv-Xiie Siècles*, ed. Evelyne Patlagean and Pierre Riché (Paris: Etudes augustiennes, 1981), 339 has argued that the poem was written 'probably in the (late) 770s', in his 2004 contribution on Alcuin to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* he amends his dates to early to mid 780s, but has not ruled out a later date. Cf. Donald Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 34-25, n. 76. Although Bullough's is the most recent dating for the poem, there are many reasons to agree with Godman's date of the early 790's.

Cuthberhti to create an urban praise poem of the city, based on contemporary Italian models.[200]

Alcuin (?735-804), born soon after the passing of Bede, was also very active in the Northumbrian church, becoming school master and deacon at York, before travelling widely and enjoying prestige as advisor to the Carolingian court in both an ecclesiastical and political capacity.[201] Having spent most of the first forty or so years of his life in Northumbria, Alcuin would have had access to the same local traditions and a very similar clerical network to that of Bede.[202] Therefore, it is of great importance that when he wanted to teach his own contemporaries lessons from the past, he turned to Bede's *HE* to provide both an authorised source for his poem, and for the didactic and providential model it provided.[203] Alcuin highlights Bede's merits in the poem with phrases such as *Beda magister* (Bede the master), *praeclarus Beda sacerdos… magister* (Bede, that famous priest… and teacher), and *presbyter eximius meritus* (a priest of outstanding merits).[204] He also includes a biography of him which merits a full thirty-one lines, complete with his own miracle, not recorded anywhere else.[205]

In reworking the *HE,* Alcuin frames his poem within a strictly Northumbrian context, written through the lens of York. Bede had not been particularly interested in York, and in many ways he actually writes the success story of the rival Bernician royal house based at Bamburgh, and extols the virtues of the archbishopric of Canterbury. However, Alcuin ingeniously crafts the story to advocate the supremacy of Deiran York. Alcuin completely subordinates the history and peoples of Northumbria to the primacy of this city as both a royal and ecclesiastical centre, under the

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[200] Godman, *Alcuin*, xxxvi. All quotes from the *York Poem* come from this edition, as do the translations, unless otherwise noted.

[201] In fact, Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 22, asserts that Alcuin was the 'architect of the "Carolingian Renaissance"'.

[202] For more on the intellectual heritage of Bede, see Bullough, *Alcuin*, 227-230, and Wood, *Missionary Life*, 44-45.

[203] Alcuin also claims to follow him closely: *posuit quae Beda magister,/ indubitante fide texens ab origine prima/ historico Anglorum gentes et gesta relatu* (ll. 1207-9).

[204] *YP* ll. 685-6, I. 1289, and I. 1547. His reverence for Bede is also recorded in his letters, see *Epistolae* no.155 and 216.

[205] *YP* ll. 1289-1318. The *signo est patefacta salutis* is at I. 1316.

leadership of the Anglo-Saxons.[206] York itself becomes the primary exemplar of unity within Northumbria, representing the synthesis between the royal and ecclesiastical centres, and removed from the regional divisions so apparent in the annals and letters from that period. Alcuin's examples of idealised Christian kings and evangelists demonstrate the power of this synthesis, and its importance in the unfolding of God's plan. Wider Northumbria only appears relative to York, and the peoples of the North are only mentioned as its subjects, ruled by Anglo-Saxon kings descended from the original leaders of the migration to Britain. In telling their story, Alcuin uses the tradition of Germanic migration to demonstrate the power and military prestige of York's kings, but also makes it clear that it is the Anglo-Saxon affiliation with Rome that makes them civilised, educated and brings them into the fold of Christendom.

The milieu in which Alcuin wrote was not drastically different from that of Bede, and we do have some understanding of his audience, because he addresses the poem's audience in line 1409 as *Euboricae… juventus* (youths of York), which most scholars believe refers to Alcuin's students.[207] Because this line suggests the poem was written for an ecclesiastical community at York, we might assume a well-educated audience, who would have been familiar with both local and biblical traditions, and would have made easy comparisons between the poem, the *HE,* and other traditional hagiographical and historical models. However, J.M. Wallace-Hadrill has warned against assuming a narrow audience, because Alcuin was widely respected on both sides of the Channel, in both ecclesiastical and royal circles, and therefore may have expected a wider audience.[208] With that in mind, it is important to note that our only evidence for the poem is preserved far away from York,

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[206] York (*Eboracum*) is only mentioned by name fourteen times within the entire *HE*: I:5, IV:3, IV:12, IV:23 (3x), IV:28, V:3, V:6, V:19 (3x), V:20 and once in the recap. Most of these references are to Wilfrid and his bishopric in York.
[207] (my translation) Cf. Bullough, *Alcuin*, 227-230.
[208] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 87 and 120. An example of this is Alcuin, *Vita Sancti Willibrordi Archiepiscopi*, in *Monumenta Alcuiniana*, ed. Wilhelm Wattenbach (Berlin: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1873), which is dedicated to Beornrad but is known to have had wider application as didactic propaganda aimed at the missions to the Avars and Saxons. Cf. Wood, *Missionary Life*, 89-90; and Andy Orchard, "Wish You Were Here: Alcuin's Courtly Poetry and the Boys Back Home," in *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*, ed. Richard Marks, Sarah Rees Jones and A.J. Minnis (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), 21-44.

and now exists in a mid seventeenth-century collation of two tenth-century (?) manuscripts that were held at the monasteries of Saint-Thierry and Saint-Remi, both presumed lost. [209]

Looking at sources for the period, outside of the poem itself, can give valuable insight into the 'real world' machinations of eighth-century secular and ecclesiastical affairs, and therefore lend context to the poem itself. Alcuin's letters are particularly important, as these had a wide variety of audiences, within both court and ecclesiastical politics.[210] These recipients were often churchmen, of various status, as well as kings and their courts, throughout Britain and the continent, who probably read these letters or had them read out for the benefit of themselves, their brethren, their households and/or their courts. Also important in considering the context in which Alcuin worked are the contemporary 'Northumbrian' or 'York' Annals which Alcuin used as a source for his composition of the other third of the poem not borrowed from Bede.[211] However, the use of these as an objective comparison with the poem and letters of Alcuin is questionable, as some scholars have suggested that these too were influenced by Alcuin, because of their particular focus on York, the inclusion of Frankish history, and the similar phraseology between them and texts more confidently attributed to him.[212]

Genre

Alcuin's choice of the poetic genre has a big impact on the story he conveys. First of all, the movement from prose to poetry naturally lends itself to omission and abbreviation, making the portrayal more concise and much less tangential from the outset. Where the *HE* is composed of five

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[209] Godman, *Alcuin*, cxiii-cxvii.

[210] The extant correspondence of Alcuin numbers at somewhere between 283-285 letters, all of which detail ecclesiastical and political relationships pertinent to understanding English and Carolingian events during his lifetime. Bullough, *Alcuin*, 35-37. All references to Alcuin's letters are from Ernst Dummler's collection in the Alcuin, *Alcuini Epistolae*, in *Monumenta Alcuini*, ed. Ernst Dummler (Berlin: Scienta Verlag Aalen, 1873) and translations from Alcuin's letters are from Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York, C. AD 732-804 - His Life and Letters* (York: Sessions, 1987), unless otherwise stated.

[211] While these annals are no longer extant in their original form, they are preserved in some measure in the *Historia Regum,* attributed to Symeon of Durham, in *Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS.139*. They are also believed to have been the basis of the so-called 'Northern Recension' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (also known as the 'D-version'). Here the version of the annals used will be those from Symeon of Durham's *Historia Regum*, in Dorothy Whitelock, *English Historical Documents (500-1042)*, vol. 1 (London: O.U.P., 1979), no. 3, 263-277.

[212] Godman, *Alcuin*, lxix; Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 349; Joanna Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, C.750-870* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 95-118 and 127-133; and Rollason, *Northumbria*, 15-16. Contra: Bullough, *Alcuin*, 16.

books, each with an average of thirty chapters (138 chapters in total), the *York Poem* is only 1658 hexameters, which is a good indication of the limitations in its range of topics. This shows Alcuin to be interpretive and selective in what he takes from Bede, and can help to demonstrate what motivations drive his own didactic purpose.[213]

The very act of reshaping the narrative prose of the *HE* to suit moral-didactic hagiographical poetry was influenced by Bede himself, who had also written hagiographical poetry from prose in the form of a metrical counterpart to his *Vita Cuthberti,* as well as verses to glorify the holy virginity of Æthelthryth. Likewise Aldhelm had written moral-didactic verses to complement his own prose *De Virginitate.*[214] Bede had used the term *opus geminatum* to describe Aldhelm's two-fold work, which was a genre in which prose and verse were traditionally linked as two complimentary pieces of the same story. This was a fairly common and very fluid genre in late Antique and early medieval literature, and one which Alcuin's audience would have been familiar with.[215] This suggests that Alcuin expected that his audience was aware of the prose *HE*, and that it would have shaped their expectations while reading the poem.[216]

Importantly, Alcuin's work also appears to have been influenced by the lofty language of Virgil's *Aeneid,* written to evoke patriotism for the city of Rome.[217] This connection with the might and glory of Rome is strengthened by Alcuin's use of Roman rhetorical conventions within the poem, such as his appeal to the deities of Olympus (*cives contestor Olympi*) and repeated reference to his Muse.[218] Similarly, his description of York as a bastion of strength and civilisation echoes the genre of

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[213] Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 342.
[214] Godman, *Alcuin*, 247-269.
[215] *HE* V:18, 514. Cf. Godman, *Alcuin*, lxxxii- lxxxiii; Peter Godman, "The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*: From Aldhelm to Alcuin," *Medium Ævum* 50, no. 2 (1981): 215-20; Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 339; Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, 30-1; and Wood, *Missionary Life*, 81.
[216] Godman, "Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*," 215 and 220-221. Alcuin also used this genre most notably in writing his two-part *Vita Sancti Willibrordi Archiepiscopi,* as well as in his *Vita II Vedastis episcopi Atrebatensis,* and his *Vita Richarii confessoris Centulensis.* Cf. Alcuin, *Vita Sancti Willibrordi*, 35.
[217] Godman, *Alcuin*, lxxxix.
[218] His appeal to the *cives contestor Olympi* is in ll. 8-14. His muse keeps him on course, for example, ll. 1078 and 1597, and is sometimes named as Christ, as in ll.747-49, rather than Pan or Phoebus 'that hollow deity' (*numen inane*). Christ is also called 'The Thunderer' (*Tonatis*) in ll. 9, which echoes the language used to describe Zeus.

urban praise poetry, also known as *encomium urbis*.[219] This is a distinctively Roman genre which was being used by contemporary Italian poets to praise the cities of Milan and Verona.[220] In these works, the poet extols on the positive aspects of a city, hearkening back to its rich history, and its ecclesiastical heritage.[221] Having travelled across continental Europe and into Rome and Pavia, Alcuin's use of this style shows his eagerness to link York with other cities and intellectual centres within the Roman tradition, and to stress that York too had Roman walls and Roman beginnings.[222]

Alcuin applies himself to the glorification of the city at the outset. In lines 16-18 he declares:

Hoc precibus: patriae quoniam mens dicere laudes,
Et veteres cunas properat proferre parumper
Euboricae gratis praeclarus versibus urbis.

…my mind is eager to speak in praise of my homeland
and swiftly to proclaim the ancient foundation
of York's famed city in rare verse!

Alcuin follows the examples of Gildas and Bede, and the conventions of urban praise poetry, by first describing his subject in terms of its beauty, fertility and bounty.[223] Then, he makes it clear that York was chosen by Edwin as his capital (*metrolimque sui statuit consistere regni*) and the prime see of the Northumbrian church (*confestim praecipit urbem/ hanc caput ecclesiis et culmen honoris haberi*), demonstrating its long history as both a royal and ecclesiastical centre within Anglo-Saxon tradition.

Roman York

Because it only works with positive examples, one of the effects of using praise poetry as a poetic genre is that it has the effect of intensifying the exemplary nature of the models Alcuin used. Also, using York as the focus of these verses as opposed to the entire kingdom of Northumbria allowed Alcuin to be selective in the details which he applied to the city, letting those details less in tandem

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[219] Cf. Margaret Schlauch, "An Old English *Encomium Urbis*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 40 (1941): 14-28.
[220] Bullough, *Alcuin*, 340.
[221] Catherine A.M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700-1400* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 91-92.
[222] For more on York's walls in the time of Alcuin, see David Rollason, *Sources for York History to AD 1100*, vol. 1, *Archaeology of York* (York: York Archaecical Trust, 1998), 125-127.
[223] *YP* ll. 27-34. Compare to *HE* I:1, 14-16; and Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae,* Ch. 3. Cf. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes*, 92.

with his purpose fade into the background with wider Northumbria. This concision within the text has the effect of depicting a deceptive sense of order and unity within the city of York, and creating a marked contrast with the disorder of his contemporary Northumbria.[224] While eliminating elements of disorder, it also lends the political and ecclesiastical prestige of the entire kingdom to the city of York, and silences any challenges to its hegemony by other important places within the kingdom, such as Ripon or Bamburgh.[225]

This ascription of the wider details of Bede's history to the city of York can be seen throughout the poem. For example, Bede's description of London: *quorum metropolis Lundonia ciuitas est, super ripam praefati fluminis posita, et ipsa multorum emporium populorum terra marique uenientium* (which is on the banks of the river [Thames] and is an emporium for many nations who come to it by land and sea), was adapted so that York is the subject of his flattering portrayal, settled on the fertile Ouse, which *multos habitura colonos./ quo variis populis et regnis undique lecti/ spe lucri veniunt...*(draws many settlers, various peoples from kingdoms all around, in hope of gain).[226] Also, in the *HE* it is clear that the Romans had helped the Britons build the Antonine and Hadrian's walls, far north of York, over the course of many years of warfare with the Picts and Scots.[227] However, according to Alcuin the Romans had instead helped the Britons to build the walls of York as an ornament, to defend against enemies, to protect its commerce and to make it a haven for ships.[228]

While eager to show York's links to Rome, the poem is much less interested in the Roman Empire than was Bede. In Alcuin's reshaping, 470 years of struggles between the Romans and Britons, twelve chapters of Bede's text, were whittled down to two concise lines:

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[224] Alcuin states that this concision is in the interest of brevity (and – ironically - not wanting to repeat Bede) at ll. 15-17, 290, 378, 431, 437-8, 741-6, 783, 1206, 1561-2, and 1649-56.

[225] Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 351. While Bede had referred to Bamburgh as the 'capital' of Northumbria, by calling it *regia civitas* and *urbs regia,* the *YP* is in direct contrast with this. Cf. Bullough, *Alcuin,* 153; Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 129-131; and "Alcuin (C.740–804)", Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, O.U.P., <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/298> [27 March 2010].

[226] *HE* II:3, 142-143 and *YP* ll. 34-36. In the time Alcuin, York probably was a bustling commercial centre. Cf. Rollason, *York History*, 129-130.

[227] *HE* I:5, 26 and *HE* I:12, 42.

[228] *YP* ll. 19-29. Cf. Rollason, *York History*, 127.

> *nam tunc Romanos fecunda Britannia reges*
> *sustinuit, merito mundi qui sceptra regebant*

> for at that time the Romans, rightly supreme
> throughout the world, held fertile Britain in their sway.[229]

He also collapses Bede's lengthy description of the three attempts at withdrawal by the Romans

into:

> *Romana manus turbatis undique sceptris*
> *postquam secessit cupiens depellere saevos*
> *hostes Hesperiae regum sedemque tueri,*

> the Roman troops, their empire in turmoil,
> had withdrawn, intending to rout their savage foe
> and to defend Italy, their native realm.[230]

While the poem shows that York was clearly begotten in Roman imperialism, it quickly becomes the

story of faith in Christianity, issued from papal Rome. After the removal of Roman troops, Alcuin

skips over the heresies and martyrdoms which took place under Imperial Rome, as well as many of

Bede's other details from this pre-Anglo-Saxon period.[231] Alcuin was clearly not interested in the

effect of Imperial Rome on Britain, but rather the effect of papal Rome on York.

In praising the Christianity of Roman York there was no place to describe the Irish influence

on the conversion of Northumbria, and instead the city's conversion is directly linked with papal

Rome.[232] Columba, Iona and Lindisfarne do not figure into the account, and Aidan is only mentioned

in order to demonstrate Oswald's pious generosity to the poor, and thus predict that his saintly hand

will be incorruptible.[233] This complete omission of any Irish influence and clear attempt at *Romanitas*

demonstrates a continued anxiety over the place of Irish Christianity within the Northumbrian

conversion story, and that the importance of affiliation with Rome was still an issue in later eighth-

century Northumbria. Alcuin's position on this is clear: the conversion of York comes through the

Roman Paulinus, rather than through the Irish mission, and Aidan's looming presence in the *HE* is

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[229] *YP* ll. 22-3, compare to *HE* I:2-6, 20-28 and *HE* I:8-11, 34-40.
[230] *YP* ll. 38-40, compare to *HE* I:12-14, 40-46.
[231] *HE* I:2-6, 20-28; *HE* I:8-11, 34-40; *HE* I:12-14, 40-46; and *HE* I:17-21, 54-66.
[232] *YP* ll. 291-301. Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 346 and 351. Aidan is also mentioned in Cuthberht's vision of his ascent into heaven at l. 691.
[233] Godman, *Alcuin*, 291-303.

replaced in the *York Poem* with that of Bishop Wilfrid - the most outspoken advocate of Roman practice in the seventh century.[234]

The gens ventura Dei

The Anglo-Saxons feature as the heroes of the poem, and even early figures from Papal Rome, such as Augustine, Theodore, Hadrian and Germanus are firmly swept aside. While Gregory could not be ignored, as he was fundamental in linking the Anglo-Saxons with papal Rome, where Bede had devoted ten chapters to Gregory and the Augustinian mission, Alcuin only spared ten lines for Gregory, discussing him only as he was relative to the faith received by the Anglo-Saxons in the Roman mission.[235] Paulinus, receives slightly more attention, as the first archbishop of York, but is really only credited with bringing the faith to Edwin, while Edwin is given credit for the conversion of the people.[236]

Alcuin clearly understood Bede's use of providential history, and continued to use the Anglo-Saxon past as a model for contemporary action in the present. Alcuin frames the Northumbrians (within York) as *gens ventura Dei,* and in perpetuating this idea Alcuin hones in on the migration myth. However, where Bede clearly represents the Anglo-Saxon migration in terms of three tribes from Germany, Alcuin instead writes that:

> *Est antiqua, potens bellis et corpore praestans,*
> *Germaniae populos gens inter et extera regna,*
> *duritam propter dicti cognomine saxi.*
>
> There is an ancient people, powerful in war, and pre-eminent in body,
> between the peoples of Germany and the outlying kingdoms,
> who are named rock (*saxi*) because of their hardiness.[237]

Here, Alcuin shifts the migration myth away from the traditional three tribes, instead choosing to focus on the unity of the Germanic people both on the continent and after their migration. Importantly, Alcuin also makes a big departure from Bede by choosing to pun on the word *saxi* in

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[234] *YP* ll.577-645.
[235] *YP* ll 79-89.
[236] *YP* ll.93-234.
[237] *YP* ll.46-48. This is from Isidore's *Etymologies* IX.2.100 '*Saxonum gens… appellate quod sit durum et validissimum genus hominum*.' Compare to *HE* I:15, 50.

order to name his people, rather than relying on the Bedan and Gregorian *Angli.* This is striking given the poem's Northumbrian, and therefore traditionally Anglian, background. His choice to use this witty name pun, describing an object, rather than a clear tribal name, may indicate reluctance on his part to affiliate the people of his poem with any tribe or political structure other than that of York.[238]

This use of *saxi* as a name for the collective of Germanic peoples is consistent with his other usage in the poem: where he claims that Edwin subdued all the *Saxonum populus* and Oswald is said to have been called such by an Irishman.[239] Nicholas Brooks has asserted that Alcuin was implying the submission of the East, West and South Saxons, and therefore Alcuin's terminology here is correct in that sense. He also states that the Irish did indeed call the Anglo-Saxons 'Saxons', so again Alcuin is using the correct terminology.[240] Alcuin also describes the Northumbrian Willibrord as a Saxon in the opening of his prose *vita* of that saint, which perhaps could be explained again by the continental audience, who certainly did call the Anglo-Saxons 'Saxons'.[241] Alcuin's terminology appears to reflect a very sensitive approach to this nomenclature. In correspondence with an Irish or English recipient, he refers to the continental Saxons as *antiqui Saxones*, but when writing to a continental recipient, they are merely *Saxones.*[242]

However, in his letters Alcuin always refers to the Anglo-Saxons themselves as the *populi, gentes* or *gens Anglorum,* even when he is writing to Wessex.[243] Notably however, here in the poem he stops just short of a clear nomenclature for the Anglo-Saxons, despite the use of specifically Anglian terminology in his letters.[244] This perhaps suggests a reluctance to apply ethnic terminology

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[238] The strength (*duritiam* and *durissimo*) of the Anglo-Saxons in taking Britain is a point of pride for Alcuin, who refers to it in three letters meant to goad his people to remain resolute in the face of the viking attacks: *Epistolae* nos. 110, 111, and 153.

[239] On the submission to Edwin, see *YP* ll. 123-124, and for the reference to Oswald, see 482; The Northern Annals generally use *Angli* to refer to the Germanic peoples.

[240] Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 41.

[241] *Vita Sancti Willibrordi,* I:1

[242] For example, see *Epistolae* no. 7. This distinction is not made in his correspondence with continental recipients, who would surely have assumed he was speaking of the continental Saxons. For example, see *Epistolae* nos. 65, 107, 110, 111, 113, 177, 184 and 215.

[243] See *Epistolae* nos. 61, 82, 122, 123, 129 and 189. Cf. Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 121-122.

[244] Cf. Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 41-43. He interprets Alcuin's usage slightly differently.

to them because of its potential divisiveness, or a wider audience than his address to the 'youths of York' would suggest.

There is a more likely explanation however. This use of the name pun *saxi* rather than a more definitive ethnic term in referring Northumbrian Angles could be seen as a deliberate attempt on the part of Alcuin to undermine the Gregorian version of the Anglian origin myth. It is notable that Alcuin does not mention the Gregorian legend with the Angle slaves and instead uses the migration myth as his opportunity to refer to the migrants based on his own witty name pun, rather than that of Gregory. There is no doubt that his Northumbrian audience would have been familiar with this story, through Bede and probably also through the anonymous Whitby *Life* of Gregory, and certainly have would not have missed this deliberate reversal of the pun. This corresponds well to Wormald's assertion that Canterbury advocated the use of Anglian terminology as a way of indicating the people over whom it claimed authority. He has also suggested that Bede might also be considered a Canterbury historian, in that he certainly emphasised the role of Canterbury within his narrative, and it was Nothelm himself who brought Bede the papal letters where Gregory consistently refers to the Anglo-Saxons as *Angli*.[245] Having been born just as the city of York had regained its metropolitan status, it is very likely that Alcuin here is emphasising his support for the Northumbrian based archbishopric, and that perhaps one of his objectives in writing the poem was to undermine the authority of Canterbury in the north.

Not using the Anglian terminology of Bede, in Alcuin's retelling of the Roman mission to Britain, he refers to the people who were converted as *Britanni*.[246] This implies that all the people of Britain were converted in this mission, and throughout the poem there is no distinction whatsoever made between the Christianity of the Britons and the universal Church.[247] According to Alcuin, the people of Britain were all simply *Brittani,* with no distinction between Germanic and Celtic, Angle or

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[245] Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 124-129. See also Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 28-29; and Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 232-237.
[246] *YP* l. 88.
[247] Cf. *Epistolae* nos. 16, 25, 116, 121, 229 and 255.

Saxon. Both in the poem and in his letters Alcuin also does not demonstrate a spiritual or geographical concept of the space related to the Old English *Engla lond* or any other nomenclature which denotes a specific area of land associated Germanic peoples in Britain outside of their regional kingdom names.[248] In his usage, the land is always called Britain, regardless of who his audience is.[249]

The Britons themselves rarely feature rarely in the poem, and serve only to highlight the prestige of the Anglo-Saxons. For example, the complimentary introduction of the *saxi* and the renowned strength they brought with them in the migration is given extra weight by being placed between two unflattering references to the Britons. One of these refers to them as a *gens pigra* (slothful race) who were continually struggling against the Picts, by whom they were eventually overwhelmed and taken as slaves.[250] The next reference is to the delight of the Britons in response to the coming of these superior Anglo-Saxon warriors, to whom they ran *ducti formidine vota/ ingeminant lacrimis* (driven by fear with tears in their eyes).[251]

Alcuin's sympathy for the Britons ends here with their tearful pleas to the Anglo-Saxons, and their desperation to keep their liberty, where he interjects bluntly: *quid tibi plura canam?* (what more can I say to you?) before detailing the next phase of the Anglo-Saxon incursion.[252] It is clear that the Britons in this context are relevant only in their inferiority, and only appear to establish the providential model whereby a worthier people inherit the island. In a big departure from the representations of the Britons given by Gildas and Bede, Alcuin does not take pains to establish them as sinners; his interest is in the worthiness of the Anglo-Saxons, not in the sins of the Britons, perhaps in some part due to the praise element of the genre in which he is working. They are not demonised for their failure to convert the Anglo-Saxons, nor are they heretics, as the Easter Controversy goes unreported (as does the Pelagian heresy). Instead Alcuin's poem moves straight from their pitiful need of help, into the divine election of the Anglo-Saxons (*gens ventura Dei*). The

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[248] See *YP* ll. 22, 88, 123, 233, 433, 455, 501 and 723.
[249] See *YP* ll. 22, 88, 123, 233, 433, 455, 501 and 723 and *Epistolae* nos. 16, 17, 64, 104, 116, 129, 230. Cf. Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 42-43.
[250] *YP* ll.41-44
[251] *YP* ll.51-60. Notably, this is the only time the Britons appear independent within the poem.
[252] *YP* l. 61. (my translation)

Britons are merely a *segnum populum* and a *scelerata gens,* and the only explanation given as to why God determined they should lose their fathers' kingdom is that the conquerors were *qui servaturus Domini praecepta fuisset* (a people destined to follow the Lord's commands), which implies that the Britons were not.[253]

In the *York Poem,* the Britons do not represent a foil for the Anglo-Saxons or God's plan. The downgrading of the importance of the Britons and Irish in Alcuin's re-telling serves to sharpen the focus of the poem on the Anglo-Saxons, lending weight to their presence on Alcuin's stage, and strengthening the notion that the Anglo-Saxon inheritance was the will of God. Alcuin makes it clear that the true history of York only began with the arrival of God's chosen (*gens ventura Dei*) and the consequent end of British rule.

Christian Kingship

In order to evoke an idyllic past, Alcuin borrows many of Bede's models, streamlining and extending them to create even more highly idealised types. One of the idealised types he uses is that of Christian kingship. According to Alcuin, it was the mighty kings of the *adventus Saxonum* who were destined by God to inherit Britain and produced equally worthy heirs. Alcuin makes it clear throughout the poem that kingship outside of descent from these God-chosen kings was not part of God's plan. While this had not been an issue for Bede, it was for Alcuin who was clearly trying to demonstrate the importance of the royal lineage to the success of his contemporary York.

Despite the brevity with which Alcuin describes their sinfulness, he makes it clear that the Britons are fundamental to the premise of divine retribution, established by Gildas and Bede before him.[254] Without their inadequacy, the Anglo-Saxons would not have been rewarded, as it is through their loss of the island that:

> *Quod fuit affatim factum, donante Tonante*
> *iam nova dum crebris viguerunt sceptra triumphis*
> *et reges ex se iam coepit habere potentes*

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[253] *YP* ll. 70-71 and l. 47.
[254] Scholars have suggested that Alcuin is using Gildas as his direct source in ll.41-45, one the two times where he disparages the Britons based on Gildas' own complaints. Godman, *Alcuin*, xlviii; and Bullough, *Alcuin*, 271-2.

gens ventura Dei.

> God's will was abundantly fulfilled: for, by his grace, and through
> repeated victories, a new power came into the ascendant
> and God's destined race began to produce
> from its own ranks powerful kings.[255]

These lines are particularly important, because they highlight Alcuin's premise that the rightful kings of York are the progeny of those original German warriors who came across in the migration, chosen by God for their hardiness.

Alcuin's portrayal of these strong and stable kings appears in striking contrast to the contemporary disharmony of Northumbrian politics. This sense of disorder can be seen by merely doing a quick survey of the Northumbrian royal line of succession across the eighth century. Presumably, King Osred I (705-716) son of Aldfrith had been the last of the Northumbrian line to derive from Ida through Æthelfrith, son of Æthelric.[256] This break in the line of succession, away from the line of Æthelfrith, created a certain level of disorder, and created opportunities for other contenders to the throne. An example is Coenred (716-718) and Ceolwulf (729–737/8), sons of Cuthwine, who was descended from Ida through another line, that of Leodwald. This was a different regnal line than Osric, who ruled between their reigns (718 to 729), and whom Bede says named Ceolwulf as his successor.[257] After the death of Ceolwulf, the succession then passed to the sons of Cuthwine's brother, Eata.[258] This shift in the succession disrupted the inheritance which the descendants of Æthelfrith had enjoyed for a century. It also gave the descendants of Leodwald the opportunity to step from the side-lines of aristocracy to the throne of Northumbria.[259] Notably, none of these kings are mentioned in the *York Poem,* which skips from Aldfrith (d.705) to Eadberht (737-758), maintaining only positive exemplars.

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[255] *YP* ll. 75-78.

[256] However, it is possible that Osric may have also have been the son of either Aldfrith or Alhfryth. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 123 and appendix, figure 6. See further *HE* V:23, 556 and n.1; and Rollason, *Northumbria*, 192.

[257] *HE* V:23, 558.

[258] Nennius, *Historia Brittonum,* Ch. 61.

[259] Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 125-6.

The confusion which had been caused by the shift of succession away from the house of Æthelfrith continued well after the death of Ceolwulf. An example of this is the controversy surrounding the inheritance of the throne by the 'patrician', Æthelwold Moll (759-765).[260] The intrigue surrounding his rise to the monarchy has led some scholars to believe that he and his followers may have engineered the downfall of Oswulf (758-759) and possibly the resignation of Oswulf's father Eadberht (737/8-758).[261] Following Æthelwold Moll, Alhred (765-774) succeeded to the throne, but he ultimately failed and fled, leaving his kingdom to Æthelwold Moll's son, Æthelred (774-779).[262]

If we are to believe Bullough's date for the *York Poem* at the early to mid 780s, then this upheaval may have directly impacted and possibly inspired Alcuin in its writing, and it is no wonder that in the poem Alcuin is eager to contrast this upheaval with earlier Northumbrian successions of order and sanctity.[263] In the poem for example, in the case of Edwin, Alcuin immediately establishes that he was *veterum de germine regum* (from a line of ancient kings), and therefore had a right to rule.[264] Likewise Oswald is the *heres veterum condignus avorum* (heir of very worthy ancestors), and Oswiu *nobiliter patrias… rexit* (reigned nobly over his father's land).[265] Alcuin also stressed that Eadberht was of royal blood by saying that he was *nutritus in ostro* (reared for wearing the purple), that he *capiti veterum diademata patrum* (assumed the crown of his ancient line), and that he *tenuit… sceptra parentum* (wore his ancestors' crown).[266]

In his models of good kingship, Alcuin also places great importance on *imperium,* which in his model is both the goal of, and the result of, good Christian kingship. This political dominance over

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[260] Rollason, *Northumbria*, 181.

[261] Rollason, *Northumbria*, 193. *Northern Annals*, *s.a.* 758. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 126 suggests that Æthelwold Moll may have been associated with the royal line of Deira, and that these possible descendants of Edwin and Oswine were still politically powerful, taking advantage of the weaknesses in the royal succession among the descendants of Ida.

[262] The *Northern Annals*, *s.a.* 765 and *s.a.* 774. Note the skepticism in *s.a.* 765, as the annalist claims that Alhred was from the stock of Ida, 'as some say'.

[263] Contra: Rollason, *Northumbria*, 196-198. Alcuin's concerns appear very realistic, as peaceful succession also seems to have been an issue for the legatine council in 786, addressed specifically in canon twelve. Cf. Catherine Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils C.650-C.850* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 183-4.

[264] *YP* l.90.

[265] *YP* l. 266. Cf. 'Alcuin', in the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

[266] *YP* ll.1273, 1281, and 1286.

other nations seems to almost resemble a type of evangelism, as it expands Christian leadership and protection over disparate peoples and is one measure of the health of the kingdom. The expansion of Christian *imperium* was not only the king's Christian duty, but it also demonstrated the fulfilment of God's will and his favour.[267] This had been a driving issue for Bede, and Alcuin uses the term *imperium* in the same way, emphasizing the peace and unity it brought to the disparate peoples, under the king and Christendom's protection.[268] Alcuin demonstrates this with his first great king, Edwin, whose kingdom is expanded from Bede's portrayal to include the Picts and the Scots, therefore encompassing all of northern Britain. According to Alcuin's portrayal, Edwin is a warrior of the faith who *fidei flammis virtutis et igne coruscans/ frigora bis ternis borealia depulit annis* (fought off the chill disbelief of the North, shining with the flames of Faith and the fire of virtue).[269]

However, where Bede had used ethnography in order to showcase the diversity of Britain and the wide hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon Church, Alcuin demonstrates the power of the Anglo-Saxons by submerging this diversity within the heroic expansion of the kingdom. An example of this can be seen in Alcuin's reshaping of Bede's portrayal of the five languages belonging to the five peoples of Britain. For Bede these were symbolic of the diversity of those peoples being subdued by the faith, and in his introduction to the island of Britain, he states:

> *Haec in praesenti, iuxta numerum librorum quibus lex diuina scripta est, quinque gentium linguis unam eandemque summae ueritatis et uerae sublimitatis scientiam scrutatur et confitetur, Anglorum uidelicet Brettonum Scottorum Pictorum et Latinorum.*

> At the present time, there are five languages in Britain, just as the divine law is written in five books, all devoted to seeking out and setting forth one and the same kind of wisdom, namely the knowledge of the sublime truth and of true sublimity. These are the English, British, Irish, Pictish, as well as the Latin languages.[270]

After this he goes on to explain the origin myths and name myths associated with each of the peoples who were identified with each language. Later, in his third book, Bede also says of Oswald:

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[267] On Bede's use of the word *imperium,* see Chapter Two, pp. 22-23 above and Fanning, "Bede, Imperium, and the Bretwaldas," 1-26; for Alcuin's, see Mary Alberi, "The Evolution of Alcuin's Concept of the *Imperium Christianum*," in *The Community, the Family and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Joyce Hill and Mary Swan (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 1-17.
[268] Rollason, *Bede and Germany,* 15. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, 103.
[269] *YP* ll. 119-123 and 214-215.
[270] *HE* I:1, 16-17.

> *Denique omnes nationes et prouincias Brittaniae, quae in quattuor linguas, id est Brettonum Pictorum Scottorum et Anglorum, diuisae sunt, in dicione accepit.*

> He held under his sway all the peoples and kingdoms of Britain, divided among the speakers of four different languages, British, Pictish, Irish, and English.[271]

Alcuin collapses the two references, effectively crediting that king with the unity of the five peoples of Britain, saying:

> *Sanctus ter ternis Ouuald felicter annis*
> *imperio postquam regnorum rexit habenas-*
> *in se quod retinet famosa Britannia gentes*
> *divisas linguis, populis per nomina patrum-*

> Saint Oswald ruled prosperously for nine years
> and after holding in his sway the empire – for famed
> Britain holds within her bounds peoples divided by language
> and separated by race according to their ancestors' names-[272]

The implication here is that the diversity of the many peoples of Britain were subdued under Oswald's own personal *imperium.* There could be no bigger *imperium* in Britain than that which encompassed all the peoples divided by language, as Bede had meant the entire island of Britain in this passage.[273]

Alcuin's ideas about the responsibility of Christian kingship can be seen right away within the poem, where after establishing the destiny of the Anglo-Saxons to rule the island, Alcuin expounds on his real interest: the kingship of Edwin, where he devotes one-hundred and forty-three lines to his glorious reign.[274] He did this by omitting all references to strife and overstating Edwin's generosity, his mercy, his juridical kingship, and the fervour of his faith.[275] Because of Edwin's eagerness to accept the faith, unlike the Edwin of the *HE* he has no need to consult his counsellors, and it is he who convinces Coifi to profane the pagan altars, instigating the conversion of the

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[271] *HE* III:6, 230.
[272] *YP* ll. 499-502.
[273] Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 2000), 432-3 points out that Wilfrid apparently saw his authority expanding with the *imperium* of Oswiu, so he claimed York's authority over all of Northern Britain – including, Pictland, Dal Riada, Iona and Northern Ireland – in his appeal to Pope Agatho. This may be related to Alcuin's claim for Oswald. Cf. *HE* V:19, 524.
[274] *YP* ll. 90-233.
[275] Godman, *Alcuin*, xlix – l.

people.[276] Although Paulinus is proclaimed to be the first archbishop of York, otherwise he receives very little credit for the conversion of Northumbria.[277] Instead, it is Edwin who is given credit for the conversion of thousands to Christianity (*convertit milia Christo*).[278] In this portrayal, Alcuin has projected his ideal contemporary king onto Edwin.

An even more dramatic example of good Christian kingship is the example of King Oswald, who sweeps onto the scene as the avenger of Edwin, despite the fact that they had actually, according to Bede's text, been rivals from the warring royal lines of Bernicia and Deira, respectively.[279] Because Alcuin portrayed him as an instrument for divine vengeance, Oswald was righteous in both his piety and his ability to inflict terror. Alcuin describes him as fighting with the *firmiter invictae fidei confisus in armis* (weapons of indestructible faith), taking on Edwin's enemies by *manditque roditque* (ravaging and devouring), and *sanguineos campis rivos post terga relinquens* (leaving the battlefield in rivers of blood). However, immediately after this, his behaviour toward his people is in stark contrast, as after *opprimit Owsuualdi sternendo exercitus hostes* (the stern Oswald destroyed his enemies) he enters his kingdom, and promptly proceeds to demonstrate his benevolence.[280] From Oswald's portrayal in the poem could be made a list of all the things Alcuin sought in a king: royal blood (l. 266), mighty virtue, both a lover of and a guide to the father land (l.267), devout (l.268), with generosity and lacking greed (l.269), having kindness, piety, fair judgement (l.270), a terror to enemies while kind to friends (l.272), invincible in war but peace loving (l.273), and of course, generous to the church (ll.274-279). While in life Oswald was a model king, and a paragon of earthly virtue, in death he was not only the perfect king, but he was also a miraculous missionary. Tales of his posthumous miracles bring the people of Germany and Ireland, as well as Britain, closer to the faith.[281] In Alcuin's telling, Oswald's miracles are all related to

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[276] *YP* ll. 148-189. Compare to *HE* II:12-13, 176-186.
[277] *YP* ll. 210. Compare to *HE* II:12-13, 176-186, and especially *HE* II:14, 186; and *HE* II:16-17, 190-196.
[278] *YP* ll. 213 and 218.
[279] *HE* III:1, 210. Cf. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 52-58 and 70. This relationship gets similar treatment from Ælfric. See Chapter 5 below, 194.
[280] *YP* ll. 269-271.
[281] *YP* ll. 455-498.

conversion, moral reform and healing, making him the ideal saint and establishing his worthiness of the amount of lines given to him.[282]

These portrayals of Edwin and Oswald are largely hagiographical types, and difficult acts to follow. Oswiu, the third of Alcuin's ideal kings, was also of royal blood (l.566), fought to keep the kingdom safe from enemies of the church and state (l.564-59), and subdued many realms (l.565) even *aequoreasque sibi gentes hinc inde subegit* (conquering all peoples who dwelled by the sea).[283] However, even the warlike Oswiu had a difficult time living up to his predecessors, his greatest exploit being that he defeated the infamous pagan Penda, and was therefore credited for bringing the Mercians *fidei sceptris et subdidit almis* (under the gentle sway of the Faith).[284] Of course, Bede's Oswiu had been raised as a Christian in the Irish Church during his exile, and was thus closely associated with Irish Christianity, as well as the ecclesiastical rift settled at Whitby in 664, so Alcuin had to disregard a large portion of the king's biography to stay on task.[285] There was also the inconvenience of Oswiu having murdered his Deiran sub-king, Oswine, which Alcuin could not raise, not only because it belied Oswiu as a model king, but it also undermined his firm association of the king with York.[286]

After Oswiu, the only other kings concerning whom Alcuin would have drawn knowledge from Bede are Egfrith and Aldfrith, and they get very little of Alcuin's attention, being only mentioned with events that happened around them. Their failure to expand their *imperium* and propagate the faith may have shown Alcuin that they were not particularly favoured by God, and were therefore certainly unworthy candidates for hagiography.[287]

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[282] Godman, *Alcuin*, l.
[283] *YP* l. 567.
[284] *YP* l. 558.
[285] *HE* III:17, 264 and *HE* III:25-27, 294-314.
[286] *HE* III:14, 256-258. Cf. *Kirby, The Earliest English Kings,* 129-131.
[287] Perhaps part of his reason for overlooking Aldfrith may also have been his Irish connections, including his illegitimate birth, and his close relationship with St. Columba, see Adomnan, *Life of St Columba*, in *Life of St Columba: Adomnan of Iona*, ed. Richard Sharpe (London: Penguin, 1991), 352, n. 350. Cf. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 119; and canon eleven of the legatine decrees of 786, which denies the right of illegitimate children to ascend to the throne in Cubitt, *A-S Church Councils*, 184.

Meanwhile, the only contemporary kings mentioned in the poem were Eadberht and Offa, king of Mercia. Offa's presence in the poem was surely meant to create a contrast with the contemporary Northumbrian kings, as he is depicted showing great reverence for the tomb of King Oswald at Bardney.[288] Offa's actions here are important, as Donald Bullough points out Alcuin actually breaks the chronology of the poem to step outside of seventh-century York to record them.[289] Here, Offa represents the Mercian supremacy both politically and ecclesiastically, in a gesture that is symbolic of his recognition of the importance and sanctity of strong Christian kingship.[290] This being the case, it may also be an invitation to the kings of Northumbria to compare the Mercian king's actions with their own inaction, and the Mercian ascendancy with Northumbria's weakness.[291] This favour for the strength and faith of Offa also appears later, in Alcuin's letters. In these, he is both protector of his people, and defender of the faith, as well as an advocate for Christian wisdom. It appears that Offa represents much that the Northumbrian leadership had lost as Alcuin claimed bleakly in 797 that Northumbria had been:

> *pene periit propter dissensions intestinas et fallaces iurationes. Nec mihi videtur, adhuc esse finem illorum malitiae.*

> almost destroyed by internal quarrels and false oaths. Nor do I think their wickedness has ended yet.[292]

In the poem, there are no Northumbrian kings mentioned after the reign of Eadberht, suggesting that Alcuin found none among them worthy of emulation. This is probably because, after having succeeded to the throne at the tender age of eleven and five violent years on the throne, Æthelred – Æthelred Moll's son - had been driven into exile, and the rule was passed to Ælfwald in 779 who was

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[288] His inclusion in the poem is consistent with dating it to the mid 790s, when Northumbrian relations with Mercia were at their peak, suggesting that Alcuin may have seen Offa's gesture in person, whilst in Northumbria in the 790s. Godman, *Alcuin*, xlvi.

[289] *YP* ll. 388-395: *rex felix onaverat Offa sepulcrum/ argento, gemmis, auro, multoque decore* (auspicious king Offa ornamented the tomb/ with silver, gems, gold and many decorations). Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 346 and 348. Cf. Simon Keynes, "Changing Faces: Offa, King of Mercia," *History Today* 40, no. 11 (1990): 14-19.

[290] Godman, *Alcuin*, xlvi.

[291] Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, 87 and 120.

[292] *Epistolae* no. 122; Allott 46. According to the *Northern Annals*, Offa's ascendency of the Mercian throne in 757 brought an end to civil war in that kingdom. Cf. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 141-2. Also, compare Alcuin's positive treatment of Offa with that of Charlemagne, in *Epistolae* nos. 217, 257 and 235.

murdered eight years later.[293] Three years after the death of Ælfwald, the *Northern Annals* record that his two sons were killed by King Æthelred.[294] Meanwhile Osred II reigned for two years (788-90) but 'deceived by the guile of his nobles, taken prisoner and deprived of the kingdom, was tonsured in the city of York, and afterwards, forced by necessity, went into exile.' Then, Æthelred was invited back from exile, only to be murdered in favour of another non-royal, the "patrician" Osbald, who was appointed king for twenty-seven days before his supporters turned on him and he was banished.[295] Things appear to have been no better under Eardwulf (796-806), when many supporters of his predecessors were put to death by his order.[296] No wonder Alcuin sought to recreate a kingship based on Northumbria's golden past.

The Providential Model

Alcuin's understanding of providential history can be clearly seen in his reaction to this crisis of succession. In his 790 letter to King Æthelred, he warns the king against the sinfulness of his predecessors, but his warnings appear to have fallen on deaf ears, as three years later the king's failure to comply with Alcuin's suggestions brought the wrath of God upon Lindisfarne, in the form of a viking attack.[297] Alcuin's astonishment at Northumbria's inability to understand and comply with God's will is expressed in a letter he wrote to them that year:

> *ecce trecentis et quinquainta ferme annis, quod nos nostrique patres huius pulcherrime patrie incole fuimus, et numquam talis terror prius apparuit in Brittannia, veluti modo a pagana gente perpessi sumus*
>
> we and our fathers have now lived in this fair land for nearly three hundred and fifty years, and never before has such an atrocity been seen in Britain as we have now suffered at the hands of a pagan people.

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[293] *Northern Annals s.a.* 780; *Epistolae,* no. 16; Bullough, *Alcuin,* 319-320; and Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings,* 128-9.
[294] *Northern Annals*, *s.a.* 791.
[295] *Northern Annals s.a.* 790.
[296] *Northern Annals s.a.* 798 and 799. Cf. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 130; and Rollason, *Northumbria*, 194.
[297] *Epistolae* no. 30; Allott 11. The term 'viking' in this study is used to represent Scandinavian pirates and invaders in general, while settled groups of Scandinavian descent will be termed 'Scandinavian' (as a general term) unless the sources dictate otherwise, in which case they will be called by those labels which fit (i.e.: 'Dane' or 'Norse') in an attempt to simplify the semantics of these references, but this is not meant to imply political unity within their places of origin. For more on the complications of this terminology, see Smyth, "English Identity," 37-39; and Clare Downham, "'Hiberno-Norwegians' and 'Anglo-Danes': Anachronistic Ethnicities and Viking-Age England," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 19 (2009): 139-169.

Here he not only cites the migration myth as the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon history, but also conjures an idealised Bedan past when he expresses his horror over the severity of the attack on the church of St. Cuthberht, which was *locus cunctis in Brittannia venerabilior* (a place more sacred than any in Britain).[298]

We have seen in Gildas' model that the Anglo-Saxons are understood to be the product of divine vengeance, meant to encourage the Britons to repent, and that Bede had expanded that model to establish the Anglo-Saxons as chosen by God to usurp the place of the Britons, based on their superior potential to appreciate their divine destiny.[299] With these models in mind, Alcuin clearly sees this eighth-century pagan attack as a symptom of God's wrath, and is sure that the Anglo-Saxons could lose their special place in God's plan if they did not behave according to his will and fulfil his plan. Alcuin's belief in this is reflected in the letters which he sent in response to the viking attacks on Northumbria in the 790s.[300] In his letter of 793, written to Æthelhard, archbishop of Canterbury, Alcuin refers to Gildas as *Brettonorum sapientissimi* (the most learned of the Britons), and through his work it is clear that:

> *…ipsi Brettones propter rapinas et avaritiam principum, propter iniquitatem et iniustitiam iudicum, propter desidiam et pigritiam praedicationis episcoporum, propter luxoriam et malos mores populi patriam perdiderunt… Caveamus, haec eadem nostris Temporibus vitia inolescere; quatenus benediction divina nobis patriam conservet in prosperitate bona, quam nobis in sua misericordia perdonare dignata est.*

> …the Britons themselves lost their fatherland because of the greedy pillaging of their leaders, the injustice of their judges, the slackness in preaching of their bishops and the luxury and wicked ways of the people… We must be on our guard that these same vices do not become established in our own time, that the divine blessing may keep our country in the prosperity which it has in mercy given us.[301]

He says something similar in his 797 letter, to the people of Kent, in response to their rebellion against the archbishop:

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[298] *Epistolae,* no. 16; Allott 12. See also *Epistolae,* no. 18. Cf. Mary Garrison, "The Bible and Alcuin's Interpretation of Current Events," *Peritia* 16 (2002): 74 and 77.

[299] Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, Chs. 21-26.

[300] On the nature of his admonitory letters to Northumbria, see Garrison, "The Bible and Alcuin," 70-73. Here she notes that for Alcuin the attack on Lindisfarne in 793 was as devastating as the sack of Rome.

[301] *Epistolae,* no. 17; Allott, 48. Cf. Garrison, "The Bible and Alcuin," 75-76.

> *Discite Gyldum Brittonem sapientissimum; et videte, ex quibus causis parentes Brittonum perdiderunt regnum et patriam; et considerate vosmet ipsos, et in vobis pene similia invenietis.*
>
> Learn of Gildas, the wisest of Britons, and see the causes through which the ancestors of the Britons destroyed their kingdom and country; look at yourselves and you will see almost the same things in you.[302]

In these letters, Alcuin clearly demonstrates his acceptance of Gildas' model, who applied the prophecy of Jeremiah I:14-15 to his own times:

> Then the Lord said to me: Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land. For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the Lord; and they shall come and all of them…[303]

For both men, the sustained attack of northern pagans could thus be seen as proof of God's disfavour, and the only remedy for this was to return to the peaceful days of times past, with strong kings and pious clergy devoted to God and their flocks.[304] In the *YP,* Alcuin's kings of the Anglo-Saxon past are purely hagiographical, and are everything a *gens ventura Dei* could want in their kings: born of royal blood, fulfilling God's will in all things, expanding the boundaries of their kingdom, listening to the advice of their bishops, while being kind to their people and a terror to their enemies. They were rewarded with God's favour, which showed itself in the expansion of empire and peace for the people within their borders. Their perfect Christian kingship was intended as a sharp contrast to contemporary Northumbrian royal politics, which had fallen into a chaotic succession of regicide, usurpation and political division. When kings failed to live up to the responsibility of Christian kingship the result was divine vengeance, displayed here in viking attack.[305] Whereas a Christian king had a duty to protect his people, viking attack represented the ultimate failure of that duty, where God's will had been overturned, and the people suffered.

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[302] *Epistolae,* no. 129; Allot 50.

[303] *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, 3 ed. (Oxford and New York: O.U.P., 2001), 'Hebrew Bible', 1076. Cf. R.I. Page, "The Audience of *Beowulf* and the Vikings," in *The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. Colin Chase (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 118; and Simon Coupland, "The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath? The Carolingian Theology of the Viking Invasions," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42, no. 4 (1991): 535-554.

[304] Viking attacks were not only seen as punishment for the sins committed in Britain, but in Francia as well. Alcuin wrote of the attacks in Aquitaine as God's punishment in his letter to Arno, *Epistolae,* no. 184. Cf. Coupland, "The Rod of God's Wrath," 535-554; and Garrison, "The Bible and Alcuin," 77-80. Interestingly, Alcuin portrays the viking attacks as God's wrath, and yet says that pagans themselves are from the Devil, for example *Epistolae,* no. 19.

[305] Garrison, "The Bible and Alcuin," 68-84. This message in the poem again suggests a date in the 790s.

The miles Christi

Kings were not the only members of society responsible for the protection of the people from God's wrath. Like Bede, Alcuin understood the importance of balancing temporal and spiritual leadership in order to lend the kingdom stability and protection from its earthly and heavenly foes. This is perhaps most clearly seen in his letter to Æthelhard, archbishop of Canterbury, where he states:

> *Divisa est potestas saecularis et potestas spiritalis; illa portat gladium mortis in manu, haec clavem vitae in lingua.*
>
> The secular power is separate from the spiritual power: the former bears the sword of death in its hand, the latter the key of life in its tongue.[306]

In the poem, he balances strong Christian kingship with pious bishops who enriched their people with spiritual guidance and protection. In representing York as the symbol of both royal and ecclesiastical authority, Alcuin mirrored his portrayal of righteous kings with equally strong and holy bishops, who also provided spiritual guidance and protected the people from damnation. They were the soldiers of Christ (*miles Christi*) and were charged with the winning and preserving of souls for Christendom. In the poem, Alcuin creates a seamless picture of the faith among the people by omitting the complexities and apostasies in Northumbria as cited by Bede, and making it appear that York had held the pallium since it was sent to Paulinus in 627.[307]

Although the figure of Wilfrid had been contentious and potentially divisive for Northumbria, Alcuin was not about to ignore his pivotal role as bishop in establishing the importance of York within the Roman church.[308] John Blair has suggested that Wilfrid was second only to Theodore in establishing educational and liturgical reform in the seventh century, with huge implications for the role of York in educating the north.[309] This being an important part of Alcuin's agenda, Wilfrid emerges from the account as a zealous missionary, who *per locua perpetuae quapropter multa salutis/ gentibus et populis doctrinae lumina sparsit* (dispersed the light and

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[306] *Epistolae* no. 17, Allot 48.
[307] This ignores the breakdown of the bishopric in the chaos and apostasy that followed the death of Edwin, so that Paulinus was forced to escape to Kent without ever receiving the pallium: *HE* II:18, 196-198 and *HE* II:20, 204. York did not regain status as an archbishopric until 735 under Egberht.
[308] Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 347.
[309] John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 94.

doctrine of eternal salvation through many places, nations, and peoples).[310] His conversion of the

South Saxons in 672 is recorded faithfully from Bede, and neatly conflated with his mission to the

Frisians in 704.[311] Alcuin gives Wilfrid credit for converting thousands (*milia*) of Frisians to

Christianity, and while on the continent, he is said to have *quocumque pedem movit, pia semina*

sevit (sown the seeds of piety wherever his feet took him), although Alcuin does not state who

exactly he converted.[312]

Juxtaposed with his account of Wilfrid is Cuthberht, whose holiness was manifest from

childhood, as he *angelicam Cuthberctus agens in corpora vitam* (led the life of an angel while still on

earth) and he appears as both preacher and anchorite, in line with Gregory's ideal and Bede's

model.[313] While Alcuin obliquely states that many people, including the king, pleaded with Cuthberht

to leave his hermitage in order to take over the bishopric, the poet neatly avoids mentioning that

the bishopric Cuthberht was returning to was not at York, but Lindisfarne, where he was bishop from

684 to 686, according to both the *HE* and his *vitae*.[314] Here Alcuin links Lindisfarne to York, as if they

were one in the same and disassociates Cuthberht from any controversy over his liturgy and

practice, while undermining Lindisfarne's exclusive claim on the saint.[315]

Alcuin balances the imperial destiny of his kings with a missionary destiny for the clergy,

both of which were rooted in Bede's text. Mission had been a driving issue in the *HE,* and

demonstrated the true potential of the Anglo-Saxons in fulfilling God's will.[316] The importance of

missionary work also drove Alcuin's text, and caused him to make his one diversion from his strict

focus on York within the poem. In retelling the stories of the missionaries Willibrord (ll. 1037-47), the

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[310] *YP* ll. 581-2. Compare to *HE* IV:13.
[311] *YP* ll. 583-605 and *HE* IV:13 and V:19. Bede and Stephen both make it clear that he was driven to land in Frisia by the west wind on his way to Rome.
[312] *YP* ll. 608 and 610.
[313] *YP* ll. 647-648 and 664-665
[314] *YP* ll. 666-667. Cf. Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 347.
[315] For more on the probable controversy surrounding the cult of Cuthberht, see Kirby, "Cuthbert of Farne and Ecclesiastical Politics," 393-397; Cubitt, "Memory and Narrative," 43-47; and Stancliffe, "Pastor and Solitary," 28 and 40-42; and Chapter Two, pp. 34-38 above.
[316] See especially *HE* V:9-15 and 22-23.

Hewalds (ll. 1044-1071) and Swithberht and Wira (l. 1074). Alcuin proudly echoes Bede in noting

that:

> *Nec gens clarorum genetrix haec nostra virorum,*
> *quos genuit soli sibimet tunc ipsa tenebat,*
> *intra forte sui concludens viscera regni,*
> *sed procul ex illis multos trans aequora misit,*
> *gentibus ut reliquis praeferrent semina vitae.*

> this people of ours, mother of famous men,
> did not keep her children for herself,
> nor did she hold them within the confines of her own kingdom,
> but sent many of them afar across the seas,
> bearing the seeds of life to other peoples.[317]

In swerving briefly away from York, Alcuin reveals his pride and his understanding of the Anglo-Saxon missionary destiny as demonstrated by Bede.[318]

Alcuin also uses his exemplars to emphasise the power of providence in the lives of men. While skipping over many of Bede's details, Alcuin makes plenty of room in the account to be specific about the miracles that surrounded Wilfrid's death, and devotes many lines to those of Cuthberht, where he faithfully follows Bede's account of the saint's miracles, after which he refers the reader to Bede for even more.[319] John (of Beverly) also figures very prominently, with his life and miracles garnering as many as one-hundred and thirty-one lines of text, and the miraculous lives of the anchorites Balthere and Echa are also detailed in order to demonstrate God's favour for the humble and ascetic.[320] The inclusion of the anchorites helps to provide a counter balance to the prestige and authority of York's bishops, reminding the audience of the importance of celibacy and prophecy in the building of York's esteemed heritage, as well as providing contemporary evidence for the continued anchoritic spirituality displayed by Cuthberht in Bede's work.[321] Also included in

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[317] *YP,* ll. 1008-1012.
[318] Cf. Rollason, *Bede and Germany,* 21-22; and Wood, *Missionary Life*, 42-44.
[319] *YP* ll. 614-643, and ll. 688-740. Bede's prose and metrical *vitae* of the saint were used interchangeably for these miracles.
[320] *YP* ll.1084-1215. Compare to *HE* V:2. Balthere: ll. 1319-1387, and Echa: ll. 1388-1393. Again, none of these men were actually from York, but they appear so in the poem.
[321] Godman, *Alcuin*, liv-lvii.

the account are Æthethryth's life and miracles, the miraculous story of Imma, and the visions of Drythelm.[322]

However, only Alcuin's own teacher and bishop, Ælberht, provides a reasonable episcopal counterweight to the lengthy portrayal of King Oswald.[323] In Alcuin's portrayal of Ælberht *sapiens* can be seen all the things that Alcuin expected from an archbishop:

> *Vir bonus et iustus, largus, pius atque benignus,*
> *catholicae fidei fautor, praeceptor, amator,*
> *ecclesiae rector, doctor, defensor, alumnus,*
> *iustitiae, cultor, legis tuba, praeco salutis,*
> *spes inopum, orphanisque pater, solator egentum,*
> *trux rigidis, blandusque bonis durusque superbis,*
> *fortis in adversis, humilis fuit inque secundis,*
> *mente sagax, non ore loquax, sed stenuus actu.*
> *Cui quantum crevit cumulati culmen honoris,*
> *tantum mens humili sese pietate subegit.*

> He was a good and just man, generous, devout, and kind,
> a pillar, teacher, and lover of the Catholic faith,
> the leader and master of his church, its protector and son,
> a lover of justice, a clarion of the law, a herald of salvation,
> hope of the poor, father to orphans, comforter of the needy,
> strong in adversity and humble in good fortune,
> stern to the hardened, gentle to the good, harsh to the proud,
> of discerning intellect, not wordy in speech, but energetic to
> act; the greater and higher his honours grew,
> the more he humbled himself with lowly pride.[324]

It is in these lines that we find Alcuin's list of all those things he found most appropriate for a bishop, and it is this list of favourable qualities which made Ælberht worthy of inclusion in his hagiographical sketch.

In his letters Alcuin also makes it clear that bishops had a duty to lend unity to Christendom, using the faith to bind Christians against their enemies.[325] They were responsible for the spiritual health of the people, and were required to help protect them from sin and suffering. Alcuin's early letters to the Northumbrian clerics invoked images of soldiers for Christ, encouraging the clergy to

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[322] On *Æthelthryth*, see ll. 753-780 and *HE* IV:19-20, on Imma, ll. 789-835 and *HE* IV:22, and on Drythelm ll.876-1007 and *HE* V:12.
[323] Oswald features in 263 lines, whereas Ælberht features in 201 lines.
[324] *YP* ll. 1398-1407.
[325] For example, *Epistolae* nos. 19, 20, 21, and 255.

set a good example. However, later letters instead tend to highlight the contrast between his description of the ideal, as represented by Ælberht, and the reality of late eighth-century ecclesiastical politics. Most likely, these idealised models were meant as a message to Eanbald II, archbishop of York (796-c.803) who was known to be involved in underhanded dynastic politics.[326] Letters to Eanbald expressed Alcuin's frustration with his lack of commitment, and overweening pride, the example of Ælberht was perhaps intended to be particularly poignant for Eanbald, as he and Alcuin both had been his pupils.[327]

Political and Ecclesiastical Harmony

It is in Alcuin's portrayal of the partnership between Bishop Egberht and King Eadberht that Alcuin's highest expectations for both king and bishop meet. His account of these brothers is given almost simultaneously, their positive traits given side by side with very little distinction between the one and the other. This partnership between Episcopal and royal models was highly idealised by Alcuin, and can be summarised in these two lines: *fortis hic, ille pius; hic strenuus, ille benignus/ germanae pacis servants iura vicissim, ex alio frater felix adiutus uterque* (the one [Eadberht] was powerful and energetic, the other [Egberht] devout and/ kindly, both lived in peace together as kinsmen should: two brothers helping one another gladly).[328] They were the epitome of what Alcuin had in mind for his city.[329] In depicting these brothers, Alcuin provides a picture of the ultimate in political and ecclesiastical harmony.

It appears that Alcuin tried to create this partnership between the clergy and his kings in his own time, and it is possible that the *York Poem* was written in response to his relationship with Æthelred of Northumbria in the early 790s. His letters indicate that he had offered sage advice repeatedly to the king, hoping to coax him into toward more Christian behaviour during his stay in Northumbria in the 790s.[330] In his letter of 791, it is clear that Alcuin saw himself as a guide for the

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[326] Cf.*YP* l. 1516; and Rollason, *Northumbria*, 195.
[327] *Epistolae* no. 114. Cf. *Epistolae* nos. 116 and 232.
[328] *YP* l. 1282-1284.
[329] *YP* l. 1287.
[330] Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 127-8. This again suggests that he may have written the *YP* in the 790s.

king, however by 793 it appears that his resolve had turned to frustration in that the king's failure to heed his advice had brought the wrath of God upon the church of Lindisfarne. It seems clear that by 796, Alcuin instead turned his attention to Offa, in hopes that the authority and Christianity of that king would prevail against the disorder of sin.[331]

Alcuin advocated co-operation between these two orders as a way to perpetuate peace within Christendom.[332] The harmony experienced under the brothers Eadberht and Egberht was the ideal, and was set as the ultimate example of how peaceful York should be. Alcuin's belief in the importance of a good relationship between the Church and the King is further evidenced by his involvement in the legatine council of 786, its decrees, and in his later role as King Ælfwald's representative.[333] With its advocacy for peace and the acceptance of Episcopal authority, Catherine Cubitt has shown that the edicts of the legatine council form a 'practical, prose counterpart to his [Alcuin's] poetic description in his poem on York of the 'tempora felicia' of Archbishop Egberht's and King Eadberht's rule of Northumbria, when each fulfilled his duties in harmony with the other.'[334] Although these synods were conducted under the auspices of papal legates, the decisions made there were directed at both clergy and laity, with edicts one through ten being addressed to the clergy, and eleven through twenty to the laity. Eleven to fourteen were addressed to the leadership of the English kingdoms in particular, subjecting them to the power of their bishops. The council attempted to legislate harmony between the ecclesiastical and secular leadership by establishing the sanctity of the king and the authority of Pope Gregory.[335]

The Ideal of Northumbrian Unity

Bullough has suggested that the cooperation of the ecclesiastical and secular spheres represented in the *York Poem* was indeed a high point in Northumbria's history, if seen in comparison to the

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[331] *Epistolae,* no. 122. Another example of his intention to create a partnership with the kings of Northumbria are in his letters to Osbald, where he encouraged the king away from sin and ambition, and later pleads with him to go to a monastery in order to deflect and atone the sin and disorder he had cultivated during his reign. *Epistolae,* nos. 118, and 109.
[332] Cf. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, 103-104.
[333] Cubitt, *A-S Church Councils*, 198-226. Contra: Story, *Carolingian Connections*, 63-64.
[334] Cubitt, *A-S Church Councils*, 175-6.
[335] Cubitt, *A-S Church Councils*, 153-9 and 166-7.

disorder that followed, as opposing dynasties wrestled with one another for control of the kingdom.[336] What Wilfrid had effectively begun, and what was continued in the partnership between Eadberht and Egberht was a power shift away from Bamburgh and Lindisfarne to the city of York, as a centre for both secular and ecclesiastical politics. In the poem Alcuin advocates that shift and demonstrates the worthiness of York as both an ecclesiastical and royal centre over the contentious northern centres of power because of its ties to the heritage of Rome and as the seat of both the archbishopric and Northumbria's earliest Christian kings.[337] This poem also inspires a sense of patriotism toward the city of York, and was probably a conscious attempt on the part of Alcuin to raise the prestige of the archbishopric of York in relation to that of Canterbury. In promoting it as both archbishopric and royal centre, Alcuin was also advocating unity between the spiritual and secular spheres, and seems to suggest that this unity is imperative in fulfilling the will of God and keeping his favour. The peace of the realm depended on both ecclesiastical and royal leadership to set good examples for the kingdom. It was only once the in-fighting ceased that the kingdom could find peace, and set about fulfilling God's will: expanding Christendom and winning converts to it.

Alcuin presented York as an unaltered ecclesiastical and political unit, with a long heritage extending back to Imperial Rome. According to the poem, it was the combined strength of the Anglo-Saxon Germanic heritage and the enlightenment they gained through their relationship with papal Rome which made the Anglo-Saxons uniquely qualified to rule this bastion of power and civilisation. Using Bede's history and his own knowledge for models of ideal behaviour, Alcuin used praise poetry to further mould historical models into hagiographical types. This representation of the unity, Christianity and prestige of York creates a striking contrast with the reality of contemporary Northumbria, a didactic point that would have been evident to his audience.

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[336] Not, he suggests, Bede's 'Golden Age' of Northumbria, but 'at least it was a Silver Age compared to what followed,' Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 348. See also, *Epistolae* no. 17; Rollason, *Northumbria*, 193; and Bullough, *Alcuin*, 134.
[337] Bullough, "Hagiography as Patriotism," 346.

Alcuin clearly connected with Bede's representation of providential history, and it frames his portrayal of past. In Bede's history, God had chosen the Anglo-Saxons not just to punish the Britons for their failure as a Christian people, but also for their superior potential in realising and expanding the faith.[338] This representation had become one of relative historical stability when Alcuin inherited it, and he adapted it to suit his own didactic purpose. He used the *adventus Saxonum* as the genesis of his people and York as the pinnacle of the peace they established, and the Christianity they were destined to perpetuate. However, history continued to inform the present and the 793 viking attack on Lindisfarne was a clear indication of Northumbria's failure to fulfil the Christian potential of their Bedan ancestors. History taught that the sins of the people would be punished, and therefore the Anglo-Saxons were in danger of losing the island in a repetition of the pagan invasion that had begun their story in Britain. The *York Poem* was meant to inspire the Northumbrians to recognise the inheritance given to them by God at the *adventus,* and to continue the work of their ancestors in fulfilling the Anglo-Saxon mission within God's plan, being *milites Christi* expanding the empire of Christendom.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

The second case study in this chapter will consider Bede's message of unity in a late ninth-century context by consideration of its use by King Ælfred (871-899) and in the wider Ælfredian milieu of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (hereafter *ASC). *This is a context firmly grounded in the Bedan spiritual ideal of a united *gens Anglorum,* and in the exemplary models that he had established for emulation. This study will first consider briefly Bede's importance in shaping King Ælfred's vision of Christian kingship and how the *ASC* was used to both support that model and to demonstrate God's favour in this very different context. However, it will focus on the ways in which Bede's ecclesiastical history informed the presentation of the politically motivated and annalistic chronicle, and how this generic shift shaped its use for an audience outside of ecclesiastical and court politics in order to both record history and to evoke patriotism at both a regional and a more 'national' level. Here, the focus will be

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[338] Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, especially Chs. 22 and 24.

on the Common Stock of the *ASC* in order to explore Bede's exemplary models in a political context where spiritual unity was pressed to represent political reality in a very different political, geographical and generic context, both as a historical record, and as a political tool in the late ninth century.[339]

Historical Background

Ælfred's Wessex was a far remove from the eighth-century Northumbria known to Bede and Alcuin. By the late ninth century, Northumbria, East Anglia, Essex and the eastern portion of Mercia were ruled by a largely Scandinavian aristocracy. The vikings which had so distressed Alcuin had continued their piracy, sweeping into these kingdoms over the very late eighth and ninth centuries. Over this period they also slowly began to settle, ultimately replacing much of the Anglo-Saxon ruling structures in these kingdoms. This left Wessex and western Mercia as the only remaining kingdoms with Anglo-Saxon kings to stand against further incursion.[340] In the remaining lands of the Anglo-Saxons*,* the power base had shifted southward and in the ninth century it was Wessex that claimed hegemony over most of southern Britain, including western Mercia, Kent, Cornwall and much of Wales. Therefore that part of Anglo-Saxon England which was not controlled by the Scandinavians was effectively ruled by a singularly strong Christian kingship which had the military and political will to unite the Anglo-Saxons in an alliance against the encroachment of the Scandinavians over what it saw as 'Anglo-Saxon' lands, and to extend power and protection over Cornwall and Southern Wales.[341]

The West Saxon royal dynasty needed the support of the people it claimed to rule in order to stand against the viking incursion, both militarily and financially. One way in which it garnered this

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[339] All references to the *ASC* and the Common Stock will come from the A-version of the *ASC,* as it appears in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, Vol. 3, MS. A*, ed. Janet M. Bately (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1986) with translations from *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. Michael Swanton (London J.M. Dent, 1996) unless otherwise stated.

[340] For a general overview of the creation of what later became known as the 'Danelaw', see Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 122-124; and Cyril Hart, *The Danelaw* (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), 3-19. For specifics on the borders of the Danelaw and the debate involved, see David Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992), 19-23; and Hart, *The Danelaw*, 117-123.

[341] Pratt, *Political Thought*, 105-106. Cf. Wendy Davies, "Alfred's Contemporaries: Irish, Welsh, Scots and Breton," in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Century Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 333-337.

support was by invoking a sense of solidarity among the Anglo-Saxons and objectifying their enemies.[342] The West Saxon leadership found the seeds of a united *Angelcynn* in the ideas of Bede and used them to help foster a sense of solidarity across Anglo-Saxon England by drawing on the shared historical traditions and shared experiences of the Anglo-Saxons.[343]

Christian Kingship

While Bede had written the *HE* to advocate Christian unity in a time of schism and possible apostasy and Alcuin had written in its aftermath, by the ninth century deep and widespread Christianity was a reality for the Anglo-Saxons, and it was this link with Christendom that could be called upon to separate them from their adversaries. Through this shared Christianity, Bede's vision for the spiritual unity of Anglo-Saxon England had the potential to move forward. In writing about an idealised Christian society, Bede had been persistent and clear about the importance of strong kingship, and we have seen how he balanced the piety of Christian kings with *imperium* - military and political success.[344] Bede's kings were representative of their people and therefore had a particular responsibility for providing a strong moral example, as well as guidance and protection, in both the material and heavenly worlds.[345] Because the relationship between God and his people was mediated by the king, and because God was seen to use retribution for offenses, it was the king's duty to ensure their security by guiding them into a good relationship with God and away from divine retribution.[346]

King Ælfred was in a position to emulate the royal model that Bede had advocated and use that model to further define Anglo-Saxon kingship.[347] He demonstrated his belief in God's favour for

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[342] Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 373. For more on the unified efforts of Mercia and Wessex in fighting the Welsh, see *ASC s.a.* 757; Asser, *Vita Ælfredi Regis Angul Saxonum*, in *Asser's Life of King Alfred, together with the Annals of St. Neots erroneously ascribed to Asser* ed. William Henry Stevenson (Oxford: O.U.P., 1959) Chs. 7 and 9; and Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 122, 141 and 150-151; see also 122-123 for the role of the Scandinavian incursion in the loss of Mercian hegemony.
[343] Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 25; and Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 153. See also, Asser, *Vita Ælfredi,* Ch. 76
[344] See Chapter Two, pp. 22-23 above.
[345] Judith McClure, "Bede's Old Testament Kings," 90-1.
[346] Pauline Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London and New York: Hodden Arnold, 1989), 5; and Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 71-2.
[347] Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 519-523; and Wormald, "Bede and the 'Church of the English'," 217-218. Contra: Pratt, *Political Thought*, 6.

the Anglo-Saxons and his commitment to recapturing that favour in the preface to his translation of

Gregory's *Pastoral Care.* Here he stresses a Bedan inspired tradition of Anglo-Saxon unity:

> *…ðe cuðan hate ðæt me com swiðe oft on gemynd, hwelce wiotan iu wæron giond Angelcynn, ægðer ge godcundra hada ge worldcundra; ond hu gesæliglica tida ða wæron giond Angelcynn, ond hu ða kyningas ðe ðone onwald hæfdon ðæs folces Gode ond his ærendwrecum hiersumedon; ond hu hie ægðer ge hiora sibbe ge hiora siodu ge hiora onweald innanbordes gehioldon, ond eac ut hiora eðel rymdon; ond hu him ða speow ægðer ge mid wige ge mid wisdome.*[348]

> It has very often come to my mind what wise men there were formerly throughout the English people [*Angelcynn*], both in sacred and secular orders; and how there were happy times then throughout England [*Angelcynn*]; and how the kings who had rule over the people in those days were obedient to God and his messengers, and both maintained their peace and their morality and their authority at home, and also enlarged their territory abroad; and how they prospered both in warfare and in wisdom.[349]

Here, not only does Ælfred follow Bede in using Anglian terminology, despite the fact that he is from

the royal house of the West 'Saxons', he also echoes the Bedan ideal, which had called for protective

peace within the realm and the expansion of Christian *imperium* without.[350] This can be compared

directly to Bede's portrayal of the golden age of the Anglo-Saxon Church, where he says of

Theodore's archbishopric:

> *Neque umquam prorsus, ex quo Brittaniam petierunt Angli, feliciora fuere tempora; dum et fortissimos Christianosque habentes reges cunctis barbaris nationibus essent terrori, et omnium uota ad nuper audita caelestis regni gaudia penderent, et quicumque lectionibus sacris cuperent erudiri, haberent in promtu magistros, qui docerent.*

> Never had there been such happy times since the English first came to Britain; for having such brave Christian kings, they were a terror to all the barbarian nations, and the desires of all men were set on the joys of the heavenly kingdom of which they had only lately heard; while all who wished for instruction in sacred studies had teachers ready at hand.[351]

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[348] Ælfred's preface to the *Regula Pastoralis* in *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, revised throughout by Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 4.
[349] Preface to *Pastoral Care* translated in Michael Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1975), 30. Cf. *HE* IV:2, 334-335; and Chapter Two, pp.25-26 above.
[350] Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 103-104, and 120.
[351] *HE* IV:2, 332-335, quote at 334-335.

Such was the strength of Bede's rhetoric, that it was used as a model for the reinvention of a harmonious Anglo-Saxon past that had probably never existed in the first place.[352] The king appears to have accepted and internalised Bede's message of a shared Christian heritage among the *Angli* and here reinterprets that idyllic seventh-century model for his own audience.[353]

Bede had clearly shown that it was only through obedience to God that their predecessors had been successful and had lived in peace. As Bede had advised his own king to do years before, Ælfred sought to use his Christian kingship as a unifying force, and to demonstrate that his strength and wisdom could help the *Angelcynn* to understand and actualise God's will.[354] In order to help him bring the idyllic world that Bede had propounded into fruition, Ælfred enlisted a cosmopolitan circle of scholars and together they implemented a programme of education which was intended to provide Christian enlightenment throughout his kingdom. He also sought to bring them guidance and unity by issuing a law code written in their vernacular, which invited comparisons between himself and Moses, both of whom, the comparison suggests, were establishing order under God's will.[355] This demonstrated that Ælfred took his responsibility as the exemplary and juridical king of his people seriously and shows that he, like Bede, believed that following the Old Testament models of kingship was in the best interest of his people, as had been prefigured in the Bible and was the will of God.[356]

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[352] Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 33.

[353] Cf. Wormald, "Bede and the 'Church of the English'," 217; Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 30 and 33; Simon Keynes, "The Power of the Written Word in Alfredian England: 871-899," in *Alfred the Great*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 182; and Simon Keynes, "A Tale of Two Kings: Alfred and Athelred the Unready," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 36, no. 5th Series (1986): 209.

[354] *HE,* Preface, 1. Here Bede tells Ceolwulf that it is his responsibility as a God-chosen king to educate his people and provide them with a model for pious behaviour. Cf. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 5; and Pratt, *Political Thought*, 106.

[355] Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 377.

[356] McClure, "Bede's Old Testament Kings," 76-98. Asser, *Vita Ælfredi,* Ch. 76 compares Ælfred with Solomon himself. Cf. Anton Scharer, "The Writing of History at King Alfred's Court," *Early Medieval Europe* 5, no. 2 (1996) 191; Janet Nelson, "Power and Authority at the Court of Alfred," in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. Jane Roberts and Janet Nelson (Exeter: Short Run Press, Ltd., 2000), 329-332; Janet Nelson, "The Political Ideas of Alfred of Wessex," in *Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe: Alfred, Charles the Bald, and Others*, ed. Janet Nelson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 135-136; and Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 96-100.

The Common Stock of the ASC

The *ASC* provides the prime example of how Bede's text was re-invented in this very different West Saxon context under the educative programme and political designs of King Ælfred.[357] The *ASC* was written as an ideological document advocating West Saxon hegemony and encouraging the support of the people in a time of both chronic and sporadic warfare, probably under the sponsorship of Ælfred himself, or the Ælfredian court, and updated by his successors.[358] Written in a time when religious conformity was less of an issue than political solidarity, the *ASC* used the *HE* to demonstrate a tradition of Anglo-Saxon spiritual unity in order to evoke this sense of political solidarity.[359] In doing so, the *ASC* links the Christian heritage of the Anglo-Saxons as portrayed by Bede with a collection of what Ian Wood has called 'a series of military origin stories'.[360]

The *ASC* is extant in seven relatively well preserved manuscripts, and one fragment, all of which descend from a common archetype to the year 891, from which the Parker Chronicle (also known as the 'A-text') is thought to be directly derived.[361] This common archetype, known as the 'Common Stock', was probably copied in 891 and distributed widely throughout what would eventually become known as *Engla lond*, in much the same way as Ælfred's *Pastoral Care* is known

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[357] Ælfredian sponsorship of the *ASC* is still a matter of debate among scholars. For example, see Frank M. Stenton, "The South-Western Element in the Old English Chronicle," in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to T.F. Tout*, ed. A.G. Little and F.M. Powicke (Manchester: 1925), 18-19; R.H.C. Davis, "Alfred the Great: Propaganda and Truth," *History* LVI (1971): 169-182, especially 173-177; Anton Scharer, "The Writing of History at King Alfred's Court," *Early Medieval Europe* 5, no. 2 (1996) 178-185; and Dorothy Whitelock, "The Importance of the Battle of Edington," in *From Bede to Alfred: Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Literature and History*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (London: Variorum, 1980), 4. Cf. Barbara Yorke, "The Representation of Early West Saxon History in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, and History*, ed. Alice Jorgensen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 141-159 for more on Ælfredian models of kingship in the *ASC*. On the role of Ælfred in the creation of this national annal, see Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 25. Asser gives evidence that there was much resentment and weariness among the people regarding heavy taxation and fighting in the *Vita Ælfredi,* Ch. 91. See also *ASC s.a.* 892.
[358] Keynes, "A Tale of Two Kings: Alfred and Athelred the Unready," 197-8; Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550 to C.1307* (London: Routledge, 1974), 34-36; and Davis, "Propaganda and Truth," 178-179 and 181-182. Contra: Stenton, "The South-Western Element in the Old English Chronicle," 15-24; Whitelock, "The Importance of the Battle of Edington," 6-15; and Janet Bately, "The Compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 60 BC to AD 890: Vocabulary and Evidence," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 64 (1980): 93-129.
[359] Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 376; and Smyth, "English Identity," 41. For the hypothesis that the Frankish Grimbald was the master mind of this project, see M.B. Parkes, "The Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript of the Chronicle, Laws and Sedulius, and Historiography at Winchester in the Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries," *ASE* 5 (1976): 149-171.
[360] Wood, "Before and After," 49.
[361] Michael Swanton, "Introduction," in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London: J.M. Dent &Sons, 1997), xix. This is by no means thought to represent all of the copied versions of the text, as there are probably many which are now irrecovably lost.

to have been distributed.[362] These copies were updated regularly with entries of national and local importance, thereafter supplemented with official bulletins in order that they maintain their purpose.[363] So, although it is often referred to as 'the' *ASC*, there are many versions, as this was a living chronicle from the late ninth to the twelfth centuries and the updated information varies greatly between the texts.[364] The extant manuscripts indicate that Winchester was probably the distribution point for these as our earliest witness, the Parker Chronicle, appears to have been written at Old Minster in the late ninth century.[365] This suggests that its exemplar must have been close to the original Common Stock, written before the end of Ælfred's reign and probably in his royal seat of Winchester. Simon Keynes has suggested that the distribution of these texts may have been prompted by the harrowing arrival of the viking armies in the autumn of 892, when this Common Stock of the existing manuscripts ends, in a 'moment of grave national crisis.'[366]

The dissemination of the *ASC* is complicated and difficult to know. A copy was made of the Parker Chronicle before it left Winchester in the early eleventh century, known as either 'A$^{2'}$ or 'G'.[367] In the late tenth century, the 'B' version of the text was copied in Abingdon.[368] This probably indicates that Abingdon had held an earlier exemplar, but no more is known about how it arrived there. B was the exemplar for the later 'C' version, also copied at Abingdon, in the mid-eleventh century.[369] The 'D' text represents a northern version of the text, complete with northern annals

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[362] Henry Sweet, *Preface to Ælfred's Pastoral Care*, ed. Revised throughout by Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 4; and Davis, "Propaganda and Truth," 174-175. The Common Stock as it appears in the Parker Chronicle is written in one hand, with the year 892 written, but not filled in. Cf. Janet Bately, "Introduction: The Manuscript," in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition - Ms A*, ed. David Dumville and Simon Keynes (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1986), xxi. However, Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, suggests that it was written post 900.

[363] Thormann, "The *ASC* Poems," 63-4.

[364] Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 29 and 32.

[365] This is extant in *Corpus Christi College Cambridge 173.* Neil Ker, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), no. 180; and Parkes, "Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript," 153-168 and 171. There is some debate on Winchester as its place of origin. For a discussion of this see Bately, "Introduction: The Manuscript," xiii-xiv and xxxii-xxxiii; and for evidence against this attribution, see Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 55-98, especially 70-92.

[366] Keynes, "A Tale of Two Kings: Alfred and Athelred the Unready," 192; Cf. Simon Keynes, 'Notes on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' in *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of the King and other contemporary sources,* edited by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 279.

[367] This is extant as *British Library Cotton Otho B.*xi.

[368] This is extant as *British Library Cotton Tiberius A.iii.*

[369] This is extant as *British Library Cotton Tiberius B.i.*

which were not in the Common Stock of the *ASC*.[370] Although written in the mid-eleventh century, its presence suggests that an exemplar was probably in York or Ripon, and that one of those centres received regular updates from Wessex through the tenth century.[371] A similar northern exemplar seems to have been extant for the copying of 'E' in the twelfth century.[372]

The earliest version of the *ASC* was probably built upon Easter tables already in existence. These brief notes would have been supplemented by older annals, along with bishop lists, poetry, monastic records and genealogies.[373] The 'Chronological Epitome' with which Bede had concluded the *HE* was written in annalistic form and was therefore well suited as a source for the early history, from the 60 BC arrival of Julius Caesar.[374] There are also some details from the body of the *HE* which inform the annals, however these borrowings from Bede are generally more conceptual than specific.[375] For example, the conceptual use of Bede's model can be seen providing a teleological framework for the history of the Anglo-Saxons, the use of which demonstrates an early belief in a tradition of Anglo-Saxon unity, as if the viking incursions had been a 'disruption' of the order known by Bede. According to this premise, the pagan invaders had redrawn the map of Anglo-Saxon England, and it was up to the Anglo-Saxon Christians to return it to the Bedan past.[376]

One of the most significant distinctions between the two texts is one of genre. The annalistic genre of the *ASC* has a big impact on the way in which the information it contains was obtained, portrayed and perceived. First of all, on a practical level, annals and chronicles are minimal by their very nature. As the earliest formats of chronicles often began as marginal notes in Easter tables,

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[370] This is extant as *British Library Cotton Tiberius B.iv.* Cf. Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 31-32; and Pauline Stafford, "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, Identity and the Making of England," *Haskins Society Journal* 19 (2007):43-48. These annals have been previously discussed in their association with Alcuin. See p. 55 above.

[371] Swanton, "Introduction," xxv.

[372] This is extant as *Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud 636.* Swanton, "Introduction," xxv-xxvi. Notably, the D and E versions of the text omit the West Saxon genealogy and instead copy Bede's geographical sketch of the island from the *HE* I:1.

[373] Cf. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 128-129.

[374] See particularly *s.a.* 47, 167, 189, 409, 540. Cf. Swanton, "Introduction," xix, n. 32.

[375] Indeed it is clear that the composer of the Common Stock worked from many sources, and often used these to date events from Bede's text. Janet Bately, "Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," in *Saints, Scholars and Heroes*, ed. Margot H. King and Wesley M. Stevens (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1979), 240-244. It is the D and E versions of the *ASC,* known as the 'Northern Recension' which follow the body of the *HE* the closest, but this is outside of this discussion. For more on this, see Bately, 239-240.

[376] Consider the use of the word *hæþen* to describe the Danes, in counterpoint to the *Cristen* Anglo-Saxons. For example, see *s.a.* 835, 842, 851, 853, 855, 865 and 871; and pp. 107-108 below.

spatial constraints lent themselves to brevity from the outset, so that only the most significant details from the year could have been recorded.[377] Also, because this particular chronicle has no authorial voice and is open-ended, its entries may appear as raw fact and without clear motive or agenda. However, this apparent lack of authorial agency is deceptive, because the writer's retrospective selection of what is worthy of inclusion in such a brief record imbues those events which are chosen with special meaning.[378]

On a more conceptual level, another effect of the annalistic genre is that it is organised by chronology rather than theme, so events that were contemporaneous within Anglo-Saxon history are written as such, which has the effect of linking otherwise unrelated events across Anglo-Saxon England. Because of this, the history across all of Anglo-Saxon England appears to unfold simultaneously, and without an obvious narrative guide this wide history seems to become thematic of its own accord. These events appear 'naturally' connected, as if God, the arbiter of time himself, was guiding events right across the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as part of a larger plan. Sarah Foot has shown that instead of being removed from narrative, annals and chronicles actually have their own type of narrative form, modelled on a providential sense of time. From their very inception, events in annals are linked with the religious year by being recorded in Easter tables alongside this most important religious festival. This effect is intensified in the *ASC* because it draws on Bede's teleology by dating all events from the Incarnation, and thus the gauging of time ocurrs within a purely Christian schematic. Being open-ended, the chronicle clearly shows that the arrow of time points toward the future which, like God's ultimate plan, is unknown and unknowable. This might be indicative of a world view where time belongs to God, and every year is documented – with or without events - because God's time is precious and only he can discern the meaning behind all events.[379]

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[377] Sarah Foot, "Finding the Meaning of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles," in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), 93.
[378] Foot, "Finding the Meaning," 99.
[379] Foot, "Finding the Meaning," 96.

In the early medieval period, chronicles such as this were often written to connect the ruling family who are its protagonists with a long historical heritage in order to validate the rule of that family and to provide support for their prowess and influence.[380] The *ASC* is no exception, and here the Bedan migration myth is invoked repeatedly, as are the early dynastic histories, conversions and genealogies of each kingdom, strengthening the connections between the earliest traditions of these kingdoms. The failure of the individual kingdoms to repel the vikings on their own draws them together and highlights the military successes of the West Saxons. Their ability to resist the viking incursion lends prestige and support to the West Saxon ascendency, where the growing unity of purpose among the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms is ultimately portrayed as part of a bigger picture reflecting God's design. It is each kingdom's acceptance of this leadership that turns their fortunes, demonstrating the importance of the West Saxon ascendency in defeating their mutual enemy, and the role of military solidarity in the fulfilment of God's plan.[381]

One way in which this political purpose for the text can be overtly seen is in the opening passage, where the West Saxon royal genealogy is proudly displayed. This genealogy appears to have been copied into the chronicle specifically as its preface, and displays a clear line of succession from the migration through to Ælfred.[382] Its prominence at the very beginning of a chronicle documenting a large sweep of Anglo-Saxon history is a clear indication of the *ASC*'s association with West Saxon imperial designs. Independent from, and probably earlier than, the rest of the Common Stock, it firmly establishes that Ælfred was a member of the ancient royal line of Cerdic, the fifth-century founder of the West Saxon dynasty.[383]

The culmination of the genealogy at Ælfred (before later hands continued it to make it contemporary) made it the most up to date of all the genealogies in the text. In contrast, the

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[380] Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 30.

[381] Foot, "Finding the Meaning," 99-102.

[382] Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 126. Cf. David Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1977), 96-102; and Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 128-129.

[383] Anton Scharer, "The Writing of History at King Alfred's Court," *Early Medieval Europe* 5, no. 2 (1996): 177-181. Here he points out the importance of the contrast between this genealogy and the less esteemed genealogies of Mercia, Kent and Northumbria.

foreshortening or omission of genealogies for subject kingdoms shows that the *ASC* was an active document, probably issued directly from the West Saxon court.[384] Clearly, this genealogy sought to undermine the prestige of the other Anglo-Saxon genealogies in the text, and we see in it for the first time the inclusion of biblical ancestors which precede Woden, the traditionally ultimate Anglo-Saxon predecessor.[385] This representation of the West Saxon dynasty clearly shows that Ælfred came from a very long tradition of West Saxon kings, which had deep roots in both the Germanic and Christian past, echoing the ethno-religious identity established by Bede.[386]

Also demonstrating its use as an overtly political text is the inclusion of the law codes of Kings Ælfred and Ine bound into the earliest extant version of the text, the Parker Chronicle.[387] Importantly, the handwriting in this manuscript is thought to be the same as that of the Tanner version of the *Old English Bede,* suggesting a shared motivation in the production of these two late ninth-century manuscripts, and highlighting the importance of the *HE* in this period.[388] The political and historical nature of the texts associated with the Parker Chronicle suggests that Bede's ideas continued to inspire political thought in late ninth and tenth-century Winchester.[389]

The distribution of these manuscripts, although sketchy in details, shows that the influence of West Saxon written culture – and probably political culture - was wide indeed in the late ninth and tenth centuries. The *ASC* was intimately connected with the Anglo-Saxons specifically, and being written in their vernacular and articulating their mutual experiences since their arrival in Britain, it seeks to strengthen a sense of social and political unity.[390] Indeed, it is thought to be the first English historical document written in the vernacular, and as such it holds an important place in the

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[384] Keynes, "Power of the Written Word,"175-197; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 129.

[385] Scharer, "Writing of History," 181; and Craig R. Davis, "Cultural Assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," *ASE* 21 (1992): 24-30. See also, *HE* I:15, 50.

[386] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 86-87.

[387] These were copied and added to the manuscript in the tenth century. Cf. Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 135-140.

[388] Parkes, "Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript," 156-7 and 162-3. Cf. Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 124-139. The relationship between these two texts and their importance is discussed in the following chapter.

[389] Bately, "Introduction: The Manuscript," xvii-xix. Parkes, "Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript," 166-7.

[390] Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles," 36, n. 33. Cf. Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 26.

historiography of England, being a unique undertaking in the development of the English historiographical genre and in the political development of Anglo-Saxon England.[391]

It has also been suggested that Asser's *Life* of King Ælfred, which follows the *ASC* closely as its main source, was meant as a Welsh version of the *ASC,* translated into Latin with a particularly magnanimous portrayal of their overlord, King Ælfred, carefully depicting his wars against the Danes in terms of Christian unity versus pagan incursion.[392] Ælfred was clearly interested in maintaining good relations with the Welsh, as a way to extend his influence over them, to enlist their loyalty in the fight against the Danes and perhaps as a way to weaken the political position of Mercia.[393] The positive nature of the *ASC*'s portrayal of Ælfred and his successors at war against Anglo-Saxon enemies is another clear attempt to convince the audience of the suitability of the West Saxon royal house in its leadership of Anglo-Saxon Christian England.[394]

Re-interpreting Bede in Ninth-Century Wessex

As we have seen, the borrowings from Bede in the Common Stock are largely conceptual, and are shaped by a world view demonstrating the importance of providence in earthly events. The teleological trajectory of the text is also shaped by its undeniable interest in ethnic origins, and in this context the migration myth is central to the connection of the various kingdoms to one another and to their beginnings within God's plan. As it opens, the West Saxon genealogy explains the arrival of the first West Saxons Cerdic and Cynric who *cuom up æt Cerdicesoran mid .v. scipum* (landed at

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[391] Thomas A. Bredehoft, "History and Memory in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*," in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature* ed. David F. Johnson and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: O.U.P., 2005), 112-3; and Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 33. Cf. Malcolm Godden, *The Translations of Alfred and His Circle, and the Misappropriation of the Past* (H.M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 14: 2003) 1.

[392] David P. Kirby, "Asser and His *Life*," *Studia Celtica* 6 (1971): 20, 26–7 and 31–3; Page, "Audience of Beowulf," 117-118; Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *The Life of King Ælfred* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 56-57. See also Pratt, *Political Thought*, 109-110. Contra: Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, 106.

[393] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 151; Thomas Charles-Edwards, "Wales and Mercia, 613-918," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 101-102; and Edward James, *Britain in the First Millenium* (London: Arnold, 2001), 228-229 and 243. See also *Vita Ælfredi,* Ch. 80. Written for the Welsh or not, Asser's use of the chronicle in writing Ælfred's biography demonstrates that the *ASC* was a product of the Ælfredian circle, where Asser is known to have worked closely with the king in his literary endeavours. Cf. Preface to *Pastoral Care,* in *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, 4-7; and Pratt, *Political Thought*, 117. For more on the authenticity of Asser's *Life,* see Dorothy Whitelock, *The Genuine Asser* (Reading: Reading University Press, 1968); and Simon Keynes, "On the Authenticity of Asser's *Life of King Alfred*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1996): 529-551.

[394] Davis, "Propaganda and Truth," 170; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 135-137; Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, 105; Keynes, "A Tale of Two Kings: Alfred and Athelred the Unready," 198; and Keynes, "On the Authenticity of Asser's *Life of King Alfred*," 177.

Cerdic's Shore with five ships) and that *vi. gear þæs þe hie up cuomon* (six years after they landed) they conquered the land of the West Saxons from the *Wealum*.[395] Later in this passage, Ælfred is said to have succeeded to the kingdom *ccc 7 xcvi wintra þæs þe his cyn ærest Westseaxna lond on Wealum ge<e>odon* (three hundred and ninety-six winters from the time when his kindred first gained the land of Wessex from the Britons).[396] The myth is again evoked as the text details the arrival of Hengest and Horsa from Bede at *s.a.* 449, but it also expands Bede's portrayal by including a separate but roughly contemporaneous arrival for the Saxons at *s.a.* 477 and 495, and that of the Jutes in 501 and 514.[397] The persistence of this myth is also clear in that it is recalled even after Bede can no longer be used as a source.[398]

The *ASC* also prefers Bede's Anglian terminology, using the terms *Angle* and *Angelcynn* for the Germanic people of Britain, despite the fact that Bede had clearly stated that the West Saxons were what the name suggests: Saxons.[399] In fact, it could be said that the chronicle amplifies the use of this collective nomenclature. For example, the chronicler pre-empts Bede's own use of Anglian terminology, so that Vortigern did not seek help from the *Angles siue Saxons*, but as early as *s.a.* 443 the *ASC* has:

> *Her sendon Brytwalas to Rome heom fultomes bædon wiþ Piohtas, ac hi þar næfdan nanne, forþan ðe hi fyrdedon wið Ætla Huna cyningæ, 7 þa sendon hi to Anglum Angelcynnes æðelingas ðæs ylcan bædan.*[400]
>
> Here the Britons sent to Rome and asked them for help against the Picts; but they had none there because they were campaigning against Attila, king of the Huns; and then

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[395] Bately, 1 and Swanton, 2.

[396] Bately, 2 (my translation). That is year 475.

[397] Bately, 17, 19 and 20.

[398] For example, some events are dated as the first of their kind since the *adventus Saxonum*, such as in *The Battle of Brunanburh* at *s.a.* 937, ll. 780-781 and in *s.a.* 979 of the E version concerning the murder of King Edward: *ne wearð Angelcynne nan wærsa dæd gedon þonne þeos wæs syððon hi ærest Brytonland gesohton* (no worse deed for the English race was done than this was since they first sought out the land of Britain). Cf. Bredehoft, "History and Memory," 113-119. For the persistence of the migration myth in Anglo-Saxon culture, and its importance in understanding their faith, consider also the Red Sea crossing in the Old English *Exodus;* and Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 30 and 103-106.

[399] This is in complete contrast with what we saw in Alcuin's portrayal, where he chose to use *saxi* as a collective term for peoples whom Bede had said were Angles. For use of the word *Angelcyn* see *ASC-A, s.a.* 443, 449, 597, 789, 839, 866, 874, 886, 896, and 1001. For *engla ðeoda* see *s.a.* 595 and 942; *Englisc* in *s.a.* 690, 891, 896, 918 and 920; *Englan* in *s.a.* 473; *Engla* in *s.a.* 871, 973 and 975. However *engla land* does not occur in the A-text until *s.a.* 1031, 1066 and 1070. There are no references to the Saxons outside of the migration scenario in *s.a.* 443 and 449 and individual personal or kingdom names. Cf. Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 372.

[400] Bately, 17.

they sent to the Angles, and made the same request to the princes of the Angle race [*Angelcynnes*].[401]

A similar treatment occurs at *s.a.* 449, where Bede states of the Angles and Saxons that:

> *…quod ubi domi nuntiatum est, simul et insulae fertilitas, ac segnitia Brettonum; mittitur confestim illo classis prolixior, armatorum ferens manum fortiorem... Aduenerant autem de tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus, id est Saxonibus, Anglis, Iutis.*

> …a report of this as well as of fertility of the island and the slackness of the Britons reached their homes and at once a much larger fleet was sent over with a stronger band of warriors… Those who came over were of the three most powerful nations of Germany: Saxons, Angles, and Jutes.[402]

The *ASC* states:

> *On hiera dagum Hengest 7 Horsa from Wyrtgeorne geleaþade Bretta kyninge gesohton Bretene on þam staþe þe is genemned Ypwinesfleot, ærest Brettum to fultume, ac hie eft on hie fuhton…. Hi ða sende to Angle 7 heton heom sendan mare fultum 7 heom seggan Brytwalana nahtnesse 7 ðæs landes cysta. Hy ða sendan heom mare fultum. Þa comon þa menn of þrim mægþum Germanie, of Ealdseaxum, of Anglum, of Iotum.*[403]

> In their days Hengest and Horsa, invited by Vortigern, king of the Britons (*Bretta*), sought out Britain [the E version mentions that they came in three ships] in the landing-place which is named Ebba's Creek, at first to help the Britons (*Bretta*), but later they fought against them… They then sent to Angeln and ordered them to send more help, and tell them of the worthlessness of the Britons (*Brytwalana*) and of the excellence of the land. They then sent them more help. These men came from three tribes of Germany: from the Old Saxons, from the Angles, from the Jutes.[404]

So, in the *ASC* it appears that Vortigern first sought help from only the Angles, who came and then sent back to Angeln for more help. It is this call back to the native land of the Angles, according to the *ASC,* which empties Angeln but the Saxons and Jutes also appear to have answered the call. This is in contrast with Bede's narrative, which clearly states that the first arrival of the Germanic migrants had included all three peoples and strongly implies that the reports about Britain go back to their respective homes. These changes in Bede's text may have been a misinterpretation of the original, but it appears that the chronicler most likely sought to strengthen the notion of unity implied in the use of the word *Anglecynnes* by making their unity a given from very early in their

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[401] Swanton, 12. Compare to *HE* I:13, 46 and *HE* I:15, 50.
[402] *HE* I:15, 50-51.
[403] Bately, 17.
[404] Swanton, 12.

history. Because the Gregorian 'discovery' of the Angles does not feature in the chronicle, this was the earliest opportunity to introduce the Angles as the preferred collective term for them.[405]

While the West Saxon kingdom of Bede's text was made up of both Jutes and Saxons, neither appear strongly represented in the Common Stock. Antonia Gransden has claimed a 'propagandist motive' for the failure of the *ASC* to recognise the role of the Jutes in the settlement of Britain outside of the migration.[406] Bede had stated that the Jutes had settled Kent and the Isle of Wight and in recording this story of their settlement from Bede, the *ASC* states that the Jutes were the *Cantware* (the people of Kent), the *Wihtware* (the people of Wight) and *ðæt cynn on Westsexum þe man gyt hæt Iutna cyn* (that race in Wessex which they still call the Jutes) in *s.a.* 449.[407] However, the 530 annal describes Cerdic and Cynric taking Wight from the legendary Jutish ancestors Stuf and Wihtgar, and then returning it to them in 534.[408] This taking of the of the Isle of Wight from the Jutish ancestors, and then magnanimously giving it back to them not only demonstrates the West Saxon military superiority, but also implies that Jutish control over the island was held with West Saxon permission from 530, despite Bede's later date of 686.[409] A similar situation occurs with the annals for Jutish Hampshire, and Barbara Yorke points out that the record of West Saxon hegemony this early contradicts both the authority of Bede's source, Bishop Daniel, and place-name evidence.[410] This version of events serves to strengthen the cause for a traditional West Saxon hegemony over this area.[411]

Despite this clear sign of West *Saxon* hegemony, it is Anglian nomenclature which is prevalent within the text. The term 'Saxon' is not used as a collective name for the Anglo-Saxons anywhere in the text, except that Augustine is said to have prophesied that the Britons would die at

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[405] Cf. Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 120-121.
[406] Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 34-35.
[407] Bately, 17.
[408] Here the annal inexplicably refers to Stuf and Wihtgar as *hiera tuæm nefum* (their two nephews). Bately, 21.
[409] *HE* IV:16, 382.
[410] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 131. However, see Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 34, note 34.
[411] Barbara Yorke, "The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex," in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester: 1989), 95-96. Note that Asser claims that Ælfred's mother was a Jute in Ch. 2 of the *Vita Ælfredi*.

Seaxna handa at *s.a.* 606.[412] Otherwise, the only time that 'Saxon' is used in the *ASC* is in reference

to the individual Anglo-Saxon kingdom names, or in referring to the continental Saxons as either

Ealdseaxons, Aldseaxons or *Seaxne*.[413] The writer's use of the term *Ealdseaxum* in the migration at

s.a. 449 (quoted above) to refer to the original, continental Saxons is clearly anachronistic at this

point, because according to the legend it records there was only one group of Saxons until after the

migration. Since there were as yet no 'new' Saxons, no distinction was required. This flags up the

point that the *Angelcynn* were clearly also called 'Saxons' in the late ninth century, and the writer

was so familiar with the distinction between the 'old' continental Saxons, and the 'new' Saxons in

Britain, that he either did not notice the anachronism (which also occurs later in the same annal), or

perhaps he felt that the distinction was still necessary.

This avoidance of the use of the term *Seaxne* in reference to the Anglo-Saxon collective,

despite the fact that Ælfred's political centre was widely considered to be Saxon, suggests that the

overwhelmingly predominant use of Anglian terminology, instead of Saxon or Anglo-Saxon, was a

conscious decision on the part of the chronicler who composed the Common Stock.[414] Within the

text *Angelcynn* is clearly used to establish an idea of Anglo-Saxon unity as early as the migration of

s.a. 443 and 449, but also later in the text, including where political unity was called upon in

contemporary Ælfredian situations. For example, the entry for *s.a.* 886 reports that Ælfred took

London, and *all Angelcyn*, except for those under Danish rule, submitted to him and in *s.a.* 900,

Ælfred *wæs cyning ofer eall Ongelcyn*.[415] Sarah Foot has suggested that the submission of all the

Angelcyn in 886 was 'the climactic moment of achievement in the king's efforts to unite the Anglo-

Saxons,' and if this is true, it is clearly important that the chronicler used a form of Bede's preferred

terminology to proclaim this.[416] The term *Angelcyn* here, probably Bedan in concept and

representing a notion of shared heritage and religion, appears to be the preferred term to define

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[412] Bately, 26.
[413] *s.a.* 449, Bately, 17; *s.a.* 885, Bately, 52; and *s.a.* 891, Bately, 54.
[414] Cf. Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 46.
[415] Bately, 53 and 61.
[416] Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 36. Cf. Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 120. However, Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 43-45 has pointed out that it is not until Æthelstan's reign (924-939) that West Saxon charters begin to reflect a purely Anglian terminology.

that group of people in Britain who spoke *Englisc,* and were therefore not British and not

Scandinavian.[417] This is important, in that it not only points to the importance of language in

determining Anglo-Saxon identity, but also demonstrates that it was the existence of outside

opposition which prompted the use of Bede's own collective terminology and helped to smooth over

regional differences.[418]

Nicholas Brooks has suggested that this usage represents an 'evolving ethnic synthesis'

within Wessex which moved Ælfred's self styling from the *rex Saxonum* in the 870s and 880s, to that

of *rex Anglorum Saxonum* and *Angulsaxonum rex* as he sought to incorporate his expanding

imperium over the Angles of Mercia into his title. With increased viking attack, Ælfred began to refer

his people as *Angelcynn* in order to demonstrate an even wider and more collective difference from

the Scandinavian invaders.[419] This is perhaps best demonstrated by *s.a.* 896 where the continuator

notes that in that year *næfde se here, Godes þonces, Angelcyn ealles forswiðe gebrocod* (the raiding

army, by the grace of God, had not altogether utterly crushed the *Angelcynn*).[420] This use of the term

implies a shared experience which separated all those who had suffered the attacks from the

invaders*.*

Similar terms were also used by Ælfred himself, such as in his treaty with the Danish king

Guthrum, where he claims to be acting on behalf of *ealles Angelcynnes witan.*[421] He also used this

terminology in his preface to the *Pastoral Care* when referring to the people of Wessex, Kent and

Mercia as the *Angelcyn* who speak *Englisc* while inviting them to recall a shared past when their

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[417] Pratt, *Political Thought*, 106-107; Stafford, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles," 33; and Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 26-8.

[418] Pratt, *Political Thought*, 105; and Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 372-373. Cf. Smyth, "English Identity," 39-43.

[419] Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 46-48; and Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn,"* 23-24, and 27. Cf. *Vita Ælfredi,* Chs. 64, 73, 83, 87, etc. See also, Pratt, *Political Thought*, 105-106; the notes of Keynes and Lapidge in Asser, *The Life of King Ælfred*, ed. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 227-228; and Simon Keynes, "King Alfred and the Mercians," in *Kings, Currency and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*, ed. M.Blackburn and D.Dumville (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), 25-26 and 34-44.

[420] Bately, 59 and Swanton, 89.

[421] *The Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum,* in *EHD,* no. 34, 416. On the authenticity of the treaty between Ælfred and Guthrum, see Hart, *The Danelaw*, 117; and on its wider social and political implications, see Paul Kershaw, "The Alfred-Guthrum Treaty: Scripting Accommodation and Interaction in Viking Age England," in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 48-52.

ancestors knew of higher standards of literacy and Christian practice.[422] This use of the word *Englisc* to denote both the spoken language of the people and the written language into which the texts of the West Saxon court were translated is in contrast with Bede's distinction between the Anglian and Saxon dialects. While this distinction was a linguistic one, rather than a political one, it is important to note that this terminology encompassed people who in the past would have been called 'Saxon' and 'Jute' as well as 'Angle'.[423] As Brooks notes, Ælfred appears to have chosen this nomenclature in an extension of what he had found in Bede because it denoted the shared heritage of the Anglo-Saxon people as it was written in their common history, the *HE* and now the *ASC*.[424]

We have noted the looming importance of the migration myth in the *ASC,* which is reflective of further interest in ethnic origins within the text. However, it is important to note that this interest pertains only to the Anglo-Saxon origins, as the origin stories for the Britons, the Scots, and Picts are not included and are not relevant to the series of events it details. Their absence can highlight for us the importance of the Anglo-Saxon genealogies which came from across England appear throughout the text, including most of the brief genealogies mentioned in Bede, complemented by many that were not.[425] It is also important to note that the chronicler includes, but fails to extend, the genealogy of Kent, which only includes the kings from Æthelberht I to Wihtred, and the genealogy of Mercia is not updated from Offa's reign. These inclusions and omissions are yet another firm statement of West Saxon dynastic dominance within Britain.

These can be compared to Bede's list of kings with *imperium* over Britain, given at *s.a.* 829 and updated to suit the purpose of the text. Where Bede says of Æthelberht:

> *qui tertius quidem in regibus gentis Anglorum cunctis australibus eorum prouinciis, quae Humbrae fluuio et contiguis ei terminis sequestrantur a borealibus, imperauit; sed*

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[422] Preface to *Pastoral Care,* in *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, 4-7. Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 30-31.

[423] It appears that the use of the term *Angul-saxonum* was more of a legalistic term, denoting specific peoples, as it is used in the charters of the late ninth-century, whereas the term *Angelcynn* was more of a conceptual term, meant to encompass the speakers of *Englisc* and their shared heritage. Cf. Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 27; and Nelson, "Political Ideas," 134-135.

[424] Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 48.

[425] Cf. Scharer, "Writing of History," 178-9; and Dorothy Whitelock, *The Old English Bede*, vol. 48, *Proceedings of the British Academy* (London: O.U.P., 1962), 74; and Yorke, "Jutes of Hampshire and Wight," 85-88.

primus omnium caeli regna conscendit. Nam primus imperium huiusmodi Aelli rex Australium Saxonum; secundus Caelin rex Occidentalium Saxonum, qui lingua ipsorum Ceaulin uocabatur; tertius, ut diximus, Aedilberct rex Cantuariorum; quartus Reduald rex Orientalium Anglorum, qui etiam uiuente Aedilbercto eidem suae genti ducatum praebebat, obtinuit; quintus Aeduini rex Nordanhymbrorum gentis, id est eius, quae ad Borealem Humbrae fluminis plagam inhabitat, maiore potentia cunctis, qui Brittaniam incolunt, Anglorum pariter et Brettonum populis praefuit, praeter Cantuariis tantum; nec non et Meuanias Brettonum insulas, quae inter Hiberniam et Brittaniam sitae sunt, Anglorum subiecit imperio; sextus Osuald et ipse Nordanhymbrorum rex Christianissimus, hisdem finibus regnum tenuit; septimus Osuiu frater eius, aequalibus pene terminis regnum nonnullo tempore cohercens, Pictorum quoque atque Scottorum gentes, quae septentrionales Brittaniae fines tenent, maxima ex parte perdomuit, ac tributarias fecit. Sed haec postmodum.

He was the third English king to rule over all the southern kingdoms, which are divided from the north by the river Humber and the surrounding territory; but he was the first to enter the kingdom of heaven. The first king to hold the like sovereignty was Ælle, king of the South Saxons; the second was Cælin, king of the West Saxons, known in their own language as Ceawlin; the third, as we have said, was Æthelberht, king of Kent; the fourth was Rædwald, king of the East Angles, who even during the lifetime of Æthelberht was gaining the leadership for his own race; the fifth was Edwin, king of the Northumbrians, the nation in habiting the district north of the Humber. Edwin had still greater power and ruled over all the inhabitants of Britain, English and Britons alike, except for Kent only. He even brought under English rule the Mevanian Islands which lie between England and Ireland and belong to the Britons. The sixth to rule within the same bounds was Oswald, the most Christian king of the Northumbrians, while the seventh was his brother Oswiu who for a time held almost the same territory…

the ASC updates the record to say that in 829:

geeode Egbryht cyning Miercna rice 7 al þæt be suþan Humbre wæs, 7 he wæs se eahteþa cyning se þe Bretwalda wæs - ærest Ælle Suþseaxna cyning se þus micel rice hæfde, se æftera wæs Ceawlin Wesseaxna cyning, se þridda wæs Æþelbryht Cantwara cyning, se feorþa wæs Rædwald Eastengla cyning, fifta was Eadwine Norþanhymbra cyning, siexta wæs Oswald se æfter him ricsode, seofoþa wæs Oswio Oswaldes broþur, eahtoþa wæs Egbryht Wesseaxna cyning. 7 se Egbryht lædde fierd to Dore wiþ Norþanhymbre 7 hie him þær eaþmedo budon 7 geþuærnesse, 7 hie on þam tohwurfon.[426]

King Egberht conquered the kingdom of Mercia and all that was south of the Humber, and he was the eighth king to be 'Controller of Britain' [*Bretwalda*]; the first who had so great a rule was Ælle, king of the South Saxons; the one after was Ceawlin, king of the West Saxons; the third was Æthelberht, king of the inhabitants of Kent; the fourth was Rædwald, king of East Anglia; fifth was Edwin, king of Northumbria; sixth was Oswald who ruled after him; seventh Oswy, Oswald's brother; eighth was Egbert, king of West Saxons. And this Egbert led an army to Dore against the Northumbrians; and there they offered him submission and concord; and on that they parted.[427]

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[426] Bately, 42.
[427] Swanton, 60, see also n. 10.

Here, like Bede, the *ASC* omits the most important Mercian kings and skips over the Mercian hegemony by going from Oswiu, King of Northumbria (642-670) to this record of Egberht, King of Wessex (802-839) and his conquest of Mercia.[428]

This discrimination in updating the genealogies and list of kings with *imperium* suggests that the Kentish and Mercian aspects of the history were suppressed because of their political subjection to Wessex in the ninth century. This active engagement of the chronicler in shaping Bede's history also indicates that his description of spiritual unity among the Anglo-Saxons was being actively shaped to articulate a political identity which suited the imperial designs of late ninth-century Wessex.[429]

The Britons in Ninth-Century Britain

Fundamental to understanding the shift of Bede's models into a portrayal of an Anglo-Saxon political identity under West Saxon hegemony, is a consideration of the chronicle's depiction of the Britons. In the Common Stock of the *ASC*, the term *brettones* is often used for Bede's *Brittani,* and appears to be somewhat interchangeable with the term *Wala* or *Wealh* (plural *Walas* or *Wealas*). However, the chronicler prefers to use the term *brettones* where the text follows the *HE* the closest, and uses only *Wealh* or *Wala* in recording later events.[430] While this shows the influence of Bede in recording their part in early Anglo-Saxon history, the treatment of the relationship between the two peoples is quite different.

Bede had used the Gregorian conversion legend to provide the background for his choice in nomenclature for the Anglo-Saxons, the *gens Anglorum.* While we have seen that this Anglian terminology is preferred throughout the *ASC,* the text does not use this legend to establish its use of

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[428] *s.a.* 827, 42. Sarah Foot, "Where English Becomes British: Rethinking Contexts for Brunanburh," in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters*, ed. Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 143-144 suggests that the poem *The Battle of Brunanburh,* recorded at *s.a.* 937, was asserting West Saxon king Æthelstan as the ninth such *bretwalda.* Cf. Bredehoft, "History and Memory," 119-120.

[429] Cf. Bately, "Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 243.

[430] See *s.a.* 457, 453, and 552, where both terms are used. *Brettas* and *Bryttas* is not used after Bede's time, except in *s.a.* 755, in reference to *anum bryttiscum gisle,* while Cynewulf is said to have *oft miclum gefeohtum feaht uuiþ Bretwalum,* although what group of Britons this refers to is unclear, Bately, 36. *s.a.* 890 refers to *Brettas,* but these are clearly continental Bretons, Bately, 54. Margaret L. Faull, "The Semantic Development of Old English *Wealh*," *Leeds Studies in English* 8 (1975): 24, 32 and 36.

vocabulary. Without the legend to help set up the religious dichotomy between the Anglo-Saxons and the 'heretical' Britons, their differences are ethnic and military, rather than religious. The focus of the *ASC* remains resolutely on the military history between these two peoples, with no need to mention the Easter controversy, the Whitby synod or any differences in the liturgy between the Roman missionaries and that of the Britons. Clearly these issues were not relevant to the ninth-century West Saxon chronicler, who was rather more interested in Anglo-Saxon Christian and political unity.

Therefore, while the Britons do appear as important players within the text, it is the military superiority of the Anglo-Saxons rather than their special religious significance which earns them control of the island. A prime example can again be seen in the re-telling of the story of Augustine's Oak. In the *HE,* the story is deeply symbolic: the British priests refuse to accept the superiority of the universal Church, and as a result Augustine angrily predicts their doom.[431] However, the entry for *s.a.* 606 in the *ASC* merely states that:

> *And her Æðelfrið lædde his færde to Legercyestre 7 ðar of<sloh> unrim Walena, 7 swa wearþ gefyld Augustinus witegunge þe he cwæþ: 'Gif Wealas nellað sibbe wið us, hi sculan æt Seaxana handa farwurþan.' Þar man sloh eac .cc. preosta ða comon ðyder þæt hi scoldon gebiddan for Walena here. Scrocmail was gehaten heora ealdormann, se atbærst ðanon fiftiga sum.*[432]

> And here Æthelfrith led his army to Chester and there killed a countless number of Welsh [*Walena*]; and thus was fulfilled Augustine's prophecy which he spoke: 'If the Welsh [*Wealas*] do not want peace with us, they shall perish at the hands of the Saxons'. There were also killed 200 priests who had come there in order to pray for the Welsh [*Walena*] raiding-army. Their chieftain was called Scrocmail, who escaped from there as one of fifty.[433]

Without the background story of the British rejection of the religious unity offered by Augustine, and the context of his prophecy, the story loses its religious polemic. Also, the misinterpretation of who Brocmail (here 'Scrocmail') was and his purpose lightens the judgement on him for having deserted the priests that he was supposed to protect. The priests are mentioned as a side note, rather than the focus of Augustine's angry prophecy. So, instead of a deeply symbolic story about the price of

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[431] See Chapter Two, pp.42–43 above, and *HE* II:2, 140.
[432] Bately, 26.
[433] Swanton, 22.

religious dissension as it appears in the *HE,* here the story of the Battle of Chester becomes just another example of the military superiority of the Anglo-Saxons.

Given that Christians in Britain had accepted the primacy of Roman Christianity at this point, Bede's record of religious discord had become irrelevant, and also therefore his analogy between the Britons and the Jews who had rejected Christ. So, while the Anglo-Saxons' various successes over the Britons are a matter of great pride within the text, the Britons are not demonised in any way.[434] Their battles are recorded with annalistic brevity and without the subtext and undertone of Bede's work. The tone of the *ASC* seems to take for granted that the Anglo-Saxons are militarily and therefore politically superior. For example, the text records many battles between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons, almost all of which display a humiliating British defeat or flight.[435] For just one example among many, the annal for 473 states:

> *Her Hengest 7 Æsc gefuhton wiþ Walas 7 genamon unarimedlico herereaf, 7 þa Walas flugon þa Englan swa [þær] fyr.*[436]
>
> This year Hengest and Æsc fought against the Welsh [*Walas*] and seized countless war-loot, and the Welsh fled from the English [*Englan*] like fire.[437]

The chronicler is eager to display military prowess and similarly portrays the founder of the dynasty, Cynric, putting the *Brettas* to flight just before triumphantly detailing his genealogy relating him to Woden, depicts two-thousand and sixty-five *Wala* as slain by Cwichelm and Cynegils in one battle, and shows Egberht, that illustrious ancestor of Ælfred, defeating both the *Walas* and the *Deniscan* in the same battle.[438] As these examples and many more illustrate, while the Britons no longer

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[434] For overtly proud references to the Anglo-Saxon military superiority see *s.a.* 449, 457, 465, 473, 477, 495, 514, 519, 552, 571, 577, 591, 597, 607, and 614.

[435] In a total of 42 references to the *walas* in *ASC-A*: *s.a.* 443 is the call to Aetius, *s.a.* 449 is a reference to Vortigern as their king, 4 depict them submitting to Edward (*s.a.* 921 and 923 both contain 2 references to this), *s.a.* 893 depicts them as allies against the Danes, 3 (*s.a.* 894 (twice) and 917) show viking activity in Wales, *s.a.* 891 has them in Cornwall. Remarkably, *s.a.* 896 records a reference to *wealhgerefa* (Welsh reeve), and *s.a.* 893 is a reference to Irish missionaries who wash up on the coast of Cornwall. One reference refers to a *Bryttisc* hostage (*s.a.* 775) while the other 31 references are all to battles between the Britons and the West Saxons, with the Britons often vanquished, sometimes fleeing (*s.a.* 473, 552 and 571), sometimes dying in very high numbers (2000 were slain in *s.a.* 614), and one time Britons die while allied to the Danes (*s.a.* 838). All of these references refer either to enemies or people in the borderlands, and none overtly refer to Britons settled within Anglo-Saxon England.

[436] Bately, 18.

[437] Swanton, 14. For a few other examples nearby, see *s.a.* 457 and 495. Cf. Sims-Williams, "Settlement of England," 27.

[438] *s.a.* 552, 614 and 838; Bately, 22, 27 and 42-43.

represent the perfidious Jews of Bede's text they do serve to demonstrate the military, and thus political, superiority of the Anglo-Saxons as they expanded their hegemony over the island.[439]

This depiction of the Britons, like that of Bede, may be a very limited portrayal of what was probably a much more fluid relationship between them and the Anglo-Saxons. The first time we see the word *Wealh* used is in Ine's seventh-century law code, and here it indicates that the *wergeld* of the British nobles was significantly less than that of the Anglo-Saxon nobles.[440] Although they were of lower status than the Anglo-Saxons, Alex Woolf has noted the significance of this seventh-century law code in that it actually gave legal protection to the Britons within the West Saxon realm and did not overtly restrict their integration with the Anglo-Saxons. It is also significant that there were indeed British nobles and that they were worth three times as much as an Anglo-Saxon *ceorl*.[441] This may have left room for much social and economic integration between the two ethnic groups. Barbara Yorke has asserted that the majority of people under West Saxon rule in the seventh century were British, and they were largely assimilated into West Saxon culture by intermarriage at even the highest levels of society by the time Ælfred's law code was issued which helps to explain why they are not specifically mentioned there.[442] This also helps to explain the inclusion of 'Celtic' names in the West Saxon genealogy – from the founder Cerdic, and including Ceadda and Ceadwalla, as well as in the genealogies of the Mercian and South Saxon royal houses.[443] These signs of integration show an important change from the context of Bede to that of Ælfred, and perhaps

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[439] For more on the social and political status of the Britons, see Alex Woolf, "Apartheid and Economics in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. N.J. Higham (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 129-129; Charles-Edwards, "Language and Society," 730-733; and Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 194 and 198.

[440] The Laws of Ine (688-694), in *English Historical Documents C.500-1042*, 2nd ed., vol. I (New York: O.U.P., 1979), no. 33, 24.2. Cf. Charles-Edwards, "Language and Society," 730-1. For a consideration of the use of the term as one for slavery, see David A.E. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England: From the Reign of Alfred until the Twelfth Century*, *Studies in Anglo-Saxon History* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), 39-43; Faull, "Semantic Development," 31; Charles-Edwards, "Language and Society," 730-731; and Grimmer, "Britons in Wessex," 104.

[441] Woolf, "Apartheid and Economics," 127-129.

[442] Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, 72.

[443] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 138-139; Faull, "Semantic Development," 32; and Wood, "Before and After," 45.

demonstrate a marked lack of anxiety toward the British within West Saxon society, where this integration may have been encouraged.[444]

In the Common Stock the term *Wala* largely appears as an ethnic term rather than a status term. There is clear recognition of cultural similarities between the Britons, inherent in their names: Welsh (*Norþwalas*)*,* Cornish (*Westwalas*) and the Britons of Strathclyde (*Stræcledwalas*), all of whom were known collectively as *Walas* or *Brytwalas*, and for their distinctiveness from the Anglo-Saxons. [445] Despite the increasing regional isolation of these strongholds, the terminology *Wala/Wealh* remained as a widely applied marker of identity throughout this period, a distinction perhaps based on language more than any other factor.[446]

Close attention to the way in which the Britons are portrayed here suggests that their inferiority within this text is mostly connected with the military superiority of the Anglo-Saxons, rather than the social inferiority of the Britons which lived under Anglo-Saxon law. While they are used within the chronicle to demonstrate the military prestige of the West Saxons, they also represent Britons who challenged West Saxon authority. It appears that none of these references definitively refer to settled Britons within the bounds of Anglo-Saxon England, but rather to those people of the border kingdoms within the context of the year in which they are recorded, and are either challenging or submitting to West Saxon expansion, even where the text follows Bede.[447] There are no overt references to settled Britons living among the Anglo-Saxons, and this suggests that either the Britons within Wessex and Mercia had been assimilated into the *Angli,* or that they were irrelevant once they were no longer the enemy. According to Nick Higham, the term *wala* was used to denote those indigenous peoples who did not speak English, and thus it eventually earned

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[444] Tolkien, "English and Welsh," 9 suggests that these names were Anglicised versions of British names, borrowed into English, so they refer to speakers of English, whether descended from Anglo-Saxons or Britons. Cf. Probert, "Early Medieval Language Change," 232.

[445] These distinctions between these groups of Britons do not appear until 815, and occur in *s.a.* 815, 830, 838, 853, 875, 891, 893, 894, 917, 921 and 923. Cf. Smyth, "English Identity," 28 and 31; and Davies, "Alfred's Contemporaries: Irish, Welsh, Scots and Breton," 331-332.

[446] Tolkien, "English and Welsh," 6 and 22-25; and Grimmer, "Britons in Wessex," 110.

[447] For example, consider the use of the terminology to mean 'other', as in Grimmer, "Britons in Wessex," 107. Cf. Charles-Edwards, "Language and Society," 714. Tolkien, "English and Welsh," 25-27, has submitted that the gloss 'foreigner' for *wealh* is too simplistic, as it was applied as a distinction for a Latin/Celtic speaker across the Germanic world, and never applied to other groups.

its pejorative connotation.[448] This suggests that Britons that did speak English, and were thus enculturated into West Saxon society were less likely to incur this pejorative name.

Christian Unity

As we have seen, the social and political context of the late ninth century was very distinct from that of Bede. The religious context was also very different. As the inclusion of biblical ancestors in the West Saxon genealogy shows, for ninth-century Anglo-Saxons Christianity was deeply rooted, and understood to be a part of their heritage and destiny. Another way this can be seen in the *ASC* is in how the biblical events which figure within the work are recorded in a simple, annalistic, matter-of-fact style. For example, the entry at *s.a.* 1 dryly states that *Crist wæs acenned* (Christ was born), and *s.a.* 30 says that this is when he was baptised and the apostles were converted, among many other biblical events which figure into Anglo-Saxon history alongside their battles, pilgrimages, and other activities. God's presence shaped all events, therefore Anglo-Saxon history and biblical history shared God's attention in his plan, and these were recorded as such. This detachment and casual registration of biblical events suggest a chronicler who is not trying to convert his audience.

Similarly, the chronicler provides a striking contrast with Bede and Alcuin in that he does not appear to be pre-occupied with conspicuous identification with the universal Church. While there are many references to pilgrimages and tithes going to Rome, the *ASC* does not overtly seek to court the favour of Rome or to win its audience over to the cause of the universal Church.[449] Written for a people already very much a part of this religious affiliation, the Common Stock does not need to advocate Rome's cause and can instead focus on ecclesiastical and secular politics within Anglo-Saxon England.[450] So, despite Ælfred's own interest in Gregory and his importance in the *HE,* the chronicle's focus on Anglo-Saxon issues ensures that the pope is given very limited mention*,* where

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[448] Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 192-3. For example see, 'The Laws of Ine', 23.3, 33, and 74.
[449] This is not to say that Rome was not very important, only that the anxiety of heresy was not an issue in this context. For example, see Susan Irvine, "The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the Idea of Rome in Alfredian Literature," in *Ælfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 63-77; Yorke, "The Representation of Early West Saxon History in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 153-155; and Howe, "Rome: Capital of Anglo-Saxon England," especially 149-150 and 159-159.
[450] Godden, "Translations of Alfred," 2.

he is simply credited with the Augustinian mission at *s.a.* 595/596, sending the pallium to Augustine

in 601, and dying in 606.[451] Also interesting to consider in this context is the entry for *s.a.* 690, which

is taken from Bede:

> *Her Þeodorius ærcebiscep forþferde, 7 feng Beorhtwald to þam biscepdome. Ær wærun Romanisce biscepas, siþþan wærun englisce.*[452]
>
> Here Archbishop Theodore passed away, and Berhtwald succeeded to the bishopric. Earlier the bishops were Roman; afterwards they were English.[453]

While Bede had claimed that Theodore was the first person to rule over all the Anglo-Saxons, this

unnecessary extra addition regarding the self-reliance of the Anglo-Saxon Church and its freedom

from complete dependence on Rome for its archbishops goes a step further. This extra detail

indicates a native Christianity that was very confident in its religious authority over Anglo-Saxon

Christians, and had its own place within God's plan.

While speaking in a voice that was confidently Christian, the *ASC* does display anxiety about

the precarious position of Christendom within the bounds of Britain. The language of the *ASC* creates

a sharp dichotomy between the Christian Anglo-Saxons and the heathenism of their enemies. This

can be seen in the numerous references to the invaders as simply *hæþen* or *heðne men,* suggesting

that religion was the defining difference between the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes.[454] Across the

literature of this period, the Scandinavian invaders are not really referred to in an ethnic sense, as

they are seen 'not of an alien race, but of an alien religion'.[455] This dichotomy can also be seen in the

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[451] *s.a.* 596 and 601, 25; and *s.a.* 605, 26.
[452] Bately, 32.
[453] Swanton, 40.
[454] For example *s.a.* 835, 842, 851, 853, 855, 865 and 871 all refer to the invaders as heathens, and while 'Dane' is the most common reference used, references to 'heathens' greatly outnumber 'Northmen'. See also, *The Will of King Ælfred,* in *The Life of King Ælfred,* ed. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 313-326. Importantly, there appears to be little distinction between Danes and other Scandinavian invaders, and we must be wary of reading the word *Dene* as an ethnic term. Clare Downham has shown that the adjective form 'Norwegian' did not develop in Old English until the eleventh century, which means that references to both *Dene* and *Norðmenn* probably refer to Scandinavians in general in this period, rather than distinctive groups. Downham, "'Hiberno-Norwegians' and 'Anglo-Danes'," 143-149. Cf. Page, "Audience of Beowulf," 117; and Harris, "Social Practice," 29.
[455] Page, "Audience of Beowulf," 118. See also, Smyth, "English Identity," 34-39.

Life of Ælfred, where Asser also uses the same dichotomy referring to the invaders as *pagani,* while the Anglo-Saxons are *Christiani*.[456]

Conversely, Guthrum's baptism and acceptance of Christianity in 878 appears to have mitigated his link with this religious dichotomy, making him a Christian and therefore no longer an enemy of Christendom.[457] In the annal for that year, Guthrum's baptism at *Weþmore* prompted very different treatment by Ælfred, as the king's old enemy now *was .xii. niht mid þam cyninge, 7 he hine miclum 7 his geferan mid feo weorðude* (was twelve days with the king, and he [Ælfred] greatly honoured him and his companions with riches) and at his death in 890, he was not a *hæþen* but is described instead as se *norþerna cyning* (the northern king) and Ælfred's godson, complete with a Christian name and noted for settling East Anglia.[458] This diplomatic conversion continued to bear fruit and it appears that the Danes who settled in the Danelaw were quickly assimilated into Anglo-Saxon culture once they accepted Christianity.[459] In the reigns of Ælfred's successors, the Christian Danes would be courted for their support of the West Saxon royal house, and for the peace that diplomacy brought.[460] Their acceptance into the Anglo-Saxon Church and therefore Christendom

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[456] For example, see Asser, *Vita Ælfredi,* Chs. 3 and 9. Page, "Audience of Beowulf," 119. Cf. Pratt, *Political Thought*, 109.

[457] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 104; and Henry Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 43. Cf. James, *Britain*, 222. This did not however necessitate an end to their conflicts. Cf. Hart, *The Danelaw*, 29.

[458] *s.a.* 878, Bately, 51 and Swanton, 76. *s.a.* 890, Bately, 54 and Swanton, 82. Importantly, with this conversion came Danish and Anglo-Saxon legal equality under Anglo-Saxon law, with recognition of their unique laws and equal *weregild,* and began a wider process of Danish assimilation into the Anglo-Saxon legal structure that continued throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. See 'The Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum*', EHD,* 416; and James, *Britain*, 246 and 250-251; Kershaw, "The Alfred-Guthrum Treaty," 48-52; Matthew Innes, "Danelaw Identities: Ethnicity, Regionalism and Political Allegiance," in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 72; and Lesley Abrams, "Conversion and Assimilation," in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 136.

[459] Tolkien, "English and Welsh," 21; Abrams, "Conversion and Assimilation," 135-153; Loyn, *The Vikings*, 78-79, 82, 91-93, 104-105, and 113; James, *Britain*, 218-219; Smyth, "English Identity," 35 and 45-46; and Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 318-319. This is in contrast to the pagan Danes who invaded later as 'vikings'. Cf. *s.a.* 879, 895, and 917; *ASC*-B and C: *s.a.* 880 and 886; *ASC*-D and E: *s.a.* 885 and 879; and the apocalyptic homilies of Wulfstan where he does not refer to the Scandinavians specifically, choosing instead to speak of *wicingas, sæmen,* or *flotmen* on the one hand, and *Cristen* on the other. Cf. Smyth, "English Identity," 36-38; and Alcock, *Kings and Warriors*, 119. For an overview of the conversion of the Danelaw in general see Hart, *The Danelaw*, 29-33.

[460] For example, *s.a.* 921 and *s.a.* 924 where Edward is lord of both Danes and Anglo-Saxons. Also consider a charter of King Æthelstan, indicating he had Scandinavian thegns with him in battle in Scotland, P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1968), 407. Also, Edgar issued a decree for the Danish laws to be respected within his kingdom, *E.H.D.*, no. 41. and used men of Danish descent in policing Northumbria, see Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 54. There is also the title given to Edmund in a land grant of King Eadred, where is styled *rex Angulsexna and Northhymbra imperator*

demonstrates Bede's own recognition of the Gregorian ideal of unity in diversity and that acceptance of the universal Church was the only tenet necessary for admittance into Christendom.

The Providential Model

As these examples show, the *ASC* uses the *HE* to demonstrate God's will in the West Saxon ascendancy. By grounding itself firmly in the Germanic heritage of the migration, using and expanding on the genealogies found in the *HE* to its advantage, listing the strong kings who had held sweeping power over the island and by demonstrating that the Anglo-Saxon military heritage was best exemplified in unity under West Saxon leadership, the *Angelcynn* are clearly the victors in this history and demonstrate God's favour. This firm focus on the might of the Anglo-Saxons saw the omission of the origin myths of the British, Irish and Pictish peoples, the discussion of their languages and the Irish mission to Northumbria.[461] Focusing intensely on the migration myth as the sole origin legend for the *Angelcynn,* and omitting that other offered by Bede regarding Gregory, the *ASC* clearly shows that the military strength of the Anglo-Saxons was all the justification they needed for their hegemony over the island.

This message, being circulated throughout the land, would have been a message of positivity for a war ravaged and overtaxed people, giving them hope for ultimate victory. It also would have encouraged their support to maintain that favour.[462] Perhaps most significantly, while consciously invoking the migration myth as a point of reference for Anglo-Saxon beginnings, the chronicler echoes this myth by having the Danes appear on the Mercian border in three ships in *s.a.* 789.[463] According to this entry, *þæt wæron þa ærestan scipu Deniscra monna þe Angelcynnes lond gesohton* (those were the first ships of the Danish men which sought out the land of the English race) which appears as a possible reference to the Anglo-Saxons having the *adventus* on their own land,

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paganorum gubenator Brittanorumque propugnator. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters,* no. 392; and *E.H.D.*, no. 105, 508-509. Cf. Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 48; and Innes, "Danelaw Identities," 72.

[461] Aidan is mentioned only once, in *s.a.* 651: *Her Oswine kyning wæs ofslægen, 7 Aidan biscep forþferde.* The Jutes were also suppressed in this version of events.

[462] Davis, "Propaganda and Truth," 178-182.

[463] The A version of the *ASC* does not state their origin, but the D,E and F versions all state that they were Northmen, while the E and F versions state that they were from Horðaland – in western Norway. Cf. Smyth, "English Identity," 38; and Downham, "'Hiberno-Norwegians' and 'Anglo-Danes'," 151.

suggesting that there had been the potential for their loss of the island. However, the *ASC* offers the Anglo-Saxons a different outcome by demonstrating their sheer courage and strength in the face of adversity across their long history. It is their natural ferocity and military superiority that had won them hegemony in the island of Britain, and as long as they maintained God's favour, they would hold it against the invaders.[464]

While the *ASC* consciously invokes the Germanic, militaristic and political aspects of the Anglo-Saxon heritage, it also maintains the ethno-religious identity established by Bede by incorporating Christian history into the annal, placing biblical figures within the West Saxon genealogy, creating a dichotomy between the Christian Anglo-Saxons and their non-Christian invaders, and by demonstrating that the events of Anglo-Saxon history were part of God's plan. This use of Christianity is subtle and unforced, but also makes very clear the importance of Anglo-Saxon victory over the heathens, by repulsion or conversion. Confident in the Christianity of his audience, the chronicler was able to build on the spiritual unity idealised by Bede in order to imagine a political unity, interpreting Christian unity through the lens of politics and warfare.

A United Angelcynn

We have seen how the Common Stock of the *ASC* is a very political text which focuses firmly on the Anglo-Saxons, their heritage, history and their military superiority by using Bede's *HE* as its historical framework and his vision of religious unity in order to create a sense of political solidarity.[465] Although Bede had created a sense of communal identity based on spiritual ideals rather than political realities, he helped to shape those political realities by creating a glorified past that the Ælfredians were inspired to return to.[466] Because in the Ælfredian context, Anglo-Saxon spiritual unity was something to be celebrated, it had the potential to become the defining feature which ultimately differentiated them from the pagans which threatened their kingdom.

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[464] For example, see *s.a.* 473, 457, 495, 597 and 614.
[465] Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 27-37.
[466] Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 128.

Therefore, the textual evidence suggests that it was the combined rhetoric of Bede and Ælfred which planted the seeds of a unified Anglian identity. Instrumental in bringing the Anglo-Saxons toward the sort of unity they would need to fulfil their destiny was for those people to realise their own kinship, and their shared past and future.[467] The *ASC* engaged with the collective heritage of the Anglo-Saxons by recalling a shared history, recording it in their exclusive language and by updating it according to the needs of contemporary society and politics. In short, the effect of Bede's terminology and his ethnogenesis for the *gens Anglorum* is that he articulated an ideological concept of a single people out of a confederation of the various Anglo-Saxon peoples.[468] This was a cultural unity that the Ælfredians sought to capitalise on and turn into a political reality, and continued to build on in the later updates to the various versions of the *ASC*.[469]

Conclusion

As we have seen, the *York Poem* and the *ASC* represent two very distinct ways of reinterpreting Bede's idyllic message of unity, and are two very good examples of the width and breadth of Bede's vision. The *YP* was written with a strictly regional focus on the city of York, while the *ASC* tried to encompass wider Anglo-Saxon England. While the *York Poem* is clearly a highly religious moral-didactic text, with a presumably clerical audience and limited circulation, the *ASC* is a highly political text with a wide, state-sponsored circulation, written in the vernacular. However, both used Bede's model in a highly patriotic attempt to shape their contemporary context in ways unforeseen by Bede.

Alcuin had inherited the *HE* in a similar context to that of Bede, and clearly used and understood Bede's methods and purposes within a related didactic and providential model. He had also inherited the legacy of the seventh-century religious schism that had so absorbed Bede. By writing poetry using Roman models and rhetoric Alcuin advocates Christian unity through York's ties

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[467] Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 49.

[468] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 22; Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 375; Brooks, *Bede and the English,* 22; and Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 523.

[469] Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English' People," 523; and Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 43-4, and 48-49. Cf. Reynolds, "'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Anglo-Saxons'," 401-2; and Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 375. For later use of this rhetoric, see especially, *s.a.* 900, 927, 937, 942, 973 and 975.

to the Christianity and civility of papal Rome, and through the use of exemplary royal and ecclesiastical models he advocates balance and cooperation between royal and ecclesiastical power. In doing so, he subtly undermines Bede's premise of incorporating the wide ethnographic sweep of Britain under the jurisdiction of the Anglo-Saxon Church with its archbishopric at Canterbury by focusing on one people within one city, York and its archbishopric. The *ASC* approaches the *HE* very differently, using an annalistic style which incorporated both the Christian and Germanic aspects of the *HE,* and it is able to channel the narrative's pervasive ideal of spiritual unity into a representation of an Anglo-Saxon military destiny. In doing so, it narrows the focus on Anglo-Saxon England, but strengthens its unifying threads so that the Anglo-Saxons continue to be charged with a special destiny within God's plan.

Although both texts clearly borrow from the *HE,* neither text is interested in the broad ethnography of Bede. They are both firmly focused on the Anglo-Saxons and the other peoples of Britain only feature to demonstrate Anglo-Saxon superiority and to therefore justify their hegemony. This has left a legacy in the historical record, as the Britons, Irish and Jutes are slowly written out of Anglo-Saxon history.

Chapter Four:

The *HE* in Translation: The *Old English Bede*

A century and a half or more after Bede wrote his *HE* in Latin, it was anonymously translated into the English vernacular in the mid to late ninth century.[470] Written at a time roughly contemporary with the *ASC,* the *Old English Bede* (hereafter *OEB*) demonstrates the continuity and development of Bede's ideas over many decades, and offers a different perspective of ninth-century England than our other case studies by giving a rare opportunity to engage with early use of the vernacular in Mercia, where the original translation probably took place.[471] Because most of the extant sources for ninth and tenth-century England are predominately West Saxon, the likelihood of a Mercian translation of a Northumbrian text can add depth to our knowledge of the period, and perhaps another perspective from which to view the West Saxon claims of hegemony.[472] Copied later by West Saxon scribes and disseminated alongside both ecclesiastical and political texts, the *OEB* has a varied range of stories to tell regarding the reception and use of the vernacular in later Anglo-Saxon England. This case study will attempt to engage with the continuities and variations in the use of Bede by comparing the early eighth-century Latin text to the mid to late ninth-century English translation with regard to the political and social contexts within which they were written.

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[470] Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 221 sets the date of translation between 883-930, however this is the date set for our first witnesses to the translation (Zu and T), giving the translation itself an early but an even less precise date than this range would suggest.

[471] The standard edition and translation is Thomas Miller, *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, in *EETS OS* 95 and 96 (1890), which relies heavily on mss T, with a 'contamination' of other texts. This is the edition used for the purposes of this paper, which also provides the translations, unless otherwise noted. Previous editions are those of Abraham Wheloc (1643) and John Smith (1722). While Jacob M. Schipper's 1897 edition is more recent, it is widely accepted that his edition is not as reliable as Miller's slightly earlier version, which is the edition which has been used for the past 120 years, and Whitelock has rightly noted that Miller's edition is 'a work to which all subsequent scholars in this field are greatly indebted.' Whitelock, *The OEB*, 57. This edition is supported and supplemented by Fredrik Klæber in 'Zur altenglischen Bedaubersetzung', *Anglia* 25 (1902): 257-315; and 27 (1904): 243-82 and 399-435. See also Gregory Waite, *Old English Prose Translations of King Alfred's Reign, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer 2000), 330. Gregory Waite is working with Sharon Rowley on a much needed new edition of the *OEB*, which will be published at some unknown date in the future. This much needed new edition will certainly help to further scholarship of the *OEB*.

[472] Whitelock, *The OEB*, 74-5; Sharon Rowley, 'Vernacular Angles' (Christopher Newport University, unpublished work) 31; Simeon Potter, *On the Relation of the Old English Bede to Werferth's Gregory and Alfred's Translations* (Prague: 1931), 5-17; and George Molyneaux, "The Old English Bede: English Ideology or Christian Instruction," *English Historical Review* 124 (2009): 1291 and 1294-1295.

Translation of the eighth-century *HE* offered an opportunity to highlight the achievements and history of the Anglo-Saxons and their church within a new context, and to adapt the text to meet new demands. Updated to become less rooted within seventh- and eighth-century regional politics and ecclesiastical controversies, the *OEB* is firmly focused on the spiritual unity of the Anglo-Saxon Church, and is less interested in secular politics.[473] Because of its intense regard for the Anglo-Saxon Church, the wider ethnic landscape of Britain is relegated to the periphery. Instead this text seeks to engage with the Anglo-Saxons by further inspiring cultural and spiritual unity, and intensifying the Christian and Germanic aspects of their identity as portrayed by Bede.

The Manuscripts

Because of the mystery surrounding the context of the translation, it is important to explore the manuscripts themselves in order to better understand the purpose and use of the *OEB.* The *OEB* is now extant in five manuscripts and one fragment of excerpts. *Bodleian Tanner 10 (9830)*, also known as 'T' or the 'Tanner Bede' appears to be the oldest of these manuscripts.[474] Scholars have debated its date, but do agree that T was copied sometime in the early to mid tenth century.[475] It is incomplete, with three quires missing from the beginning and two from the end; therefore there is no way of knowing if it contained the list of chapter-headings which appear in some of the other versions of the text.[476] It may have been written at Winchester, where it shares palaeographical and decorative details with late ninth and early tenth-century texts made there, including the *Parker*

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[473] Antonina Harbus, "The Presentation of Native Saints and Their Miracles in the Old English Translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*," in *Miracles and the Miraculous in Medieval Germanic and Latin Literature*, ed. K. E. Olsen, A. Harbus and T. Hofstra (Leuven: Peters, 2001), 157.

[474] This text appears in full facsimile in Janet Bately, *The Tanner Bede: The Old English Version of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica, Oxford Bodleian Library Tanner 10, Together with the Mediaeval Binding Leaves, Oxford Bodleian Library Tanner 10* and the Domitian Extracts, London British Library Cotton Domitian a Ix Fol. 11*, ed. Janet Bately, *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 24* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1992), 11. In this volume, Janet Bately provides the fullest analysis of these manuscripts to date. Cf. Waite, *Old English Prose Translations*, 324.

[475] For a date between 899-924, see Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 351; and Richard Gameson, "The Decoration of the Tanner Bede," *ASE* 21 (1992): 130. For the broader date of early to mid tenth century, see Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 668; and Thomas Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', v and xiii.

[476] Gameson, "Decoration," 128 believes that it did once have the list of chapter-headings. This list also appears in the Ca and O texts, and agree with the Latin list of chapter-headings exactly up to I:23, despite the fact that the actual text within the *OEB* varies from the Latin, so that these chapter-headings do not correspond with the actual chapters of the *OEB* until after I:23.

Chronicle (the previously discussed A-version of the *ASC - Corpus Christi College Cambridge 173*), before it came to reside at Thorney Abbey at some point before the fourteenth century.[477]

The next oldest version of the *OEB* is extant in *British Library, Cotton MS Otho B.xi*, or 'C'. C is also incomplete, as it comes from a volume which suffered much damage in the 1731 Cotton fire at Ashburnham House, so that only fifty-three of its original 241 leaves remain, and of those, only thirty-eight of the *OEB*'s 115 leaves are extant.[478] There are many gaps in the extant manuscript, so while palaeographers agree that it was written in Winchester, it has been dated variously anywhere from the early tenth century to the early eleventh century.[479] It is clear that C contained a list of the chapter-headings, which like the *HE* followed the text's preface.[480] Along with a poem on the seasons of fasting and herbal recipes, in the early eleventh century it was bound with a Winchester version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *Laws of Ælfred and Ine*, and *Æthelstan II*, as well as other legal materials, including the Burghal Hidage and notes on hidal measurements.[481] These accompanying texts suggest that C was probably considered important as a political document - at least by the time it was bound with these texts in the eleventh century.

Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 279B, known as 'O', is another of the extant *OEB* manuscripts, dated to the early eleventh century, although its origin and provenance are

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[477] Parkes, "Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript," 156-171. Other texts which appear to have palaeographical similarities are the Tollemache *Orosius,* Junius 27, Boulogne 10, and the Trinity *Isidore*. However, Gameson, "Decoration," 129-130 and 150 remains unconvinced that it is of Winchester provenance.

[478] This leaves editors of this text dependent on a transcript made by Laurence Nowell in the sixteenth century, alongside Wheelock's 1643 and Smith's 1722 editions of the C-text, to fill in the many gaps in the text. Miller, *OEB,* Introduction', xvi. The transcript of Laurence Nowell is now *British Library Additional MS 43703*, also known as 'CN'.

[479] Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 357, dates it to the early 10th; Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 180, dates it to the mid 10th-early 11thc., and Miller dates it to the late 10th, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xvi.

[480] This is apparent thanks to Wheelock's notes. Dorothy Whitelock, "The List of Chapter-Headings in the Old English Bede," in *From Bede to Ælfred: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and History* (London: Variorum, 1980), 265. The fragments of the *ASC* included in this collection (*British Library Cotton Otho B xi, 2*) appear to be a direct copy of the *Parker Chronicle*, and palaeographical evidence indicates that one of the hands written into the body of the *OEB* text is very similar to that of the *Parker Chronicle* for annals 925-955. This hand is also very similar to that of the 'Tollemache'/'Lauderdale' *Orosius,* (*British Library Additional 47967*), suggesting that they were possibly written by the same scribe, or in the same scriptorium, probably at Winchester. Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 180; and Parkes, "Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript," 167. Bede's short autobiography was added to this version of the history fifty years after its completion.

[481] Sharon M. Rowley, "Vernacular Angles," 6. Because of the extensive damage done to this text, much of what we know about this manuscript we know from what Nowell says about it before the fire.

unknown.[482] C, mentioned above, also appears to belong in this manuscript family, because O, Ca, and C all insert the *Interrogationes Augustini* at the end of Book III, rather than in Book I:27 as in the Latin text, and they all share an alternate translation of III: 16-18, while omitting the story of Fursey in the following chapter.[483] It is impossible to know, because the first three quires are missing from this text, but it is probable that O also contained the West Saxon genealogy up to Ælfred, like the other two texts in this manuscript family. Importantly, Miller has shown that the script of O is indicative of an early Anglian exemplar for these texts, because it contains erasures which have corrected many of the Anglian letter forms to comply with later, West Saxon usage.[484]

The 'B' version of the text, *Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41*, is an unfinished manuscript believed to have been written at the beginning of the eleventh century in the south of England, perhaps in Devon.[485] Slightly later, much material was added to the margins, in both Latin and English. These were mostly religious texts, including Latin masses (with English rubrics), Latin prayers, and a martyrology for December 25-31, as well as six homilies in English. Also added at this time were various Latin and Old English charms, and a recipe in English.[486] Raymond Grant has suggested that B was meant as a working copy of the *OEB,* written and illuminated under Winchester influence for a religious institution.[487] Unlike the C-O-Ca family of texts, both B and T

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[482] It is an incomplete text, with folio missing from both the beginning and the end, perhaps suggesting that at some point it existed on its own before being bound with *Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 279A* (a 13th c. version of the *HE*) in the 16th/17th c. Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 354; and Gneuss, *Handlist*, 673. Cf. Rowley, 'Vernacular Angles', 7.

[483] T and B have III:16 and III:18-20 and C, O and Ca have III:16-18. Cf. James Campbell, "The *OEB*: Book III, Chapters 16-20," *Modern Language Notes* 67, no. 6 (1952): 381-386. See Chapter V for more on the exclusion of the *Vita Fursey*.

[484] Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xvii-xviii. It appears to have been copied from an exemplar missing at least two folios, at Book II:5-7, but the text runs on continuously, as if the scribe did not notice the lacuna. Ca, mentioned below, appears to also be related to O, as it also displays this gap in the text unremarked.

[485] Gneuss, *Handlist*, 31, Ker, *Catalogue*, No. 32; and Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xvii. See also Rowley, 'Vernacular Angles', 9. Dorothy Whitelock suggests that the manuscript is unfinished because 'blank spaces are left frequently for initial letters, and some initials are only sketched in outline,' Whitelock, "Chapter-Headings," 280 n. 20.

[486] Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 32; and Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 39. See also Raymond Grant, *The B Text of the Old English Bede: A Linguistic Commentary* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989), 6. It also contains the so-called 'Metrical Epilogue' added by the scribe to the end of the history, which does not appear in any other Bedan manuscript. Fred Robinson, "Old English Literature in Its Most Immediate Context," in *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. John D. Niles (Cambridge: Brewer, 1980), 12.

[487] Grant, *The B Text of the Old English Bede: A Linguistic Commentary*, 9. It also contains an English inscription which indicates that it was a gift from Bishop Leofric to St. Peter's Church, Exeter sometime between 1050 and 1072, and it belonged to Archbishop Parker in the sixteenth century before he bequeathed it to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 1575.

appear to have been written without the West Saxon genealogy. Because of this, and the fact that B was bound with religious texts not long after being written, it seems that its purpose may have been outside of its use as a political text. This text is important to understanding the original translation because it has both of the parts missing in the other variants, such as III:19-20, which T has but the C-O-Ca family of texts does not, and a complete list of chapter-headings which does not appear in T.[488] Strangely, this list corresponds with the body of the texts of the C-O-Ca family of manuscripts, rather than the body of its own text, which suggests that the scribes of B had access to more than one version of the *OEB* in use as an exemplar.[489]

Cambridge University Library, Kk. 3.18, or 'Ca', is a faithful copy of O, both of which are related to the C version of the text.[490] It is believed to have been copied in mid to late eleventh-century Worcester, perhaps at Worcester Cathedral Priory.[491] Like the other two manuscripts in this family, it skips over Book II:5-7, and offers the alternate translation of Book III:16-18.[492] As mentioned above, Ca is also one of the manuscripts which contain a translation of the Latin chapter-headings.[493] The first page of the manuscript contains the following couplet: *Historicus quondam fecit me Beda latinum, Ælfred rex Saxo transtulit ille pius* (once the historian Bede made me in Latin, the blessed Ælfred, King of the Saxons translated it). This was probably written in the late eleventh century, and indicates an early belief in Ælfred's participation in the translation of the text.[494]

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[488] Sharon M. Rowley, "Nostalgia and the Rhetoric of Lack: The Mission Exemplar for Corpus Christi College Cambridge, Manuscript 41," in *Old English Literature in Its Manuscript Context*, ed. Joyce Tally Lionarons (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2004), 14. Cf. Grant, *The B Text of the Old English Bede: A Linguistic Commentary*, 15.

[489] "OEB," xix; and Whitelock, "Chapter-Headings," 264. The only other text with these chapter-headings still extant is Ca, although Wheelock did make notes on the headings in C before they were destroyed in the Cotton fire.

[490] It is this version of the text which was the source for both Wheelock's 1643 edition of the text, and Smith's 1722 edition. Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', v.

[491] Sharon Rowley, "Vernacular Angles", 9; and Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1315. Rowley has argued that it was at the priory c.1062-95, during the time of Wulfstan II's episcopacy, and while she submits that the scribe was Hemming, George Molyneaux names the scribe as Coleman, both of whom were at the Priory in this period.

[492] Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 23; and Whitelock, "Chapter-Headings," 263.

[493] Miller, *OEB,* xix; and Whitelock, "Chapter-Headings," 265.

[494] Miller, *OEB,* xix.

Unlike the previous texts, *British Library Cotton Domitian ix, f.11*, or 'Zu', contains only excerpts from the translation, on a single leaf.[495] The first is from *OEB* IV:5 containing the last two chapters of the decrees of the Synod of Hertford in 672, and five lines from Book I and ten from Book II, both on Augustine and his establishment of the Church in Canterbury. Ker assumes that the other decrees would have been extant on the previous leaf – no longer available. It appears to have been written sometime in the very late ninth to early tenth centuries.[496] While Zu is obviously too fragmentary to get much information regarding the original translation, it is the oldest surviving record of the *OEB*, and Miller insisted on its absolute importance in understanding the history of the exemplar. This is especially true in that Zu uses the older Anglian forms he also found in O, without the erasures; therefore the dialect of Zu is closer to the original forms of the translated text than any of the manuscripts mentioned above.[497] This is important with regard to the transmission history of the *OEB*, supporting Miller's claim that it began as an Anglian work, rather than early West Saxon as previously assumed.[498]

Transmission History

As the example of Zu shows us, the mere fact that the *OEB* was being excerpted so early indicates that it was already an important text by the late ninth century.[499] Dorothy Whitelock has also submitted all of the extant manuscripts are at least two or more removes from the original English translation.[500] This may indicate a very early date for the exemplar, perhaps as early as the mid ninth

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[495] A facsimile of Zu is also available in Janet Bately's *The Tanner Bede: the Old English Version of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica. Oxford Bodleian Library Tanner 10* and the Domitian ix, f. 11.*

[496] Ker, *Catalogue*, no.151; Miller, *OEB,* xx; Janet Bately, "Old English Prose before and During the Reign of Alfred," *ASE* 17 (1988): 98; date the fragment to the early 10th c, while Dumville has suggested a window between 890-930. David Dumville, "English Square Miniscule Script: The Background and Earliest Phases," *ASE* 16 (1985): 169. Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 330 believes that it was copied sometime in the 9th c after 883. Richard Gameson, "Decoration," 119-120 has linked the decoration of Zu to that of other, late ninth century texts, such as the royal genealogies and Old English *Martyrology,* (*British Library, Additional 23211*), the Tollemache *Orosius* (*British Library, Add. 47967*) and the Trinity *Isidore*, all of whose decorations seem to coincide with 'the celebrated educational programme of King Ælfred'.

[497] Consider also that J.J. Campbell has shown that the alternate translation of III:16-20 in the T and B manuscripts confirm the use of an Mercian exemplar. Campbell, "The *OEB*: Book III, Chapters 16-20," 383-386.

[498] Miller, *OEB,* xiii; and Campbell, "The *OEB*: Book III, Chapters 16-20," 383-386. Raymond Grant has offered a theory that some of these Anglian features may have been injected into the text by Anglian scribes, rather than by the translator. Grant, *The B Text of the Old English Bede: A Linguistic Commentary*, 10, 13 and 444.

[499] Rowley, 'Vernacular Angles', 4. For the suggestion that this was in response to Fulk's letter to Ælfred, see Pratt, *Political Thought*, 211-212 and 226.

[500] Whitelock, "Chapter-Headings," 264.

century and therefore before the Ælfredian translation programme.[501] Miller suggested that the T and B versions of the *OEB* shared a common exemplar, which was a direct descendent of a Latin copy, and that C and O also shared an English exemplar directly descended from a Latin copy.[502] However, while Dorothy Whitelock believed that all extant manuscripts went back to a common archetype, she was sure that this common archetype was in the vernacular, and at one remove from the original translation, because it contained errors in it which appeared to be scribal, rather than made by the translator.[503] This would put even the earliest of the extant manuscripts in at least the third generation of copying.[504] She agreed that C, O, and Ca were all related, but could not fathom that T and B were related to one another at all, and contended that they were copied from different sources.[505]

These complications in explaining the transmission history of the *OEB* make it clear that the extant manuscripts cannot fully explain the historical and material context of the original translation. They are at varying removes from the exemplar, and their exact relationship with it is most likely unknowable.[506] Because of these issues, it is hard to discern many details about the original translation, its context in time, or the place and intended purpose of either the translation or its immediate copies. However, the lack of a clear stemma does indicate that there were many more copies of the *OEB* in the late ninth and tenth centuries than are extant today. Clearly, there were several exemplars for the extant copies, and this demonstrates a greater popularity of the text than the paucity of manuscripts implies. This can also be seen in the records of missing copies in the post-conquest libraries at Burton-on-Trent, Durham, and Canterbury, which indicate that there were probably copies in these libraries before the late tenth century. The existence of these copies of the *OEB* in the late ninth and tenth centuries corresponds with a marked lack of Latin copies being

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[501] Contra: Bately, "O.E. Prose," 98.
[502] Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xxiii.
[503] Whitelock, "Chapter-Headings," 263.
[504] Whitelock, *The OEB*, 62 points out that the list of chapter-headings in B was clearly not copied from the list in Ca, as B is not only older than Ca, but also has a better sense of the Latin exemplar. B also did not copy its chapter headings from C, as it does not have the same errors as in C, so she suggested that perhaps B's list of chapter-headings was copied from a manuscript that had a list that was free of the errors in C and Ca.
[505] Whitelock, "Chapter-Headings," 266-8.
[506] Rowley, "Nostalgia," 11-12.

produced during this period, making it probable that the *OEB* enjoyed greater use during this time than its Latin counterpart.[507]

Complicating the stemma issue even further is the fact that the Latin exemplar for the translation is also not extant. Dorothy Whitelock has put forward a theory that the *OEB* was translated using an exemplar from the 'C-recension' family of Latin manuscripts, of which *British Museum, Cotton Tiberius C.II* is the closest example.[508] Michael Lapidge concurs with this but has also pointed out that there are many passages where the *OEB* does not follow the corruptions that are extant in the C-recension of the Latin text. He contends that the *OEB* was translated from another, less corrupt version of the C-recension, no longer extant, which he has dubbed 'ε'. This suggests that the translator's exemplar (here 'ε') was closer to the original *HE* than the extant C, K, and O texts of the Latin Bede.[509]

Translator(s) and Scribes

The translator of the text remains anonymous, and assuming that there was only one original translation, from which all the others were copied at some point before the early eleventh century, it remains unknown exactly when this original translation was written. We have seen that the date range given by scholars for its earliest witness varies from 883 to 930, and that the manuscripts we have are at least third generation copies. This would seem to indicate that the translation may have taken place anywhere from mid ninth century to the early tenth. While most scholars have

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[507] Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1294-1296; and Ker, *Catalogue*, xlv-xlvi.

[508] Whitelock, 'Chapter-Headings', 266; and Whitelock, *The Old English Bede*, 86, n. 123. This is because both the *OEB* and the C-recension texts of the *HE* include a passage at the end of IV:13 which does not appear in the M-recension texts, are very similar in chapters IV:17 and 18, have chapters IV:29 and 30 in reverse order, and have matching details such as the spelling of some proper names.

[509] Michael Lapidge, "The Early Manuscripts of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*." Paper presented at 'The Manuscripts of Bede' Conference. Durham University, August 6-8, 2008.

presumed that the translation was made subsequent to Ælfred's 'manifesto' to translate the necessary books into the vernacular, there is no definitive proof for this.[510]

The extant texts have come to us in a late West Saxon dialect however Thomas Miller has shown that the original translation was done in an Anglian dialect, which he believed was that of Mercia, by closely analysing spellings and corrections in O and Zu.[511] This removes the possibility of authorship by King Ælfred, and the probability of translation by his circle.[512] While there is no contemporary evidence indicating that Ælfred should be associated with the translation, as Asser does not mention it in his *Life,* nor is a translation of Bede specifically mentioned in any other writings attributed to Ælfred, the king has traditionally been credited for translating the *OEB*.[513] This attribution to Ælfred was first mentioned in the writings of Ælfric of Eynsham, writing a century after Ælfred's death.[514] This attribution to Ælfred also appears in a couplet on the opening page of Ca, probably written in the mid to late eleventh century.[515] Despite Miller's ground-breaking research which indicated that the original translation was made in the Anglian dialect of Mercia, scholars were at first hesitant to remove the translation from the Ælfredian circle, and shifted the identity of the translator onto the only scholar specifically mentioned in the context of translating for Ælfred – Wærferth, bishop of Worcester.[516] Although Wærferth was Mercian, and Asser mentions that he translated Gregory's *Dialogues* for Ælfred, no Ælfredian writer mentions the *OEB* specifically, nor any

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[510] Bately, "O.E. Prose," 98 and 103-4; and Grant, *B-Text*, 3.

[511] Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xxii-lix, especially lvi-lix and 'Preface', v, and went so far as to suggest it was made at Lichfield, lvii-lix.

[512] Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', lix.

[513] Cf. Whitelock, *The OEB*, 57-61; Charles Leslie Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature* (London: Harrap, 1967), 215; and Sherman M. Kuhn, "The Authorship of the *OEB* Revisited," *Neuphilologishe Mitteilungen* 73 (1972): 172-80.

[514] Ælfric, *CH* 2.9, 72. 900 years after Ælfric, scholars began to challenge his claim. For example, see Frank J. Mather, "Anglo-Saxon Nemne (Nymðe) and the 'Northumbrian Theory'," *Modern Language Notes* 9 (1894): 77; Henry Sweet, *An Anglo-Saxon Reader* (Oxford: OUP, 1896); and more claimed that the translator was Mercian: Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xix; Max Deutschbein, "Dialektische in Der Ags. Ubersetzung Von Bedas Kirchengeschichte," *Beiträge zur Geschichte Deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 26 (1904): 169-244; Frederick Klaeber, "Notes on the Alfredian Version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*," *PMLA* 14, no. Appendix I and II (1899): lxxii-lxxiii; and Waite, *Old English Prose Translations*, 327-329.

[515] Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xix.

[516] For example, Hans Hect, *Biscofs Wærferth von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialogue Gregors des Grossen* (Bibliotheck der angelsächen Prosa, v, Abt. 2). For an argument against this, see Potter, *On the Relation of the Old English Bede to Werferth's Gregory and Alfred's Translations*, 33. M.B. Parkes has suggested the *OEB* was composed when Ælfred's 'continental helpers' were in Winchester, namely Grimbald, who 'would have been well equipped to promote the revision and transmission of historical texts'. Parkes, "Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript," 163-5. Cf. Whitelock, *The OEB*, 58-59.

other major translations being done at Ælfred's court, outside of Ælfred's own claim of translating Gregory's *Pastoral Care*.[517]

Despite much debate, there is no clear consensus around the translation of the text, and although most scholars believe that the translator was indeed Mercian, he remains anonymous some eleven centuries after the *OEB* was written.[518] An emphasis on understanding the identity of the translator has fueled recent inquiries into the text, which have been driven by his proactive re-interpretation of the text during the course of translating. Malcolm Godden has preferred the term 'adapter' rather than 'translator' in referring to the creator of the *OEB,* and Antonina Harbus refers to the translator's actions as 'tinkering' because of the systematic shifts in emphasis and carefully planned omissions in the text.[519] The transformations that the *HE* went through in being translated into the vernacular are absolutely important in considering the reception of the *HE* in this later period. Because the translator is so difficult to know, the person responsible for creating this version of Bede's *Historia* will be called the 'translator' throughout this study, for simplicity's sake.[520] However, semantics should not cloud our awareness that there is yet no consensus on the identity of the translator(s), the specific regional and historical purpose of the *OEB,* nor the details of what happened to the work between its translation and the creation of the extant copies*.*

While the translator remains a mystery, and the specific transmission history is difficult to discern, in changing the text from the Mercian dialect to the late West Saxon dialect, the scribes were also actively engaged with these works. Not only did they change spelling to suit their own

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[517] Malcolm Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?," *Medium Ævum* 76, no. 1 (2007): 18. Cf. Dorothy Whitelock, "The Prose of King Alfred's Reign," in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E.G. Stanley (London and Edinburgh: Nelson, 1966), 78-79.

[518] Thomas Miller also suggested that there were more translators, outside of the main, Mercian translator, based on the variations in the translations of Book III:16-18 Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xxiv-xxv; and J.W. Pearce, "Did King Alfred Translate the *Historia Ecclesiastica*?," *PMLA* 8 (1893): appendix, vi-x. Simeon Potter revised Miller's theory in 1930, submitting that there need be only two translators to explain the divergence in the two versions of Book III, which was probably the result of the section missing in one of the exemplars. Potter, *On the Relation of the Old English Bede to Werferth's Gregory and Alfred's Translations*, 30-3. However, Dorothy Whitelock has again suggested three translators. Dorothy Whitelock, 'Chapter-Headings', 264. Cf. Campbell, "The *OEB*: Book III, Chapters 16-20," 381-6.

[519] M. R. Godden, "The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths: Rewriting the Sack of Rome," *ASE* 31 (2002): 56; and Harbus, "Native Saints and Miracles," 158.

[520] We will also assume that the translator is a man, as not doing so would require an inquiry well outside of the realm of this discussion.

dialect (or perhaps that of their patron), but they also sometimes filled the gaps in their copies of the work. They were familiar with the text of the narrative, and probably had more than one copy of it in the scriptorium with them.[521] There are many differences apparent within each copy of the work that is extant, which would seem to indicate scribal activity. Although this blurs and obscures the actual work of the translator himself, all these changes are absolutely important in understanding the reception and use of the *HE* in the late Anglo-Saxon period.

Ultimately, what the manuscript evidence seems to imply is that there was continued use of Bede's narrative throughout late Anglo-Saxon England, which indicates the continued importance of the text.[522] Moving the *HE* from Latin into Old English made the *HE* more accessible to a wider group of people. George Molyneaux has asserted that because of the decline in the use of Latin in the ninth century, the *HE* would have been available only to an exclusive group of highly educated religious scholars, and its translation opened up the text for a larger group who if they could not read it, could understand it read aloud.[523] When considering this audience, it does appear likely that some members of the intended audience were less educated about Christian theology than the translator, because he often explains biblical details that Bede had taken for granted. For example, the *OEB* offers a few explanations within the text, such as Genesis being the first book of Moses, that the top priest during Christ's Crucifixion was Caiaphas, that Jacob is the patriarch described in I:34, and that St. Peter was the chief of the apostles, among others. However, the text's inclusion of the decrees of the councils of Hertford and *Hæthfeld* and the *Libellus Responsionum* would suggest that the audience also included highly trained ecclesiastics as well.[524]

Didactic Purpose

Perhaps the most important effect of the changes made during the course of translation is the intensification of Bede's exemplary model. It did not just copy the examples of Bede however, but

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[521] Rowley, 'Vernacular Angles', 27.
[522] Grant, *The B Text of the Old English Bede: A Linguistic Commentary*, 7.
[523] Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1294-1295 and 1310.
[524] Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1310; and Whitelock, *The OEB*, 75

also re-worked the text in order to strengthen didactic aspects of Bede's message. The translator's active involvement in this can perhaps be seen most clearly in the preface which is shaped to his intended purpose.[525] First of all, he divides the preface into two parts, which separates the address to King Ceolwulf from the list of Bede's sources, so that the address is given its own emphasis, right at the beginning of the text. Then he demonstrates the purpose of the text within this address, so that where the Latin text reads:

> *Historiam gentis Anglorum ecclesiasticam, quam nuper edideram, libentissime tibi desideranti, rex, et prius ad legendum ac probandum transmisi, et nunc ad transcribendum ac plenius ex tempore meditandum retransmitto.*
>
> Your Majesty has asked to see the history of the English church and nation which I have lately published. It was with pleasure, sire, that I submitted it for your perusal and criticism on a former occasion; and with pleasure I now send it once again, for copying and fuller study, as time may permit.[526]

in Old English, it is translated to read slightly differently:

> *7 ic ðe sende þæt spell, þæt ic niwan awrat be Angelþeode 7 Seaxum, ðe sylfum to rædanne 7 on emtan to smeageanne; 7 eac on ma stowa to writanne 7 to læranne…*
>
> And I send you the history, which I lately wrote about the Angles and Saxons, for yourself to read and examine at leisure, and also to copy out and impart to others more at large…[527]

In his preface, Bede was clearly looking to Ceolwulf to endorse his enterprise, lending him the credence he needed to capture his intended audience. However, the translator is much less concerned about the king's approval, and does not indicate that the author was remotely interested in having the work checked over by the king. Rather it suggests that the text was sent to the king for studying so that he himself might learn from it, for his own edification. Importantly, the translation also adds that his intention in sending it to the king was so that he might 'impart it to others'. This addition is all the more striking in that, throughout the text, the translator often omits, and rarely adds to the Latin. This suggests that the translator was especially intent on the didactic purpose of his text.

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[525] Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1307-1310.
[526] *HE*, Preface, 2-3.
[527] *OEB*, Preface, 2-3.

Likewise, later in this address, Bede goes on to say:

Siue enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemoret de prauis, nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor siue lector deuitando quod noxium est ac peruersum, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognouerit, accenditur.

Should history tell of good men and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evil ends of wicked men, no less effectually the devout and earnest listener or reader is kindled to eschew what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pursue those things which he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God.[528]

This is translated into Old English thus:

Forðan þis gewrit oððe hit god sagað be godum mannum, 7 se ðe hit gehyreþ, he onhyreþ þam, oððe hit yfel sagaþ be yfelum mannum, 7 se ðe hit gehyreð, he flyhð þæt 7 onscunaþ.

For this book either speaks good of the good, and the hearer imitates that, or it speaks evil of the evil and the hearer flees and shuns the evil.

to which is added:

Forþon hit is god godne to herianne 7 yfelne to leanne, þæt se geðeo se þe hit gehyre. Gif se oðer nolde, hu wurð he elles gelæred?

For it is good to praise the good and blame the bad, that the hearer may profit. If your hearer be reluctant how else will he gain instruction?[529]

Here again, the translator focuses on the purpose of the text as a tool for teaching good behaviour.

He further uses the address to Ceolwulf to reiterate the point that education was the key to creating

good Christians, by modifying this Latin statement directed to the king:

Quod ipsum tu quoque uigilantissime deprehendens, historiam memoratam in notitiam tibi simul et eis, quibus te regendis diuina praefecit auctoritas, ob generalis curam salutis latius propalari desideras.

This you perceive, clear-sighted as you are; and therefore, in your zeal for the spiritual well-being of us all, you wish to see my History more widely known, for the instruction of yourself and those over whom divine authority has appointed you to rule.[530]

to read in English as:

For þinre ðearfe 7for þinre ðeode ic þis awrat; forþon ðe God to cyninge geceas, þe gedafenað þine þeode to læranne.

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[528] *HE*, Preface, 2-3.
[529] *OEB*, Preface, 2-3.
[530] *HE*, Preface, 2-3.

I have written this for your profit and for your people; because God chose you out to be king, it behoves you to instruct your people.[531]

This statement charges the king with the God given duty to educate himself and his people.[532]

One reader of the Ca text of the *OEB* understood the didactic purpose in the text, and says so in regard to Drythelm's vision by adding the statement: *sumes goodes mannes gesihðe be heofene rice 7 be helle wite ræd hit 7 well understond 7 þu bist þe betere* (some good man's vision concerning the kingdom of heaven and the punishment of hell. Read it and understand well and you will be better). In this statement, a commentator picks up on the message of the text, and emphasises it once again for the reader, suggesting that the Ca text continued to be used in the manner intended by the translator.[533]

The audience who is being addressed also seems to shift slightly within the translation. We have seen how the translator sought to explain some basic elements of Christian theology to his audience. He also explains some of the geography which he has copied from Bede's text, such as in the first sentence of Book I, where he explains that Ireland is the island of the Scots, and the location of Germany and Spain. He also tells his audience that Constantinople is the capital of the Greeks.[534] In addition, he interjects and rearranges the order of the narrative in Book III in order to explain who gives the sign to Edwin which prompts him to convert to Christianity after his victory in battle, as if he was concerned that his audience would not realise that the mysterious figure was Paulinus.[535] These changes suggest that the translator foresaw his text being used by teachers who would need to explain these details to their pupils, while the inclusion of ecclesiastical law and the rendering of

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[531] *OEB,* Preface, 2-3.
[532] The translator also adds in the word *lareow* (teacher) to describe the role of Albinus in the second part of the preface, which was not in the Latin exemplar.
[533] Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1310. Drythelm's vision is at *OEB* V:13, 422-434.
[534] *OEB* I:1, 24 and I:11, 48.
[535] *OEB* II:9, 127-132 .

some of the prayers and blessings of Bede's text in Latin, suggests that the text could also be of use for the teachers themselves.[536]

In fact, the use of the *OEB* as a teaching text seems to undermine its composition under a royal initiative. This is again clear in the preface, where the image of Ceolwulf is treated very differently. There is no mention of Ceolwulf's request for the text, nor his having already read a draft. Also, the endearments offered by Bede to his king are much cooler in the *OEB* and less poetic, written as if to goad the king toward a higher standard, rather than to flatter his ego. The voice of the writer in the preface is much altered in the translation, as it does not seek royal approval or authority; rather it focuses on the didactic potential of the work for the king and his people. Because there is in fact very little mention of Ceolwulf, beyond his name as the dedicatee, the *OEB* shifts the initiative for the work well away from the king, therefore emphasising Bede's own initiative. This would suggest that the dedication to Ceolwulf was kept in order to remain faithful to the original, but was not in fact intended for Ceolwulf or any other king specifically.

Again, scribal evidence supports this reading of the text. In the B text, a scribe adds his own sentiment onto the colophon left by Bede (as it appears in the M-recension texts) requesting the mercy and prayers of his readers. The scribe has added to these colophons, in the 'Metrical Epilogue', begging *æghwylcne brego rices weard* (any lord, guardian of the kingdom) to *þæt gefyrðrige þone writre wynsum cræfte þe þas boc awrat* (support with kindly power the scribe who wrote this book). This address indicates that the scribe is addressing an aristocratic patron, but because the reference to this lord is prefaced with *æghwylcne* (whatsoever/each/every) it is likely that the address is not being made to a specific aristocrat, but to any potential patron who might have the manuscript in his possession.[537]

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[536] For example, *OEB* I:14, 60; and V:13, 442. Also, some of Gregory's answers in the *Libellus* are recorded in Latin, and translated into OE, perhaps indicating their importance and use.
[537] Robinson, "Old English Literature in Its Most Immediate Context," 12 and 22.

These examples suggest that the translation was not made to honour a specific king, or planned with the specific intention of a royal audience. There is no special treatment of royal history; the translation of the body of the text itself faithfully maintains Bede's references to kings, and these are carefully translated, never updated and rarely omitted. This fidelity to the *HE* seems especially important in the translation of Bede's famous list of kings who had held *imperium* over the island of Britain: *cyning in Ongolþeode cyningum þæt allum suðmægþum weold 7 rice hæfde oð Humbre stream* (the kings of England who ruled over all the southern provinces and held sway as far as the river Humber). This list is again carefully recorded, and does not update Bede's own record, despite what some historians would point to as Bede's disregard for powerful Mercian kings such as Wulfhere, Æthelred and his contemporary Æthelbald.[538] The royal genealogies are included faithfully as well, with no attempt to update them – except for the later addition of the West Saxon genealogy between the preface and the chapter-headings when the text was copied into a West Saxon milieu. The only changes made to the *HE* in recording royal history are in the chapter breaks, which we will come back to later.

This shift of emphasis in the preface, and then the subsequent fidelity to Bede's own text suggests that the translation was not conducted under royal patronage. Although tradition claims that the text was written under Ælfredian auspices, there is no internal evidence of this. Neither the history of the West Saxons nor their ancestry is given special treatment outside of that given by Bede himself. In fact, there is an instance where the *OEB* actually misunderstands the West Saxon history in Bede's account. Bede had reported that Oswald was betrothed to the West Saxon princess Cyneburh, daughter of Cynegisl, however the *OEB* renders the case that Oswald had betrothed *his* daughter to Cynegisl. Also, in the same chapter, is the rather unflattering story of Cænwalh, son of Cynegisl, and although the passage portrays Cænwalh as a sort of spoiled royal, the story is faithfully

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[538] This is in contrast with the *ASC*, which did update the list of 'Bretwaldas' from Bede in *HE* II:5, 148-150.
Cf. Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 99-129; and Wormald, "Anglo-Saxon Society and Its Literature," 3.

carried across into the OEB.[539] Similarly, the *OEB* renders the details of the vendetta between the Northumbrian king Edwin and the West Saxon king Cwichelm faithfully and even maintains sympathy with Edwin and his heroic thegn Lilla, against the West Saxon king.[540] Even Aldhelm, credited with converting the Britons of Wessex to orthodoxy, and an important member of the West Saxon royal line, is rendered according to the Latin version, unremarked.[541] While maintaining fidelity to Bede's text is what we might expect, more important here are the omissions in portraying West Saxon history. One example is the omission of the consecration of Birinus, who is said by Bede to have been responsible for the conversion of the West Saxons, and to have been their bishop.[542] Even the epitaph of Cædwalla, the West Saxon king whom Bede praised for abdicating in favour of pilgrimage to Rome, is not recorded.[543]

This tends to confirm Miller's case that the text was not translated in Wessex, and it appears not under West Saxon patronage. There are a few instances where a West Saxon perspective appears, but these are most likely examples of scribal intervention in the later copying of the texts into a West Saxon context, because although they point to a special interest in the West Saxon aspects of the history, they are not indicative of the authority, desire and/or skill to make bigger changes. For example, in the list of kings who held *imperium* over Britain, mentioned above, where Bede records two different dialectical versions for the name of the West Saxon king Cælin, the translation only records the West Saxon version of the name 'Ceawlin'.[544] Also, in IV:12 of the *HE,* Bede gives a short description of the Anglo-Saxon bishops by region from 676 to 678, beginning with the West Saxon bishops. In copying this survey, the *OEB* the gives the names of the West Saxon bishops within their own separate chapter, so that they comprise Chapter III:15 in the *OEB,* while the rest of the survey is in III:16. Doing this gives the West Saxon bishops an independent emphasis, without changing the content of the text.

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[539] *HE* III:7, 232-236 and *OEB* III:5, 168-170.
[540] *HE* II:9, 164 and *OEB* II:8, 122.
[541] *HE* V:18, 512-514 and *OEB* V:16, 446-448.
[542] *HE* III:7, 232 and *OEB* III:5, 166-168.
[543] *HE* V:7, 470-472 and *OEB* V:7, 404-406.
[544] *HE* II:5, 148 and *OEB* II:5, 108.

A potentially more important scribal change may be seen where Bede often used the term *Gewisse* to refer to the West Saxons, and the English version invariably changes the probably archaic term *Gewisse* to *Westseaxna*.[545] Barbara Yorke has submitted that Bede's own use of the term *Gewisse* changes to *Occidentalium Saxonum* when the West Saxons begin to have military success over the other Germanic groups within Britain, which marks 'a significant change in the growth of Wessex.'[546] Surely this use affected the use of *Westseaxna* here for *Gewisse*, and updated the terminology to ninth-century conventions.

Miller has convincingly shown that the translator was actually Mercian, based on dialectical evidence in the erasures of the Zu and O texts. He offers as more evidence the claim that, along with 'some familiarity with Scotch localities and circumstances' the translator apparently also shows 'a certain tenderness for national susceptibilities'. He has also given Lichfield as the likely place of origin for the text.[547] However, a careful survey of the text shows that the Mercians are not singled out for special favour in the translation anymore than the West Saxons were, but are rendered just as they are found in Bede's text. As in the *HE*, the Mercians of the *OEB* are referred to as *seo hæðne þeod Mercna* (the heathen Mercian people) while under Penda's rule, and the text truly records Bede's statement that the Mercians at first failed to recognise the sanctity of Oswald, Bede's hero, and continued to persecute him with their regional hatred, even after he had died.[548] Also, Æthelred's men remain a *waerge weorod* (wicked host) while attacking Kent.[549] However, as will be discussed later, Mercian influence may have influenced the faithful record of St. Alban, despite the removal of most non-English saints in the translation.

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[545] For example, see *HE* II:5, 152 and *OEB* II:5, 114; *HE* III:7, 232 and 236 and *OEB* III:5, 166 and 168; *HE* IV:15-16, 380-384 and *OEB* IV:18, 306-310; and *HE* V:19, 522 and *OEB* V:17, 456.

[546] Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, 59.

[547] Miller points to a Mercian background because of the text's inclusion of details from and about Iona, and the early conversion of Mercia was also the product of the Ionian mission. Diuma, the first bishop of Mercia was from Iona, and was ordained by Finan (also from Iona), who baptised Peada and thus brought Christianity to the Mercians. He was followed by Cellach, a Irish cleric who retired to Iona, and an English bishop who was ordained in Iona. Miller, *OEB,* lvii-lix. However, Dorothy Whitelock has effectively shown that the text does not reflect this, and the assertion of a Mercian provenance for the translation must lie on the manuscript evidence alone. Whitelock, *The OEB*, 63-64.

[548] *HE* III:14, 254 and *OEB* III:12, 192; and *HE* III:11, 246 and *OEB* III:9, 182.

[549] *HE* IV:12, 368 and *OEB* IV:16, 298.

Because of the text's amplification of Bede's didactic purpose, especially considering the additions in the preface when most of the changes in the text are omissions, it seems clear that the *OEB* was written as a teaching text. This is compounded by a de-emphasis on royal authority, along with complete fidelity to Bede's own portrayal of royal history. Thus, the *OEB* appears to be a translation which sought to strengthen its connection with contemporary educative needs, but was not seeking to align itself with a particular political agenda. This suggests that the *OEB* was written to address a need for vernacular translation and instruction, but despite the clear affiliation of the extant manuscripts with the West Saxon court and other works produced under Ælfredian auspices, the West Saxon provenance for the extant manuscripts does not seem to reflect the milieu of the original translation itself or its original purpose. As we shall see, the intention of the work seems to be as a didactic text, motivated by Christian ideals of unity and an ecclesiastical milieu.

Anglo-Saxon Identity

During the act of translation, there were many changes within the body of the text and nearly a quarter of Bede's details were removed. However, the *OEB* remains broadly faithful to the *HE*.[550] Most of the excisions concern the non-English characters within the history, while retaining many of Bede's details about the Anglo-Saxons, such as their genealogies, stories of conversion and piety, political history, and their Church. No work which claimed to be a translation of the *HE* would be complete without the vivid tale of Edwin's conversion - from his exile in the court of Rædwald and the sign that was to bring about his allegiance to Christianity, to the allegory which compared life on earth to the flight of the sparrow through the mead hall in winter, Coifi's profaning of his own pagan altar, and the triumphant mass baptism of his daughter Eanflæd and her people by Paulinus in the river Glen.[551] Equally, the colour given in both the Latin and English accounts includes Æthelberht's conversion, Penda's prowess in battle, Oswald's role as *wealhstod* between the Irish Aidan and the

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[550] Whitelock, *The OEB*, 62.
[551] *HE* II:9, 162-166 and *HE* II:12-14, 174-188 and *OEB* II:8-11, 118-140.

Northumbrians, and Cuthberht's austere piety.[552] The translator followed Bede in including vivid tales from all over Anglo-Saxon England, continuing to use Anglo-Saxons as examples of both good and bad behaviour. So, Æthelfrith remains a pagan war lord, complete with genocidal tendencies against the British and Penda, *se fromesta esne of Mercna cyningcynne* (the valiant soldier of the Mercian royal race), remains the villain.[553] By including these memorable tales the English account maintains the text's potential to capture the cultural imagination, and retains the poignancy of the Bede's famous narrative, while continuing to produce exemplary history.

Again, the preface is the key to understanding the intensified focus of the translation. As we have seen, the preface is divided into two sections, giving each part a separate and deliberate emphasis. The first part is the dedication to Ceolwulf, discussed above, which states the purpose of the work, and the second contains Bede's list of his sources from all over England. We have seen how the first section sharpens Bede's focus on the importance of teaching good Christian behaviour. It also changes the description of the protagonists, so that rather than being written as a history of the *gens Anglorum* (*historiam gentis Anglorum ecclesiasticam*), it is instead clearly a history of both Angles and Saxons (*spell… be Angelþeode 7 Seaxum*). This important change is interesting: while the *ASC* seems to have perpetuated Bede's Anglian terminology, there are reasons to believe that the ninth century saw an increase in this inclusive terminology that sought to encompass the contemporary unity of the Saxons and Angles of Wessex and Mercia under Ælfredian hegemony.[554] Chapter Three discussed this shift toward the use of 'Anglo-Saxon' terminology which can be seen in Asser's reference to Ælfred as king of the *Angulsaxonum* and as *Anglorum Saxonum rex,* as well as in some of Ælfred's charters.[555] In the *OEB*, the terms *Seaxan þeode* and *Ongolcynne* are used

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[552] On Æthelberht's conversion: *HE* I:26, 176-178 and *OEB* I:15, 62; Penda's prowess: *HE* II:20, 202-204 and *OEB* II:16, 148; Oswald translating for Aidan: *HE* III:3, 218-220 and *OEB* III:2, 158; and Cuthberht's piety: *HE* IV:27-32, 430-448 and *OEB* IV:28-33, 360-384.

[553] On Æthelfrith as warlord, see *HE* I:34, 116 and *HE* II:2, 140-142 and *OEB* I:18, 92 *OEB* II:2, 102-104; and Penda as a villain: *HE* II:20, 202-204 and *HE* III:23, 288-290 and *OEB* II:16, 146-148 and *OEB* III:18, 234-236.

[554] Reynolds, "'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Anglo-Saxons'," 397-398.

[555] Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 46-48; and Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 23-24, and 27. Cf. Asser, *Vita Ælfredi*, Chapters 64, 73, 83, 87, etc. See also, David Pratt, *The Political Thought of Ælfred the Great* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 2007) 105-106; the notes in Lapidge, *The Life of King Ælfred*, 227-228; and Keynes, "King Alfred and the Mercians," 25-26 and 34-44.

interchangeably as the Germanic immigrants are introduced within the text. Vortigern's call for help

is made to the *Seaxna þeode* in Chapter I:11, and then to *ða Angel þeod 7 Seaxna* in I:12. However, it

is the *Seaxan* who beat back the Picts and Scots who were preying on the poor Britons, and who

demanded more money from the Britons for their services. This ambivalence in terminology can best

be seen in the final passage of I:12, where Bede had referred to the invaders twice as *hostes* the *OEB*

records:

> *7 þa of þære tide hwilum Brettas, hwilum eft Seaxan sige geslogon oð Tæt ger ymbsetes þære Beadonescan dune, þa heo micel wæl on Ongolcynne geslogon, ymb feower 7 feowertig wintra Ongolcynnes cymes in Breotone.*
>
> And then from that time now the Britons, now again the Saxons were victors, till the year in which Mount Badon was beset; there they made a great carnage of the Angles, about forty-four years after the arrival of the Angles in Britain.

In this passage the Saxons and Angles appear as the same people. However, after this point, the *OEB*

strictly follows Bede's usage, and the collective nomenclature for the Germanic people is *Onglecynne*

or *Ongolþeode*.[556]

It is also clear that an Anglo-Saxon Germanic identity is equally important in the translation

as it was to Bede. The continental roots of the Anglo-Saxons are kept true to Bede's text, both in the

migration myth which included Angles, Saxons and Jutes, as well as in the list of pagan continental

relatives, which includes the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and the *Boruhtware*, copied

word for word, although the *OEB* does not mention that the Britons referred to the Angles and

Saxons as *Garmani*, perhaps because they no longer did.[557] That chapter of the *OEB* also continues to

charge the Anglo-Saxons with the duty to share their Christianity with these peoples.

This awareness of continental Germanic ancestors is also present in the Anglo-Saxon

genealogies all of which appear in the *OEB,* such as the short genealogy given by Bede for the kings

of Kent from Oisc to Eadbald, and that of the East Anglians from Wuffa to Eorpwald, and then to

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[556] For another interpretation of this use of nomenclature, see Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1302 and 1317. Cf. Chapter 3 p. 95, n. 399.
[557] *HE* V:9, 476 and *OEB* V:9.

Anna.[558] The Jutish genealogy is also included, and the claim of their descent from Woden: *of ðæs strynde monigra mægða cyningcynn fruman lædde* (from his race the royal families of many tribes derived their origin).[559] As noted above, later, under West Saxon patronage, the C and Ca (and very likely the O, and possibly the T) versions of the text were updated by expanding the West Saxon genealogy to include later kings to Ælfred, as well as biblical ancestors.[560] With this update, the West Saxon genealogy was given pride of place over the others by following the preface, treated much the same in the *OEB* as it is in being placed at the very beginning of the Ælfredian *Parker Chronicle.*[561] This inclusion of the updated West Saxon genealogy shows that the Ælfredian milieu into which the text was later copied after translation clearly sought to identify itself with the wider work of Bede and the history of the Anglo-Saxons.

Related to this emphasis on family origins within the translation is the complicated relationship which unfolds between the Anglo-Saxons and the Goths across these two narratives. According to Malcolm Godden, Bede's own portrayal of the Goths in the fall of Rome had shifted them to a place of increased importance compared to that of his sources. Despite what Bede would have read about the Goths in the works of Augustine and Orosius, where the Gothic threat was portrayed as a challenge to Rome which Christianity had overcome, in the *HE* they appear 'implicitly responsible for clearing Britain of Roman power', as if God had planned their removal before the arrival of his chosen redeemers.[562]

The translator of the *OEB*, like the translator of the Old English version of Orosius, can also be seen shifting his text away from a negative portrayal of the Goths, and showing a special interest in

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[558] On the *Oiscingas: HE* II:5, 150 and *OEB* II:5; on the *Uuffingas: HE* II:15, 190/*OEB* II:12; and details of the East Anglian royal dynasty: *HE* III:18, 266-268 and *OEB* III:14.

[559] *HE* I:15, 50 and *OEB* I:12. Cf. Daniel Anlezark, "Sceaf, Japheth and the Origins of the Anglo-Saxons," *ASE* 31 (2002): 13.

[560] Cf. Roberta Frank, "Germanic Legend in Old English Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1986), 92-95.

[561] See Chapter 3, 90-93.

[562] Malcolm Godden, "The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths: Rewriting the Sack of Rome," *ASE* 31 (2002): 54.

their role as the perpetrators of the fall of Imperial Rome.[563] As discussed further below, in the *OEB* the account of the Romans in early Britain is much abridged, causing the account of Roman history to rush swiftly toward its ending with the entry of the Goths and their *hergung* (devastation) of Rome in 407. In Bede's version of events, Rome's fall only occurs after the many incursions from across the Rhine into Gaul by Alans, Suebi, Vandals and *multaeque cum his aliae* who defeated the Franks living there. Defending Gaul diverted and weakened the Roman army:

> *fracta est autem Roma a Gothis anno millesimo CLXIII suae conditionis, ex quo tempore Romani in Brittania regnare cessarunt.*

> meanwhile, Rome was broken by the Goths eleven hundred and sixty four years from its beginning, after which time the Romans ceased to rule in Britain.

However, the meaning shifts slightly in the corresponding passage in the *OEB*, where all mention of other invading peoples is omitted and it simply states that:

> *twam gearum ær Romaburh abrocen 7 forhergad wære. Seo hergung wæs þurh Alaricum Gotena cyning geworden. Wæs Romaburh abrocen fram Gotum ymb þusend wintra 7 hundteontig 7 feower 7 syxtig ðaes þe heo geworht wæs. Of þære tide Romane blunnun ricsian on Breotene.*

> it was then two years before Rome was taken and devastated. The devastation was caused by Alaric, king of the Goths. The capture by the Goths took place about 1164 years after the foundation of the city. From that time the Romans ceased to have dominion in Britain.[564]

The *OEB* also omits Bede's reference to the Huns, who attacked Rome after the Goths.[565] In this re-telling, the implication is that Alaric single-handedly brought down the mighty Roman Empire. So, the Rome that was *fracta* by the Goths in the Latin text was one that had already been weakened by the other invaders within its empire, but would stand to face others.[566] The Rome *abrocen* by Alaric in the *OEB* appears to have been intact before he arrived on the scene, and then completely subdued by him. According to the *OEB*, it is the Goths alone who bring about the fall of Rome, and thus usher in a new age within its former boundaries. The history of Rome's relationship with Britain

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[563] See also, *ASC, s.a.* 418. Godden points out that both the *ASC* and Æthelweard's *Chronicon* have a similar depiction of the Goths. Godden, "Anglo-Saxons and Goths," 56.
[564] *HE* I:11, 38-40 and *OEB* I:9, 42-44. The year here 409.
[565] *HE* I:13, 46 and *OEB* 1:10, 46-48.
[566] Cf. Godden, "Anglo-Saxons and Goths," 53.

is also under-recorded in the text, leaving the Goths guilty by implication for the Roman loss of dominion over Britain in this streamlined version of events.[567]

In Bede's text, it is clear that his religious vision for the Anglo-Saxons was balanced between his profound belief in the unity of Christendom through communion with the universal Church of Rome, and by his recognition of a traditional familial connection between the Anglo-Saxons and the peoples of Germany with whom they shared a common ancestry. Their migration myth articulated this connection, and Bede used the power of this myth to encourage the Anglo-Saxons to return as missionaries to the continent, and to bring those people into Christendom.[568] The translator of Bede's text seems also to have been moved by this connection, as the English text follows the *HE* closely with what Nicholas Howe has determined is 'a degree of fidelity unmatched elsewhere' in the translation and with a 'scrupulous regard for the integrity and form of Bede's migration myth.'[569] The power of the migration myth persisted across the shifting contexts of the two writers.

Arguably, this perception of Germanic peoples as the ancestors to the Anglo-Saxons grew more complicated with the ninth-century incursion of pagan 'Germanic' peoples, into the realms of Christian England. Bede had said that the Danes were one of the peoples of Germany from whom the Anglo-Saxons claimed descent, and the *OEB* records this faithfully:

> *ðara cynna monig he wiste in Germanie wesan, þonon Ongle 7 Seaxan cumene wæron, ðe nu Breotene eardiað. Wæron Fresan, Rugine, Dæne, Hune, Aldseaxan, Boructuare.*
>
> he [Egberht] knew that there were many of those tribes in Germany, from which had come the Angles and Saxons who now lived in Britain. These were the Frisians, the Rugini, the Danes, the Huns, the Old Saxons, the Bructeri.[570]

One tantalising hint at the complexity of this relationship can be seen in the nomenclature used for the Jutes in the migration myth as it is presented in the *OEB*. The three tribes which Bede names at the *adventus* are translated from *Saxones*, *Angli* and *Iuti* into the English *Seaxum*, *Angle*,

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[567] Godden, "Anglo-Saxons and Goths," 56.

[568] *HE* V:9, 476 and *HE* V:10, 480. Cf. Campbell, "Bede I," 4; and Hills, *Origins of the English*, 27. See also Boniface's letter to the English (738) asking for their prayers for the pagan Saxons, claiming that 'we are of one and the same blood and bone.'

[569] *Howe, Migration and Mythmaking*, 70.

[570] *HE* V:9, 476 and *OEB* V:9.

and *Geatum*.[571] Stephen Harris has shown that while *Geatum* is not a direct English translation for Jutes, the terms 'Jutes', 'Geats', and 'Goths' were commonly associated in Anglo-Saxon England.[572] This terminology is used for the Jutes throughout the migration scenario but later in the text when the ethnic background of the Anglo-Saxons is no longer an issue, the translator reverts back to the conventional way of referring to the Jutes in English, *Eote*.[573] According to Craig Davis, this shift from *Geatum* to *Eote* demonstrates that the translator knew that the common translation for *Iuti* was *Eote* and that the Jutes in England were not known as Geats. This suggests that the translator can be seen here making a conscious decision in referring to them this way.[574]

This choice of ethnic convention appears to have been prompted by the influence of the Goths in the ninth-century cultural imagination. Harris suggests that *Geatum* is an early English form of the Latin word *Getæ,* the word which Jordanes and Cassiodorus used to define the Goths in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.[575] If this is truly what is happening here, then the translator may be trying to link Anglo-Saxon heritage with that of the Goths. Because the Jutes were integral to the migration myth of the Anglo-Saxons, the twisting of their name into one associated with the Goths meant that the Anglo-Saxons were indeed ethnically tied to the Goths. This logic asserts that, according to the translator's interpretation of events, the Anglo-Saxons could understand their own people to have had a hand in bringing down Imperial Rome and establishing a new order.[576]

There is a wider context for accepting this theory, because the assertion of a strong kinship with the Goths was not unique to the translator of the *OEB.* An obvious example of this can be seen in Asser's *Life* of King Ælfred, where he opens the work with the king's genealogy, tracing his lineage through Gewise, Woden, Geat, and then back to Adam. Also, in the second chapter, Asser states that

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[571] *OE* I:12, 52-53. My emphasis.
[572] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 84.
[573] *OEB* IV:18, 308. This is the only other reference to the Jutes outside of the migration scenario.
[574] Craig R. Davis, "Redundant Ethnogenesis in Beowulf," *Heroic Age* Summer/Autumn, no. 5 (2001): <http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/5/Davis1.html>.
[575] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 84; and Davis, "Ethnogenesis in Beowulf," <http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/5/Davis1.html>. Cf. Merrills, *History and Geography*, 145-155.
[576] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 84. However, this does not explain why the fall of Rome is attributed to *Gotum* in the *OEB*, and not *Geatum.*

Ælfred's grandfather, Oslac *Gothus erat natione; ortus enim erat de Gothis et Iutis* (was a Goth by race, as his origin was that of Goths and Jutes).[577] An ancestor named 'Geat' also appears in the royal genealogies of Lindsey, Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, and Kent in the late eighth century.[578]

The importance of the Geats can also be seen in other in Anglo-Saxon literature. For example, in the poem *Beowulf* the protagonist is a Geat, who appears in this poem about Swedish kings and heroes, written in Old English.[579] Some scholars have explained the poem's appearance in Anglo-Saxon England as a cultural phenomenon resulting from contact with the newly settled Scandinavians within the bounds of Anglo-Saxon England.[580] Some have linked it to the West Saxon attempt to merge these Scandinavians into their own hegemony by linking them to a shared past with the Anglo-Saxons.[581] Still others have attributed it to praising the ancient line of the Mercian king Offa because it includes many names which appear in both the Anglian collection's genealogy of King Æthelred (675-704) and Penda's genealogy in the *ASC*, such as Eomer/Eamer and Wærmund/Garmund, as well as Offa.[582] There is much to commend the theory that it was written in Mercia, and perhaps the inclusion of Geats in the *OEB* is a result of this common literary milieu.[583]

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[577] Asser, *Vita Ælfredi,* Chs. 1 and 2, 1-4. Here Ælfred is identified with both tribal affiliations, but it is difficult to know from this passage if they are considered distinctive groups, as it implies that although he was Gothic and Jutish, his overarching identity was Gothic. Consider here the statement made by the writer of Ohthere's voyage, who as he described Ohthere's journey around Jutland noted that 'in these lands the Angles lived before they came here.' Page, "Audience of Beowulf," 120. See also Frank, "Germanic Legend," 95.

[578] David Dumville, "The Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies and Regnal Lists," *ASE* 5 (1976): 47-48; and Kenneth Sisam, "The Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 39 (1953): 308-309. Cf. Davis, "Cultural Assimilation," 21.

[579] Of which there is one manuscript: *British Library Cotton MS Vitellius A.XV*. See *Beowulf*, ed. Michael Swanton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997),.

[580] Davis, "Ethnogenesis in Beowulf," <http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/5/Davis1.html>; Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 143-179, see especially 144-148; and Alexander Callander Murray, "*Beowulf,* the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy," in *The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. Colin Chase (Toronto, Buffalo, London: Toronto University Press, 1981), 104-108. Contra: Dorothy Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 24-26 and 61.

[581] For example, Murray, "*Beowulf,* the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy," 103-110. Cf. Anlezark, "Sceaf, Japheth and the Origins of the Anglo-Saxons," 13-46.

[582] Barbara Yorke, "The Origins of Mercia," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle Brown and Carol A. Farr (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 15-16; Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf*, 58-59, and 63-64; and Raymond Wilson Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1959), 104.

[583] Cf. Murray, "*Beowulf,* the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy," 103, and his sources at note 12 for Mercia as home of poem; and Davis, "Ethnogenesis in Beowulf," http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/5/Davis1.html for an evidence that the poem was relevant to the East Anglian, West Saxon and Mercian dynasties, and attempted to incorporate the heroic Danes into this multiethnic depiction.

Another example of Geats in Anglo-Saxon literary tradition is in the seventh-century poem Widsith.[584] Although our only version of this poem is a manuscript of Devon provenance, it also contains references to Offa and his great kingship, as well as references to Jutes, Goths, and Geats. John Niles has noted that the Goths in this poem are portrayed as particularly prestigious, and thus the marriage it mentions between the Anglo-Saxon princess Ealhhild and the Gothic king Eormenric suggests that the writer considered the Anglo-Saxons and Goths to be similar in status.[585] This point should not be pressed however, because the poem lists the Goths, Geats and Jutes separately, and probably understands them as distinct (albeit probably related) peoples, indicating that the Geats in *Widsith* are not considered Goths.[586]

The Anglo-Saxons may have sought to connect themselves with the Goths in particular because of their prestige in wider Germanic culture.[587] Wallace-Hadrill has shown that ninth-century Scandinavians also felt a strong kinship with the Goths, and were eager to reiterate their legendary ties to Theodoric.[588] Likewise, the Carolingians were also interested in their own relationship with the Goths as their empire expanded into lands Gothic both in its western extremity – Visogothic Spain – and eastern – Ostrogothic Italy.[589] This expansion also prompted a sense of collective Teutonic ethnicity among the Franks, Goths, Lombards, and Danes, gradually encompassing the many diverse people within the Carolingian empire, and leading them toward thinking of themselves as a *gens teudisca*.[590]

The Anglo-Saxon incorporation of the Goths into their own origin myths may indicate that they too understood themselves as a part of this Teutonic ethnicity, which included the Goths and

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[584] In *Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501*, see *Widsith*, in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: An Anthology of Old English Poems*, ed. S.A.J. Bradley (London: Dent, 1982) 336-340.
[585] John Niles, "*Widsith* and the Anthropology of the Past," *Philological Quarterly* 78 (1999): 187.
[586] Cf. Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf*, 55, and Pohl, "Ethnic Names and Identities," 23-24.
[587] Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 81. Cf. Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf*, 55, and Pohl, "Ethnic Names and Identities," 23-24.
[588] Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, 10.
[589] Frank, "Germanic Legend," 93. One indication of this is when Charlemagne removed the statue of the Gothic king Theodoric from Ravenna to his home in Aachen. Cf. Matthew Innes, "Teutons or Trojans? The Carolingians and the Germanic Past," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2000),227-249.
[590] Frank, "Germanic Legend," 94.

Danes, and seems to be supported by the list of related ethnic groups given in Bede and copied into the *OEB*.[591] This sense of a shared heritage would have generally focused on a shared past, but here this sense of kinship seems related to a continuation of Bede's idea of the missionary destiny for the Anglo-Saxons as a fulfilment of their role in God's plan. The *OEB* does maintain Bede's focus on conversion in an Anglo-Saxon context, and kinship between these groups would have been absolutely important in considering the place of the Anglo-Saxons within England itself, as the invading Danes would have also been a part of the *gens teudisca* and therefore also ethnically related to themselves, and on the list for conversion by the Anglo-Saxon mission.[592]

Of course, this is a lot of weight to put on three instances of a single word occurring in this long narrative however the passage where it appears is a crucial one in establishing the ethnic identity of the Anglo-Saxons. The disappearance of the Jutes from the historical record may have contributed to their being used to connect the Angles and Saxons with Geats. It is clear that Bede's astute sensitivity to the Anglo-Saxon connection to their Germanic past, and his re-interpretation of that identity into Christian providential history resulted in an ethno-religious identity that continued to resonate through the centuries. This being the case, the translator may have meant to use this identity as a missionary force in his own day, in much the same way Bede had. In this context it is important to consider that London may have been a missionary base for evangelism into Scandinavian controlled East Anglia and Essex in the late ninth century, because London is where our first witness to the *OEB,* Zu, is believed to have been copied.[593] It is possible that the Scandinavian incursion was seen as a failure of the Anglo-Saxon mission to the continent, because of its direct effect on both Bede's Northumbria and the eastern half of the translator's Mercia. The translator may have considered his text to be one way of encouraging the continuation of that mission, to the Germanic pagans within Britain.

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[591] Smyth, "English Identity," 30-31; and Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 159.
[592] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 85-6. However, this does not explain why the reference to the Britons calling the Anglo-Saxon *Garmani* (as a garbled form of *Germani*) is omitted in *OEB* V:9, compare to *HE* V:9, 476.
[593] David Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 197.

The Ethnic Landscape

In following Bede's historical model, the *OEB* also clearly understands the providential role of his protagonists in fulfilling the will of God from the *adventus*. The *OEB* follows its exemplar closely in setting up Vortigern's invitation to the foreign *Angel þeod 7 Seaxna* to help protect the native Britons, and setting the scene for the Anglo-Saxon incursion.[594] Here, the *OEB* keeps the derogatory references to the Britons, who fall into decadence because their victories against the Picts and Scots had brought a new life of leisure. As Gildas and Bede had portrayed them, the Anglo-Saxons in the *OEB* appear in Britain by the *rihte Godes dome* (by the just judgement of God) wreaking God's vengeance on the Britons just as the biblical Chaldeans had done in Jerusalem. As in the *HE,* this helps to demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxon intervention was necessary in order to redeem the island and save the Britons from themselves. Therefore their advent is justified and they remain redemptive heroes.

The Anglo-Saxons also continue to feature as instruments of God in the symbolic story of Augustine's Oak. Here, the *OEB* maintains the Britons' failure to recognise the superiority of the Augustinian mission, despite the miracle he performs: symbolically bringing sight to the blind Englishman. For this the Britons pay dearly at the Battle of Chester. Although the *OEB* drops the emotive details, as discussed below, the Saxons continue to wreak God's vengeance on the Britons, again *rehte Godes dome geworden wæs* (by the just judgement of God). Where in Latin the Christian Britons who fought the pagan Saxons are dubbed the *gentis perfidae* (unbelieving people) they are the same in Old English: *getreowleasan þeode.*[595] In both versions of the text, the Christian Britons are contrasted against the pagan Anglo-Saxons: one fails to follow God's will, while the other cannot help but follow it, even while pagan. Here the Britons continue to function in the story as a demonstration of God's favour for the Anglo-Saxons.

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[594] *HE* I:15, 50 and *OEB* I:12, 50.
[595] *HE* II:2, 140 and *OEB* II:2, 102.

The translator's sharp focus on the Anglo-Saxons also affects the way in which he reshaped Bede's ethnography. From the very beginning of the work, the *HE* clearly states that it is about the island of Britain in its entirety. In the first chapter of the first book, after discussing the basic geographical features of the island, Bede shows a wide interest in the peoples of Britain by detailing their origin myths and locating them within this geography. He describes all the peoples of Britain, their respective languages, their shared use of Latin, and their relationships with one another, before going into some detail regarding the history of Britain before the arrival of the Saxons in the *adventus Saxonum*.

While the *OEB* does not exclude the other peoples within Britain, the translator does steer the course of his account away from the details of their story. Much of the detailed information about the Irish, British and Picts is omitted by the translator. For example, the Pelagian heresy warrants no entry in the *OEB*, nor do the two visits by St. Germanus.[596] Because there is no equivalent chapter in the *OEB* to match *HE*'s I:12, a reader/listener of the later text would not know that the attacks of the Irish and Picts had forced the Romans to help build a wall to protect the British, and because *HE* I:9 is omitted, so is the removal of Rome's armies from Britain to Gaul by Maximus. There is no mention of the British victory under Ambrosius, nor of the civil wars which had exhausted them to the breaking point.[597] Honorius' letter to the Irish regarding the correct dating of Easter and the Pelagian heresy is much scaled down, as are the details about Iona and the Pictish conversion.[598] Likewise, many of the British and Irish heroes, such as Columba, Ninian and Adomnán are also largely edited out of the Old English version.[599] Among them only Saints Alban and Aidan still figure prominently in the *OEB.* Interestingly, what the *OEB* omits regarding Aidan is some, but not all, of Bede's criticism of Aidan's adherence to Irish Christianity, suggesting that Aidan's religious

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[596] *HE* I:17-21, 54-66.
[597] *HE* I:16, 52-54 and *HE* I:22, 66-68.
[598] For Honorius' letter, see *HE* II:19, 198-202 and *OEB* II:15, 146; and for Iona and the Pictish conversion, see *HE* III:3-4, 218-224 and *OEB* III:2, 158-160.
[599] For Columba and Ninian, see *HE* III:4, 220-224, and for Adomnán see *HE* V:15-17, 504-512.

differences were less important at this stage than his pastoral relationship with Oswald and his evangelism.[600]

Because most of the details regarding the other ethnic groups on the island are omitted, a person who had only read or heard the *OEB* may not have ever learned that the Picts were converted to Christianity by Columba, how Celtic monasteries differed from Roman ones, and very little about the importance of Iona or Adomnán's success in converting the southern Irish to Roman orthodoxy.[601] While Bede had spilled much ink in his vehement objection to the differences in liturgy between the Celtic and Roman churches, in the *OEB* very little attention is drawn to these points. A person without access to the Latin version of the *History* would probably have had a very limited understanding of the controversy in Northumbria regarding the calculation of Easter. There is no mention of the Synod of Whitby in 664, nor the latent distrust among the Roman and Irish traditions subsequent to the synod, and only obscure references to Roman *rihtgelefdan lare* (orthodox doctrines) surface, but without solid connections to the Britons or Irish.[602] Similarly, while Colmán is an important figure in the *HE* as an advocate for Columba's authority in the Easter issue, and chose to return to Ireland rather than follow Roman orthodoxy, he is not associated with the schism at all in the *OEB*, but rather appears simply as the founder of an Anglo-Saxon monastery in his Irish homeland.[603] As Dorothy Whitelock has pointed out, the only references to the Easter controversy in the *OEB* are those which celebrate the English actively bringing the Celtic Church back into line with Roman orthodoxy, such as the letter of Ceolfrith to Nectan, King of the Picts, and Egberht's work in Iona.[604]

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[600] See especially *HE* III:3, 218 and *OEB* III:2, 158 where his 'error' is ignored. See also *HE* III:5, 226-230 and *OEB* III:3, 160-164; and *HE* III:15-17, 260-266 and *OEB* III:13-14, 198-208 which are a faithful account. However, this portrayal is complicated by the fact that the *OEB* manuscripts diverge at III:14, where there appears to have been a lacuna in the exemplar that appeared after it was copied from the translation. Because of this the section on Aidan's humility and spirituality is missing in T and B, and the gap in O and Ca has been filled in by a later hand.

[601] *HE* III:4, 220-226 and *HE* V:15, 504-506.

[602] *HE* III:25-6, 294-311 and *OEB* III:20, 246. The *ASC* also omits the Synod of Whitby.

[603] *HE* IV:4, 346-348 and *OEB* IV:4, 272-274.

[604] *HE* II:4,146 and *HE* V:21, 534-552. Whitelock, "The Prose of King Alfred's Reign," 78.

Because much of the criticism against the Britons disappears, one effect of these omissions is that the relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons changes considerably. The English version uses less derogatory language to describe the Britons, which can be seen in the absence of many of the Latin statements which refer to the British as *stupida, ignavi, utpote omnis bellici usus prorsus ignara* (utterly ignorant of the art of warfare) and *segni populo* (sluggish people). The *OEB* also does not include Bede's comment that the wall built by the Britons was *ad nihil utilem* (useless) because the Britons *utpote nullum tanti operis artificem habentes* (were not skilled in building work), nor any of the details regarding the failure of their wall.[605]

Likewise, the statement from Bede concerning the final Roman withdrawal from Britain:

Tum Romani denuntiauere Brettonibus non se ultra ob eorum defensionem tam laboriosis expeditionibus posse fatigari; ipsos potius monent arma corripere et certandi cum hostibus studium subire qui non aliam ob causam, quam si ipsi inertia soluerentur, eis possent esse fortiores.

Then the Romans informed the Britons that they could no longer be burdened with such troublesome expeditions for their defence; they advised them to take up arms themselves and make an effort to oppose their foes, who would prove too powerful for them only if they themselves were weakened with sloth.[606]

was translated into English as:

Ða gesægdon Romane on an Bryttum þæt hi no ma ne mihton for heora gescyldnysse swa gewinnfullicum fyrdum swencte beon. Ac hi manedon 7 lærdon þæt hi him wæpno worhton 7 modes strengðo heora feondum.

Then the Romans said to the Britons once for all, that they could no longer exhaust themselves in such toilsome expeditions for their defence. But they admonished and instructed them to manufacture arms, and pluck up stout hearts that they might fight and withstand their foes.[607]

Where the text of the *HE* indicates that the fight on behalf of the Britons was dragging down (*fatigari*) the Romans, that the Britons were merely victims of their own laziness and unwillingness to fight (*ipsi inertia soluerentur*) and needed to take up arms and make an effort to defeat their enemies (*arma corripere certandi cum hostibus studium subire*), the *OEB* translation portrays a slightly different relationship between the Romans and the Britons. The Romans of the *OEB* are

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[605] *HE* I:12, 42-45 and *OEB* I:9, 42-46.
[606] *HE* I:12, 42-43.
[607] *HE* I:12, 44 and *OEB* I:9, 44-46.

more encouraging and helpful; they explain that they need to conserve their energy for their own defence; encouraging the Britons to be brave (*modes strengðo naman þæt hi compedon wiðstodan heora feondum*) and they even help the Britons to develop the weapons they will need to withstand any barbarian onslaught.

Similarly, where Bede portrays the British turning against one another, fighting and stealing, in order to stay alive after the various barbaric incursions, the *OEB* says merely that:

> þa earman ceasterwaran toslitene 7 fornumene, wæron fram heora feondum, 7 heora æhtum benemde 7 to hunger gesette
>
> the poor townsmen were rent and destroyed by their foes, being stripped of their possessions and left to starve.

While portraying them as desperate, the *OEB* does not indicate that they fought one another in any selfish attempt to rectify their plight.[608]

Again, the shift in the relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons can be seen in the story of Augustine's oak (*Agustinus aac*), mentioned above.[609] As we saw in Chapter Two, Bede continually pointed to the inadequacies of the British in his telling of the story and while maintaining the role of the Anglo-Saxons as God's instrument against the Britons, the *OEB* tempers the polarisation of Bede's text by playing down the details of Bede's polemic. For example, the British divergence in the calculation of Easter is not mentioned and because the translation does not mention that the monks who were slaughtered at the hands Æthelfrith were also from Bangor, Bede's implication that among them were the bishops that had denied Augustine is omitted, which severs the direct causal link between their failure to recognise Augustine's superiority of faith and Æthelfrith's retribution. Also, by omitting Bede's triumphant emotive details, such as his pastoral depiction of those monks feeding themselves by ploughing the land, and fasting for three days before being slaughtered at battle, the account loses its smug tone. Also undermined is his emphasis on their utter devastation and his statement that seven groups of three hundred monks had been

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[608] *HE* I:12, 44 and *OEB* I:11, 50.
[609] *HE* II:2, 134-142. See also Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 above.

slain, causing Bede's account to lose its smug tone. The translator of the *OEB* also chose not to

mention that their body guard, Brocmail, had deserted them and *inermes ac nudos ferientibus*

gladiis reliquit (left them unarmed and helpless before the swords of their foes).[610] By not including

these details, the sharp contrast between the victorious Æthelfrith and the degraded Britons is

played down considerably, and Bede's polemic of retribution is somewhat undermined. The Britons

still function in their role as sinners, who ultimately incur God's wrath, but the triumphant tone of

Bede's text is much understated in the *OEB*.[611]

It also undermines Bede's polemic against early Irish Christianity.[612] For example Bede, despite

his love for Bishop Aidan, repeatedly condemns his practice of Easter saying:

> *Aidanum summae mansuetudinis et pietatis ac moderaminis uirum habentemque zelum*
> *Dei, quamuis non plene secundum scientiam. Namque diem paschae dominicum more*
> *suae gentis, cuius saepius mentionem fecimus, a quarta decima luna usque ad*
> *uicesimam obseruare solebat.*

> Aidan, a man of outstanding gentleness, devotion, and moderation, who had a zeal for
> God though not entirely according to knowledge. For after the manner of his race, as
> we have very often mentioned, he was accustomed to celebrate Easter Sunday between
> the fourteenth and the twentieth day of the moon.[613]

Following this statement, Bede goes on to complain about the same practice among the Picts as

well. However, in the corresponding English passage, Easter is not mentioned with regard to Aidan

or the Picts. Instead it reads simply:

> *Aidan wæs haten micelre monþwærnesse 7 arfæstnisse 7 gemetfæstnisse monn; 7 he*
> *hæfde Godes ellenwodnisse 7 his lufan micle.*

> Aidan, a man of much gentleness, piety and moderation; and he had the zeal of God
> and love for him in a high degree.[614]

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[610] *HE* II:2, 140 and *OEB* II:3, 102-104.
[611] This shift away from the dichotomy between the two faiths can also be seen by comparing the consecration of Chad in the two works (*HE* III:28, 316 and *OEB* III:19). The *OEB* glosses over Bede's dismay that because Bishop Wini was the only bishop in Britain who had been consecrated by the Roman Church, and thus he needed two helpers in consecrating Chad that were of British Christianity, Chad's consecration was invalid according to the Church. Instead it ignores Bede's scathing commentary and states simply that Bishop Wini was the only bishop that was '*rihtlice gehalgad*' (correctly ordained), without further comment.
[612] See also *HE* III:4, 220-224 and *OEB* III:2, 160 where the account of the Pictish conversion and the Christianity of the Irish Columba is given a very brief gloss.
[613] *HE* III:3, 218.
[614] *OEB* III:2, 158.

These changes create a radical shift in tone within the *OEB,* and suggest that the translator was actively interpreting and updating it according to his own contextual perspective. Therefore, it seems very likely that the polarities highlighted by Bede were contrary to the translator's purpose, except in establishing the providential model whereby the Anglo-Saxons gain hegemony of the island based on God's favour, or to demonstrate the value of mission.[615] This is poignantly exemplified at the close of the narrative where the translator includes the only reference to the failure of the Britons to convert the Anglo-Saxons. This occurs toward the very end of the narrative, where Bede is surveying the state of Britain in his own day. In both texts this reference serves to justify the Anglo-Saxon hegemony over the Britons, because while the Irish shared their faith generously with the Anglo-Saxons, the Britons instead choose to harbour an *odio gentem Anglorum* (inborn hatred of the English) - rendered *inlice hete ond fenge Ongel þeode* in the *OEB* – and thus live a life of frustration and subjection under the Anglo-Saxons.[616] The inclusion of this passage in this place, when so many other similar passages are omitted, suggests that the hegemony of the Anglo-Saxons still needed to be justified in the ninth century.

Outside of this model the translator systematically removes the derogatory references to the Britons. One reason for the softening of the dichotomy between the seventh and eighth-century religious practices is that the issues that were so important to Bede were no longer valid in the ninth century. The Welsh and the Irish had become members of the universal Church soon after Bede wrote, so their religion was no longer distinctive and the Britons within Anglo-Saxon England were also part of the Anglo-Saxon Church, which completely removed them from the accusations he had made. As they spoke English and were members of the Anglo-Saxon Church, they were a part of Anglo-Saxon society at large. As this shift in portrayal suggests, the religious and linguistic differences between the two peoples had become less important and less clear in the ninth century than it had been in previous centuries.

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[615] *HE* II:2, 140-142 and *OEB* II:2, 102-104; *HE* V:23, 560 and *OEB* V:22, 478-480.

[616] *HE* V:22, 554 and *OEB* V:20, 472; and the quotes are at *HE* V:23, 560-561 and *OEB* V:22, 480. Also Cædwalla remains a symbol of all the Britons, because he had no respect for the religion of the English, and this helps to justify Oswald's subjection of them in *HE* II:20, 204 and *OEB* III:1, 148.

It may also be the case that by the ninth century the British had become a valuable part of the English Church, and an integral part of holding it together against the pagan incursion. Important for consideration in this context is David Dumville's point that we should be careful not to underestimate the influence of the Welsh churches and scribes in an era when 'in the aftermath of Scandinavian assaults and settlements in England, the cultural strength of the British churches [here meaning the churches in Wales] may have seemed superior to that of many of their English counterparts.' He illustrates this by pointing to Asser's important contribution to Ælfred's court, and the possibility that Welsh reformed minuscule was an influence on the reform of English Square minuscule in the late ninth century.[617] There is some evidence that the Mercian Church in particular had been influenced by the Christianity of the Britons, with the West Midlands incorporating the British ecclesiastical structure to a large degree, and the diocese of Lichfield growing out of an already established British church structure.[618] However, little is known about the condition of the British Church within Anglo-Saxon England in the ninth century, as it was absorbed into that of the Anglo-Saxon Church, and the documentation for Mercia in particular is scanty.[619]

The Place of Rome

This intensified focus on the Anglo-Saxons in the *OEB* also appears to have affected the way in which the history of Imperial Rome was portrayed. Bede's account of Roman history has been thinned considerably, and is often included only as it relates to the English. Therefore, the Roman history that Bede relates for the period prior to the a*dventus Saxonum* is marginal and extremely over simplified. For example, the colourful account which Bede gives of the various skirmishes and many sea battles waged between Julius Caesar and the Britons in the *HE* is simply rendered in the *OEB* as if Caesar discovered Britain and conquered it in 60 BC. The entire chapter has been whittled down to read:

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[617] Dumville, "English Square Miniscule," 159-160.
[618] Tyler, "Early Mercia and the Britons," 97-100.
[619] Tyler, "Early Mercia and the Britons," 91 and 101.

> *Wæs Breotene ealond Romanum uncuð, oððæt Gaius se casere, oðre namen Iuluis, hit med ferde gesohte 7 geode syxtygum wintra ær Cristes cyme.*

> The island of Britain was unknown to the Romans, till the emperor Gaius, also called Julius, came with an army and overran it, sixty years before the advent of Christ.[620]

From this point and throughout Book I, the translated text quickly marches through Roman history, rushing the account to its fall to the Goths in 407 with another oversimplified version of events.[621]

Across Book I most Roman historical figures disappear from view, as do the Roman names given in the *HE*, which are either shortened in the *OEB*, or simply left out. Also such events as the building of the Roman walls across northern Britain are given a shortened account in the *OEB*, and while vastly important in the history of religion, the translation omits that Pope Boniface acquired the Pantheon in Rome, and rededicated it to St. Mary.[622] Some details of Roman history are misconstrued, for example while the *HE* states that Nero was the cause of many Roman problems during his reign, nearly losing Britain being one of them, the OE version again oversimplifying and misconstruing Roman history, states of Nero *þæt he Breotone rice forlet* (that lost the dominion of Britain).[623] In the next chapter, the translation covers for this error by not mentioning that the Britons rebelled under Severus, stating merely that Severus sent a force to fight in Britain, and recovered a portion of the island. Other details of Roman history are given a distinctively British bent. For example, the emperors Constantine I, Constantine III, Magnus Maximus, and Gratian II are all said to have been born in Britain, rather than just receiving proclamation while in Britain.[624] Imperial Romans seem largely irrelevant to this retelling of the story of the Anglo-Saxons, excepting that they brought Britain out of prehistory and into history, beginning with Julius Caesar's arrival in 60 BC, according to the *OEB*.

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[620] *OEB* I:2, 30.

[621] See *HE* I:2-6, 20-28 and *HE* I:9-11, 36-48 as compared to *OEB* I:2-3, 30; *OEB* I:6, 32-34 and *OEB* I:9-11, 42-50.

[622] *HE* II:4, 149 and *OEB* I:4, 32.

[623] *HE* I:3, 24. Cf. Godden, "Anglo-Saxons and Goths," 55-56.

[624] Antonina Harbus, "Native Saints and Miracles," 169 suggests that this is due to a mistranslation of Bede's *creatus imperator* (raised as emperor) which is rendered as *acenned* (born) in the *OEB,* perhaps reflecting an interpretation of the text influenced by traditions which had developed after Bede.

Of greater relevance in the ninth century was papal Rome. However, it appears that changes in the ecclesiastical context of Britain since the eighth century complicated the *OEB'*s relationship with its exemplar with regard to its representation of papal Rome. As we have seen in looking at the *HE* and Alcuin's *York Poem*, seventh and eighth-century Northumbria had seen a great deal of controversy and anxiety regarding the connections between the Anglo-Saxon Church, the Irish Church and papal Rome. We have also seen how this anxiety had diminished by the mid ninth century, and how Canterbury came to act as Rome's agent as the centre of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Therefore, the anxiety regarding adherence to the doctrines of the universal Church is no longer an issue in the ninth century of the *OEB.* This changes the text dramatically, in that the removal of this anxiety from the text in effect de-emphasises the role of papal Rome, and highlights the importance of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

This can be seen most clearly in the treatment of the Roman sources that Bede so carefully (one might say 'cautiously') cultivated. While Bede found recording his sources in detail absolutely necessary to demonstrate the accuracy of his text, and perhaps to defend it, the translator excises most of the direct quotes from documents and letters. For example, Pope Boniface's letter bestowing the pallium on Justus, his admonishing letter to Edwin, his encouragement to Æthelburgha concerning her husband's conversion to Christianity, as well as Pope Honorius's letters to Edwin are all non-existent in the English version.[625] Also, while Honorius's letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury is summarised in the *OEB*, his letter to the Irish regarding the correct dating of Easter does not appear at all.[626]

Even the letters regarding the Gregorian mission, despite its importance in the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon Church, receive little of the translator's ink. For example, the letter which Pope Gregory sent to Augustine, motivating him to persevere toward his mission in

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[625] For his letter to Justus, see *HE* II:8, 158-160; to Edwin, see *HE* II:10, 166-170; for the letter to Æthelburgha, see *HE* II:11, 172-174; and for Boniface's letter to Edwin, see *HE* II:17, 194-196.
[626] For the letter to Archbishop Honorius, see *HE* II:18, 196-198; and *OEB* II:15, 146; for the letter to the Irish, see *HE* II:19, 198-202.

Britain despite his reservations is much abridged, and his letter to the Bishop of Arles concerning his expectation of that bishop's kindness toward Augustine is dropped from one chapter and is much abridged in another.[627] Gregory's letters to Mellitus, in which he at first decides that they should tear down the Anglo-Saxon pagan shrines, and then changes tack, deciding after much thought that they should be converted to Christian shrines, do not appear at all in the *OEB*.[628] Nor does his letter to Augustine admonishing the new bishop not to revel overmuch in his ability to perform miracles and his letter and gifts to King Æthelberht following this are just barely mentioned.[629] Indeed, it seems that the only time papal letters are referenced at all in the *OEB* is when they are in praise of the Anglo-Saxons, so that thirteen of the exemplar's letters regarding orthodoxy are omitted, and almost every other significant omission from the *HE* refers to non-English documents. The effect of these removals is the undermining of the authority that Bede sought in including them. Instead, the translation foregoes that authority, and presents a text that takes Bede's word as fact, making him the authority within the text.[630]

What the translator does include of Bede's details concerning papal Rome is given only in relation to the Anglo-Saxons.[631] So, where the *HE* gives numerous details regarding the life, humility and piety of Gregory, the English version is much less hagiographical in tone, with no mention of his birth, lineage, personal experiences, troubles reconciling his solitary study and his pastoral duties, his poor health, nor his written works.[632] It also does not record that Gregory was the apostle to the Anglo-Saxons, that he snatched them from the teeth of paganism nor that he was eager to convert them.[633] However Augustine's role in building the church at Canterbury is followed closely, as are

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[627] For the letter to Augustine, see *HE* I:23, 70 and *OEB* I:13, 56; to the Bishop of Arles, see *HE* I:24, 70-72, *HE* I:28, 128, and *OEB* I:16, 62.
[628] *HE* I:30, 106-108 and *HE* I:32, 100-114.
[629] *HE* I:31, 108-110; *HE* I:32, 110 and *OEB* I:16, 90.
[630] Nicole Guenther Discenza, "The *Old English Bede* and the Construction of Anglo-Saxon Authority," *ASE* 31 (2002): 76-77.
[631] Æthelweard, *Chronicon Æthelweardi*, in *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. Alistair Campbell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962) I:1, 5 displays a very similar attitude toward relating the details of Roman history.
[632] *HE* II:1, 122-132 and *OEB* II:1, 94-98.
[633] *HE* I:30, 106-7 and *HE* II:1, 130-131. Cf. Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1303-1304.

Augustine's other ecclesiastical activities in Kent.[634] Also, the *Libellus Responsionum* is a true

translation, suggesting an avid interest in canon law and in the early doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon

Church, which is notably also the focus of the excerpts in Zu, our earliest witness to the

translation.[635] In this, it appears that the translator does not share Bede's interest in recording the

minutiae of Roman ecclesiastical politics, but is much more interested in their direct effect on the

establishment of the early Anglo-Saxon Church.

Gregory's letter regarding the second wave of the mission, in which Justus, Mellitus,

Paulinus and Rufianus come to help Augustine and to expand the mission into other parts of Britain,

is also not recorded. This means that Gregory's orders concerning this second wave, such as his

desire to establish metropolitan sees at London and York that were equal in status, that the

Archbishops of these sees elect twelve bishops under them and that the British bishops are subject

to Augustine do not appear either.[636] This raises important questions concerning the translator's

intense focus on the monastic community at Canterbury, while omitting the details of wider

ecclesiastical organisation, such as perhaps refusing to recognise Gregory's intentions to have an

archbishopric at London rather than Canterbury, that the status of the archbishopric at York be

equal to that of London, and that the British bishops were included in his plan.[637]

The omissions within the text help to highlight what does appear, and focus the narrative on

the importance of Canterbury, Augustine and the effect of the Gregorian mission. Gregory's epitaph

(which specifically mentions his role in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons) and the epitaph of

Augustine are the only two kept in the translated narrative, lending prestige to their roles within the

text, and weight to their reputation as the apostles to the Anglo-Saxons. It appears that in the *OEB*

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[634] *HE* I:27, 78-102; *HE* I:33, 44-116; and *OEB* I:16-17, 62-90 (it is important to point out here that this citation included the *Libellus* because that is where it appears in Miller's edition, but the manuscripts actually have it at the end of Book III).
[635] The *Libellus* as it appears in the *OEB* maintains Gregory's focus on clerical marriage, sexual continence, kin marriage, ritual purity, and reprisals against Church theft. See *HE* I:27, 78-102 and *OEB* I:16, 64-88 (see previous note).
[636] *HE* I:29, 104-106.
[637] Cf. Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 125; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 216 and 223-227; and Whitelock, *The OEB*, 69.

Gregory is most important when his story relates to the story of the Anglo-Saxons, and the realisation of their Christian destiny.[638]

Tellingly, Gregory's pivotal role in the origin myth of Anglo-Saxon Christianity is recorded faithfully. His discovery of the Angle slaves for sale in the Roman market is re-told with remarkable adherence to Bede's own telling. The *OEB* includes his remarks on their extraordinary appearance: *wæron whites lichoman 7 fægres ondwlitan men 7 æðellice gefeaxe* (they were men of fair complexion and handsome appearance with beautiful hair), complete with the name puns given in the original. The importance of this Christian origin myth carries across in the translation, where it is equally clear that Gregory was divinely inspired to initiate the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons: *he monad wære, þæt he saw geornfulle gymenne dyde ymb þa hælo ure þeode* (he was warned to take such zealous care for the salvation of our people). The emphasis of this story is complimented in both texts by being followed directly with the story of Augustine's oak, proving that Augustine was fulfilling Gregory's divine mission and doing the will of God by bringing enlightenment to the Anglo-Saxons, where they had previously only known paganism and error.

Again, while clearly working within a Roman ecclesiastical world view, Roman authority appears to matter less to the translator of the *OEB* than it did to Bede or to his contemporaries and this also shaped the portrayal of Bede's ethnography, an example of which can be seen in the depiction of the Irish mission in Northumbria. While most of the non-English characters within the Anglo-Saxon conversion story are dropped Aidan remains prominent, as does the role of Iona in converting Northumbria. Because Ninian, Columba, Germanus, and others do not appear, this influence seems all the more striking.[639] The *OEB* tells us that when Aidan was bishop of Lindisfarne:

> of þæt tide monige cwoman dæghwamlice of Scotta lande on Breotone; 7 on þam mægþum Angelþeoðe, þe Oswald ofer cyning wæs.

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[638] There were however many contemporary translations of his works, and although unlikely, it is possible that they were thought to have covered the missing material in the *OEB*.

[639] Aidan features prominently in *HE* III:3, 218-220, *HE* III:5-6, 226-230 and *HE* III:15-17, 260-266, which is reflected in *OEB* III:2-4, 158-166 and *OEB* III:13-14, 198-208.

at that time many came daily from the land of the Scots into Britain; and with great fervour preached and taught Christ's faith in the tribes of English under Oswald's rule.

This pastoral depiction is complimentary to the Irish in both texts, but while Bede says that *multi Scottorum* (many Irish) came to teach, the English version intensifies this record, saying that *monige cwoman dæghwamlice* (many came daily).[640] This description, coupled with the omissions regarding Aidan's contentious Easter practice, adds an increased amount of positivity to the account, which serves to lend sanctity to both Saints Oswald and Aidan as they are shown orchestrating a golden age of faith in Northumbria.[641]

In a clear change of context from that of Bede and Alcuin, the translator is content to shift the central focus of early Anglo-Saxon Christianity away from Rome. This sharpens the narrative's focus on Canterbury and the first bishopric there, and allows the Ionan mission to loom larger and have a greater impact within the history. In decentring the role of Rome in Anglo-Saxon religious history, the *OEB* also stands out from other works of the period in its approach to written history and in its reliance on the authority of an Anglo-Saxon historian rather than papal documents. This approach appears to contradict evidence in other contemporary works which are eager to align themselves with their Latin exemplars, and while the *OEB* certainly shows reverence for Gregory, the account of him here removes any touches of hagiography.[642] The English translations that are known to be a part of Ælfred's programme point to the importance of an ongoing cult of St. Gregory among the Ælfredian circle. This unique treatment of Rome again supports the claim that the *OEB* was constructed outside of the Ælfredian circle, and offers a different perspective than that offered by

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[640] *HE* III:3, 220-221 and *OEB* III:2, 158-160.

[641] On Aidan's work with Oswald, see *HE* III:3, 218-220 and *HE* III:6, 230; and *OEB* III:2, 158 and *OEB* III:4, 164-166. On his Easter practice, see *HE* III:3, 218 and *HE* III:17, 264-266. Note that the chapter Bede has squeezed in the middle of his account of Aidan is about the Easter practice of Columba and his churches, and could therefore also be offering further explanation of Aidan's own practices, see *HE* III:4, 220-224. This is omitted in the *OEB.* Cf. Chapter Two above.

[642] For example, the translations of *Cura Pastoralis* and *Dialogues* into Old English. Cf. Mechthild Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2005), 57-60.

most of our extant manuscripts from this period as the *OEB* seems to boldly operate outside of this milieu and is content to rest on the authority of Bede alone.[643]

The History of the English Church

As we have seen, the translator decentres Roman papal authority in the text, and instead focuses on Canterbury as the centre of the Anglo-Saxon Church, using Bede's authority to tell its story. This, along with many omissions concerning Roman political history, fewer details regarding the Irish and the Picts, and the removal of most derogatory comments about the Britons, gives the *OEB* has a much narrower, more targeted focus on the Anglo-Saxons themselves. While undermining Bede's broad ethnographic vision, the translation stays true to the biblical impetus of its exemplar, so that in both texts the Anglo-Saxons are systematically brought into line with their Christian destiny.

We have also seen that Bede was intent on demonstrating the debt of Anglo-Saxon Christianity to the Irish mission but ultimately proclaimed the superiority of the universal Church of Rome which brought the Anglo-Saxons into Christendom and communion with God's will. However, the Anglo-Saxon Church was confidently Christian in a way that Bede's eighth-century church had not been. Loyalty to Rome in the ninth century was a given, and the translator did not feel the need to continually re-establish his loyalty to Roman orthodoxy, nor reinforce his ties to the papacy, depending on Rome for strength and authority in the way that Bede and Alcuin had.[644] In effect, the *OEB* clearly focuses on Canterbury as the established centre of the Anglo-Saxon faith. Dorothy Whitelock has proposed that the translator's omission of many of the letters from the papacy points toward his desire to emphasise the holiness of the Anglo-Saxon Church, because he lays the conversion of the Britons, Scots and Picts to orthodoxy at the feet of the feet of Theodore, Wilfrid, Egberht, Aldhelm and Ceolfrith while omitting the efforts of popes Boniface and Honorius, as well as that of Adomnán.[645]

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[643] Discenza, "The *OEB* and Authority," 69-70, and 73. See also, Rowley, "Nostalgia," 28.
[644] Discenza, "The *OEB* and Authority," 73-77.
[645] Whitelock, *The OEB*, 63.

This treatment of Rome as both integral and peripheral reflects a similar attitude to the composer of the *ASC.* Both texts follow Bede in beginning the story of Anglo-Saxon England with Imperial Rome's subjugation of Britain, and then tell of the withdrawal of Imperial Rome and the establishment of a new relationship in Britain between the Anglo-Saxons and papal Rome, beginning with the Gregorian mission. However they choose to focus the trajectory of their history on the Anglo-Saxons and their Church. The importance of Theodore in this context should not be underestimated, and we have seen how the *HE,* the *ASC* and the *OEB* all focus on Theodore as the Roman representative who moderated the connection between Roman orthodoxy and the archbishopric, and moved Anglo-Saxon Christianity forward by standardising its practice and strengthening its hierarchical structure.[646] Bede credits Theodore with being the first man to lead all the Anglo-Saxon people, and Ælfred invokes Bede's own description of the happy times under Theodore's guidance when describing a historical golden age of Anglo-Saxon literacy and learning.[647] The *ASC* marks the death of Theodore in 690 as the time when the Anglo-Saxon Church was no longer dependent on Rome for its archbishop, articulating this new developmental stage in Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Patrick Wormald has given Theodore significant credit in the rise in the use of the vernacular, and Catherine Cubitt has noted the effect of his powerful role as archbishop in instigating regular synods and increasing uniformity within Christian practice across the kingdoms – all important factors which contributed to Anglo-Saxon Christian identity.[648]

Related to this growing sense of a 'nationalised' Anglo-Saxon Church is the increasing reverence and commemoration of pan-Anglo-Saxon saints. Craig Davis has submitted that in Bede's Northumbria, the Church had deprived kings of their pagan gods as their traditional prestigious royal ancestors. Therefore, Northumbrian saints became the new inspirational heroes of the Christian

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[646] See Chapter Two and Chapter Three above. Cf. Godden, "Anglo-Saxons and Goths," 58.

[647] *HE* IV:2, 332-334, and the Preface to Ælfred's *Pastoral Care,* in Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader,* 4-7*.*

[648] Michael Lapidge, "The School of Theodore and Hadrian," *ASE* 15 (1986): 53-62; Wormald, "Anglo-Saxon Society and Its Literature," 8-9; and Cubitt, *A-S Church Councils*, 8-12. Cf. J. D. Pheifer, "The Canterbury Glosses: Facts and Problems," in *Archbishop Theodore*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1995), 281-333; Patrick Wormald, "The Uses of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and Its Neighbours," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27, no. 5th Series (1977): 103; and Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 125-127.

kingdom, where deriving ancestry from men like Oswald became a prestigious act, and the re-telling of his life as both warrior-king and saint ultimately replaced pagan folklore.[649] The well-established cults which supported the commemoration of these saints, helped most by their hagiographers, ultimately gained recognition throughout Anglo-Saxon England. It is surely no coincidence that many of Bede's most revered saints maintain sizeable cults throughout the period. The popularity of these saints, revered in place of pagan gods, became widely revered as Christianity became more deeply rooted within the culture and over time they effectively become pan-English saints.[650]

According to Sawyer, this process probably began in the ninth century, and was a 'natural response' to Scandinavian settlement, as Mercian and West Saxon interest in Northumbrian and East Anglian saints became especially important in this period. The veneration of those saints helped the Anglo-Saxon controlled kingdoms connect with those Anglo-Saxons who lived under Scandinavian control and re-iterated a shared cultural memory which contrasted with the religious culture of their occupiers and focused on their shared religious experience and inheritance.[651] Kings Ælfred, Edward the Elder, Æthelstan, along with Æthelred and Æthelflæd all contributed to the shrines of Anglo-Saxon saints which resided in Scandinavian territory, and helped to supplement the endowments which had previously been made by the ruling Anglo-Saxon aristocrats who had been replaced by a Scandinavian aristocracy that was less enthusiastic about Anglo-Saxon saints.[652] This promotion of national saints was an important part of these rulers seeking to ('re')connect with the people of the Danelaw for religious and certainly political – and perhaps ethnic – reasons.[653]

This process can also be seen in the *OEB,* where Anglo-Saxon saints remain prominent while other, non-English saints are obscured. Antonina Harbus goes so far as to assert that 'English saints

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[649] Davis, "Cultural Assimilation," 33.
[650] David Dumville, *Liturgy and the Ecclesiastical History of Late Anglo-Saxon England: Four Studies* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992), 109-110.
[651] P.H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (London: Routledge, 1978), 243; and Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 374 and 376.
[652] Sawyer, *From Roman Britain*, 244.
[653] For example, consider Æthelstan's promotion of the cult of St. Cuthberht to court the Northumbrians into accepting rule from the south and Edgar's use of the reform movement to consolidate power in East Anglia and Mercia. Cf. Smyth, "English Identity," 40-42; and Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 54.

and their miracles appear to be of even greater interest to the translator than they were to Bede',

and that the inclusion of fifty out of fifty-one Anglo-Saxon miracles 'is itself compelling evidence of

the translator's priorities.'[654] Indeed, the only miracles not included in the *OEB* are those of the non-

English saints Germanus and Augustine.[655] This focuses the narrative firmly on the Anglo-Saxon

Christian experience, which appears to have been important to both the translator and the scribes,

as all the variations of the *OEB* record these saint's lives meticulously.[656]

Two non-Anglo-Saxon saints from the *HE* were in a sense 'Anglicised' and absorbed into the

Anglo-Saxon pantheon. One of these was Aidan, who as we have seen is clearly marked as distinct

from the Anglo-Saxons and the universal Church by Bede. Because the description of Aidan in the

OEB is without many of these distinctions his humility, austere piety and miracles are positively

highlighted, as he appears as the epitome of humility, as *swa swiðe his lif tosced fram ussa tida*

aswundenesse (his life so differed from the sluggishness or our times).[657] He also continues to

demonstrate the didactic emphasis of the narrative by appearing as an evangelist for the faith,

teaching the people through his words but also through his exemplary life. His holiness is such that

he contributes to Oswald's saintly image as the king cheerfully takes his advice on all matters,

becomes his *wealhstod,* and works together with him to expand the Northumbrian church.[658]

The other non-English saint who features strongly in the *OEB* is Alban, the Romano-British

saint martyred well before the *adventus,* who in effect becomes the Anglo-Saxon proto-martyr. He is

well represented in the translation, where his story is told following Bede's description very closely,

strongly associating him with Britain. Like the *HE,* the *OEB* maintains Fortunatus' claim: *þone æðelan*

Albanum seo wæstmberende Bryton forðbereð (the noble Alban [was] fruitful Britain's offspring).

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[654] Harbus, "Native Saints and Miracles," 158 and 161. The miracle omitted is a nun's vision of Hild's rise into heaven, at the very end of *HE* IV:23, 414.
[655] *HE* I:17-21, 54-66 and *HE* I:31, 108-110.
[656] Harbus, "Native Saints and Miracles," 158-9. Except of course the problematic *HE* III:16-20, 262-278 which was missing from the immediate exemplar of the extant *OEB* mss.
[657] *HE* III:5, 226 and *OEB* III:3, 160-162.
[658] *OEB* III:2-4, 158-167 and *OEB* III:14, 202-208. Cf. Harbus, "Native Saints and Miracles," 162. Perhaps importantly, the reference to Aidan's practice of Easter which the *OEB* does include is the one where Bede was eager to point out that although Aidan did not celebrate Easter canonically, he was not a heretical Quartodeciman *ut quidam falso opinatur* (as some falsely believe). *HE* III:17, 266-267 and *OEB* III:14, 202-208.

Bede's description of Alban includes a passage referring to the persecutions of Diocletian, in which *passus est Sanctus Albanus* (Saint Alban suffered), and which is localised in the *OEB* to emphasise that his martyrdom happened in Britain, rather than in the context of the wider persecutions: *on Breotone was ðrowiende Sanctus Albanus* (in Britain, St. Alban suffered).[659]

The *OEB* also records the Latin and English dialectical differences in the name of the town of St. Albans, saying that it was that which *ðe Romane heton Uerolamium, seo nu fram Angelðeode Werlameceaster oþþe Wæclingaceaster is nemned* (the Romans called Verolamium, and is now named by the English Werlameaceaster or Wæclingaceaster). This amount of geographic and dialectic detail is rare in the *OEB,* for often it records only one contemporary version of names if it records them at all.[660] This specific attention to St. Alban and Verulamium may suggest the significance of a contemporary cult of that saint for the translator and perhaps a Mercian attempt at association with him. Mercian king Offa was traditionally associated with the endowment of St. Alban's and with the saint's translation, as evidenced by diplomas written under Æthelred dated 996, 1005, and 1007, and the F version of the *ASC*.[661] It is likely that St. Alban, although historically a Romano-Briton, was absorbed into Mercian Christian culture, and came to represent that kingdom in much the same way that Cuthberht had come in a way to represent Northumbria, and eventually England itself.[662] This would have made references to him within the text especially important to a Mercian translator and suggests that this attention to his story was associated with ninth-century veneration of that saint.[663]

Another way in which the translation can be seen focusing on the role of Canterbury as a satellite of papal Rome is the way in which the narrative is shifted in order to emphasise the

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[659] Alban's story is *HE* I:7, 28-35, and *OEB* I:7, 34-41, with quotes at 34 and 40. Cf. Harbus, "Native Saints and Miracles," 163.

[660] Cf. Whitelock, *The OEB*, 65-66.

[661] Julia Crick, "Offa, Ælfric and the Refoundation of St. Albans," in *Alban and St Albans: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology*, ed. Martin Henig and Phillip Lindley (Leeds: Maney, 2001), 79.

[662] Importantly, Ælfric anachronistically refers to Alban's as being from *engla lande* in his *Life,* further demonstrating this move toward a regionalised and then nationalised saint. Cf. Dumville, *Liturgy and the Ecclesiastical History of Late Anglo-Saxon England,* 109; and Mechthild Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints,* 65-126.

[663] Harbus, "Native Saints and Miracles," 164.

ecclesiastical nature of the *HE.* An example of this can be seen in the subtle changes within the structure of the text. Some of these occur by the insertion of chapter breaks in key places. For example, in the *HE* Paulinus' ministry and the peace of Northumbria subsequent to Edwin's conversion (where a woman with a newborn could walk safely from one end of the island to another) are relayed within the same chapter.[664] However, while in the *OEB* Paulinus' ministry is recorded in the corresponding chapter, the peace for which Edwin is credited is moved to the next chapter, which also paraphrases Honorius' letters to him and Paulinus.[665] This gives a separate emphasis to Paulinus' ministry, which appears alone, while Edwin's peace is moved and relayed alongside other matters. Similarly, the miracles which occur at Barking are recorded over four chapters in the *HE*, while in the *OEB* each one is recorded in its own chapter, so that the same miracles comprise six chapters.[666] Also, Bede records the mission of Willibrord to Frisia and the martyrdom of the Hewalds within two chapters, while the *OEB* records the events separately, comprising three.[667] The same sort of thing occurs at the end of the text, where Bede records the state of Britain in his own time, including what bishops rule what see, and he also records some details about political and ecclesiastical history.[668] The *OEB* separates this chapter so that the recent history recorded by Bede is distinct from the references to the various ethnic groups within Britain and the various bishops who work among them.[669] This movement of material lends a separate emphasis to these chapters, as if they were meant to be read separately and perhaps aloud as part of teaching or preaching.

An even stronger example of the shift in emphasis due to rearrangement of the text is the movement of the of the *Libellus Responsionum* from its place in I:27 of the *HE* (I:16 in the *OEB*), following details of Augustine's ordination, to the end of Book III. Sharon Rowley has clearly shown that this movement is not the result of an afterthought on the part of the translator, as suggested by

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[664] *HE* II:16, 190-192.
[665] *OEB* II:13-14, 142-146.
[666] *HE* IV:7-10, 356-364 and *OEB* IV:8-13, 282-294.
[667] *HE* V:10-11, 480-486 and *OEB* V:10-12, 412-422.
[668] *HE* V:23, 556-560.
[669] *OEB* V:21-22, 474-478.

Dorothy Whitelock, but is entirely intentional.[670] Instead, she asserts, this actually demonstrates the translator's engagement with the content of his text, as he shaped the structure of Book III so that its content is thematic rather than chronological.[671] Across Book III, the missionaries are faced with re-converting the Anglo-Saxons, as they are forced to confront the residual pagan practices and apostasy of their converts. It tells the story of the apostasy of Eanfrith and Osric after the death of Edwin, their death by Cædwalla (which was the just judgement of God), and the re-establishment of Christian order in Northumbria by Oswald and Aidan.[672] Likewise the apostasy of the East Saxons is curtailed by Bishop Jaruman, and King Eorcenberht orders the destruction of pagan idols and makes laws enforcing Christian practice in Kent.[673] It also describes the conversion of the West Saxons by Birinus, the ultimate conversion of the Mercians under Peada, as well as the conversion of the East Anglians by Cedd.[674] The inclusion of the consecrations of Chad and Wilfrid also demonstrates the re-establishment of Roman practice by the end of the book.[675] These stories depicting the new conversions and interactions between clergy and their new converts are punctuated in the *OEB* by the *Libellus Responsionum,* which 'resonates with Gregory and Augustine's emphasis on the newness of Christian order.'[676]

Rowley also points out that the answers which Gregory provides for Augustine establishing specific ways for dealing with the pagan practices of the Anglo-Saxons also tie into the themes of the stories in Book III. For example, Sigeberht is murdered by his kinsmen, which was foreseen by Cedd, because he disobeyed the bishop's warning not to interact with a person who had been excommunicated for unlawful kin marriage. Not only does this scenario contradict Gregory's advice in response to Question Five, against the marriage within one's kin group, but also goes against

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[670] Cf. Whitelock, *The OEB*, 240.
[671] Sharon M. Rowley, "Shifting Contexts: Reading Gregory the Great's *Libellus Responsionum* in Book III of the *Old English Bede*," in *Rome and the North: The Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe*, ed. Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr, Kees Dekker, and David Johnson (Paris: Peeters, 2001), 85-92.
[672] *HE* III:1, 212-214; *HE* III:3, 218-220; *HE* III:5-6, 226-230; and *OEB* III:1-4, 152-166.
[673] *HE* III:30, 222 and *OEB* III:22; and *HE* III:8, 236-240 and *OEB* III:6, 172-176.
[674] On the conversion of the West Saxons, see *HE* III:7, 232 and *OEB* III:5, 166-172; on the Mercians, see *HE* III:21, 278-280 and *OEB* III:15, 220-222; and on the re-conversion of the East Angles, see *HE* III:22, 280-284 and *OEB* III:16, 224-224-226. Cf. Rowley, "Shifting Contexts," 90.
[675] *HE* III:28, 314-316 and *OEB* III:20. Rowley, "Shifting Contexts," 90.
[676] Rowley, "Shifting Contexts," 90. Cf. Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1313-1314.

Gregory's answers to Questions Eight and Nine, in regard to consorting with the excommunicated.[677] This movement of the *Libellus* to the end of Book III clearly demonstrates the active purpose of the translator, as he intervenes in the text to draw attention to the importance of the teachings of Gregory in establishing Christian order among the newly converted.

Another example of the added emphasis on ecclesiastical law within the text can be seen in the *OEB*'s careful reproduction of Bede's details regarding the Synod of Hertford in 672, which according to Colgrave 'is of importance as being the first provincial synod of the reorganised English Church.'[678] The participants and decisions reached there are meticulously recorded and these decisions, like Gregory's answers in the *Libellus,* included no tolerance of incest and remarriage, but also reinforced the church hierarchy by reasserting the Archbishop's role in controlling the size of bishoprics, and reaffirming monastic loyalty to abbots and bishops. The decrees of this council were also fundamental in establishing basic ecclesiastical order and rules of organisation for the Anglo-Saxon Church, as well as in instigating the practice of holding an annual synod at *Clofesho*.[679] The importance of this synod in the establishment of the early Anglo-Saxon Church is clear, so that the only difference between Bede's text and what appears in the *OEB* is the omission of the inability of the members of the Synod to agree, so that according to the translation, there is no record of discord.[680]

Likewise, the 680 Synod of *Hæthfeld* is recorded faithfully from Bede, indicating that all parties involved agreed to the renunciation of all versions of the faith deemed heretical by papal synod: Arianism, Monophysitism, Monothelitism and the Nestorian heresy.[681] The decisions of this synod link the Anglo-Saxon Church with Rome, but also help to establish its own orthodoxy as a satellite of Roman practice by laying out the tenets of the early Anglo-Saxon faith. As Patrick Wormald has pointed out, the regularity of the councils which subsequently took place at *Clofesho*

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[677] Rowley, "Shifting Contexts," 91.
[678] Colgrave and Mynors, 348, n. 1.
[679] Cubitt, *A-S Church Councils*, 18, 27, 63 and especially 241.
[680] *HE* IV:5 348-352 and *OEB* IV:5, 276-280.
[681] *HE* IV:17, 384-386 and *OEB* IV:19, 310-312.

as a result of this synod were probably fundamental to increasing the spiritual solidarity of the Anglo-Saxons, and emphasised the importance of the archbishop as the leader of this Christian community.[682]

Again, the importance of the history of canon law in the *OEB* indicates the translator's intention to highlight the series of steps taken in the growth of the Anglo-Saxon Church within Britain, and helps to emphasise the importance of Theodore in establishing orthodoxy and a measure of autonomy. There must be a connection between this focus and the purely canonical content of the excerpts which appear in Zu.[683] Attended by both kings and bishops, these synods would have been very significant in shaping the structure of Anglo-Saxon Church and society, and were therefore very important in understanding the development of Anglo-Saxon Christianity across the period between Bede and his translator.[684]

However, this interest in Anglo-Saxon canon law does not appear to stretch to the inclusion of the 664 Synod of Whitby, which raises questions concerning its relevance in the ninth century. It is omitted despite its role in the reorganisation of the Northumbrian Church, which established a firm connection with Rome, and mitigated Iona's hold over the northern Churches so that they too were held under the primacy of Canterbury. One can only speculate about its omission from the *OEB* (and the *ASC*) but one reason may be that the translator sought to present a picture of a unified Church, and saw the Britons within Anglo-Saxon England as members of this Church. They were certainly no longer schismatics, and though they had been considered as such in the past, this was a dead issue which was covered fully in the references to the Synod of Hertford – but without the sectarianism.[685] Another reason for its omission may include the fact that Whitby was a regional synod and convened under the auspices of King Oswiu, without real relevance to the rest of England, whereas the Synod

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[682] Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 126-127. Cf. Wormald, "Anglo-Saxon Society and Its Literature," 8.
[683] See Chapter Four, p. 118 above.
[684] Wormald, "Anglo-Saxon Society and Its Literature," 8; and Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1314-1315.
[685] Cubitt, *A-S Church Councils*, 63.

of Hertford had a wider significance and was convened by Archbishop Theodore, and was therefore much more relevant to the purpose of the translator.[686]

Similarly, while the Arian heresy receives a mention, the Pelagian heresy does not.[687] Because of Bede's contention that the rise of Pelagius in Britain is the final contributing factor of the Britons' sinful loss of the island, Sharon Rowley has asserted that the translator avoids including the Pelagian heresy because he did not wish to press Bede's contention that the Britons had lost the island because of their sinfulness. The Anglo-Saxons of the ninth century could see this loss of the island to pagan invasion as a very real and very frightening possibility, and would not want to perpetuate an idea of that happening in the face of their own similar incursion.[688] While this may be the case, this point should not be pressed too hard because the translation does make references (although vague) to the providential scenario that instigated the transfer of power from the Britons to the Anglo-Saxons, as we have seen. However, it is probable that the translator saw the heresy as a potentially divisive issue. Here, it may be important that Pelagius was a Briton, which Bede clearly acknowledges and again links to their sinfulness.[689] This heresy may have been omitted because of its close links with the Britons. As the translator edits out most of the references to the divisions caused by the Easter controversy and the superfluous derogatory references to the Britons, as well as includes Saints Aidan and Alban in the pantheon of Anglo-Saxon saints, he portrays a sense of unity that goes beyond that of his exemplar. Perhaps drawing connections between the Britons and this heresy had the potential to undermine his presentation of the Anglo-Saxon Church as unified and largely homogenous, for surely if Saint Alban could become part of the Anglo-Saxon spiritual identity, dangerously, Pelagius could as well.

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[686] For localism in the Synod of Whitby, see Cubitt, *A-S Church Councils*, 8, 47 and 53; for the role of kings in Anglo-Saxon Church councils, see 6-7, 50 and 55-58.

[687] On the Arian heresy, see *HE* I:8, 34-36 and *OEB* I:8, 42 and on the Pelagian heresy, see *HE* I:10, 38; *HE* I:17-18, 54-60; *HE* I:18, 58-60; and *HE* I:21, 64-66.

[688] Rowley, "Vernacular Angles," 29.

[689] For example, see Pohl, "Ethnic Names and Identities," 18.

Conclusion

Dorothy Whitelock has suggested that the translator was 'clumsy' and 'over literal' in his translation, and that the changes made in the English translation of Bede's text point to the failure of education in the time of Ælfred.[690] While Ælfred's low regard for the Latinity of his contemporaries has been accepted by many other scholars as well, it seems however that the translator was actually quite adept at translating the text from Latin and had clear control over the shape of his narrative.[691]

Also, there is no evidence of a contemporary link between the translation of the *OEB* and the court of Ælfred. Despite over a millennia of tradition which claims otherwise, close analysis of the *OEB* suggests that the translation was cultivated outside of court politics altogether, as the focus of the text is not on kings, but rather saints, and the details of the history are often second to the 'otherworldly' aspects of these saints' lives.[692] Rather than a political work, it seems clear that the translation was meant as a religious didactic text, meant to promote the role of Canterbury, to teach Christian thought and exemplary Christian behaviour and to further cultivate the Anglo-Saxon Church by promoting idealised figures in an idealised past. Here, it was better to omit Bede's dating, and use instead 'timeless examples' in order to best impress his point onto his audience, to shift the authority of the text away from Bede's Romanised sources to Bede himself, and emphasise the role of the early Church at Canterbury and Theodore's role in this.[693]

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[690] Whitelock, *The OEB*, 57; and Whitelock, "The Prose of King Alfred's Reign," 77 and 78. But see also, her reference on 78 to his 'vigorous, idiomatic English' and how he 'simplifies ponderous expressions' from the *HE*. In contrast, Sharon Rowley has suggested that the translator's omissions make for a better, smoother story. Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 223.

[691] Many scholars have pointed to the lack of Latin education in the Ælfredian era. For example, Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899*, 409-454; Malcolm Godden, "Wærferth and King Alfred: The Fate of the Old English Dialogues," in *Alfred the Wise*, ed. J. Roberts, J.L. Nelson and M. Godden (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1997), 44-8. However, the appearance of the Mercian scholars at Ælfred's court, and our translator, suggests that at least in the case of Mercia, the king may have exaggerated. Cf. Fredrick Klaeber, 'Die altenglishe Bedaubersetzung und der Denkspruch auf Oswald', *Archiv fur das Studium der nereren Sprachen und Literaturen* 144 (1922): 251-3; and Waite, *Old English Prose Translations*, 331.

[692] Rowley, "Vernacular Angles," 28.

[693] Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1316. Part of this emphasis on Canterbury may have been a result of the relative weakness of the archbishopric at York during this period as a result of sustained viking attack and settlement, which can be seen in the later need to link the see of York with that of the much wealthier Worcester community across the later ninth and tenth centuries. James, *Britain*, 255; and Pauline Stafford, "Church and Society in the Age of Aelfric," in *The Old English Homily and Its Background*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard F. Huppé (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 14.

In this version of the *HE,* the translator effectively adheres to Bede's premise that the Anglo-Saxons are a Christian people with their own destiny within God's plan.[694] Indeed, this text is clearly willing to engage with Bede's agenda but importantly, it insists on a broader concept of what it meant to be Anglo-Saxon by being less tied to regional divisions and more connected to the other peoples within Britain.[695] In the ninth century the definition of the *gens Anglorum* had shifted slightly from Bede's eighth century, and so had their destiny. The myth set down by Bede was both Germanic and Christian, and the translator engages with this ethno-religious identity as it is presented in the *HE.* Part of the translator's work involved moving this identity forward however, playing down differences between the peoples of the island and moving them all into an identity that was defined by its affiliation with the Anglo-Saxon Church. Arguably, the translation's emphasis on the Germanic origins of the early Anglo-Saxons was a way of tying them to the Scandinavian migrants who were now their neighbours. This seems especially clear in the shifting nomenclature of the Jutes to Geats within the migration myth, which may demonstrate an extension of Bede's attempt to connect the Anglo-Saxons with their Germanic roots in order to inspire their evangelism. Therefore the divine mission of the Anglo-Saxons to convert their continental cousins, as established in Bede's *HE,* could have shifted to focus on sharing Christendom with their Germanic cousins in the Danelaw, with the text representing an updated mission for the Anglo-Saxons: effectively turning their continental cousins from pagan invaders to Christian brethren. In this case, the English Destiny to convert their continental cousins, as set forth in Bede's text, had been brought home to the English.

It may well be that works such as this, combined with the active commemoration of Northumbrian and East Anglian saints not only nationalised those saints but also may have contributed to the relatively rapid conversion and assimilation of the Danelaw. In this context, it is perhaps important to note that the *OEB* as we have it today represents a Mercian translation of a

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[694] Rowley, "Nostalgia," 28 in reference to Whitelock, '*OEB*', 232.
[695] Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 27.

Northumbrian text which commemorates Anglo-Saxon saints from various regions, and was disseminated in a West Saxon milieu. The translation's heightened focus on spiritual unity effectively gave its readers and perhaps the Anglo-Saxon Church in general, a shared heritage and destiny that superseded regional affiliations.

Importantly, the *OEB* does not use the Britons as a counter point to this harmony: they rarely act as a foil for Anglo-Saxon Christianity and they are not used to highlight what it means to be Anglo-Saxon in this text. Instead, they seem more a part of Anglo-Saxon identity, and less a counter force against it. While they do however serve to demonstrate the providential model, as the translator follows Bede's point regarding their loss of Britain because of their own sinfulness, he only mentions that the Britons did nothing to convert the English once, at the end, in order to explain their social inferiority. In doing this, he appears to avoid the analogy that would establish that the Anglo-Saxons were in danger of losing control of Britain if they failed to convert the Danes, like Gildas and Bede had set up the Britons in the Anglo-Saxon incursion. By playing down the distinctions between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons, and inspiring recognition of the new comers as reflections of themselves, the *OEB* furthered the cause of its exemplar by fostering a greater sense of harmony between the peoples of Britain, and instilling the need for the English to convert their Germanic kindred. This was the ultimate fulfilment of their mission, as given to them by God when they became the scourge of the British.

Chapter Five:

Bede and the English Reform movement

One final way in which we will consider the reception and use of the *HE* is by considering Bede's importance in the Benedictine reform movement of the tenth century through one last case study: the works of Ælfric. This chapter will consider Bede's reputation within the English reform movement, with a primary focus on Ælfric's use of the *HE* in his vernacular *Catholic Homilies* and *Saint's Lives* in order to authorise his didactic programme of Christian orthodoxy in a West Saxon milieu. It will also consider the dissemination of the *OEB* in this period, and how this reflects the tenth-century context of our manuscripts.

Historical Context

The West Saxon hegemony of the ninth century emerged as an increasingly centralised monarchy in the tenth under the leadership of such kings as Edward the Elder, Æthelstan, and Edgar.[696] Along with the increase in the breadth of West Saxon power came the settlement and Christian conversion of those once invading Scandinavians, and a relative reprieve from viking attack from 955-980.[697] This reprieve coincided with the reign of Edgar (959-975) which, along with his support of the English reform movement, earned him the name 'Edgar the Peaceful'.[698] The English reform movement was

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[696] Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 141-142, and 198-199.

[697] On the conversion of the Scandinavian settlers, see James, *Britain*, 219; Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 147 and 197. For the role of diplomatic conversion and its effects, see Abrams, "Conversion and Assimilation," 135-153; and for the survival and re-establishment of pre-viking East Anglian religious institutions, see Julia Barrow, "Survival and Mutation: Ecclesiastical Institutions in the Danelaw in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 155-176.

[698] Stafford, "Church and Society," 13; Simon Keynes, "An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006-7 and 1009-12," *ASE* 36 (2008): 152-153; and James, *Britain*, 250. According to Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 368: 'It is a sign of Edgar's competence as a ruler that his reign is singularly devoid of recorded incident', indeed the reprieve enjoyed from viking incursion during his reign was seen by later generations as a sign of his strength and piety, and his later successor, Æthelred, has suffered much in comparison. Cf. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 50, 56 and 59-64.

an attempt, on the part of its champions, Bishops Dunstan, Oswald and Æthelwold, to impose a monastic Benedictine doctrine on the English church at large.[699]

The context for this reform came from contact with the Carolingian Benedictine reform movement, and the increased movement of texts between Europe and Britain through diplomatic and economic channels throughout this period.[700] This was coupled with the point of view that the ferocity of sustained viking attack was the result of decline in correct Christian practice, and the subsequent loss of God's favour, rather than that the decline of uniformity in Christian practice and literacy across the country was a result of attack and invasion.[701] With the renewal of viking invasion toward the end of the tenth century, the rhetoric of the reformers becomes very focused on penance and the encouragement of peace and order through conformity with a higher standard of Christian practice. In advocating this pan-English ideal of reform, they sought to align Anglo-Saxon practice with that of the Carolingian reforms, and thus the practices of wider Christendom.[702]

The reform movement in England was tied to what Bishops Æthelwold, Oswald and Dunstan had seen as the high point of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, the seventh-century Church under the Canterbury archbishopric of Theodore of Tarsus, as described by Bede in the *HE*.[703] In the *Regularis Concordia Anglicae nationis monachorum sanctimonialiumque* (c.970) Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester (963-984), articulated nostalgia for a lost time in the seventh century when the Anglo-Saxon Church had flourished, and the need for a tenth-century 'restoration' to the standards of this Bedan past.[704] Contrasting Bede's models, which he saw as ideals based within reality, with his own

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[699] Dunstan was abbot of Glastonbury in 944, before becoming bishop of both Worcester in 957 and London in 958, and Archbishop of Canterbury from 960 to 978. Oswald became bishop of Worcester in 961 and also gained York in 971, while Æthelwold was abbot of Abingdon before he became bishop of Winchester in 963.

[700] Cf. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 346; Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 156-162; and John Nightingale, "Oswald, Fleury and the Continental Reform," in *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, ed. Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1996), 23-45. Patrick Wormald, "Æthelwold and His Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast," in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988), 13-42; see also 32 and 37-38 for the significant differences between the two movements, such as the intensity of the political connections with the movement, and the ousting of canons from the cathedrals to be replaced by monks.

[701] Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 193.

[702] Wormald, "Continental Counterparts," 30-32.

[703] David Rollason, "The Cult of Bede," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2010), 193.

[704] Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 80-81; and Mechthild Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints*, 132-133. For more on Æthelwold specifically, see Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, 235-241; Barbara Yorke, "Æthelwold and the

time it appeared that the literacy and liturgical engagement of the clergy had fallen into steep decline. Also, because there were no universal prescriptions applied consistently throughout the Anglo-Saxon Church, the practices conducted across England were localised and hard to discern.[705] Thus the *HE* became recognised as a part of the pan-English prescriptive dogma for orthodoxy within the movement.

The *HE* was written into the fabric of what might be called the blueprint of the reform, Æthelwold's vernacular translation of the *Rule of St Benedict,* the preface to which is known as 'King Edgar's Establishment of the Monasteries'.[706] In this preface Æthelwold, according to Patrick Wormald, used what he found in the *HE* as a 'historical introduction to English monasticism,' by emphasising the role of the Gregorian mission and the *Libellus Responsionum* in the earliest establishment of the English monasteries. These early, presumed monastic houses became the model for all religious institutions in England.[707] In this, Bede's became a voice of particular authority within the teachings of the Church.[708]

It was Bede's importance as an exegete and biblical commentator within the Carolingian reform movement which had first prompted his importance among the fathers of the Church. Joyce Hill has suggested that Anglo-Saxon missionaries to the continent in the eighth century, such as Boniface and subsequently his pupil Lul, had used Bede's works in their own endeavours to convert the continental pagans, and through this they had created a familiarity, demand and reverence for the works among the Germans as a fundamental part of Christian teaching.[709] Also, later in the

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Politics of the Tenth Century," in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988), 65-88; and *Wulfstan of Winchester: The Life of St. Æthelwold,* ed. Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), xxxix-li.

[705] 'King Edgar's Establishment of the Monasteries', *EHD*, no. 238, 920-922. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 346-7.

[706] For more on Æthelwold as the author of the Old English *Rule of St. Benedict*, see the *Liber Eliensis* II:37, and Ælfric's *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham,* in Jonathan Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, vol. 9 (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), 123-124. See also, Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, 226-260, and Wormald, "Continental Counterparts," 98.

[707] Wormald, "Continental Counterparts," 39-42, quote is on 41.

[708] Also important to consider here is that Dunstan and Æthelwold had been monks together at Glastonbury, where Rollason, "The Cult of Bede," 197-198, has suggested there was a cult of Bede based on a 12th c. claim, and later abbey lists, which indicate a 10th c. tradition of his relics being housed there.

[709] Joyce Hill, "Carolingian Perspectives on the Authority of Bede," in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Scott De Gregorio (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 229-230. See also, Dorothy Whitelock, *After Bede* (Jarrow Lecture:1960) 7; Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 20-21; Joshua A.

eighth century, Alcuin had taken his reverence for and familiarity with the authority of Bede to the

Carolingian court, where the works became an important part of the royal education programme

there.[710] Subsequently, it was to Bede that Paul the Deacon turned when Charlemagne asked him to

put together a collection of authoritative homilies for circulation within the empire, thus creating

the texts which Ælfric himself would later draw upon for orthodoxy in tenth century when the texts

came back to England.[711]

While Bede's authority rested in his exegesis, the value of these works in turn raised the

prestige of the *HE*. It is important to note that while there are no extant English manuscripts of the

HE from the second quarter of the ninth century (the date of *British Library, Cotton Tiberius C.ii*) until

the late tenth/early eleventh century (the date of *Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 43*) there are as

many as eleven extant from the continent for the same period.[712] Because of this prestige within the

Carolingian reform movement, and his detailed knowledge of early Anglo-Saxon Church history,

Bede's authority was unquestioned within the English movement.[713] As Joyce Hill asserts, the lack of

reference to Bede by the Blickling and Vercelli homilists is 'an omission which is a measure of their

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Westgard, "Bede and the Continent in the Carolingian Age and Beyond," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2010) 204-205; and Rollason, "The Cult of Bede," 196.

[710] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 21-24; Westgard, "Bede and the Continent," 205-206; and R.H.C. Davis, "Bede after Bede," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, et al. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), 103-104.

[711] Hill, "Carolingian Perspectives," 232; and Whitelock, *After Bede,* 11-12. Ælfric had access to many continental saints' lives alongside much of the *HE* thorough Paul the Deacon in a work similar to the anonymously written collection of hagiographies now called the Cotton-Corpus legendary. Joyce Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 40; Patrick H. Zettel, "Saints Lives in Old English: Latin Manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: Ælfric," *Peritia* 1 (1982): 17-37; and Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 47. Bede's authority is attested to throughout 9th c. Frankia, as he was mentioned in the councils of Mainz in 813 and Aachen in 816 with regard to his exegesis on Luke. In 825 the *HE* was mentioned specifically as an important work within the reform at the Council of Paris, as were Bede's works of exegesis. By the time of the Council of Aachen in 836, Bede was officially elevated to *doctor admirabilis* in the prologue of Book III of the Council. Cf. Hill, *Bede and the Benedictine Reform,* 3-4, esp. note 14.

[712] There is however, some evidence of the text's being used in England: this is the period in which the *OEB* was translated (from the *HE*) and copied into T and C (in which III:16-18 were also re-translated), and excerpted into Zu. Also, *Cotton Tiberius C.ii* has 10[th]c. English glosses, and the mid to late 10[th]c. *BL Cotton Vitellus A. xix* has excerpts from the HE regarding Cuthberht's life. Whitelock, *After Bede,* 12-13; Westgard, "Bede and the Continent," 206-210. Davis, "Bede after Bede," 104 suggests that 8 of these from Frankia were probably the result of Alcuin's place within the Carolingian Palace School, while another 3 can be traced to the monasteries of Germany associated with the Anglo-Saxon mission. See also Rollason, "The Cult of Bede," 196-7.

[713] Westgard, "Bede and the Continent," 211-213.

distance from the traditions of patristic exegetical authority which Bede and the Carolingians and at least Ælfric among the Anglo-Saxon reformers, if not others, strove so hard to perpetuate.'[714]

Having earned the support of King Edgar, the reform movement also followed the Carolingian model by emphasising the importance of the monarchy and royal politics, in what Eric John has called 'an environment saturated with royalist sentiment', where royal power was in some sense sacred.[715] Patrick Wormald has asserted that England was the 'only place in post-Carolingian Europe where monastic uniformity was a matter of political principle', and indeed it appears that the reform movement in England was even more tightly bound to the monarchy than that of the Carolingians.[716] An example can be seen in how the *Regularis Concordia*, despite its Carolingian models, established that the king and queen, in this case Edgar and Ælfthryth, were not just prestigious lay people, but were extremely valuable as the Church's patrons and protectors, *pastorum pastor,* which was a relationship idealised by the movement.[717]

Because of their ties to royal power, the reformers were not only prestigious ecclesiastics, but upon the accession of Edgar they also became an important part of the Anglo-Saxon leadership and politics.[718] Therefore, although their views and conclusions probably do not represent the opinions and standards of all, or even most, tenth-century Anglo-Saxons, their voices are the loudest, and the best represented in the sources.[719] Because of the growing prestige of the

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[714] Hill, *Bede and the Benedictine Reform,* 12. Cf. Malcolm Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," in *The Old English Homily in Its Backgrounds*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernardo F. Huppé (Albany: University of New York Press, 1978), 99-100. For a different point of view on apocryphal homiletic texts in general, see Nancy M. Thompson, "Anglo-Saxon Orthodoxy," in *Old English Literature in Its Manuscript Context*, ed. J. T. Lionarons (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2004), 41-56.

[715] For example, Æthelwold, *Rule of St Benedict*, in *The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation*, ed. Dom Thomas Symons (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1953) Ch. 2-3, 2; Ch. 9, 6; Ch.7, 7; Ch. 16, 12; and Ch. 25, 21-22 (Ch. 7, 7 especially). Eric John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 309; and Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 350-1. Cf. Wormald, "Continental Counterparts," 14 and 31-33; Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 5; and Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 347-367. For more on the continental aspect of Æthelwold's thought, see Donald A. Bullough, "The Continental Background of Reform," in *Tenth-Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia*, ed. David Parsons (London: Phillimore, 1975), 20-36.

[716] Wormald, "Continental Counterparts," 32 and 37; and Stafford, "Church and Society," 14-15. Consider the role of the West Saxon royal house in fostering the Church and its reforms across the viking age, Dumville, "Alfred and the Tenth-Century Reform," 192-198, and 202-203.

[717] Æthelwold, *RSB*, Ch.10, 6-7. Cf. Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 165; and Cf. J. Armitage Robinson, *The Times of St Dunstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 144-145.

[718] Cf. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 51-52. For more on the reform before Edgar, see Dumville, "Alfred and the Tenth-Century Reform," 185-205, especially 191-193.

[719] John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," 303; and Thompson, "Anglo-Saxon Orthodoxy," 37-65.

reformers and their emphasis on sexual continence, literacy and monasticism, their disdain for the secular clergy has marginalised voices of dissent, especially once the secular canons were evicted from the churches and replaced by reformed monks in 964.[720] One example of the suppression of other points of view from the 960s, and evidence of the distorted view our sources give of the Anglo-Saxon Church at this time, can be seen with the Latinate secular canon known to history as the scribe 'B'.[721] Even after sending his *Vita S. Dunstani* to Ælfric, Archbishop of Canterbury, and writing to both he and Æthelgar, bishop of Selsey, B. had remarkable trouble getting a response or finding employment anywhere among the reformers in England despite his education because he was not a monk.[722] Evidence of discontent with these reforms, and the re-distribution of land that coincided with them, is hinted at in the so-called 'anti-monastic reaction'. Largely portrayed as an attack on the reform movement, which had challenged both lay land holdings and religious practices, the churches bore the brunt of these attacks, despite the fact that many of these problems had actually been caused by Edgar's politics, rather than Church policy.[723]

With the passing of Edgar in 975, royal and ecclesiastical politics became fraught when political factions surrounding the dynastic succession caused tensions to descend into a power struggle, the result of which was the 'martyrdom' of Edgar's oldest son Edward under suspicious circumstances, and the accession of the ten-year-old Æthelred.[724] With this glitch in the order of power, the Danish king Swegn seized on the opportunity to attack England with increasing ferocity from 980 onward.[725] The nature of these attacks was very different from those of the ninth and early tenth centuries in that they were instigated by Danish royal authority as part of Swegn's intentions

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[720] See '964x969, A Council on the Expulsion of Clerics from Monasteries' Dorothy Whitelock, *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, Volume 1: AD 871–1066*, ed. C.N.L. Brooke and D. Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), no. 30, 113-118.

[721] Cf. Joyce Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church: Ælfric's Pastoral Letters in Context," in *England in the Eleventh Century*, ed. Carola Hicks (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1992), 103-117.

[722] I am grateful to Anna Clarke for bringing this example to my attention. Cf. Michael Lapidge, "B. And the *Vita S. Dunstani*," in *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, ed. Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Tim Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992), 250-258.

[723] See 'The Anti-Monastic Reaction', Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, no. 34, 155-165; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest,* 50-53 and 57-58; and Sawyer, *From Roman Britain*, 128.

[724] Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 57-59; and Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 373-375.

[725] Cf. *The Life of St Oswald, EHD,* no.236, 843.

toward empire, and thus were very organised and well-equipped.[726] Coinciding with the accession of Æthelred and the factional in-fighting that had ensued at the death of Edgar, this renewal of attacks was seen as God's reprisal for the suspicious circumstances in which Æthelred came to the throne, his redistribution of the lands granted by Edgar and the attacks on the monasteries.[727] It was this sign from God, along with the famine of 1005, which caused Æthelred to change his image, becoming a more publicly penitent king, more firmly in line with the leaders of the reform movement.[728]

Ælfric and the Reform movement

Ælfric of Eynsham (c.955–c.1012) grew up in Winchester during a relatively high watermark of tenth-century political unity in England, where he was a monk before becoming first abbot of Cerne in c.987, and then Eynsham in 1005.[729] As such, he was well placed to witness the monarchical power of the West Saxon royal house, and to be educated under Bishop Æthelwold, one of the most zealous of the English Benedictine reformers. This, along with his keen intelligence and command of language, uniquely qualified him to become 'the most important homilist in Anglo-Saxon England and the most prolific writer of Old English'.[730] Ælfric used the extensive education he had received in the most prestigious monastic school in the country to follow and shape the principles established by his reformist predecessors.

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[726] The ferocity of these attacks peaked with the invasion of Thorkell, a Danish jarl, in 1009-1012, and those of Swegn Forkbeard and his son Cnut in 1013-1016. Not only were these invasions orchestrated by powerful men within the Danish royal circle, and the product of political rivalries within Scandinavia, but Swegn and Cnut were also Christian, which complicated the previously established dichotomy set up between the Christian Anglo-Saxons and the pagan Danes. Cf. Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 155-156; and Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 64-66.

[727] Catherine Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 172-175. She suggests that this decision to return land to the laity was a wise move on the part of Æthelred, and would have been popular as many resented having been coerced into giving up their lands to rich monasteries, unfortunately 'his political coming of age coincided with Viking attacks of ever increasing intensity', which culminated in his defeat and exile, as well as created fear among the people of divine reprisal. For a good overview of this power struggle between secular and ecclesiastical power, see Stafford, "Church and Society," 11-41.

[728] Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 154-155; and Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 59-60. For more on the political history of Æthelred's reign, see E. G. Whatley, "Late Old English Hagiography, Ca 950-1150," in *Hagiographies: Histoire Internationale De La Littérature Latine Et Vernaculaire En Occident Des Origines Á 1550*, ed. G. Philippart (Turnhout: 1994), 441-444.

[729] For more historical background on the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, see Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, especially 43-50; and Stenton, Anglo-Saxon England, 356-390. For more on Ælfric specifically, see Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 35-65; and Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 2-15.

[730] Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 3.

Ælfric was able to use Bede's authority as both a source for his own interpretive translations of the *HE,* and as a vehicle to deliver his own messages to his contemporaries.[731] His selective and interpretive use of the *HE* is informative, as he mines Bede's work for hagiographies and pastoral messages, using Bede's historical background as the framework for reform in his own tenth-century context.[732] Through his reinterpretation of the *HE* Ælfric offers a measured commentary on contemporary issues of kingship, nationhood and social control by carefully teasing out his own messages from its pages. He also uses the text as historical authority for his own points regarding celibacy, holy kingship, conversion, and his portrayal of the early foundations of English Christianity through the lives of saints Alban, Æthelthryth, Oswald, Gregory, and to some degree Cuthberht. In doing so, Ælfric engages with the *HE*, and bends it to his will in order to support his perspective. The effect of Ælfric's careful use of the *HE* is that it provides insight on the way in which he viewed the inter-relation between Christianity and the viking invasions, the relationship between the clergy and laity at different levels of society, his geographical perception of Britain and *Engla land,* and how all of these things affected the unity of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Through his works we can gain a better understanding into the ways in which the homilist was both connected to, and separated from, Bede's portrayal of early Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

Ælfric translated and wrote works with an ecclesiastical and didactic purpose, focusing on unity within the faith and the role of ecclesiastical and secular rulership, as well as exploring theology and the role of providence in the lives of men.[733] His two sets of forty *Catholic Homilies* (c.990-995) were later emended, expanded and placed alongside his *Lives of the Saints* (c.996-997) as vernacular translations of Latin homilies, saints' lives and exegesis which were important in the

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[731] While Bede is an important source for Ælfric, and he refers to Bede's writings over 800 times, the *HE* is itself less important than Bede's own homilies and commentaries. A search of Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/> (05 March 2010) indicates: Ælfric's *SH* 1 used Bede's Homily 1.8; *SH* 12 used Bede's Homily 2.18; *SH* 13 used Bede's Homily 1.25; *SH* 13, 14, and 16 used Bede's Commentary on Luke; *SH* 17 used both the Commentary on Luke and Homily 2.6; *SH* 18 used Bede's Commentaries on both Mark and Luke; *SH* 4 borrows entirely from Bede's Commentary on Luke; *SH* 8 is from Bede's Homily 2.12 and Commentary on Mark, while *SH* 9 is from Bede's Homily 2.16. Cf. Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 225.

[732] Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 107 asserts that although Ælfric was certainly not writing within a historical genre, he is very interested in the historical framework and maintaining historicity within his texts.

[733] Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 43; and Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 108-109.

celebration of Anglo-Saxon Christianity.[734] These texts, like his other works, include prefaces that

lend them his orthodox authority, but also help to contextualise them and give valuable insight into

his goals and preoccupations when writing.[735] It is in *Catholic Homilies II* (hereafter *CH II*) and the

Lives of the Saint's (hereafter *LS*) that we find Ælfric borrowing directly from the *HE*, and according to

their prefaces Ælfric is like Bede in writing his texts to fill a didactic need for a mixed audience of

both clergy and laity.[736]

An example of this can be seen in that *CH* were dedicated to Sigeric, Archbishop of

Canterbury, while the *LS* was commissioned by Æthelweard, an aristocratic and well-educated

layman who, along with his son Æthelmær, were also recipients of Ælfric's *CH* among others.

Æthelweard is well known for his connections to lay piety and literacy, and is believed to have

written (or possibly commissioned?) the *Chronicon,* as well as founded the abbey of Eynsham where

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[734] The text of Ælfric's homilies is from Peter Clemoes, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, in *EETS* SS, no. 17 (1997) for *CH* I; with translations from Benjamin Thorpe, *Catholic Homilies, Vol. 1, The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric, in the Original Anglo-Saxon, with an English Version* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1971), unless otherwise noted; and Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, in *EETS* SS, no. 5 (1979) for *CH* II, with translations from Benjamin Thorpe, *Catholic Homilies, Vol. 2, The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric, in the Original Anglo-Saxon, with an English Version* (London: The Ælfric Society, 1846), unless otherwise noted. The text used for Ælfric's *LS* is from Walter Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints, Vol. 1*, in *EETS OS*, no. 76 & 82 (1966) and Walter Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints, Vol. 2*, in *EETS* OS, no. 94 & 114 (1966), the translations are also from these editions, unless otherwise noted. The *CH* I and II were both composed between 990 and 995 while the *LS* were completed in the 990s. The Supplemental homilies which were appended to this collection are thought to have been issued from Cerne sometime between 1005 and 1010. Cf. Peter Clemoes, "The Chronology of Aelfric's Works," in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. Peter Clemoes (London: Bowes & Bowes Publishers Ltd., 1959), and Malcolm Godden, "Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary," in *EETS SS* 18 (2000): xxxv.

[735] Mary Swan, "Identity and Ideology in Ælfric's Prefaces," in *The Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Macgennis and Mary Swan (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 247-249; and Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces,* 73. For more on the poor transmission of the prefaces in their manuscript contexts, see Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 54-55; Joyce Hill, *Translating the Tradition: Manuscripts, Models & Methodologies in the Composition of Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, (Toller Memorial Lecture:1996) 47; and Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 106-107, and 111.

[736] Ælfric's reliance on Bede has been asserted by Malcolm Godden, as cited in Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project, Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: A Database Register of Written Sources Used by Authors in Anglo-Saxon England, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk> (August 2010). For more on the audience, see Mary Clayton, "Hermits and the Contemplative Life," in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1996), 161-166; and John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," 301-302. In addition to these works, Ælfric also produced a *Grammar*, a *Glossary* and a *Colloquy* designed specifically for teaching Latin to the English. He also wrote vernacular paraphrases of 4 books of the Old Testament, for the books of Esther and Judith, a vernacular homily on Judges, a vernacular collection of excerpts from Bede's *De Temporibus*, and an abbreviated *Vita Æthelwoldi*, in addition to many pastoral letters. Cf. Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 39-40; and Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 32-33 and 20. According to Clemoes, Ælfric wrote a total of 84 more general homilies plus 37 homilies for special occasions, such as saints' festivals, Clemoes, "The Chronology of Aelfric's Works," 214-217.

Ælfric was abbot.[737] In fact, Ælfric's patrons were some of the most powerful secular and ecclesiastical forces in the land, from Æthelweard and Æthelmær who were both Ealdormen of the Western Provinces in turn during the reigns of Kings Edgar, Edward and Æthelred, to bishop Wulfsige of Sherborne, bishop Cenwulf of Winchester, Archbishop of Canterbury Sigeric, and Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York, as well as clerical and secular men of less political significance, but more local significance, such as Wulfgeat, Sigeweard, and Sigefryth.[738]

Peter Clemoes has pointed to Canterbury as the major dissemination point for Ælfric's works, which indicates approval for his translation project within the highest echelons of English ecclesiastical authority.[739] What this patron list suggests is that Ælfric was engaged across the geographical and social spectrum, that he felt able to provide didactic guidance across this spectrum, and most of all, that his work was relevant.[740] These prefaces also suggest that his is an audience that was not passive, but actively engaged in Ælfric's work and message, and that this message applied to monastic and court politics, clergy and laity.[741] While we cannot be sure of the historical understanding across his audience, we can be sure that they understood the importance of God's will as it unfolded in their contemporary context.[742]

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[737] In fact Æthelweard received a special copy of *CH* I that had 4 extra homilies that the other versions of the text did not, as witnessed in *Cambridge, University Library Gg. 3.28*. Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 55; Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 165-192; and Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 84. For more on his authorship of the *Chronicon*, see Sisam, "The Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 320-321, n. 3; and Skeat, "Ælfric's Lives of the Saints, Vol. 1," 4.

[738] Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 165-192 and 178; and Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 42-43 and 51.

[739] Clemoes, "Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series," 173-174.

[740] Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 41. For more on Ælfric as a teacher, see Clemoes, "The Chronology of Aelfric's Works," 245-246; and Robert K. Upchurch, "For Pastoral Care and Political Gain: Ælfric of Eynsham's Preaching on Marital Celibacy," *Traditio* 59 (2004): 43 and n. 11. The relevance of his work can also be seen in their wide dissemination. Godden points out that there are 'twenty-four major manuscripts drawing on the *Catholic Homilies*, nine fragments probably from large collections and six manuscripts containing just one or two items from the collection,' with evidence for many more, covering a geographical area including Canterbury, Durham, Exeter, Rochester, Winchester, Worcester, and Bury St. Edmunds, among other places. Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 110, and cf. 112-113. However, this does not mean his version of 'orthodoxy' was the only one, or even completely in line with others within the movement. Cf. Thompson, "Anglo-Saxon Orthodoxy," 44-49 and 56-59.

[741] John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," 301-302; and Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 188-191.

[742] Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 188-189.

Ælfric and Authority

While Ælfric knew that using the vernacular was a good vehicle for transmitting his interpretation of orthodoxy, he was also keenly aware of the potential for confusion, misinterpretation and misuse of Church doctrine once the texts he translated were widely available in the vernacular. Because of this he placed a severe warning on the end of both prefaces to *CH I*:

In English:

Nu bidde ic and halsige on Godes naman, gif hwa þas boc awritan wylle þæt he hi geornlice gerihte be þære bysene, þylæs þe we þurh gymelease writeras geleahtrode beon. Mycel yfel deð se ðeleas writ, buton he hit gerihte, swylce he gebringe þa soðan lare to leasum gedwylde. forþi sceal gehwa gerihtlæcan þæt þæt he ær to woge gebigde, gif he on Godes dome unscyldig beon wile;

Now I desire and beseech, in God's name, if anyone will transcribe this book, that he carefully correct it by the copy, lest we be blamed through careless writers. He does great evil who writes false, unless he correct it; it is as though he turn true doctrine to false error; therefore should everyone make that straight which he before bent crooked, if he will be guiltless at God's doom.[743]

And in Latin:

Ergo si alicui displicit… Condat sibi altiore interpretatione librum, quomodo intellectui eius placet: tantum obsecro ne pervertat nostram interpretationem, quam speramus ex Dei gratia, non causa jactantiae, nos studiose secuti valuimus interpretari.[744]

And so, if it displeases anyone… let him make for himself a book with a better translation in whatever manner is pleasing to his understanding. But I entreat him not to pervert our version which we hope that we translate accurately, as far as we have been able, by God's grace and not through vainglory.[745]

He also reiterates these admonitions in the English preface to *CH* II. Ælfric knew that keeping the works in Latin meant that the audience would need mediation in order to understand them. However, by translating the works himself, Ælfric hoped to provide his audience with an 'authorised' interpretation of these works – his own.[746]

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[743] *CH* I, 8-9.
[744] *CH* I, 2-3.
[745] Wilcox, 128.
[746] Importantly, Ælfric saw the perversion of the patristic word and the use of miracles as a danger to the mind of the unschooled, as Antichrist would be able to use these in order to trick people who were not aware that these were against the glory of God. Therefore, translating these works – and not sullying them with other, less

For Ælfric, those vernacular works which were along the lines of the Blickling and Vercelli homilies, although moralistic, were not based on patristic doctrine, and were therefore of suspicious authority.[747] In contrast, Ælfric was always careful to show that his work was building on patristic authority, and he was hesitant to move complex theology, which he clearly felt was best expressed in the religious language of the patristic fathers, into English.[748] As part of this need for orthodoxy, his homilies are rubricated with initials to indicate his source, and Latin notes are often included to clarify his reading of the text, suggesting that he anticipated deeper examination by a Latinate audience.[749] The Latin preface of *CH II* states that his sources are no less than Augustine, Jerome, Bede, Gregory, Smaragdus, *et aliquando Hægmonem, horum denique auctoritas ab omnibus catholicas libentissime susciptur* (and sometimes Haymo, for the authority of these is most willingly acknowledged by all the orthodox).[750] Most important for our purposes, is the appearance of Bede in this list which indicates that Ælfric's use of Bede is tied to his adherence to orthodoxy and patristic authority. Here Bede is placed firmly between such prestigious patristic authors as Jerome, the translator of the Bible, and Gregory, pope and apostle of the English.

Ælfric's Translation Theory

While looking to the patristic fathers for authority for the texts he propounded, Ælfric also sought authority for his translation of these texts into the vernacular. His inspiration for translating them probably came from his mentor, Bishop Æthelwold. Ælfric proudly aligned himself with Æthelwold's

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authoritative works – meant that he could mediate their access to what was available in the vernacular. Cf. Malcolm Godden, "Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problem of Miracles," *Leeds Studies in English* 16 (1985): 86-8.

[747] Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 19-20; and Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 99-100. However, later compilers did not see it this way, and found other sources for the homilies that he did not translate for them, and placed them alongside his 'orthodox' works. Cf. Thompson, "Anglo-Saxon Orthodoxy," 60-62.

[748] For example, in the Latin preface to *CH I*, his translation was for *ob edificationem simplicium, qui hanc norunt tantummodo locutionem* (the edification of the simple who know only this language) and in his Latin preface to the *LS*, he states that *nec convenit huic sermocinationi plura inseri, ne forte despectui habeantur margarite Christi* (it is not fitting to introduce more in this [English] language, lest, perhaps, the pearls of Christ be held in disrespect). In this same context, he declines to translate the *Vitae Patrum* because it has *multa subtilia* (many subtleties) for most of his audience to comprehend correctly. Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces,* 107, 119, 127 and 131.

[749] Godden, "Commentary," xxiii.

[750] Godden suggests that the list is ordered by Ælfric in order of orthodox authority, rather than by his own use. The main sources for Ælfric's homilies were actually Paul the Deacon, Haymo of Auxerre and a witness to the Cotton-Corpus legendary. From Paul the Deacon alone, Ælfric mined stories from nearly 100 homilies, and used works there attributed to Augustine (14-17 times), Gregory (33 times) and Bede (29 times). Despite the statement quoted above Ælfric actually used Haymo as a source 34 times, while only citing him twice. Godden, "Commentary," xxxix; Hill, *Bede and the Benedictine Reform,* 10-11; Hill, *Translating the Tradition*, 49-62; Godden, "Ælfric and Miracles," 88; and Zettel, "Saints Lives in Old English," 17-37.

teaching, and his works speak often of his tutelage under the bishop at Winchester as both a way of noting his own authority as teacher and translator, and to validate his translation theory.[751] Like his mentor, Ælfric believed that broadening access to literacy and therefore strengthening knowledge and understanding of orthodoxy within the faith could help to achieve the desired prescriptive uniformity in doctrine.[752]

However, Ælfric's role in the transmission of Christian fundamentals was a conflicting one. While Æthelwold, his own teacher, had stated in his translation of the *Rule of St Benedict* that:

> *wel mæg dugan hit naht mid hwylcan gereorde mon sy gestryned ¬ to*
> *þan soþan geleafan gewæmed, butan þæt an sy þæt he Gode gegange.*
>
> it certainly cannot matter by what language a man is acquired and
> drawn to the true faith, as long only as he comes to God,[753]

for Ælfric things were not so simple, as he was sure that the movement of Christian fundamentals from Latin discourse and into the vernacular could lead to the perversion of Christian Truth. Because Ælfric knew that once in the vernacular, wider society would have direct access to the texts outside of orthodox control he was caught between his own concerns about the use of the texts once they were out of his hands and the need for the translations in order to give wider access to the Truth. For example, he gives his reason for his translation project in the preface to *CH* I:

> *for ðan ðe ic geseah 7 gehyrde mycel gedwyld on manegum engliscum bocum, ðe*
> *ungelærede menn ðurh heora bilewitnysse to micclum wisdome tealdon; 7 me ofhreow*
> *hi ne cuðon ne næfdon ða godspellican lare on heora gewritum, buton ðam mannum*
> *anum ðe leden cuðon, 7 buton þam bocum ðe ælfred cyning snoterlice awende of ledene*
> *on englisc, ða synd to hæbenne.*
>
> because I have seen and heard of much error in many English books, which unlearned
> men, through their simplicity, have esteemed as great wisdom: and I regretted that they
> knew not nor had not the evangelical doctrines among their writings, those men only

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[751] For example, in the Latin preface in to his *CH* I, he is *alumnus Æthelwoldi,* in his *Letter to the monks of Eynsham* he notes that he attended the school of Æthelwold for many years, in the preface to his *Grammar* he mentions that he was a member of the *schola Æthelwoldi,* and in the *Vita Æthelwoldi* he is *alumnus Wintoniensis.* Joyce Hill reminds us that he does not mention the other important reformer, Oswald, at all and makes very limited reference to Dunstan in the *Vita Æthelwoldi,* which again serves to emphasise his ties with Æthelwold in particular. Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 41 and 47-49. Cf. Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations,* 262-264.
[752] Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces,* 21.
[753] 'Edgar's Establishment of the Monasteries' Whitelock, *Councils and Synods,* no. 33, 142-154, quote at 151-152. This was commissioned by Edgar and Ælfthryth, according to the *Liber Eliensis.*

excepted who knew Latin, and those books excepted which king Ælfred wisely turned from Latin into English, which are to be had.[754]

He goes on to explain that Christ had warned his disciples that when the end is near false prophets will attempt to pervert the Truth in order to lead mankind away from it and toward sin and error.[755] Here it is clear that Ælfric saw a dichotomy within the extant vernacular works: those apocryphal works written by unorthodox clerics, and the 'orthodox' works of Ælfred's translation programme.[756]

Always careful to work within established Christian tradition, in this case he could not look to a continental model for translation into the vernacular. Therefore, he looked to the example of Æthelwold to help him validate his own translation theory and to King Ælfred for historical precedent. Importantly, Bede was also famous for having translated Latin texts into the vernacular. His pupil Cuthberht had written that as Bede lay dying, he translated a selection from Isidore's *De natura rerum* and endeavoured to turn the book of John *in nostrum linguam ad utilitatem ecclesiae Dei conuertit* (into our mother tongue to the great profit of the Church) because, as he said, *nolo ut pueri mei mendacium legant, et in hoc post meum obitum sine fructu laborent* (I cannot have my children learning what is not true, and losing their labour on this after I am gone).[757] This would have been a particularly poignant image for Ælfric, who shared an almost identical translation theory to that presented here for Bede by his own pupil.

Ælfric would also have known Ælfred's translations of Gregory's *Pastoral Care* and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, and perhaps Augustine's *Soliloquies,* all of which demonstrated his role as both a pious king and as translator into the vernacular.[758] Because he believed that Ælfred had translated the *OEB,* the king appeared to have provided yet another precedent in keeping with

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[754] *CH I,* 2-3 and Thorpe, 3.

[755] The Scandinavian attacks referred to in the preface of his second set of homilies do seem to feed in to his thoughts about God's retribution and the end of days, see especially his *LS* 23, *De oratione Moysi,* 282-306.

[756] Cf. Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 104. For a detailed account of Ælfric's contribution to the 10th c. reforms, see Dumville, "Alfred and the Tenth-Century Reform," 185-205.

[757] *Epistolae de Obitu Bedae,* in *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* ed. Colgrave and Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969) 582-583.

[758] Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 106-107, following Forster, points out that Ælfric and the Ælfredian corpus all use the authority of Gregory, Bede and Augustine to validate their texts.

the reform's commitment to the Bedan tradition.[759] In the preface to his *Grammar,* Ælfric

rhetorically echoes Ælfred's own preface to his *Pastoral Care.* This is where Ælfred invokes the same

golden age under Theodore's archbishopric that Bede before him had sought to recover.[760] It is

worth quoting the two at length to best compare the points, beginning with Ælfred:

> *…me com swiðe oft on gemynd: hwelce wiotan iu wæron giond Angelcynn ægðer ge godcundra hada ge woruldcundra; ond hu gesæliglica tida ða wæron giond Angelcynn; ond hu ða kyningas ðe ðone onwald hæfdon ðæs folces on ðam dagum Gode ond his ærendwrecum hiersumedon, ond hu hie ægðer ge hiora sibbe ge hiora siodu ge hiora onweald innanbordes gehioldon ond eac ut hiora eðel rymdon, ond hu him ða speow ge mid wige ge mid wisdome; ond eac ða godcundan hadas hu giorne hie wæron ægðer ge ymb lare ge ymb liornunga ge ymb ealle ða ðiowotdomas ðe hie Gode don scoldon… Swæ clæne hio wæs oðfeallenu on Angelcynne ðæt swiðe feawa wæron behionan Humbre ðe hiora ðeninga cuðen understondan on Englisc oððe furðum an ærendgewrit of Lædene on Englisc areccean; ond ic wene ðætte noht monige begiondan Humbre næren.*[761]

> …it has very often come to my mind what wise men there were formerly throughout the English people, both in sacred and in secular orders; and how there were happy times then throughout England; and how the kings who had rule over the people in those days were obedient to God and his messengers, and both maintained their peace and their morality and their authority at home, and also enlarged their territory abroad; and how they were prepared both in warfare and in wisdom; and also how zealous the sacred orders were both about teaching and about learning and all the services which they had to perform for God… So complete was its decay among the English people that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their rituals in English, or indeed could translate a letter from Latin into English; and I imagine that there were not many beyond the Humber.[762]

Ælfric understood himself to be working within the same tradition as Ælfred, charged with the duty

of returning literacy and morality to the standards of an idealised Bedan past by translating texts

into the vernacular so that they were more widely accessible as he responds to Ælfred's own

concerns:

> *Is nu for ði godes þeowum and mynstermannum georne to warnigenne, þæt seo halige lar on urum dagum ne acolige oððe ateorige, swaswa hit wæs gedon on Angelcynne nu for anum feawum gearum, swa þæt nan englisc preost ne cuðe dihtan oððe asmeagean*

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[759] Bernard F. Huppé, "Alfred and Aelfric: A Study of Two Prefaces," in *The Old English Homily and Its Backgrounds*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard F. Huppé (Albany: University of New York Press, 1978), 119-139; and Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 102-103. Ælfred had also tried to reform the monasteries during his reign, according to Asser, Chs. 93 and 94, and the *Life of St Grimbald* credits him with helping the saint found New Minster (which continued under Edward the Elder). Cf. Dumville, "Alfred and the Tenth-Century Reform," 192-183; Sawyer, *From Roman Britain*, 123-124 and 242; and James, *Britain*, 255-256 and 258.

[760] See *HE* IV:2, 334-335; Chapter Two, pp.25-26; and Chapter Three, pp. 85-86 above.

[761] From Sweet, *Preface to Ælfred's Pastoral Care*, 4-5.

[762] Translated by Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 30-31.

anne pistol on leden, oðþæt Dunstan arcebisceop and Æthelwold bisceop eft ta lare on munuclifum arærdon.

It is then right for God's ministers and monks to take great care that divine learning does not cool off or fade in our time, as happened in England a few years ago, with the result that no English cleric knew how to compose or interpret a letter in Latin, until Archbishop Dunstan and Æthelwold restored scholarship again in the monasteries.[763]

Bernard Huppé has shown that Ælfric certainly would have connected with Ælfred's problem, as he

worked out his own translation theory, and sought to remedy the king's complaint that:

ða wundrade ic swiðe swiðe ðara godena wiotena ðe giu wæron giond Angel cynn, ond ða bec be fullan eallæ geliornod hæfdon, ðæt hie hiora ða nænne dæl noldon on hiora agen geðiode wendan.[764]

I wondered greatly at those good wise men who formerly existed throughout the English people and had fully studied all those books, that they did not wish to translate any part of them into their own language.[765]

He may also have found solace in Ælfred's logic regarding the translations of sacred texts by the

Greeks and Romans from Hebrew into their own vernaculars, and considered it a justification for his

own translation of important texts.[766]

Clearly, Ælfric looked to Æthelwold, Ælfred and Bede to validate his translation theory and felt

that his commitment to teaching his audience about their faith outweighed his reservations

concerning the distortion of his message. In this, Ælfric's debt to Bede may be more conceptual than

can be seen by tracing the sources for his work. Ælfric can be seen linking his role as teacher of the

English to Bede through their mutual textual connection with Ælfred, extending a long line of

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[763] Cf. Malcolm Godden, "Ælfric and the Alfredian Precedents," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan, *Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition: A Series of Handbooks and Reference Works on the Intellectual and Religious Life of Europe, 500-1700* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 142; and Dumville, *From Alfred to Edgar*, 193. In this context, consider also these lines from his *De Oratione Moysi: Wel we magon geðencan hu wel hit ferde mid us./ þaða þis igland wæs wunigende on sibbe./ and munuc-lif wæron mid wurð-scipe gehealdene./ and ða woruld-menn wæron wære wið heora fynd./ swa þæt ure word sprang wide geond þas eoðan.* (Well may we think how well it fared with us/ when this island was dwelling in peace,/ and the monastic orders were held in honour, and the laity were ready against their foes,/ so that our report spread widely throughout the earth) which also hearken back to a Bedan past (ll.147-151).
[764] From Ælfred's preface to *Pastoral Care,* in *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader,* 6.
[765] Translated by Swanton, in *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 31.
[766] Huppé, "Alfred and Aelfric," 119-137, especially 119, 128-129, and 131-132; and Dumville, "Alfred and the Tenth-Century Reform," 194-195. See also Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 153; and Hill, *Translating the Tradition*, 47-49. This is yet another reason for him to invoke Jerome's authority in his Latin preface to *CH II.* Consider also Ælfric's references to the importance of Oswald as *wealhstod* for Aidan as he teaches to the Northumbrians, ultimately bringing about their wholesale conversion (*Life of Oswald*, l. 67), and Augustine's dependence on *wealhstodas of Francena rice* within his mission in order to convert Æthelberht in the *Life of Gregory.*

historical tradition, preservation and education back through the king to Bede. Within Ælfric's works,

Bede is dubbed *ure lareow, se ðeoda lareowa* and *Bede se snotera lareow,* making it clear that Ælfric

recognises him not only as a doctor of the Church, but also as a teacher to the English people.[767]

Ælfric saw himself as part of the same tradition, and as such he was integral for spreading the ideals

of the reform movement among the laity.[768] In his preface to the *LS,* he explicitly states that the text

was written particularly about those saints which *þe angel-cynn mid freols-dagum wurþað* (the

English nation honours with festivals), creating a collection which was distinctly Anglo-Saxon, and

one where Bede's history of the Anglo-Saxon Church would have been of particular value. So, Ælfric

uses the *HE* for exemplary models of the pious lives of important saints such as Cuthberht, Alban,

Æthelthryth, Oswald, and Gregory as reported by Bede as a way of controlling memory of the past,

and to provide a uniquely English cast to the pantheon of otherwise continental and Mediterranean

saints.[769] Ælfric also calls upon Bede to lend authority and credibility to his texts, as he is mentioned

as the source for all these stories (except in conjunction with Alban). Consideration of Ælfric's use of

the *HE* as both a set of exemplary models, and as an authoritative account of these models will be

seen by first giving an overview of how Ælfric reshapes these figures, and then analysing these

portrayals in light of his tenth-century context.

St Cuthberht

The importance of St Cuthberht as a national saint, the appropriation of whom helped to tie

Northumbria into the unity of what became England, cannot be underestimated.[770] Ælfric's version

of the saint's *Life,* the *Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti Episcopi, CH* 2.10 borrows heavily from Bede's

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[767] These examples are from *CH* 2.9, 2.10 and 2.21 and Ælfric, *De Temporibus Anni*, in *Ælfric's De Temporibus Anni*, ed. Martin Blake (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, Ltd, 2009) 76. Clearly, Ælfric also saw himself as a teacher, educating the masses. In his Latin preface to the *CH I*, he states that *nec tamen omnia evangelia tangimus per circulum anni, sed illa tantummodo quibus speramus sufficere posse simplicibus ad animarum emendationem, quia seculars omnia nequeunt capere, quamvis ex ore doctorum adiant* (we have not touched upon all the gospels in the yearly cycle, but only those we hope to be sufficient for the simple for the improvement of their souls, because laymen are not able to take in all they hear, even from the mouths of the learned). Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 107 and 127.
[768] James, *Britain*, 258. On the importance of teaching and preaching for Ælfric, see Clayton, "Hermits and the Contemplative Life," 161-166; and Upchurch, "Pastoral Care and Political Gain," 69-70.
[769] Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints,* 54-57. Gregory can be seen here as an honorary Insular figure, as his importance as the apostle of the English was well-known throughout Anglo-Saxon England, and this is emphasised within Ælfric's work. On cults and controlled memory, see Cubitt, "Memory and Narrative," 29-66.
[770] For more on the cult of St Cuthberht in England and on the continent, see Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints,* 65-126.

prose and metrical hagiography of the saint, as well as the *Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo,* all of which are outside of the scope of this inquiry.[771] According to Malcolm Godden, a few lines do borrow phraseology from the *HE,* which helps to lend some historical context to Cuthberht's life.[772] However, Ælfric does not explicitly state that he used the *HE* at all, claiming only that:

> *Beda, se snotera Engla ðeode lareow, þises halgan lif endebyrdlice mid wunderfullum herungum. ægðer ge æfter anfealdre gereccednysse ge æfter leoðlicere gyddunge awrat; Us sæde soðlice beda…*
>
> Beda, the wise doctor of the English nation, has written the life of this saint in the order of events, with wonderful praises, both in a simple narrative and in a poetic composition. Beda has truly informed us…[773]

Also, the few references which Godden claims come from the *HE* are also in Bede's much fuller prose version of the *Vita.*[774] Godden admits that these few similarities in phraseology between the *HE* and Ælfric's version of the *Life,* merely serve to 'historicise' and 'contextualise' the course of Cuthberht's life and that although Ælfric does not cite the *HE,* 'he clearly knows the work.'[775] That Ælfric is familiar with the *HE* has already been established, so the probability of slight borrowing in phraseology from the *HE* for his account of Cuthberht does not merit focus here, except that, it should be noted, this is a prime example of Ælfric's access to many sources for the same story. He is not dependent on the *HE* for the story of Cuthberht, and therefore uses the much fuller *vitae* of the saint for his re-telling.

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[771] *CH* 2.10, 81-91. A search of Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/> (August 2010), reports that 188 of the 338 lines found in Godden's edition are from Bede's *VCM,* while 201 are from his *VCP,* and 79 are from the *VCA.* Comparatively few lines are from the *HE,* comprising 32 of 338 lines. For the *VCA* and the *VCP,* see Colgrave, *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert,* and for the *VCM* see Bede, *Vita S. Cuthberti Metrica,* in *Bedas metrische Vita Sancti Cuthberti, Palaestra 138,* ed. W. Jaager (Leipzig: 1935). For more on Ælfric's portrayal of the saint, see Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints,* 101-126.

[772] Malcolm Godden, "Experiments in Genre: The Saints' Lives in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies,*" in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts,* ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 276-277.

[773] *CH* 2.10, Thorpe, 132-135.

[774] The similarities are to be seen at *HE* IV:27-28, 432 and 436-438.

[775] Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 276-280. See also, Godden, "Commentary," 412-429; and Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints,* 65-126, esp. 101-122.

St Alban

One of the lives which was mined directly from the *HE* is the first part of *LS* XIX, the *Passio Sancti*

Albani Martyris.[776] In borrowing the entire *Life* directly from the *HE,* Ælfric clearly moves the story

from history to hagiography by paring down Bede's story to focus sharply on the dichotomy

between Alban's Christianity and the *hæðen* and *arleasa*, and by removing the historical details,

such as both the Latin and English names of the city where Alban was martyred (*Verulamium* and

then *Verlamacæstir/Væclingacæstir*).[777]

As in the *HE* Alban is not a Christian in the beginning, but is nonetheless willing to take in a

Christian fleeing persecution and being converted by the refugee, he bravely takes the fugitive's

place before the magistrate for the crime of Christian faith. It is Alban's self sacrifice, and the

miracles he performs through this sacrifice, that wins converts to the faith. He is called a *soðfæstan*

martyr (steadfast martyr) and Ælfric follows Bede in recording that Alban draws a crowd of people

who were inspired by this selflessness.[778] He also follows Bede in that by miraculously drying the

stream that blocked his path on the way to martyrdom, Alban converts his executioner, who *feoll to*

his fotum mid fullum geleafan/ wolde mid him sweltan ærðan þe he hine sloge (fell at his feet with

full faith,/ desiring to die with him rather than to slay him). The man who finally did decide to

decapitate him lost his eyes alongside Alban's head, *þæt he mihte oncnawan hwæne he acwealde*

(that he might understand whom he had killed).[779]

There are however, two very striking differences in Ælfric's portrayal, one of which is that he

anachronistically refers twice to Alban's homeland as *engla lande*, rather than *Brytene*.[780] Also

striking is the conclusion. In both accounts, Alban's remarkable martyrdom causes the magistrate to

rescind the persecutions, and the British Christians come out of hiding to celebrate and live in

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[776] *SL* 1.19, 415-424. According to Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: A Database Register of Written Sources Used by Authors in Anglo-Saxon England, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>, 144 of the 154 lines of the account are directly from Bede. The second part of the homily, *Item Alia* on Ahitophel and Absalom appears to be completely distinct from the account of Alban, and does not borrow from Bede, but rather is a warning to thieves and traitors which comes directly from the Bible. For more on the cult of St Alban at his church in Mercia, see Crick, "St. Albans," 78-84.

[777] *HE* I:7, 34.

[778] I.42 and ll. 86-89 and *HE* I:7, 30-32.

[779] ll.101-102 and l. 122; *HE* I:7, 32.

[780] ll. 17 and 135. See the similar use of *engla lande* and *englisce* in Gregory's *Life, CH* 2.9, 120.

peace. However in the *HE,* Bede clearly blames the *Arrianae uaesaniae* (Arian madness) for the end

of this peace which *corrupto orbe toto hanc etiam insulam extra orbem tam longe remotam ueneno*

sui infecit erroris (corrupted the whole world and even infected this island, sundered so far from the

rest of mankind, with the poison of its error).[781] In doing so, Bede sets the stage for the *adventus*

Saxonum by offering the Arian heresy as the point of departure from the happy state of Christianity

enjoyed by the Britons following the martyrdom of Alban, and the ultimate justification for their

loss of the island to the pagan Anglo-Saxons. Ælfric, on the other hand, omits any references to

heresy, which in effect places *adventus Saxonum* side by side with the high point of British

Christianity enjoyed after Alban's martyrdom and their relief from persecution. Ælfric, in contrast

with his source, claims that Alban's martyrdom

> *wæs geworden ær ðæt gewinn come*
> *ðurh hengest. and horsan þe hyndon ða bryttas*
> *and se cristen-dom wearð ge-unwurðod syððan*
> *oðþæt agustinus hine eft astealde.*
> *be gregories lare þæs geleaffullan papan.*
> *Sy wuldor and lof þam wel willendan scyppende*
> *seðe ure fæderas feondum æt-bræd.*
> *and to fulluhte gebigde þurh his bydelas.*
>
> was done before that strife came
> through Hengest and Horsa who defeated the Britons,
> and Christianity was again dishonoured,
> until Augustine re-established it
> according to the instruction of Gregory, the faithful pope.
> Be glory and praise to the benevolent Creator,
> who delivered our fathers from their foes,
> and disposed them to baptism by means of his preachers.[782]

By eliminating Bede's polemic of heresy, Ælfric's account represents an entirely different

perspective on the role of the English in taking Britain, referred to here with the arrival of Hengest

and Horsa. This final remark reveals a sort of shame in the Anglo-Saxons, who dishonoured the

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[781] *HE* I:8, 34-35.
[782] ll.147-154. Notice here that the Britons are *bryttas,* as in Bede, rather than *wealas.* See also, the *Life of St Swithun, LS* 21, l. 540-541 where Ælfric refers to the kings of the Britons as *cyningas… cumera.* For more on the use of *wealh* in the 10th century, and Ælfric's use in particular, see Faull, "Semantic Development," 27, see also 35-36.

Christianity of Alban and the Britons.[783] There is no mention of heresy here, and for Ælfric the blame was not with the Britons, but rather with the Anglo-Saxons who, like the Roman persecutors, were not only heathens but destructive to the Christian faith.

St Æthelthryth

Another saint who appears in the *LS* and whose account is directly from Bede is Æthelthryth, in the *Natale Sancte Æðeldryðe Virginis, LS XX*.[784] While the accounts are very similar, of course Ælfric's version of Æthelthryth's *Life*, like that of Alban, is more hagiographical in tone and much less interested in historical details. For example, while interested in the fact that her father was the pious Anna, king of the East Angles, Ælfric is not interested in the geography of Ely, or the martyrdom of Sigeberht, her father's predecessor.[785] These details are smoothed away to streamline a purely hagiographical account of the virgin, the effect of which is an account even more focused on the virginity of the saint.

Both Bede and Ælfric had expected disbelief in the saint's virginity after two marriages, and called on both temporal and miraculous proof in order to convince their audiences. In the *HE*, Bede immediately follows up his statement that she had been married to both Tondberht and King Egfrith with the testimony of Wilfrid, who *dicens se testem integritatis eius esse certissimum* (told me [Bede] that he had the most perfect proof of her virginity) in that the king had tried to bribe him into convincing the queen to consummate their relationship.[786] Ælfric calls on this testimony of Bede for his own proof, and *se lareow beda* (the teacher Bede) also attests to the miracles performed by her relics.[787] Ælfric also calls on the authority of *haalga beda þe þas boc gesette* (holy Bede who wrote this book) to demonstrate that acts of celibacy were even possible *nu on urum*

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[783] Importantly, British Christianity is completely omitted from Ælfric's account of the Gregorian mission. This relationship with the pagan Anglo-Saxon ancestors might be compared with Æthelweard's treatment in the *Chronicon* where he refers to the Saxons as *spurci populi* at I:2, 7 (presumably because of their paganism) and yet proudly details their migration and settlement across I:3-5, 7-10.

[784] *SL,* 1.20, 432-441.

[785] Compare to *HE* III:18, 268 and IV:19, 396. See also, *HE* III:7, 234.

[786] *HE* IV:19, 390-392.

[787] ll.19-23, and ll.115-119.

dagum (now in our days) and were not necessarily relegated to the past.[788] Not only calling on Bede

for authority, Ælfric's account accords much space to the proof of her virginity. While a nun's

virginity is expected, Æthelthryth's virginity remained intact whilst she spent many years in the

secular (and political) world and even maintained it against the will of the king himself.[789] She is

idealised because she kept her virginity despite the circumstances and her example shows that

celibacy within the secular world is not only possible, but ideal.[790]

This point is strengthened by the insertion of eight lines from Rufinus' *Historia Monachorum*

at the conclusion of the *Life.*[791] These lines tell of *be sumon ðegne/ se wæs þryttig geara mid his*

wife on clænysse (a certain thane,/ who lived thirty years with his wife in continence) after the birth

of their three sons, which is repeated in the very next line: *hi siððan buta/ ðrittig geara wæron*

wunigende butan hæmede (they both lived/ for thirty years without cohabitation).[792] Here Ælfric is

clearly offering another monastic model to a secular audience, where he shows that sexual

continence was ideal even for married couples, especially once they had fulfilled their procreative

role.[793]

Ælfric's use of the saint's story is important, in that it clearly demonstrates the shifting

historical contexts in which Bede and Ælfric were working. Bede had never emphasised that lay

people should be expected to take on monastic values, and indeed for him Æthelthryth's story is

more remarkable because she did this of her own free will.[794] However, in Ælfric's use of the *Life,* he

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[788] ll.24-30.

[789] Ruth Waterhouse, "Discourse and Hypersignification in Two of Ælfric's Saints' Lives," in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 344. For more on Ælfric's anxiety concerning Æthelthryth's lack of submission in her marriage, see Peter Jackson, "Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: A Reconsideration of the *Life of Æthethryth,* Lines 120-130," *ASE* 29 (2000): 247-255. Compare to Ælfric's *On Apostolic Doctrine,* ll. 111-116 and Alcuin's treatment of Æthelthryth and Egfrith's relationship in his *York Poem,* ll. 760-3.

[790] Upchurch, "Pastoral Care and Political Gain," 49, 53-54 and 70-71.

[791] Cf. Whatley, "Late Old English Hagiography," 467, n. 176; and Jackson, "Christian Marriage," 238-240.

[792] ll.123-124 and 125-126.

[793] Jackson, "Christian Marriage," 244-245 suggests that this message differed from that offered by the example of Æthelthryth herself with its emphasis on mutual consent for abstinence between married partners. For more on these lines from Rufinus, see Upchurch, "Pastoral Care and Political Gain," 53-58.

[794] Upchurch, "Pastoral Care and Political Gain," 49-53 demonstrates that although Ælfric bases his strictures on chastity on Augustine, he actually amplifies Augustine's own opinions to be much stricter than his writings suggest.

clearly expects that sexual continence could be imposed on secular clergy and lay people, whom he expected to refrain from sexual intercourse outside of producing offspring and during certain times of the year.[795] Ælfric uses Æthelthryth as an example in order to strike out at the married clergy who did not have the continence of Queen Æthelthryth, a woman who maintained virginity in both the secular world and the ecclesiastical one. Ælfric here seems to be offering celibacy as an ideal which provides a distinction between the 'correct' practices of the monastics who imitated Christ, and the clergy who were sexually incontinent.[796] In this context celibacy can be seen as a means of social control, offering a point of separation between the reformed and the unreformed and with the ability to connect devout lay people with the ideals of the reform, rather than their secular clergy.[797]

This distinction is also emphasised in Ælfric's language, where her sexual purity is symbolised by her *clænysse*. The word *baðian* is repeated three times over four lines to indicate that while she imitates Christ in washing others, her purity ensures that her own washing is only ritually necessary, such as at important religious feasts.[798] Ruth Waterhouse also points out that Ælfric shifts the report of Æthelthryth's deadly neck tumour from the mouth of Cynefrith, the leech, to the saint's own direct speech, where she states that the tumour was God's way of cleansing away the sinful vanity of the adornments she had worn on her neck in her youth: *godes arfæstnyss þone gylt aclænsige* (God's justice may cleanse my guilt).[799] The use of *aclænsige* in this line, rather than a direct translation of Bede's *absolvar* ('released' or 'discharged'), amplifies Æthelthryth's purity. Of course, when the tomb is later opened, the scar from the tumour has healed, indicating that she was indeed cleansed of sin.[800]

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[795] John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," 308. This is part of a wider movement to place monastic demands on pious laity. Cf. Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 183.

[796] Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 342, 352 and 491; and Upchurch, "Pastoral Care and Political Gain," 71-73.

[797] Catherine Cubitt, "Virginity and Misogyny in the Tenth and Eleventh Century," *Gender and History* 12, no. 1 (2003): 3; and Upchurch, "Pastoral Care and Political Gain," 60 and 75-76 suggests also that Ælfric uses this idea of marital celibacy to connect the laity with the reform movement, by having the laity actively monitor the sexual habits of the clergy.

[798] II.44-48.

[799] II.58.

[800] Waterhouse, "Discourse and Hypersignification," 341-342. She also suggests that the double repetition of the word *hwit* to describe the stone coffin in which her incorrupt body was laid also stresses the purity of the saint, 347.

Here Ælfric amplifies Bede's own message to suit the late tenth-century context in which he is writing by including ten lines from Rufinus. This is consistent with Ælfric's view of clerical chastity where it is represented elsewhere, such as in his *Letter to Sigefyrth*, where he is eager to counter the allowance made for cohabiting clerics by a local anchorite, his *On Apostolic Doctrine* where he details his conditions for sexual continence within marriage, and his vernacular preface to his translation of the book of Genesis, where he points out that the disciples were allowed wives, but forsook marriage upon realizing their devotion to Christ, which is reiterated his homily *Dominica in Sexagesima*.[801]

St Oswald

A slightly more nuanced way in which Ælfric used Bede's history in his hagiography is in the *Natale Sancti Oswaldi Regis et Martyris, LS* XXVI.[802] Ælfric clearly cites *se halga beda þe ðas boc gedihte* (the holy Bede who indicted this book) as his source for the sanctity of King Oswald and his account of Oswald follows the same basic storyline as Bede's, demonstrating the king's exceptional piety, humility and generosity.[803] Toward the end of the account, Ælfric underlines Bede's authority in reference to Oswald by passing on Bede's message:

> *Nu cwæð se halga beda þe ðas boc gedihte.*
> *þæt hit nan wundor nys. þæt se halga cynincg*
> *untrumnysse gehæle nu he on heofonum leofað.*
> *for-ðan þe he wolde gehelpan þa þa he her on life wæs.*
> *þearfum and wannhalum. And him bigwiste syllan*.

> Now saith the holy Bede who indited this book,
> it is no wonder that the holy king
> should heal sickness, now that he liveth in heaven,
> because he desired to help, when he was here on earth,
> the poor and weak, and to give them sustenance.[804]

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[801] *Letter to Sigefryth,* Bruno Assman *Angelsachsische Homilen* (Darmstadt, 1964) no. 2, 13-23; *Preface to Genesis,* Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces,* 116-119; *On Apostolic Doctrine SH* 2.19, 626-637*;* and *Dominica in Sexagesima, CH* 2.6, 52-59. Cf. The Gospel of Matthew 19:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-7:39, especially 7:25-35, *Oxford Annotated Bible*, 'New Testament', 36 and 273-278. Jackson, "Christian Marriage," 247 also points out that Wulfstan revised the First Old English Pastoral Letter issued by Ælfric to omit the inclusion of *masspreosts* and *diacons* from the list of those forbidden to have a woman in their household, perhaps allowing for a more realistic approach to the situation.
[802] *SL,* 2.26, 124-143.
[803] I.272.
[804] II.272-276.

Ælfric's account is divided into three parts, the first of which tells of Oswald's takeover of the Northumbrian kingdom, where he puts up a miraculous cross at Heavenfield and avenges the death of Edwin. In the next part, he and Aidan convert Northumbria from its apostasy, and nurture humility and good works among the converts. In the third part, Oswald is martyred, and his relics work a myriad of miracles, in Britain, Ireland and the continent. In both accounts it is Oswald's religious fervour that wins favour with God for his kingdom. As in the *HE*, Oswald is depicted fighting boldly against Cadwallon, despite being desperately outnumbered, where it was not strength of arms that won the day, *ac his geleafan hine getrymde/ and crist him gefylste to his feonda slege* (but his faith strengthened him/ and Christ helped him to the slaughter of his enemies).[805]

However, in Bede's account, Oswald is also endowed with *imperium,* military strength that attested to his favour with God.[806] Bede idealised both the security for the people and the potential for Christian conversion that this prowess offered. One way in which he had demonstrated the superiority of Oswald's *imperium* was in his explanation of Northumbrian military expansion in the north:

> *Denique omnes nationes et prouincias Brittaniae, quae in quattuor linguas, id est Brettonum Pictorum Scottorum et Anglorum, diuisae sunt, in dicione accepit. Quo regni culmine sublimatus, nihilominus (quod mirum dictu est) pauperibus et peregrinis semper humilis benignus et largus fuit.*

> He held under his sway all the peoples and kingdoms of Britain, divided among the speakers of four different languages, British, Pictish, Irish and English. Though he wielded supreme power over the whole land, he was always wonderfully humble, kind, and generous to the poor and to strangers.[807]

In saying this, Bede was referring back to the opening of his work, where he had listed all the peoples in Britain, identifying them by their language.[808] Over the course of his narrative, he depicts the struggles between these various peoples for control over their respective territories, and here

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[805] ll.15-16. Compare with *HE* III:1, 214-215: *superveniente cum paruo exercitu, sed fide Christi munito.*([Oswald] came with an army, small in numbers but strengthened by their faith in Christ).
[806] See Chapter 2, pp. 22-23 above.
[807] *HE* III:6, 230.
[808] *HE* I:1, 16.

uses Oswald's ability to subdue them as a positive sign of his particular favour with God.[809] Oswald

is thus able to share the religious and cultural superiority of the Northumbrians with those peoples

whom he had subjected, with the support of God.

Ælfric, however, frames this political expansion differently. According to him, Oswald's merits

were such that:

> *feower þeoda hine underfengon to hlaforde*
> *peohtas. and bryttas. Scottas and angle.*
> *swa swa se ælmihtiga god hi geanlæhte to ðam.*
> *for oswoldes geearnnungum þe hine æfre wurðode.*
>
> Four peoples received him as lord,
> Picts, Britons, Scots, and Angles,
> even as the Almighty God united them for the purpose,
> because of Oswald's merits, who ever honoured Him.[810]

Here, the implication is that the peoples of Britain chose to be his subjects, rather than were

conquered by him, and it was his extraordinary merit which rendered the people into Oswald's care.

His kingship is marked with humility, self sacrifice, and his martyrdom as:

> *geseah he genealecan his lifes geendunge.*
> *and gebæd for his folc þe þær feallende sweolt.*
> *and betæhte heora sawla and hine sylfne gode.*
> *and þus clypode on his fylle. God gemiltsa urum sawlum.*
>
> he saw approach his life's ending,
> and he prayed for his people who died falling,
> and commended their souls and himself to God,
> and thus cried in his fall, 'God, have mercy on our souls.'[811]

In this context, it is instructive to compare Ælfric's depiction of Oswald as an ideal king with his

portrayal of Edgar in the *Life of St Swithun*:

> *we secgað to soðan þæt se tima wæs gesælig*
> *and wynsum on angel-cynne. þaða Edgar cynincg*
> *þone christen-dom ge-fyrðrode. And fela munuclifa arærde*
> *and his cynerice wæs wunigende on sibbe*
> *swa þæt man ne gehurde gif ænig scyp-here wære*
> *buton agenre leode þe ðis land heoldon.*

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[809] For example, see *HE* II:5, 150-152 where the failure of *imperium* after the deaths of Æthelberht and Sæberht resulted in apostasy and chaos, and *HE* III:1, 212-214 where the death of Edwin does the same.
[810] ll.105-108.
[811] ll.158-161.

and ealle ða cyningas þe þysum iglande wæron.
cumera. And scotta. common to Edgare.
hwilon anes dæges eahta cyningas.
and hi ealle gebugon to Edgares wissunge.

we say of a truth that the time was blessed
and winsome in England, when King Edgar
furthered Christianity, and built many monasteries,
and his kingdom still continued in peace,
so that no fleet was heard of,
save that of the people themselves who held this land;
and all the kings of the Cymry and Scots
that were in this island, came to Edgar
once upon a day, being eight kings
and they all bowed themselves to Edgar's rule.[812]

According to Ælfric, these eight kings chose Edgar as their lord because of his virtue – which would have been exceptionally remarkable during a time of peace. This is similar to the 'choice' he attributes to the people of the four different languages who wilfully subject themselves to the virtues of Oswald.[813]

The desire to portray a peaceful rule in his examples may also be reflected in Ælfric's treatment of the relationship between Oswald and Edwin. King Edwin is Oswald's predecessor, and in Bede's account, his mortal enemy. In the *HE,* it is clear that Oswald and the other sons of Æthelfrith are scattered throughout northern Britain and Ireland in order to escape the long and deadly reach of Edwin, who would have seen them as rivals for his throne, because they were heirs to the royal house of the rival Northumbrian dynasty, Bernicia.[814] Therefore, their claim to the Bernician throne, based at Bamburgh, and the over lordship of Northumbria was just as legitimate as his was to that of Deira, based at York, and his own over lordship. According to the *HE,* at Edwin's death the kingdom broke into its constituent pieces and Oswald's brother Eanfrith stepped up to claim his inheritance to the Bernician throne, while Edwin's son Osric became king of Deira. When these two kings failed to hold their kingdoms, Oswald came out of exile in Ireland, and seized the

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[812] *LS* 21, 468-469 (ll. 444-453). Notice here that the Britons are *cumera,* not *Bryttas* or *Wealh,* this suggests a familiarity with the speech of the Britons, since that is their own nomenclature, and not that of an outsider.
[813] Compare this to the treatment of the voluntary subjection of the Franks, Frisians, Gauls, Vikings, Welshmen, Irishmen and Bretons to Ælfred by Asser in Ch. 76 and 59-60.
[814] *HE* III:1, 212.

kingship of the entire kingdom of Northumbria, in just the kind of takeover Edwin had feared while

he was alive, and Edwin's heirs then took their own turn in exile in the south.[815]

Ælfric however, chose to depict the kingdom as solidly unified, and the transition as a smooth

one.[816] Thus, Oswald is portrayed as the great avenger of Edwin. Ælfric says of Oswald's exile in

Ireland that:

> *se ferde on his iugoðe fram freondum and magum*
> *To scot-lande on sæ. and þær sona wearð gefullod*
> *and his geferan samod þe mid him siþedon.*
>
> He went in his youth from friends and kindred
> to Scotland by sea, and there was forthwith baptised,
> together with his companions who had travelled with him. [817]

While Oswald was indeed converted during his exile in Ireland, these lines suggest that Oswald left

his friends and family behind in order to be baptised. Here Ælfric intentionally distorts events in

order to create an image of peregrination for his pious king. In the following lines, Ælfric states that

> *Betwux þam wearð ofslagen eadwine his eam*
> *norðhymbra cynincg on crist ge-lyfed.*
> *fram brytta cyninge ceadwalla geciged….*
> *and se ceadwalla sloh and to sceame tucode*
> *þa norþhymbran leode æfter heora hlafordes fylle.*
> *oþ þæt oswold se eadiga his yfelnysse ad wæsete.*
>
> About that time Edwin his uncle,
> king of the Northumbrians, who believed in Christ,
> was slain by the British king named Cadwallon…
> and this Cadwallon slew and shamefully ill-treated
> the Northumbrian people after their lord's fall,
> until Oswald the blessed extinguished his wickedness.[818]

Clearly, here Ælfric is portraying Oswald as the redeemer, who rushes to avenge his uncle (*his eam*)

and save his people from the tyranny of Cadwallon.[819] Ælfric focuses on their familial relationship

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[815] *HE* II:20, 204.
[816] Compare with Alcuin's treatment of the Northumbrian royal succession in his *York Poem*, discussed in Chapter Three, p. 69 above, where he is also portrayed as avenging Edwin in order to promote unity.
[817] ll. 4-6.
[818] ll. 7-13.
[819] Compare with *HE* II:20, 202-204.

and also uses the phrase *betwux þam wearð* (about that time) as if to indicate that Oswald had just been baptised, and then rushed to avenge Northumbria.

In this account, it is the divine justice that Oswald metes out to Cadwallon that imbues the cross at Heavenfield with such miraculous power.[820] According to Ælfric, Edwin is connected to Oswald as *his mæg* (his kinsman) and by their death at the hands of Penda who goes unmentioned in the earlier account of Edwin's death, but at Oswald's he is both Oswald's murderer, and *þe æt his mæges slege ær/ eadwines cyninges ceadwallan fylste* (he who formerly had assisted/ Cadwallon at the slaying of his kinsman king Edwin).[821] Penda's name seems to have been saved for dramatic effect to connect the death of Edwin with the martyrdom of Oswald.

Here, the transition between the reigns of Edwin and Oswald is portrayed as a smooth one, internal strife is edited out, and the unity of the people goes unquestioned.[822] This interest in unity also shapes the way in which Ælfric frames the rejection of Oswald's holy bones by the Bardney monks. There is no even faint hint of the tension seen in Bede, where

> *noluerunt ea, qui erant in monasterio, libenter excipere, quia, etsi sanctum eum nouerant, tamen quia de alia prouincia ortus fuerat et super eos regnum acceperat, ueteranis eum odiis etiam mortuum insequebantur.*

> They knew that Oswald was a saint but, nevertheless, because he belonged to another kingdom and had once conquered them, they pursued him even when dead with their former hatred.[823]

Ælfric merely states that they rejected the bones because of *menniscum gedwylde* (human error), rather than because of the tension between the Mercians and Northumbrians during this period.[824]

After detailing Oswald's swift and holy vengeance on Cadwallon for the death of Edwin, the account moves into its next phase: that of the conversion of Northumbria.[825] While there is no mention of the work of Edwin and Paulinus in the conversion of Northumbria, much of Ælfric's

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[820] ll.16-33.
[821] ll.110, 151, and ll.150-152.
[822] Notably, Ælfric follows Bede's instructions in *HE* III:1, 214 and III:9, 240 to assign the regnal dates of the apostates Osric and Eanfrith and the time of tyranny under Cadwallon to the reign of Oswald. As per these instructions, Ælfric gives Oswald a reign of nine years (l. 148), only mentions the apostasy indirectly (l. 63), and those 2 years between Edwin and Oswald vaguely (l. 8).
[823] *HE* III:2, 246-247.
[824] ll.176-191.
[825] This account also varies from Bede's in that Edwin is not portrayed as a saint, and barely features at all except as a prop for the praising of Oswald.

account of Oswald is about his partnership with Bishop Aidan and their (re)conversion of Northumbria.[826] Aidan features in over fifty-nine of the account's two hundred and eighty eight lines, and is at the very end inexplicably linked with the vision of St Cuthberht, who saw his soul being carried to heaven.[827]

According to Ælfric's portrayal of Aidan:

> *He lufode forhæfednysse. and halige rædinge.*
> *and iunge men teah georne mid lare.*
> *swa þæt ealle his geferan þe him mid eodon*
> *sceoldon sealmas leornian. oððe sume rædinge.*
> *swa hwider swa hi ferdon. þam folce bodigende.*
> *Seldon he wolde ridan. ac siðode on his fotum.*
> *and munuclice leofode betwux ðam læwedum folce.*
> *mid myclere gesceadwisnysse. and soþum mægnum.*

> He loved self-restraint and holy reading,
> and zealously drew on young men with knowledge,
> so that all his companions, who went with him,
> had to learn the Psalms or some reading,
> whithersoever they went, preaching to the people.
> He would seldom ride, but travelled on his feet,
> and lived as a monk among the laity
> with much discretion and true virtues.[828]

As in the *HE,* here Aidan's austerity is stressed, but Ælfric is free to wax lyrical on the bishop without the anxiety of Bede's text, because his affiliation with the unorthodox practice of the seventh-century Irish Church was no longer relevant in the tenth century. Therefore Aidan is not only a prime exemplar of asceticism and humility, he is also the very epitome of the ideal monastic bishop.

Here Oswald is certainly an idealised Christian king, but in Ælfric's story he is a well of Christian strength, piety and humility because of the good example set by Aidan. This relationship between king and bishop was sacred and instructive, as they represent the perfect relationship between the political and ecclesiastical models. It is Oswald's attention to the examples set forth by bishop Aidan that led to his sanctity, as it was Aidan who *him wel gebysnode mid weorcum symle* (ever set them a good example by [his] works) and it through this example that Oswald who became

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[826] *HE* II:14, 186-188.
[827] ll.44-103 and ll.279-282.
[828] ll.75-82.

swiðe ælmes-georn and eadmod on þeawum and on eallum þingum cystig (very charitable and humble in manners, and in all things bountiful).[829] Together, *man ahrærde cyrcan on his rice geond eall and mynsterlice gesetnysse mid micelre geornfulnesse* (they reared churches everywhere in his kingdom,/ and monastic foundations with great zeal) and the austerity, generosity and humility of Aidan, and consequently of Oswald, are detailed from Bede's account. This ultimately leads Aidan, in both accounts, to pray for the incorruptibility of Oswald's generous right hand, as it remained even until the time of Ælfric. Here it is important that Aidan and Oswald work together to convert Northumbria and that they need one another in order to be successful. Aidan is fundamental to teaching the converts through his pastoral commitment and pious example, while Oswald is essential as the protector of the Church and people, and as *wealhstod,* literally bringing Aidan's words to the people in their own language.

St Gregory

In writing the *Sancti Gregorii Pape Urbis Romane Incliti, CH* 2.9, Ælfric demonstrates a sophisticated and resourceful selectivity in pulling together available sources in order to create his hagiography.[830] In what he states is a brief account, Ælfric acknowledges a wide array of sources extant for the *Life* and importantly, he refers the reader to the 'Historia Anglorum' *Ælfred cyning of Ledene on Englisc awende* (which King Ælfred turned from Latin to English) for a more extended version.[831] Ælfric's *Life* of Gregory is easily broken into four distinct parts, given in chronological order, which creates a clear trajectory for the account, rooted in his divinely inspired conversion of the Angle slaves, and the ultimate destiny of the Anglo-Saxon Church. In doing so, it inevitably narrows the focus of Gregory's story on the issues pertinent to Ælfric and his audience. The first part is a reverent and hagiographical re-telling of Gregory's early life, taken from Paul the Deacon's version of the *Life*.[832] In the second part, Gregory discovers the Angle slaves in the Roman market, closely following

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[829] ll. 83-84. Similarly, Bede's words are 'humilis', 'benignus' and 'largus' *HE* III:6, 230.
[830] *CH* 2.9, 72-80. Cf. Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 275.
[831] *CH* 2.9, Godden, 72 and Thorpe, 117-119. It is this ascription of the *OEB* to Ælfred which is the earliest extant, and has shaped the way the text, and King Ælfred, have been studied ever since.
[832] Cf. Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 275.

Bede's familiar story. In the third part, he records Gregory's sermon to the Romans, as told by Gregory of Tours in his *Historia Francorum* and also recorded in Paul the Deacon's *Life* of the saint. The last part of the *Life* discusses the Gregorian mission using the *HE* to record its success and to provide a meaningful and Anglo-centric conclusion to the saint's career.

In this account Ælfric devotes a third of his narrative to the story of Gregory's discovery of the Angle slaves in the Roman market.[833] In doing so, he uses not only the *HE,* as mediated through Paul the Deacon, but also the Latin original and remarkably, according to Malcolm Godden, he also uses the *OEB*.[834] If this is indeed the case, then his use of the *OEB* demonstrates the rare use of a vernacular source by Ælfric, and his overwhelming preference for the Latin *HE* in all other borrowings from Bede. Godden has suggested that Ælfric may have used the *OEB* in the interest of making his translation easier because the borrowings could have just as easily come from the Latin *HE,* or that perhaps he recited similar wording to the *OEB* from memory after having read the *OEB*, although he is unconvinced of the latter.[835]

In his account of the discovery of the Angle slave boys, Ælfric follows Bede's example by establishing the divine initiative given to Gregory in his discovery, which finally culminates in the Gregorian mission under Augustine, as well as recording the name puns of the *HE*. The Angle slaves are repeatedly described in terms of their beauty. For example, they *wæron hwites lichaman and fægeres andwlitan menn, æðellice gefexode* (were white of body and of comely countenance, with noble heads of hair), with f*ægeres hiwes* (fair appearance) and with the *engla wlite* (beauty of angels).[836] Arguably, this beauty is emphasised by Ælfric even more than in his sources. As the

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[833] *CH* 2.9, 74. Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 276.

[834] The similarities in phraseology was first noticed by Whitelock, *The OEB*, 58-59, 79, n.10 and 80, n.18. Malcolm Godden, "The Sources for Ælfric's Homily on St Gregory," *Anglia* 86 (1968): 79-88 expands on this point, offering as support the reference to the translation which opens this account and that both texts agree in their omissions. Importantly however, Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints,* 58-60 remains unconvinced. Cf. Godden, "Ælfric and the Alfredian Precedents," 147-163; and Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 103; Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints,* 56-7; and Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, 332-49.

[835] Godden, "The Sources for Ælfric's Homily on St Gregory," 86-87. See also, Whitelock, *The OEB*, 58-59, and notes 10 and 18. This similarity of language based on memory seems the most likely option, since he does not use the *OEB* anywhere else, and has no obvious reason to here. That he knew of the *OEB* is clear from his reference to it, suggesting that he had probably also read it, and perhaps easily recalled its phraseology.

[836] Thorpe, 121.

tradition goes, it is the heathenism of such beautiful creatures which prompts Gregory to send teachers to the *Angelcynne*.

Importantly, the Angle slaves that Gregory meets in Rome are anachronistically from *Engla land* in Ælfric's story, rather than Britain. They are *englisc,* while the merchants selling the slaves are *englisce cypmenn.* This nomenclature is not like either of his sources. The *OEB* refers to the merchants as *cypemen of brytene* (merchants of Britain) and the slaves as *of Breotone ealonde brohte* (brought from the island of Britain). Also, the *OEB* explains the pun on the name 'Deira' and *de ira* whereas the pun falls flat in Ælfric's text, because he does not. So in Ælfric's version, the slaves are both *englisc* and Deiran, despite the fact that the Deiran reference is unnecessary without the name pun given in the other texts.[837]

Perhaps this anachronistic use of *Engla land* and *englisc* to describe the merchants is due to his recognition of the fact that the Britons were already Christians, as mentioned in the *Life of St Alban*. The inclusion of the Christianity of the Britons in this particular story may have had the potential to undermine the premise of the Anglo-Saxons having received the faith from Gregory's divine inspiration, and his representation of idealised Christian unity in Britain. Similarly, he omits any mention of the fact that a small group of Kentish Christians were already worshiping at St Martin's Church in Canterbury, before Augustine's arrival.[838]

Despite altering Bede's nomenclature, Ælfric remains true to his source in that Gregory's discovery clearly inspires the Augustinian mission, which forms the final piece of the story.[839] This series of events serves to demonstrate the true genesis of Christian England, and the truth in Gregory's title as the *engliscre ðeode apostle* (the apostle of the English people).[840] These two stories from Bede are however buffered by Ælfric's version of Gregory's sermon to the Romans, which puts the major events of Gregory's life in chronological order, and one could argue that it indicates a

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[837] *OEB* II:1, 96.
[838] For more on these anachronisms, see Clare A. Lees, "In Ælfric's Words: Conversion, Vigilance and the Nation in Ælfric's *Life of Gregory the Great*," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 285.
[839] *CH* 2.9, 77-80.
[840] *CH* 2.9, 72, Thorpe, 117.

warning to the Anglo-Saxons regarding the safeguarding of their special place in God's plan.[841] This

sermon to the Romans focuses on the power of repentance to heal the wounds inflicted by *Godes*

swingle (God's scourge). Here, God inflicts these wounds on the people through a plague that

beleaguers Rome; they are stricken *mid swurde þæs heofonican graman* (with the sword of heavenly

anger), words which although in reference to the plague, easily evoke imagery of the viking attacks

against the Anglo-Saxons of the tenth century. Indeed, these attacks are mentioned explicitly in his

preface to this collection of homilies and make this part of the account acutely relevant to tenth-

century England.[842] Perhaps just as relevant is the sermon's encouragement to be patient in waiting

for God's mercy.[843]

In the final part of the *Life,* the Augustinian mission to Britain, Ælfric takes an opportunity to

discuss what he felt was the ideal monasticism of the early English church. Here, Ælfric emphasises

the good practice of the early missionaries, who, upon setting up their church,

> *geefenlæcenne þera apostola lif mid singalum gebedum. and wæccan. and fæstenum*
> *gode ðeowigende. and lifes word þam ðe hi mihton bodigende. ealle middaneardlice*
> *ðing swa swa ælfremede forhogigende. ða þing ana þe hi to bigleofan behofedon*
> *underfonde, be ðam ðe hi tæhton sylfe lybbende. and for ðære soðfæstnysse ðe hi*
> *bodedon. gearowe wæron ehtnysse to ðoligenne. and deaðe sweltan, gif hi ðorfton.*[844]

> began to imitate the life of the apostles, serving God with constant prayers, and
> watchings, and fastings, and preaching the word of life to those to whom they could,
> despising all worldly things as extraneous; receiving those things only which were
> necessary for their subsistence, living themselves conformably to what they taught, and
> for the truth which they preached were ready to undergo persecutions and suffer
> death, if they had cause.[845]

This direct quote from Bede is clearly a message to Ælfric's contemporaries, which offered them a

model of poverty, evangelism, and self-sacrifice from the very beginnings of English monasticism.

These are very similar to the qualities which Aidan demonstrated as he established monasteries in

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[841] *CH* 2.9, 75-77.
[842] Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 276.
[843] *CH* 2.9, 77.
[844] *CH*, 2.9, 78.
[845] Thorpe, 129-131.

Northumbria in the life of Oswald.[846] For Ælfric Bede's authority on this matter was tantamount, and served his own reforming ideals well.

Ælfric also refers to the *Libellus Responsionum,* telling his audience that Augustine had sought Gregory's advice on *hu him to drohtnigenne wære betux ðam nighworfenum folce* (how he should live among the newly converted people), suggesting that Augustine would have been a cloistered monk, and living among the laity was new to him.[847] This relationship helps to make Augustine's experience relevant to a tenth-century audience, in that the reforms Ælfric promoted also created an overlap between the clergy and the laity, and this was something that reformed clerics could identify with. In his response, Gregory warns Augustine against arrogance and boasting about miracles – which was also relevant for Ælfric and surely appealed to his distrust of miracles. Ælfric's message rings through, and amplifies that of Bede, as Gregory warns Augustine to maintain his humility, and not to raise himself above his followers.

While focusing on the austerity and humility of Augustine's life, Ælfric does not sympathise with Gregory's ambivalence between the pastoral and solitary lives, and chooses to omit this part of the account, which Mary Clayton suggests reflects Ælfric's own ideas about the role of monks as teachers and preachers rather than as hermits and anchorites.[848] Likewise, he is not sympathetic to Augustine's fears regarding the task of evangelism among the *barbaram feram incredulamque gentem, cuius ne linguam quidem nossent* (barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation whose language they did not even understand) and turns Gregory's letter of encouragement into an inspiring farewell speech.[849] Here, Ælfric's active engagement with the text suggests his high expectations for his contemporary ecclesiastics.

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[846] *LS* 26, ll. 75-82.
[847] *CH* 2.9, 79 and Thorpe, 131.
[848] The *Life* of Cuthberht has the same omission. Clayton, "Hermits and the Contemplative Life," 161-166 and for more on how Ælfric differs from Bede in this, see especially 161. Cf. Godden, "The Sources for Ælfric's Homily on St Gregory," 86-7; Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," 138-143; and Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 108.
[849] *CH* 2.9, 77-78 and *HE* I:23, 68-69.

The Life of Fursey

Perhaps the best way to observe the differences between the objectives of Ælfric and Bede, and the genres in which they wrote is in their variable treatment of the *Life of Fursey, CH* 2.20.[850] Ælfric includes the story of Fursey in his Rogation homily, as it contains the traditional Rogation tide visions of Hell, but which he felt was more orthodox than the common and widely known *Visio Pauli,* which is rejected by Ælfric at the outset on the authority of St. Augustine.[851] By replacing the expected – but unorthodox - *Visio Pauli* with a story from the *HE,* Ælfric offers what he feels is a more suitable replacement. However, the account he gives varies so much from that of the *HE*, that it is clear that Ælfric is using the anonymous *Vita Fursei* independently of Bede.[852] While both appear to be using the same *Vita Fursei,* which is believed to have been written in Péronne monastery in c.656, their portrayals are very different, which becomes clear in comparing the two accounts.[853]

Bede tells the story of Fursey among other historical events in East Anglia so that it appears as one of many happenings within that kingdom.[854] He does not give the story special significance, relating it as any other historical event, with incredibly mundane details, such as the time at which Fursey died and was brought to life, the fact that Sigeberht was king at the time, and that the monastery where Fursey lived was endowed by King Anna. He even includes such incidental details as:

> *siluarum et maris uicinitate amoenum, constructum in castro quodam*
> *quod lingua Anglorum Cnobheri, id est Vrbs Cnobheri, vocatur.*

> Now the monastery was pleasantly situated close to the woods and the sea, in
> a Roman camp which is called in English *Cnobheresburg,* that is the city of Cnobhere.

Tellingly, he also states that there is more about Fursey in a *libellus de uita,* and that:

> *de quibus omnibus siqui plenius scire uult… legat ipsum de quo dixi*

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[850] *CH* 2.20, 190-198.

[851] *CH* 2.20, 190. He does later change his mind, and sometime around 1015-1016 he includes it in his revision of *CH* I. Cf. Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge and New York: C.U.P., 1990), 238 and 244-245.

[852] Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 262.

[853] Ælfric probably had access to this story through his witness to the Cotton-Corpus legendary, which as Godden points out, shares many similarities with Ælfric's version. Godden, "Commentary," 529-530.

[854] *HE* III:19, 268-276.

> *libellum uitae eius, et multum ex illo, ut reor, profectus spiritualis accipiet.*

> If anyone wishes to know more of these matters, let him read the book
> I have mentioned and I think that he will gain great spiritual benefit from it.[855]

Bede shortens the account considerably, and where he omits details he again refers the reader to the *vita,* for more information, where he:

> *quae uel ipsi uel omnibus qui audire uellent multum salubria essent, audiuit.*

> learned many things from them valuable both to himself and to those who
> might be willing to listen.[856]

Ælfric, on the other hand was more interested in everything that Bede left out of his version of the *Life.*[857] For example, where Bede records one of Fursey's visits to the Afterlife, Ælfric records both. Where Bede paraphrased the details regarding the angels, Ælfric's account delves into a theological discourse between the angels and demons, and explains in detail the small sins for which Fursey had been guilty, and the price of those sins.[858] However, Ælfric ignores most of the historical details rendered so faithfully by Bede. For example, he does not record the location of the monastery, or even that it is in East Anglia, so that it could have taken place anywhere.[859] In other words, the two accounts reflect completely different genres, goals and audience. Bede expected that his audience would seek out the original *Life* of the saint if they wanted to learn more about his vision, while Ælfric apparently took Bede's advice by going back to the source for the fuller account himself and the *profectus spiritalis* (spiritual guidance) that Bede said he could find there.[860] However, Ælfric did not expect his own audience to do so, and so shaped the account according to his own didactic message.

Importantly, unlike Bede, Ælfric never names his source for the account of Fursey, presumably because it was anonymous, and could be said to lack authority.[861] While advancing from the beginning of the account that the *Visio Pauli* lacked the authority of orthodox hagiography, he

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[855] *HE* III:19, 270-271.
[856] *HE* III:19, 272-273.
[857] Cf. Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 225-226.
[858] *CH* 2.20, 191-196.
[859] *CH* 2.20, 191 and *HE* III:19, 268-270.
[860] *HE* III:19, 270. Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 262.
[861] Godden, "Commentary," 529; and Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 107.

thus substitutes the account of Fursey, silently letting Bede's account authorise his own by juxtaposing the anonymous Fursey with other visions of Hell from the *HE,* followed by Bede's story of Imma.[862] Although he does not claim Bede's authority, the orthodoxy of the account could have rested on the fact that Bede had used it in the *HE,* therefore garnering Bede's tacit approval.[863] This is evidenced by the way Ælfric cleverly follows his anonymous account of Fursey with Bede's story of Drythelm, opening the story (titled 'Alia Visio') with the words: *Beda, ure lareow, awrat, on ðære bec þe is gehaten 'Historia Anglorum…'* (Bede our teacher has written, in the book which is called 'Historia Anglorum…').[864] That these two pieces were meant as companion pieces is likely, as they complement one another very well in their descriptions about the four fires of hell in Fursey, and the separation of the various layers of hell, purgatory, paradise and heaven in Drythelm.[865]

It is also worth noting that it is entirely possible that Ælfric's copy of the *HE* did not have the story of Fursey. Importantly, this is also one of the omissions in the C, Ca and O versions of the *OEB.*[866] The exemplar for this family of texts appears to have lost III:16-19, so III:16-18 of the *OEB* have been re-translated from another version of the *HE* for inclusion here, but III:19, which contains the story of Fursey, was not. This could either mean that the Latin exemplar from which III:16-18 was re-translated also did not contain the story of Fursey, or that the scribe who included this new section into the manuscript chose not include it for reasons of his own.[867] So, it is possible that either the version of the *HE* and/or the *OEB* from which Ælfric was working also did not have the *Life of Fursey,* or that he too chose not to use it. It is tempting to consider that the C version of the *OEB,*

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[862] *CH* 2.21, 199-205. Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 226 suggests that Ælfric used the anonymous version because it contains the account of Fursey's trial in Heaven, and Godden, "Ælfric and Miracles," 89 and 91 states that Ælfric may have purposefully misunderstood Augustine's apprehension toward the *Visio Pauli.*

[863] Godden, "Ælfric and Miracles," 87. Ælfric also does not acknowledge his use of the anonymous version of the *Vita Cuthberti* as a source for his hagiography of that saint, nor his use of the anonymously translated *OEB* in his *Life of Gregory.*

[864] On Drythelm, *CH* 2.20, 199-202 and *HE* V:12, 488-498; on Imma, *CH* 2.20, 204-205 (given under the heading *Hortatorius Sermo de Effecacia Sanctae Missae*) and *HE* IV:22, 400-405.

[865] Godden, "Commentary," 529 and 538. A similar variation between the accounts can be seen in Ælfric's adaptation of Drythelm's visions of Heaven and Hell and the prayers which continually free Imma. Where Bede's account includes more historical and circumstantial detail, Ælfric paraphrases these details to focus on the theology involved and in order to emphasise the power of prayer.

[866] See Chapter Four, p. 116.

[867] The T and B versions of the text have III:19 (the story of Fursey) but are missing III:17. Cf. Campbell, "The *OEB*: Book III, Chapters 16-20," 381-386.

which is a Winchester text written before or around the time of Ælfric, may have even been read by him and used in writing the *Life* of Gregory. Although we can only speculate regarding this unusual treatment of the life of Fursey, there seems to be little reason for its active omission, which may suggest that it was actually missing from the exemplar.[868]

Emerging Themes

In surveying these *Lives* and visions, selectively mined from Bede's *HE,* it becomes clear that Ælfric is very engaged with his source and his selectivity and focus shapes the way these stories are told as they are moved from history to hagiography and homily and comment on contemporary affairs.[869] His use also highlights a distinctive ecclesiastical and political shift in context from Bede's early eighth-century Northumbria to Wessex at the close of the tenth century.

Christian Kingship

One of the themes which emerge from Ælfric's careful craftsmanship is his perspective on the role of Christian monarchy. As we have seen, the Oswald who appears in the works of both Bede and Ælfric is a very devout and generous man. However, Ælfric's Oswald has greater humility and represents a more peaceful hagiographical figure, martyred with a prayer for his people on his lips.[870] While Bede's Oswald is a devoutly pious figure, he has the God given military strength to expand his *imperium* which serves to encompass more people under the security of his Christian kingship. Meanwhile, Ælfric's Oswald appears tranquil even while avenging his nephew's murder, and has jurisdiction over various peoples who received him as their ruler simply because of his special grace as a Christian king.[871]

This Oswald might be compared to Ælfric's account of another idealised king, Edmund, who was also martyred by a heathen enemy.[872] Like Oswald, Edmund has the redeeming qualities of any saint; he is described as *snotor and wurðfull* (wise and honourable) as well as *ead-mod and*

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[868] See p. 225 below.
[869] Godden, "Ælfric and Miracles," 91-93.
[870] ll. 158-160.
[871] Compare to Alcuin's treatment of the king in Chapter 3.
[872] *LS* 32, 314-334, ll.73-126, see especially ll.121-123.

geþungen (humble and devout).[873] When force of arms failed to protect his people, Edmund

surrendered to God's will, expressing his faith by *cristes gebysnungum* (imitating Christ) and *awearp*

his wæpna wolde geæfen-læcan (throwing away his weapons), before being personally attacked by

the Danes (after which he, in an extension of the Christ-like imagery, is bound to a tree and

tortured).[874] Like Oswald, even when faced with martyrdom his people are foremost in his mind, as

to bysmore synd getawode þas earman land-leoda (the poor people of this land are brought to

shame) and he bravely offers up himself as a sacrifice to protect them.[875] He sums up his position on

Danish overlordship, saying:

> *næs me næfre gewunelic þæt ic worhte fleames*
> *ac ic wolde swiðor sweltan gif ic þorfte*
> *for minum agenum earde. and se ælmihtiga god wat*
> *þæt ic nelle abugan fram his biggengum æfre*
> *ne fram his soþan lufe. swelte ic. lybbe ic.*

> It was never my custom to take to flight,
> but I would rather die, if I must
> for my own land; and almighty God knoweth
> that I will never turn aside from His worship,
> nor from His true love, whether I die or live.[876]

He, like Oswald, demonstrates that a king should be a Christian model for his people, and defend

them with his piety and self sacrifice. Military strength had its temporal limits, thus the best way to

protect the people was by winning God's favour through devotion. Ælfric expected kings to identify

themselves with the suffering of Christ, willing to make extreme sacrifices for the good of their

people. In which case, these two martyr-kings could be held as exemplars of the behaviour he

expected from Christian kings in general, and perhaps King Æthelred in particular.[877]

While Oswald represents a warrior king, successful because of God's favour for his piety, and

his willingness to die for his people, Edmund sacrifices himself rather than make a deal with the

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[873] l.14 and l.16.
[874] ll.103-109.
[875] ll.64-67.
[876] ll.78-82.
[877] John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," 310-313; and Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 172.

vikings.[878] Similarly King Edgar, that royal champion of the reform movement, was renowned for his strong rule which was characterised, in the words of Catherine Cubitt 'by enhanced notions of kingship, emphasizing its christomimetic qualities.'[879] Pauline Stafford submits that over time, and with the longevity of the Danish attacks from the 990s, a warrior king became less favourable compared to a Christ-like one.[880] These examples of self-sacrifice by Oswald and Edmund can therefore be seen in direct relevance to Ælfric's own expectations of Æthelred, whose failure in holding back the Danes suggested another, more humble tack.[881] In Ælfric's hagiography it seems as though the king had a national duty to live the Christian ideal within a society where Christianity defined his people.

Another variation on this model can be seen in how Ælfric represents Oswald and Edgar as peacemakers, who were able to bring various different peoples together in peace under their Christian kingship.[882] As these models are focused on Christian unity, and the power of a pious king's leadership to attract the good will of the multitudes of peoples in Britain, Ælfric may be suggesting that Æthelred court the affections of the people of Britain with pious and humble kingship. Here Ælfric advances the notion that a king with God's favour can bring the people into a harmonious relationship with one another and God. Ælfric here seems to suggest a royal policy of penance and leadership through example.[883] One of the reasons for these portrayals of kingship, as

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[878] Malcolm Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: studies presented to E.G. Stanley*, ed. Malcolm Godden, Douglas Gray and Terry Hoad (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 139. See also Ælfric's account of *Maccabees* in *LS* 25, 66-80, ll.85-204.

[879] Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 172.

[880] Stafford, "Church and Society," 26-27. See also Ælfric's *Wyrdwriteras,* where he advocates the use of ealdormen in place of the king in leading a battle for similar reasons. John Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, in *EETS* OS, no. 259 and 260 (1967-1968): 2.18, 725-33.

[881] Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 162, and 165-166. Cf. Ælfric's *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* in this context.

[882] This could suggest another model aimed at King Æthelred, which might be contrasted with his own kingship, as later seen in the massacre of the Anglo-Danes on St. Brice's Day. For implications of this on ethnic identity within England, see Innes, "Danelaw Identities," 65-88, especially 66, 72-77 and 80.

[883] Connected to this, Mary Clayton has also pointed out that Ælfric's homily for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost demonstrates the penance of Emperor Theodosius in response to his own involvement in a massacre in Thessalonica. Mary Clayton, "Of Mice and Men: Ælfric's Second Homily for the Feast of a Confessor," *Leeds Studies in English* NS 24 (1993): 21-22.

a product of virtue, may have been part of a statement regarding the true nature of royal power as an extension of God's favour.[884]

Another way in which Ælfric addresses royal leadership is in the Latin preface to the *Lives of the Saints.* In this preface, as a sort of aside to the Latinate audience, Ælfric states that he requires special attention to the point that:

> *nollem alicubi ponere duos imperatores siue cesares in hac narratione simul, sicut in latinitate legimus; sed unum imperatorem in persecutione martyrum ponimus ubique; Sicut gens nostra uni regi subditur, et usitata est de uno rege non de duobus loqui.*

> I do not like in any passage to speak of two emperors or Caesars in the story at the same time, as we read of in the Latin; but I everywhere speak of one emperor as being concerned in the persecution of the martyrs; just as our own nation is subject to one king, and is accustomed to speak of one king, and not of two.[885]

The fact that Ælfric specifically prefaces this statement with *unum cupio sciri hoc uolumen legentibus* (I desire that one point should be especially noted by them that read this book) indicates that this statement is of great importance to him, and conveys a particular anxiety on his part regarding loyalty to a single king, and the unity of the people.

While this statement is addressed to a Latinate audience, the English preface also refers to kingship, stating that: *an woruld-cynincg hæfð fela þegna/ and mislice wicneras. he ne mæg beon wurðful cynincg/ buton he hæbbe þa geþincðe þe him gebyriað./ and swylce þening-men. þe þeawfæstnysse him gebeodon* (an earthly king hath many servants/ and diver stewards; he cannot be an honoured king/ unless he have the state which befitteth him,/ and as it were serving-men, to offer him their obedience), before comparing a king's reign with that of God.[886] By comparing the reign of a king with the reign of God in heaven, Ælfric invites the reader to consider the importance of an anointed king in God's plan, suggesting that political unity was the will of God. In a text which appears to have been dedicated to Æthelweard and Æthelmær, this appears as a strong statement

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[884] John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," 309.
[885] *LS,* preface, 2-5. See *Life of Oswald* (ll.148) and *Life of St Alban* (ll.1-2) for evidence of this.
[886] *LS,* preface, 6-7.

about the nature of the relationship between a king and his people, perhaps meant for them specifically.

The importance of this passage is supported by Ælfric's adherence to this rule. For example, Ælfric avoids mentioning the Roman emperor who ruled alongside Diocletian during the martyrdom of Alban.[887] Also, in the *Life of Oswald* he carefully avoids referring to the splitting of Northumbria into its constituent petty kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, and to the two kings who ruled these kingdoms simultaneously in the interim between the death of Edwin and accession of Oswald.[888]

The anxiety which Ælfric displays on this issue is indicative of his West Saxon perspective. Wessex had been in the ascendancy since the ninth century, and yet the unity that it advocated as part of its hegemony was fragile. Edgar had been vigilant in maintaining his hold over the constituent kingdoms by using both diplomacy and generosity in order to keep the newly forged England from breaking into its old regional affiliations.[889] Ælfric engages with this emphasis on political unity by carefully referring to this geographic space as *Engla land* and its people as *Englisc* in the *Life of Gregory* and the *Life of St Alban,* and also by using the Ælfredian *Angelcynn* in his wider works*.*

He uses Bede to help him write the conversion story of England, by telling of the conversion of Kent, Wessex, Northumbra and Mercia, and knits these conversions together by further nationalising the most important saints from Northumbria (Oswald and Cuthberht), East Anglia (Æthelthryth and Edmund), Mercia (Alban) and Wessex (Swithun), as well as that of the national apostle. Here he tells the story of an idealised English Christian unity in a mirrored projection of idealised political unity, both appearing as different facets of the same ideal. This is perhaps best articulated by Ælfric himself, who says in the *Life of King Edmund*:

> *Nis angel-cynn bedæled drihtnes halgena.*
> *þonne on engla-landa licgaþ swilce halgan*
> *swylce þæs halga cyning is and cuþberht se eadiga.*
> *and sancte æþeldryð on elig. and eac hire swustor*

[887] *SL* 1.19, ll. 1-2 and *HE* I:6, 28.
[888] *SL* 2.26, l.10.
[889] Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 50, 56 and 59-64.

ansunde on lichaman geleafan to trymminge.
Synd eac fela oðre on angel-cynne halgan
þe fela wundra wyrcað. swa swa hit wide is cuð
þam ælmihtigan to lofe. þe hi on gelyfdon.

The English nation is not deprived of the Lord's saints
since in English land lie such saints
as this holy king, and the blessed Cuthbert,
and Æthelthryth in Ely, and also her sister,
incorrupt in body, for the confirmation of the faith.
There are also many other saints among the English
who work many wonders, as is widely known)
to the praise of the Almighty, in whom they believed.[890]

Again here, the focus is on the *Angel-cynn*, and its wealth of saints. Clearly, even while mining a broadly ethnographic work such as the *HE* for hagiographical examples, Ælfric is not concerned about wider Britain, except where it demonstrates the charisma of his kings and the superiority of their Christian kingship, built on the principles of piety and self-sacrifice.

Temporal and Ecclesiastical Politics

Other evidence of a royal model can be seen in the relationship between king and bishop. As we have seen, in the *Life of St Oswald,* the king and Aidan are depicted working together as partners to bring about the true conversion of Northumbria. Oswald serves as Aidan's *wealhstod* and together the two men nurture the faith by building churches and living by good examples. In discussing holy King Oswald, Ælfric also lends importance to the king's involvement with the Roman mission to Wessex through his relationship with the Bishop Birinus and King Cynegils. While Bede's coverage of the West Saxon mission barely takes up two paragraphs in Colgrave and Mynors edition of the text, Ælfric's devotion of nearly the same amount of text in a much shorter account is remarkable, and highlights his West Saxon perspective.[891] Here Ælfric discusses how Oswald helped the mission by lending his support and standing as godfather to King Cynegils while both kings reward Birinus when he becomes bishop by together granting him the city of Dorchester as an Episcopal see.[892]

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[890] *LS* 32, 332-335, ll.259-266.
[891] The West Saxon mission is 24 of the account's 288 lines. *HE* III:7, 232-236 and *LS* 26 (ll.119-133).
[892] ll.134-6. King Edmund can also be seen using his bishop for counsel, and in this case, the bishop convinces him that all hope of military resistance to the Danes is gone. However, while the bishop tries to convince Edmund to give over the treasures of the kingdom in order to place the Danes, Edmund refuses (ll.63-7).

The depiction of the relationship between Oswald and Aidan is much like Ælfric's portrayal of Edgar and Æthelwold. Like Oswald, King Edgar works closely with Bishop Æthelwold in ecclesiastical politics and building projects.[893] In the *Life of St Swithun, LS* 21, the focus is mostly on Æthelwold and the miracles of St. Swithun, but Ælfric also inserts eleven lines praising Edgar, in whose reign the miracles of St Swithun would have occurred.[894] Like Oswald, Edgar *christen-dom ge-fyrðrode, and fela munuclifa arærde* (furthered Christianity and built many monasteries). Importantly, it was because of this that England was at peace during Edgar's time, and the eight kings of various peoples came to him as their ruler.[895]

As these examples show, the relationship between the monarchy and the church was vital to the spiritual health of the kingdom.[896] Ælfric sends out a clear message regarding the ties between the two, suggesting that he saw the peace England enjoyed under Edgar as a direct result of his support for the Church and his acceptance of its counsel. As king, he was special to God and had an important place within ecclesiastical politics. The two spheres of influence overlapped and demonstrated Christian unity for the entire realm.

As Ælfric grew increasingly worried and weary regarding the effects of the viking attacks, perhaps he was offering his advice to Æthelred and Archbishop Sigeric, showing the advantages that their joint efforts could offer.[897] For example, consider his *Prayer of Moses,* where he writes:

> *…forcuðlic hit bið þæt cyning beo unrihtwis.*
> *eac bið swyþe derigendlic þæt bisceop beo gymeleas.*
> *and un-fremful. bið þæt folc beo butan steora.*
> *oððe butan. æ. him eallum to hearme.*
> *Þissere worulde hæl is. þæt heo witan hæbbe.*
> *and swa ma witena beoð on bradnysse middan-eardes.*
> *Swa hit bet færð æfter ðæs folces þearfa.*
>
> it is odious that a king be unrighteous;
> also it is very hurtful that a bishop be careless;
> and it is very unprofitable that the fold be without a governor,
> or without law, for the harm of them all.
> It is for this world's safety that it have wise men,

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[893] Ælfric, *Vita S. Æthelwoldi,* in *EHD*, no. 235, Ch. 11-12, 16 and 18, 835-836.
[894] *LS* 21, 468, ll.443-454.
[895] ll. 446-453. Quote at l. 446.
[896] Godden, "Ælfric and Miracles," 96-97; and Stafford, "Church and Society," 18-21.
[897] Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 162-7. Cf. *CH* I.9 (lines 31-47) and Ælfric's *Letter to Wulfstan*.

and however many more there are of wise men on the earth's surface;
so much the better will it fare with the people's needs.[898]

In offering models of an idealised relationship between kings and their bishops, Ælfric does not seek to undermine the importance of the king, but offers partnership as the key to implementing the order necessary for the reforms to work.[899] An important aspect of this relationship was not that of dominance but of communication between these two sectors of society, as can be seen in both his homily for the Sunday after Ascension and in his *Sermo de die iudicii*.[900]

Nationalised Christianity

According to the world view expressed by Ælfric, non adherence to the will of God could be felt on a national level and it was the duty of everyone to pray and be repentant in order to win God's favour. Viking attacks continued to increase across the 990s, to which Ælfric refers specifically in the preface of *CH* II, and as *Godes swingle* (God's scourge) in his *Life of Gregory*. As mentioned above, an important part of his account of Gregory is his sermon to the Romans, where the power of penance features heavily. In this sermon Gregory, the national apostle, tells the audience in his own voice that salvation is not free, and that redemption from the plagues which threaten the existence of life on earth requires penance and prayer.[901] The inclusion of this sermon between Gregory's desire to convert the Angles and their conversion moves Bede's ethno-religious identity for the English into tenth-century relevance, by linking the beginning of their Christianity with both their possible demise, and their potential redemption through prayer and repentance.

Malcolm Godden has shown that Ælfric (and Wulfstan) had to balance discussions of the vikings as God's scourge, with 'eschatological expectations'. In his *De Oratione Moysi,* Ælfric seeks to do both within one account, making it 'one of the most politically charged of all Ælfric's writings'.[902] In this work, Ælfric establishes that prayer was the answer for all human problems. If prayer proved

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[898] *LS* 13, 292-293, ll. 124-130.
[899] Stafford, "Church and Society," 29-32; and Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 162.
[900] *SH* 2.21, 372-392; and 2.22, 598 (ll.180-188); and Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 162 and 164-165.
[901] *CH* 2.9, 75-76; and Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints,* 56-57.
[902] Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion," 131-133.

ineffective in combating these problems, then the afflicted must atone for angering God, and by all means keep praying.[903] He evokes an idealised Christian past saying:

> *Wel we magon geðencan hu wel hit ferde mid us.*
> *þaða þis igland wæs wunigende on sibbe.*
> *and munuc-lif wæron mid wurð-scipe gehealdene.*
> *and ða woruld-menn wæron wære wið heora fynd.*
> *swa þæt ure word sprang wide geond þas eorðan.*

> Well may we think how well it fared with us
> when this island was dwelling in peace,
> and the monastic orders were held in honour,
> and the laity were ready against their foes,
> so that our report spread widely throughout the earth.[904]

Here he recalls the successes of the Bedan church, or perhaps the peaceful reign of Edgar (or both), where both monks and the laity are aligned with God's will. Here it is clear that stability at home made it possible for English Christians to be known in the wider world as either evangelists or pilgrims. This passage sounds remarkably like Ælfric's preface to his *Grammar*, which echoes that of Ælfred's preface to *Pastoral Care,* all of which look back on an idealised Christian, and perhaps Bedan, past for guidance in the disorder of the present.[905]

> This passage stands in sharp contrast with the lines which follow it:

> *Hu wæs hit ða siððan ða þa man towearp munuc-lif.*
> *and godes biggengas to bysmore hæfde.*
> *buton þæt us com to cwealm and hunger.*
> *and siððan hæðen here us hæfde to bysmore.*

> How was it then afterward when men rejected monastic life
> and held God's services in contempt,
> but that pestilence and hunger came to us,
> and afterward the heathen army had us in reproach?[906]

Clearly, the *hæðen here* represents the anger of God toward the Anglo-Saxons for their failure to maintain the monastic ideals of their forefathers, and this is a message probably specifically focused on what he saw as the decline in support for the reform after the death of Edgar, and the

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[903] *LS* 23, 282-306, ll. 30-7.
[904] ll.147-151.
[905] See pp. 181-183 above. However, Godden has suggested that this passage is an evocation of the recent, rather than the distant, past. Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion," 135.
[906] ll. 152-155.

subsequent viking attack and instability.[907] As this stability collapsed, it appears that the outside world was no longer a place for proud English pilgrims and missionaries, but rather that it had turned against them, bringing God's scourge.

However, Ælfric also offers messages of hope. Gregory's sermon to the Romans urges them to be patient in waiting for God's mercy, and not to give up praying for it. True faith is demonstrated by the willingness to fight, and know that God is on your side.[908] Edmund does not give into the pressures of the Danes, either in letting them take his land, or in renouncing his faith. In his resistance he is an empowering figure demonstrating true faith and understanding that there is nothing to gain by giving into the *hæðen here*, because a Christian has their true reward in heaven. Clearly, resistance to sin, along with penance and prayer were both a national and Christian duty, these things being one and the same, and as such they could allay the ravages perpetuated on the people by God's scourge. Here Christianity has become a national imperative, the integrity of which was threatened by sin and reprisal.

Combined with his admonition to better Christian behaviour, prayer and penance, Ælfric seems to offer another suggestion for reviving God's favour in tenth-century England, conversion. This had been a key theme in the *HE,* and we have seen how Ælfric records the conversion stories of Northumbria (one of them), Wessex and Kent directly from Bede. Also, conversion figures largely in the *Life of St Alban,* where not only is he converted by the good example set by the refugee that hides in his home, but he also wins a throng of converts for the faith through his eager pursuit of martyrdom. Even his persecutor is converted, and the implication is that even after his death, he continues to win converts by the miracles which took place at the site of his martyrdom.

Ælfric's view on these conversions was of course slightly different from that which appears in the *HE*, especially with regard to the nature of the Irish mission. One way in which this can be seen is in the way he dates Oswald's kingship from the coming of Augustine, by beginning the account with the line *æfter ðan ðe augustinus to engla lande be-com* (after Augustine came to

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[907] Cf. Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 154. esp.162-5.
[908] *CH* 2.9, 76-77; and Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion," 142.

England) before actually telling the story of conversion from Ireland, *þær se geleafa wæs ða* (where the faith was then).[909] In doing this, he blends the two missions seamlessly, as a way of demonstrating the universality of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, without the contrasts between the two missions which had figured so prominently in the *HE*.[910] For Ælfric, the work of Aidan was not opposed to that of Augustine, but rather complemented it. Therefore the saintly Oswald, a convert of Irish Christianity works closely with both Aidan in the conversion of Northumbria and the Roman missionary Birinus for the conversion of the West Saxons, before post-humously converting people in Ireland and Germany.[911]

The importance of mission in Ælfric's texts cannot be overstated. It also figures largely in the *Life of Gregory,* where Ælfric reshapes his sources to make the English mission the focal point of his papacy.[912] The importance of Gregory in his role as an evangelist is underlined right from the beginning, as Ælfric states, quoting directly from Bede:

> *He is rihtlice Engliscre ðeode apostol, forðan ðe he, þurh his ræd and sande, us fram deofles biggengum ætbræd, and to Godes geleafan gebigde.*

> He is rightly the apostle of the English nation, for he, through his counsel and mission, withdrew us from the worship of the devil, and turned us to the belief of God.[913]

Although not from Bede, Ælfric's message to his contemporaries might be most clearly seen in Edmund's *passio*. Edmund's dying attempt to convert the heathen Danes would have resonated deeply with his audience. That the role of Edmund has clear heroic sentiment relative to the tenth century, is demonstrated in his defiance of the Danes:

> *ne abihð næfre eadmund hingware on life*
> *hæþenum here-togan. buton he to hælende criste*
> *ærest mid ge-leafan on þysum lande gebuge.*

> Edmund the king will never bow in life to Hingwar
> the heathen leader, unless he will first bow,
> in this land, to Jesus Christ with faith.[914]

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[909] ll.1 and 48.
[910] Waterhouse, "Discourse and Hypersignification," 335-7.
[911] Also, British Christianity is revered, rather than scorned in reference to the migration in the *Life* of Alban.
[912] Godden, "Commentary," 403.
[913] Cf. Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 276.
[914] ll.91-93.

Here Ælfric is again clear. Conversion was one way of saving the nation from pagan attack. With this emphasis on conversion, Ælfric seems to be charging his contemporaries with a duty to carry on in the tradition of their ancestors who, often inspired by Bede, were famous for their dangerous missionary work. This tradition could be traced back to the earliest English monks under Augustine who had worked among the pagan English, and *wæron ehtnysse ðoligenne, and deaðe sweltan, gif hi ðorfton* (were ready to undergo persecutions and suffer death, if they had cause).[915] When prayer, penance, chastity and pious living failed to bring relief from God's scourge, the only choice left is either to convert the pagans or die trying.

Conclusion

The use of Bede as a patristic authority for the English reform movement gave the Anglo-Saxons a uniquely English model for their reform, allowing them to interpret continental ideas through their own historical context. Ælfric demonstrates that while framing the history of the Anglo-Saxon Church and supplying documentary evidence about its beginnings, Bede's *HE* also appealed to the demands of the later period. Ælfric appropriates Bede's history for each kingdom and expands his collection of Christian heroes to represent a more nationalised pantheon. In his hands, the personalities of Bede's history are stripped down as they move further into hagiography: they are more universal and archetypal, more spiritual and less temporal, and removed from specific times and places in order that they represent an updated vision of spiritual unity – one that mirrors the emerging English political identity of the tenth century.[916]

Ælfric maintained Bede's focus on Christian kingship and the role of the Church. However Ælfric intensified the exemplary nature of Bede's kings by making them more Christ-like and hagiographical. In reshaping Bede's text Ælfric omitted and expanded where he deemed necessary, for example portraying Edwin and Oswald as caring kindred, and making the mission to England the

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[915] *CH* 2.9, 78, Thorpe, 128-131.
[916] Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 281. See also Godden, "Ælfric and Miracles," 94.

focus of Gregory's career.[917] While maintaining Bede's models as exemplars with which to strengthen the Anglo-Saxon Church, Ælfric's perception of the roles of church and monarchy varies significantly from that of Bede, in that these are less separate categories, but are intimately connected in the fulfilment of God's will. Also in Ælfric's work there is an intensified notion that Christianity is the national identity, and here it is not only saints that have been nationalised, but also sin.[918] Therefore, the blame for the viking attacks falls not on the Danes, but on the Anglo-Saxon people, because it is their sin that invited the Danes to act as God's scourge.[919] The remedy for this according to Ælfric is penance and evangelism in order to bring God's favour back to the high point it reached under Edgar's peaceful reign.

In Ælfric's re-interpretation of the *HE*, he presents an idealised past to aspire to in his own time by offering examples of sanctity and the value of God's favour.[920] Ælfric follows Bede in having Alban answer the judge's question concerning his parentage with the answer,

> '*Hwæt belypmð to þe hwlycere mægðe ic sy*
> *ac gif ðe soð wylt gehyran ic þe se ge hraðe*
> *þæt ic cristen eom and crist æfre wurðige.*'

> 'What concerneth it thee, of what family I may be?
> but if thou desire to hear the truth, I tell thee quickly
> that I am a Christian, and will ever worship Christ.'[921]

Ælfric's fidelity to Bede here is important because it connects the two authors conceptually, indicating the persistence of Bede's premise that true adherence to the teachings of Christ were more important than ethnic identity or parentage.

However, Ælfric's geographical focus is much narrower than Bede's. An example of this can be seen in how Ælfric does not try to engage with the ethnographic thrust of Bede's work. Wider Britain is immaterial in Ælfric's vision of England, and tellingly, he actively replaces Bede's *Brittania* with *Engla land* and the people are *englisc,* which clearly articulates Ælfric's perception of his people and

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[917] Godden, "Ælfric and Miracles," 92.
[918] For Bede's different take on sin, see Campbell, "Bede II," 38.
[919] Keynes, "Abbot, Archbishop, Viking Raids," 170.
[920] Cf. *LS* 13, 292-293, ll. 133-138.
[921] ll.56-58.

their land both geographically and ideologically.[922] While Bede's focus was on a very similar idea of

region, people and language, they did not exist in isolation, and his interest was in the entire island

of Britain. Ælfric however only discusses the other peoples of Britain vaguely, and in terms of their

acceptance of his exemplary Christian kings, suggesting that he was defining Anglo-Saxon identity

through this affiliation with unified Christianity and the West Saxon leadership rather than in

opposition to the other peoples of wider Britain. Also, the use of hagiography to express his vision

removes the stories from their historical chronology so that here the concept of 'England' appears

timeless.[923] In this, Ælfric articulates his West Saxon perspective, where the spiritual, geographic and

ideological unity of the Anglo-Saxon Church is tied to political unity under the West Saxon

hegemony.

Perhaps due to the hagiographical and homiletic genre in which he was working, there is no

place in which he really identifies with the Germanic aspect of the Anglo-Saxon identity which has

figured so prominently in all of our other case studies. This is made most clear in his allusion to the

adventus Saxonum in the *Life of Alban,* where he does not link the migration with an idea of Anglo-

Saxon foundation ideology at all. Here the pagan Anglo-Saxons do not redeem Britain from the

heretical British, but rather Hengest and Horsa disrupt Christianity in Britain to the point that it has

to be restored by Augustine.[924] Here the Germanic origin myth is linked with the shameful loss of

British Christianity, rather the glorious beginning of the Anglo-Saxon inheritance.[925] Ælfric actively

undermines that old model, and true to the hagiographical genre in which he was working, the *Life*

of Gregory chooses instead to focus on the other origin myth set up by Bede, where the genesis of

the Anglo-Saxons begins with Gregory's discovery of the angelic slaves in Rome. While the

Scandinavians do appear as a real threat to the integrity of this Christianity, it is outside of the

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[922] Consider Æthelweard's take on the use of the name 'England' in his *Chronicon*, I:4, 9 where he notes that the immigration of the Anglo-Saxons was to such a large extent 'that it gradually brought into disuse the name used for their country by the natives.'
[923] *LS* 1.19, ll.17 and 35.
[924] ll.147-150.
[925] Again, see Æthelweard's version of the *adventus*, where he glorifies the Germanic inheritance of the Anglo-Saxons in the *Chronicon,* I:3-5, 7-12.

context established by Gildas.[926] Instead Ælfric issues a message that, while severe, offers hope. The 'return' to an idealised, and nationalised, Christendom is the key to restoring peace and prosperity for the kingdom and its church. The price of this stability was piety, chastity, prayer, penance and evangelism.

The OEB in its Tenth-Century Context

There is one more point with regard to the reception and use of the *OEB* that should be addressed before closing. That is the use of the *OEB* in the reform movement. We have seen that some scholars believe that Ælfric used the *OEB* in writing his *Life of Gregory,* and Ælfric himself refers his audience to the 'Historia Anglorum' *Ælfred cyning of Ledene on Englisc awende* (which King Alfred turned from Latin to English) for a more extended version of the *Life,* giving us our earliest reference to the king as its translator.[927] This opens up pertinent questions regarding the wider use of the *OEB* during the period of reform, and is worth considering in brief.

We have seen the reform's emphasis on the use of the vernacular as a way of sharing its ideals and liturgy with wider England, and that palaeographical evidence suggests that while there is a gap in the production of Latin *HE* manuscripts in England from the second quarter of the ninth century until the late tenth/early eleventh century, this is the crucial period in which the *OEB* was translated and the Zu, T and C version of the text were copied.[928] We have also considered the wide dissemination of the text as a mark of its popularity and the five extant copies, along with post-Conquest catalogues, which indicate a wide geographical distribution. C, and possibly T, were copied at Winchester between c.883-c.930.[929] Of the later texts, the provenance of the early eleventh-

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[926] In contrast, see Wulfstan's use of Gildas in representing the sins of the English as the reason for their loss of the island to the Danes, Archbishop of York Wulfstan, *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*, ed. Michael Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1975), 116-121. Cf. Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 8-20.

[927] *CH* 2.9; Dorothy Whitelock, *The Old English Bede*, vol. XLVIII, *From the Proceedings of the British Academy* (London: O.U.P., 1962), 58-59, 79, n.10 and 80, n.18; Godden, "The Sources for Ælfric's Homily on St Gregory," 79-88; Godden, "Ælfric and the Alfredian Precedents," 147-163; Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 102-103; and Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 221. See also the reservations of Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints*, 56-60 and Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, 332-49.

[928] Gneuss, *Handlist*, nos. 330, 357 and 668. The excerpts in Zu are dated 883><930 (Dumville), T has been dated at 890><930 (Gameson), and C to the mid tenth century (Gneuss). The earliest extant manuscript, Zu, was presumably excerpted from an earlier exemplar.

[929] For T, see Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 351; and Gameson, "Decoration," 130. For C see Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 180; Miller *OEB*, xvi.

century O text is unknown, but B appears to have been copied in Devon in the early eleventh century, while Ca was copied in Worcester later that century.[930] Our earliest version of the text, the excerpted fragments of Zu, was composed in London in the late ninth century and post-conquest catalogues indicate that there were copies at Canterbury, Christ Church, Durham and Burton-on-Trent.[931]

In addition to this evidence for the widespread distribution of the *OEB,* there are other indications for its use in this period. Aside from its use by Æthelweard and quite possibly Ælfric in the late tenth century, there is internal evidence which suggests that the text was a familiar one in several scriptoria of England.[932] For example, the B and T texts have different exemplars from one another and from the C family of manuscripts, and these (3?) missing exemplars are all believed to be at least one remove from the translation.[933] The B-text also has chapter-headings that do not match the body of its own text, but rather that found in the C, O and Ca family of manuscripts, which suggests that the scribe copying the chapter-headings had access to both the exemplar to B, as well as a copy related to the C family of manuscripts at some point.[934] Similarly, although late, a marginal note in Ca indicates the rubricator's recognition of an alternative translation between the two versions of the *OEB* at III:16-18, and knowledge of both versions of the text.[935] The Ca text also suggests a link with the same literary traditions as Ælfric in that it contains only the second reference

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[930] For O, see Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 354; Gneuss, *Handlist*, 673. For B, see Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 32; Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 39; Miller, *OEB,* xvii; Grant, *B-Text*, 6-9. For Ca, see Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 23; Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 22; and Miller, *OEB,* xix.

[931] On Zu, see Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 151; Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 330; Thomas Miller, *OEB,* xx; Bately, "O.E. Prose," 98; and Dumville, "English Square Miniscule," 169. On the catalogues, see Ker, *Catalogue*, xlv-xlvi. While Canterbury and Burton had reformed monasteries, and may have had copies made with the didactic purpose of the movement in mind, its appearance at Durham may be linked with a cult of Bede there. Rollason, "The Cult of Bede," 194-195 notes that an 11ᵗʰc. *Life* of Bede may have been written at Durham, which coincides with Symeon of Durham's account of his relics being there.

[932] For Æthelweard's use, see Campbell's 'Introduction' to Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, xxxvi-xxxvii, n. 3; and Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 105.

[933] Whitelock, *The OEB*, 62.

[934] Whitelock, "Chapter-Headings," 263-268; and Whitelock, *The OEB*, 62. She has also pointed out that we are missing the translation itself, and the exemplar to our existing manuscripts.

[935] The comment reads: *EFT oðer cw(æð)* at 39v/27, marking the beginning of the variation, and 7 *eft oðer cwide* at 40v/29, marking the end. Rowley, "Vernacular Angles," 9-10. Also, he does not indicate that III:19-20 (one which contains the *Vita Fursey*) was missing, which perhaps suggests that both versions were missing III:19-20.

to Ælfred as the translator of the *OEB*: *Historicus quondam fecit me Bede Latinum/Ælfred rex Saxo transtulit ille pius.*[936]

Clearly, these examples show that there is both a wide geographic spread in the dissemination of the text, from Durham in the north to Devon and Canterbury in the south, as well as a large overlap in the texts being used in the scriptoria of England.[937] This suggests that our extant copies were not just chance survivals, but are indicative of a wide range of texts. According to Ælfric, without it very few people would have known Bede's *HE* at all at the turn of the tenth century.[938] Chapter Four has shown that the translation was probably completed in an ecclesiastical milieu, and from this context it was later copied and disseminated from Wessex, probably in conjunction with the auspices of the West Saxon royal house.[939] This association of the extant manuscripts with the late West Saxon dialect could be the result the growth of the reform across this period, and its links to Winchester and the royal capital there.[940] If this is the case, then the *OEB* may have been used as part of the teaching and preaching so integral to it, with the appearance of Zu being an early part of this, connected to the missions into Scandinavian Essex and East Anglia, orchestrated from London.[941]

There is much about the content of the *OEB* to commend it to the ideals of the reform. Not only is it important as a vernacular translation of Bede, and one probably specifically designed for teaching his text, but it was also a work that would not have had to be translated for dissemination, merely copied. One might expect a demand for such a translation among the reformers, as indeed it

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[936] Ælfric's active appreciation of Ælfred's combination of pious royal heritage, interest in the revival and reform of the ninth-century Church in the face of his own viking attacks, and his programme to move important texts into the English vernacular has been remarked on in terms of Ælfric's anxiety about authority and his translation theory (see above). Perhaps the reputation of Ælfred as the translator was based on Ælfric's own ideas rather than an already existing tradition.

[937] Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 221-222.

[938] See the preface to *CH I,* and *CH* 2.9. Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1245.

[939] Contra: Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 178-180.

[940] Grant, *B-Text*, 443, remarks that all the extant manuscripts bear the marks of being copied by a scribe using the late West Saxon dialect at some stage.

[941] Dumville, "Alfred and the Tenth-Century Reform," 197. It is worth noting that the *ASC* was also being updated by reformed monastic houses in Winchester, Peterborough, Worcester, and Abingdon.

appears to have been used by Ælfric and Æthelweard in this context.[942] Also, there are many similarities between the *OEB* and the ideals of the reform, including an increased emphasis on the Church, the continued importance of Christian kingship and an intensified interest in the miraculous and visionary aspects of the *HE,* including a heightened use of the miracles which took place at Barking and an emphasis on St Alban as the Anglo-Saxon proto-martyr, therefore having the potential to appeal especially to those reformed communities.[943] Also, like the preface to the *Rule of St Benedict* and Ælfric's *Life of Gregory* (and in some ways the *Life of Oswald*) the *OEB* stresses the importance of the early Anglo-Saxon Church by focusing on the Augustinian mission, the *Libellus Responsionum,* and the edicts of the synods of Hertford and *Hæthfeld.* In the case of the *Libellus* and the synod of Hertford, their attention to ritual purity, sexual continence, clerical marriage and kin marriage would be of particular interest to the reformers as they worked to establish canon law consistently across England.

The values of the reform can also be seen by looking again at Ælfric's re-interpretation of the *HE* in his works. For example, he too uses the *HE* as a didactic text in the vernacular, and in doing so the stories told in both are streamlined similarly. We have seen the ways in which both Ælfric and the translator of the *OEB* focus on the relationship between Aidan and Oswald, edit out the tensions between the Irish and Roman religious practices, underplay the role of Paulinus in the conversion of Northumbria, and emphasise Oswald's role as godfather to Cynegils. Sharon Rowley has noted that the two interpretations of Oswald's life are 'almost identical'.[944] Mechthild Gretsch has shown how the *Life of Gregory* has the same omissions as those in the *OEB,* such as abbreviating the details of his life, and the omission of his ambivalence between the active and contemplative life.[945] Also important is the meticulous inclusion of the non-English saints Aidan and Alban when many other

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[942] It must be noted that while the texts are both interested in Christian kingship, the *OEB* was also very focused on Germanic origins. This is certainly not the case in Ælfric's adaptation of the *HE,* but this interest does appear in Æthelweard's *Chronicon.*

[943] I am profoundly grateful to Els Schröder for extensive discussions on this topic.

[944] Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 225-226.

[945] Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints*, 59-60; Whitelock, *The OEB*, 58-59; and Godden, "The Sources for Ælfric's Homily on St Gregory," 74-75.

non-English aspects of the *HE* are omitted, which lends a striking emphasis to their appearance within the texts.

While very committed to demonstrating the details of early Anglo-Saxon Christianity, neither adaptation conveys Bede's emphasis on its connections with Rome, choosing instead to emphasise the Anglo-Saxon engagement with its own Church's history. The *OEB* does this by using Bede as the singular real authority in the text, which would square with Bede's patristic reputation in the mid to late tenth century, and Ælfric's frequent references to him as *ure lareow* to authorise the saint's lives he used from the *HE*.[946] Connected to this intensified focus on the Anglo-Saxons, both the *OEB* and Ælfric's texts are uninterested in discussing heresy among the Britons. With this de-emphasis on their sins the Britons no longer appear as schismatics and with this loss of distinction are in general much less prominent. Also, both sets of re-interpretations reflect the later period's interest in visions and miracles, while downplaying the historical, circumstantial details – such as dates and place-names - therefore the eschatological effect of the *HE* is heightened.[947] The effect of these differences ensures that these vernacular translations emphasise the universality of the English Church, by making it appear timeless and distinct from the politics and history of wider Britain.[948]

While the *OEB* could easily appeal to the didactic and pastoral ideals of the reform, this is also a period in which there are few texts from outside the monastic movement, as there may have been limited opportunities for secular scribes to secure the patronage needed to produce and disseminate texts after secular priests were removed from the monasteries beginning in 964.[949] Along with the geographical spread and multiplicity of the texts, all these things make it very likely that the *OEB* enjoyed some level of dissemination through Benedictine circles in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, although this suggestion falls short of proof. What we do know is that there

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[946] Discenza, "The *OEB* and Authority," 69-73.
[947] Westgard, "Bede and the Continent," 212-213; and Rowley, "Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England," 222.
[948] John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," 306.
[949] See p. 173 above.

were copies at reformed houses in Worcester, Winchester, Canterbury, Christ Church and at Burton-On-Trent (as well as in Durham).[950]

In considering the possibility of the extant texts featuring within this milieu, it is important to consider especially the C, O and B versions, which were all composed in the late tenth to early eleventh centuries, around the height of the movement. Despite their dates and the connections between the body of the text and the ideals of the reform, their manuscript contexts speak of slightly different uses in this period. For example, C was copied in mid tenth-century Winchester, and appears to have remained associated with the Ælfredian royal house in that it has the West Saxon genealogy and was bound with important state documents, such as the Laws of Ælfred and Ine, the Laws of Æthelstan and the Burghal Hidage, which is a document referring to the number of hides needed for burg defence.[951] It was also bound with a statement concerning the sin of adultery and poems on fasting, the text of which complies with the tenets of the *Libellus Responsionum* concerning Anglo-Saxon practices which were distinctive from those of Frankia.[952] All of this indicates that the extant manuscript was compiled at Winchester in conjunction with the royal house, and was probably copied either just before or during the Episcopacy of Bishop Æthelwold (963-984).[953]

C – of which O is a copy – also lacks III:19-20 which should contain the *Life of Fursey.* It is very tantalising to consider that C may be, or be very similar to, the copy used by Ælfric, because he went back to the anonymous source for his version, rather than using Bede. C also contains the list of chapter-headings so if it was used by Ælfric, this list would have told him that Bede had included the saint in his text, even if his own Latin and/or Old English text did not have it, and this may have prompted him to seek out the earlier, original version.[954] While this is hard to know, it is certain that

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[950] Ker, *Catalogue*, xlv-xlvi. Perhaps it is important in this context to note that Ælfric's *CH* have also been found at Worcester, Winchester, Canterbury and Durham.
[951] See Chapter Four, p. 115 above.
[952] Molyneaux, "The *OEB*," 1306, n. 110.
[953] Without a more precise date for the composition of C, it is difficult to know who was ruling from Winchester during this time. It may have been (Edmund 939–946), but was probably either Eadred (946–955), Eadwig (955-959), or most likely Edgar (959–975).
[954] See Chapter Four, p. 116 and p. 205 above. Of course there is every reason to believe that he preferred to use the original version, as it suited his purpose better.

either the C text or its exemplar was given an alternate translation of the missing III:16-18 – but not III:19-20 - before it was later copied to form the extant Ca and O texts. While O is of unknown provenance and is now only extant bound with a fourteenth-century version of the *HE*, Ca was copied from C the mid eleventh century in a Worcester hand. While late, this connection with Worcester may suggest a link to the reform but more importantly, Ca also contains the attribution of the translation to Ælfred, and therefore forms a link between the C family of manuscripts and a shared tradition of Ælfredian authorship, as first mentioned by Ælfric.

In contrast with the manuscript context of C is the early eleventh century B text, which hints at possibilities of a very different textual history. Palaeographical evidence indicates that B was written south of the Humber, perhaps in Devon, and scholars believe that it was meant as a working copy of the *OEB,* written and illuminated under Winchester influence for a religious institution.[955] Soon after it was composed the margins became filled with material in both Latin and English. These were mostly religious texts, including Latin masses (with English rubrics), Latin prayers, and a martyrology for December 25-31, as well as six homilies in English, and an English version of *Solomon and Saturn,* along with various Latin and Old English charms, and an English recipe.[956] Its use as a religious text may also explain why B does not appear to have ever included the West Saxon genealogy and how it came to be in the ownership of Bishop Leofric later in the eleventh century.[957]

Miller complained that the scribe who copied B 'dealt very freely with his author, changing forms and words and recasting sentences,' therefore, he felt that the style of the scribe was too free to really offer much in the way of understanding the exemplar or specific translations.[958] Ker has said that the writing is 'rough' and although it appears to have been illuminated by someone in the Winchester school, the decorations are also 'elaborate but rough' and very little of them are

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[955] Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, 31, Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 32; Miller, *OEB,* 'Introduction', xvii, and Grant, *The B Text of the Old English Bede: A Linguistic Commentary*, 9. See also Rowley, 'Vernacular Angles', 9.
[956] Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 32. See also Grant, *B-Text*, 6.
[957] Its opening page contains an inscription indicating that it was a gift from Bishop Leofric to St. Peter's Church, Exeter sometime between 1050 and 1072.
[958] Miller, *OEB,* v-vi.

finished.[959] Likewise, Raymond Grant has called the (two) scribes who copied this version 'careless', but points out that this version of the work probably reflects the one hundred and fifty years of scribal errors, amendments and dialectal changes which would have occurred between the time of the translation and the actual writing of B.[960]

Grant's study of the text led him to conclude that:

> One cannot but wish that its scribes had read and taken to heart Ælfric's plea that scribes should copy according to their exemplar, for here his worries about the damage that *lease writeras* could do seem to find adequate justification.[961]

This would not have been Ælfric's only objection to this treatment of the *OEB*, as B also contains vernacular homilies outside of what Ælfric would consider to be the orthodox canon, including a homily on the Assumption that is believed to be very similar to the Blickling homily against which Ælfric decried.[962] This may give us a tantalising hint at the use of the *OEB* outside of the mainstream of the reform movement. Nancy Thompson has shown that there was a tradition related to this apocryphal Assumption of Mary that appears, from the number of extant manuscripts associated with it, to have been fairly popular.[963] Unfortunately for Ælfric, many of these witnesses to the popularity of the Assumption homily actually appear in manuscripts alongside his own work.[964] Clearly not everyone, or even most people, agreed with Ælfric concerning the rules of what was 'orthodox' and what was not.[965]

Scholars have been unable to pinpoint the scriptorium where B was composed, but Grant has pointed to an Irish connection because it contains a hymn from the Irish *Liber Hymnorum* on St Patrick, focuses on Irish demonology within the text of the *Solomon and Saturn,* and one of the

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[959] Ker, *Catalogue*, 32.
[960] Grant, *B-Text*, 10 and 13.
[961] Grant, *B-Text*, 445.
[962] Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 100-101, and 112. For a comparison between them, see Thompson, "Anglo-Saxon Orthodoxy," 37-65; and Donald Scragg, "The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts," *EETS OS* 300 (1992).
[963] Thompson, "Anglo-Saxon Orthodoxy," 50-52.
[964] Thompson, "Anglo-Saxon Orthodoxy," 60.
[965] Joyce Hill, "The Apocrypha in Anglo-Saxon England: The Challenge of Changing Distinctions," in *Apocryphal Texts and Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Kathryn Powell and Donald Scragg (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 167-168. She points out here that Æthelwold certainly had a different concept of orthodoxy than did Ælfric, and that sometimes Ælfric was not even consistent within his own body of works.

charms in the text speaks of the favourite saints of Ireland: Peter, Paul, Patrick, Phillip, Maria, Brigid, Felix and Cyriac.[966] Irish or not, this is again indicative of the dissemination of the *OEB* into a very distinct context than that of Ælfric or the C text, and speaks of a very different ecclesiastical tradition. Perhaps B was received into an atmosphere outside of the ideals of the movement altogether, and offers another vantage point from which to view piety in the early eleventh century from that given by Ælfric.

What this brief survey has revealed is that while it is extremely likely that some members of the reform movement were using the *OEB* as a teaching guide, a source for their own texts and disseminating the text through their ecclesiastical networks, it is difficult to know to what extent the extant manuscripts were copied into this milieu. Ælfric in particular seems connected to the C text, which was written at Winchester during the mid tenth century and so it, and witnesses to it, would probably have been a part of the cathedral library while he was living there.[967] It was certainly copied later into a Worcester context, and this link suggests other possibilities of links to the other reformed sites listed as having the *OEB* in their post-conquest catalogues - Burton-on-Trent, Tavistock and Canterbury – and to the height of Æthelwold's reforms and his focus on a Bedan tradition while in Winchester. However suggestive this may be, there is no definitive evidence of this, other than perhaps the Ca copy of C at Worcester, and that text's attribution of its translation to Ælfred. It appears that there are strong connections between the texts and the movement but as the B text may indicate, the *OEB* may also have been used outside of the reform context, providing a slightly different perspective from which to view the history of religion in the early eleventh century. While all this remains conjecture at this point, it does open up avenues of research and potential to increase our knowledge of the use of the *OEB,* and the vernacular in general, in the interim period

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[966] Grant, *B-Text*, 445.
[967] This also might have been the text which Æthelweard used, or perhaps was a witness to it.

just before and during the resurgence in the production of the Latin *HE* in the early eleventh

century.[968]

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[968] There were copies of the *HE* being used in England in this period, but our evidence is patchy, including the exemplars needed for the translations mentioned above, there are also 10th c. glosses in the late 8th c. *Cotton Tiberius C.ii,* and there are excerpts from the *HE* in the late 10th c. *BL Cotton Vitellus A. xix*.

Conclusion

Modern scholarship has clearly shown that Bede's history was not a dry registration of facts, but was crafted to suit his own didactic purposes, most of all to inspire reform within his eighth-century context. In creating his work, he used exemplary and providential history to advocate a better understanding of God's plan, emphasising the value of spiritual unity in fulfilling the divine will. This thesis has explored the models established in Bede's *HE* by considering their importance in articulating his vision of spiritual unity for the Anglo-Saxons, and to what extent they were a reflection of identity in this period. Also, by charting the re-use of Bede's models in case studies which represent a wide sweep of the political, social and ecclesiastical changes which occurred from the early eighth century to the beginning of the eleventh, we have explored Bede's work through a variety of generic and geographical contexts. In doing so, it has become clear that these changes in context and genre have had an important impact on the way in which Bede's narrative was interpreted and represented in these case studies, which have revealed a variety of sophisticated and complex approaches to the use of the narrative, and demonstrated the flexibility of his model. They have also shown that Bede's use of ethnographic language not only contributed to a larger rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon identity, but also that his expression of a spiritual unity for his people was an ideal so effective that it continued to be invoked across the period alongside the far reaching changes in the political and ecclesiastical structures of Anglo-Saxon England.

In Chapter Two we saw that Bede's prescription for Christian unity implemented exemplars for both ecclesiastical and lay people to follow, demonstrating the importance of both in the ultimate fulfilment of the Anglo-Saxon Christian destiny. According to Bede's model, harmony was the path to peace and security, and he prescribed communion with the universal Church as the most important aspect of this. Unity with wider Christendom was the divine will, and in his idealised version of events, teaching and evangelism were the ultimate positive expressions of belief in God's great design. Teaching and preaching served God by widening Christendom, and thus bringing various peoples into harmony with one another and with the divine order. This model of unity was

complemented by exemplars of strong Christian kings, which offered protection for their people and encompassed others within a wide Christian *imperium*, which was both an expression of God's favour and his will.[969]

In establishing the importance of unity in the fulfilment of God's will, Bede used both biblical and ethnic paradigms to express the movement of peoples within this providential model. Central to his narrative was the idea of a single *gens Anglorum* for which he recorded two distinct but complementary origin myths in order to demonstrate the Christian and Germanic aspects of their identity. The first of these was the myth of a collective migration from Germany, in which the Angles, Saxons and Jutes were bound to one another even before their arrival in Britain. The other was a conversion legend which involved Pope Gregory's divinely inspired discovery of the Angle slaves, which prompted his mission to the *gens Anglorum.* These two variations on the origins of the Anglo-Saxons explain both explain their migration from their German homelands and their beginnings as a Christian people as the result of their special role in God's plan. It is this duality in the nature of their Germanic and Christian ethnogenesis that prefigures their Christian destiny to bring the Germanic peoples of the continent into harmony with the realm of Christendom.

According to this model, all peoples have a unique place within God's plan, but the *gens Anglorum* are also special in that they are agents of the divine will even while pagan. This is in contrast to the Britons, who despite having been Christians before the Anglo-Saxons, fail to recognise their own place within God's design. While this dichotomy explains the Anglo-Saxon hegemony over the Britons, it does not make inclusion in Christendom exclusive to the *gens Anglorum*.[970] According to Bede's model, all peoples belong to God and unity with wider Christendom was the ultimate expression of devotion to God, so while the Anglo-Saxons and the Irish were well on course in their acceptance of the universal Church and their commitment to

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[969] Chapter Two, pp. 22-23.
[970] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 274-279. For more on the use of historical traditions and myths of justify the superiority of one ethnic group over another, Cf. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), 49-51.

evangelism, the Britons operated counter to the will of God by refusing both of these requirements.[971]

Within this model, Bede blends ethnic and religious identities in such a way as to obscure the differences between them.[972] Because ethnic identity in this period was not based on biological descent, but was a constructed identity based on allegiance, Bede's shaping of an ethno-religious identity based on affiliation with the Anglo-Saxon Church for his people was able to overarch other tribal or regional identities.[973] Here acceptance of this authority was the most important aspect of their identity, so his use of the term *Angli* came to not only to represent ethnic identity, but also more importantly spiritual identity. By extension, compliance with the authority of the Anglo-Saxon Church was to become a part of the *gens Anglorum.* Therefore, the Saxons and Jutes of Bede's narrative were also identified as *Angli,* as were the Britons who accepted their role under this authority. This spiritual use of the ethnic name *Angli* helps to explain how the Britons became obscured behind this ethno-religious nomenclature, as they became assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon Church and ultimately into Anglo-Saxon culture.[974]

Alcuin was writing in a context similar to that of Bede, but later in the later eighth century, after their native Northumbria had gained its own archbishopric at York. In Chapter Three we saw Alcuin transposing material from Bede's narrative prose into an urban praise poem which extolled the virtues of this city. In doing so he engaged with the exemplary models of Bede's history by also establishing an idealised version of the past when the wide *imperium* of York's kings demonstrated God's favour, protected the people from their enemies, and drew others into this protection and into Christendom. He mirrored this royal model with an ecclesiastical one, in which the clergy

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[971] The idea that God's will provides for 'unity in diversity' is a Gregorian one, for example see Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, 43; Meyavert, "Diversity within Unity: A Gregorian Theme," 141-162; and Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, 274-279. This idea corresponded well with Germanic religious traditions regarding the movement of peoples and their relationship with their gods. See Wolfram, "*Origo Et Religo*," 82.

[972] Wood, "Before and after the Migration to Britain," 51.

[973] Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 81-82 and 88. Cf. Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 29; Pohl, "Telling the Difference," 122-123; Pohl, "Conceptions of Ethnicity," 17; Pohl, "Ethnic Names and Identities," 8; Wolfram, "*Origo Et Religo*," 72; and Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 10.

[974] Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 221-247. Cf. Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 29; Tolkien, "English and Welsh," 6, 25 and 29; Bartlett, *The Making of Europe,* 198-204; Pohl, "Telling the Difference," 124; and Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 29-30.

protected the people spiritually through prayer and provided religious exemplars for emulation, while tireless evangelists brought disparate peoples into Christendom.

While Alcuin's use of the *HE* in his poem is closely based on the text itself, it is also a big departure from it in that it widens the ethnic paradigms of Bede so that they are less specific and distinct, while sharply narrowing its geographic scope. This is clear from his choice of ethnic nomenclature within the poem. First of all, he re-tells Bede's story of the migration from Germany, but instead of using the three tribal names in the *HE,* he nicknames them collectively in such a way as to highlight their power, using the word *saxi* meaning 'stone'.[975] Then, he links them to their Christian destiny by referring to them as *gens ventura Dei*.[976] In Alcuin's idealised portrayal, these two aspects of Anglo-Saxon identity manifested themselves in the cooperation between the ecclesiastical and political spheres, epitomised by the city of York itself. In creating this harmonious exemplar, the Britons only appear as a means of establishing the providential model. As in the *HE,* it is the inferiority of the Britons which explains the migration, whereby a superior people inherit the island, and they therefore serve to highlight the power and strength of the *saxi*.

In fact, Alcuin may have sought to undermine the use of Bede's Anglian terminology altogether by implicitly challenging the influence of Canterbury in the north and its own advocacy of this terminology, in favour of the metropolitan see of York.[977] Where Bede had created an idyllic seventh-century image of the Church under Theodore as Archbishop of Canterbury, instead Alcuin uses Bede's largely Northumbrian material to praise York and its archbishopric, creating his own golden age under the reign and episcopacy of brothers Egberht and Eadberht.

Alcuin's exhortatory letters illustrate his moral stance on contemporary events in Northumbria, and a comparison of them to his praise poem makes it apparent that this genre gave him an opportunity to provide positive exemplars as another means of urging reforms within his

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[975] *YP* ll. 46-48.
[976] *YP* l. 78.
[977] Wormald, "*Bretwaldas*," 121-122; Brooks, "English Identity from Bede to the Millennium," 41.

context, which is perhaps a technique he learned from Bede himself. Toward this end, the poetic genre contributed to the movement of Bede's exemplars from historical personalities to hagiographical types by removing the chronological and geographical details of Bede's history in shaping the mood of the account with its emphasis on the positive aspects of the narrative in order to 'white wash' the past.

Like Alcuin, the writer of the Common Stock of the *ASC* also mined Bede's narrative for items which represented his agenda in portraying the past, but within the very different political and geographical context of the ninth century under West Saxon hegemony. Written during a time which saw a revival of learning and teaching, as well as sustained viking attack, the *ASC* almost certainly had royal support, which involved the distribution of the text throughout Anglo-Saxon England. Here Bede's Latin narrative prose was used to inform succinctly written annals in the vernacular as the backbone of his military and political history of the Anglo-Saxons. With this shift in context and genre, we find a chronicler that is more interested in the content of Bede's narrative than its moral themes, as he uses a selective collection of events from Bede's narrative and 'Chronological Epitome'.

For the chronicler, Bede's work is a source which invokes the collective Christian and Germanic heritage of the Anglo-Saxons. This heritage is stressed by the text's consistent use of Bede's Anglian nomenclature – primarily the word *Angelcynn* – to describe the Anglo-Saxon collective, invoking the tradition of a shared past and furthering a sense of solidarity in clear contrast to the Britons and Danes who appeared to threaten this identity.[978] Similarly, it borrows all the genealogies from Bede's narrative among others. However, the West Saxon genealogy is given special attention by being updated to include Christian ancestors preceding the pagan ones, and

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[978] For *Angelcynn,* see *s.a.* 443, 449, 597, 789, 839, 866, 874, 886, 896, and 1001. For *Engla ðeoda* see *s.a.* 595 and 942; *Englisc* in *s.a.* 690, 891, 896, 918 and 920; *Englan* in *s.a.* 473; *Engla* in *s.a.* 871, 973 and 975.

being placed at the very beginning of the text as a preface, it clearly announces the *ASC's* function as a political and ideological document.[979]

Working primarily as a series of military origin stories, the Common Stock uses the *HE* to help assert West Saxon supremacy by demonstrating both military prowess and God's favour. One way in which it does this is by updating Bede's list of kings with *imperium* to include the ninth-century heir to that legacy, the West Saxon king Egberht. The migration myth also looms large throughout the text, clearly defining the origins of each of the constituent kingdoms, making these beginnings feature as aspects of a single identity. By invoking this Germanic origin myth while excluding the Gregorian one, the Common Stock is a firm expression of military superiority which is the only justification needed for the Anglo-Saxon hegemony over the Britons. While the Britons help to demonstrate the physical strength of the *Angelcynn,* Anglo-Saxon military power is also complemented by the language of spiritual unity as the use of *Angelcynn* works in opposition with the *hæðen Denes*, helping to connect West Saxon imperial designs with evangelism in order to justify the expansion of their hegemony.[980]

Roughly contemporary with the Common Stock of the *ASC,* the *HE* was also translated into English in the ninth century. But as we saw in Chapter Four, the *OEB* is believed to have been translated in Mercia, and as such the *OEB* probably represents a rare example of a ninth-century vernacular text written outside of the dominant West Saxon milieu, although it was later received, used and copied alongside other West Saxon texts. Maintaining the historical narrative form, the *OEB* remains broadly faithful to the Latin version. Like its exemplar, the translation focuses on the importance of unity with particular attention to conversion and mission. Also, it continues to demonstrate the shared heritage of Anglo-Saxons, here *Angel/Ongel ðeode* and *Angelcynn,* and their

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[979] Davis, "Cultural Assimilation," 30-31.

[980] This dichotomy is also evidenced in Asser's *Life.* Cf. Smyth, "English Identity," 41; Harris, "Social Practice," 42; Pohl, "Ethnic Names and Identities," 23; and Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, 113. Consider also the 're'-conquest of the Danelaw, which was actually a rhetorical justification for West Saxon expansion. Cf. Wormald, 'Engla lond', 373. For comparison with a larger anthropological context, see Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 12 and 19.

shared Christian destiny, in that both the migration and the Gregorian conversion legend remain important within the text, and evangelism among the Germanic peoples remains the ultimate goal.

However, the process of translation also allowed the translator to update the history for his ninth-century context by omitting some of the less relevant aspects of the history and shifting the emphasis onto others. For example, he omitted most of Bede's polemic against the Britons, most of the non-English history and almost all of the letters and epitaphs in the translation. This has the effect of heightening the presence of the Anglo-Saxons who are recorded closely, including all their genealogies, conversion stories, visions and miracles. In telling these stories, few of the dates and geographical details are carried across which creates a type of timelessness, lending emphasis to the more spiritual aspects of the *HE.* The preface of the *OEB* actually also has rare additions to the text which intensify its didactic purpose.

This added stress on the ecclesiastical and didactic purpose of the text is complemented by an intense focus on both of the ethno-religious origin myths, suggesting that Bede's emphasis on these aspects of the Anglo-Saxon identity was still considered important to the ultimate fulfilment of their Christian destiny. The *OEB* shows great fidelity to both of these legends, and to the Germanic aspect of the Anglo-Saxon identity. This is intensified by a subtle change in the migration myth, which is structured so that the *Ongelþeode* are actually related to their Scandinavian neighbours, with conspicuous use of the name *Geatum* instead of *Eote* as the third tribe of migrants who founded England.[981] Because the name 'Geat' invoked the Scandinavian connection with the Goths, it invited the audience to consider themselves kin with the Danes as they too were a part of this Jutish/Geatish heritage.[982] We know that the *HE* was an important text in the Anglo-Saxon missions to the continent in the eighth century, and because they were also one of the peoples on Egberht's list for conversion, this treatment of the *HE* in translation suggests its use in the Danelaw as a

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[981] *HE* I:15, 50 and *OEB* I:12, 32 compare to the later use of *Eote* in *OEB* IV:16, 308.
[982] *HE* V:9. For example, see Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 81-82; and Wolfram, "*Origo Et Religo*," 76. The earliest witness to the *OEB,* Zu, was written in London, which is believed to have been a base for missionary activity into East Anglia and Essex.

religious didactic text, perhaps demonstrating that the *HE* continued to be an important missionary text in this ninth-century context.[983]

By the tenth century, the Danelaw was largely Christian and Chapter Five looked closely at Bede's continuing importance in this period as an English political identity began to emerge alongside the expansion of the West Saxon hegemony. The didactic purpose of the *HE* and the exemplary role models Bede had used to create his idyllic picture of the people and church of the seventh century continued to resonate with Benedictine reformers, who sought to 'return' England to this glorious and pious past. Bede's authority within the continental reform movement, coupled with his unique rendering of the Anglo-Saxon Christian heritage made his *HE* a particularly relevant mine of exemplary models. This was complemented by a renewal of viking incursion, which vividly demonstrated God's reprisal and the need for Christian reform, to bring England back to the peace it had known before the vikings.

The most intensive use of Bede's *HE* in this context was by Ælfric, who removed these models from their historical context and into hagiography and homily. He did not however remove them from their geographical contexts, but let them represent the wide range of Anglo-Saxon contexts and lend power to his collection by demonstrating the pan-Englishness of his vision. In doing this, Ælfric was clearly not interested in Bede's representation of the wider ethnography of Britain, and focuses his vision intently on Anglo-Saxon England. Along with this collective view of the Anglo-Saxon Christian past, he also used the terms *Engla land, Englisc* and *Angelcynn* to express his perspective on the identity of the people within this cultural and geographical space. This nomenclature is used consistently, even to the point of anachronism, contributing to the timelessness of his hagiography and his intense focus on the Anglo-Saxon collective. Strikingly, the one place where he refers to the *Bryttas* is in invoking the Anglo-Saxon origin myth, but here he castigates the English for interfering with the Christianity of the Britons, lamenting the sinfulness

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[983] On the mutual intelligibility between Danish and English, see Smyth, "English Identity," 24 and 31; and Loyn, *The Vikings*, 79.

that prevented Britain from enjoying a continuous Christian heritage from the beginning. Tellingly, here the Anglo-Saxons are the ones who are in need of redemption, and this comes from the establishment of monastic order in the form of the Augustinian mission.

One effect of Ælfric's firm focus on *Engla land* and the Anglo-Saxons is that Christianity appears as a national imperative and the unifying feature of his works, where the mission of Aidan in Northumbria is just as important as that of Augustine in Kent and every member of society had a duty for prayer and penance. Ælfric also intensified Bede's royal model to represent kings who ruled by the grace of God and brought peace, security and harmony among the people, reflecting the spiritual health of the entire kingdom. While invoking Bede's royal model demonstrates Ælfric's use of the *HE*, it also draws attention to the change in contexts between the two men. While for Bede Christian kingship was best represented by kings who expanded their territories and brought other peoples into their realms and under their protection, for Ælfric expansion without was not as important as peace within the realm and here again he is intensely focused on England and its issues. In Ælfric's late tenth-century context there is no separation between the religious and secular spheres of power, and his works intensify the importance of the king's self-sacrifice and pious devotion as a national duty which could bring God's favour, and therefore peace among the peoples of Britain, or whose sin brought God's wrath, and thus dissension, famine and viking invasion.[984]

From these examples, it is clear that Bede's depiction of the beginnings of the Anglo-Saxon people continued to resonate across the period. It is a testament to the intuitive nature and powerful rhetoric of Bede's text that it continued to capture the imagination of writers in these very distinct contexts and offer them an ideologically based vocabulary and frame of reference from which they could articulate their own ideas regarding the relationships between the people of Britain and their relationship with God. Bede's idealised representation of seventh-century Britain also remained a powerful exemplar, as his heroes continued to be used as images of Christian unity.

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[984] Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 54.

Bede's representation of the seventh century continued to represent a time when pious Christians filled the land, winning God's favour and thus bringing the political stability that allowed Latin literacy and education to flourish while the Anglo-Saxon Church shared the bounty of its faith in an outpouring of evangelism.[985] Embracing the Anglo-Saxon heritage and creating greater harmony with Christendom was a theme applied across the entire range of our case studies, despite their shifting contexts, and their use of these themes reflects the importance of the concepts for each writer.

Bede's religious vision had expressed the identities of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes as a spiritual collective and later writers expanded his rhetoric and conception of unity to suit their own political and social ideals. We can see the acceptance of Bede's ideas in the use of the Anglian nomenclature across the period, and while in the *YP* Alcuin does not use the terminology himself, he responds to it by undermining its use for his own ecclesiastical and political reasons. Bede's models of kingship and exemplary bishops also continued to provide idealised models and while the situations in which these models appear shifts they remain representatives of the very best aspects of the English Christian identity. Bede had created a spiritual identity for the Anglo-Saxons and this use of 'English' as synonymous with 'Christian' continues across these case studies as religion remains the most important diacritical marker of Anglo-Saxon identity. Conversion looms large in these texts, and in so doing, both the converted Britons and Danes become assimilated into the *gens Anglorum,* which was a religious identity flexible enough to keep defining itself across the period, according to contemporary social, political and ethnic needs.[986] In effect, the Britons become so assimilated by this that they seem to disappear from view and the Danes become less and less distinct as their language and culture becomes acculturated into what it meant to be English in late Anglo-Saxon England.[987]

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[985] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 239; and Goffart, *Narrators*, 253.

[986] Here we can see Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians, Britons and Danes (as well as other groups that we cannot see) all being subsumed into and helping to redefine the *gens Anglorum.* Cf. Wood, "Before and After," 50-51; Sims-Williams, "Settlement of England," 5 and 24; Dumville, "Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend," 192; and Bremmer, "The Nature of the Evidence," 354-359.

[987] On the assimilation of the Britons, for example see Rollason, *Northumbria*, 108; Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 31; Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons*, 189-191; Higham, *Northumbria*, 75, 99-100 and

The complexity and flexibility of Bede's models are revealed in how each text approached Bede's history very differently and offered new interpretations based on changes in political and ecclesiastical structures across the period. For example, Alcuin and Ælfric illustrate the close relationship between history and hagiography in this period as Bede's historical personalities lent themselves to being shifted into hagiographical types, selectively removed from their historical contexts. Also, Bede's role as a teacher was important across our case studies, and both Alcuin and Ælfric invoke his authority for their own works. However, the didactic aspect of Bede's text has its greatest expression in the *OEB,* which emphasises this aspect of the *HE* and provides us with evidence of the continued use of Bede's text for this purpose. These case studies also indicate that the development of political unity over the period was not inevitable, but developed alongside changes in, and the expansion of, royal and ecclesiastical power over time and in response to outside pressure. Alcuin and the *ASC* use Bede's exemplary model of Christian kingship to demonstrate a clear connection with Bede's use of an idealised royal *imperium* to express political stability and hegemony in terms of the expansion of Christendom. For the writer of the Common Stock, this had a particularly practical application within his West Saxon context, as it could be used to justify West Saxon imperial designs. Ælfric on the other hand focused on the sacrificial aspects of Bede's kings, concerned less with widening political control, and more with the king as the model for and representative of his people. His use of the royal model also reflects a change in the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical structure, where the political and ecclesiastical spheres had merged, with both kings and bishops important members of both.

While Bede certainly did not create the English, he did create an ideological and rhetorical framework which was flexible enough to allow them to express their own ideas of unity and to explain the social contexts which continued to take shape around them, and be shaped by them. In

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111; Brooks, "Canterbury, Rome and English Identity," 232-237 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 138-139; Meecham-Jones, "Where Was Wales?," 28; Hills, *Origins of the English*, 9-55; and Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, 58-62, 69-73 and 114. On the Danes, see Simon Trafford, "Ethnicity, Migration Theory and Historiography," in *Cultures in Contact*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 29-30; Smyth, "English Identity," 29-30; Kershaw, "The Alfred-Guthrum Treaty," 51-52 and 58; Innes, "Danelaw Identities," 72 and 79; Loyn, *The Vikings*, 78-82 and 91-93; and Page, "Audience of Beowulf," 118-121.

this thesis we have seen the extraordinary richness and power of Bede's *HE*, as it was reworked over the centuries into numerous genres and contexts. While the *HE* was a text of its own time and written to address contemporary needs, it was sufficiently flexible and rich to be used by subsequent generations for different purposes: as a source of hagiography, biography, genealogy, annal, homily and as a repository of myth. It also remained relevant across the period, as Bede had dedicated his *History* to a king and it was enthusiastically taken up and re-used by those close to power and authority in Anglo-Saxon England. It became both a tool in the hands of some of the most persuasive spokesmen of Anglo-Saxon England and an influence upon how they thought about the world.

List of Abbreviations

ACMRS   Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies

ASC   *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

ASC-A   The A- version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Corpus Christi College Cambridge 173)

ASC-B   The B-version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (British Library Cotton Tiberius A.iii)

ASC-C   The C- version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (British Library Cotton Tiberius B.i)

ASC-D   The D- version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (British Library Cotton Tiberius B.iv)

ASC-E   The E- version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud 636)

ASE   *Anglo-Saxon England*

B   The B-text of the *Old English Bede* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41)

BL   British Library

C   The C-text of the *Old English Bede* (British Library, Cotton MS Otho B.xi)

c.   century

Ca   The Ca-text of the *Old English Bede* (Cambridge University Library, Kk. 3.18)

ca.   *circa*

ch./chs.   chapter/chapters

CH I   *Catholic Homilies,* vol. 1

CH II   *Catholic Homilies,* vol. 2

C.U.P.   Cambridge University Press

EETS OS   *Early English Text Society* (Original Series)

EETS SS   *Early English Text Society* (Second Series)

EHD   *English Historical Documents,* vol. 1

HE   *Historia Ecclesiastica gens Anglorum*

LS   *Lives of the Saints*

MRTS   Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (University of Arizona)

ms.   manuscript

no./nos.	number/numbers
O	The O-text of the *Old English Bede* (Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 279B)
OEB	*Old English Bede*
O.U.P.	Oxford University Press
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association
s.a.	*sub anno* ("under the year")
T	The "Tanner Bede" or *Bodleian Tanner 10 (9830)*
YP	*York Poem* (Alcuin's *Versus de patribus, regibus et sanctis Eboracensis ecclesiae*)
Zu	The Zu fragment of the *Old English Bede* (British Library Cotton Domitian ix, f.11)

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