Aldhelm's *opus geminatum De virginitate* in its Early Anglo-Saxon Context

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Aldhelm's double treatise *De virginitate* in its early Anglo-Saxon context. The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One focuses on the historical circumstances in which this West Saxon abbot and bishop wrote his Latin prose and verse treatise on sexual and social renunciation. It investigates Aldhelm's career and postulates that the work was written to valorise and promote adult renunciation, to teach religious its meanings and rewards, and to enter wide-ranging contemporary debates surrounding monasticism and renunciation. It also examines the identities of Aldhelm's immediate monastic dedicatees, the diverse composition of his wider audience, and their difficulties forsaking the secular life. This background will be shown to have had a direct impact on Aldhelm's spiritual guidance, which is considered in Part Two.

Part Two examines how Aldhelm transmitted and reworked patristic teachings on marriage, gender, virginity, chastity, and interior spirituality, in response to contemporary circumstances. It therefore explores how his nuanced treatment of marriage reflects early Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical rulings on wedlock, while at the same time emphasising the danger of sexuality to professed religious. It also proposes that Aldhelm's treatment of gender shows an attempt to unify male and female religious, whilst recognising that their outward experiences of renunciation and the religious life were different. Aldhelm will be shown to have provided his audience with contemplative guidance which, foremost, assessed their level of spiritual success according to their inner virtues. This will be related to his concern to valorise the once-married celibates in his audience, whose actions needed to be placed within established patristic traditions on virginity.

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Abbreviations

AA   Auctores Antiquissimi

AM   *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa de virginitate cum glosa latina atque Anglosaxonica*, (ed.), S. Gwara, CCSL, CXXIV (Turnhout, 2001). Note that Ehwald's edition of the double treatise *Dv* is used throughout. However, Gwara's lexical amendments to the *PdV* are either signalled in footnotes or, in the case of Latin citations, offered in curly brackets.

AMA   *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa de virginitate cum glosa latina atque anglosaxonica*, (ed.), S. Gwara, CCSL, CXXIV A (Turnhout, 2001).

AO   *Aldhelmi Opera*, (ed.), R. Ehwald, MGH, AA, 15 (Berlin, 1919, repr. München, 1984).

ASCCE   The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition

ASE   *Anglo-Saxon England*

BAR   British Archaeological Reports

BCS   *Cartularium Saxonicum*, (ed.), W. de G. Birch (3 vols, London, 1885-99), vol. I.

CCSL   Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina

CdV   *Carmen de virginitate*

CEW   H. Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*, BAR, British Series, 198 (Oxford, 1988).

CSASE   Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England

CSEL   Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum

Dv   *De virginitate*

EHR   *English Historical Review*

EME   *Early Medieval Europe*

GP   William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Pontificum*, (ed.), N. E. S. A. Hamilton, *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum Libri Quinque*, Rolls Series, 52 (London, 1870), pp. 330-443.

H. E.   Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969).

HS III   A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds.), *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. III (Oxford, 1964).

Kelly, *The Electronic Sawyer*: S. E. Kelly, *The Electronic Sawyer. An Online Version of the Revised Edition of Sawyer's Anglo-Saxon Charters*, British Academy/Royal Historical Society Joint Committee on Anglo-Saxon Charters, 21st January 1999, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/eSawyer>; all references to the Electronic Sawyer were last accessed on 28th May 2004. Individual URLs are cited in footnotes

LH   M. Lapidge and M. Herren (trans.), *Aldhelm. The Prose Works* (Ipswich, 1979).

LR   M. Lapidge and J. L. Rosier (trans.), *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985). *LH* and *LR* translations are used throughout, whilst any alternative readings are offered in square brackets.

JEH   *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

MGH   Monumenta Germaniae Historica

PDNHAS *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society*

PL   Patrologia Latina cursus completus, (ed.), J.-P. Migne (1844-1865).

PdV   *Prosa de virginitate* Note that I ordinarily cite line and page numbers from *AO* when citing the prose text. However, I offer only page numbers if I refer to the entire chapter.

P. Theodori 'D'   Poenitentiale Theodori, 'D' recension, (ed.), P. W. Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori Cantuariensis und ihre Überlieferungsformen* (Weimar, 1929), pp. 239-52.

P. Theodori 'U'   Poenitentiale Theodori, 'U' recension, (ed.), P. W. Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori Cantuariensis und ihre Überlieferungsformen* (Weimar, 1929), pp. 285-334.

S   P.H.Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968). All references to charters give the Sawyer number. However, I cite *BSC* if they are absent from his list.

SS   *Scriptores*

SCH   *Studies in Church History*

Tangl   M. Tangl, *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, MGH, Epistolae Selectae, I (Berlin, 1916).

VBOH   C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera historia* (Oxford, 1896).

WANHM Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Magazine

Introduction

In recent years Aldhelm (c. 639/40-c.709), abbot of Malmesbury and bishop of Sherborne, has been described variously as 'the first Englishman of letters', 'a zealous pedagogue', and, 'not merely the first but the finest of the Anglo-Latin poets'.[1] These descriptions reveal modern tendencies to view Aldhelm principally as a figure of literary importance. Moreover, his *opus geminatum*, that is 'work of two paired parts', the *Prosa de virginitate* and its verse counterpart, the *Carmen de virginitate*, has been studied chiefly from a literary perspective.[2] Its prose style, verse composition, manuscript transmission and glossings have thus received a good deal of scholarly attention.[3] Yet ironically, Aldhelm's considerable expertise in, and influence upon, Anglo-Latin literature, has been illuminated so effectively that his extensive involvement in the late seventh- to early eighth-century church is often overshadowed. Bede (c. 673-735), Theodore (602-90) and Wilfrid (d. 709) instead have emerged as its most influential figures. Furthermore, his double treatise's unparalleled insight into early Anglo-Saxon sexual and social renunciation, deserves much further attention. In part the double treatise has been neglected because of the impenetrability of Aldhelm's Latin style: although a best-seller in his own time, even so, his Latin is far less appealing to modern tastes.[4] The aim of this thesis is to highlight his double treatise's historical importance, by interpreting it with a view to its author, audience, and the period of religious and political transformation of which they were a part. I hope to show that this work was written not merely as a stylistic

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[1] *LH*, p. 1; S. Gwara, 'Glosses to Aldhelm's "Prosa de virginitate" and Glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon Golden Age *ca.* 670-800', *Studi Medievali*, Third Series, 38 (2) (1997), p. 644; A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994), p. 2.

[2] P. Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *opus geminatum*: From Aldhelm to Alcuin', in M. Herren (ed.), *Insular Latin Studies* (Toronto, 1981), p. 115; following Gwara, I refer to Aldhelm's prose work on renunciation as the *Prosa de virginitate*, because Aldhelm did not, as far as we know, title the work, and extant manuscripts give it different titles, see, *AM*, p. 20 n 3.

[3] See, for example, M. Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's Prose Style and its Origins', *ASE*, 6 (1977), 39-76; M. Lapidge, 'Anglo-Latin Literature', in S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder (eds.), *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York, NY and London, 1986), pp. 5-37, rev. and repr. M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), at pp. 7-10; Orchard, *Poetic Art*; *AM* and *AMA*, and see below, pp. 85-92.

[4] *LH*, pp. 1-4.

exercise, nor simply to eulogise virginity.[5] Instead, Aldhelm's double treatise, the longest of his works, provides Anglo-Saxonists with an important insight into monastic spirituality, by an active ecclesiastic, who was involved heavily in the rapidly emerging church.

In the *geminatus stilus* tradition, Aldhelm writes both a prose and a verse text on the same subject. He perceived the some 60 chapters of prose and 2,904-line verse counterpart to be one work, even though they circulated and were studied separately.[6] Both texts therefore provide the religious with guidance on a number of the same issues. For example, they offer interior spiritual acts for religious to follow; discuss the relative spiritual merits of virginity, chastity and marriage; and, teach the meaning of sexual and social renunciation. Some of the ideas put forward in these theoretical passages are then illustrated in a lengthy catalogue of male and female saints, which comprises the greater part of the two texts. The poetic text does not, however, simply versify its prose predecessor. To begin with, the prefaces to the works differ. The prose text begins with a long epistolary address to ten named women religious, which praises their learnedness and encourages them to pursue a number of inner contemplative acts.[7] The prose text devotes much more attention than the verse to discussing sexual and spiritual threats to sexual continence, (such as rape and the dangers of wearing lavish dress), and how they might be addressed. It also spiritually assesses Christians according to their levels of sexual continence and inner spiritual perfection.[8] In contrast, the verse text focuses on the latter two themes only, and, instead, opens with an acrostic prayer which implores God for His help in composing this work.[9] Furthermore, whilst the theme of spiritual warfare is

[5] Cf. S. Gwara, 'Manuscripts of Aldhelm's "Prosa de Virginitate" and the Rise of Hermeneutic Literacy in Tenth-Century England', *Studi Medievali*, Third Series, 35 (1) (1994), p. 102; M. Herren, 'Review: A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994)', *EME*, 5 (1) (1996), p. 111; S. O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*: Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia* 12 (1998), p. 295 esp.

[6] G. Wieland, '*Geminus Stilus*: Studies in Anglo-Latin Hagiography', in M. Herren (ed.), *Insular Latin Studies*, Papers in Medieval Studies, 1 (Toronto, 1981), p. 123; Godman, 'Anglo-Latin *opus geminatum*', pp. 215-21; Note that the chapter divisions in the prose text are not an original feature, but appear to have been introduced in the late ninth century, see, *AM*, p. 315.

[7] Aldhelm, *PdV, prologus*, caps. I-VI, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 228-34 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in caps. II, IV and VI, see, *AM*, p. 311).

[8] For an in-depth discussion of these themes, see below, pp. 192-228.

[9] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1-38, pp. 350-52.

introduced into the *Prosa de virginitate*, Aldhelm devotes a considerably larger 316 lines of its verse counterpart to depicting a full-scale battle.[10] Aldhelm also reworks his presentation and selection of saintly *exempla* between the drafting of the two texts,[11] and adopts a different Latin style, and, therefore, narrative technique, to present both accounts.[12]

Both the prose and verse *De virginitate* survive in a good number of manuscripts. There are nineteen extant manuscripts of the prose text, some of which are fragmentary. The vast majority are Insular, and date to the tenth and eleventh centuries, with many of these deriving from continental manuscripts, reintroduced into England following the loss of native copies during the ninth-century Viking incursions. The earliest manuscript of the *Prosa de virginitate* is arguably, however, a group of *membra disiecta* (the largest of which is the fragment Yale New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Lib. mss 401, 401A), which date to the early ninth century; another early witness, which contains Insular features (Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek ms M. p. th. F. 21), may have been written at Fulda, and dates 842 x 855, attesting to the early continental transmission of the work.[13] Twenty-two extant copies of the *Carmen de virginitate* survive. The earliest dates to the eighth century, the latest to the fifteenth century, with the majority produced between the ninth and eleventh centuries.[14]

Rudolf Ehwald prepared the groundwork for the study of Aldhelm in modern times by publishing a comprehensive critical edition of his works in 1919.[15] Further significant milestones came with the English translations of Aldhelm's prose and poetic works, by Michael Lapidge, Michael Herren and James L. Rosier, in 1979 and 1985 respectively.[16]

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[10] *Idem., PdV,* caps. XI-XII, (ed.), *AO,* pp. 239-41; *Idem., CdV,* (ed.), *AO,* ll. 2446-2761, pp. 452-65.

[11] See below, pp. 175-76 esp.; For further discussion of the differences between the two texts, see, *LH,* pp. 13-14, 185 n 10; Wieland, '*Geminus Stilus*', pp. 117-18.

[12] Orchard, *Poetic Art,* pp. 8-16.

[13] Much work has been undertaken on the manuscripts of the *PdV*. A summary of this work, together with a summation of Gwara's pioneering work on this topic, is found in *AM,* pp. 74-187; a discussion of the early manuscripts is found at *AM,* pp. 77-78, 85-94. For further discussion of the texts' dissemination on the continent, see, below, pp. 85-89.

[14] *AO,* p. 349, supplemented by *LR,* p. 256 n 11.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *LH; LR.*

Indeed, it is largely due to the work of Lapidge, Herren and their students, that in the last two decades the marginality of Aldhelmian studies has begun to be addressed seriously. Herren's student, Scott Gwara, recently has undertaken an invaluable reassessment of the *Prosa de virginitate* in his revised edition and collation of the text. In this he offers only 139 lexical amendments and a handful of spelling changes to Ehwald's edition; nonetheless, he greatly supplements his apparatus by publishing an impressive corpus of some 60,000 Latin and Old English glosses alongside the text. Furthermore, Gwara has evaluated Aldhelm's *Prosa de virginitate* with a view to the churchman's career, the period of conversion in which he wrote, and the dedicatees for the text. [17]

Although we know that Aldhelm wrote the prose version of his double treatise first,[18] even so, it is impossible to establish an accurate date for its composition. The earliest extant manuscript of the work post-dates Aldhelm's life by around a century, and although a letter written to him alludes to the double treatise, this can be dated only to Aldhelm's abbacy (675 x 681-705/6).[19] Most recently, Gwara, following Ehwald and ultimately Aldhelm's twelfth-century biographer William of Malmesbury (c. 1090-c.1143), has postulated a date of composition after 685, and possibly nearer to c. 700, because this would fit with the circumstances of two of the texts' possible dedicatees.[20] During the course of this thesis I tentatively date the work to between the late 680s to early 690s, but, like all other hypotheses, this must remain conjectural.

This thesis falls into two parts. The first focuses exclusively on the historical circumstances in which the double treatise was produced, and how this affects our understanding of the texts' purpose and function. This is of great importance, for whilst a number of scholars offer passing comments on this topic, even so, most focus on the

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[17] *AM* and *AMA*.

[18] At the end of his prose text Aldhelm says he will write a verse counterpart and in the *Carmen de virginitate*. He also refers back to his earlier prose work, see, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 321, ll. 4-20, (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. LX, p. 321, ll. 5, 9, 10), see, *AMA*, cap. LX, p. 753, ll. 2, 8, 9); and Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 20-22, p. 353. He also refers to writing the prose text some while ago in his account of Saints Chionia, Irene and Agape in the verse counterpart, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2220, p. 443.

[19] *Epistola Cellani*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 498, ll. 11-12; *LH*, pp. 14, 149, 203 n 47; Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 240-41; for the dates of Aldhelm's abbacy and episcopacy, see below, pp. 18-19, 25.

[20] *AM*, pp. 47-55.

guidance alone or situate it within patristic traditions. In this thesis I focus principally on the late seventh-to early eighth-century context, namely, the period in which Aldhelm was an active abbot and bishop. However, some consideration of the subsequent decades will also be relevant. Although I will move around early Anglo-Saxon England, I will spend the majority of time in lands that the West Saxons controlled or sought to expand over. I do not intend to discuss Aldhelm's brilliance as a scholar, which has been established already, but, instead, I will begin the study by exploring his activities as a West Saxon ecclesiastical politician. When this research was fairly advanced Scott Gwara's edition of the *Prosa de virginitate* was published. Gwara also considers how Aldhelm's ecclesiastical activities impact upon his work, but his suggestion that Aldhelm is a missionary and the double treatise a missionary document will not be followed here. Duncan Probert also considered Aldhelm's activities in Devon and Cornwall in his Ph. D. thesis. Unfortunately, I learnt about his research too late to incorporate it into this study.[21]

In Chapter One I draw mainly upon Aldhelm's own corpus of writings and charter evidence in order to explore his activities as an influential cleric at the heart of the West Saxon church. The churches and *monasteria* Aldhelm built and his attendance at the church's increasingly regular councils will be outlined as evidence for his deep involvement in the developing church.[22] I will also discuss his concern to advise laymen and religious, his connections to a good number of contemporary churchmen and newly established monastic communities, and the fact that he was chosen to act as a spokesman for West Saxon church reform. His involvement in reforming the British church, I suggest, involved him inextricably in West Saxon politics.[23] Indeed, in Chapter Two, I seek to situate Aldhelm in a religious group alongside two highly influential early Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics: Eorcenwald, bishop of London (675-c.693) and Wilfrid, bishop of York. I shall present evidence which suggests that this group was active mainly during the late 680s and early 690s, and in the expanding West Saxon kingdom and its church. Most

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[21] D. Probert, 'Church and Landscape: A Study in Social Transition in South-Western Britain AD c. 400-c. 1200', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 2002).

[22] See below, pp. 30-33, 35-43; Note that, throughout this thesis, I use *monasterium/monasteria* to describe monastic communities. These terms embrace varied forms of Anglo-Saxon religious life and do not have the modern Benedictine connotations associated with the noun 'monastery', see, S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters: A Review of the Terminology', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, London and New York, NY, 1992), pp. 212-25.

[23] See below, pp. 37-44.

significantly, I postulate that these churchmen may have collaborated to encourage high status adults to leave the secular life and marriage, in order to undertake pilgrimage to Rome or to enter the religious life. This has significant implications for assessing Aldhelm's double treatise, which, I will suggest, may have been written to support, legitimise, and even to promote adult renunciation.[24]

Building on the work of Scott Gwara, in Chapter Three, I consider the audience for Aldhelm's double treatise and the impact that they had on the tenor of his spiritual guidance. In the first part of this chapter, I depart from traditional thinking on Aldhelm's dedicatees, and, instead, follow Gwara's recent suggestion that the *Prosa de virginitate* was addressed to a constellation of double *monasteria*, rather than simply to Barking Abbey in Essex. However, I also seek to connect Aldhelm with a number of his dedicatees, therefore, raising the possibility that his work responded directly to their religious needs. Moreover, I propose that their *monasteria* may have been located in areas of West Saxon control and political interest; this suggests that the work cannot be divorced from this kingdom's expanionist politics.[25]

In the second half of this chapter I explore the composition of Aldhelm's audience. Following Michael Lapidge and Sinead O'Sullivan, I suggest that the presence of virgins alongside once-married celibates had a significant impact upon his spiritual advice. This is particularly true of those individuals who had left their spouses for the religious life, because biblical and patristic literature made limited provisions for these individuals.[26] However, I shall suggest that Aldhelm not merely responded to formerly married individuals in his audience, but also to the fact that rising numbers of mainly first to second generation religious recruits had very different experiences of renunciation. The full diversity of Aldhelm's audience has yet to be explored. It comprised male and female religious who were mainly, but not exclusively, adult aristocrats, who were probably of varied religious convictions. This diversity must be borne in mind, I suggest, when we consider the unifying intentions of Aldhelm's spiritual guidance. In the same vein, I consider contemporary difficulties in forsaking the secular life, and relate this to Aldhelm's

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[24] See below, pp. 45-71.

[25] See below, pp. 82-84; *AM*, pp. 47-55; I was advancing similar ideas as Gwara's thesis was published.

[26] *LH*, pp. 52-56; S. O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background to Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', *Milltown Studies*, 37 (1996), p. 60; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 282-84.

concern to provide mainly adult monastic recruits with new codes of behaviour that would distinguish them from the nominally Christian laity. In this chapter I highlight the didactic function of the double treatise.[27] I accept, but do not dwell upon, the increasingly orthodox view that the work was written to flatter (and to avoid offending) those formerly married individuals who comprised the majority of his audience.[28] I take a different approach, however, to Gwara, who argues that the *Prosa de virginitate* was a defensive missionary document that was written to inspire, offer solace to and vindicate, the actions of zealous contemporary religious, who practised their new religion stoically, despite wider contemporary attachment to paganism.[29] Instead, I deem the work to be part of an emerging church, which was shaped by the social and political interests of the early Anglo-Saxon elite. By arguing that Aldhelm provided religious with new and distinctive codes of behaviour, I also depart from Dempsey, who argues that Aldhelm responds to the violence inherent in seventh-century culture by focusing on physical virginity and its preservation.[30] Since I am concerned with what Aldhelm's texts might tell us about different contemporary religious, I also depart from feminist writers, who have interpreted the work with a view to women and their relative positions of influence within the early Anglo-Saxon church.[31]

Part One of this thesis therefore seeks to establish a number of contexts in which to interpret Aldhelm's double treatise. Part Two focuses mainly on Aldhelm's religious guidance and relates it to this background. However, Chapters Four to Six also offer a further approach to studying the work by examining its polemical function in a number of contemporary religious debates. To appreciate the possible polemical importance of monastic spiritual guides, it is helpful to consider briefly three of the patristic models used by Aldhelm, namely, Jerome's *Epistola ad Eustochium* (completed early spring 384 at the

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[27] See below, pp. 105-110.

[28] First suggested by *LH*, p. 56.

[29] *AM*, pp. 46, 54-62 esp.

[30] G. T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury's Social Theology: the Barbaric Heroic Ideal Christianised', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), 58-80.

[31] S. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 82-98 esp.; O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', pp. 57-59; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 275-79; C. A. Lees and G. R. Overing (eds), *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon Culture* (Philadelphia, PA, 2001), pp. 110-25, 148-49.

latest), and Cassian's *De institutis coenobiorum* (419-26) and *Conlationes* (426-28).[32] Aldhelm's double treatise is part of, and draws upon, a long literary tradition of ascetic guides, written for religious audiences, in which the writers developed, clarified and promoted their theological views. In the fourth century Jerome wrote a letter of ascetic advice to his female charge Eustochium. Whilst this provided her with guidance partly shaped to her and her family's religious concerns, at the same time, he used this text to promote his belief in the supremacy of physical virginity, in contemporary debates on the spiritual merits of virgin, celibate and married Christians.[33] Likewise, in the first half of the fifth century, we know that John Cassian entered debates on the meaning of asceticism when composing the *Institutiones coenobiorum* and *Conlationes* for Gallic monks and clerics. Whilst these tracts were written to provide a spiritual programme for developing cenobitic monasticism in southern Gaul, at the same time, his texts promoted his distinctive views on the controversial issues of grace, free will and sin.[34] These Christian writers therefore used their spiritual guidance to enter contemporary doctrinal and theological debates; this meant that their religious audiences were, in turn, at the forefront of these controversies.

Aldhelm's double treatise is not simply a monolith in a vast landscape of writings on sexual continence stretching back to the late antique period. Instead, like Jerome's and Cassian's writings, his spiritual guidance responds to a number of contemporary religious debates. This is because patristic theological disputes on renunciation were not merely transmitted to England, but Anglo-Saxon churchmen also revived these debates and coined original responses to them.[35] Indeed, whilst Anglo-Saxon historians have traditionally focused on the doctrinal polarity between Irish and Roman churchmen on the issues of tonsure and the dating of Easter, I explore some of the other ascetic discussions that troubled and shaped the rapidly emerging church. In early Anglo-Saxon England, as throughout the history of Christianity, churchman debated the essence of the Christian

[32] For Aldhelm's literary sources, including these writers, see below, pp. 115-16.

[33] Jerome, *Epistola ad Eustochium*, (ed.), I. Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, pars I, CSEL, LIV (Vienna, 1910), pp. 143-211; and for these debates, see below, pp. 127-29.

[34] Cassian, *Conlationes*, (ed.), M. Petschenig, CSEL, 13 (Vienna, 1886); Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, (ed.), M. Petschenig, CSEL, 17 (Vienna, 1888); M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 73-78.

[35] Dempsey suggests that Aldhelm's double treatise may engage in doctrinal debates with Irish scholars, see, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 58-80.

religion and how it should be manifested in their culture.[36] Points of dispute included what comprised appropriate ascetic practices; the conduct expected of virgin and married Christians, and their spiritual ranking within the church; the practice and validity of social and sexual renunciation; and, the relative merits of the double *monasterium* form vis-à-vis single-sex communities. Indeed, we should not underestimate the extent to which the early Anglo-Saxon church was immersed in theological discussion and debate, because even the major biblical scholar Bede was accused of heresy.[37]

Part Two of this thesis focuses mainly on Aldhelm's innovative and pragmatic representations of marriage, sexuality, gender, virginity and chastity. To determine his views on these issues, I undertake a close reading of his double treatise, and, by comparing his views with a number of his patristic literary models, consider how he transmitted their ideas, both generally and in specific passages. This is important, for most modern scholars have situated Aldhelm's guidance within general patristic writings on virginity, albeit recognising his sometimes-selected transmission and adaptation of these. Sinead O'Sullivan has contributed four important articles on this theme. These consider the patristic background to Aldhelm's thoughts on virginity, chastity and marriage, his indebtedness to Bishop Cyprian of Carthage's (248-58) ideas on adornment and his use of the psychomachian tradition for depicting spiritual battle.[38] More limited work has been given to systematically comparing selected passages in Aldhelm's texts with those of his patristic exemplars.[39] In this thesis I also consider how some of Aldhelm's opinions on

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[36] My thinking on ascetic debates has been influenced greatly by R. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 1-17 esp.; my thinking on renunciation and its discontents has been influenced greatly by P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, NY, 1988).

[37] Bede, *Opera de Temporibus*, (ed.), C. W. Jones (Cambridge, MA, 1943), pp. 313, 315.

[38] O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', pp. 57-59; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 271-95; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* and the Psychomachian Tradition', *Mediaevalia*, 20 (2001), 313-37; *Idem.*, 'The Image of Adornment in Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*: Cyprian and his Influence', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), 48-57.

[39] With discussion often confined to a few pages in their articles, see, for example, M. Lapidge, ' "Beowulf", Aldhelm, the "Liber Monstrorum" and Wessex', *Studi Medievali*, Third Series, 23 (1), (1982), pp. 158-62, rev. and repr. M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), pp. 279-80; Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 68-69.

sexual continence set him apart from other contemporary Anglo-Saxon writers: an area of research which deserves further exploration.[40]

Chapter Four explores how, in response to contemporary church rulings, Aldhelm's normative model of marriage encouraged licit unions for the procreation of children, yet at the same time as berated forced marriages, mixed pagan-Christian marriages, incest and adultery. However, he will also be shown to have emphasised the spiritual dangers of sexuality, foremost, with a view to his religious audience. His great concern that the religious should dress more austerely will also be discussed. These concerns will be related to his need to encourage contemporary religious to abandon sex and secular dress in the cloister. More widely, I suggest that he associated married individuals with external physical behaviour in order to distinguish them from virgin and chaste religious, who he instead attributes with inner spiritual identities.[41]

Chapter Five analyses Aldhelm's texts from the perspective of gender. Two approaches to gender will be adduced: first, that, in the theoretical passages of *De virginitate*, male and female religious are both presented as masculine combatants in an inward spiritual battle. Through this shared internal ascetic regime, Aldhelm will be shown to have encouraged unity between the sexes in the cloister, and promoted the spiritual merits of male and female religious living alongside each other in double *monasteria*. Second, Aldhelm's catalogue of 116 saintly and biblical *exempla* will be systematically considered. Even though Aldhelm's decision to catalogue male and female saints means that his double treatise provides ideal material to study from the perspective of gender, to date, scholars have focused on analysing his female saints or selected saintly *exempla*.[42] A comparative study of the *exempla* suggests that, in the external and tangible acts of miracle performance and ascetic virtue, his male saints are associated with heightened masculinity. In contrast, female saints are presented in characteristically feminine terms. This will be related to men's and women's different experiences of

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[40] Some work on this topic was, however, undertaken by M. Byrne, *The Tradition of the Nun in Medieval England* (Washington, DC, 1932), pp. 23-66.

[41] See below, pp. 134-43, 151, 192-228.

[42] For focus on the female saints, see, for example, O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 277-78; Lees and Overing (eds), *Double Agents*, pp. 118-22; for studies of selected saints, see, for example, Lapidge, ' "Beowulf", Aldhelm', pp. 279-80 and J. Stevenson, 'Constantine, St. Aldhelm and the Loathy Lady', in S. N. C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds.), *Constantine. History, Hagiography and Legend* (London, 1998), pp. 189-206.

religious renunciation. Since there was much continuity between women's secular and religious lives they did not need to act like men to be holy. Men, however, had more to forsake when leaving the secular life, and the religious life did not necessarily compensate for this. Aldhelm sought to reassure men than the cloister presented an alternative, but equally masculine lifestyle.[43] Here my work contributes to the current debate on whether saints transcended biological gender.[44]

The central place that the interior spiritual life occupies in Aldhelm's double treatise will finally be investigated in Chapter Six. His belief that not only virgins but also chaste religious must practise inner contemplative acts will be considered, together with the remarkable fact that, in departure from his patristic sources, both are assigned religious statuses based foremost on their inward spiritual attainments. A number of scholars, but O'Sullivan, in particular, have discussed Aldhelm's predominant concern with virgins' interior spiritual state.[45] However, I propose that his interest in the interior life extended to chaste individuals as well. Furthermore, to counter Dempsey's recent suggestion that Aldhelm focused mainly on physical virginity and its preservation, I explore his relative lack of concern with virgins' physical bodies and physical ascetic regimes.[46] Aldhelm's praise of virginity will also be acknowledged, and related to his need to both conform to orthodoxy, and to teach his audience the spiritual glories of virginity. However, at the same time, Aldhelm will be shown to have challenged virgins' spiritual supremacy by teaching them to dedicate their lives to achieving inner purity alongside the chaste. By focusing upon recent religious recruits' inward ascetic acts, I suggest that Aldhelm sought to transcend many social and spiritual differences between rising numbers of cloistered religious, most notably, between their different sexual statuses as virgins or post-married

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[43] See below, pp. 178-88 esp.

[44] This scholarly debate covers a wide historical period. An example is, however, found in the discussion regarding Ælfric's saints. See, P. E. Szarmach, 'Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia', in H. Damico and A. Hennessey Olsen, *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Bloomington, IN, 1990), pp. 146-57; G. Roy, 'A Virgin Acts Manfully: Ælfric's Life of St Eugenia and the Latin Versions', *Leeds Studies in English*, New Series, 23 (1992), 1-27; C. Cubitt, 'Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth-and Eleventh-Century England', *Gender and History*, 12 (1) (2000), 1-32.

[45] O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', pp. 62-63; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 290, 293; *Idem.*, 'Psychomachian Tradition', pp. 330-31; *Idem.*, 'Image of Adornment', pp.48-57 *passim*.

[46] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 66-80 esp.

celibates. It was also a means to distinguish them from secular society. Moreover, he sought to valorise the social and sexual renunciation which he and his ecclesiastical associates were involved in promoting.[47]

Despite increasing interest in Aldhelm's ecclesiastical activities, his true historical importance, and its implications for interpreting his double treatise, has yet to be realised. This thesis seeks to establish his position of influence within the mainstream of the early Anglo-Saxon church alongside Bede, Theodore and Wilfrid. By situating Aldhelm and his work within a West Saxon context it also seeks to strengthen our understanding of the religious vitality of this kingdom and its church. This is important, for, aside from the seminal studies on politics and religion in the south-west by Barbara Yorke and Patrick Sims-Williams, most scholarly attention is still directed towards the rich ecclesiastical histories of Northumbria and Canterbury in this period.[48]

This thesis also explores the didactic and polemical functions of Aldhelm's double treatise and examines its spiritual guidance with a view to its author, audience and the climate in which it was written. This is an area of Aldhelmian research where much remains to be done. This study also aims to establish the importance of Aldhelm's double treatise for studying early medieval attitudes to sexuality, renunciation and the ascetic life. Whilst these subjects have been extensively considered for the late antique period, the last two, in particular, have yet to receive sustained attention by early medievalists.[49] Anglo-Saxon scholars recently have devoted much valuable work to the institutional form of nunneries, *monasteria* and pastoral care.[50] The theological views these *monasteria*

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[47] See below, pp. 62-70 esp.

[48] Including, among other articles and monographs, P. Sims-Williams, 'Continental Influence at Bath Monastery in the Seventh Century', *ASE*, 4 (1975), 1-10; *Idem.*, 'Cuthswith, Seventh-Century Abbess of Inkberrow, near Worcester, and the Würzburg Manuscript of Jerome on Ecclesiastes', *ASE*, 5 (1976), 1-21; *Idem., Religion and Literature in Western England 600-800*, CSASE, 3 (Cambridge, 1990); B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London and New York, NY, 1990), pp. 128-56; *Idem., Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London and New York, NY, 1995); *Idem.*, 'The Bonifacian Mission and Female Religious in Wessex', *EME*, 7 (2) (1998), 147-72.

[49] See, for example, P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford, 1978); Brown, *Body and Society*; S. Elm, *"Virgins of God": The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1996); K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1996); C. Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000).

[50] See, for example, S. Foot, *Veiled Women I: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (2 vols, Aldershot, 2000), vol. I; *Idem., Veiled Women: Female Religious Communities in*

propagated, however, have been less explored. Likewise within Anglo-Saxon studies historians mainly have explored sexuality within the regulatory prescriptive literature, whereas literary scholars have concentrated on vernacular representations of sexual behaviour.[51] A revised interpretation of Aldhelm and his highly influential double treatise *De virginitate*, therefore, can provide new insights into early Anglo-Saxon religious history.

England, 871-1066 (2 vols, Aldershot, 2000), vol. II; B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London and New York, NY, 2003); and, for recent reviews of the literature debating pastoral care, see, E. Cambridge and D. Rollason, 'Debate: The Pastoral Organisation of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a Review of the "Minster Hypothesis" ', *EME*, 4 (1) (1995), 87-104; J. Blair, 'Debate: Ecclesiastical Organisation and Pastoral Care in Anglo-Saxon England', *EME*, 4 (2) (1995), 193-212.

[51] For the prescriptive literature, see, for example, A. J. Frantzen, 'Between the Lines: Queer Theory, the History of Homosexuality and the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials', *Journal of Medieval and Early Medieval Studies*, 26 (2) (1996), 255-96; *Idem.*, 'Where the Boys are: Children and Sex in the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials', in J. J. Cohen and B. Wheeler, *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York, NY, and London, 1997), pp. 43-66; for vernacular representations, see, for example, E. Whitehurst-Williams, 'What's So New about the Sexual Revolution? Some Comments on Anglo-Saxon Attitudes toward Sexuality in Women Based on Four Exeter Book Riddles', in Damico and Olsen, *New Readings on Women*, pp. 137-45; M. Clayton, 'Ælfric's Judith: Manipulative or Manipulated?', *ASE*, 23 (1994), 215-27; J. W. Tanke, '*Wonfeax Wale*: Ideology and Figuration in the Sexual Riddles of the Exeter Book', in B. J. Harwood and G. R. Overing (eds.), *Class and Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections* (Bloomington, IN, 1994), pp. 27-42; H. Magennis, ' "No Sex Please, We're Anglo-Saxons?" Attitudes to Sexuality in Old English Prose and Poetry', *Leeds Studies in English*, 26 (1995), 1-27; Cubitt, 'Virginity and Misogyny', pp. 1-32.

Part One: The Context

Chapter One

Aldhelm: An Active West Saxon Cleric

'Modern historians seem rather reluctant to give him a large share of the growth of Anglo-Saxon culture'.[1]

René Derolez made this observation of Aldhelm in 1959: it is still largely applicable today. The late 1970s to early 1980s marked a new era in Aldhelmian studies. Not only were his works published in translation, but scholars also offered revised interpretations of his life and writings. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren published Aldhelm's prose writings in translation in 1979, while Lapidge and James L. Rosier published his poetic works in translation six years later: both editions offered new insights into Aldhelm and his writings.[2] In the same period, Henry Mary-Harting directed historians' attention to Aldhelm's ecclesiastical and political importance in the early Anglo-Saxon church, while Michael Winterbottom and Michael Lapidge re-evaluated Aldhelm's contribution to Anglo-Latin.[3] However, in the past twenty-five years most scholars have focused on exploring Aldhelm's pioneering Anglo-Latin style and its considerable influence.[4] As a consequence, Aldhelm is now widely recognised as a significant literary figure. His historical significance, however, awaits further consideration: although many scholars acknowledge it, only Scott Gwara has looked at his

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[1] R. Derolez, 'Aldhelmus Glosatus III', *English Studies*, 40 (1959), p. 129.

[2] *LH; LR.*

[3] H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edn., Pennsylvania, PA, 1991), p. 196; M. Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's Prose Style and its Origins', *ASE*, 6 (1977), 39-76; M. Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse', *Comparative Literature*, 31 (1979), 209-31, repr. and rev. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), pp. 247-69; cf. some earlier scholars unfavourable views of Aldhelm's Latin style, see, for example, M. Roger, *L'Enseignement des Lettres Classiques d'Ausone à Alcuin* (Paris, 1905), p. 294 esp.

[4] On his Anglo-Latin style, see, for example, M. Lapidge, 'Anglo-Latin Literature', in S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder (eds.), *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York, NY, and London, 1986), pp. 5-37, rev. and repr. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899*, at pp. 7-10; A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994); for work undertaken on its influence, see below, pp. 85-87 esp.

ecclesiastical career in any depth, and then chiefly to investigate Aldhelm's role as a missionary, for which there is little evidence.[5]

In this chapter I seek to establish Aldhelm's importance as a monastic founder and advisor, and as a passionate Romanist and reformer, in the mould of his more celebrated contemporaries, Benedict Biscop (d. 689) and Wilfrid of York (d. 709).[6] Whilst I outline Aldhelm's importance as a scholar and teacher, I concentrate on his activities as an active priest, abbot and bishop in the monastic boom of the late seventh century. I also explore his role as a West Saxon ecclesiastical politician, in a period when this kingdom and its church were expanding rapidly. Only by reconstructing Aldhelm's career, can we understand the motivations and influences behind his double treatise *De virginitate*.

1. 1 The Sources for Aldhelm's Life

Traditionally, scholars have relied upon the post-conquest sources for our subject.[7] Most of the sources for Aldhelm's life were written at his own abbey of Malmesbury in Wiltshire, although an Old English poem on him is preserved in a tenth- to-eleventh century manuscript of the *Prosa de virginitate*.[8] Our two most substantial accounts of Aldhelm's career are found in the monk Faricius's (d. 1117) *vita* of our subject, written c. 1078, and in William of Malmesbury's (c. 1090-c.1143) lengthier and more reliable *vita* of Aldhelm, which comprises book five of his *Gesta pontificum*, written in 1125.[9] Thomas, monk of Malmesbury, also wrote a short account of Aldhelm in his *Eulogium historiarum*

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[5] *AM*, pp. 23-46; Duncan Probert also explores Aldhelm's activities in Devon and Cornwall in his Ph.D. thesis. See, D. Probert, 'Church and Landscape: A Study in Social Transition in South-Western Britain AD c. 400-c. 1200', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 2002).

[6] *CEW*, p. 105; *AM*, p. 40.

[7] See, for example, J. Fowler, *St Aldhelm* (Sherborne, 1947); J. Godfrey, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 176, 178, 201-205.

[8] For a recent edition of the poem, see, Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 282-83, for the MSS (326 CCCC), see, H. Gneuss, *A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 241 (Temple, Arizona, 2001), pp. 36-37; on the sources for Aldhelm's life, see, A. S. Cook, 'Sources of the Biography of Aldhelm', *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 28 (1927), 273-93; *AM*, pp. 20-22.

[9] Faricius, *Vita S Aldhelmi*, (ed.), J. A. Giles, *Vita Quorundam Anglo-Saxonum* (London, 1854), pp. 119-56, repr. PL, 89 (Paris, 1863), cols. 63-84, the *vita* arguably dates to c. 1078, when Faricius was present at Aldhelm's translation and reburial, *AM*, p. 19 n 1 cf. *LH*, p. 181 n 2.

(1361).[10] These texts provide important biographical evidence for Aldhelm's life, with William, in particular, making use of now-lost material on him.[11] However, all of the post-conquest sources must be treated with caution, because they draw upon unverifiable oral traditions and legendary material.[12] It is also likely that the Malmesbury texts exaggerate their monastic founder and patron's achievements, in view of the post-conquest restoration of his cult.[13] Furthermore, Faricius is known to have been especially inaccurate, and Thomas offers only a few lines on the origins of Malmesbury and Aldhelm's education: both of which are, as we shall see, contentious subjects.[14]

The early sources for Aldhelm's life provide an alternative body of evidence. This seventh- to eighth-century material has been less explored by Aldhelmian scholars and has the advantage of being more contemporary to the events it describes, even though it survives in later manuscript copies. This chapter will draw mainly upon this earlier evidence, yet some discussion of William of Malmesbury's *vita* will be helpful, and inevitable, given that he preserved letters and charters relating to Aldhelm, and, moreover, has shaped modern historiography of him. The earlier sources include, first, Aldhelm's fairly sizeable corpus of extant writings, which are written in Anglo-Latin prose and verse[15] (particularly important here are the thirteen surviving letters from Aldhelm's

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[10] For Thomas' text and a translation, see, Cook, 'Sources of the Biography', pp. 286-90; for even later accounts of Aldhelm, see, *Ibid.*, p. 290.

[11] D. Whitelock, 'William of Malmesbury on the Works of King Alfred', in D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (eds.), *Medieval Literature and Civilisation. Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway* (London, 1969), pp. 90-91 esp., see also, *LH*, p. 5; *LR*, p. 5.

[12] See, for example, M. Lapidge, 'The Medieval Hagiography of St Ecgwine', *Vale of Evesham Historical Society Research Papers*, 6 (1977), pp. 83-84.

[13] William also wrote under the threat of Roger, Bishop of Salisbury's annexation of Malmesbury Abbey in c. 1125, see, N. Berry, 'St Aldhelm, William of Malmesbury and the Liberty of Malmesbury Abbey', *Reading Medieval Studies*, XVI (1990), 15-38.

[14] Cook, 'Sources of the Biography', pp. 186-290; *LH*, p. 5.

[15] His writings comprise, the *opus geminatum De virginitate*; the *Carmen ecclesiastica*, which are five *tituli*, probably composed to dedicate churches or altars; the *Epistola ad Acircium*, a composite work dedicated to King Aldfrith of Northumbria which includes a biblical exposition on the number 7, a treatise on Latin metre and 100 *Enigmata*; the *Carmen rhythmicum*, a poem on a storm; and, thirteen surviving letters; for a brief discussion of these works, including the reasons why Lapidge and Herren reintroduced the *Carmen rhythmicum* into Aldhelm's corpus of writings, see, *LH*, pp. 10-18; note that scholars try to attribute other works to Aldhelm, see, *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19 and below, p. 23 n 50.

correspondence);[16] second, a brief entry to Aldhelm in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; third, a fairly short account of him in Bede's (c. 673-735) *Historia ecclesiastica*; and fourth, extant charters, an important source for West Saxon and Aldhelmian history, whose potential is beginning to be realised.[17] In addition to these textual sources is, fifth, the growing body of archaeological evidence for the churches that Aldhelm may have built and for the environs in which he lived.

1.2 Periodisation

Many aspects of Aldhelm's life elude us. Its largely speculative and relative chronology is a case in point. The date of Aldhelm's birth is, for example, unknown. The years 639-40 have been deemed possible, because William of Malmesbury suggested that he was not less than 70 when he died, yet he also admits that there is no firm evidence for his age.[18] However, we should not rule out the possibility of a birth date nearer to 650, which as we will see, would make him an abbot in his mid-late 20s, like his contemporaries Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid.[19] Different recensions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle record Aldhelm's death in either 708 or 709.[20] However, the remarks of Bede put it in 709 or 710, for he tells us that Aldhelm was bishop for four years, and we know

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[16] Note that, although the authenticity of Ehwald's Epistola XIII (*Epistola ad Winbertum*, pp. 502-503) has been doubted (*LH*, p. 151), nonetheless, Heather Edwards has argued convincingly that Aldhelm wrote it, H. Edwards, 'Two Documents from Aldhelm's Malmesbury', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 59 (139) (1986), pp. 5-6, and *CEW*, pp. 96-97.

[17] See, for example, the work of Heather Edwards, *CEW*, pp. 80-119, 126-27 esp. cf. A. F.Leach, *The Schools of Medieval England* (London, 1915), pp. 38-39; *LH*, pp. 5-6, 18, 173, 183 n 25.

[18] *GP*, V. 231, p. 385; *LH*, p. 6.

[19] Cf. *LH*, p. 6; Bede, *Historia abbatum*, (ed.), *VBOH*, caps. I-II, pp. 364-66; Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), cap. VIII, pp. 16-17.

[20] MSS A, D and F put his death in 709, MSS B and C in 708, see, respectively, *MS A*, (ed.), J. Bately, ASCCE, 3 (Cambridge, 1986), p. 33; *MS D*, (ed.), G. P. Cubbin, ASCCE, 6 (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 9-10; *MS F*, (ed.), P. S. Baker, ASCCE, 8 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 45; *MS B*, (ed.), S. Taylor, ASCCE, 4 (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 23-24; *MS C*, (ed.), K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, ASCCE, 5 (Cambridge, 2001), p. 43; for further discussion of his death-date, see, *LH*, pp. 10, 183 n 24, 184 n 31.

that he was elevated to the episcopate in either 705 or 706.[21]   Within this broad chronological framework, the date at which he became abbot is also disputed. William of Malmesbury draws upon an extant charter, which has some basis in authenticity, to claim that he became abbot in 675.[22]   Lapidge and Herren instead place the beginning of his abbacy to between 673 x 674, but this was based on their mistaken belief that a letter he wrote whilst he was abbot arose from the council of Hertford, which was convened in 672.[23]   More recently Heather Edwards' study of Malmesbury charters suggests 681 as the *terminus ante quem*.[24]   Therefore, a date of between 675 x 681 seems likely for his accession to the abbacy.

We know that Aldhelm was of Saxon birth,[25] but his parentage and early life, unfortunately, are ambiguous. William of Malmesbury tells us that Aldhelm was a nobleman. With more reservation, he outlines that Aldhelm was by tradition the son of one Kenten, who may have been either an otherwise unknown brother or cousin of the West Saxon King Ine (688-726).[26]   Lapidge has postulated that later Anglo-Saxons may have mistaken Kenten for the West Saxon King Centwine (c.676-c.685), but this is debatable, because Aldhelm wrote a poem for Centwine's daughter without acknowledging their kinship.[27]   That Aldhelm was of royal status does remain a possibility, however, for like contemporary royal kin, he appears to have founded important *monasteria* and had many royal connections.

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[21] *H. E.*, V. 18, pp. 512-15; see below, p. 25.

[22] *GP*, V. 199, pp. 347-49; the charter is S1245, for a discussion of its status, see, Kelly, 'S1245', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201244-1409.html>.

[23] *LH*, pp. 9, 141-42.

[24] *CEW*, pp. 90-92, 126, a hypothesis based on S71, which is thought to be broadly trustworthy, see, Kelly, 'S71', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/eSawyer.99/S%2067-81.html>.

[25] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Cellanum*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 499, l. 6.

[26] *GP*, V. 188, p. 332, V. 223, p. 375.

[27] *LH*, p. 181 n 6; *LR*, pp. 6, 40-41, 222 n 10, 233 n 10, 234 n 12; cf. Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* III, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 14-18; also see Gwara's discussion of Aldhelm's possible royal status, *AM*, p. 24.

1. 3 Education and Scholarly Activities

Aldhelm's education is one of the most studied areas of his life, yet aspects of it still remain obscure. After three decades of discussion Aldhelm is now thought to have received an early Irish education. Until the late 1970s scholars accepted later medieval traditions that Aldhelm was educated at the site of Malmesbury Abbey by the Irish eremite Maildub.[28] They found evidence for this Irish training in Aldhelm's Latin, which, they proposed, was indebted to Hiberno-Latin models.[29] However, revisionist work on Aldhelm's Latin prose style challenged the Irish basis of his training, by proposing that it had developed from Gaulish and Italian literary models instead.[30] Recently, Orchard has swung the pendulum back in favour of an early Irish education. As well as showing that Hiberno-Latin texts did provide sources and models for Aldhelm's verse, Orchard has offered more decisive evidence, in a letter from an unnamed individual to Aldhelm, which mentions his nourishment *a quodam sancto viro de nostro genere*.[31] This individual is described as *Scottus ignoti nominis* in the sole manuscript to preserve the letter: a mid-ninth century manuscript of high authority.[32] We should, however, remain sceptical about whether it was Maildub who taught Aldhelm;[33] although his name is preserved in the

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[28] This tradition is preserved in the writings of Faricius, William of Malmesbury, Thomas, monk of Malmesbury, the extant charter S1245 and Pope Sergius I's (687-701) bull to Aldhelm; For earlier scholars' total acceptance of it, see, for example, Roger, *L'Enseignement des Lettres Classiques*, pp. 290-91 and M. R. James, *Two Ancient English Scholars: St Aldhelm and William of Malmesbury* (Glasgow, 1931), p. 9.

[29] P. Grosjean, 'Confusa Caligo. Remarques sur les *Hisperica Famina*', *Celtica*, 3 (1956), pp. 64-67; M. Herren, 'Some Conjectures on the Origin and Tradition of the Hisperic Poem *Rubisca*', *Ériu*, 25 (1974), p. 72; M. Herren, *Hisperica Famina 1* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 36, 43.

[30] Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's Prose Style', pp. 39-76; J. Marenbon, 'Les Sources du Vocabulaire d'Aldhelm', *Bulletin du Cange*, 41 (1979), 75-90; *LH*, pp. 6-7, p. 182 nn 11, 13; *LR*, pp. 6-7.

[31] *Epistola Scotti cuiusdam*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 494, l. 15, (trans.), *LH*, p. 164 'by a certain holy man of our race'.

[32] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 4-5, 29-60 esp., the manuscript is Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 751; Following Orchard's study, Aldhelm's early Irish training now is accepted more widely, see, for example, M. Herren, 'Review: A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994)', *Peritia*, (1997), p. 404; G. T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Irish', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 100 (1999), pp. 5-10, cf. *AM*, pp. 32-33; Note that Ehwald's Latin edition of the letter includes the words *Scottus ignoti nominis* (*AO*, p. 494), but they were deemed to be editorial by *LH*, even though on balance, they favoured an Irish authorship for the letter, *LH*, pp. 146-47.

[33] Cf. Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 5.

place-name of Malmesbury, nonetheless, we do not know whether he was a historical figure or not. It is possible, therefore, that the tradition that he taught Aldhelm was based on surmise or misinformation.[34] Thus whilst scholars rightly remain reluctant to ignore Maildub's existence at Malmesbury altogether, even so, it is possible that Aldhelm received his early training elsewhere - certainly he had links with Irish scholars during his lifetime.[35]

To this end, it is worth mentioning Aldhelm's lengthy composite work to King Aldfrith of Northumbria (685-705), for this reminds us to keep a healthy scepticism about his early education (and indeed career). In the letter Aldhelm addresses the king using the language of spiritual kinship. Lynch has suggested that Aldhelm may have stood as Aldfrith's sacramental sponsor during his post-baptismal confirmation ceremony.[36] Aldhelm's sponsorship of Aldfrith is difficult to date, but it may have taken place in the mid-660s.[37] If so, it is always possible that Aldhelm and Aldfrith met during their early

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[34] For his name being preserved in the place-name 'Malmesbury', see, J. E. Gover, A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Wiltshire*, English Place-Name Society, 16 (Cambridge, 1939), pp. 47-48; reference to Maildub indeed appears to be made as early as the eighth century, see, *H. E*, V. 18, p. 514, and is found in both the Old English and Latin versions of Sergius I's papal bull to Malmesbury, C. Rauer, 'Pope Sergius I's Privilege for Malmesbury', Forthcoming, cf. the scepticism of *LH*, pp. 181-82 nn 8-9.

[35] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Ehfridum*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 486-94; *Epistola Scotti cuiusdam*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 494; *Epistola Cellani*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 498-99; Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Cellanum*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 499.

[36] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Acircium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 61, ll. 2-3, 7, 9, p. 62, ll, 3-4; J. H. Lynch, *Christianizing Kinship. Ritual Sponsorship in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), pp. 112-16; cf. Aldhelm being his baptismal sponsor, *AO*, p. 61 n 1, *LH*, pp. 12, 32.

[37] Aldhelm describes this event taking place in *tempore pubertatis nostrae* and *ante bis bina lustrorum volumina*, Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Acircium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 62, l.1 and p. 61, ll. 8-9, (trans.), *LH*, p. 34 'in the era of our young manhood; twice two revolutions of the lustra ago'. Since a *lustrum* is a period of five years, seemingly it occurred twenty years previous. Putting the sponsorship around its earliest possible date of 665 (and the letter in 685 therefore), twenty years before Aldfrith assumed the throne, would fit with Aldhelm's reference to the event occurring in their *pubertas*. Aldhelm uses the noun *pubertas* a number of times in his writings, in three instances linking it to a definite age, twice with reference to 15 year olds, and once with reference to an 11 year old being near the age of *pubertas*, see, *AO*, p. 682. If Aldfrith was born c. 650, which is possible (see, D. P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), p. 143), this would make him around aged 15 at his confirmation. Aldhelm would also have been 15 if he was born in c. 650 (see above, p. 18). However, *pubertas* would still suit Aldhelm if he was born c. 640, for it was a period that could span into one's mid-30s (*LH*, p. 12). It is possible that Aldfrith required confirmation according to the Roman liturgy after the Synod of Whitby, in c. 665, because he was probably initially baptised in a Celtic manner and confirmation did not feature in the Irish liturgy. The latest possible date for the sponsorship would be 695, twenty years before Aldfrith's death (cf. *LH*, p. 12), yet by this stage both men would have been either at the outer limit, or past their *pubertas*.

education.[38] Aldfrith, who was the bastard son of King Oswiu (d. 670) and an Irish concubine, was living in exile in Iona the year before he assumed the Northumbrian throne. He was known also as Adomnán's student in Ireland.[39] However, Bede refers to Aldfrith being educated *in insulis Scottorum* and *in regionibus Scottorum*,[40] suggesting that he studied in more than one place outside of Ireland. It may be significant that Bede introduces Aldhelm and Aldfrith in similar terms.[41] He describes Aldfrith as *vir in scripturis doctissimus* and says of Aldhelm that, *vir undecumque doctissimus* and *vir et ipse in scripturis sanctis multum eruditus*.[42]

Thankfully, we have more reliable evidence for Aldhelm's advanced education, for his extant letters show that he was amongst the first generation of students at the intellectually vibrant and pioneering Canterbury School, founded by Archbishop Theodore (602-90) and Hadrian (d. 709/10), abbot of SS. Peter and Paul in Canterbury.[43] Aldhelm greatly valued the intensive education he received at the school, and, indeed, extolled its superiority over and above that offered by contemporary Irish scholars.[44] He is thought to have studied at Canterbury during his adulthood, and, more narrowly, at sometime between the school's foundation in c. 670 and the beginning of his abbacy, between 675 x 681.[45] Working from this assumption, Howlett has offered a numerical analysis of the

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[38] Note also that Aldfrith had connections with King Cenwealh of the Gewisse (643-72), see, B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), p. 233 n 6.

[39] Anon., *Vita S Cuthberti*, (ed.), B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), III, 6, pp. 104-105; *VBOH*, Notes, p. 263.

[40] Bede, *Vita S Cuthberti*, (ed.), Colgrave, *Two Lives*, cap. XXIV, pp. 236, 238-39 'on the islands of the Irish', 'in the regions of the Irish'.

[41] *VBOH*, Notes p. 312 and *AO*, p. 61 n 1.

[42] *H. E.*, IV, 26, pp. 430-31 'a man most learned in the Scriptures'; *Ibid.*, V. 18, pp. 514-15 'he was a man of wide learning; he also was a man most learned in the Scriptures'.

[43] Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry', p. 249.

[44] S. J. Gwara, 'Aldhelm's Ps and Qs in the *Epistola ad Ehfridum*', *Notes and Queries*, 36 (3) (1989), 290-93; D. R. Howlett, 'Aldhelm and Irish Learning', *Bulletin du Cange*, 52 (1994), 37-75.

[45] *LH*, pp. 8, 137-39; *LR*, p. 7; *AM*, pp. 38-39; Dempsey, 'Aldhelm and the Irish', pp. 10-11; for his attendance at the school for more years, see, M. Lapidge, 'Aldhelm', in M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 25; note also, that his learning was interrupted by illness; our sources for Aldhelm studying at Canterbury are, Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Hadrianum*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 478-79 and Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Leutherium*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 475-78; William of Malmesbury wrongly thought that

number of lines and words Aldhelm uses in a letter written whilst at the school and suggests that he cleverly infixes the date of its composition to 672.[46] However, given scholarly misgivings about Howlett's analytical method,[47] and our lack of evidence for Aldhelm's whereabouts in the 670s, it is best to keep an open mind about when he was at Canterbury during this decade.[48] Since Aldhelm's correspondent Heahfrith received six years of advanced training (albeit in Ireland), his advanced education may well have lasted several years.[49] It is probable, however, that this training ended no later that c. 680, after which his career seems to have been too busy to have accommodated intensive study.

The Canterbury School produced many accomplished writers amongst its teachers and students in the late seventh century. Nonetheless, Aldhelm is the only named student for whom writings survive and this provides one reason for why his scholarly accomplishments have been illuminated so fully.[50] Certainly, his academic achievements deserve recognition. Studies by Winterbottom and Lapidge have shown that he devised the highly popular ornamented Latin style that he used in the *Prosa de virginitate*,[51] and, in

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Aldhelm studied at Canterbury as a child, see, A. S. Cook, 'Aldhelm's "Rude Infancy"', *Philological Quarterly*, VII (2) (1928), 115-19.

[46] D. R. Howlett, 'A Possible Date for Aldhelm's "Letter to Heahfrith" ', *Bulletin du Cange*, 54 (1996), 99-103.

[47] A. B. E. Hood, 'Review Article: Lighten our Darkness – Biblical Style in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland', *EME*, 8 (2) (1999), 287-96 esp. and D. Howlett, 'A Response to "Lighten our Darkness" ', *EME*, 9 (1) (2000), 85-92; also see Gwara's rejection of Howlett's thesis, *AM*, p. 21 n 7.

[48] *AM*, p. 27.

[49] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Ehfridum*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 489, ll. 9-10.

[50] For glossographical activity at the school in this period, see, J. D. Pheifer, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Glossaries and the School of Canterbury', *ASE*, 16 (1987), 17-44; For biblical commentaries written at the school, see, B. Bischoff, 'Wendepunkte in der Geschichte de Lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter', *Sacris Erudiri*, 6 (1954), 189-279, repr. *Mittelalterliche Studien*, (3 vols, Stuttgart, 1966-81), vol. 1, pp. 205-73; M. Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', *ASE*, 15 (1986), 45-72, rev. and repr. *Idem., Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899*, pp. 141-68; B. Bischoff and M. Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, CSASE, 10 (Cambridge, 1994); M. Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore*, CSASE, 11 (Cambridge, 1995); J. Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the School of Archbishop Theodore*, CSASE, 14 (Cambridge, 1995); for the suggestion that Aldhelm wrote exegesis based on his Canterbury training, see, G. T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Paris Psalter: A Note on the Survival of Antiochene Exegesis', *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, 38 (2) (1987), 368-86.

[51] For Aldhelm's hermeneutic Latin, see, for example, Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's Prose Style', and M. Lapidge, 'The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature', *ASE*, 4 (1975), 67-

its verse counterpart, pioneered a way of composing quantitative Latin verse by using native Anglo-Saxon, rather than classical Latin poetic techniques.[52] Extant letters also suggest that he was a respected teacher with widespread influence, because a number of individuals wrote to him asking for books, tuition and literary advice.[53] Indeed, he is thought to have founded an important school at Malmesbury[54] and he wrote the manuals *De metris* and *De pedum regulis,* as well as his *Engimata,* to introduce students to the techniques of Latin metrics.[55]

1.4 Aldhelm the Cleric

Even though Aldhelm was a well-educated and talented scholar, it is important that we do not place him in an ivory tower, removed from the ecclesiastical world of which he was a part. In his *Historia ecclesiastica,* Bede portrays Aldhelm in similar terms to another Canterbury alumnus, Bishop Oftfor of the Hwicce, that is, as a well-educated churchman who presided over his diocese energetically.[56] Likewise, their teacher, Archbishop Theodore, is remembered as much for his considerable learnedness as he is for reforming the ecclesiastical infrastructure of the early Anglo-Saxon church.

Aldhelm was one of a number of Canterbury students to become bishop and his advanced education at this school will have given him the requisite skills needed for ecclesiastical governance. Aldhelm became bishop of the western sector of the West Saxon see, when it was divided into two dioceses between 705 and 706: the date of the

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111, rev. and repr. M. Lapidge (ed.), *Anglo-Latin Literature 900-1066* (London, 1993), pp. 105-49, *passim.*

[52] Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry', pp. 247-69.

[53] *Epistola Scotti cuiusdam,* (ed.), *AO,* p. 494; Æthilwaldi, *Epistola ad Aldhelmum,* (ed.), *AO,* pp. 495-97; *GP,* V. 191, pp. 336-37.

[54] See, for example, J. D. Pheifer, *Old English Glosses in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary* (Oxford, 1974), p. lvii; S. Gwara, 'Glosses to Aldhelm's "Prosa de virginitate" and Glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon Golden Age, *ca.* 670-800', *Studi Medievali,* Third Series, 38 (2) (1997), pp. 563, 625-26, 643-45.

[55] *LH,* pp. 12-13; Aldhelm, *De metris et enigmatibus ac pedum regulis,* (ed.), *AO,* pp. 59-204.

[56] *H. E.,* IV. 23, pp. 408-11, V. 18, pp. 514-15.

division is difficult, since it is based on Bede's ambiguous calculation of the previous bishop, Hæddi's death (676-705/6).[57] Aldhelm was elevated to the episcopate late in life, but the reasons for this are probably circumstantial. When Hæddi was made bishop of Winchester in the mid-670s Aldhelm is likely to have been attending the Canterbury School and thus was unavailable for the position. He had to wait a long time for the West Saxon see to become vacant, since, contrary to the usual practice of early Anglo-Saxon episcopal succession, Hæddi apparently did not resign his episcopal seat in old age in order to live a contemplative existence.[58] Instead, he remained in office for some thirty years until his death. The reason why the West Saxon see was not divided any earlier, despite Archbishop Berhtwald of Canterbury's (693-731) demands that it should be, has been attributed to Hæddi's opposition. His refusal to ordain another bishop had apparently been so controversial that the West Saxon kingdom had been temporarily excommunicated.[59] Although we might ponder why Aldhelm did not become a bishop elsewhere in England, his monasteries were founded in the West Saxon kingdom and as we shall see, he appears to have had considerable ecclesiastical authority before he became bishop. By 704, the terms by which Aldhelm was referred to in a broadly trustworthy charter of King Ine (*presul* and *servus servorum dei*) has led Edwards to conclude that he was a religious leader by this date.[60] In the late seventh century he was, as we shall see, particularly active in the areas that would become his diocese (which included, on paper at least, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall), suggesting that he may have acted as

[57] For different opinions on this matter, see, *LH*, p. 10; *LR*, p. 5; C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c. 650-c.850* (London, 1995), p. 260 n 45; cf. *CEW*, pp. 109-111, 232, Edwards, 'Two Documents', pp. 4-5.

[58] *H. E.*, V. 18, pp. 512-15, for early Anglo-Saxon episcopal succession, see, C. Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops": Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600-c.800 ', *Northern History*, XXV (1989), pp. 24-30.

[59] P. Chaplais, 'The Letter from Bishop Wealdhere of London to Archbishop Brihtwold of Canterbury: The Earliest Original "Letter Close" Extant in the West', in M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (eds.), *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries. Essays Presented to N. R. Ker* (London, 1978), p. 5; *CEW*, p. 114.

[60] Edwards, 'Two Documents', pp. 5-6; *CEW*, pp. 110-11; the charter is S245, there is some debate over its authenticity, although the witness list has been deemed genuine, see, Kelly, 'S245', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20238-69.html>.
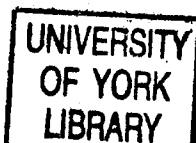
Hæddi's episcopal surrogate before his position was formalised.[61] Indeed, Cubitt's study of early Anglo-Saxon episcopal succession has shown that 'the man chosen for the succession was often one who was closely associated with the present or recently deceased bishop, and who had frequently borne some of his administrative duties.'[62]

Aldhelm certainly worked alongside Hæddi for at least twenty-five years before succeeding him in the episcopate. In c. 681 and 682 both men attested two different charters to Abbot Hæmgils of Glastonbury. Although these are reworked and interpolated, they appear to have a broadly trustworthy basis.[63] It is possible, however, that Aldhelm was well known to Hæddi even before he went to Canterbury to study. Whilst he was a student at the school, Aldhelm wrote a letter to an unnamed bishop, apologising that the pressures of studying had prevented him from leaving at Christmas-time. In it, he refers to himself as *supplex almitatis vestrae bernaculus*.[64] The recipient of this letter has been subject to some discussion. Hahn postulated that it was addressed to Bishop Wilfrid.[65] However, he was presiding over the see of York in this period (or in Rome appealing for his loss of it) and we would expect Aldhelm to be writing to a bishop in the West Saxon Kingdom, where his career chiefly was played out.[66] A number of scholars have suggested that the letter was addressed to Leutherius, primarily, because they believe him to have been a West Saxon bishop during Aldhelm's time at Canterbury.[67] However, Hæddi's episcopate may also coincide with his schooling, for he probably became assistant bishop to Leutherius (fl. 670-76) in the mid-670s.[68] Moreover, William of Malmesbury, who

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[61] See below, pp. 34-35, 37-44; for the territorial composition of the see, see, F. P. Magoun, 'Aldhelm's Diocese of Sherborne *Bewestan Wuda*', *Harvard Theological Review*, 32 (1939), 103-14.

[62] Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops" ', p. 28.

[63] Kelly, 'S236' and 'S237', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/eSawyer.99/S%20227-37.html >.

[64] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Leutherium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 475, l. 3 (trans.), *LH*, 'humble servant of your Holiness'.

[65] H. Hahn, *Bonifaz und Lul* (Leipzig, 1883), p. 13.

[66] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, caps. XI-XXXII, pp. 22-67.

[67] See, for example, *AO*, p. 475 n 1; *LH*, pp. 137-38.

[68] H. P. R. Finberg, *The Early Charters of the West Midlands* (Leicester, 1961), p. 173; *CEW*, p. 222 .

preserves the letter in his *Gesta pontificum*, and who presumably had seen the letter's inscription (even though he does not transcribe it), claims that Hæddi was its recipient.[69]

Aldhelm's letter deserves further study, for it may shed light on his religious status prior to attending the Canterbury school. William of Malmesbury proposed that Aldhelm became a monk at Malmesbury during boyhood: a suggestion that Aldhelmian scholars traditionally accepted.[70] However, this is not recorded in earlier traditions and we would expect William to claim him as an oblate, given that he was writing in the post-Benedictine reform era. Indeed, it appears just as likely that Aldhelm entered the religious life in his late teens or early twenties, like his contemporaries Wilfrid, Benedict Biscop, Cuthbert (d. 687) and Guthlac (c. 674-714). Furthermore, it is possible that, like Guthlac, he was ordained in clerical, but not necessarily monastic orders.[71] In the letter, Aldhelm reveals that he had hoped to spend time in the bishop's company (*vestrae caritatis affabili praesentia frui*), after he had spent Christmas with 'the brethren' (*fratres*).[72] He ends the letter by asking the bishop to greet his *sodales*, that is, individuals of intimate connection who are part of the same grouping. He therefore requests him to: *Salutate in Christo omnem sodalium meorum catervam a minimo usque ad maximum*.[73] It has been suggested that the *fratres* - that is male religious living in *monasteria* - refer to the monks of Malmesbury and that Aldhelm wants the bishop to greet them, his *sodales*, on his behalf.[74] However, whilst bishops oversaw monastic communities and were, therefore, in a position to communicate with them, surely Aldhelm would have sent his own letter to the monks he

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[69] *GP*, V. 195, p. 341.

[70] *GP*, V. 189, p. 333; see, for example, its acceptance by L. Bönhoff, *Aldhelm von Malmesbury: Ein Beitrag zur Angelsächsischen Kirchengeschichte* (Dresden, 1894), pp. 31-49.

[71] Catherine Cubitt has undertaken much recent research on the distinction between the monastic and clerical statuses, see, C. Cubitt, 'Images of St. Peter: The Clergy and the Religious Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in P. Cavill (ed.), *The Christian Tradition* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 46-48 esp.; C. Cubitt, 'The Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Historical Research*, Forthcoming.

[72] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Leutherium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 476, ll. 3-4, (trans.), *LH*, p. 152, 'to enjoy the affable presence of your Goodness'.

[73] *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 478, ll. 5-6, (trans.), *LH*, p. 153, 'Greet in Christ the entire throng of my companions from the youngest to the eldest'.

[74] Bönhoff, *Aldhelm von Malmesbury*, p. 99; *LH*, 137; throughout his writings Aldhelm uses *frater* to refer to biological brothers or monks, see, *AO*, p. 615; Likewise, Bede generally uses *frater* with reference to men in *monasteria*, Cubitt, 'Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England'.

had planned to spend Christmas with, in order to notify them of his absence.[75] This being the case, it is possible that Aldhelm wants the bishop to address his own clerical *familia*, that is his episcopal retinue, on his behalf. This would place Aldhelm in close connection with the bishop's *familia* (which was perhaps sited at Winchester) and even raises the possibility that he was a cleric working under the bishop's authority. Indeed, although Aldhelm addresses the bishop formally (he hopes to spend time in *vestra ...praesentia*), he clearly regards him as a mentor, referring to him as *post Deum peculiari patrono*.[76] Moreover, if Aldhelm was a cleric, he would have needed his bishop's permission in order to travel from Canterbury, explaining why he would need to account for his activities in a letter.[77] The bishop may have also been involved in sending him to Canterbury.[78] Yet where was Aldhelm sent from?

The place of priests in the parochial administration of early Anglo-Saxon England has been hotly disputed for over a decade. Some scholars argue that pastoral care was mainly carried out by monks and clergy, of largely undifferentiated status, who were responsible for ministering to the laity in large territorial *parochiae* that were dependent on their *monasteria*. Other scholars challenge this 'minster' hypothesis and argue that there was an independent and co-existing territorial organisation of clergymen who had different statuses to those living in monastic orders. The degree of interrelation between these systems, and their institutional forms, continues to be debated, although there is a distinct possibility that they operated concurrently.[79] With this in mind, it is possible that Aldhelm was a priest living in a *monasterium* before attending Canterbury, but subject, foremost, to the diocesan bishop and in regular contact with his *familia*.[80] Hence, he expected to see both his monastic community and the bishop separately at Christmas.

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[75] The monks were not necessarily those at Malmesbury.

[76] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Leutherium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 475, l. 2, (trans.), *LH*, 'After God, my special patron'.

[77] In contrast, monks needed letters from their abbots, see, *H. E.*, IV. 5, no. 4, pp. 350-51.

[78] Aldhelm is especially keen to display his learning in the letter.

[79] For recent summaries of the debate, see, E. Cambridge and D. Rollason, 'Debate: The Pastoral Organisation of the Anglo-Saxon Church: A Review of the "Minster Hypothesis" ', *EME*, 4 (1) (1995), 87-104; J. Blair, 'Debate: Ecclesiastical Organisation and Pastoral Care in Anglo-Saxon England', *EME*, 4 (2) (1995), 193-212; Cubitt, 'Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England'.

[80] For clergy living in monastic communities, see, C. Cubitt, 'Pastoral Care and Conciliar Canons: the Provisions of the 747 Council of *Clofesho*', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care*

Aldhelm's priestly duties, therefore, may have begun before he received an advanced education at the Canterbury School. Certainly, he was to become an important cleric. Bede, in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, refers to Aldhelm as a *presbyter et abbas* of Malmesbury before he became bishop.[81] Bede was probably fairly well informed about Aldhelm's ecclesiastical status, for he had access to first hand accounts of him, from Bishop Pecthelm of Whithorn and Bishop Daniel of Winchester.[82] Furthermore, Cubitt has shown that 'Bede is ... careful to describe an individual's clerical and regular status'.[83] The significance of the coupling of the terms *presbyter* and *abbas* has been emphasised by Alan Thacker. He considers that these terms in early Anglo-Saxon sources 'may be an indication of a high and distinctive rank within the hierarchy, whose holders had personal charge of the *parochiae* with which their community was associated'.[84] Indeed, it is notable that contemporary authors used this dual status to describe Bishop Wilfrid of York, and Adomnán, ninth abbot of Iona (d. 704): two reformist, pioneering and powerful churchmen.[85] Aldhelm's ecclesiastical activities need to be considered in the same league.

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before the Parish (Leicester, London and New York, NY, 1992), pp. 208-209; Cubitt, 'Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England'.

[81] *H. E.*, V. 18, pp. 514-15 'priest and abbot'; The fact that Aldhelm was a cleric and abbot, may also explain Bede's uncertainty about whether to put his informant Pecthelm, who he tells us spent a long time working alongside Aldhelm, in monastic or clerical orders (*Pecthelm ... qui cum successore eius [Hædde] Aldhelmo multo tempore adhuc diaconus sive monachus fuit*), *H.E.*, V.18, p. 512; note also, Leach's suggestion that Aldhelm was 'a secular', Leach, *Schools of Medieval England*, p. 40.

[82] For Daniel (who presided over the second West Saxon diocese contemporaneously with Aldhelm) and Pecthelm providing Bede with information for his history, see, *H. E.*, *prologus*, pp. 4-5 and V. 18, pp. 513-15; Like Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 3, I believe that both churchmen could have informed Bede about Aldhelm, cf. Kirby, who suggests that only Pecthelm did, D. P. Kirby, 'Bede's Native Sources for the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 48 (1966), p. 364.

[83] Cubitt, 'Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England'.

[84] A. Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in Blair and Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care*, p. 146.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 146 n. 53, citing, *H. E.*, V. 15, pp. 504-505; Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, caps. IX, X, pp. 18-19, 20-21; For Wilfrid being in clerical, but not necessarily monastic orders, see, Cubitt, 'Images of St. Peter', p. 47.

1. 5 Monastic Founder and Church Builder

Aldhelm is purported to have founded a number of *monasteria* and churches in the lands that would later comprise his see. He may well have had a significant role in establishing the all-male *monasterium* of Malmesbury in north-west Wiltshire, although this is difficult to determine.[86] A later medieval tradition claims that the Irish monk Maildub established a community at Malmesbury where Aldhelm was educated before being elected abbot on Maildub's death.[87] Since this Irish eremite is such an obscure figure, Heather Edwards has proposed that Aldhelm established the *monasterium*, albeit on the site where Maildub previously may have lived some form of religious existence.[88] She has suggested that although the original foundation grant could have been Mercian, it was, more likely, West Saxon.[89] More recently, Jonathan Pitt has discussed the possibility that Aldhelm may have founded a new minster on the site of Maildub's former community.[90] The recently excavated site at Cowage Farm, in the hamlet of Foxley, Wiltshire, contributes to this debate, for this revealed substantial timber structures, including a possible hall-like building, with a semi-circular apse or annexe, datable to the sixth or seventh centuries.[91] The status of the site, which lies just two miles from Malmesbury, is ambiguous: whilst some scholars interpret it to be a royal manor, others have suggested that it may be Maildub's original community,[92] which raises the possibility that Aldhelm relocated it. Thus, whilst the origins of Malmesbury abbey elude proof, there is a good possibility that Aldhelm had a significant role in its establishment.

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[86] *LR*, p. 8 cf. *Ibid.*, p. 223 n 23.

[87] *GP*, V. 189, pp. 333-35, V. 197, p. 345; *LH*, p. 9.

[88] Edwards, 'Two Documents', pp. 16-19; *CEW*, pp. 82-83, 90-97, 100-107 and 126; Dempsey has recently agreed with Edwards interpretation, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm and the Irish', pp. 7-8; for Maildub's name being preserved in the Malmesbury place-name, see, above, pp. 20-21.

[89] *CEW*, pp. 92, 97, 126.

[90] J. M. A. Pitt, 'Wiltshire Minster *parochiae* and West Saxon Ecclesiastical Organisation' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton, 1999), pp. 110-11; For a similar argument, see, Thomas, Monk of Malmesbury's *Eulogium historiarum*, in Cook, 'Sources for the Biography', pp. 288-90.

[91] J. Hinchcliffe, 'An Early Medieval Settlement at Cowage Farm, Foxley, near Malmesbury', *Archaeological Journal*, 143 (1986), 240-59.

[92] For a recent discussion, see, Pitt, 'Wiltshire Minster *parochiae*', pp. 112-13.

Certainly Aldhelm may have founded other religious communities and built a number of churches, some of which lie on his monastic estates. Most modern scholars
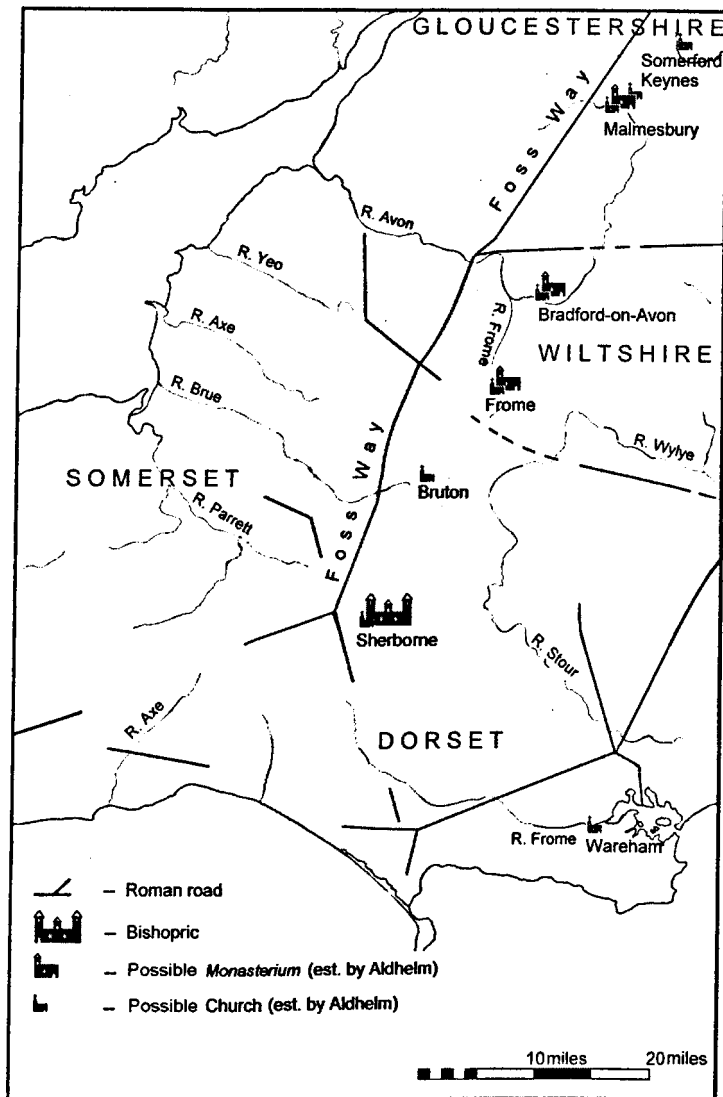
Map 1. Aldhelm's bishopric and possible religious foundations

consider the papal bull that Sergius I (687-701) issued to Aldhelm to be authentic.[93] The bull records that Aldhelm was abbot of Malmesbury and an unnamed *monasterium* towards the river Frome (probably a daughter-house), that was dedicated to St John.[94] A

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[93] H. H. Anton, *Studien zu den Klosterprivilegien der Päpste im frühen Mittelalter*, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters, 4 (Berlin, 1975), pp. 69-82 esp.; Edwards, 'Two Documents', pp. 9-15, 16-19; *CEW*, pp. 100-105, 126-27; and most recently, Rauer, 'Pope Sergius I's Privilege'; cf. *LH*, pp. 9-10, 204 n 2; Note, however, that Edwards and Rauer disagree over the relationship between the Latin and Old English transmission of the privilege; further discussion of the privilege is found in Berry, 'St Aldhelm, William of Malmesbury', pp. 20-27 esp.

[94] For an alternative location of the community towards the Frome to that suggested in Map 1, above, p. 31, see, *LH*, p. 183 n 26 cf. *LR*, p. 8.

seemingly fabricated and undated (although post-eighth century) document records that Aldhelm also founded a *monasterium* at Bradford-on-Avon in central western Wiltshire.[95] Aldhelm's and Malmesbury's possible connections with these establishments is increased when we consider that both communities may have been situated within relatively easy access of this *monasterium*. This is because Malmesbury was situated on the Avon, some 20 miles north from Bradford, and some 23 miles north from the confluence of the rivers Avon and Frome. Access to both communities would have been aided by nearby Roman roads (particularly the Fosse Way), which ran near to both sites and are thought to have been usable in this period.[96] In total, however, William proposes that Aldhelm founded two churches at Malmesbury Abbey, one at Frome, one at Bradford-on-Avon, one at Wareham in Dorset, one at Bruton in east Somerset, and one at Sherborne in Dorset, after he became bishop.[97] Unfortunately, there is no architectural evidence to support these claims. Although Saxon church remains have been found at Bradford-on-Avon and Sherborne, these probably date to the tenth century.[98] The same might be said for the remains of a Saxon doorway at a church in Somerford Keynes, just inside the Mercian

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[95] *BSC*, no. 114, pp. 167-69, note that throughout this thesis I only cite Birch's charter numbers in those cases in which Sawyer does not catalogue the document. Otherwise, all charters are referred to by their Sawyer numbers; William of Malmesbury also makes this claim, see, *GP*, V. 197, p. 346.

[96] D. A. E. Pelteret, 'The Roads of Anglo-Saxon England', *WANHM*, 79 (1985), 155-63; on Aldhelm's areas of religious activity in relation to Roman topography, see, K. Barker, 'Institution and Landscape in Early Medieval Wessex: Aldhelm of Malmesbury, Sherborne and Selwoodshire', *PDNHAS*, 106 (1984), 33-42.

[97] *GP*, V. 197, p. 345, V. 216, pp. 361-63, V. 198, p. 346, V. 217, pp. 363-64, V. 222, p. 374, V. 224, p. 378; for a discussion of the early foundation of SS Peter and Paul, and S Mary, at Malmesbury, see, Pitt, 'Wiltshire Minster *parochiae*', pp. 117-18.

[98] John Blair, pers. comm. and E. Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1982), pp. 121-24, 145-50. Note, however, that the dating of the extant church of St. Laurence's, Bradford-on-Avon, has been subject to much debate. See, for example, E. Gilbert, 'The Church of St Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon', *WANHM*, 62 (1967), 38-50; cf. H. M. Taylor, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chapel at Bradford-on-Avon', *The Archaeological Journal*, 130 (1973), p. 166 and Pitt, 'Wiltshire Minster *parochiae*', pp. 145-47; for recent excavations at the site, see, D. A. Hinton, 'Recent Work on St Laurence's Chapel, Bradford-on-Avon: An Interim Report', *WANHM*, 96 (2003), 206-207; For the argument that Aldhelm's church at Sherborne lies beneath the current church, see, J. H. P. Gibb, 'The Anglo-Saxon Cathedral at Sherborne (with an Appendix on Documentary Evidence by R. D. H. Gem)', *The Archaeological Journal*, 132 (1975), pp. 102-104.

satellite Kingdom of the Hwicce, which has been associated with Aldhelm.[99] However, in his study of Wiltshire's minsters and their *parochiae*, Jonathan Pitt postulated that a number of the churches surrounded and were linked to Malmesbury and Bradford-on-Avon, and, perhaps, were dependent upon them.[100] Therefore, Pitt proposes that Aldhelm set up a large and influential minster at Malmesbury and that Bradford may have had minster status from the seventh century.[101]

1. 6 Ecclesiastical Activities

Aldhelm's writings frequently refer to the burdens of pastoral care and although this is a common literary trope, even so, he was probably involved heavily in ministering to the religious and the laity before he became bishop.[102] These duties may have stemmed from his role as a priest subject to a bishop, as much as from his role as abbot of *monasteria* that administered pastoral care. As a priest, Aldhelm would have expected to hear confessions, prescribe penance, celebrate masses and sing psalms.[103] He would have also administered the important rite of baptism.[104] Indeed, in an extant letter, Aldhelm tells an otherwise unknown, Abbess Sigegyth, that he has petitioned the bishop on her behalf regarding the controversial issue of re-baptism.[105] It is possible that he was acting as an intermediary between one of the *monasteria* he administered and the bishop, who was ultimately responsible for pastoral care in his diocese. Certainly Aldhelm bestowed spiritual advice during his abbacy. Thus, he cautioned his student Wihtfrith to avoid

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[99] John Blair, pers. comm. Cf., for example, F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edn., Oxford, 1971), p. 151; *CEW*, pp. 93-94; on the Kingdom of the Hwicce, see, P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, CSASE, 3 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 29-39.

[100] Pitt, 'Wiltshire Minster *parochiae*', pp. 116-19.

[101] For Malmesbury, *Ibid.*, pp. 114-22, 129-30; For Bradford, *Ibid.*, 145-57, *passim*.

[102] See, for example, Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Acircium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 202, ll. 8-10; Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 320, ll. 16-22.

[103] Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care', p. 138.

[104] On baptism see S. Foot, ' "By Water in the Spirit": The Administration of Baptism in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in Blair and Sharpe, *Pastoral Care*, pp. 171-92.

[105] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Sigegytham*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 497.

prostitutes, to spurn lavish accommodation and to wear modest dress.[106] He warned another student, Æthilwald (who may have been a layman), against the latter two indulgences and against riding about without purpose.[107] He also reminded King Aldfrith of the importance of study and prayer.[108] Aldhelm's clear concern to proffer spiritual advice provides a context for interpreting his double treatise *De virginitate*. In the introduction and conclusion to the prose *De virginitate* Aldhelm refers to letters that he had received from the texts' dedicatees. Since he praises the fact that these make known their religious vows and studies in Scripture, it is possible that they asked Aldhelm for direction in educational, moral, and/or theological matters.[109]

In addition to the pastoral activities outlined above, we know that Aldhelm visited monastic communities, perhaps inquiring into their affairs as part of his duties as a priest. These communities differed in form, as late seventh-century Anglo-Saxon monasticism had yet to find fixed expression and was subject to varied cultural influences.[110] In his *Carmen rhythmicum* Aldhelm describes celebrating matins with a male religious community in a wooden church in Cornwall or Devon.[111] It is possible that this church was British, for, in the post-Roman period, the British church predominantly survived in the west of England, where it is likely to have had a significant role in converting Anglo-Saxons to Christianity.[112] During the reign of King Ine of Wessex, but more narrowly between 688 and 701,[113] Aldhelm wrote a *titulus* to commemorate the building and

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[106] *Idem., Epistola ad Wihtfridum*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 479, ll. 20-21-p. 480, ll. 1-6.

[107] *Idem., Epistola ad Æthilwaldum*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 499-500; for Æthilwald's possible lay status and the letter perhaps dating to Aldhelm's abbacy, see, *LH*, pp. 136, 139.

[108] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Acircium*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 203-204.

[109] *Idem., PdV*, cap. I, (ed.), *AO*, p. 229, ll. 10-12.

[110] On these varied cultural influences and for different forms of *monasteria*, see, Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 87-143.

[111] Aldhelm, *Carmen rhythmicum*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 123-44, p. 527; for a discussion of the church's possible location, see, *LR*, pp. 173, 261 n 13; for a recent edition and analysis of the poem, see, D. R. Howlett, 'Aldhelmi Carmen Rhythmicum', *Bulletin du Cange*, 53 (1995), 119-40.

[112] C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500* (London, 1981), pp. 347-55; Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 78-86; S. Bassett, 'Church and Diocese in the West Midlands: The Transition from British to Anglo-Saxon Control,' in Blair and Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care*, pp. 13-40.

consecration of a monastic church for Bugga, an otherwise unknown daughter of King Centwine. The community's status, as a Gaulish-inspired double *monasterium*, is clear from his description of the church's twin choirs and male and female religious lectors.[114] Aldhelm's precise portrayal of this new church, with its glass windows, and resplendent liturgical objects, suggests that he had visited this community.[115] His authoritative instructions on how the community must celebrate the church's dedication may even suggest that he was involved in consecrating it.[116]

As well as minister to the religious and the laity, Aldhelm will have been involved in developing the doctrine, discipline and theology of the contemporary church by attending church councils.[117] After Archbishop Theodore instigated church councils in Anglo-Saxon England in 672, they met frequently, perhaps even annually.[118] During his abbacy Aldhelm wrote a letter to Geraint, King of Dumnonia, in which he relayed the proceedings of an episcopal council that he had attended.[119] This synod is not necessarily the same meeting that Aldhelm refers to in his *Prosa de virginitate*, where he describes travelling *ad pontificale ... conciliabulum*.[120] Charters claim Aldhelm's attendance at further councils. Thus, for example, he is on the witness list of a charter that purports to

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[113] We know that the poem was written in Ine's reign, Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* III, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 35-37, p. 16; I believe that Aldhelm may have written it before Pope Sergius I's death in 701 (cf. *LR*, pp. 40-41), because he refers to Ine's predecessor, Cædwalla, abdicating and journeying to Rome, where he was welcomed by the pope (who would have been Sergius). Instead of naming the pope, he uses a periphrasis (*LR*, p. 235 n. 19), arguably because his audience knew that Sergius I was in office.

[114] For the influence of Gaulish monasticism in the south-west, see, P. Sims-Williams, 'Continental Influence at Bath Monastery in the Seventh-Century', *ASE*, 4, (1975), pp. 4-6.

[115] Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* III, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 46-58, 66-82, pp. 16-18.

[116] *Ibid.*, ll. 42-65, pp. 16-17.

[117] For abbots and clergy attending early Anglo-Saxon church councils, see, Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 42-43.

[118] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, for those held within Aldhelm's lifetime, *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, 18-25, 247-63, 289-90.

[119] See below, pp. 38-43; and for the letter to Geriant, see, Probert, 'Church and Landscape'.

[120] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. I, (ed.), *AO*, p. 229, l. 7, (trans.), *LH*, p. 59 'to an episcopal convention'; for these meetings being different see Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 21, 24, 261-62, cf. *LH*, pp. 9, 141-142, 194 n. 2, and *LR*, p. 38, there no reason to suppose (as *LH* and *LR* do) that it is the synod of Hertford.

have been signed at a provincial synod in 705 or 706.[121] According to another, in 685 the king or sub-king Berhtwald granted land to Aldhelm at a synod held at 'Berhgford', possibly in Oxfordshire. If this charter can be trusted - and this is a moot point - Aldhelm may have been present at this meeting.[122] In addition, we can speculate that he may have been elected and consecrated bishop at a church council.[123] It is also likely that a synod was convened to confirm Aldhelm's privilege from Pope Sergius I, since two Northumbrian synods met to confirm those of Agatho and Sergius to Wearmouth and Wearmouth-Jarrow, between c. 678 x 679/80 and 701 x 705 respectively.[124] Indeed, the Old English version of Aldhelm's privilege includes attestations by Kings Ine and Æthilred: attestations that probably arise from a royal or church council.[125]

1.7 Church Reformer

Through his attendance at church and royal councils, Aldhelm will have met many churchmen and have learnt about many religious communities. This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Two. Here it is important to observe that, throughout his career, Aldhelm was heavily involved in monasticism in lands over which the West Saxon kings had hegemony or interest in expanding over. During the mid-to-late 680s, the West Saxon

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[121] S148, the authenticity of this charter has been disputed, although the witness-list is thought to be genuine, see, Kelly, 'S148', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20238-69.html>; for further discussion, see, L. Abrams, 'A Single-Sheet Facsimile of a Diploma of King Ine for Glastonbury,' in L. Abrams and J. P. Carley (eds.), *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury Abbey: Essays in Honour of the Ninetieth Birthday of C. A. Ralegh Radford* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 118-19 esp.; for the status of the synod and its dating, see, Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 261-62.

[122] S1169, some scholars dispute the authenticity of this charter, no witness-list survives, see, Kelly, 'S1169', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>; on the synod and its site, see, *CEW*, p. 94; Drawing upon further charter evidence, William of Malmesbury places him at two different councils on the rivers Blandon and Nadder, *GP*, V. 199, p. 348, V. 225, p. 380.

[123] Cubitt, *Church Councils*, p. 65.

[124] Bede, *Historia abbatum*, (ed.), *VBOH*, cap. VI, p. 369, cap. XV, p. 380; for the dating of these, see, Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 289-90.

[125] The most recent edition is by Rauer in the forthcoming article, 'Pope Sergius I's Privilege'; it is thought that these attestations once existed in the Latin version of this grant as well, see, Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 9-10; *CEW*, p. 101; and, Rauer, *Ibid*.

kingdom expanded rapidly, shifting increasingly from its original base in the Upper Thames. Temporary, or more often, permanent control, was gained over parts or the entirety of Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Dorset, Devon, the Jutish provinces in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the kingdom of the South Saxons, Surrey, and Kent.[126] Likewise, in the last three decades of the seventh century, West Saxon monasticism underwent significant growth.[127] Many of the *monasteria* with which Aldhelm was associated were, therefore, newly or recently established. Thus, in 682 and 708 he apparently witnessed land transactions for two communities in Somerset, namely, Glastonbury, which possibly was built on a former British *monasterium*, and Muchelney, a community that is thought to have existed by 693.[128] He also witnessed the 692 *monasterium* foundation charter for the South Saxon Princess Nothgyth and the 688 foundation charter for a family *monasterium* in Farnham, Surrey.[129] Furthermore, he is found in charter witness lists alongside many West Saxon abbots, including, Hæmgils and Berhtwald of Glastonbury, Eadberht who was probably abbot and later bishop of Selsey, Hæha of Bradfield, Wintra of Tisbury, and Froda, abbot of Muchelney.[130] Three charters,

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[126] B. Yorke, 'The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex', in S. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (London, 1989), pp. 84-96; B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 136-38.

[127] For this period of expansion, see, for example, B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London and New York, 2003), pp. 23-30 esp.; Aldhelm's dedicatory *titulus* for Bugga's church also provides evidence for rapid monastic growth in this period, see, Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* III, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 3-7, p. 14.

[128] The Glastonbury charter is S237, for its status, see above, p. 26 n 63; the Muchelney charter is S1176, it is thought to have an authentic basis, see, Kelly, 'S1176', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>; for the former British community at Glastonbury, see, *CEW*, pp. 64-65; for the community of Muchelney existing by 693, see, *Ibid.*, p. 207.

[129] The foundation charter for Nothgyth's *monasterium* is S45. It is thought to be mainly authentic, see, Kelly, 'S45', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%2042-50.html>, for an edition and analysis of this charter, see, S. E. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Selsey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters, VI (Oxford, 1998), pp. 13-22; the Farnham grant is S235. It is also thought to be basically authentic, see, Kelly, 'S235', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20227-37.html>. For the latter grant being for a family *monasterium*, see *CEW*, p. 132.

[130] For Hæmgils, see, S237, above, p. 26 n 63; for Berhtwald, Eadberht, Hæha, Wintra and Froda, see, S245, above p. 25 n 60; Berhtwald's and Eadberht's identity on S245 has been deduced by Edwards, *CEW*, p. 108; Aldhelm and Froda also appear on the witness list of S1176, for this charter, see above, p. 37 n 128.

and a letter dating from the 680s, also link Aldhelm with Abbot Wynberht of Nursling, at whose community the Anglo-Saxon missionary Boniface was to receive an education.[131]

Aldhelm's connections with so many contemporary churchmen provide one reason why, during his abbacy, his fellow churchmen delegated him to convey the proceedings of a synod he had attended.[132] The product was Aldhelm's lengthy letter to the British King Geraint and the bishops of Dumnonia. Scholars often discuss this work with reference to Aldhelm's attempts to bring the British church in line with Roman methods of calculating the date of Easter and of wearing the clerical tonsure.[133] Indeed, Aldhelm was a passionate Romanist in this major ecclesiastical debate.[134] However, it is important to recognise that, more widely, his letter seeks to forge unity of religious practise and belief between West Saxon and British clerics. This is evident, for example, in Aldhelm's diatribe against the isolationist purity rituals practised by the British Bishops of Dyfed in south west Wales. These British bishops, he complains, interpret Old Testament precepts (Leviticus especially) literally and therefore deem the body to be a source of contamination. His accusations deserve to be reviewed in brief. According to Aldhelm, the bishops will not celebrate the divine office nor eat charitably with them (presumably

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[131] The charters are (in chronological order) S231, S1170 and S243. There is some debate regarding the authenticity of S231, but it may have a genuine basis, see, Kelly, 'S231', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20227-37.html>; whilst some scholars deem S1170 to be spurious, others regard it to be basically authentic, see, Kelly, 'S1170', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>; for S243, which may have a genuine basis, see, Kelly, 'S243', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20238-69.html>; it has been suggested that the letter Aldhelm wrote to one Wynberht, identified as Wynberht of Nursling (Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Winbertum*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 502-503), arose from a land dispute associated with S1170, *GP*, V. 210-11, pp. 354-55; Edwards, 'Two Documents', pp. 5-6 and *CEW*, pp. 96-97, cf. doubts raised regarding the letter's authenticity, *AO*, p. 502 n 1 and *LH*, p. 151.

[132] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Geruntium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 481, ll. 1-12.

[133] See, for example, W. F. Bolton, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature 597-1066* (2 vols, Princeton, New Jersey, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 95-96; P. Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1977), p. 140; H. Vollrath, *Die Synoden Englands bis 1066* (Paderborn, 1985), p. 100; cf. however, H. P. R. Finberg, 'Sherborne, Glastonbury and the Expansion of Wessex', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, III (1953), 101-24, repr. *Idem., Lucerna: Studies of Some Problems in the Early History of England* (London, 1964), at pp. 100, 163; C. Stancliffe, 'The British Church and the Mission of St. Augustine', in R. Gameson (ed.), *St. Augustine and the Conversion of England* (Thrudd, Shroud, 1999), pp. 110, 128, 130; however, see, Probert's 'Church and Landscape'.

[134] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Geruntium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 482, ll. 20-30-p. 484, ll. 1-5; *Idem., Epistola ad Ehfridum*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 493, ll. 2-11.

West Saxon churchmen), whilst left-over food is fed to dogs and pigs, and communal vessels purified with gravel and ash. The British churchmen, he claims, also refuse to kiss their guests and to wash their feet. Aldhelm is, however, most insulted by the fact that religious who want to reside with British bishops, first, are expected to undertake forty days of penance.[135] Aldhelm likens the British Bishops of Dyfed to heretics, warning them that their rigorous ascetic discipline will yield no religious profit if it is performed outside of the Catholic Church.[136] With a view to creating religious concord, therefore, he lectures the British churchmen to be charitable, to thwart the vice of pride and instead to develop the virtue of humility. These latter two themes are notably of central importance to his double treatise *De virginitate* which also seeks to forge spiritual unity among its readers and auditors.[137]

Whilst it is possible that Aldhelm was chosen to delegate the proceedings of this synod on account of his literary reputation,[138] it is more likely, that he was selected because he was a Romanist,[139] who apparently had observed Roman church practices first hand. We know this because a letter from an anonymous Irish student reveals that Aldhelm had visited Rome.[140] We need not doubt that he was there, because other early Anglo-Saxon religious visited the city on pilgrimage and to study.[141] Whilst Aldhelm may have gone to Rome during the papacy of Sergius I, from whom he gained a monastic privilege,[142] it is possible that he went there more than once. Furthermore, Aldhelm may

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[135] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Geruntium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 484, ll. 6-26-p. 485, ll.1-5.

[136] *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 481, ll.12-16.

[137] *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 485, ll. 6-11; see below, pp. 208, 225-26.

[138] Aldhelm does not write the letter in the highly ornamented Latin style he favours in other letters, *LH*, p. 143; see, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm and the Irish', p. 14 for the suggestion that Aldhelm was chosen to relay the synod's proceedings, in part, because of his knowledge of computus.

[139] See, for example, his comments on Gregory the Great in the *PdV*, cap. XIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 242, ll. 12-13.

[140] *Epistola Scotti cuiusdam*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 494, l. 14; for this student's Irish nationality, see above, p. 20.

[141] See, for example, *H.E.*, V. 7, pp. 469-73, V. 19, pp. 516-31; M. Lapidge, 'Some Remnants of Bede's Lost *Liber Epigrammatum*', *EHR*, XC (1975), 798-820, repr. and rev. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899*, at p. 360.

[142] *GP*, V. 217-20, pp. 363-67, cf. *LH*, pp. 9-10, for the privilege, see above, pp. 31-32.

have learnt about the Roman church at Canterbury, for his teacher, Archbishop Theodore, is remembered for trying to introduce the authority of Rome into Anglo-Saxon England.

However, Aldhelm may have also been delegated to relay the synod's proceedings because he was an ambitious churchman, who had much involvement with the British church. Since the British church was involved in converting the west of England to Christianity, it probably had an early and continued influence on Aldhelm's career. Aldhelm's community at Malmesbury bordered the Mercian satellite kingdom of the Hwicce, which may have been converted by Britons. From the 680s he is associated with Glastonbury *monasterium*, which may have developed from and even absorbed a British religious community.[143] There is also thought to have been a British church and perhaps also a *monasterium* at Sherborne (which was near the Cornish border), although we do not know whether it was active or abandoned by the time Aldhelm's see was established.[144] In the undateable poem *Carmen Rhythmicum*, Aldhelm describes travelling through Cornwall and Devon: it is possible that he was travelling through British-held lands or lands that had been recently conquered by the West Saxons.[145] It is also possible that Aldhelm's letter to Geraint and his bishops provides only a fleeting glimpse into his much greater involvement in reforming the British church.

In his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede refers to how Aldhelm *scripsit ... librum egregium adversus errorem Brettonum, quo vel pascha non suo tempore celebrant, vel alia perplura ecclesiasticae castitati et paci contraria gerunt.*[146] However, there are

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[143] For one of these associations, see, A. S. Cook, 'Who was the Ehfrid of Aldhelm's Letter?', *Speculum*, II (1927), 369-73.

[144] *CEW*, pp. 251, 253; K. Barker, 'The Topography of Sherborne/*Lanprobi* – A Reply', *PDNHAS*, 104 (1982), p. 198; for the suggestion than part of the boundary of the British monastic precinct is preserved in the modern street plan of Sherborne, see, Barker, *Ibid.*, and *Idem.*, 'The Early Christian Topography of Sherborne', *Antiquity*, 54 (212) (1980), 229-31; cf. a number of scholars, including, D. Hinton, 'The Topography of Sherborne – Early Christian?', *Antiquity*, 55 (215) (1980), 222-23 and L. Keen, 'The Topography of Sherborne, Dorset- *Lanprobus*', *PDNHAS*, 103 (1981), 132-34; William of Malmesbury tells us that Aldhelm built a church at Wareham in Dorset. Although this cannot be determined, the West Saxons may have rebuilt a British church soon after their advances into this region, in c. 700, *GP*, V. 217, p. 363; Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), 'Wareham West Walls', *Medieval Archaeology*, III (1959), p. 122; for the church post-dating Aldhelm's life, see, Hall, *Minster Churches*, pp. 13, 15.

[145] Aldhelm, *Carmen rhythmicum*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 8-10, p. 524; for Aldhelm's vague geographical description, see, *LH*, p. 173.

[146] *H.E.*, V. 18, pp. 514-15, 'wrote a remarkable book against the British error of celebrating Easter at the wrong time, and of doing many other things to the detriment of the pure practices and the peace of the Church'.

discrepancies between the work that Bede describes and Aldhelm's extant letter. Aldhelm's letter seems to relay the proceedings of a provincial council,[147] because it refers to the canonical decrees promulgated *in concilio episcoporum, ubi ex tota paene Brittania innumerabilis Dei sacerdotum caterva confluxit.*[148] Bede suggests that Aldhelm wrote it *iubente synodo suae gentis.* Although Bede's use of *gens* in this context may refer to the collective spiritual identity of the English vis-à-vis the British, it may simply refer to a synod of Aldhelm's people, the West Saxons.[149] Indeed, Aldhelm refers to the council imploring him *ut ad vestrae pietatis praesentiam epistulares litterarum apices diregerem*, perhaps meaning that he was to send individual letters to the king and his bishops, or that he was to correspond with them more than once.[150] In contrast, Bede refers to Aldhelm writing a *liber.*[151] Elsewhere in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede uses the noun *liber* to refer to substantial pieces of writing, including many of his own works and Aldhelm's double treatise *De virginitate.*[152] A number of scholars have suggested that Bede was misinformed (despite the fact that he had two informants for Aldhelm's career and was, as we shall see, familiar with some of his writings).[153] However, it is possible that Aldhelm addressed more than one piece of writing to the British church, perhaps at the request of

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[147] Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 63, 261 cf. this being a national synod, Hahn, *Bonifaz und Lul*, p. 39 and *LH*, p. 141.

[148] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Geruntium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 481, ll. 4-7, (trans.), *LH*, p. 155 'at an episcopal council, where, out of almost the entirety of Britain an innumerable company of the bishops of God came together'.

[149] *H.E.*, V. 18, pp. 514-15 'by order of a synod of his own people'; cf. Vollrath, *Synoden Englands*, p. 101; note here, J. Campbell, 'Bede's Reges *and* Principes', Jarrow Lecture, 1978 (Jarrow, 1979), repr. *Idem.*, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), p. 86: '*Gens* is the term Bede uses most commonly, [for kingdoms and people] and he uses it indifferently for either a large ethnic group, e.g. *gens Brettonum* or for the men of a particular kingdom, e.g. *gens Merciorum*'.

[150] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Geruntium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 481, l. 9, (trans.), *LH*, p. 155, 'to direct epistolary letters to the presence of your Loyalty'.

[151] *H.E.*, V. 18, pp. 514-15; Notably, William refers to him writing a *liber* and *litteras*, *GP*, V. 196, p. 343, V. 215, p. 360.

[152] P. F. Jones, *A Concordance to the Historia Ecclesiastica of Bede* (Cambridge, MA, 1929), pp. 292-93.

[153] *LH*, p. 141; Cubitt, *Church Councils*, p. 261; On Bede's knowledge of Aldhelm, see above, p. 29 n 82 and below, pp. 87, 90-91.

different synods and that Bede refers to a different work than Aldhelm's extant letter.[154] Let us not forget that issues of dogma, such as the calculation of Easter, were recurrent topics of debate at church councils.[155] If Aldhelm had relayed the proceedings of one synod to the British church it raises the possibility that he was chosen to convey others. To this end it is worth noting that, whereas Aldhelm's letter was addressed to Geraint and the Bishops of Dumnonia, he devotes a passage to berating the isolationist activities of the Bishops of Dyfed in south-west Wales. In the future, it would be worth investigating whether his digression on the Welsh bishops is, in fact, interpolated into his letter to Geraint and itself represents a different letter written to pioneer British church reform.[156] Certainly Aldhelm was an active reformist who was concerned that contemporary religious followed correct and canonical church customs. Bede, moreover, tells us that he was successful in converting the British. This claim is perhaps substantiated by the fact that a later tradition records that Geraint was a benefactor of Sherborne abbey.[157]

1. 8 Embroilment in West Saxon Politics

Finberg has proposed that Geraint's patronage of Sherborne and Aldhelm's letter to the king and his bishops were politically inspired.[158] In this period, political and religious growth, indeed, was inextricably linked and Aldhelm's reform of the British Church involved him in West Saxon expansionist politics.[159] The reform of British church customs, as well as the promotion of Roman observances, had long been on the Anglo-Saxon church's agenda. Indeed, there were Romanising churchmen in the West Saxon

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[154] Stancliffe, 'The British Church', pp. 110, 128, 130, suggests that Bede's representation of the British in his *Historia ecclesiastica* was influenced by Aldhelm's letter to Geraint and the bishops of Dumnonia.

[155] Cubitt, *Church Councils*, p. 61.

[156] Note that the work survives in only one manuscript, *LH*, p. 140.

[157] For the grant, see, *CEW*, pp. 246-47, 251-53; M. A. O'Donovan (ed.), *Charters of Sherborne*, Anglo-Saxon Charters, III (Oxford, 1988), pp. xli, xlviii.

[158] Finberg, *Lucerna*, pp. 88, 100; also see, *CEW*, p. 253.

[159] For the political landscape of Aldhelm's career, see, *AM*, pp. 34-41.

church before Aldhelm.[160] Nonetheless, West Saxon attempts to reform British Christianity may have been as much an attempt to control its people as to ensure the orthodoxy of its customs. Throughout the sixth and seventh centuries, the West Saxons sought to achieve hegemony over the British, as part of their continued attempts at expansion westwards. The Sherborne Register records that Cenwalh (643-672) gave a 100-hide estate, 'Lanprobi', to the church at Sherborne. This was probably land gained during his advances into British territory.[161] Centwine fought the British and it is possibly during his campaigns that much of Devon came under West Saxon control.[162] Later, in 710, Ine fought with a King Geraint - who probably should be identified as the recipient of Aldhelm's letter - for control over Cornwall and the remainder of Devon.[163] Indeed, it is possible that Aldhelm's letter was written during Ine's reign. The synod from which Aldhelm's letter arose cannot be dated more precisely than his abbacy (675 x 681-705/6).[164] However, Ine will have had a vested interest in reforming his rival Geraint's church and as we shall see in Chapter Two, Aldhelm was probably an important advisor to this West Saxon king.[165]

1.9 Conclusion

To conclude, Aldhelm's *opus geminatum De virginitate* has received a good deal of attention in studies of its Latin and manuscript glossings. As a consequence, Aldhelm has in the last thirty years become known as an important literary figure. Yet his ecclesiastical importance is often overshadowed. A review of the early Anglo-Saxon

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[160] *H. E.*, III. 25, pp. 298-301, Agilbert, one-time West Saxon bishop (d. c. 680), was part of the Romanist party at the synod of Whitby.

[161] O'Donovan, *Sherborne Charters*, p. 87; *CEW*, pp. 246-47, 251.

[162] Finberg, *Lucerna*, pp. 102-103; William of Malmesbury places Aldhelm's letter in the political context of Centwine's reign, see, *GP*, V. 215, pp. 359-61.

[163] Finberg, *Lucerna*, p. 100; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 64; *CEW*, p. 251; cf. *LH*, p. 142.

[164] Compare, for example, *AO*, pp. 480-81 n 4; *LH*, pp. 141-42; Cubitt, *Church Councils*, p. 261; Vollrath's suggestion that the letter dates to 705, because Bede refers to it in the same chapter as discussing the division of the West Saxon see, cannot be sustained, see, Vollrath, *Synoden Englands*, pp. 100-101.

[165] See below, pp. 58-59.

evidence, however, renders it likely that Aldhelm was involved greatly in West Saxon lay and monastic Christianity from the early 680s. As well as having connections to many religious and their communities, he attended church councils and was a known figure at these. As a result, he was involved in trying to reform the British church, possibly for political reasons. Aldhelm's activities have implications for his double treatise, for they would have put him in a favourable position to write spiritual guidance. Furthermore, since contemporary monastic founders and abbots put together their own religious rules from varied texts, Aldhelm is likely to have had experience in compiling monastic guidance by 681 at the very latest, when he is first recorded to be abbot. Aldhelm's own religious communities, and his association with many others, would have provided him with an insight into the type of guidance that recent religious recruits required. His double treatise therefore needs to be interpreted with a view to his religious and political involvement in the early Anglo-Saxon church. To appreciate this further we need to turn to consider Aldhelm's ecclesiastical and political networks.

Chapter Two

Aldhelm's Ecclesiastical and Political Associates

It is now time to consider Aldhelm's connections with some of the leading secular and ecclesiastical figures of his age.[1] Aldhelm's association with Wilfrid, bishop of York (d. 709), is particularly important to unravel. Within modern scholarship these churchmen's reputations are in sharp contrast.[2] As I mentioned in Chapter One, despite Aldhelm's extensive religious and political involvement in the late seventh-to early eighth-century church, he is seen chiefly as a figure of literary importance.[3] In contrast, Wilfrid has emerged as one of Anglo-Saxon England's most influential and yet unruly churchmen. And whilst scholars acknowledge Wilfrid's efforts to introduce texts in England,[4] even so, he is best known for the nature of his influence in seventh-century 'political and ecclesiastical life'.[5] Within this context, he has been deemed 'a great figure', 'a ... trouble-maker', and 'the most hated and feared man of his day in the English church'.[6]

Given Aldhelm's and Wilfrid's contrasting legacies, we might be forgiven for thinking that they share little common ground, with the exception that both were born in the first half of the seventh century, and, after long ecclesiastical careers in which they

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[1] For a study on how Bede's interests and concerns were shaped by the individuals with whom he interacted, see, D. Whitelock, 'Bede and his Teachers and Friends', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), pp. 19-39; for acknowledgement that Aldhelm had important connections, see, *AM*, pp. 25-26.

[2] Note, however, Herren's brief discussion of the similarities between the two men, *LH*, p. 150.

[3] See above, pp. 15, 23-24.

[4] For his circulation of the Rule of St. Benedict, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), cap. XIV, pp. 30-31, cap. XLVII, pp. 98-99 and D. Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord?', in J. Hill and M. Swan (eds.), *The Community, the Family and the Saint. Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, International Medieval Research, 4 (Turnhout, 1998), pp. 162-63; he is associated with writing one letter, which is preserved in Stephen of Ripon's *Vita S Wilfridi*, see, E. Dekkers and A. Gaar (eds.), *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, CCSL (3rd edn., Steenbrugge, 1995), no. 1329, p. 441; later medieval sources suggest that Wilfrid amassed a book collection, see, M. Roper, 'Wilfrid's Landholdings in Northumbria', in D. P. Kirby (ed.), *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham* (Gateshead, 1974), p. 69.

[5] Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, p. ix.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. ix; D. P. Kirby, 'Northumbria in the Time of Wilfrid', in Kirby (ed.), *Saint Wilfrid*, p. 10; *LH*, p. 150.

became priests, abbots and bishops, both died in c. 709.[7] However, scholars have had to consider these two churchmen's connections, because, at some point in the late seventh century, Aldhelm wrote a letter to Wilfrid's abbots, in which he urged them to obey their exiled bishop.[8] Their association has been described variously as one of 'personal ties,' 'friend(ship)', 'firm friendship' and more cautiously, as 'not necessarily ... allies'.[9] The extent and implications of their personal relationship has yet to be fully considered.

In the following chapter I seek to situate Aldhelm and Wilfrid in an ecclesiastical group alongside Bishop Eorcenwald of London (675-c.693), another ambitious churchman, who, among other achievements, was highly influential in the development of Anglo-Saxon diplomatic.[10] I shall present evidence which suggests that this ecclesiastical group's activities were centred mainly upon the West Saxon kingdom and its church, during its period of dramatic expansion and consolidation in the late 680s to early 690s. As well as consider the nature of these churchmen's connections, I shall discuss their implications for interpreting Aldhelm's double treatise *De virginitate*, for it seems possible that the work was a written manifestation of this ecclesiastical group's efforts to support, legitimise and perhaps even to promote, high status renunciation within elite society.

2. 1 Similarities in the Careers of Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid

It is important to observe that despite their contrasting legacies, Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid shared a great deal in common. This is important when in the early middle ages friendships typically arose between individuals of equal status who

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[7] For the dates of Aldhelm's birth and death, see above, pp. 18-19; for Wilfrid's date of birth, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. I, pp. 4-5; For Wilfrid's death, see, R. L. Poole, 'St. Wilfrid and the See at Ripon', in R. L. Poole (ed.), *Studies in Chronology and History* (Oxford, 1909), pp. 81-83.

[8] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Wilfridi abbates*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 500-502.

[9] In order of citations, A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994), p. 1; H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edn., Pennsylvania, PA, 1991), p. 122; G. T. Dempsey, 'Legal Terminology in Anglo-Saxon England: The *Trimoda Necessitas* Charter', *Speculum*, 57 (4) (1982), p. 847 n 1; *AM*, p. 26.

[10] P. Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England: The Charter Evidence*, Jarrow Lecture, 1984 (Jarrow, 1985), pp. 9-11; A. Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert* (Wien, 1982), pp. 129-41, comments on 140-41 esp.

shared mutual interests.[11] Whilst only Eorcenwald and Wilfrid were bishops in the late seventh century, hence in the period in which I seek to connect our churchmen, Aldhelm appears to have had much ecclesiastical responsibility prior to becoming bishop in 705/6.[12] Aldhelm, like Wilfrid, was a cleric, but not necessarily a monk, for there is no contemporary evidence that either man was tonsured.[13] All three were noblemen who were likely to have had great wealth.[14] They had all visited Rome in a period when such pilgrimages were not necessarily frequent,[15] with Aldhelm and Wilfrid zealously championing Roman customs within the Anglo-Saxon church, even though they had both received some early training from Irish religious, many of who favoured different church customs.[16] Both men also received advanced training in the Kingdom of Kent, albeit Wilfrid two decades earlier than Aldhelm and at the Kentish court, rather than at the

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[11] H. W. Goetz, 'Beatus Homo Qui Invenit Amicum'. The Concept of Friendship in Early Medieval Letters of the Anglo-Saxon Tradition on the Continent', in J. Haseldine, *Friendship in Early Medieval Europe* (Thrupp, Stroud, 1999), pp. 125-26.

[12] See above, pp. 25-26, 30-44.

[13] For Aldhelm, see above, pp. 27-29; for Wilfrid, see, C. Cubitt, 'Images of St. Peter: The Clergy and the Religious Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in P. Cavill (ed.), *The Christian Tradition* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 47; note also, that Stephen of Ripon makes a point of telling us that Wilfrid was not tonsured when he lived in the *monasterium* of Lindisfarne during his youth, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi* (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. II, pp. 6-7.

[14] For Aldhelm and Eorcenwald, see, B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London and New York, 1990), p. 110; for Wilfrid, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi* (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. XXIV, pp. 48-49.

[15] For Aldhelm, see above, pp. 39-40; for Eorcenwald, who like Wilfrid, may have gone during the papacy of Agatho, see S1246. This charter it is thought to have an authentic basis, see, Kelly, 'S1246', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201244-1409.html>; note, however, Whitelock's caution about whether Eorcenwald went to Rome, D. Whitelock, 'Some Anglo-Saxon Bishops of London', *The Chambers Memorial Lecture* (London, 1975), repr. in *Idem., History, Law and Literature in 10th-11th Century England* (London, 1981), II, p. 7 n. 1; for Wilfrid, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, caps. V, XXIX,-XXXIII, L-LV, pp. 10-13, 56-67, 102-21; for the relative infrequency of pilgrimages to Rome in this period, see, P. Sims-Williams, 'Cuthswith, Seventh-Century Abbess of Inkberrow, near Worcester, and the Würzburg Manuscript of Jerome on Ecclesiastes', *ASE*, 5 (1976), p. 15; *Idem.*, P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, CSASE, 3 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 193-94.

[16] For Aldhelm, see above, pp. 20-22, 39-40; for Wilfrid's training at Lindisfarne, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, caps. II-III, pp. 6-9, for his championing of Roman customs, see, for example, *Ibid.*, caps. XXIX-XXXVII, pp. 56-75; for Eorcenwald's possible *Romanitas*, see, C. R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (Leicester, 1966), p. 118.

Canterbury school.[17] Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid were career-driven churchmen who appear to have founded a number of *monasteria* and are among the few early Anglo-Saxon monastic founders known to have secured papal privileges for these.[18] Indeed, among contemporary churchmen, scholars single out Aldhelm and Wilfrid for their 'devotion to the papacy'.[19] Furthermore, all three churchmen received generous land donations from rival kings[20] and as we shall see, all had connections with royal courts. Aldhelm and Wilfrid also took a great interest in contemporary monastic spirituality. Aldhelm therefore wrote the double treatise *De virginitate*, whilst Wilfrid introduced the Rule of St Benedict into his *monasteria*.[21] Clearly there are parallels in the careers of our churchmen: parallels that arguably rendered them compatible associates with much grounds for rapport.

2. 2 Evidence for Interaction

Aldhelm's impassioned letter to Wilfrid's abbots, which is preserved only as an excerpt by William of Malmesbury (c. 1090-c.1143), provides compelling evidence that these churchmen knew each other. The letter encourages Wilfrid's abbots to support him

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[17] For Aldhelm, see above, pp. 22-23; for Wilfrid, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. III, pp. 8-9.

[18] For Aldhelm, see above, pp. 30-33; for Eorcenwald, see, S1246, for this charter's status, see above, p. 47 n 15; for Wilfrid, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. XLVII, pp. 96-97, cap. LI, pp. 106-107.

[19] For this citation, given with reference to Wilfrid, see, D. H. Farmer, 'Saint Wilfrid', in Kirby (ed.), *Saint Wilfrid*, pp. 53-54; for Aldhelm, see, Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 122.

[20] For Aldhelm, see below, p. 56; for Wilfrid, see, J. Campbell, 'Bede I', in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Latin Historians* (London, 1966), pp. 159-90, repr. J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), at p. 16; for Eorcenwald, see, for example, Whitelock, 'Anglo-Saxon Bishops', p. 11; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 49; J. Blair, 'Frithuwold's Kingdom and the Origins of Surrey', in S. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, Studies in the Early History of Britain (London and New York, NY, 1989), pp. 103-105 and below, pp. 57, 61; for the suggestion that Aldhelm and Wilfrid, like Eorcenwald (above p. 46) influenced the development of early Anglo-Saxon charters, see, Dempsey, 'Legal Terminology', pp. 846-49; Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 104-105; B. Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London and New York, NY, 1995), p. 245.

[21] For Aldhelm, see, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 226-348 and *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 350-471; for Wilfrid, see above, p. 45 n 4.

during his exile. Unfortunately, it lacks both salutation and conclusion, and with it potentially interesting evidence for the men's association. However, it may be significant that William of Malmesbury, who had seen both, refers to Wilfrid as Aldhelm's *amicus venerabilis*.[22] The very existence of a letter indeed suggests that the two men had formed a bond of friendship, which in the early medieval period was a formal relationship that would require them to support each other, especially in times of need.[23] Although the letter also tells us that Aldhelm was well aware of Wilfrid's activities, unfortunately, it cannot be dated, which makes it extremely difficult to know when the churchmen may have become acquainted. Ehwald thought that it was written during Aldhelm's episcopate (705/6), when Wilfrid appealed to the papacy for the final time regarding the loss of his see.[24] However, this is chronologically uncertain, because Wilfrid returned from his last period of exile in 705.[25] The dates of Wilfrid's excommunications do not help, for he was driven from his see in 678, 692 and 703. However, 678 arguably can be ruled out, for there is a good possibility that Aldhelm was studying at the intellectually vibrant School of Canterbury in the 670s and as we will see, it seems possible that he first met Wilfrid in the late 680s.[26] 692 is possible, but as Herren has observed, Aldhelm's letter suggests that Wilfrid's abbots should accompany him overseas and Wilfrid spent this period of exile with King Æthilred of Mercia (675-704).[27] As such, it seems more likely that Aldhelm's letter to Wilfrid's abbots was written in 703,[28] especially since by this date Aldhelm had achieved a position of some importance in the West Saxon church and perhaps, therefore, felt able to influence Wilfrid's abbots. Furthermore, in 703 Wilfrid's followers journeyed

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[22] *GP*, V. 192, p. 337 'venerable friend'.

[23] G. Althoff, 'Friends and Political Order', in Haseldine (ed.), *Friendship*, pp. 92-93.

[24] *AO*, pp. 500-501 n 1.

[25] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. LVIII, pp. 124-27; *LH*, p. 151.

[26] Cf. *LH*, p. 151; for Aldhelm's period of education at Canterbury, see above, pp. 22-23.

[27] *LH*, p. 151; 691 has been suggested as a possibility by J. Godfrey, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 143-44 and D. Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents c. 500-1042* (London, 1955), p. 730.

[28] Goffart favours this date without explanation, W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1988), pp. 263, 263-64 n 138.

to Rome with him, hence overseas as Aldhelm's letter suggests.[29] A date of either 692 or 703, however, would place the letter in the reign of King Aldfrith of Northumbria (686-705). We know that Aldhelm knew Aldfrith for he dedicated a lengthy composite work to the king between 685 x 695 (comprising a biblical exposition on the number 7, a treatise on Latin metre, 100 riddles, together with an introduction and epilogue to the work).[30] In the letter Aldhelm makes it clear that he and Aldfrith are spiritual kin and it is possible that Aldhelm was the king's sacramental sponsor at his confirmation ceremony.[31] Although the spiritual bond created at confirmation had less social significance than those created at baptism, even so, Aldhelm still would have been expected to offer Aldfrith patronage and support thereafter.[32] We do not know why Aldhelm dedicated this work to the king, but it may be significant that he refers to the need to restore their fraternity.[33] One suggestion is that he sent it in 686, to mark Aldfrith's initial restoration of Wilfrid to his Northumbrian see, following the bishop's expulsion by his predecessor King Ecgfrith (670-85).[34] Another is that Aldhelm dedicated the work to the king in the 690s to appease him, because in 692 he too banished Wilfrid from Northumbria.[35] Therefore, Aldhelm wrote a letter in support of Wilfrid and may have dedicated a work to Aldfrith of Northumbria in

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[29] A suggestion made by Herren but with reference to 678, *LH*, p. 151; Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Wilfridi abbates*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 500-502; For Wilfrid journeying to Rome, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. L, pp. 102-103.

[30] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Acircium* (ed.), *AO*, pp. 59-204; For dating problems associated with this text, see *VBOH*, Notes, p. 312; *LH*, p. 12; and, above, p. 21 n 37.

[31] See above, pp. 21-22; It is of interest that after his death (705), Aldfrith's son Osred became Wilfrid's *filius adoptivus*, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi* (ed.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. LIX, at pp. 128-29; Lynch proposes that perhaps he, like Aldhelm, was a sponsor at confirmation, J. H. Lynch, *Christianizing Kinship. Ritual Sponsorship in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), pp. 115-16.

[32] Lynch, *Christianizing Kinship*, pp. 99-121.

[33] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Acircium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 74, l. 26-p. 75, ll. 1-11; admittedly, he suggests that time and distance are the chief causes of their relationship needing to be restored.

[34] *LH*, pp. 32, 199 n 27.

[35] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*. cap. LV, pp. 92-93; admittedly there may not be a political motivation behind Aldhelm's dedication of the work. He and Aldfrith shared a love of learning (perhaps they were even educated together, see above, pp. 21-22) and moreover, Aldhelm may have dedicated it to the king because he was known to have circulated texts, see Bede, *H. E.*, V. 15, pp. 508-509. For an entirely speculative suggestion that the reception of Aldhelm's composite text at Aldfrith's court may have influenced the composition of

response to the bishop's ecclesiastical difficulties. These sources tell us that Aldhelm knew what Wilfrid was up to and may imply that they were friends, possibly as early as 678, but perhaps, more likely, at some stage after this date.

Clearly the written evidence for Aldhelm's ecclesiastical associates can be tantalisingly incomplete. It can also be reticent, for the three men barely are associated in our major written sources, that is Stephen of Ripon's *vita* of Wilfrid, dated between c. 710 and c. 720 and Bede's (c. 673-735) *Historia ecclesiastica*, dated 731.[36] The nearest we get is Wilfrid's hagiographer referring to Archbishop Theodore (602-90) requesting the presence of Eorcenwald and Wilfrid together at a meeting (in 686/7).[37] Yet the lack of evidence in these two sources is not necessarily problematic for they are both Northumbrian-centred narratives which pay little attention to West Saxon affairs.[38] Furthermore, following continental episcopal models, Stephen of Ripon is more interested in Wilfrid's enemies than his friends.[39] Furthermore, if we follow Walter Goffart's suggestion that Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* was written to rival and rectify Stephen's biography of Wilfrid, then Bede is unlikely to have associated him with such important Romanist churchmen as Aldhelm and Eorcenwald. This is because, according to Goffart,

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the *Dream of the Rood*, see, D. K. Braswell, 'The Dream of the Rood and Aldhelm on Sacred Prosopopoeia', *Medieval Studies*, 40 (1978), 461-67.

[36] For Stephen, rather than Eddius Stephanus, being a more accurate identity for Wilfrid's biographer, see Kirby's now orthodox comments, in D. P. Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the "Life of Wilfrid"', *EHR*, 98 (1983), pp. 102-105.

[37] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. XLIII, pp. 86-87.

[38] D. P. Kirby, 'Problems of Early West Saxon History', *EHR*, 80 (1965), pp. 11-12; Bede's representation of West Saxon affairs focus on his informant Daniel's bishropic, rather than that of Aldhelm, D. P. Kirby, 'Bede's Native Sources for the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 48 (1966), pp. 342, 364-65.

[39] P. Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Hagiography', *Past and Present*, 127 (1990), pp. 11-13; W. T. Foley, *Images of Sanctity in Eddius Stephanus' 'Life of Bishop Wilfrid', An Early English Saint's Life* (Lewiston, New York, 1992), pp. 41-46, 76-87 esp.; S. Coates, 'The Role of Bishops in the Early Anglo-Saxon Church: A Reassessment', *History*, 131 (1996), 177-96; for Stephen of Ripon using biblical typology to characterise Wilfrid's turbulent career, see, M. D. Laynesmith, 'Stephen of Ripon and the Bible: Allegorical and Typological Interpretations of the *Life of Wilfrid*', *EME*, 9 (2) (2000), 163-82.

Bede looked to discredit Stephen's claims regarding both Wilfrid's achievements while exiled in Southumbria and his propagation of Roman forms of Christianity.[40]

Charter evidence provides us with firmer, albeit sometimes muddy ground, with which to explore our churchmen's personal acquaintance. Most early Anglo-Saxon charters exist only in later copies and have been altered during the course of their transmission. Yet considerable work has been undertaken on determining their relative authenticity. Moreover, Simon Keynes's study of royal diplomas from the reign of King Æthelred 'the Unready' (978-1016) provides us with an important model for how charters might be used to highlight the effect of ecclesiastical and political groupings on royal politics. Keynes establishes that the witness lists attached to these documents provide reliable evidence for determining which individuals were attending meetings of the king's council at a given time. These lists, he suggests, may be curtailed so that it is difficult to ascertain the order of presence at a council. However, generally they enable us 'to identify and then to characterise those men who were frequently in the king's presence and who may therefore have exercised the strongest influence over him'.[41]

It is true that that diplomas in the reign of Æthelred apparently were drawn up by scribes working in a royal chancery or an ecclesiastical scriptorium, whereas it is thought that seventh-century charters were produced in the 'great churches' of the age.[42] Yet the consistency in many of these charter witness-lists suggests that a fair number have an authentic basis and credibly represent those individuals present at ecclesiastical and royal meetings. These meetings were an important forum for churchmen and laymen to interact

[40] Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 307-24 esp.; Bede is also thought to have established Theodore and Wilfrid in two rival factions. Since Aldhelm was associated with both men he did not fit within this division (Orchard indeed proposes that Aldhelm wrote Theodore's epitaph, Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 277-80). Furthermore, Aldhelm had connections with Oswiu's descendant Aldfrith. Goffart suggests that Bede instead supported the rival royal line of King Ceolwulf, to whom he dedicated this work; for the controversy surrounding Wilfrid's career having an impact on Bede's lives of St Cuthbert, see, A. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', in G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe, *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 115-21; for further differences between Bede's and Stephen of Ripon's representation of Wilfrid, see, G. Isenberg, *Die Würdigung Wilfrieds von York in der Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum Bedas und der Vita Wilfridi des Eddius* (Münster, 1978), pp. 18-57.

[41] S. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready' 978-1016: A Study in their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980), p. xvii.

[42] For the drawing up of diplomas Æthelred's period, see, *Ibid.* and C. Insley, 'Charters and Episcopal Scriptoria in the Anglo-Saxon South-West', *EME*, 7 (2) (1998), 173-97; and for Aldhelm's period, see, Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion*, p. 9.

and debate on ecclesiastical and political issues. It is highly possible that Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid met at church councils which took place regularly, perhaps even yearly, in both Southumbria and Northumbria from 672.[43] These meetings were ordinarily attended by the archbishop and his suffragans, clergymen and abbots, kings and laymen, and there was ample opportunity to network and discuss ideas at them, because they lasted several days.[44] Likewise, royal courts probably had large lay and religious attendance on some occasions, with kings, their courts and churchmen also meeting and feasting at important religious events, such as the foundation and dedication of *monasteria* and their churches.[45] Bishops, accompanied by members of their clergy, are indeed likely to have attended upon kings regularly.

Like the churchmen of King Æthelred's reign, early Anglo-Saxon religious were able to influence kings' decisions when meeting with them in both formal and informal fora. King Ine (688-726) acknowledges the advice of his bishops and churchmen in his famous law-code, dated to c. 690,[46] and in his letter to Archbishop Brihtwold of Canterbury (693-731), sent in 704/5, Bishop Wealdhere of London refers to the ecclesiastics who shared government with the West and East Saxon kings.[47] When Boniface decided to censure the unchristian behaviour of King Æthelbald of Mercia (between 746 x 747), he asked the priest Herefrid to read and interpret a letter that he and seven missionary bishops had written to the king, for it was known that Æthelbald occasionally listened to this priest's advice.[48] Clearly one did not have to be a bishop to offer guidance to kings. Indeed, even as a deacon, Alcuin (c.735-804) offered trenchant

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[43] For Southumbrian synods in Aldhelm's lifetime, see, C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c. 650-c.850* (London, 1995), pp. 18-25, 247-63; for Northumbrian provincial synods, see, *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, 18-19, 289-90; for Aldhelm's attendance at synods, see above, pp. 35-42.

[44] Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 25, 39-49.

[45] J. Campbell, 'Anglo-Saxon Courts', in C. Cubitt (ed.), *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages. The Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, III (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 155-56, 162, 165.

[46] The Laws of Ine, (ed.), F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, (3 vols, Halle, 1898-1916), vol. I, *prologus*, pp. 88-89.

[47] P. Chaplais, 'The Letter from Bishop Wealdhere of London to Archbishop Brihtwold of Canterbury: The Earliest Original "Letter Close" Extant in the West', in M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (eds.), *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries. Essays Presented to N. R. Ker* (London, 1978), p. 22.

[48] Tangl, 74, pp. 155-56.

advice to both Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian kings.[49] Furthermore, in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede portrays Archbishop Paulinus (625-33) as King Edwin's (d. 633) instructor and Bishop Aidan (d. 651) as King Oswald's (d. 642) religious advisor. Whilst this shows the influence of these bishops over kings, at the same time, the monk and priest Bede no doubt intended to provide exemplary models for his text's dedicatee, King Ceolwulf.[50]

Charter witness lists thus have the potential to identify which churchmen were in regular contact with each other and the kings that they were able to exert influence over. Now let us see what they can tell us about Aldhelm and his associates.

2. 3 Interaction around the West Saxon Court

It is in a charter witness-list that we can begin to explore Aldhelm's, Eorcenwald's and Wilfrid's interaction around the remarkably expansionist King Cædwalla, for the circumstances of his brief two-year reign (686-88) appear to have drawn our churchmen together. In this document, which generally is thought to date to 688, all three of our churchmen attest Cædwalla's grant of lands at Farnham in Surrey to three lay men for the building of a *monasterium*. This charter has been subject to much analysis and is thought to be authentic.[51] A likely historical context for the king's grant is the control that he had gained recently over the Kingdom of Surrey, for Heather Edwards has shown that Cædwalla, who became the most powerful ruler of the time in southern England, was in the habit of granting his conquered estates to *monasteria*.[52] As well as alienating swathes of land from potential claimants, this enabled the king to integrate himself into the

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[49] See Alcuin, *Epistolae*, 16, 18, 30, 108-109, (ed.), E. Dümmler, *Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, II, MGH, Epistolarum, IV (Berlin, 1895), pp. 42-44, 49-52, 71-72, 155, 156.

[50] Bede, *H. E.*, II. 14, pp. 186-87, III. 3, pp. 218-21, III. 14, pp. 258-59.

[51] The grant is S235, see, Kelly, 'S235', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20227-37.html>; the date is debated slightly, since the incarnational year and first given indiction do not agree. Whilst it is generally dated to 688, some scholars suggest that a date range between 685-87 is more likely (see, for example, Scharer, *Angelsächsische Königsurkunde*, pp. 138-39). Although it has been argued that 688 is impossible as Wilfrid was no longer in exile in Southumbria by this year, this argument is not valid, for Wilfrid maintained connections with the Southumbrian church after his reinstatement to his Northumbrian see, see below, pp. 59-60.

conquered region (gift giving was foremost a means to secure loyalty) and to recruit an 'army of prayer' to secure the continued success and stability of his kingdom.[53] It was by gaining control of South Saxon lands and London that Cædwalla brought Eorcenwald and Wilfrid into the sphere of West Saxon influence where Aldhelm was active already. The witness list to the Farnham grant tells us that our churchmen were all present at one meeting with the king at least. Provided that it has not been curtailed or changed, it also hints at the three men's possible positions of influence at this meeting, for Aldhelm is the first abbot to subscribe and Wilfrid the first of three bishops, over and above the West Saxon Bishop Hæddi (676-705/6), who appears third. As for Eorcenwald, in addition to his subscription, his further involvement in the Farnham grant is strongly suspected, because it has diplomatic links to charters for his communities at Barking in Essex and Chertsey in Surrey, raising the possibility that one of his monks may have written it.[54]

Only the Farnham charter links all three of our churchmen together. Even so, their activities in the same ecclesiastical circles, mainly during and after Cædwalla's reign, is suggested further by their shared association with other individuals in the witness list to this grant. Thus the king and all three churchmen, sometimes two of them in tandem, attest a number of different charters with Hagona, the abbot of an unknown *monasterium* and with the layman Cisi.[55] This suggests that they were present at a number of the same

[52] *CEW*, pp. 136-37; see also, J. Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey: Land Holding, Church and Settlement before 1300* (Stroud, 1991), p. 8.

[53] For these potential motivations for royal monastic patronage, see, K. J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society* (London, 1979), pp. 64, 68-70 esp.; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 55-56, 110; M. de Jong, *In Samuel's Image. Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 229-31, 245-52 esp., citation at 246.

[54] Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion*, pp. 9-10; Scharer, *Angelsächsische Königsurkunde*, pp. 129-41.

[55] For Hagona, see, S1248, S233 and S245. S1248 is an interpolated charter which may have an authentic basis, see, Kelly, 'S1248', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201244-1409.html>; S233 is a fabricated charter which may have some authentic basis, see, Kelly, 'S233', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20227-37.html>; There is some debate over the authenticity of S245, although the witness list has been deemed genuine, see, Kelly, 'S245', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20238-69.html>; for Cisi, see, S1248, S231 and S1170. As suggested, S1248 may have an authentic basis; there is some debate regarding the authenticity of S231, but it may have a genuine basis, see, Kelly, 'S231', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%20227-37.html>; whilst some scholars deem S1170 to be spurious, others regard it to be basically authentic, see, Kelly, 'S1170', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-

royal and church councils where these probably were witnessed. Furthermore, our churchmen all have independent associations with King Cædwalla and appear to have been in a position to influence the king.

Let us start with Aldhelm and Cædwalla. Two broadly trustworthy charters, which probably date to 688 and perhaps arise from the same council, suggest that Cædwalla made a generous land grant to Malmesbury *monasterium* and confirmed an earlier land exchange between Aldhelm and the West Saxon subordinate ruler, Baldred.[56] Aldhelm of course presided over this *monasterium* which was situated on the West Saxon kingdom's northern border with the Mercian satellite kingdom of the Hwicce. Cædwalla had recently conquered land in this unstable border area and perhaps needed to secure the community's allegiance, for previously it had benefited from Mercian patronage.[57] It is conceivable that Cædwalla also sought Aldhelm's alliance because he was a highly trained churchman, who had been active in the West Saxon Church since the early 680s and who probably attended councils with his predecessor, Centwine (c. 676-85).[58] Aldhelm thus attended one and perhaps even two meetings with the king in 688: hence the same year as the Farnham grant. They may, however, have met more frequently.

As for Wilfrid, this churchman apparently became one of Cædwalla's closest advisors when he was exiled in the south between 681 and 686/7, that is, after Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury and King Ecgfrith of Northumbria confiscated his enormous Northumbrian diocese.[59] According to Wilfrid's biographer Stephen, the two men met in Sussex in 686. The bishop then helped the exiled king remove his enemies (including

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eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>; the observation that both Hagona and Cisi occur in these charters is made by Edwards, *CEW*, p. 132.

[56] The charter is S231, for its status, see above, pp. 55-56 n 55; note that Edwards suggests that S234 may preserve elements of S231 along with a genuine grant by Centwine (*CEW*, pp. 97-100), otherwise S234 is deemed to be spurious, see, Kelly, 'S234', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/eSawyer.99/S%20227-37.html>; for the exchange, see S1170, for the status of this charter, see above, p. 56 n 55; here I follow Edwards' interpretation of this charter as a confirmation, see, *CEW*, pp. 94-97; I also agree with Edwards that this charter and the Farnham grant may have been attested at the same council, *CEW*, 96.

[57] For West-Saxon and Mercian politically-inspired patronage of Malmesbury, see, *CEW*, pp. 81, 92-127 *passim*.

[58] For the possibility that Centwine himself was a patron of Malmesbury and that his grant is perhaps recorded in S234, see, *CEW*, pp. 99-100.

[59] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. XLII, pp. 84-85.

Wilfrid's former ally the South Saxon King Æthelwealh) in his successful bid to gain the West Saxon throne. In return, Cædwalla made Wilfrid his chief counsellor and gave him generous landed endowments.[60] Although Wilfrid's ready support of this expansionist king has sometimes been doubted,[61] as Nick Higham has proposed, Wilfrid may have deliberately allied himself to Cædwalla because he recognised that he might develop the power to promote his reinstatement to the Northumbrian diocese.[62]

Turning now to Eorcenwald's association with Cædwalla, this bishop became involved in the West Saxon Church after the king took control of his London see from the Mercians. This explains why Eorcenwald may have witnessed and even influenced Cædwalla's seemingly politically inspired church donations in Kent and Essex.[63] Thus a fabricated charter, which may conflate genuine early grants, records that in 687 he witnessed Cædwalla's grant of land in Hoo, Kent, to an Abbot Ecgbald and his *familia*.[64] If this transaction took place, then it probably related to the king's expansion into Kent. Cædwalla was also remembered as a generous patron of Barking, a *monasterium* situated in Essex, near to the East Saxon border, which Eorcenwald had been involved in founding.[65] Presumably Cædwalla had recently conquered the land in Surrey that he purportedly bestowed upon the community.

The evidence I have gathered, thus far, suggests that Aldhelm, Wilfrid and Eorcenwald moved in circles around King Cædwalla in his short two-year reign. This

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[60] For a possible charter recording one of these land grants, see, *BCS*, no. 50.

[61] See, for example, B. W. Wells, 'Eddi's Life of Wilfrid', *EHR*, 6 (1891), p. 546.

[62] N. Higham, 'Bishop Wilfrid in Southern England: A Review of his Political Objectives', *Studien zur Sachsenforschung*, 13 (1999), pp. 215-16 esp.; This indeed occurred between 686/7. Note that this does not necessarily cause problems for dating the Farnham grant, for, as we shall see, Wilfrid maintained strong links with the Southumbrian church and is found on further charter witness-lists from this period, see below, pp. 59-60.

[63] Whitelock, 'Some Anglo-Saxon Bishops of London', p, 8; for churchmen influencing kings on the location of minsters, see, J. Blair, 'Minster Churches in the Landscape', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988), p. 38.

[64] S233, for this charter's status, see above, p. 55 n 55.

[65] The charter is S1246, for its status, see above, p. 47 n 15; for the founding of Barking Abbey, see, Bede., *H. E.*, VI. 6, pp. 354-57 at 354-55 and Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 54; for a discussion of Cædwalla's grant, including its political context, see, Hart, *Charters of Eastern England*, pp. 121, 133, 144; previously the community had received Mercian patronage as part of this kingdom's struggle for hegemony in this area, see, *Ibid.*, pp. 142-44.

involved all three in the king's politically inspired monastic land donations, with Eorcenwald, Wilfrid and perhaps even Aldhelm, in a position to influence the king's decisions. It is of significant interest that these churchmen may have met whilst witnessing the Farnham grant, especially if it does date to 688, because in this year Cædwalla abdicated, renouncing the secular life in order to travel to Rome to be baptised.[66] He was one of a number of kings who abdicated in their prime for religious reasons. A number of scholars have conjectured that Wilfrid was involved in this event, because not only was he Cædwalla's advisor, but he was also a frequent visitor to Rome and had hoped to end his own days there.[67] Yet since Aldhelm and Eorcenwald were in the king's presence in this period, it is possible that they were somehow involved in his decision. This is a topic to which I shall return, but first, I want to consider our three churchmen's continued associations after Cædwalla's reign.

There is a strong probability that Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid remained in contact for the rest of their lives. Aldhelm and Eorcenwald are likely to have maintained connections at the court of Cædwalla's successor, Ine. We know that Eorcenwald was a prominent ecclesiastical advisor to Ine, for the king's law-code acknowledges the support that he had received from *Eorcenwoldes mines biscepes*.[68] Eorcenwald was in a position to counsel Ine because the king had inherited control of his London see from Cædwalla.[69] Ine's laws may derive from a meeting of the king's council, and, if so, Aldhelm, who attended councils, is likely to have attended this alongside Eorcenwald.[70] Ine's Laws refer to many churchmen influencing these promulgations and single out the support of Bishop Hædd, who Aldhelm worked alongside.[71] Aldhelm would have also been in a good position to advise the king, having undertaken legal studies at Canterbury.[72] Indeed, it is

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[66] Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* III, (ed.), *AO*, p. 14, ll. 19-32; Bede, *H. E.*, V. 7, pp. 470-73.

[67] K. H. Krüger, 'Königskonversionen im 8. Jahrhundert', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 7 (1973), pp. 178, 183; Farmer, 'St. Wilfrid', p. 51; C. Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', in P. Wormald with D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 170-71; *CEW*, p. 137; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 137.

[68] The Laws of Ine, (ed.), Liebermann, *Gesetze*, prologus, p. 88 'Eorcenwald my bishop'.

[69] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edn., Oxford, 1971), p. 73.

[70] C. Cubitt, pers. comm.

[71] The Laws of Ine, (ed.), Liebermann, *Gesetze*, prologus, p. 88.

certainly possible that Aldhelm was active during the early years of Ine's reign; although charter evidence links him with Ine mainly after Eorcenwald's death (c. 693), even so, Aldhelm undoubtedly maintained associations with the West Saxon court throughout the late 680s to early 690s, since by 704 he appears to have risen to the position of prominent advisor to King Ine.[73] He could have met Eorcenwald at a number of church and royal councils in the early years of Ine's reign.

Wilfrid appears to have maintained links with Aldhelm and Eorcenwald after his reinstatement to the Northumbrian diocese. Aldhelm of course wrote a letter to Wilfrid's abbots, perhaps in 702, and Wilfrid is present on land grants that Eorcenwald made in the late 680s and early 690s.[74] Clearly Wilfrid continued to have contact with the friends he had made and the monastic communities he had founded during his period of exile in the south. It is within this context that we should understand Wilfrid's appearance on further Southumbrian monastic grants of this period. Thus, for example, between 692 and 709, the South Saxon princess Nothgyth, whose monastic foundation charter Aldhelm had attested, granted land to Wilfrid in Sussex, and between 676 and 693 he conferred land grants to two different abbesses in the province of the Hwicce.[75] Indeed, Wilfrid founded

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[72] A. S. Cook, 'Aldhelm's Legal Studies', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 23 (1924), 105-13; Dempsey, 'Legal Terminology', pp. 846-49.

[73] See the broadly trustworthy S243, in which Ine, apparently acting on Aldhelm's advice, exempted West Saxon churches and *monasteria* from taxes and secular burdens, see, Kelly, 'S243', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/eSawyer.99/S%20238-69.html >; for Aldhelm attending Ine's court and being close to the king, see also, the remarks of M. Lapidge, ' "Beowulf", Aldhelm, the "Liber Monstrorum" and Wessex', *Studi Medievali*, Third Series, 23 (1), (1982), 151-92, repr. and rev. *Idem., Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), at pp. 275-76.

[74] For these land grants, see below, p. 60, for the letter to Wilfrid's abbots, see above, pp. 49-51.

[75] The grant from Nothgyth to Wilfrid is S1172; the grants to the Hwiccian abbesses are S51 and S53; S1172 is probably authentic, see, Kelly, 'S1172', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>, and, for an edition and analysis of this charter, see, S. E. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Selsey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters, VI (Oxford, 1998), pp. 13-22; S51 is an interpolated charter that is generally thought to have an authentic basic, see, Kelly, 'S51', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%2051-63.html>; S53 is thought to be authentic, see, Kelly, 'S53', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%2051-63.html>; for the synods at which the latter two transactions are thought to have taken place, see, Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 40, 250, 259; for Aldhelm attesting Nothgyth's foundation charter, see above, pp. 37-38.

monasteria in Mercia.[76] Since Wilfrid is known to have travelled widely in England and on the continent, we can expect him to have visited these communities, as well as his friends and his colleagues, after he had returned to the north.

Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid therefore may have met at the court of Cædwalla and maintained their connections thereafter. With this in mind, let us consider how Aldhelm's connections with these churchmen may have influenced his choice of dedicatees for his double treatise *De virginitate*.

2. 4 Aldhelm's Dedicatees

Aldhelm's connections with Eorcenwald and Wilfrid may help to explain why Abbess Hildelith of Barking (fl. 700) is the first named dedicatee of Aldhelm's *Prosa de virginitate*, for all three churchmen had mutual connections with her community.[77] Eorcenwald, as suggested, was involved in founding this *monasterium*, perhaps in the 680s, and he remained a keen patron of it.[78] Indeed, Wilfrid witnesses both of Eorcenwald's probably genuine land grants to Barking (dated 687/8 and 693).[79] As for Aldhelm, he evidently knew Hildelith well enough to address his work to her and one wonders whether his connections with the abbess were forged or strengthened through Eorcenwald.[80]

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[76] See, for example, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi* (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. XL, pp. 80-81.

[77] Aldhelm, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, prologus, pp. 228, l. 28-229, l. 1; for the Hildelith in Aldhelm's *PdV* representing Hildelith of Barking, see below, pp. 75-76.

[78] Although the date of foundation has been put at c. 666, there is evidence to place it in the 680s instead, see, S. Foot, *Veiled Women: Female Religious Communities in England, 871-1066* (2 vols, Aldershot, 2000), vol. II, p. 27 n 1.

[79] These are S1246 and S1248. For the status of S1246, see above, p. 47 n 15; for the status of S1248, see above, p. 55 n 55.

[80] Yorke has conjectured that the two men even collaborated on monastic issues, since Eorcenwold and the community of Barking appear to have had much influence on female *monasteria* in Wessex, perhaps via Aldhelm's endorsement. She finds evidence for this in many of the female Bonifatian correspondents' indebtedness to Aldhelm's Latin style, see, B. Yorke, 'The Bonifacian Mission and Female Religious in Wessex', *EME*, 7 (2) (1998), p. 163. However, as we shall see, it is more likely that this relates to the work's multiple dedication and Aldhelm's own efforts to circulate it, see below, pp. 72-85, 87-89.

It is also striking that a good number of the charters which Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid witnessed, were related to West Saxon expansionist politics. This is true, for example, of Caedwalla's grants to *monasteria* at Farnham in Surrey, Malmesbury in Wiltshire and Hoo in Kent. It is also true of Barking, which was situated in Essex, a kingdom fought over by rival kings, including Cædwalla, as part of his expansion north of the Thames. This is significant when, as we shall see in Chapter Three, Aldhelm's double treatise may in fact have been dedicated to a number of abbesses, who presided over double *monasteria* in areas over which the West Saxon kings had control or sought integration.[81] Aldhelm's ecclesiastical associates thus provide an important context in which to consider the dedication of his double treatise; as well, they provide an important context for interpreting the texts' spiritual advice.

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[81] See below, pp. 72-85; It is worth noting that all three men have been connected with Bath *monasterium* and that Scott Gwara identifies Beorngyth as the second abbess of Bath and a dedicatee of Aldhelm's double treatise (*AM*, p. 51). Wilfrid and Eorcenwald therefore appear on the witness list to S51 (dated to between 675 and c. 700), which Sims-Williams has identified as the foundation charter of Bath. He has also argued tentatively that the charter's proem may be contemporary and perhaps was even coined by Aldhelm himself (P. Sims-Williams, 'St. Wilfrid and Two Charters dated AD 676 and 680', *JEH*, 39 (2) (1988), pp. 165-74). Scott Gwara instead has suggested that the charter was forged at Bath in c. 700 and that its use of Aldhelmian Latin perhaps provides evidence for the community's access to a copy of Aldhelm's *PdV* by this date (*AM*, pp. 53-54). However, there are a number of problems with these suggestions. First, the proem of S51 has been interpolated and rewritten (for the status of the charter, see above, p. 59 n 75). Second, the charter's connections with Bath have been challenged (see, *CEW*, pp. 218-23). Third, Stenton and Edwards have argued that Beorngyth is not the second abbess of Bath, but instead, is abbess of a *monasterium* in Mercia, see, *CEW*, pp. 211-14 and F. M. Stenton, 'St. Frideswide and her Times', in D. M. Stenton (ed.), *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1970), p. 225 and below, pp. 77-78.
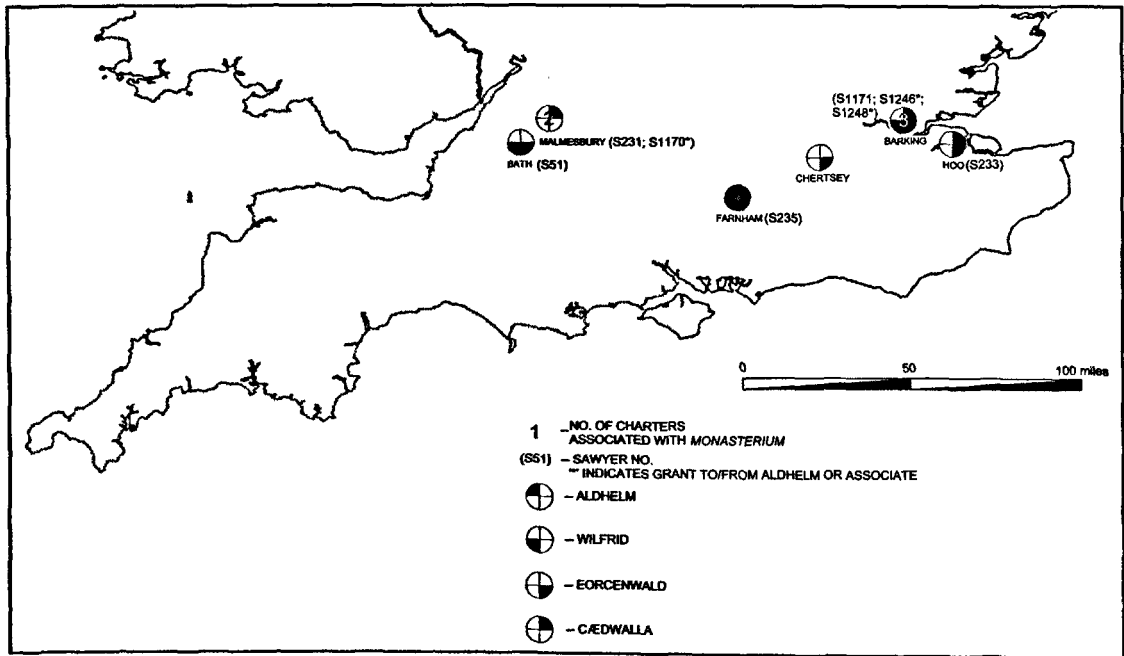
Map 2. The location of religious communities receiving charters witnessed by Aldhelm and his associates

2. 5 Abdicating Kings

To compile his spiritual guidance Aldhelm drew upon patristic literature on the subjects of virginity and asceticism, yet reformulated its ideas in concession to his recently converted audience, the majority of which were formerly-married high-status religious. His concern was to teach his audience the meanings and rewards of social and sexual renunciation. As an active churchman Aldhelm must have been aware, therefore, that his spiritual guidance was potentially contentious, for, as we shall see in the forthcoming chapters, in early England tensions arose as Christian renunciation challenged existing secular codes of behaviour. Whilst adult renunciation was deemed inspiring and empowering to some elements of religious and secular society, to others it appeared odd, incomprehensible, even threatening.[82] This needs to be kept in mind as I now turn to connect Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid to a number of Anglo-Saxon kings, who abdicated, often in their prime, in order to enter a *monasterium* or to undertake lifelong pilgrimage to Rome.

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[82] See below, pp. 105-10, 119-20, 157-58.

Claire Stancliffe's illuminating study of Anglo-Saxon kings who 'opted out' of society shows that this phenomenon, which may have been influenced by Irish ascetic teachings, peaked between 685-710. Crucially for us, she postulates that 'Wilfrid was the chief inspirer' of pilgrim kings. This is because he is the first Anglo-Saxon known to have expressed a desire to go on pilgrimage to Rome (in c. 652), which he did whilst living in the Irish community at Lindisfarne. He had also hoped to remain in the city permanently when he visited in 704. More significantly, Wilfrid was friends or associated with many kings who planned to take or undertook pilgrimages. They include, among others, Alchfrith, sub-king of Deira and his father Oswiu (d. 670). Furthermore, although the trend for kings to undertake pilgrimages to Rome probably needed little prompting once it had become established, nonetheless, in 709, the same year that Wilfrid died, Cenred of Mercia (d. c. 709) renounced his throne and together with King Offa of the East Saxons (c. 694 x 709), travelled to Rome to become a monk. Wilfrid had been friends with this king as well.[83] I find Stancliffe's hypothesis convincing, but I would like to add two further possibilities. These are, first, that Wilfrid encouraged royalty to abdicate not only to go on pilgrimage, but also to enter the monastic life; and, second, that Wilfrid did not work alone, for Eorcenwald and moreover, Aldhelm, were also involved.[84]

Let us start with Wilfrid's promotion of adult renunciation for the monastic life. Wilfrid was involved in the high-profile marriage renunciation of the Virgin-Queen Æthelthryth, who apparently yearned to relinquish the secular world and her marriage to the Northumbria King Ecgfrith, in order to lead a fully religious life. In his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede tells us that it was only at length, with difficulty and moreover, with Wilfrid's help, that Æthelthryth (d. 679) gained Ecgfrith's permission to enter the *monasterium* of Coldingham.[85] Indeed, although historians have postulated many reasons why Theodore and Ecgfrith banished Wilfrid from the kingdom in 678, hence at the time of the queen's entry to the religious life, one of these is likely to have been Wilfrid's direct involvement in Æthelthryth's decision to become a nun.[86] If Aldhelm knew Wilfrid by c.

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[83] Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', pp. 156-57, 170-71, citation at170; Krüger also points to the possible Irish influences behind the trend, see, 'Königskonversionen', p. 183; note that Goffart attributes the story of Cenred and Offa journeying to Rome to Bede's anti-Wilfrid sentiment, rather than reality, see, Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 323-24.

[84] For all we know, Aldhelm could have been the impetus.

[85] Bede, *H. E.*, IV. 19, pp. 392-93.

678 — and this is a moot point – then he may have been aware of Æthelthryth's actions. While the abdication of a queen is not in the same league as that of a king, it does, however, demonstrate that Wilfrid was ready to encourage royalty to abandon the secular life in favour of a monastic existence. To this end, it is worth noting that he was also in a strong position to influence his friend and patron King Æthilred of Mercia, who in 704 abdicated to enter the *monasterium* of Bardney.[87] This is because from the second half of the 680s at least, Æthilred was a friend, patron and protector to Wilfrid.[88] Even though Wilfrid was petitioning the Pope in the year of Æthilred's abdication, he was quick to visit the king on his return to England in 705.[89] Aldhelm no doubt would have been interested to hear about the king's abdication, since Æthilred previously had made two land grants to him and consented to two others. [90]

It is indeed possible that both Aldhelm and Eorcenwald helped to inspire royalty to join the religious life. It may be significant that Eorcenwald can be associated with the devout East Saxon King Sæbbi (c. 664-94), who, after a thirty-year reign and a severe bout of illness, eventually managed to persuade his wife to let him enter a *monasterium*.[91] In

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[86] For alternative political reasons, see, for example, E. John, 'The Social and Political Problems of the Early English Church', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Land, Church and People: Essays Presented to H. P. R. Finberg, Agricultural Historical Review, Supplement*, 18 (1970), p. 51; D. P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), pp. 106-107; for religious reasons, related mainly to Wilfrid's possible ambitions to create a Northumbrian Archdiocese, see, M. Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York', *Speculum*, 48 (2) (1973), 213-46, a review generally rejected until recently reinstated by Pelteret, 'St. Wilfrid', pp. 168-80 and moreover, T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 429-38; for his banishment being related to the creation of new sees, see, C. Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's "Usurping Bishops": Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600-c.800 ', *Northern History*, XXV (1989), 18-38.

[87] Bede, *H. E.*, V. 19, pp. 528-29 and V. 24, pp. 566-67.

[88] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, caps. XLIII, pp. 88-91 cap. XLV, pp. 92-93, cap. XLVII, pp. 96-97, cap. XLVIII, pp. 100-101, cap. LI, pp. 106-107, cap. LVII, pp. 124-25 cf. cap. XL, pp. 80-81; *H. E.*, V. 19, pp. 528-29.

[89] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. LVII, pp. 124-25; Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', p. 155 n. 5.

[90] The grants are S71 and S1246, made in 681 and 685 respectively. For S71, which is thought to be broadly trustworthy, see, Kelly, 'S71', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/ chartwww/eSawyer.99/S%2067-81.html>; for S1246, see above, p. 47 n 15; Æthilred confirms S1169, dated to 685, although some scholars dispute the authenticity of this charter, see, Kelly, 'S1169', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>; he also confirms the Old English version of Pope Sergius's privilege for Malmesbury, see the forthcoming edition in C. Rauer, 'Pope Sergius I's Privilege for Malmesbury'; William also tells us that Aldhelm was friends with Æthilred, *GP*, V. 217, p. 363, V. 222, p. 374.

the last decade of Sæbbi's rule Eorcenwald had access to the king, who appears to have witnessed a grant to Barking Abbey.[92] This in itself does not provide evidence for Eorcenwald's involvement in his abdication, not least because Sæbbi renounced his kingdom the year after the bishop died. However, Barbara Yorke has made a good case for Eorcenwald being a member of East Saxon rather than Kentish royalty as is supposed traditionally.[93] This provides a reason why the king entered St Paul's, where Eorcenwald was buried.[94] Moreover, the tradition of Sæbbi's renunciation was preserved at the bishop's monastic foundation at Barking as part of the wider hagiographical efforts of none other than Abbess Hildelith: Aldhelm's dedicatee.[95]

More striking, however, is the West Saxon King Centwine's abdication to enter a *monasterium*. The king's entry to the monastic life is known only from a dedicatory *titulus*, written by Aldhelm (688 x 701) to commemorate the consecration of Centwine's daughter Bugga's monastic church.[96] Stancliffe has proposed that Aldhelm, as a commanding figure who advocated celibacy, possibly influenced the king's decision.[97] This is possible, particularly given that he may have been a patron of Malmesbury Abbey.[98] Aldhelm's poem may be seen as both a celebration and a legitimisation of the king's renunciation, especially since he is only the second Anglo-Saxon king known to

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[91] Bede, *H. E.*, IV. 11, pp. 364-69.

[92] The grant is S1171, which is though to be an authentic charter, see, Kelly, 'S1171', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>.

[93] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 54-56.

[94] Bede, *H. E.*, IV. 6, 11; a later, unverifiable tradition, claims that Sæbbi and Eorcenwald granted lands and a privilege to St Paul's in London, see, Whitelock, 'Some Anglo-Saxon Bishops', p. 9; note also that Offa of the East Saxons, who went on pilgrimage with Cenred to Rome, was Sæbbi's nephew, see below, p. 69.

[95] Bede, *H. E.*, IV. 9-10, pp. 362-65.

[96] Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* III, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 14-15, ll. 4-16; For the dating of this poem, see above, p. 35 n 113.

[97] Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', p. 170.

[98] For his possible patronage, see, *CEW*, pp. 99-100; for Centwine's confirmation of one of Aldhelm's land exchanges, see, S1170 and Edwards interpretation of it, *CEW*, pp. 94-97, for the status of S1170, see above, p. 56 n 55; Aldhelm and Centwine also appear on the witness list to S237, which is a revised and interpolated charter, which probably has an authentic basis, see, Kelly, 'S237', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/eSawyer.99/S%20227-37.html>.

have abdicated.[99] The first was Sigeberht of East Anglia (in c. 631), whose actions had not gained total acceptance, for his people ultimately dragged him from his *monasterium* to fulfil his duties as a warrior king.[100] Moreover, it is of great significance that Aldhelm wrote this *titulus* for Abbess Bugga's church, when, as we shall see in Chapter Three, she may have been a dedicatee of Aldhelm's double treatise *De virginitate*.

Another notable renunciation episode is recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, where we are told that Cuthburh (d. 718), sister of the West Saxon King Ine, and wife of Aldfrith of Northumbria, left her marriage to enter the religious life.[101] As mentioned above, Aldhelm dedicated a composite work to King Aldfrith between 685 and 695, and in it refers to acting as his spiritual sponsor some 20 years earlier. Moreover, he was a religious advisor to King Ine. We do not know when Cuthburh left her marriage to Aldfrith, but it is possible that the king's expulsion of Wilfrid in 691/2 had something to do with his involvement in this.[102] Since Aldhelm had connections with the courts of Aldfrith and Ine, we are left to speculate the degree to which he was aware of, if not involved in, her marriage renunciation and whether this provides another reason why he sent the king a composite work?[103] His possible knowledge of Cuthburh's renunciation is important, when, as we shall see in Chapter Three, she too has been identified as a recipient of his double treatise.[104]

Our final piece of evidence that Aldhelm and Eorcenwald possibly worked alongside Wilfrid to support and/or encourage royalty to abdicate is found in the renunciation of the West Saxon King Cædwalla. As I outlined earlier, in 688, after a two-

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[99] Notably, Wilfrid apparently did not have a favourable relationship with King Centwine, see, Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. XLII, pp. 80-81. In this instance, therefore, Aldhelm may have been operating alone.

[100] Bede, *H.E.*, III. 18, pp. 268-69 and see below, p. 158.

[101] In the entry for 718. See, for example, *MS B*, (ed.), S. Taylor, ASCCE, 4 (Cambridge, 1983), p. 24; *MS C*, (ed.), K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, ASCCE, 5 (Cambridge, 2001), p. 44; *MS D*, (ed.), G. P. Cubbin, ASCCE, 6 (Cambridge, 1996), p. 10.

[102] See above, pp. 50-51.

[103] Furthermore, it is of interest that Aldfrith is connected with Aldhelm, since Bede tells us that the king was friends with Drythelm, who renounced his marriage to become a monk. Indeed, Aldfrith requested that Drythelm should be admitted to the *monasterium* of Melrose and regularly visited the monk to hear about his visions, Bede, *H. E.*, V. 12, pp. 496-97. In a world steeped in story telling, it is possible that Aldhelm learnt about Drythelm's renunciation via Aldfrith.

[104] See below, pp. 76-77.

year reign, this king abdicated and undertook lifelong pilgrimage to Rome. Wilfrid is thought to have influenced the king's decision, because he was Cædwalla's prominent counsellor, a frequent visitor to Rome, and moreover, a promoter of royal pilgrimage.[105] However, as we have seen, Aldhelm and Eorcenwald were also valued by the king and may have had at least one meeting with him in the year of his abdication. Moreover, Aldhelm apparently was responsible for preserving the tradition of Cædwalla's abdication, which he records for West Saxon posterity in the same dedicatory epithet as that of Centwine.[106] Perhaps because he too had journeyed to Rome, Aldhelm can relay evocatively how in cold and turbulent weathers Cædwalla sailed to the Continent and then crossed the stormy Alps. The Pope and Roman clergy, he reveals, received the king joyously, but following baptism he died (in 689). Although he does not name the Pope (perhaps because he was still alive and his audience knew that he was in office), he was Sergius I (687-701), from whom Aldhelm secured a papal privilege.[107]

In sum, many factors suggest that Wilfrid, chief inspirer of royal *peregrinatio*, may have had supporters in Aldhelm and Eorcenwald. Since Cædwalla's royal pilgrimage was the first to be carried out to fruition and is thought to have inspired others, they may have had a role in establishing this royal tradition in England, perhaps with a view to providing models for other members of the elite to emulate.[108] Early Anglo-Saxon royal abdications peaked between 685-710: hence ending the year after Wilfrid's and Aldhelm's deaths, which itself may be a testimony to the extent of their influence. Of the six early Anglo-Saxon kings who abdicated to enter the monastic life, Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid knew three. Of the five kings who went or planned to go on pilgrimage to Rome, they knew four directly.[109] One of the last followers of lifelong *peregrinatio* was King Ine, to whom both Aldhelm and Eorcenwald had been prominent advisors. Aldhelm thus knew

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[105] See above, pp. 47, 56-57, 63-64.

[106] Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* III, (ed.), *AO*, p. 14, ll. 19-32; *H. E.*, V. 7, pp. 470-73; Orchard proposes that Bede's account of Cædwalla is based on Aldhelm's *titulus*, see, *Idem.*, *Poetic Art*, p. 257, cf. *LH*, p. 235 n 20; *LR*, p. 235 n 20; note, however, that Bede supplements it with further detail.

[107] *LR*, p. 235 n 19; for the implications of Aldhelm's reference to Sergius by the periphrasis *clementia Romae* in this poem, see, Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 211-12.

[108] As for example, Boniface thought that King Æthelbald should provide an exemplary model for his people, see, Tangl 74, p. 156.

[109] For all of these individuals, see, Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', pp. 154-57.

first hand all three abdicating West Saxon kings and preserved the traditions of two of these. Finally, if Irish ascetic teachings and favourable attitudes to monk-kings did inspire early Anglo-Saxon kings' abdications, as Stancliffe suggests, then it may be important that Irishmen also trained Aldhelm.[110]

The exact nature of our churchmen's involvement in these kings' abdications is difficult to determine. However, despite continental and Anglo-Saxon evidence for kings being tonsured involuntarily (including Ceolwulf to whom Bede dedicated his *Historia ecclesiastica*), it seems that some early Anglo-Saxon kings chose to 'opt out'.[111] Bede tells us that Ine left the kingdom to younger men and Stephen of Ripon tells us that before Æthilred entered his own monastic foundation at Bardney he had appointed his successor Coenred to whom he continued to proffer religious and political advice.[112] Similarly, Sigeberht of East Anglia entered his own monastic foundation after appointing a kinsman as his successor.[113] As a consequence, these kings, together with Sæbbi, who Bede suggests desired to renounce his secular life, seem to have entered the religious life voluntarily.[114] Other kings' abdications, such as that of Centwine, admittedly are more ambiguous. On the one hand, we know that Cædwalla was keen to gain the throne, indeed using Wilfrid's help to do so, providing a context in which the king may have been forced to abdicate. But on the other hand, it will have been rather tactless for Aldhelm to have celebrated the king's renunciation in a *titulus* to the king's daughter had he been tonsured unwillingly.[115] It is certainly possible that some royal houses saw the benefits of kings' religious retirements. Æthilred, Sæbbi and Ine abdicated after long reigns of 30 years or more (and Sæbbi after illness as well), and although Cædwalla and Offa of the East Saxons

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[110] See above, pp. 20-22.

[111] See, for example, those cases cited by Krüger, 'Königskonversionen', p. 177, 180-83; Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', pp. 155-56, 158; S. J. Ridyard, 'Monk-Kings and the Anglo-Saxon Hagiographic Tradition', *The Haskins Society Journal. Studies in Medieval History*, 6 (1994), pp. 22-23; note, however, that Ceolwulf returned to the throne after this forced tonsure, although he later chose to retire into a *monasterium*, appointing a successor when he did so.

[112] Bede, *H. E.*, V. 7, p. 472; Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. LVIII, pp. 124-25.

[113] Bede, *H. E.*, III. 18, pp. 268-69.

[114] Krüger, 'Königskonversionen', pp. 177-79: note that Krüger does not include Ine in his observation.

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 179; cf. Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', p. 155.

were much younger, like Cenred of Mercia, they died soon after reaching Rome.[116] It would have made for wise and peaceful succession politics to have a younger and healthier king rule.[117] It may also be significant that three consecutive West Saxon kings (admittedly of different, albeit related lines) abdicated, that Northumbrian father and son, Alchfrith and Oswiu, had planned to abdicate, and that Cenred of Mercia and Offa of the East Saxons were the nephews of the Monk-Kings Æthilred and Sæbbi respectively.[118] It is true that early Anglo-Saxon monk-kings were not the subjects of major saints' cults and remained marginal among venerated saints; this suggests that if their kin were involved in their renunciations they had missed the opportunity to achieve further religious and political gain from it. However, their lack of veneration may tell us about more about changing Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards sanctity, monasticism, and moreover, the secular duties of kingship, that post-date our ecclesiastical group's period of influence.[119] At the time, the traditions of Centwine's and Sæbbi's abdications at least were celebrated in their kin's *monasteria* in a process of memorialisation and possibly legitimisation which Aldhelm, Bugga's *monasterium* and the community at Barking were involved in. It is therefore possible that our ecclesiastical grouping encouraged some kings to retire into the religious life and that a good number of these went voluntarily, even if, in some cases, it may have meant motivating the kings to jump before they were pushed. It is also possible that kings abdicated for religious reasons and, that, even in those circumstances where it was related to succession politics, our ecclesiastical group sought to project their actions in a Christian light. Ultimately, pilgrimage in this period was linked to penitential practice and the expiation of sins.[120] Furthermore, in his *Epistola ad Acircium* Aldhelm implored Aldfrith of Northumbria to devote time to studying scripture: for life on earth was transient

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[116] For the ages and abdications of Æthilred, Sæbbi, Cædwalla and Ine, see, Bede, *H. E.*, V. 24, p. 566, IV. 11, p. 364, V. 7, p. 472 respectively; for Offa's and Cenred's ages, see, Bede, *H. E.*, V. 19, p. 516, V. 24, p. 566; for Offa's and Cenred's deaths, see, *Liber pontificalis*, (ed.), L. Duchesne (2 vols, Paris, 1886-1892), vol. I, p. 391, ll. 18-20, as observed by Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', p. 157 n 16.

[117] Admittedly, different royal branches did compete for the West Saxon throne in this period, see, Yorke, *Wessex*, p. 84, with a genealogical table of early West Saxon kings on p. 81.

[118] Later tradition has Centwine choose Cædwalla as a successor, *GP*, V. 205, p. 352.

[119] Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', pp. 172-75; Ridyard, 'Monk-Kings', pp. 13-27.

[120] R. A. Aronstam, 'Penitential Pilgrimages to Rome in the Early Middle Ages', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, 13 (1975), 65-83.

and even though he was king he would still need to prepare his soul for the Resurrection.[121]

The possibility that Aldhelm and his associates helped to inspire royal abdication thus provides us with an important context to interpret his double treatise: a double treatise which sought to assimilate into orthodox patristic thinking those individuals who had controversially rejected their secular lives and marriages in order to devote themselves to the religious life.

2. 6 Implications of Aldhelm's Ecclesiastical Network

It is time to step back and consider the implications of the evidence I have presented. It is likely that Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid collaborated on religious renunciation, because they are mutually associated with King Cædwalla, with Barking *monasterium*, with royalty who abdicated for the religious life and with *monasteria* of West Saxon control or interest. Their associations remind us of the religious vitality of the early West Saxon church and of Aldhelm's importance within it. They also have important implications for assessing Aldhelm's double treatise on virginity. I believe it possible that Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid encouraged individuals to leave their secular lives and marriages in order to enter a religious life. Within this context Aldhelm's double treatise may have been a written manifestation of this ecclesiastical group's efforts to promote and endorse high status renunciation within elite society. If so, the work would have performed religious and political functions at the highest level of Anglo-Saxon society. In the very least, Aldhelm's connections with abdicating kings tell us that his ideas on adult sexual and social renunciation were formed as much from first hand experience as from inherited patristic traditions.

Finally, Aldhelm's associations with these churchmen enable us to hazard a speculative period during which he wrote his double treatise. That is during the 690s, for by then he had mixed in circles with Eorcenwald and Wilfrid, royal renunciation was well underway and he had, had ample opportunity to forge links with Barking *monasterium*, perhaps via Eorcenwald himself. Eorcenwald died in c. 693, so perhaps the abbey was keen to receive religious guidance after the death of their important patron. It is also

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[121] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Acircium*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 203-204; for the transience of life inspiring kings to abdicate, see, Stancliffe, 'Kings who Opted Out', pp. 166-68.

notable that Hildelith, second abbess of Barking, must have been elevated to the office of abbess after c. 686-88: the date of an apparently authentic land grant to her predecessor, Æthelburh.[122] Perhaps her appointment as abbess prompted Aldhelm to list her as the first dedicatee? Furthermore, by the 690s Aldhelm and his ecclesiastical group had also forged links with different religious communities throughout West Saxon lands, when, as we shall now see in Chapter Three, his double treatise seems to have been dedicated to *monasteria* in lands of West Saxon hegemony or political concern.

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[122] Bede tells us that Hildelith succeeded Æthelburh to the office of abbess (Bede, *H. E.*, IV. 10, pp. 362-63); the charter is S1171, for the charter's status, see above, p. 65 n 92; cf. *LH*, p. 51.

Chapter Three

Aldhelm's Audience and Religious Renunciation

Scholars have yet to assess fully the character and depth of Aldhelm's audience for the double treatise *De virginitate* and its implications for interpreting his spiritual guidance. As a consequence, the work's wider significance for early Anglo-Saxon church history is often overlooked. Traditionally scholars have interpreted this work with reference to the community of Barking *monasterium* in Essex to whom Aldhelm is thought to have dedicated both texts. This audience is usually seen to comprise devout and aristocratic women religious, who were either virgins or formerly married, but now chaste, individuals. In this chapter I seek to revise this accepted model of Aldhelm's addressees. Rather than address one religious community alone the double treatise, instead, may have been dedicated to a number of abbesses.[1] Beyond these dedicatees I suggest that Aldhelm will have intended his texts to circulate among a much wider audience of professional Christians.[2] This diverse audience of first-second generation religious would have comprised mainly, but not exclusively: adult men and women; nuns, monks and clerics; virgins, chaste and married; and zealous, as well as reluctant, religious. These individuals would have had very different experiences of sexual and social renunciation, with some having difficulties forsaking secular practices and identities. Aldhelm's work was, I suggest, written in response to his audience's needs and concerns, at the same time as engaging in wider contemporary discussions on the nature and importance of sexual and social renunciation.

3. 1 Aldhelm's Dedicatees

Our chief evidence for Aldhelm's dedicatees is found in the prefatory letter to his prose text. In this he addresses the following women religious: *Hildilithae, regularis disciplinae et monasticae conversationis magistrae, simulque Iustinae ac Cuthburgae nec non Osburgae, {mihi} contribulibus necessitudinum nexibus conglutinatae Aldgithae ac*

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[1] As observed by *AM*, pp. 47-55 at 51-54 esp.

[2] 'Professional Christians' is a term coined by Richard Fletcher, see, *Idem., The Conversion of Europe from Paganism to Christianity 371-1386 AD* (London, 1997), p. 9.

Scolasticae, Hidburgae et Berngithae, Eulaliae ac Teclae, rumore sanctitatis concorditer ecclesiam ornantibus.[3] In the early twelfth century William of Malmesbury (c. 1090-c.1143) identified these women as Abbess Hildelith (fl. 700) and the nuns of Barking *monasterium* in Essex.[4] His deduction tends to be regarded as fact. Presumably he identified Hildelith from Bede's (c. 673-735) *Historia ecclesiastica* and thought that she had seniority over the women listed because Aldhelm names her first and describes her as *regularis disciplinae et monasticae conversationis magistrae.*[5] As a consequence, William assumed that the only other woman that he could identify among the dedicatees, namely, Cuthburh (d. 718), purported foundress of Wimborne *monasterium*, was a nun at Barking before founding her own community.[6] However, recently Scott Gwara has offered an alternative hypothesis for the texts' dedicatees. He suggests that they may have been the abbesses of double *monasteria* in West Saxon and/or Hwiccian lands.[7] In this chapter I present further evidence in favour of a multiple dedication, although I qualify Gwara's model of Aldhelm's audience by suggesting that his texts were dedicated to a constellation of select *monasteria* to which he may have been connected. I also suggest that these communities were located in areas of West Saxon control or interest. Curiously Gwara does not account for the fact that Barking was an East Saxon foundation, nor does he consider the possibility that Aldhelm addressed Mercian abbesses as well. Furthermore, I propose that Aldhelm intended his texts to reach a wide audience from the outset.

It is possible that Aldhelm's double treatise was addressed to a number of different religious dedicatees.[8] No contemporary evidence suggests that the work was addressed

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[3] Aldhelm, *PdV, prologus*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 228, l. 28-p. 229, ll. 1-5, (trans.), *LH*, p. 59, 'To ...Hildelith, teacher of the regular discipline and of the monastic way of life; and likewise Justina and Cuthburg; and Osburg too, related (to me) by family bonds of kinship; [to] Aldgith and Scholastica, Hidburg and Berngith, Eulalia and Thecla - (to all these nuns) unitedly ornamenting the Church through the renown of their sanctity'; (for Gwara's introduction of *mihi* to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage, see, *AMA*, p. 27, l. 7).

[4] *GP*, II. 73, p. 143.

[5] Aldhelm, *PdV, prologus*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 228, l. 28-p. 229, l. 1 (trans.), *LH*, p. 59 'teacher of the regular discipline and of the monastic way of life'.

[6] For these observations, see, *AM*, pp. 47-51.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 47-55 at 51-54 esp.

[8] They were presumably all religious since the texts were aimed at individuals living a communal religious existence; a paradigm for a multiple religious dedication is found in the Anglo-Saxon nun

merely to the *monasterium* of Barking in Essex. Even Bede does not make this connection, although he mentions both Aldhelm's double treatise *De virginitate* and the hagiographical literature preserved and circulated at Barking in his *Historia ecclesiastica*.[9] No internal evidence in either the prose or verse treatise suggests that it was addressed to Hildelith and her community alone, nor is this made explicit in the preface to the prose text.[10] Here, Aldhelm describes Hildelith as a monastic teacher, and then simply adds the conjunctive *simul*, 'as well as', before listing the other women religious (who are not ascribed religious statuses).[11] In contrast, Bede, for example, addressed his prose *Vita S. Cuthberti*: *Domino sancto ac beatissimo patri Eadfrido episcopo, sed et omni congregationi fratrum qui in Lindisfarnensi insula Christo deseruiunt*.[12]

Whilst this raises the possibility that Aldhelm addressed the work to multiple abbess-dedicatees, it is important to recognise that his dedicatory preface, ultimately, may have been a literary device. The work of Tors Janson provides us with an important paradigm to consider here, for he has shown that classical, late Latin and early medieval dedicatory prefaces were literary in function. Authors professed to be writing on behalf of an addressee because they were required to by literary tradition. The function of the preface was to offer an explanation for writing, to complement the dedicatee and to provide a modesty *topos*.[13] This is not to suggest that Aldhelm did not know his audience, nor that he was detached from their needs. However, it does mean that his selection of dedicatees may represent only the tip of an iceberg that included among others, his students at Malmesbury, and the abbots and clerics with whom he interacted. This explains why, after a short epistolary address at the start of his *Prosa de virginitate*,

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Huneberc of Heidenheim's *Hodoeporicon* of St. Willibald, Hygeburg, *Vita S Willibaldi Episcopi Eichstetensis, praefatio*, (ed.), O. Holder-Egger, MGH, SS 15, 1 (Hanover, 1887), *prologus*, p. 86; note that Huneberc is influenced by Aldhelm's prose, see, *LH*, p. 2.

[9] *H. E.*, V. 18, pp. 514-15 and IV. 6-11, pp. 356-69 respectively.

[10] *AM*, p. 48.

[11] Aldhelm, *PdV, prologus*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 229, l. 1.

[12] Bede, *Vita S Cuthberti*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, (Cambridge, 1940), *prologus*, pp. 142-43 'To the [holy Lord and the] most holy and most blessed father, Bishop Eadfrith, and also to the whole congregation of brethren who serve Christ on the island of Lindisfarne'; for a different epistolary example (and the preface to Aldhelm's prose text is epistolary in style), see, Tangl 101, p. 224.

[13] T. Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions* (Stockholm, 1964).

Aldhelm signals that he intends his work to be all-inclusive, rather than catering for the needs of a selective audience. He therefore offers the bee as an example of virginity and obedience: *ut omissa specialitate ad generalitatem sermonis oratio decurrat*.[14] Indeed, after addressing ten women in the preface to his prose text, elsewhere in his work, Aldhelm refers to his audience using such all-encompassing terms of address as *Christi caelibes*.[15] His only other references to his dedicatees occur at the end of the prose text and he does not even include an official dedication in its verse counterpart.[16] No doubt Aldhelm addressed the same dedicatees, because in the penultimate chapter to the prose text he promises to send his readers a verse version, provided that they send him letters to incite his creativity. Furthermore, in the *Carmen de virginitate*, he refers to his earlier work and claims that by versifying the prose treatise he was keeping a promise.[17] Aldhelm's reticence was arguably deliberate and a means of keeping his audience as wide as possible. However, before exploring this wider audience we need to consider the possible identities of Aldhelm's ten dedicatees, why he may have directed his work to them, and their part in the texts' dissemination.

3. 1. 1 Hildelith

Scott Gwara has postulated identities for four of the ten women who Aldhelm addresses. The first woman to be identified is Hildelith. There is no reason to object to William of Malmesbury's suggestion that she is Abbess Hildelith of Barking.[18] This is because Aldhelm addresses an individual of a senior monastic status: so plausibly an abbess. Moreover, although onomastic studies have shown that the name element 'Hild'

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[14] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. VI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 234, ll. 6-7, (trans.), *LH*, p. 63 'in order that, leaving out the particular, the course of my discussion may hasten to the general'.

[15] *Ibid.*, cap. XXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 260, l. 16, (trans.), *LH*, p. 85 'Christ's celibates'.

[16] Instead he begins with an acrostic prayer, Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1-38, pp. 350-52.

[17] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 321, ll. 4-20, (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. LX, p. 321, ll. 5, 9, 10), see, *AMA*, p. 753, ll. 2, 8, 9); Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 19-22, p. 353, Admittedly, perhaps he omitted a preface to the verse text because he envisaged the works circulating together.

[18] *LH*, p. 51, 193 n. 1; *AM*, pp. 47-48.

occurs fairly frequently in early Anglo-Saxon England, Hildelith of Barking is the only known individual of this name.[19] Since her abbacy probably began some time after 686 x 688 it is chronologically possible that she was one of Aldhelm's dedicatees.[20] Furthermore, if, as I have proposed, Aldhelm worked alongside Eorcenwald (675-c.693) in the late 680s to early 690s, he may have had connections with this abbess via the bishop of London, who helped to found Barking and was a keen patron of the community.[21]

3. 1. 2 Cuthburh

Aldhelm's dedicatory preface also addresses one Cuthburh. The name Cuthburh may have been fairly common in early Anglo-Saxon England, since the name elements 'Cuth' and 'burh' occur fairly regularly.[22] However, a likely candidate is found in Cuthburh, sister of the West Saxon King Ine (688-726), former wife of Aldfrith of Northumbria (686-705), and purported foundress of Wimborne *monasterium*.[23] Aldhelm is likely to have known this Cuthburh, for, whilst only a spurious charter connects them

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[19] Dagmar Schneider identified 8 Anglo-Saxon woman with the name element 'Hild' in her prosopography of 246 seventh- to tenth-century Anglo-Saxon women religious, see, D. B. Schneider, 'Prosopography' (unpublished, University of Cambridge, 1985), nos. 59-60, 109, 154, 171-74, pp. 15, 31, 45, 50-51; for further male and female examples, see, W. G. Searle, *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum. A List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the Time of Beda to that of King John* (Cambridge, 1897), pp. 297-98, for Hildelith being the only individual of this name, see, *Ibid.*, p. 298 and Schneider, 'Prosopography', no. 173, p. 51.

[20] For the beginning of her abbacy, see above, p. 71, cf. *LH*, p. 51; We do not know when Hildelith died, but presumably she was alive in 716 when in a letter to Abbess Eadburga, Boniface mentions that Hildelith had related the vision of a recently deceased monk to him (Tangl, 10, p. 8). Bede also tells us that she was abbess for many years, until she was very old indeed (*H. E.*, IV. 10, pp. 363-64).

[21] See above, p. 60; Given that it was common for successive kin to rule monastic communities, one wonders whether Hildelith was, like her predecessor Æthelburh, related to Eorcenwald.

[22] The name element 'Cuth' was very popular in the Anglo-Saxon period, see, Searle, *Onomasticon*, pp. 147-51; Schneider identified 3 possible Anglo-Saxon woman with the name element 'cuth', and 44 with 'burh' in her prosopography, for 'cuth', see, *Idem.*, 'Prosopography', nos. 100-102, pp. 28-29, and for 'burh', see, *Ibid., passim*.

[23] *LH*, pp. 52, 191 n 7, 193 n 1; We learn of her identity in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 718. See, for example, *MS B*, (ed.), S. Taylor, ASCCE, 4 (Cambridge, 1983), p. 24; *MS C*, (ed.), K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, ASCCE, 5 (Cambridge, 2001), p. 44; *MS D*, (ed.), G. P. Cubbin, ASCCE, 6 (Cambridge,1996), p. 10.

directly, they shared links with Kings Ine, to whom Aldhelm was a spiritual advisor, and to King Aldfrith, to whom he was a spiritual sponsor.[24] Many scholars have felt uncomfortable with William of Malmesbury's suggestion that Aldhelm dedicated his work to Cuthburh whilst she was a nun at Barking *monasterium* before founding her own community.[25] However, an alternative explanation is that she was a joint dedicatee alongside Hildelith of Barking.[26]

3. 1. 3 Beorngyth

A late seventh-century Southumbrian abbess shares the name of another of Aldhelm's dedicatees: Beorngyth. Given this woman's religious status, and the dates and location of her abbacy, she may well have been one of Aldhelm's dedicatees.[27] Gwara has suggested that Beorngyth was the abbess of Bath, located in Hwiccian lands, for two land grants to this abbess and her unnamed *monasterium* (both possibly dated to 681) are preserved in the Bath cartulary.[28] Sandwiched between these grants, however, is a charter

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[24] For the charter, see, *BCS*, no. 114; see, *CEW*, pp. 115-16 for its spurious nature; whilst Gwara uses it as evidence for Aldhelm's and Wimborne's connections (*AM*, pp. 49-50), these are rejected by Edwards, *CEW*, p. 115; for Aldhelm's connections to Aldfrith and Ine, see above, pp. 21-22, 34, 43-44, 50-51, 58-59.

[25] See, for example, Schneider, 'Prosopography', nos. 100-101, p. 28 and B. Yorke, 'The Bonifacian Mission and Female Religious in Wessex', *EME*, 7 (2) (1998), p. 159; note that, queens commonly returned to their native kingdoms to enter the religious life, P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, CSASE, 3 (Cambridge, 1990), p. 123.

[26] *AM*, pp. 48-51 at 51.

[27] Note that, whilst the name element 'gyth' was common in Anglo-Saxon England, with 23 examples occurring in Schneider's prosopography, 'Beorn' occurs only once, and it is for this abbess, see, *Idem.*, 'Prosopography', no. 79, p. 21; note that Searle lists three women named Beorngyth, but these may well be one and the same, *Idem.*, *Onomasticon*, p. 99.

[28] *AM*, p. 51; the charters are S1167 and S1168. S1167 generally is deemed authentic, see, Kelly, 'S1167', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>; the authenticity of S1168 has been subject to much debate: whilst some scholars deem it to be a forgery, others believe it to have an authentic basis, see, Kelly, 'S1168', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%201164-1243a.html>; note that S1167 is made not only to Beorngyth, but also one Folcburh, for a discussion of her status (successor, prioress, co-owner or relative), see, Schneider, 'Prosopography', no. 159, p. 47 and *CEW*, p. 214.

to one Abbess Berta, dated 676.[29] One explanation is that Beorngyth was involved in founding Bath alongside Berta.[30] Another is that Beorngyth's charters pertain to a different *monasterium* whose lands eventually were subsumed by Bath.[31] It has been postulated that this community was located 'in the neighbourhood of Oxford', and more narrowly, in the vicinity of the land grants, at Islip, at the confluence of the Rivers Cherwell and Ray.[32] If Beorngyth's *monasterium* was Bath, then it lay only 13 miles from Aldhelm's *monasterium* at Malmesbury and 7 miles from his possible community at Bradford-on-Avon.[33] If it was in the Cherwell Valley, then it was in former West Saxon territory. Notably, Aldhelm's friend Wilfrid is thought to have founded *monasteria* in Mercian lands; this therefore provides one possible context in which our subject could have become associated with Beorngyth's community.[34]

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[29] The charter is S51. Although interpolated, even so, it is generally thought to have an authentic basic, see, Kelly, 'S51', *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/-eSawyer.99/S%2051-63.html>.

[30] Schneider, 'Prosopography', no. 82, p. 22; Scholars who associated these charters with Bath, include, P. Sims-Williams, 'Continental Influence at Bath Monastery in the Seventh Century', *ASE*, 4, (1975), p. 3; *Idem.*, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 56-57; and J. Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (Oxford, 1994), p. 61.

[31] Schneider, 'Prosopography', no. 79, p. 21.

[32] F. M. Stenton, 'St. Frideswide and her Times', in D. M. Stenton (ed.), *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1970), p. 225; *CEW*, p. 214; Certainly a number of ill-recorded late seventh-century Mercian minsters appear to have been founded in the Cherwell Valley, see, Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*, pp. 65-67 esp.

[33] If it is Bath, then it is of great interest that Sims-Williams postulates that an early copy of the *Song of Songs* was produced at Bath, with Burginda, the author of a letter attached to it (who may or may not belong to Bath), sharing sources with Aldhelm, see, Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 199-204, 216-18.

[34] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), cap. XIV, pp. 30-31, cap. XL, pp. 80-81, XLVII, pp. 96-97, cap. LI, pp. 106-107, cap. LXIV, pp. 138-39; P. Sims-Williams, 'Cuthswith, Seventh-Century Abbess of Inkberrow, near Worcester, and the Würzburg Manuscript of Jerome on Ecclesiastes', *ASE*, 5 (1976), pp. 13-14; for the suggestion that Wilfrid even inspired the foundation of Withington, see, H. P. R. Finberg, *Roman and Saxon Withington* (Leicester, 1955), repr. *Idem.*, *Lucerna: Studies of Some Problems in the Early History of England* (London, 1964), p. 21.

3. 1. 4 Osburg and/or Hidburg

Aldhelm certainly knew Osburg, the fourth dedicatee of his double treatise, who he describes as his kinswoman.[35] Gwara has sought to identify Osburg more securely by postulating that she was known by the hypocoristic name-form Bugga, which was based on the Old English name-ending element-*burg*.[36] Identifying any individual based on this pet-name must remain highly conjectural: many Anglo-Saxon women's names ended in 'burg' so it is likely to have been popular.[37] Among Boniface's (c. 675-754) correspondents, for example, we find the abbesses Eadburga, Heaburg, Egburga and Mildburga, as well as the nun Wethburga.[38] Even so, Gwara hazards that Osburg may have been the Abbess Bucga whose *monasterium* was located near to the present-day village of Withington, Gloucestershire, in the Mercian satellite kingdom of the Hwicce.[39] This identification is suggestive given that the community was only some 20 miles north of Malmesbury. Furthermore, Bucga was active during Aldhelm's lifetime for her *monasterium* was founded between 680 x 693 and she presided over it for some 34 years.[40]

However, Aldhelm knew another Abbess Bugga, who probably was a different individual,[41] namely, King Centwine's (c. 676-685) daughter, who seems to have been a patron of Glastonbury, and whose community perhaps was even located near this

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[35] Aldhelm, *PdV*, prologus, (ed.), *AO*, p. 229, ll. 1-2 (note Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in l. 1, see above, p. 73 n 3); note that, Aldhelm's dedicatee Osburg, is the only known Anglo-Saxon woman of this name before the 9th century, Searle, *Onomasticon*, p. 372.

[36] *AM*, pp. 51-53, and before him, *LR*, p. 40.

[37] *CEW*, p. 70.

[38] For Eadburga, see, Tangl, nos. 10, 30, 35, 65, pp. 8, 54, 60. 137; for Heaburg, Tangl, 14, p. 21, for Egburga, *Ibid.*, no. 13, p. 18; for Mildburga, see, *Ibid.*

[39] *AM*, pp. 52-53; and more cautiously, *LR*, p. 40.

[40] Anon., *Epitaphium Buggae*, (ed.), M. Lapidge, 'Some Remnants of Bede's Lost *Liber Epigrammatum*,' *EHR*, XC (1975), 798-820, repr. and rev. *Idem., Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), ll. 14-15, p. 374; *LR*, p. 40.

[41] A number of scholars have assumed that Abbess Bugga of Withington and Centwine's daughter Bugga are one and the same individual, see, Rev. G. F. Browne, *St Aldhelm: His Life and Times* (London, 1903), pp. 243-49; *LH*, p. 11; *LR*, p. 40; Lapidge, 'Bede's Lost *Liber Epigrammatum*', p. 375.

monasterium.[42] Centwine's daughter would be a suitable dedicatee for Aldhelm's work because he wrote a dedicatory poem for her church during the first few years of Ine's reign which hints at his greater association with the community.[43] Indeed, Aldhelm attended Centwine's court and had links with Glastonbury *monasterium* himself.[44] Although it is an attractive possibility that Bugga of Withington or Centwine's daughter Bugga may be the Osburg among Aldhelm's dedicatees (and therefore related to him), even so, we must remember that he addresses another abbess in his dedicatory preface whose name ends in 'burg', namely, one Hidburg.[45] This tangle of Abbess Buggas, together with the popularity of this hypocoristic name-form, means that we must be extremely cautious about identifying Osburg and Hidburg. All we can say with certainty is that Aldhelm was related to Osburg.

Ultimately there is no way of determining who Aldhelm's dedicatees were: therefore, it is possible that Hildelith is not the abbess of Barking, nor Cuthburh the abbess of Wimborne, nor Beorngyth the abbess identified in the charters. However, given our limited evidence for women religious in this period, it is a remarkable coincidence that his dedicatees share the names of Anglo-Saxon abbesses who were active in his sphere of influence in the late seventh to early eighth century.

3. 1. 5 *Justina, Scholastica, Eulalia and Thecla*

Indeed, whilst it is impossible to establish identities for Aldhelm's remaining dedicatees, that is, Aldgith, Justina, Scholastica, Eulalia and Thecla, this does not negate the possibility that these individuals were known to him personally. Indeed, the latter four

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[42] For her patronage of the community, see, Schneider, 'Prosopography', no. 84, p. 23; *CEW*, pp. 69-70; and, Yorke, 'The Bonifacian Mission', pp. 157-58; There were two poorly recorded West Saxon *monasteria* in this area, see, *Ibid.*, pp. 159-61.

[43] Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* III, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 14-18, and see above, pp. 34-35; Lapidge cautiously discusses the possibility that Centwine's daughter Bugga (who he identifies as Osburg) could have been Aldhelm's sister, see, *LR*, pp. 40-41, 233 n 10; For a valid challenge to this argument, see, *AM*, p. 52.

[44] See above, pp. 37-38, 56, 65-66.

[45] It would make sense for Aldhelm to have used their full-names in his dedicatory preface in order to distinguish between them; Hidburg's name is rare for she is the only known woman with this name in Anglo-Saxon England, see, Searle, *Onomasticon*, p. 296.

Latin-named dedicatees perhaps provide us with a clue to their association with him.[46] These women share names with female saints eulogised in both the prose and verse *De virginitate*, namely, with St Benedict's nun-sister Scholastica and with three Roman virgin martyrs. The use of Latin names by Anglo-Saxon nuns is extremely rare.[47] Whilst it is possible that they were taken in religion they may, instead, have been by-names which were either 'assumed voluntarily' or conferred.[48] I want to consider the latter possibility here.

Mary Garrison's study of Alcuin of York's (c.735-804) use of nicknames gives us a helpful case study to consider. Garrison shows that the by-names Alcuin coined and used for his colleagues and associates demonstrate his common interests with these individuals. Furthermore, it defines a circle of individuals joined to him, 'by *amicitia* and *familiaritas*'.[49] For his female associates, Alcuin foremost chose the names of saints and Roman virgin martyrs. In fitting with Alcuin's more general use of by-names these were descriptive and prescriptive: the names of Roman virgin martyrs therefore were used for virgins and individuals who he advised on chastity.[50] Significantly, nicknaming had

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[46] Note that one Aldgith is listed, however, under the names of queens and abbesses in the *Liber vitae Dunelm*, see, *Ibid.*, p. 197.

[47] Latin names occur most frequently among Anglo-Saxons in continental missionary circles. Aside from the four Latin names at the beginning of Aldhelm's prose text, in her prosopography of 246 seventh- to tenth-century Anglo-Saxon women religious, Schneider identified only Nerienda and another Tecla (who was a missionary to the continent), see, Schneider, 'Prosopography', no. 197, p. 60 and no. 216, p. 66; she also lists one Fufanna, no. 161, p. 47, an Anglo-Saxon Bonifatian correspondent whose real name probably was Susanna (C. Cubitt, pers. comm.); Furthermore, the influential Anglo-Saxon missionary Leofgyth/Leobgytha/Leobgyda is referred to by her Anglo-Saxon name in all extant Bonifatian correspondence, but as Lioba by Rudolf, her ninth-century Frankish hagiographer (James Palmer, pers. comm.); it was also rare for native churchmen to adopt biblical or early Christian names, see, C. Clark, 'Onomastics', in R. M. Hogg (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language I: The Beginnings to 1066* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 464.

[48] M. Garrison, 'The Social World of Alcuin. Nicknames at York and at the Carolingian Court', in L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (eds.), *Alcuin of York. Scholar at the Carolingian Court*, Germania Latina, III (Groningen, 1998), p. 62; it has been suggested that these dedicatees were oblates, Schneider, 'Prosopography', no. 157, p. 46, no. 182, pp. 54-55, no. 215, p. 65, no. 207, p. 63. However, oblation was relatively rare in this period (see below, pp. 98-99) and since the majority of Southumbrian *monasteria* were formed between 670-700, few oblates will have reached maturity and become heads of communities by the time Aldhelm wrote his work; alternatively, it has been suggested that they took the names of virgin martyrs to define their religion in opposition to their hostile pagan kin, *AM*, p. 55. Arguably, however, the double treatise was not written in a defiantly pagan context, see below, pp. 94-96 esp.

[49] Garrison, 'The Social World of Alcuin', p. 78.

insular origins, with alternative names used by Aldhelm and among Irish scholars, to whom he owed his early education.[51] Aldhelm thus uses name-play in his major composite work to Aldfrith of Northumbria (calling the king Acircius), and, of course, in the dedicatory *titulus* in which he addresses Centwine's daughter by her hypocoristic name-form 'Bugga'. His student Æthilwald also calls him *cassis priscus*.[52] Within this context, it is possible that Aldhelm was an intimate of his Latin-named dedicatees, and that, he, like Alcuin, conferred these names upon them. Perhaps Scholastica, Justina, Eulalia and Thecla were somehow mutually connected. Furthermore, if Aldhelm used by-names for these women it would mean that we cannot determine their exact identity, for name play occurs in the intimate world of familiars, and is preserved in letters and verse, rather than in official religious or legal documentation.[53]

3. 1. 6 Aldhelm's Choice of Dedicatees

If Gwara and I are right, then it should not surprise us that Aldhelm would have dedicated his texts to a number of religious communities. As an abbot and monastic founder, as well as a reformer who was involved in instituting more uniform and canonical customs in the church, he was in a prime position to guide contemporary religious.[54] If his female correspondents are correctly identified then it is significant that their *monasteria* were located in areas that the West Saxons controlled or sought expansion over. Hildelith's community at Barking, Essex, therefore, received land grants from King

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[50] For Gungrada for example, see, *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71 and J. L. Nelson, 'Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment', in J. C. Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (New York, NY, 1993), pp. 43-61, repr. J. L. Nelson, *The Frankish World 750-950* (London, 1996), pp. 237, 240; for Ædilburg, see, Schneider, 'Prosopography', no. 47, p. 12.

[51] See above, pp. 20-22.

[52] Garrison, 'The Social World of Alcuin', pp. 62-63 n 10; see also his wordplay when addressing Helmgils in the *Carmen rhythmicum*, Aldhelm, *Carmen rhythmicum*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 524, ll. 1-2; for Bugga, see above, pp. 79-80; for the use of alternative names among Irish scholars, including one Maildub who Herren has identified as Aldhelm's teacher, see, M. Herren, 'The Pseudonymous Tradition in Hiberno-Latin: An Introduction', in J. J. O'Meara and B. Naumann (eds.), *Latin Script and Letters A.D. 400-900: Festschrift für Ludwig Bieler* (Leiden, 1976), pp. 121-31.

[53] Garrison, 'The Social World of Alcuin', p. 60; Furthermore, they perhaps all celebrated the achievements of the late antique saints, whose names they adopted.

[54] See above, pp. 30-43.

Cædwalla as part of his expansion north of the Thames, and, in the early part of his reign, Ine had control over the see of London.[55] Cuthburh's double *monasterium* at Wimborne, Dorset, was situated in an area over which the West Saxons were gaining increasing influence during Aldhelm's career.[56] Beorngyth's *monasterium* may have been situated in the Cherwell Valley, when the Upper Thames had originally been West Saxon (Gewissian), before it was lost during the expansionist reign of King Wulfhere of Mercia (658-674).[57] The Middle and Upper Thames continued to be disputed between the Mercians and West Saxons, with the latter retaining an interest in *monasteria* in their former homelands.[58] If not situated in the Cherwell Valley, then Beorngyth's *monasterium* was possibly situated at Bath, in West Saxon/Hwiccian borderlands. The communities of Centwine's daughter Bugga may have been located near Glastonbury in Somerset, an area around which the West Saxons looked to expand westwards into British lands. That of Bugga of Withington was located in the Kingdom of the Hwicce, in West Saxon-Mercian border territory.[59] Since Aldhelm, Eorcenwald and Wilfrid (d. 709) were active in these areas, the locations of these *monasteria* provide further evidence that the double treatise *De virginitate* may have been linked to this group's ecclesiastical activities. Furthermore, they suggest that Aldhelm's double treatise cannot be entirely divorced from West Saxon attempts to gain religious and political acceptance in their outlying areas through the support and patronage of monastic communities.

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[55] See above, pp. 58, 61; For this political hegemony ending in the early 690s, see, D. Whitelock, 'Some Anglo-Saxon Bishops of London', *The Chambers Memorial Lecture* (London, 1975), repr. in *Idem., History, Law and Literature in 10th-11th Century England* (London, 1981), II, p. 10 n 1.

[56] H. P. Finberg, 'Sherborne, Glastonbury and the Expansion of Wessex', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, III (1953), 101-24, repr. Finberg, *Lucerna*, pp. 100, 102-103.

[57] B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London and New York, NY, 1990), p. 136; Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*, pp. 42-45.

[58] Stenton, 'St. Frideswide and her Times', p. 229; Ine, for example, was a patron of Bradfield, Berkshire (founded probably in the late 660s or early 670s), see, Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 139.
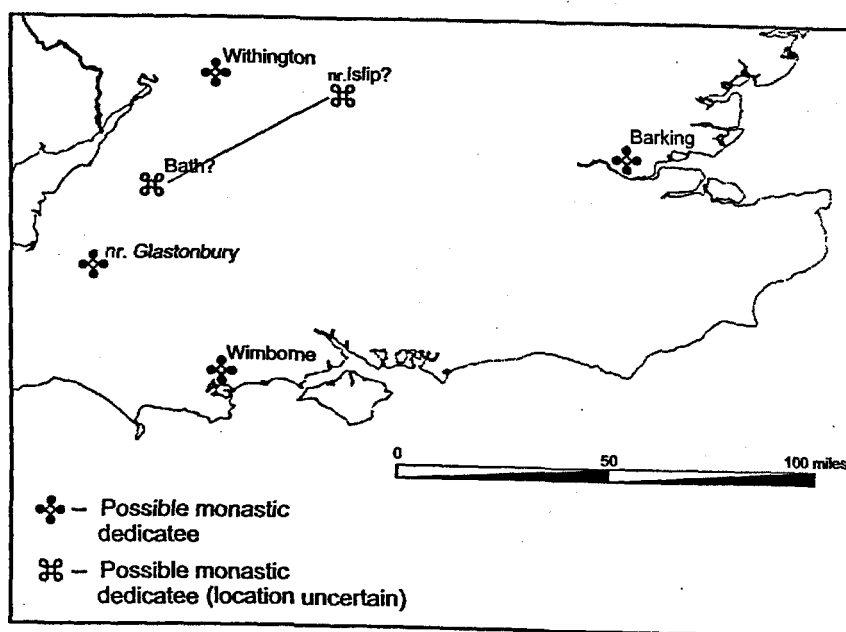
Map 3. The location of Aldhelm's potential dedicatees' *monasteria*

There is a good possibility that Aldhelm knew his dedicatees well and was involved in the spiritual life of their communities. Presumably these individuals were competent in Latin and in the prose text in particular Aldhelm takes a great interest in their education and spiritual welfare. He also refers to exchanging letters with them.[60] Aldhelm and his addressees may have shared common interests in the spiritual contents of his work and have exchanged ideas on some of its material. It is also possible that they were his tutees undertaking some form of distance learning. A paradigm is found in Boniface, Aldhelm's near-contemporary, whose hagiographer tells us that when he taught in south-west England men attended his lectures whereas his female pupils studied in the cloister because they were able to travel less easily.[61] This implies that Boniface travelled to and corresponded with his female pupils and it is not impossible that Aldhelm did the same.[62] Indeed, Lul, West Saxon missionary and Boniface's successor as bishop of Mainz (754-

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[59] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 108-109, 136-37, and see above, pp. 43-44.

[60] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. I, (ed.), *AO*, p. 229, ll. 8-10; *Ibid.*, caps. II-IV, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 229-32; *Ibid.*, cap. LX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 321, ll. 13-16.

[61] Willibald, *Vita S Bonifatii Archiepiscopi Moguntini*, cap. II, (ed.), W. Levison, *Vita Sancti Bonifatii Archiepiscopi Moguntini*, MGH, SS, *rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (Hanover, 1905), pp. 1-58.

[62] We know that Aldhelm gave lectures, see, *Epistola Cellani*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 498, ll. 10-11.

86), sent to his West Saxon spiritual mother Abbess Fufanna [sic] and his female pupil, Erkenchind, examples of his verse composition to correct.[63] This provides evidence for teaching via letters, for the learnedness of contemporary West Saxon women religious, and for West Saxon male religious teaching and being taught by women. Indeed, as Sims-Williams has shown, Cuthswith, seventh-century abbess of Inkberrow near Worchester, about who we know very little, owned a fine fifth-century Italian manuscript of Jerome's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. This reminds us of how potentially extensive even Aldhelm's local audience was.[64] Clearly, there were many educated Southumbrian religious who would have provided a ready audience for his double treatise.

3. 2 Reception of the Double Treatise

Having considered the specifics of Aldhelm's potential dedicatees we need to turn to the wider audience that he probably envisaged from the outset. Even in our relatively small pool of extant early Anglo-Saxon texts, Aldhelm's double treatise can be shown to have been instantly popular, capturing the imagination and interest of many of his contemporaries: monks, nuns and clerics, in England and on the continent alike. References to Aldhelm's double treatise in contemporary texts testify to the knowledge of it during our subject's lifetime or within a few years of his death in 709/10. For example, Aldhelm's correspondent Cellanus, an Irish monk from the *monasterium* of Péronne in Picardy, appears to allude to the prose version in a letter to our subject, written between c. 675-705.[65] Manuscript glosses to the texts provide further evidence for their rapid dissemination and extensive use.[66] Therefore, Scott Gwara has proposed that the *Prosa De*

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[63] Tangl, 98, pp. 218-22; for Fufanna being a mistake for Susanna, see above, p. 81 n 47.

[64] Sims-Williams, 'Cuthswith', pp. 5-16; *Idem., Religion and Literature*, pp. 190-98; also see the eighth-century copy of the *Song of Songs*, which was probably written in southern England, perhaps in the diocese of Worcester, above, p. 78 n 33.

[65] *Epistola Cellani*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 498, ll. 11-12; *LH*, pp. 14, 149, 203 n 47; A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 240-41; also see Bede's reference to the work, below, p. 90.

[66] For some of the studies on this subject, see, H. Logeman, 'New Aldhelm Glosses', *Anglia*, 13 (1891), 26-41; corrected and supplemented by A. Napier, 'Collation der altenglischen Aldhelmglossen des Codex 38 der Kathedral-Bibliothek zu Salisbury', *Anglia*, 15 (1893), 204-209, with further amendments by R. I. Page, 'More Aldhelm Glosses from CCCC 326', *English Studies*,

virginitate was glossed heavily within Aldhelm's lifetime and that all of his writings were studied at the Canterbury School in the early Anglo-Saxon period.[67] Cases of literary borrowings from the double treatise also demonstrate how many contemporary Insular authors were silently indebted to its Latin prose and metre. Both texts greatly influenced many eighth-century English missionaries to the continent, including Boniface, Lul, Leofgyth (Lioba) and Boniface's hagiographer, Willibald.[68] Manuscript evidence also suggests that the missionaries were involved heavily in transmitting, disseminating and studying the texts on the continent.[69] Indeed, it has been postulated that Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek ms M. p. th. F. 21, one of the earliest extant manuscripts of the *Prosa de virginitate* (dated between 842 x 855) that may have been written at Fulda, descended from a copy of the text taken or sent to the continent by missionary circles.[70] Many of the missionaries' English correspondents also knew the double treatise well, with Orchard demonstrating that Aldhelm's poetic technique was especially influential in eighth-century Southumbria where his *Carmen de virginitate* was studied and remembered.[71] However, it was also studied in Northumbria, with Bede and Abbess

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56 (1975), 481-90; H. D. Meritt, 'Old English Aldhelm Glosses', *Modern Language Notes*, 68 (1952), 553-54; L. Goossens (ed.), *The Old English Glosses of MS. Brussels, Royal Library 1650* (Brussels, 1974); and the work of Scott Gwara, moreover, whose many pioneering articles on the subject culminated in the two CCSL editions, *AM* and *AMA*.

[67] S. Gwara, 'Glosses to Aldhelm's "Prosa de virginitate" and Glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon Golden Age, ca. 670-800', *Studi Medievali*, Third Series, 38 (2) (1997), 561-645; *AM*, 188-308.

[68] *LH*, p. 2; *LR*, pp. 1-4; W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 76-77; A. Orchard, 'After Aldhelm: The Teaching and Transmission of the Anglo-Latin Hexameter', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 2 (1992), pp. 103-108; *Idem., Poetic Art*, 248-54, 284-86.

[69] See, for example, *AO*, pp. 211-12; *LH*, p. 2; *LR*, p. 220 n 4; Gwara, 'Glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon Golden Age', pp. 626-32, 645; note, however, that manuscripts of the work could have been sent to the continent within Aldhelm's lifetime, see, Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 240-41, and Cellanus, above, p. 85. For the missionaries involvement in importing books more generally, see, Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 139-48; Sims-Williams, 'Cuthswith', pp. 4-5; and for a recent reassessment of English book production on the continent, see, R. McKitterick, 'Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Reflections on the Manuscript Evidence', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, IX (1989), 291-329, repr. *Idem., Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th-9th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1994), IV, pp. 291-329.

[70] Gwara, 'Glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon Golden Age', pp. 626-32.

[71] Orchard, 'After Aldhelm', pp. 97-108.

Ælflæd of Whitby among the individuals who mimicked the work.[72] Furthermore, Felix, the East Saxon based hagiographer of the *Vita S Guthlaci* (c. 730-c.740), made literary borrowings from both texts of the double treatise.[73]

In a period in which individuals appear to have learnt of texts, and received copies, via word of mouth and written correspondence, Aldhelm's double treatise was probably disseminated along many different routes. As Rosamond McKitterick reminds us, we cannot pinpoint where individuals learnt Aldhelmian Latin for teachers, students and texts alike moved from region to region.[74] Our attempts to work out the texts' early dissemination are further hampered by a lack of early Insular manuscripts of the work. However, it is possible that he and his dedicatees were involved actively in disseminating his texts and it is tempting to speculate possible routes along which they travelled. Starting with Aldhelm, we might wonder whether copies reached Bede and Abbess Ælflæd of Whitby via Aldfrith of Northumbria. Aldfrith was Aldhelm's spiritual godson, a recipient of one of his works and a man who is known to have circulated texts.[75] Boniface may have learnt of the texts via his teacher, Abbot Wynberht of Nusling, with whom Aldhelm apparently had personal connections.[76] Aldhelm's community at Malmesbury no doubt studied the texts and perhaps also propagated them, for a common core of glosses, which draw upon the prose *De virginitate* and probably date to the late seventh century, may well have been compiled in this *monasterium*.[77] Furthermore, Lul's knowledge of the texts probably stems from his education at Malmesbury and between 745 x 746 he in turn requested that the Malmesbury monk Dealwine send copies of Aldhelm's works to the

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[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 108-14; *Idem.*, *Poetic Art*, pp. 242-48, 254-60, 287-88; also, see, C. Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1984), p. 113 cf. the more cautious statements of G. Wieland, 'Review: A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994)', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 5 (1995), p. 261.

[73] B. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 17-18; *LH*, p. 2.

[74] R. Mckitterick, 'Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Personal Connections and Local Influences', Vaugham Paper, 36 (Leicester, 1991), p. 16.

[75] *H.E.*, V. 16, pp. 508-509.

[76] See above, p. 38.

[77] Gwara, 'Glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon Golden Age', pp. 625-45 esp. and *AM*, pp. 294-308 esp.; and for the Épinal-Erfurt glossary being compiled at Malmesbury, see, J. D. Pheifer, *Old English Glosses in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary* (Oxford, 1974), p. lvii; Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 58-59.

continent.[78] It is unfortunate, however, that given the number of possible routes by which the *Prosa de virginitate* reached the continent, Ehwald's suggestion that Lul's copy is preserved in the ninth-century Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek ms M. p. th. F. 21, cannot be sustained.[79]

Yet whilst Aldhelm and Malmesbury no doubt circulated the double treatise, his female dedicatees could have as well, especially if they are the individuals that have been identified above. As McKitterick has shown, there is ample evidence for nuns' involvement in copying manuscripts, including major patristic treatises, in the scriptoria of female or double *monasteria* in the Paris basin and in Picardy in the eighth century. Significantly, there are many English connections with these communities, and some of their extant manuscripts show Insular traits and habits, suggesting the presence of English women religious who were trained in book copying. Not only does this suggest that English nuns were involved in scribal activities in Frankia, but it also raises the possibility that they were engaged in similar activities on home soil.[80] Therefore, it is significant that Hildelith of Barking and the double *monasterium* of Wimborne were connected to missionary circles (and each other).[81] Even though there is no evidence for these communities having organised scriptoria, eighth-to early ninth-century styli excavated from the site of Barking *monasterium* indicate early literary activity.[82] Furthermore,

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[78] Tangl, no. 70, p. 144; *AO*, pp. 211-21; for the suggestion that Lul was involved in exchanging further manuscripts of Aldhelm's work, see, C. Fell, 'Some Implications of the Boniface Correspondence', in H. Damico and A. H. Olsen (eds.), *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Bloomington, IN, 1990), p. 40.

[79] Gwara, 'Glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon Golden Age', pp. 626-32; *AM*, 81-83.

[80] R. McKitterick, 'The Diffusion of Insular Culture in Neustria between 650 and 850: The Implications of the Manuscript Evidence', in H. Atsma, *La Neustrie. Les Pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850* (Sigmaringen, 1989), pp. 406-12; *Idem.*, 'Nuns' Scriptoria in England and Francia in the Eighth Century', *Francia*, 19 (1) (1989), pp. 1-35, repr. *Idem.*, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, VII, pp. 25-29 esp.

[81] For Hildelith's connections, see, Tangl. 10, p. 8; for Cuthburh's, see, Tangl. 115, pp. 248-49; for Wimborne and Barking's connections, see, Yorke, 'The Bonifacian Mission', pp. 149-52, 161, 163; for their connections to each other, see, Tangl, p. 115; note that a number of unidentified centres in Mercia had the capacity to copy books, see, Mckitterick, 'Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Personal Connections', p. 5; there were also many Hwiccian links to the Bonifatian correspondents, see, Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 211-42.

[82] L. Webster and J. Backhouse, *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900* (London, 1991), no. 67 (i-k), p. 90 cf. Whitby and Jarrow, both of which were involved in book production, *Ibid.*, no. 105 (d), p. 140 and no. 107 (c-e), pp. 142-43.

Eorcenwald, who was involved in the community's foundation, played an important role in the written production of charters.[83] As for Wimborne, it is thought that Boniface's correspondent, Eadburg, may have taught at this community and perhaps was involved in book production, since Boniface asked her to send him books and to produce a copy of St Peter's Epistles in gold.[84] Aldhelm's double treatise probably was studied intensively in this *monasterium*, for the Wimborne-educated Leofgyth (or Leoba), correspondent of Boniface and influential female missionary, used it as a stylistic model.[85] If Barking and Wimborne *monasteria* were among Aldhelm's dedicatees, therefore, it is possible that they helped to transmit and publicise his work.[86]

Contemporary indebtedness to Aldhelm's double treatise may reflect his immense popularity as a writer as well as the intellectual fashion for copying his works.[87] It also reflects his texts' intensive use for the study of advanced Latin, as a literary model, and for the culling of rare and obscure vocabulary in *glosae collectae*.[88] Indeed, the double treatise pioneered new ways of writing Anglo-Latin prose and verse, and Aldhelm perhaps deliberately wrote idiosyncratic Latin for pedagogic purposes.[89] The prose text's use as a model for hermeneutic Latin is further suggested by the fact that it circulated with his *Epistola ad Ehfridum* which is written in the same Latin style.[90] However, this does not

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[83] See above, pp. 46, 55, 60.

[84] McKitterick, 'Nuns' Scriptoria', p. 26; Yorke, 'The Bonifacian Mission', pp. 150-52, 170-71.

[85] *LH*, p. 2; Tangl, no. 29, pp. 52-53; for Leofgyth's education at Wimborne, see, Rudolf of Fulda, *Vita S Leobae abbatissae Biscofesheimensis*, (ed.), G. Waitz, MGH, SS, 15, 1 (Hanover, 1887), cap. VII, pp. 124-25.

[86] If Aldhelm did dedicate the texts to Mercian *monasteria*, this may provide one channel through which Felix, Guthlac's hagiographer, became familiar with the texts.

[87] S. Gwara, 'Manuscripts of Aldhelm's "Prosa de Virginitate" and the Rise of Hermeneutic Literacy in Tenth-Century England', *Studi Medievali*, Third Series, 35 (1) (1994), p. 103.

[88] *AO*, p. 215; R. Derolez, 'Aldhelmus Glosatus III', *English Studies*, 40 (1959), pp. 131-34; *LH*, pp. 2-3; R. Derolez, 'Aldhelm and the Lexicographer', in A. Bammesberger (ed.), *Problems of Old English Lexicography. Studies in Memory of Angus Cameron* (Regensburg, 1985), pp. 91-106; Orchard, 'After Aldhelm', *Idem., Poetic Art*; Gwara, 'Rise of Hermeneutic Literacy', pp. 101-59; *Idem.*, 'Drypoint Glossing in a Tenth-Century Manuscript of Aldhelm's Prose Treatise on Virginity', *Traditio*, 51 (1996), 99-145; *Idem.*, 'Glossaries from the Anglo-Saxon Golden Age', pp. 561-645.

[89] Derolez, 'Aldhelm and the Lexicographer', p. 96; and see above, pp. 23-24; on Aldhelm's Latin prose style, see, *AM*, pp. 62-70.

[90] *LH*, p. 143.

mean that the texts simply were studied for their Latin, and, worse still, that their spiritual ideas had no currency in their own age.[91] Many of the contemporaries who were indebted to Aldhelm's written style were professional religious working at the forefront of developing Christian monasticism and spirituality within Germanic culture. They include: the influential monk Bede, who keenly promoted orthodox practices in lay and monastic Christianity; Felix, who composed the *vita* of Guthlac (c. 674-714), a warrior-turned-monk; and the English missionaries, who were involved in establishing new *monasteria* and reforming nascent Christianity. Indeed, Aldhelm's concerns about Christian sexual morality and marriage find strong echoes throughout Boniface's correspondence.[92] Furthermore, some contemporary authors seem to have recognised the spiritual importance of Aldhelm's double treatise. In his *Historia ecclesiastica* Bede mentions that Aldhelm wrote several works, and, as Orchard has shown, apparently he had read and imitated Aldhelm's *Enigmata* and *Carmina Ecclesiastica III* by the time he wrote his history.[93] Even so, he names and discusses only the *opus geminatum De virginitate* and the book that Aldhelm wrote against British church customs. Perhaps he singled out these texts from Aldhelm's oeuvre because he regarded them to be the most spiritually edifying and of greatest importance to English church history. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (959-88) and the figure-head of the Benedictine reform movement in the tenth century provides a second, later example, for although he was a promoter of Aldhelm's hermeneutic Latin, he also recommended that the texts were read to strengthen the monastic life – perhaps in part because virginity was so important to the reformers.[94] Later still, William of

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[91] See, for example, Gwara, 'Rise of Hermeneutic Literacy', p. 102: 'Aldhelm's best known works, the treatises *de Virginitate*, were short on content, and their unfashionable philosophy had no currency in any age'; and, M. Herren, 'Review: A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994)', *EME*, 5 (1) (1996), p. 111: 'It is arguable that Aldhelm never wrote a sentence worth reading for its content'.

[92] See, for example, Tangl 33, pp. 56-57 and Tangl 50, pp. 83-84; and it may be no coincidence that Boniface asked Bishop Pecthelm of Whithorn for advice on canon law concerning marriage (Tangl, 32, pp. 55-56), for Pecthelm had worked alongside Aldhelm, see above, p. 29 n 81; cf. McKitterick, 'Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Personal Connections', p. 18, who argues that Pecthelm was recommended to Boniface by Nothelm of Canterbury.

[93] *H.E.*, V. 18, pp. 514-15; see, A. Orchard, 'Poetic Inspiration and Prosaic Translation. The Making of Cædmon's Hymn', in M. J. Toswell and E. M. Tyler (eds.), *Studies in English Language and Literature. 'Doubt Wisely': Papers in Honour of E. G. Stanley* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 404-409.

[94] *AO*, p. 216; Gwara, 'Rise of Hermeneutic Literacy', pp. 101-59; *AM*, pp. 130-46.

Malmesbury's synopsis of the double treatise asserts that they praised virginity and showed that it was not difficult to achieve.[95]

Aldhelm's audience undoubtedly was as interested in, and influenced by, his spiritual ideas as they were his Latin. The reception of his spiritual ideas has received some consideration by Old English scholars, but would benefit greatly from further study, particularly within Latin texts.[96] Indeed, even a cursory examination of some contemporary Latin texts suggests that ideas of sanctity were influenced by Aldhelm's sanctity *exempla*. Consider, for example, Ædiluulf's (fl. 803-21) early ninth-century poem *De abbatibus*. As John Blair has observed, whilst the poet describes only one saint's cult explicitly, there are devotional undertones to the entire work. Thus, 'the abbots are praised in turn for their learning, piety, and beneficience, in language appropriate to saints'.[97] It is therefore of considerable interest that Ædiluulf draws upon many phrases from the saints' lives in Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate*, suggesting that he had studied these in depth.[98] More importantly he seems to have been influenced by some of the central tenets of Aldhelm's work. Thus, he praises monks' chaste hearts and souls, as well as their total purity of thought and deed.[99] He even borrows a line to this effect from one of Aldhelm's saints' portraits in order to celebrate Wynfrith the priest:

Isque deo deditus cum *tota mente fidelis*   *DA* 584

Ac dominum *tota* conversus *mente fidelis*   *CdV* 1864 [100]

[95] *GP*, V. 196, p. 343.

[96] Charles Wright, for example, has demonstrated that Aldhelm's distinctive conception of sin as 'a lurid outgrowth of Abel's blood', in his *CdV*, appears to have been appropriated in the moralising biblical poems *Genesis A* and *Maxims I*, see, C. D. Wright, 'The Blood of Abel and the Branches of Sin: *Genesis A*, *Maxims I* and Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate*', *ASE*, 25 (1996), 7-19, citation at p. 15; equally, Aldhelm's description of a spiritual battle between virtue and vice in his double treatise is thought to have influenced Old English poems in the Psychomachia allegory, see, J. P. Hermann, *Allegories of War: Language and Violence in Old English Poetry* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), pp. 20-28; furthermore, Abram recently has outlined the probable influence of Aldhelm's double treatise on *The Ruin*, see, C. Abram, 'In Search of Lost Time: Aldhelm and *The Ruin*', *Quaestio*, 1 (2000), pp. 31-37; it is unfortunate that Old English poetry is so difficult to date.

[97] J. Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England', in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 474-75, citation at 474.

[98] Orchard, 'After Aldhelm', pp. 116-21; *Idem., Poetic Art*, pp. 263-68, 288-89.

[99] Æthelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, (ed.), A. Campbell (Oxford, 1967), cap. X, p. 27, ll. 312, 320.

Likewise, the *Old English Martyrology*, which dates from the late ninth century or earlier, frequently draws upon Aldhelm's prose and poetic *De virginitate*, even remarking in its entry for Saints Agape, Chionia and Irene: *þis syndon swiðe mære fæmnan on* De virginitate, *þæt is on fæmnena bocum.*[101] The author of the *Old English Martyrology* therefore recommends Aldhelm's double treatise as a biographical dictionary of virgin-saints, substantiating the idea that it was read for its spiritual and devotional sustenance. This is no surprise when a number of his saints will have been celebrated in the canon of the mass. Since the *Old English Martyrology* would have been read aloud it reminds us that knowledge of Aldhelm's texts entered into wide circulation. In sum, Aldhelm's double treatise presented contemporary religious with a plethora of spiritual ideas to which they could relate and which affected their thinking on various religious issues. In addition to his fame as a Latinist, the contemporary applicability of Aldhelm's guidance provides an explanation for its immediate and widespread circulation.

3. 3 The Composition of Aldhelm's Audience

Having discussed the early medieval readership of Aldhelm's texts, we need to consider the character of his audience in more depth. A number of scholars have recognised that Aldhelm may have addressed men, as well as women, because they assume that he dedicated the work to Barking, which was a double *monasterium*.[102] In early Anglo-Saxon England, such communities, over which abbesses normally presided, housed nuns, monks and clerics, who lived together in varying degrees of proximity.[103]

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[100] Orchard offers this citation in his list of parallels between Aldhelm's phraseology and Ædiluulf's *De abbatibus*, see, Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 267.

[101] C. Rauer, 'The Sources of the Old English Martyrology', *ASE*, 32 (2003), pp. 91, 93, 103; *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, (ed.), G. Kotzor, Bayerische Akademie der Wiseenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, Abhandlungen 88 (Munich, 1981), p. 49, ll. 4-5, (trans.), G. Herzfeld, *Early English Texts Society*, Old Series 116 (London, 1900), p. 53, 'These are virgins highly celebrated in the book *de virginitate*, that is in the book on virgins', I owe this reference to Christine Rauer.

[102] For example, Browne, *Aldhelm*, pp. 314-15; *LH*, pp. 51, 56-57; *AM*, pp. 60, 62; G. T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury's Social Theology: the Barbaric Heroic Ideal Christianised', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), p. 61.

[103] D. B. Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life: A Study of the Status and Position of Women in an Early Medieval Society' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1985), pp. 23-43 esp.; for a recent study of Anglo-Saxon nunneries, with reference

However, other scholars suppose that Aldhelm principally wrote for adult noblewomen.[104] Aldhelm's audience has also been seen to comprise uniformly devout religious, with Scott Gwara even proposing that they were small pockets of newly converted, but zealous missionaries, living in 'defiantly pagan territory'.[105] Gwara also argues that virgins who had shunned their marriages to pagan suitors were an important component of Aldhelm's audience.[106] In contrast, Lapidge and O'Sullivan suggest that the texts were shaped by his formerly married addressees, that is, both widows, and, moreover, those who had left their spouses in favour of the religious life.[107]

Scholars' interpretations of Aldhelm's audience have had a fundamental bearing on how they have understood his religious guidance. Lapidge and O'Sullivan, for example, have suggested that he sought to maintain the orthodox Christian view that virginity was the most exalted sexual state, whilst also seeking to valorise and praise those individuals who had renounced their marriages for the religious life.[108] Alternatively, Scott Gwara has proposed that the *Prosa de virginitate* was foremost a defensive missionary document, written in a climate of 'tenacious (or resurgent)' paganism. Aldhelm, he argues, wanted to encourage monks to proselytise to potentially dangerous southern heathens. Moreover, he sought to 'offer solace and encouragement' to women religious whose families 'still had some pagan attachments', as well as to vindicate those women who had spurned marriages with pagans.[109] However, it is unclear how Gwara envisages the texts to have functioned in this respect, for, had they been written to defend the actions of Christian women against

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to double *monasteria*, see, B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London and New York, 2003).

[104] S. O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background to Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', *Milltown Studies*, 37 (1996), p. 60; *Idem*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* - Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia*, 12 (1998), pp. 272, 282.

[105] *AM*, pp. 41-46, 55-62, citation at p. 46.

[106] *AM*, pp. 52 n 22, 54-55, 60-62, cf. his earlier views, Gwara, 'The Rise of Hermeneutic Literacy', pp. 105-106.

[107] *LH*, pp. 52-56; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 282-84.

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] *AM*, esp. pp. 46, 54-62, citations at pp. 56 and 55 respectively, cf. p. 82 for Gwara's recognition that the double treatise also justifies religious chastity.

their pagan kindred, it implies that Aldhelm envisaged a (presumably pre-literate) pagan readership among his audience, which seems unlikely.

In the discussion that follows I want to reconsider Aldhelm's audience by focusing on its diversity and recent conversion.[110] I shall then consider the implications that this has for interpreting his work. In addition to the aims put forward by Lapidge and O'Sullivan, I propose that he sought to unify nascent religious, to encourage them to renounce secular habits, and to provide them with new Christian identities that would distinguish them from the nominally Christian laity.

3. 3. 1 New Monasteria

Aldhelm's double treatise was written during a period of remarkable religious expansion. Whilst the conversion of the English was begun in earnest by the late sixth century, it was a piecemeal process, with Aldhelm's mainly aristocratic audience converted by perhaps only two generations. They were also first to second generation professional religious, for it was not until the last three decades of the seventh century that the majority of West Saxon, Hwiccian and Mercian religious communities were founded.[111] For example, Withington, whose abbess Bugga may have been among Aldhelm's dedicatees, was founded between 680-693 and a good case has been made for placing the foundation of Barking in the later 680s, rather than the 660s, as is traditionally believed.[112]

These newly formed monastic communities rapidly dominated the landscape in this period. For instance, if we position ourselves at Aldhelm's *monasterium* at Malmesbury in the late seventh century, Tetta's *monasterium* was situated 4 miles north of the community, and Bugga's community at Withington some 20 miles distant. Aldhelm's possible *monasterium* at Bradford-on-Avon (which was situated only 5 miles from Bath

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[110] For the diversity of individuals in contemporary *monasteria* and their varied experiences of secular and religious life, see, C. Cubitt, 'Monastic Memory and Identity in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in W. O. Frazer and A. Tyrrel (eds.), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 256-61.

[111] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*, p. 56; Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses*, pp. 17-46, 23-30 esp.

[112] S. Foot, *Veiled Women: Female Religious Communities in England, 871-1066* (2 vols, Aldershot, 2000), vol. II, p. 27 n 1 cf. *LH*, p. 51.

monasterium) was 30 miles south along the River Avon. Only 3 miles west of Bradford-on-Avon, the River Avon joined the River Frome, towards which he may have had a third community. Bradford-on-Avon, together with the possible church he built at Brunton, east Somerset, were situated less than 10 miles from the Fosse Way, which ran past all of his possible religious communities on the way from Malmesbury to his episcopal seat at Sherborne. Once at Sherborne, Glastonbury, Muchelney and a further religious community near Shaftesbury were located within a 16-mile radius, and to the south-west Wimborne was around 25 miles away.[113] There are likely to have been further religious communities in these areas for which records have been lost.[114] Moreover, many of these *monasteria* had considerable land on which churches and other 'devotional foci' would have been located.[115] Gwara's suggestion that Aldhelm's addressees' *monasteria* were like islands of Christianity in a sea of paganism cannot be sustained. On the contrary, they were a large archipelago, whose culture was shaped by the nobility who quickly populated it and who presumably had long controlled it.

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[113] E. Murphy, 'Anglo-Saxon Shaftesbury – Bectun's Base or Alfred's Foundation?', *PDNHAS*, 113 (1991), pp. 23-28; for Aldhelm's associations with Glastonbury and Muchelney, see above, pp. 26, 37-38, 40.

[114] For Dorset minsters and the possible early origins of some of these, see, T. A. Hall, *Minster Churches in the Dorset Landscape*, BAR, British Series, 304 (2000).

[115] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*, p. 67.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Withington
c.20 miles

Tetbury

Somerford
Keynes

Malmesbury

R. Avon

Foss Way

R. Yeo

R. Axe

R. Frome

Bradford-on-Avon

WILTSHIRE

R. Brue

(possible location)

Frome

R. Wylye

Glastonbury

Bruton

SOMERSET

R. Parrett

Foss Way

Muchelney

Shaftesbury?

R. Stour

Sherborne

R. Axe

DORSET

Wimborne

R. Frome Wareham

/ — Roman road

— Bishopric

— Possible *Monasterium* (est. by Aldhelm)

— Possible Church (est. by Aldhelm)

— *Monasterium*

? — Uncertain

10miles   20miles

Map 4. Aldhelm's bishopric and possible religious foundations and their proximity to
selected local *monasteria*

3. 3. 2 Male and Female Religious

Although some scholars have focused on the female element in Aldhelm's audience, nonetheless, reception of the double treatise tells us that both male and female religious had access to the texts and that it was popular among both sexes. Its influential Latin style can, for example, be detected in the writings of Boniface, Lul, Ælflæd and Leofgyth.[116] Indeed, it is possible that Aldhelm dedicated the work to abbesses of double *monasteria* or houses of women which included monks and clerics.[117] Contemporary sources refer to collective groups of monks at Barking, Wimborne and at the *monasterium* of Centwine's daughter Bugga.[118] Men and women in these communities would have had access to the double treatise in private, communal, educational and devotional contexts, for the work of Dagmar Schneider has shown us that both men and women were educated and taught in double *monasteria*, as well as having 'equal rights and duties' within them.[119]

Certainly Aldhelm's texts envisage male readers and auditors. Almost all of the specific references that Aldhelm makes to women religious are confined to the introductory and concluding chapters of his 60-chapter prose text, hence to the material addressed to his female dedicatees.[120] In significant contrast, throughout the rest of the work, direct references to women are conspicuous by their absence. Instead, Aldhelm will even refer to *ecclesiastici, fratres* and individuals of *utroque sexus*.[121] Thus, for example, he tells us that: *Pudet referre quorundam frontosam elationis impudentiam et comptam*

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[116] See above, pp. 86-87.

[117] On this monastic form, see, Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 17-26; S. Foot, *Veiled Women I: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (2 vols, Aldershot, 2000), vol. I, pp. 49-56; it is now generally agreed that the majority, although not necessarily all early Anglo-Saxon *monasteria*, housed priests and clergy, who were charged with lay pastoral responsibilities, for a recent summary of the literature on this topic, see, Cubitt, 'The Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England', forthcoming in *Historical Research*.

[118] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', p. 26.

[119] *Ibid.*, citation at p. 30, see for example, pp. 26-31, 144-48, 179-94.

[120] Aldhelm, *PdV, prologus*, caps. I-II, LX, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 228-30, 323 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in caps. II and LX, see, *AM*, pp. 311, 314).

[121] *Ibid.*, cap. LVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 317, l. 23, (trans.), *LH*, p. 127 'ecclesiastics'; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2627, p. 459, (trans.), *LR*, p. 161 'brothers'; *Idem.*, *PdV*, caps. X, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, l. 14, *Ibid.*, cap. LVIII, (ed.), *AO*, 317, l. 22, p. 318, 1-2, (trans.), *LH*, pp. 67, 127 'either sex'; for another example of his gender inclusiveness, see, *LH*, p. 195 n 15.

stoliditatis insolentiam, quae in utroque sexu non solum sanctimonialium sub regimine coenubii conversantium, verum etiam ecclesiasticorum sub dicione pontificali in clero degentium.[122] This gender inclusiveness is unusual and sets him apart from his late antique literary exemplars who wrote on virginity.[123] Likewise, as I will demonstrate in Chapters Four to Six, in departure from his patristic models, Aldhelm chose to include material that was appropriate to both male and female religious, rather than to women in particular.

3. 3. 3 Varied Sexual Histories

Aldhelm's audience will have had varied sexual histories. Virgins are likely to have been in a minority amongst Aldhelm's audience. Some adult virgins, such as the purportedly Virgin-Queen Æthelthryth (d. 679), undoubtedly entered *monasteria* in this period, yet evidence for them is extremely limited.[124] A higher proportion of virgins no doubt were represented by children and youths, who themselves comprised only a small number of monastic and clerical entrants.[125] Different groups of children entered religious communities in this period: those receiving an education, the sick, orphaned and oblates.[126] Taking the latter group, Bede, who was an oblate himself, tells us a miracle concerning a 3 year old boy Æscia, who was cared for at Barking *monasterium* in the late seventh

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[122] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 317, ll. 21-24, (trans.), *LH*, p. 127, 'It is a disgrace to mention the shameless impudence of vanity and the sleek insolence of stupidity which [vanity and insolence] are to be discerned in those of both sexes, not only those living cloistered under the discipline of the monastery but even ecclesiastics whose clerical sphere of duty is under the control of a bishop'.

[123] Compare, for example, Ambrose, *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*, (ed.), I. Cazzaniga, *S Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi De virginibus libri tres* (Turin, 1948), and Jerome, *Epistola ad Eustochium*, (ed.), I. Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, pars I, CSEL, LIV (Vienna, 1910); While both church fathers do address males specifically in a handful of passages, their references to females are considerably more plentiful.

[124] *H. E.*, IV. 19-20, pp. 390-401; whilst Æthelthryth was said to have been a virgin, some reasonable doubt can be placed on this, since she had been married to an Anglo-Saxon king who would have been concerned to produce heirs. Note also, how once-sexually active royal women might be labelled virgins in liturgical, narrative and hagiographical texts, see, V. Ortenberg, 'Virgins Queens: Abbesses and Power in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in R. Gameson and H. Leyser (eds.), *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 59-68.

[125] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 50-51.

century.[127] The missionary Leofgyth also entered Wimborne *monasterium* as an oblate in the first half of the eighth century.[128] However, as De Jong's study of Carolingian child oblation has shown, it was not until the ninth century that it became a sizeable and desirable form of monastic recruitment.[129] Furthermore, whilst lifelong chastity among children in *monasteria* was the ideal, it was not always met in reality, for, as we shall see shortly, adolescents left the cloister to marry and a number of children who were educated in *monasteria* will not have been destined for a religious career.[130] Accordingly, only a minority of Aldhelm's audience will have been virgins and for some of these it will only have been a temporary sexual state prior to marriage. Furthermore, virgins were mainly represented by the younger (and therefore less authoritative) members of religious communities, who had renounced less than adult religious entrants and whose access to Aldhelm's texts probably would have been limited. These factors, as we shall see, had an important bearing on his treatment of virginity.[131]

Equally significant to Aldhelm was the fact that the majority of his audience comprised once sexually active individuals. Widows are likely to have formed a significant group in contemporary *monasteria*.[132] In the early medieval period, widows, unlike male widowers, had a recognised legal and religious status. Monasticism was popular among these often-vulnerable women because it provided a means for them to secure their inheritance and avoid re-marriage; it was also a means for the church to protect them from sexual threats, to preserve their chastity, control their property and to limit their remarriage.[133] Not only was monasticism beneficial to widows, but society produced

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[126] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 79, 131-42.

[127] *H. E.*, IV. 8, pp. 358-59.

[128] Rudolf of Fulda, *Vita S Leobae*, (ed.), Waitz, cap. VI, p. 124; for further examples of early Anglo-Saxon oblates, see, M. de Jong, *In Samuel's Image. Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 47-55.

[129] De Jong, *In Samuel's Image, passim.*

[130] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 79, 136-39; and, see below, p. 107.

[131] See below, pp. 192-228.

[132] O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 282-83.

[133] J. L. Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', in W. Davies and P. Fouracre, *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 82-113; for widows in the early Anglo-Saxon church, see, Foot, *Veiled Women I*, pp. 112-20.

many such women as well. Karl Leyser's study of tenth-to eleventh-century Ottonian society has shown that constant warfare and feuding reduced the life expectancy of high status adult men. As a consequence, these men's wives might be widowed young and often outlived them for many years.[134] This demographic trend is likely to have operated in early Anglo-Saxon England, where girls might marry as young as 12-14 years of age and where violence and warfare were commonplace.[135]

The second major group of once sexually active individuals among Aldhelm's audience were those who had renounced their marriages and secular lives in adulthood. As we saw in Chapter Two, Aldhelm may have had a vested interest in helping these individuals, for he and his ecclesiastical group probably had an active hand in encouraging renunciation, at least among royalty for whom we have documentary evidence. These individuals included, Queen Æthelthryth, who ended her marriage to the Northumbria King Ecgfrith to enter the *monasterium* of Coldingham,[136] young Offa of the East Saxons (c. 694-709), who left a wife to journey to Rome and became a monk,[137] and Cuthburh of Wimborne, whose separation from her husband, Aldfrith of Northumbria, may have occurred just prior to her beginning a religious life.[138] It is likely that these individuals represent a much wider trend, for the penitential literature associated with Archbishop Theodore (602-690) prescribes the circumstances under which religious recruits might

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[134] K. J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society* (London, 1979), pp. 52-58.

[135] O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 282-83; for girls' ages at marrying, see, S. Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Thrupp, 1999), pp. 48-49.

[136] See above, pp. 63-64.

[137] *H. E.*, V. 19, pp. 516-17.

[138] See above, pp. 66, 76-77. All of these examples and more are cited by *LH*, p. 54 and M. Lapidge, 'A Seventh-Century Insular Latin Debate Poem on Divorce', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 10 (1985), pp. 14-17; for a later medieval account of Cuthburh's marriage, in which Aldfrith allowed her to enter the religious life before consummating their marriage, see, J. M. J. Fletcher, 'The Marriage of St Cuthburga who was Afterwards Foundress of the Monastery at Wimborne', *PDNHAS*, XXXIV (1913), pp. 170-83.

leave their marriages.[139] Furthermore, men in major clerical orders were expected to relinquish their marriages and sexual relationships once ordained.[140]

In addition to virgins and the sexually continent, Aldhelm's audience is likely to have included married individuals on the periphery. His students are a case in point, because they probably included secular individuals.[141] Readers and auditors of his work also will have interacted with married individuals, such as their secular patrons, who may have temporarily resided in their communities as guests. Furthermore, priests and clerics in most communities probably had some responsibility over the sexually active laity and it is thought that all major religious houses must have contained 'non-monastic priests and subordinates of various grades',[142] who canon law permitted to marry. The extent to which these monastic personnel were a part of monastic complexes, or separate from them, remains a moot point, although presumably they presided in separate lodgings from those undertaking vows of chastity.[143] Whilst it is doubtful whether minor clergymen would have been able to read Aldhelm's Latin, nonetheless, they were part of the wider monastic milieu.[144] Married individuals, therefore, were important to the functioning of

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[139] *P. Theodori 'D'*, nos. 39, 112, pp. 242, 248; *P. Theodori 'U'*, II. XII. 8 and II. XII. 13, pp. 327-28; for discussions of these rulings, including their connection to Archbishop Theodore and their compilers, see, A. J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (New Jersey, 1983), pp. 61-93 *passim*; T. Charles-Edwards, 'The Penitential of Theodore and the *Iudicia Theodori*', in M. Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore*, CSASE, 11 (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 141-74.

[140] For clerical marriage in early Anglo-Saxon England, see, A. Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, London and New York, NY, 1992), p. 138; C. Cubitt, 'Images of St. Peter: The Clergy and the Religious Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in P. Cavill (ed.), *The Christian Tradition* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 50-53 and *Idem.*, 'Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England'; for the wider context, see, C. A. Frazee, 'The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Western Church', *Church History*, 41 (1972), 149-67.

[141] P. Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*, (trans.), J. J. Contreni, (Columbia, SC, 1976), pp. 322-23.

[142] Blair, 'Debate', p. 208.

[143] The Minster model presumes a lack of distinction between monks and clergy. However, Cubitt has recently developed a more nuanced model of pastoral care, with more variation between communities of monks and clerics than hitherto recognised, Cubitt, 'Images of St. Peter', pp. 46-48 and *Idem.*, 'The Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England'.

[144] For the minimal requirements of clerical Latin, see, Canones *Clofesho*, (ed.), *HS III*, no. 10, p. 366.

contemporary *monasteria*: Aldhelm may have wanted to take this into account when discussing the spiritual merits of their sexual status in the course of his double treatise.

Finally, it is worth noting that some early Anglo-Saxon monastic entrants had been, or were continuing to be, sexually licentious in the eyes of the church. Contemporary prescriptive literature, for example, makes provisions for adulteresses who enter *monasteria*.[145] A fair number of monastic entrants must have been married more than once in a period in which the church looked upon second and moreover, multiple marriages, disdainfully.[146] The Virgin-Queen Æthilthryth provides us with an example of a twice-married nun; the poet Ædiluulf provides another, a monk at his *monasterium*, who experienced a vision of Judgement in which God let his reproachful wife decide his fate because he had violated their mutual vow not to remarry if either partner died.[147] Furthermore, a mid-eighth century vision of the afterlife, written by an unknown author, tells us that Queen Cuthburh, who probably should be identified with Aldhelm's possible dedicatee of the same name, was seen submersed to her armpits in a penitential pit, in retribution for the carnal sins she had committed.[148] It is possible that Cuthburh's perceived sin had occurred whilst she was in the religious rather than the secular life, for, as we shall see shortly, in the minds of some early Anglo-Saxon clerics, women religious were associated with worrying levels of sexual promiscuity.

3. 3. 4 Age, Social Status and Religious Ardour

The diversity among Aldhelm's immediate audience could be extended considerably, but I want to focus briefly on three further variables, namely age, social

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[145] *P. Theodori 'U'*, II. XII. 11, p. 327.

[146] *P. Theodori 'D'*, no. 36, p. 242; *P. Theodori 'U'*, I. XIV. 2-3, p. 307.

[147] *H. E.*, IV. 19, pp. 390-91; Æthelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, (ed.), A. Campell (Oxford, 1967), cap. XI, pp. 26-33, and Campbell's discussion on pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

[148] Tangl. 115, pp. 248-49; *LH*, p. 193 n 20; Only two Cuthburhs have been identified in early Anglo-Saxon England, namely, Ine's sister who was wife of Aldfrith of Northumbria and the dedicatee for the *PdV*, who, as discussed above (pp. 76-77), are likely to be one and the same, cf. Searle, *Onomasticon*, p. 148; Schneider, *Prosopography*, nos. 100-101, p. 28; the monk of Wenlock's vision is also preserved among the Bonifatian correspondence, on this, see, Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 243-72.

status, and religious ardour.[149] First, there is age, for children and teenagers lived in *monasteria* alongside individuals who had aged in religious communities and others that had entered in adulthood. Æscia at Barking was, as previously suggested, 3 years old, but the same community housed Torhtgyth, who had lived there for many years, and Hildelith, who, Bede tells us, lived to a great old age.[150] Likewise, whereas Bede purportedly entered the *monasterium* of Wearmouth at the age of 7, Eosterwine (d. 686) was 24 and when Ceolfrith (688-716), abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow, died aged 74, he had been in priests' orders alone for 47 years, and perhaps, therefore, in the religious for longer.[151] Second there were differences in social status. Taking women, for example, we can expect that the majority were of high status, for early Anglo-Saxon double *monasteria* and nunneries were 'essentially ... aristocratic institution(s)', founded by royalty and nobility and often governed by their kinswomen.[152] Cuthburh of Wimborne was of course a former queen, Centwine's abbess-daughter Bugga a princess, and if Aldhelm was of royal stock, his kinswoman Osburg may have been as well. Yet the wealth and statuses of these nobles would have been varied and *monasteria* may have also housed less affluent individuals. This is suggested, for example, in the letter of Abbess Eangyth to Boniface, in which she complained that she was presiding over monastic charges *multorum mentibus et diversis moribus*.[153] As Schneider has observed, 'this difference in mentality and habit could perhaps indicate different social backgrounds as well'.[154] As a number of scholars have shown, variations in age and social status may have been a source of conflict in contemporary *monasteria* as noble religious continued to value and exploit their secular

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[149] Consider, for example, the fact that individuals from the same family lived in *monasteria* alongside non-family members and that the disabled lived alongside the physically able.

[150] *H. E.*, IV. 8, p. 358, IV. 9, p. 360, IV. 10, p. 362.

[151] *Ibid.*, V. 24, p. 566; Bede, *Historia abbatum*, (ed.), *VBOH*, caps. VIII, XXII, pp. 372, 386.

[152] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 32-33, 51-54; B. Yorke, ' "Sisters under the Skin?" Anglo-Saxon Nuns and Nunneries in Southern England', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1989), pp. 98-102; S. Foot, *Veiled Women I*, p. 44.

[153] Tangl 14, p. 23, ll. 1-2 'with the dispositions and different ways of many'.

[154] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 51-52.

identities, and as those educated in *monasteria* from childhood, scorned the lower scholastic abilities of older religious entrants.[155]

A third difference that we can expect among Aldhelm's audience is in their degrees of religious ardour. Some monastic entrants seemingly were dedicated religious who had desired to leave secular society and start their lives anew. An example is found in Bede's account of the Northumbrian nobleman Drythelm, who, with a view to saving his soul, left his wife and family to become a monk.[156] Conversely, we have many examples of involuntary, although admittedly not necessarily unwilling, monastic recruits, which included adulteresses, political prisoners or refugees, fugitives, thieves, exiles and oblates.[157] In addition, regardless of their religious conviction, some monks and clerics had many sins to atone, for in this warrior caste society, many male religious, including the successful warriors Sæbbi (c. 664-694), Æthelred (675-704) and Guthlac, are likely to have had blood on their hands.

In sum, Aldhelm will have addressed a diverse audience of first to second generation religious, which comprised mainly, but not exclusively, high status and adult, male and female religious. They had challengingly diverse sexual identities for a writer enumerating the merits of sexual continence and included individuals who had rejected marriage, alongside virgins, widows, widowers, married individuals and individuals who, in the church's eyes, were sexually licentious. Many were only recent religious recruits, yet their ardour for the monastic and clerical life was undoubtedly varied. As we shall see in the next three chapters, Aldhelm's diverse audience had major implications for his double treatise. Rather than merely encouraging zealous religious, he would have to reconcile his audiences' varied experiences of renunciation and spiritually unite them in common religious pursuits.

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[155] For conflict caused by difference in social status, see, H. Mayr-Harting, *The Venerable Bede: The Rule of St. Benedict and Social Class*, Jarrow Lecture, 1976 (Jarrow, 1977), pp. 10-12 esp.; Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 51-54; Cubitt, 'Monastic Memory and Identity', pp. 260-61; for differences in levels of education being a source of conflict, see, *Ibid.*, pp. 256-57; and for child oblates forming an educated elite, see, De Jong, *In Samuel's Image*, pp. 232-45.

[156] *H. E.*, V. 12, pp. 488-89; Bede, *Historia abbatum*, (ed.), *VBOH*, caps. I-II, pp. 364-65.

[157] For political prisoners or fugitives, see, Æthelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, (ed.), Campell, cap. II-III, pp. 6-7, ll. 44-53, cap. IV, pp. 6-9, ll. 65-92; Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 79-80; for thieves, *P. Theodori 'D'*, nos. 91, 128, pp. 246, 249, *P. Theodori 'U'*, I. III. 1, p. 293; for adulteresses and oblates, see above, pp. 98-99, 102.

3. 4 Contemporary Difficulties with Renunciation

Aldhelm also needed to provide his addressees with new statuses and codes of behaviour, for in this period the developing English church was seeking to sharpen the boundaries between religious and secular lifestyles. Encouraging distinctions between first and second generation religious and their secular counterparts was, however, problematic. *Monasteria* were principally founded by the nobility, for the nobility, and as Patrick Wormald showed us in a seminal article, some of their inhabitants had to be persuaded to renounce accustomed mores in favour of new ones.[158] This was complicated, first, by the fact that professional Christians disagreed over how and to what extent secular values should be accommodated into the religious life,[159] and, second, by the fact that early religious communities interacted and converged with secular society.

Two aspects of renunciation concerned Aldhelm especially, that is, the renunciation of sexual intercourse and of secular dress. Relinquishment of sexual activity was a difficult ideal for the early Anglo-Saxon church to impose on professional religious.[160] Within secular society, both pre-Christian and contemporary Anglo-Saxons probably practised some forms of sexual abstinence already, because anthropological and historical paradigms recognise old age and widowhood as likely periods of sexual continence for women especially.[161] The church will have looked to appropriate these recognised stages in the lifecycle, together with that of prepubescent virginity, and to invest them with Christian meaning and status. However, by encouraging individuals in the prime of their lives to abandon sex, the church presented this kin-based and patriarchal

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[158] For their reluctance in doing so, see, P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in R. T. Farrell (ed.), *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, BAR, British Series 46 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 42-58 esp.

[159] See, for example, Bede berating what he believed to be false *monasteria* in Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* (ed.), *VBOH*, caps. X-XIII, pp. 413-17.

[160] See, for example, A. J. Frantzen, 'Between the Lines: Queer Theory, the History of Homosexuality and the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials', *Journal of Medieval and Early Medieval Studies*, 26 (2) (1996), 255-96; *Idem.*, 'Where the Boys Are: Children and Sex in the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials', in J. J. Cohen and B. Wheeler, *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York and London, 1997), pp. 43-66.

[161] P. Caplan, 'Celibacy as a Solution? Mahatma Gandi and *Brahmacharya*', in *Idem* (ed.), *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality* (London and New York, 1987), p. 271; P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), p. 69; note how Bede regarded the 'virginal young or the abstinent old' to be more suitable communicants than married individuals, Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral care', p. 155.

society with an alternative form of authority and status. Stuart Airlie has shown that when writing the *vita* of Gerald of Aurillac (855-909), in c. 930, Odo of Cluny admitted that the count's radically chaste behaviour was rather odd.[162] Whilst it is true that Odo was writing about a lay saint, for a lay aristocratic audience, nonetheless, his sentiments would have found a sympathetic hearing among the early Anglo-Saxons.[163] This is because high-status Anglo-Saxon males took multiple sexual partners.[164] It is also likely that in early Anglo-Saxon England, as in other kin-based societies, marriage alliances were fundamentally important and carefully orchestrated to bring political, social and economic benefits.[165] Social and/or political alliances could be created or strengthened, fealty expressed and affilial kin relationships formed by women joining different kin groups. It also meant that a family could control its heirs and in turn its wealth, support and standing in society. This provides one reason why in early medieval society adolescence was a transitional stage at which individuals of both sexes could begin to acquire a new and distinctive status, which probably was based on their sexual maturity, their 'full social participation and responsibility', and for girls, moreover, on their ability to marry and procreate.[166]

The fact that adolescence was accompanied by an important sexual and social transition provides a reason why contemporary prescriptive texts single out young men (although clerics and monks as well) as especially likely to break their religious vows to

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[162] S. Airlie, 'The Anxiety of Sanctity: St. Gerald of Aurillac and his Maker', *JEH*, 43 (3) (1992), pp. 389-92.

[163] For the treatment of male saints' sexual continence in early Anglo-Saxon hagiography, see, E. Pettit, 'Aldhelm's *De laude virginitatis* and *Carmen de virginitate*. A Study of Anglo-Saxon Discourses on Sexuality', (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of York, 2000), pp. 55, 61-62.

[164] M. Clunies-Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', *Past and Present*, 108 (1985), 3-34, and see below, p. 123.

[165] On Anglo-Saxon kinship, see, for example, Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 74-88; L. Lancaster, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon Society, Parts I and II', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 9 (3) (1958), 230-50, 359-77; T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Kinship, Status and the Origins of the Hide', *Past and Present*, 56 (1972), 3-33.

[166] P. Stafford, 'Review Article: Parents and Children in the Early Middle Ages', *EME*, 10 (2), p. 261; also see, Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 46-56, 154-67; N. Stoodley, 'From the Cradle to the Grave: Age Organisation and the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite', *World Archaeology*, 31 (3) (1999), 456-72 and *Idem., The Spindle and the Spear. A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite*, BAR, British Series, 288 (Oxford, 1999), pp. 105-18.

marry unlawfully.[167] The earliest penitential associated with Archbishop Theodore therefore prescribes penance for those monastic boys under the age of 16 who were unable to abstain from marriage.[168] Indeed, children and youths raised in *monasteria* were not fully integrated into wider monastic and clerical communities until around aged 15-16 years. At this age, it seems, some chose to accept the community's values, whilst others rejected them and rejoined secular society.[169] Secular society certainly appears to have put the religious under pressure to forsake their chastity. Parents who had dedicated their children to the monastic life in childhood, for example, might try to reclaim them for marriage once they had attained puberty.[170] Even though it has been suggested that the early Anglo-Saxons had a preference for founding female *monasteria*, because the presence of unbetrothed girls in the secular household invited unsuitable sexual relations and unwanted children, these new institutions did not safeguard women completely.[171] Instead, we have evidence for early Anglo-Saxon men forcibly removing nuns from *monasteria* in order to marry or having sexual intercourse with women religious against their will. Possible examples are found in Boniface's long polemical letter to King Æthelbald of Mercia (716-57). In this he berates Æthelbald for having sexual intercourse *cum sanctis monialibus et sacratis Deo virginibus* in their *monasteria*, and accuses Kings Ceolred of Mercia (709-16) and Osred of Deira (706/6-16) of defiling nuns, with the later king singled out for the violent manner in which *per monasteria nonnarum sacratas virgines stuprantem*.[172] Furthermore, although women religious were perhaps especially

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[167] *P. Theodori 'D'*, no. 171, p. 252; *P. Theodori 'U'*, I. VIII. 14, p. 301, *Ibid.*, I. IX, 4, p. 302, *Ibid.*, II. VI. 11, p. 321; for wider concern with religious returning to the secular life, see, *P. Theodori 'U'*, I. VIII. 12-13, p. 301, *Ibid.*, I. IX. 2-3, p. 302.

[168] *P. Theodori 'D'*, no. 171, p. 252; *P. Theodori 'U'*, I. VIII. 14, p. 301.

[169] For aged 15/16 being the age at which individuals were able to decide whether to chose a secular or religious existence, see, *P. Theodori 'D'*, nos. 118-19, 166, 171, pp. 248, 251-52; *P. Theodori 'U'*, I. VIII. 14, p. 301, *Ibid.*, II. VI. 11, p. 321, *Ibid.*, II. XII. 37, pp. 330-31.

[170] Tangl, no. 26, p. 46, discussed De Jong, *In Samuel's Image*, pp. 46-53.

[171] Lesyer, *Rule and Conflict*, p. 64.

[172] For Æthelbald, see, Tangl 73, p. 148, ll. 21-22 'with holy nuns and virgins consecrated to God', for Ceolred and Osred, *Ibid.*, p. 152, ll. 25-26 and for Osred alone, *Ibid.*, p. 153, ll. 8-10 at 8-9 'through the *monasteria* of nuns he defiled consecrated virgins'; on Osred's misdemeanours, also see, Æthelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, (ed.), Campell, cap. II, pp. 4-7 and below, p. 121; for potential reasons why Boniface wrote to Æthelbald of Mercia, see, Mckitterick, 'Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Personal Connections', pp. 20-23.

vulnerable to rape during times of war, even so, one wonders whether some of these individuals had entered *monasteria* in childhood when their ability to procreate was inconsequential, only to be reclaimed when it became important in adulthood.

Whilst there was fear that the laity might undermine professed religious' vows of chastity, the church also feared that *monasteria* created a climate of sexual temptation. The canons associated with Archbishop Theodore therefore expressed concern about men and women living together in close proximity in double *monasteria*.[173] Bede suggested that male and female religious at the double *monasterium* of Coldingham remained awake in their cells at night for the purpose of sin(s) (*ad peccata*), with even the vowed virgins entertaining men from outside of the community.[174] Clerics indeed seem to have feared unbridled female sexuality, with Boniface encouraging Archbishop Cuthbert (740-58) to forbid Anglo-Saxon women from undertaking pilgrimages to Rome because many only made it as far as East Francia, whereupon they became prostitutes.[175] In addition, the penitentials show concern with monks' and clerics' sexual acts, homosexual acts especially. Children's sexual conduct was also a source of concern, with boys deemed a sexual temptation to male religious.[176] In this climate, Aldhelm had to encourage professed religious to value and maintain their chastity at the same time as demonising those who attempted to undermine it.

In addition to sexual relations, the forsaking of secular dress represents another ideal that the indigenous church had difficulty imposing. Early Anglo-Saxons were expected to wear *halgum hrægle* and dress that was fitting to their vocation: it therefore had to be simple, and lavish colours, materials and ornamentation were to be avoided.[177]

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[173] *P. Theodori 'U'*, II. VI. 8, p. 320.

[174] *H. E.*, IV. 25, pp. 424-25; on Nuns at Holy Cross, Poitiers, becoming pregnant, see, Cubitt, 'Monastic Memory and Identity', p. 256; also see Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, for sexually active married men and women ruling *monasteria, Ibid.*, (ed.), *VBOH*, cap. 12, pp. 415-16.

[175] Tangl, 78, p. 169, ll. 15-25.

[176] Frantzen, 'Between the Lines', pp. 271, 273-80; *Idem.*, 'Where the Boys Are', pp. 43-66; also see, J. Nelson, 'Parents, Children and the Church in the Earlier Middle Ages', in D. Wood (ed.), *The Church and Childhood, SCH*, 31 (1994), pp. 84-85 and R. Meens, 'Children and Confession in the Early Middle Ages', in *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

[177] For priests' association with *halgum hreægle*, 'holy garments', see, for example, The Laws of Wihtred, (ed.), F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, (3 vols, Halle, 1898-1916), vol I, no. 18, p. 13; Tangl, 78, p. 170.

Regulating religious dress was important on many levels. In the first instance it offered a means of differentiating religious from the laity and helped to engender a distinctive identity among them. Abstemious dress was also compatible with the modesty, austerity and, moreover, chastity, expected of professional religious. Although the association between extravagant dress and sexuality was a well-worn Christian trope, nonetheless, evidence from the Continent suggests that for women, 'dress and bodily adornments' may have indicated marriageable status and child-bearing potential (and thus, by extension, sexual availability).[178] Indeed, Bede complained that some of the nuns of Coldingham endangered their virginity by weaving elaborate garments with which they adorned themselves as though they were brides.[179] Furthermore, to the early Anglo-Saxons, dress was an important purveyor of status. Whilst *monasteria* principally housed high status individuals, even so, they included less affluent individuals and the nobility were themselves of varying affluence and degrees of social importance. Moderating dress was thus a means of preventing religious from manifesting their social distinctions.

Despite the church's concern to moderate religious dress, a good number of written documents lament the fact that they continued to wear items of secular dress. This can also be inferred from the archaeological evidence.[180] Eighth-century silver gilted globular-headed pins, for example, which may have been used to secure veiling on headdresses, have been found at the site of Barking *monasterium*.[181] Similar items occur at other high-status sites, which may or may not have housed religious communities.[182] Scholars' difficulties in determining the nature of these sites is itself testimony to the similarities

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[178] For the association between sexuality and dress, see below, pp. 140-141; for clothing and jewellery indicating marriageable status, see, G. Halsall, 'Female Status and Power in Early Merovingian Central Austrasia: the Burial Evidence', *EME*, 5 (1) (1996), pp. 14-17 esp., citation at p. 14.

[179] *H. E.*, IV. 25, pp. 424-27.

[180] For prescriptions against lavish religious dress, see, for example, Canones *Clofesho*, (ed.), *HS III*, no. 19, pp. 368-69; also see the comments of Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf", p. 51 and J. Campbell, 'Elements in the Background to the Life of St Cuthbert and his Early Cult', in G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (eds.), *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 9, 13-14, 17.

[181] Webster and Backhouse (eds.), *The Making of England*, no. 67 (d-h), pp. 89-90.

[182] These items, albeit some of which are more ornate versions, occur at Brandon, Suffolk and at Flixborough, South Humberside, see, *Ibid.*, no. 66 (c-k), pp. 83-85 and no. 69 (d-h), pp. 96-97 respectively.

between religious and secular habitation in this early period.[183] Most remarkably, gold thread fragments, which may derive from woven braids and date to the seventh to eighth century, have been found at the site of Barking *monasterium*.[184] These threads may have been from ecclesiastical vestments. However, it appears significant that their nearest parallels come from sixth-to early seventh-century high-status (mainly) female graves from Kent, where their deposition suggests that they were worn as headbands and around cuffs.[185] Were the nuns of Barking not only aware of, but also participating in, high status contemporary fashion?[186] In sum, contemporary religious were expected to forsake secular clothing, and the statuses and social messages with which it was associated. Nonetheless, they continued to wear some items of secular dress at least. This was one of the issues that Aldhelm would have to address when teaching his audience the meaning and rewards of sexual and social renunciation.

3. 5 Polemical Aims

It is left for us to highlight one further function of Aldhelm's double treatise that will emerge more clearly in Part Two of this thesis. That is, to promote his distinctive views on renunciation. Whilst the political and polemical intentions of Northumbrian monastic texts have been well served by historians,[187] Aldhelm's texts have been largely ignored from this perspective.[188] Yet he was, as we have seen, a reformer, who was keen

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[183] For a recent discussions on the nature and function of the site at Flixborough, for example, see, K. Leahy, 'The Middle Saxon Site at Flixborough, North Lincolnshire', in J. Hawkes and S. Mills (eds.), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Thrupp, Stroud, 1999), pp. 92-94.

[184] Webster and Backhouse (eds.), *The Making of England*, nos. 67 (a), pp. 88-89.

[185] *Ibid.*; E. Crowfoot and S. C. Hawkes, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Gold Braids', *Medieval Archaeology*, 11 (1967), pp. 50-53, 67-71 esp.

[186] Webster and Backhouse (eds.), *The Making of England*, nos. 67 (a), pp. 88-89; K. MacGowan, 'Barking Abbey', *Current Archaeology*, 149 (1996), p. 175.

[187] See, for example, W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1988), pp. 235-324; A. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthert', in Bonner, Rollason and Stancliffe (eds.), *St Cuthbert*, pp. 115-22.

[188] Dempsey, however, recognises Aldhelm's double treatise's potential involvement in a 'literary war' with the Irish, see, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm Social Theology', pp. 70-80.

the same time, his texts provided him with a vehicle by which he could publicise more widely his own distinctive views on renunciation.

Part Two: The *opus geminatum De virginitate*

Part Two Introduction

As we have seen in Chapters One to Three, Aldhelm was a West Saxon ecclesiastical politician of great importance, who wrote his double treatise *De virginitate* for a diverse audience of first to second-generation religious. His deep involvement in contemporary monasticism placed him in a favourable position to offer guidance to nuns, monks and clerics. In Part Two of this thesis I shall consider the nature of this guidance. Before I do this, however, it is important to consider the sources that Aldhelm drew upon to write the work, and the possible functions of his texts.

Sources

Aldhelm's work on sexual and social renunciation is conceived of as an *opus geminatum*. It therefore comprises a 60-chapter treatise on prose and a 2, 904-line verse counterpart. Both texts begin and end with guidance on how spiritual perfection might be attained in religious communities. However, the greater part of the texts, which is sandwiched between this material, comprises a lengthy catalogue of male and female saints, presented as illustrative models. A good deal of attention has been devoted to reconstructing Aldhelm's literary sources, with extant Anglo-Saxon booklists and manuscripts helping to verify which texts probably were available to him.[1] Aldhelm had access to impressive book collections, including those at Canterbury and his own library at Malmesbury.[2] His education will have introduced him to texts and disciplines that were of relevance to his double treatise. For instance, at Canterbury he studied Roman law

[1] Of the authors discussed below, in c. 778, Ælbert, archbishop of York, certainly owned works by all of the authors discussed, bar Juvenal, Corippus, Cyprian, Cassian, Pelagius (whose work on virginity circulated under Jerome's name anyway) and Benedict (whose rule the community at York would have been familiar with), see, M. Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England', in M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (eds.), *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 46-49; Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of all of the authors discussed below, with the exception of Corippus, were written or owned in England prior to 1100, see, H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 241 (Temple, Arizona, 2001).

[2] H. Gneuss, 'Anglo-Saxon Libraries from the Conversion to the Benedictine Reform', *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo*, 32 (Spoleto, 1986), pp. 651-52; M. Lapidge, '*Beowulf*, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', *Studi Medievali*, Third Series, 23 (1982), 151-92, repr. and rev. *Idem., Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), pp. 298-99; R. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 98-99.

(including, perhaps, the Breviary of Alaric).[3]   Likewise, his education and clerical activities will have made him familiar with penitential and conciliar literature, which discussed many of the lay and monastic spiritual issues addressed in his work.[4]

Aldhelm has been shown to have enriched his prose and poetic *De virginitate* with citations from, and allusions to, grammars, as well as to Christian, classical, and secular Latin verse.[5]   The latter included a wide range of poets: for example, Aldhelm was indebted to the extremely influential classical secular poet Vergil (70-19 BC), but at the same time, he is the only known Anglo-Saxon poet to have had first-hand knowledge of Juvenal (died after 127).   Likewise, his extensive knowledge and use of the Christian Latin poets included popular writers such as Caelius Sedulius (fl. 425-50), Prudentius (c. 348- after 405) and Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530-600), alongside less celebrated poets, such as Corippus (c.500-68).[6]   Although Aldhelm may have had access to individual texts of these authors, even so, it is also possible that he also studied them in anthologies or florilegia.[7]

The essential core of Aldhelm's texts, however, is a mix of influences drawn from the Bible, patristic texts on asceticism and sexual continence, as well as passions, *vitae* and martyrial literature (both canonical and apocryphal).[8]   Writings on virginity by, among other authors, Cyprian (248-58), Ambrose (c. 339-97), Jerome (c. 342-419), Jerome's early fifth-century rival Pelagius, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530-600), provided Aldhelm with definitions and statements about the nature and

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[3] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Leutherium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 476, ll. 7-9; A. S. Cook, 'Aldhelm's Legal Studies', *Journal of English and German Philology*, 23 (1924), 105-13; M. R. James, *Two Ancient English Scholars: St Aldhelm and William of Malmesbury* (Glasgow, 1931), p. 14.

[4] For churchmen's knowledge of conciliar literature, see, *H. E.*, IV. 5, pp. 348-53.

[5] See esp., V. Law, 'The Study of Grammar in Eighth-Century Southumbria', *ASE*, 12 (1983), pp. 46-57; A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 126-238, which extends and revises among other works, M. Manitius, 'Zu Aldhelm und Baeda', *Sitzungsberichte der phil.-hist. Classe der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien*', 112 (1886), pp. 535-614; see also, C. E. Murgia. 'Aldhelm and Donatus's Commentary on Vergil', *Philologus*, 131 (2) (1987), 289-99.

[6] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 126-238 *passim*. Aldhelm, alone of known Anglo-Latin writers, appears to have been familiar with Corippus, see, *Ibid.*, pp. 188-91, 237 esp.

[7] P. Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*, (trans.), J. J. Contreni, (Columbia, SC, 1976), p. 472.

[8] A. M. C. Casiday, 'St Aldhelm on Apocrypha', *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, 55 (1) (2004), 147-57.

significance of virginity, chastity and marriage.[9] These texts, a good number of which were probably known to his contemporaries, also offered a wealth of ascetic teachings on how chaste religious should conduct their lives.[10] To exhort contemporary religious further, Aldhelm drew upon many patristic texts on the ascetic and monastic life in which sexual continence was a comparatively minor theme. These included, for example, the writings of Cassian (c. 360-c.435), various texts by Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) and a number of Rufinus of Aquileia's (c.345-410) translations of eastern theological texts, such as, Eusebius's *Historia monachorum*.[11] Many of these texts formed a common stock of literature used by early medieval monastic writers.[12] Furthermore, his saints' lives drew upon a range of sources, including influential *vitae* by Jerome, Paulinus (c. 354-431) and Sulpicius Severus (c. 363-c. 420-25), and the passions of many third- and fourth-century virgin martyrs.[13] Aldhelm's debts to these late antique and early medieval works will be considered in the next three chapters.

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[9] *AO*, pp. 544-46, and extensive references throughout his edition of the *PdV* in particular, pp. 226-323, *passim*; *LH*, pp. 52, 191-92 n 8; for the most comprehensive treatment of his indebtedness to Venantius Fortunatus's *De virginitate*, see, Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 191-95, 235-36 esp.

[10] For Fortunatus' *De virginitate*, see, M. Lapidge, 'Appendix: Knowledge of the Poems in the Earlier Period', in R. W. Hunt, 'Manuscript Evidence for Knowledge of the Poems of Venantius Fortunatus in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE*, 8 (1979), 279-95 at pp. 287-95, repr. *Idem.*, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899*, pp. 399-407; Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 191-95, 235-36; Bede also knew Ambrose's *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*, see, D. A. Bankert, J. Wegmann and C. W. Wright, *Ambrose in Anglo-Saxon England with Pseudo-Ambrose and Ambrosiaster*, Old English Newsletter, Subsidia, 25 (1997), p. 38; there appears to be less knowledge of the works of other authors (such as Jerome's *Epistola ad Eustochium* and *Adversus Jovinianum*) among Anglo-Saxons writers consulted on the Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: Worldwide Web Register, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/> (31st October 2003). However, this probably simply reflects the current state of academic research on the matter.

[11] For Cassian, see, S. M. Lake, 'The Influence of John Cassian on Early Continental and Insular Monasticism to c. AD. 817', (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1996), pp. 205-11; *Idem.*, 'Knowledge of the Writings of John Cassian in early Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE*, 32 (2003), pp. 32-34; For Gregory the Great, see, *AO*, pp. 544-45, and for example, *Ibid.*, p. 242 n 4, p. 268 n 1, p. 437 nn 2032, 2034; for Rufinus, see, *AO*, p. 545, and notes on pp. 263, 267, 270-75, 284-85, 287 esp.; it is uncertain whether Aldhelm knew Greek, *LH*, pp. 8, 183 n 21.

[12] A number of the same texts, for example, were used in the Rules of Benedict (c. 480-547) and Columbanus (c. 550-615), see, C. Peifer, 'The Rule of St. Benedict', in T. Fry (ed.), *The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1981), pp. 89-90; G. S. M. Walker (ed.), *Sancti Columbani Opera*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, II (Dublin, 1957), pp. xlviii, lii.

[13] See below, p. 176.

Function

The reception of Aldhelm's prose and verse *De virginitate* demonstrates that both were studied thoroughly, although independently of each other, since they have separate manuscript traditions and glossings to the texts do not seem to cross-reference each other.[14] This may be because of the differences between them in style, and, to a lesser degree, in content.[15] However, as I have stressed, it is important that we do not study Aldhelm's prose and poetic texts exclusively as school textbooks, without regard for their spiritual function (and more widely, their contribution to contemporary theological debates). To Aldhelm and his religious contemporaries, reading and learning were deeply spiritual exercises.[16] Indeed, at the start of his prose *De virginitate* he makes it clear that ceaseless reading and learning were contemplative acts.[17] Certainly, it is likely that Aldhelm's readers were as influenced by his spiritual ideas as they were by his Latin style.[18] Whilst both texts would have been read privately, the verse work, in particular, is suitable for reading aloud in church, or at meal times.[19] This is because Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate* is written in a simpler Latin style than the *Prosa de virginitate* (unlike other contemporary double treatises, where instead the verse text is more complicated). This is suggestive in a period when other writers of double treatises, including Alcuin (c.735-804), envisaged that one of the texts would be read publicly to the less educated, whilst its counterpart would be studied by students.[20] Both texts also are divided into distinctive sections which sermonise on different spiritual matters, and in a number of extant

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[14] G. Wieland, '*Geminus Stilus*: Studies in Anglo-Latin Hagiography', in M. Herren (ed.), *Insular Latin Studies*, Papers in Medieval Studies 1 (Toronto, 1981), p. 123.

[15] P. Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*: From Aldhelm to Alcuin', *Medium Ævum*, L (1981), p. 221.

[16] J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (2nd edn., New York, 1974), pp. 309-29 esp.

[17] Aldhelm, *PdV*, caps. II-III, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 229-31 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in cap. II, see, *AM*, p. 311).

[18] See above, pp. 89-92.

[19] St Benedict recommended that spiritually edifying material should be read aloud at meal times, see, Benedict, *Regula Sancti Benedicti* (ed.), Fry, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, cap. XLII, pp. 242-43.

[20] This included Alcuin, who wrote a less complex prose text. See, Wieland, '*Geminus Stilus*', pp. 122-26.

manuscripts of the *Carmen de virginitate*, medieval scribes separate and separately title Aldhelm's description of the battle that the religious must undertake against spiritual vices.[21] This suggests that this battle was studied and read in its own right. Individually Aldhelm's saints' biographies could have also been studied or read aloud for instructional and/or devotional purposes, especially since they provide much narrative detail on the saints, as well as include many miracle stories.[22] *Passiones* and *vitae sanctorum* were used by preachers of the period as *exempla* to teach monks, clerics and laymen.[23] Furthermore, song was used as a pedagogic tool, which is significant, since Orchard suggests that Aldhelm based his hexameter verse on indigenous oral traditions.[24]

We must therefore envisage readers, and arguably auditors as well, engaging in Aldhelm's double treatise on different levels and for different purposes. With this in mind, let us now consider his representation of marriage, sexual continence and gender.

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[21] G. R. Wieland, 'Aldhelm's *De Octo Vitiis Principalibus* and Prudentius' *Psychomachia*', *Medium Ævum*, 55 (1986), pp. 85 nn 3-4, 90-91; William of Malmesbury regarded it to be a separate work, *GP*, V. 196, p. 343.

[22] Compare this with his *exemplar* for this catalogue of saints, namely, Ambrose's *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*. Compare, for example, Aldhelm's and Ambrose's biographies of St Thecla, Ambrose, *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*, (ed.), I. Cazzaniga, *S. Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi De virginibus libri tres* (Turin, 1948), II. III, pp. 42-43, with Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 300, ll. 1-10; Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1975-2008, pp. 434-36.

[23] Riché, *Education and Culture*, pp. 487-88, 489-94.

[24] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 73-125.

Chapter Four

Marital and Sexual Relationships

In his letter to Bishop Ecgbert (732-35), written late in his life, Bede (c. 673-735) condemned lay *monasteria* presided over by sexually active husbands and wives, for these failed to conform to behaviour expected of either chaste religious or married laity.[1] Indeed, the early Anglo-Saxon church had difficulties reforming both religious and lay sexual behaviour. Aldhelm's double treatise reflects the concerns of a pastorally-minded churchman working in this context, for he sought to promote sexual continence amongst nuns, monks and clerics, at the same time as looking to confine lay sexual relationships to licit marriage. Pursuing these dual aims meant that Aldhelm presented his audience with a complex and sometimes contradictory model of marriage, which will have had different messages to his readers and auditors, depending on their experiences and concerns.[2]

In the last few years Aldhelm's treatment of marriage has become a topic of some debate. Scholars agree that that he maintained an orthodox patristic view which deemed virginity to be spiritually superior to marriage. However, their interpretation of this orthodox view varies considerably. On the one hand, Lapidge proposes that Aldhelm endorsed wedlock, but considered virginity preferable to it.[3] On the other hand, Dempsey argues that Aldhelm's view of marriage is 'transparently grudging, at best', and that 'he would appear to want to reject its reality altogether'.[4] A third, middle way, has been offered by O'Sullivan, who suggests that whilst Aldhelm endorses wedlock, even so, he 'appears to have internalised the underlying patristic biases' against it.[5] Dempsey and O'Sullivan find evidence for Aldhelm's negative treatment of marriage in his saints' accounts and in some of the imagery he uses to describe this sexual state. These scholars have, however, focused mainly upon interpreting Aldhelm's ideas on marriage within

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[1] Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, (ed.), *VBOH*, cap. XII, pp. 415-16.

[2] K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealised Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp. 116-43 at 142.

[3] *LH*, pp. 53-54.

[4] G. T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury's Social Theology: The Barbaric Heroic Ideal Christianised', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), pp. 61-63, citation at 63.

[5] S. O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background to Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', *Milltown Studies*, 37 (1996), pp. 60-62, citation at 62, and developed further in *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* - Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia*, 12 (1998), pp. 284-88, 294.

patristic literary traditions. Only Scott Gwara has offered a more nuanced approach by considering his remarks within the context of his spiritual guidance and with a view to his interpretation of the work as a defensive missionary document. Gwara therefore proposes that Aldhelm's saints' accounts are concerned with 'religious defilement engendered specifically by pagan marriage and not marriage *per se*'.[6]

My aim in this chapter is to further clarify our understanding of Aldhelm's treatment of marriage and sexual relationships by widening the contexts in which his attitudes are surveyed. Following previous scholars, Aldhelm's attitudes towards sexual relationships will be interpreted against the background of his biblical and patristic sources. Since his views have been situated mainly within general Christian traditions, I will focus instead on comparing Aldhelm's views with some of the works he drew upon most extensively. These include: Cyprian's *De habitu virginum*; Ambrose's *De virginitate* and *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*; Jerome's *Epistola ad Eustochium* and *Adversus Jovinianum*; Augustine's *De bono coniugali*, *De sancta virginitate* and *De bono viduitatis*; and, Venantius Fortunatus's *De virginitate*. In addition, I look at some of the various texts he used to compile his long list of saintly *exempla*.[7] Aldhelm's views will also be interpreted within the framework of his double treatise and with a view to his mixed audience, whose experiences of marriage were varied: they might be married, formerly married, involved in reforming marriage and perhaps even tempted by marriage.[8] His double treatise will, moreover, be situated within the contemporary church's attempts to stop sexual activity within *monasteria* and to reform lay marriage; it is this context that I will turn to first.

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[6] *AM*, pp. 46, 54-55, 60-62, citation at 46.

[7] For Aldhelm's indebtedness to these sources, see, *AO*, pp. 544-46 and extensive references throughout Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in particular, *Ibid.*, pp. 226-323, *passim*; *LH*, pp. 52, 191-92 n 8.

[8] Note that Dempsey does acknowledge that Aldhelm's remarks on marriage may be context-specific within his double treatise, but he does not pursue this, see, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 63.

4. 1 Marriage and Sex in Early Anglo-Saxon England

As I suggested in Chapter Three, early Anglo-Saxon religious had difficulties maintaining sexual continence. Whilst double *monasteria* were deemed to be a source of particular temptation because men and women lived alongside each other in varying degrees of proximity,[9] penitential literature reveals the church's concerns that nuns, monks and clerics of all ages were fornicating. The earliest recension of the penitentials and canons attributed to Archbishop Theodore (602-90), for example, rule that higher clergy (thus bishops, priests or deacons) caught fornicating should be deposed.[10] In the narrative sources women religious' sexual misdemeanours are often singled out. Thus Boniface (c. 675-754) claims that many Anglo-Saxon women religious had become prostitutes in East Francia.[11] Even more dramatically, he complains about the many Anglo-Saxon harlots (*meretrices*), both nuns and laywomen, who killed children born of illicit unions.[12] In another letter, addressed to King Æthelbald of Mercia (716-57), he berates the king for having sexual intercourse with Anglo-Saxon nuns and consecrated virgins, and condemns Kings Ceolred of Mercia (709-16) and Osred of Deira (706/6-16) for defiling nuns.[13] Indeed, it is clear that the laity did not aid religious chastity, for in addition to nuns being abducted to marry, there is evidence for parents reclaiming oblates from the cloister when they reached marriageable age. Such a blurring between the sexual and the sacred worlds was of great concern to the church. This is because following biblical rulings in Exodus, Samuel and especially Leviticus, these areas of life were thought to be fundamentally incompatible, and crossing the boundaries between them was deemed a threat to social and religious order.[14] It was thus crucial for Aldhelm to teach the religious the rewards of lifelong sexual continence.

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[9] See above, p. 108.

[10] *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, nos. 37, 140, pp. 242, 250.

[11] Tangl, 78, p. 169, ll. 15-25.

[12] Tangl, 73, p. 151, ll. 29-34.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 152, ll. 25-26, p. 153, ll. 8-10.

[14] M. de Jong, 'To the Limits of Kinship: Anti-Incest Legislation in the Early Medieval West (500-900)', in J. Bremmer (ed.), *From Sappho to De Sade. Moments in the History of Sexuality* (London and New York, NY, 1989), pp. 37, 49-53; the most important study on the notion of pollution is M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1996);

At the same time, however, Aldhelm needed to pay lip service to the contemporary church's attempts to regulate secular marital and sexual customs. We know that the Christianising Anglo-Saxons married because regulations concerning wedlock are found in the earliest of law-codes, which mainly comprise indigenous customs of the time.[15] Determining the nature of pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon marriage is a difficult task, for we are reliant upon the prescriptive literature. Unfortunately, this only codifies some of the customs ideally adhered to by society and can be difficult to interpret.[16] However, Anglo-Saxon law-codes suggest that women's close kin and future spouses ordinarily arranged and controlled their sexual and marital relationships.[17] Fathers, it appears, might also arrange their young sons' marriages.[18] The laws of Æthelberht (597-616), which demonstrate limited Christian influence, also provide an insight into marriage by capture, for they ruled that men who seized women could legally marry them, if they brought the consent of the free woman's owner.[19] Arranged marriages, like marriage by capture, indeed, were secured by purchase, with the former at least, marked by ceremonies and festivities.[20]

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and for a discussion of sexual pollution with reference to the early Anglo-Saxons, see, R. Meens, 'Questioning Ritual Purity: The Influence of Gregory the Great's Answers to Augustine's Queries about Childbirth, Menstruation and Sexuality', in R. Gameson (ed.), *St Augustine and the Conversion of England* (Thrupp, 1999), pp. 176-86.

[15] For valuable overviews of early Anglo-Saxon marriage, see, D. Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (London, 1952), pp. 149-52; R. Hill, 'Marriage in Seventh-Century England', in M. H. King and W. M. Stevens (eds.), *Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones* (2 vols, Collegeville, MN, 1979), vol. I, pp. 67-75 and C. Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 56-73; for the composition of the early law-codes, see, P. Wormald, '*Lex Scripta* and *Verbum Regis*: Legislation and Germanic Kingship, from Euric to Cnut', in P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (eds.), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), pp. 111, 130-32.

[16] The latter point is amply demonstrated by C. A. Hough, 'The Early Kentish "Divorce Laws": A Reconsideration of Æthelberht, chs. 79 and 80', *ASE*, 23 (1994), 19-34.

[17] Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 58.

[18] *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, no. 119, p. 248; for the secondary literature on these rulings, see above, p. 101 n 139.

[19] The Laws of Æthelberht, (ed.), F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, (3 vols, Halle, 1898-1916), vol. I, no. 82-84, p. 8.

[20] *Ibid.*, nos, 31, 77, 81-84, pp. 5, 7, 8; The Laws of Ine, (ed.), *Ibid.*, no. 31, p. 103. Captured women received an additional payment, the morning-gift, after the consummation of the marriage. On the 'morning-gift', see, Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 56-59; for the ceremonies and festivities associated with marriage, see, A. Fischer, *Engagement, Wedding and Marriage in*

Alongside marriage, the early Anglo-Saxons practised concubinage, which provided another means to secure heirs. Even though evidence for Anglo-Saxon concubinage is limited, Clunies-Ross' extensive survey of the extant sources suggests that it was probably widespread among high-status males.[21] She has shown that one or more concubines, who were typically of low status, might live in a rich and powerful man's household, alongside a legal spouse. Although concubines were characteristically distinguished from wives by the absence of a recognised legal status and dowry, even so, they were publicly recognised consorts, who received customary privileges and whose children could assume important positions within the family.

The early Anglo-Saxons also formed marriages that were deemed incestuous by the church. Given that incest prohibitions occur in some form in most societies, it is likely that the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons had some rules governing choice of sexual and marital partner.[22] However, unions were formed with close kin of common descent, both blood and affinial. Marriage of cousins (cross and parallel) is a case in point, with Oswiu of Northumbria (651-70), for example, marrying his first cousin Eanflæd.[23] Unions were also formed with step-parents, step-siblings, and the widows or widowers of kinsfolk: Eadbald of Kent (616-64), for example, married his deceased father's wife.[24] Whilst these unions must have been largely unavoidable in small communities, some were no doubt necessary in a period when marriage alliances were politically, socially and economically inspired.[25]

Old English (Heidelberg, 1986), pp. 25-36, 42, 65, 145, 148; and for the wider early medieval context, see, P. L. Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church. The Christianisation of Marriage during the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 66-99, 101-17.

[21] M. Clunies-Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', *Past and Present*, 108 (1985), 3-34.

[22] R. Parkin, *Kinship. An Introduction to Basic Concepts* (Oxford, 1997), p. 36; for there being pre-Christian incest prohibitions on the continent, see, De Jong, 'To the Limits of Kinship', pp. 37, 48-49, 54.

[23] *H. E.*, III. 15, pp. 260-61, as observed by Hill, 'Marriage in Seventh-Century England', p. 71.

[24] *Ibid.*, II. 5, pp. 150-51.

[25] See above, p. 106.

4. 2 Contemporary Marriage Reform and its Difficulties

The early Anglo-Saxon church sought to reform many of these long-established and socially important marital and sexual customs. In England, as on the Continent, anxieties about incest were at the forefront of sexual issues worrying professional Christians at the conversion.[26] Throughout early medieval Europe, therefore, the church increased significantly the fairly limited restrictions on degrees of permissible relationships found in the Bible, Roman law, early canon law and the writings of the church fathers. It was not until after Aldhelm's death in the eighth century that a rash of anti-incest legislation began to appear which made sexual relationships between spiritual kin (made at baptism or confirmation) a taboo. However, unions between affinial kin (those related through marriage) became an impediment to licit marriage from the early sixth century.[27]

It was not only sexual relationships between kin that the church deemed spiritually polluting, because it also looked negatively upon inter-religious marriages between Christians and 'pagans'.[28] Canons associated with Theodore, therefore, order that if a pagan wife could not be converted, she was to be dismissed.[29] Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) also wrote a letter to Queen Æthelburh, urging her to aid the conversion of her husband King Edwin (d. 633), to ensure that they were united in both marriage and in faith.[30] Concern to instil Christianised morality into sexual relationships also explains why the contemporary Anglo-Saxon church prohibited concubinage, as well as second marriages, adultery and fornication.[31] Instead sexual relationships were to be

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[26] R. Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe from Paganism to Christianity 371-1386 AD* (London, 1997), p. 280.

[27] For these trends, see, for example, De Jong, 'To the Limits of Kinship', pp. 38-45; D. Herlihy, 'Making Sense of Incest: Women and the Marriage Rules of the Early Middle Ages', in B. S. Bachrach and D. Nicholas (eds.), *Law, Custom and the Social Fabric in Medieval Europe*, Studies in Medieval Culture, XXVIII (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1990), pp. 1-6.

[28] This had late Roman precedents, see, H. S. Sivan, 'Why Not Marry a Barbarian? Marital Frontiers in Late Antiquity (The Example of *Th.* 3.14.1)', in R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan (eds.), *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 136-45.

[29] *P. Theodori*, 'U' recension, II. XII. 19, p. 328 cf. *Ibid.*, II. XII. 18, p. 328 and *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, no. 28, p. 241.

[30] *H. E.*, II. 11, pp. 172-75.

[31] Clunies-Ross, 'Concubinage', p. 18-26; *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, nos. 27, 31-32, 64, 82, 132, pp. 241-42, 244, 246, 249.

monogamous and procreative, with non-procreative marital sex censured and periods of sexual abstinence imposed upon married couples.[32] Thus the church sought to control who could marry and how they should live in marriage. It also made rulings concerning when marriage ceremonies could take place, how marriages were to be arranged and the circumstances in which they could be annulled.[33]

Taking arranged marriages, for example, the church challenged male kin's traditional authority to orchestrate marriages, by prescribing that individuals of both sexes, but women especially, should be able to influence their choice of spouse. The ecclesiastical promulgations ascribed to Archbishop Theodore, therefore, made a number of provisions for those women who refused to consent to betrothals. Parents, it instructed, could not give a betrothed girl (*desponsata puella*) in marriage if she resisted this, but instead she could enter a *monasterium*.[34] If a betrothed woman (*desponsata mulier*) did not want to live with her spouse (*viro habitare non vult cum*) then the bride-price was to be paid back to him and a third added.[35] Similarly, if the man refused to live with his betrothed then he would lose the money he had given for her.[36] Moreover, the canons decreed that a father could not give a daughter in marriage against her will (*contra eius voluntatem*) after she had reached the age of 16 or 17, nor a son against his will (*sine voluntate sua*), after the age of 15.[37]

One means by which the early Anglo-Saxon church sought to reform the nature of early Anglo-Saxon sexual practices was to distinguish between *licet* and *non licet* acts and to prescribe that all sexual activities should be confined to *legitimum coniugium*.[38] This

[32] See, for example, *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, nos. 54, 56, p. 244; here, the Anglo-Saxons followed the church fathers and early medieval church more generally, see, P. J. Payer, 'Early Medieval Regulations Concerning Marital Sexual Relations', *Journal of Medieval History*, 6 (1980), 353-54, 370.

[33] Entering a *monasterium* provides one circumstance in which marriage could be annulled, see below, pp. 194-96.

[34] *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, no. 145, p. 250; *P. Theodori*, 'U' recension, (ed.), II. XII. 34, p. 330.

[35] *Ibid.*, no. 118, p. 248.

[36] *P. Theodori*, 'U' recension, II. XII. 35, p. 330.

[37] *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, no. 119, p. 248; *P. Theodori*, 'U' recension, II. XII. 36-37, pp. 330-31.

[38] S. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Woman and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 15-74 *passim*.

language of legitimacy had earlier precedents and is found in the Bible and the writings of the church fathers (including, Aldhelm's exemplars, Jerome and Augustine).[39] Whilst Gregory the Great used this language to delineate permitted and non-permitted sexual unions in his letter to the Anglo-Saxon missionary Augustine in the late sixth century, a much greater number of references occur in the canons and penitential rulings associated with Archbishop Theodore.[40] Furthermore, secular law used the language of legitimacy in reference to marital and sexual unions, and its clear influence among contemporary religious is suggested by its occurrence in the descriptive sources.[41] The anonymous life of Gregory the Great (dated 704-14), for example, refers to a crowd of pagans who were *non licitis stricti coniugiis*.[42] Furthermore, Felix, in his *Vita S Guthlaci* (c. 730-c.740), tells us that the saint's father took a virgin as a wife *condecentibus nuptiarum legibus uxorem duxit* (he also assures us that it was only some time after they had married that Felix's mother conceived Guthlac!)[43] Clearly, concern with marriage reform was felt widely in the church.

It is difficult to ascertain how quickly Christian views of marriage and sexual intercourse filtered down to the laity in this period. Although priests were able to bless first marriages,[44] nonetheless, ecclesiastical weddings were, it appears, exceptional and church ceremonies were not necessary to legalise marriage.[45] However, it is likely that in

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[39] See, for example, Augustine, *De bono coniugali*, cap. V. 5, (ed.), I. Zycha, *Sancti Aureli Augustini*, CSEL, XLI (V. III) (Vienna, 1900), p. 194, ll. 14-15, *Ibid.*, cap. VII. 7, p. 196, l.1-p. 197, ll. 1-4.

[40] *H. E.*, I. 27. 8, pp. 94-99, for the authenticity of Gregory's *Responsiones*, see below, p. 127 n 52; see, for example, *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, no. 110-111, p. 248; *P. Theodori*, 'U' recension, II. XII. 7, p. 327; and a canon at the Council of Hertford, *H. E*, IV. 5, no. 10, pp. 352-53, for a discussion of the potential origins of this canon, see, M. Brett, 'Theodore and the Canon Law', in M. Lapidge, (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, CSASE, 11 (Cambridge, 1995), p. 127.

[41] Laws of Wihtred, (ed.), Liebermann, *Gesetze*, nos. 3, 5, 6, p. 12; Clunies-Ross, 'Concubinage', pp. 18-22.

[42] Anon., *Vita S Gregorii*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1968), cap. XV, pp. 96-97 'bound to ... unlawful wives'.

[43] Felix, *Vita S Guthlaci*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956), caps. III-IV, pp. 74-75 'in accordance with the seemly laws of marriage'.

[44] *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, no. 34, (ed.), Finsterwalder, *Canones*, p. 242; *P. Theodori*, 'U' recension, I. XIV. 1, p. 306.

England, as on the Continent, the church's attempts at regulation were slow and piecemeal.[46] Certainly varying and conflicting prescriptions on marriage that were in circulation in the seventh to eighth century suggest that the early church had difficulties agreeing legislation.[47] Anti-incest legislation is a case in point.[48] According to Bede, the tenth canon from the Synod of Hertford, convened by Archbishop Theodore in 672, simply commanded that *nullus incestum faciat*.[49] Early recensions of the penitential and canonical rulings attributed to Theodore are more explicit, yet appear undecided on incest rulings. Thus, whilst two canons instruct that marriages in the third degree should be annulled, another two list the Greek custom that permitted such marriages.[50] The *Libellus Responsionum*, preserved in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, also claims that in answer to Augustine's question on the marriage of blood relations, Gregory offered a relatively lenient ruling, which allowed marriage to within three generations.[51] However, since this ruling aroused great interest in the eighth century, when the papacy extended incest prohibitions to within seven generations, scholars now believe it to be an eighth-century interpolation to an otherwise genuine text, suggesting contemporary resistance to stricter papal rulings on incest.[52] In sum, Aldhelm's double treatise belongs to a period in which

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[45] For the celebration of Christian marriage in the medieval period, see, A. Esmein, *Le Mariage en Droit Canonique* (2 vols, Paris, 1929), vol. I, pp. 179-87; C. Vogel, 'Les Rites de la Célébration du Mariage: Leur Signification dans la Formation du Lien durant le Haut Moyen Age,' in *Il Matrimonio Nella Società Altomedievale, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo*, 24 (Spoleto, 1977), pp. 397-465.

[46] Fletcher, *Conversion of Europe*, pp. 280-84 esp.

[47] A point made by Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, pp. 50-53.

[48] This is observable more generally in the early medieval period, see, De Jong, 'To the Limits of Kinship', p. 37.

[49] *H. E.*, IV. 5, p. 352, 'Let none commit incest'.

[50] *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, nos. 29, 30, 121, 158, pp. 241-42, 248, 251; cf. Both being mentioned once in *P. Theodori*, 'U' recension, II. XII. 26-27, p. 329.

[51] *H. E*, I. 27, no. 5, pp. 84-87.

[52] For this position and an analysis of the debate concerning the text's authenticity, see, P. Meyvaert, 'Bede's Text of the *Libellus Responsionum* of Gregory the Great to Augustine of Canterbury', in P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (eds.), *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 15-33, repr. *Idem., Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others* (London, 1977), X, and *Idem.*, 'Le Libellus Responsionum à Augustin de Cantorbéry: une Oeuvre Authentique de Saint Grégoire le Grand', in J. Fontaine, R. Gillet and S. Pellistrandi (eds.), *Grégoire le Grand* (Paris, 1986), pp. 543-50.

the church sought to encourage religious to be sexually continent and to confine lay sexual activities to licit marriage, although their legislation on wedlock, at least, had yet to find fixed form.

4. 3 The Christian Inheritance

Having considered the early Anglo-Saxon context in which Aldhelm's guidance on marriage and sexual relationships was written, we need to situate his ideas within the Christian literary inheritance he drew upon. This literature offered varied attitudes towards marriage. Starting with the Bible: whereas patriarchal marriages formed under Hebrew law were characteristically polygamous, Jesus advocated monogamous wedlock. Writing some 25 years after Jesus' crucifixion, Paul of Tarsus (d. 60 AD) offered another, altogether more radical, view of marriage. His extremely influential statements, made in his first Letter to the Corinthians, oscillated between two different views. On the one hand, Paul argued that marriage was no sin and that husband and wife owed each other conjugal relations. Yet, on the other hand, he presented marriage as no more than a means of sating damning lust, and deemed sexually active spouses spiritually inferior to sexually continent Christians.[53]

From the second century onwards, Paul's doctrine met with different responses among ascetic writers. Whilst a small number of writers defended marriage,[54] among the larger part, it received a poor evaluation. However, it was not until in the fourth to early fifth century that the spiritual authority of Christian married householders became subject to real debate. In this period the mass-Christianisation of society took place alongside a significant increase in the number and profile of Christians committing themselves to asceticism. As a result, the identity of the moderate and sexually active 'rank and file' Christians came to require urgent definition vis-à-vis the ascetic virgin elite.[55] Responses to the dilemma varied greatly. Whilst some writers argued that all

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[53] P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, NY, 1988), pp. 41, 53-57; H. E. Chadwick. 'All Things to All Men', *New Testament Studies*, I (1955), pp. 264-65 especially.

[54] See, for example, Clement of Alexandria, Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 134-36, 255.

[55] R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 19-43; Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 206-209; Cooper, *Virgin and the Bride*.

baptised Christians were equal, regardless of their degrees of sexual continence and asceticism, in stark contrast, other extreme religious groupings, such as the Pelagians, wanted all Christians to be chaste ascetics.[56] Christian writers, however, generally agreed that marriage was less favourable than virginity. They also classified Christians into three distinct spiritual grades, based on their degrees of abstinence from sexual activity: *virginitas, viduitas, iugalitas*. Implicit in this model was a 'steep-pitched ... notion of hierarchy', in which marriage was the lowest sexual state.[57] However, the early Church Fathers' and Augustine of Hippo's (354-430) assessments of wedlock still varied considerably. Starting with the early fathers, Ambrose (c. 339-97), a passionate advocate of virginity, may have supported marriage, but he also transmitted negative clichés against it.[58] He was less militant, however, than Jerome (c. 342-419), who emphasised the supremacy of virginity so emphatically that he vilified marriage and sex.[59] Writing with a view to married African householders, in particular, Augustine felt compelled to enter the debate to defend 'good Catholic Christians'.[60] Although Augustine's views on virginity and asceticism changed throughout his life, it is his early fifth-century writings that are the most original and influential. In these, he offered a host of arguments in favor of the married state, including, that it produced children, satisfied conjugal needs and allowed for companionship between the sexes.[61]

These late antique views on marriage greatly influenced early medieval churchmen, including, as we shall see, Aldhelm's exemplar, Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530-

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[56] See, for example, P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a Biography* (London, 1967), pp. 347-48; J. Bugge, *Virginitas*: an Essay on the History of the Medieval Ideal, Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Idées, Séries Mineur, 17 (The Hague, 1975), pp. 68-69; J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome. His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London, 1975), pp. 104, 180-82, 186-87; Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 359-60.

[57] Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 359.

[58] J. Moorhead, *Ambrose, Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 43-50.

[59] Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 179-94.

[60] Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 401-402 citation at 401; Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, labels his fourth chapter 'Augustine: a defence of Christian mediocrity', pp. 45-62; for a comprehensive survey of Augustine's view on marriage, see, E. Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien dans l'Oeuvre de Saint Augustin. Une Théologie Baptismale de la Vie Conjugale* (Paris, 1983).

[61] See, for example, Reynolds, *Marriage*, pp. 241-311.

600).[62] He therefore had a rich and diverse Christian inheritance from which to develop his own ideas on marriage and sexual relationships.

4. 4 Aldhelm's Views on Marriage within the Context of Patristic Writings

Aldhelm, as a number of commentators have observed, offered an orthodox patristic view of marriage, in so far as he argued that all Christians were equal, but virgins more equal than others. Following the church fathers, he categorised Christians into three different grades, according to whether they were virgins, chaste or married, and by citing Matt. XIII. 8, gave these sexual states 100, 60 and 30-fold spiritual rewards respectively.[63] Following Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* and the anonymous author of the *Passio SS Victoriae et Anatholiae*, he used distinctive metaphorical comparisons to illustrate the spiritual disparities between virginity and marriage.[64] In doing so, he sought to show that marriage was worthwhile, even if virginity was undoubtedly superior.[65] Thus he states for example:

Punica neu granis temnuntur mala rotundis,

Quae circum simplo cortex velamine cingit,

Quamquam palmeti praecedant dulcia poma

Nectaris et mellis mulsos imitantia gustus.[66]

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[62] Venantius Fortunatus, *De virginitate*, (ed.), L. Fridericus, *Venanti honori Clementiani Fortunati Opera poetica*, MGH, AA, 4.1 (Berlin, 1881), pp. 181-91; for Aldhelm's knowledge of the work, see above, pp. 115-16.

[63] *AO*, p. 249 n 1; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 280-81.

[64] *AO*, p. 236 n 4, p. 248 n 2; note that Ehwald attributes Aldhelm's borrowing to a long version of the *Passio S Victoriae* (BHL, no. 8591), whereas *LH* instead attributed it to a different, shorter version, of BHL, no. 8591, both of which are printed in *Analecta Bollandiana* II (1883), *LH*, pp. 192-93 n 19, p. 194 n 10; but Franklin has shown that it instead came from a joint passion of Victoria and Anatholia, preserved in Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, F. III. 16 (Ottino, no. 24), see, C. V. Franklin, 'Theodore and the *Passio S Anastasii*', in Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore*, pp. 186-91.

[65] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. IX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, ll. 3-4.

[66] *Idem., CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 236-39, p. 363, (trans.), *LR*, p. 108 'Pomegranates with their round seeds surrounded by a covering are not spurned, even though the sweet fruit of the palm-tree excels them, reproducing the sweet tastes of nectar and honey'; for further discussion of these metaphors, see, O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', pp. 60-61; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 284-85, 288; Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 63.

However, whilst Aldhelm gives marriage a much lower spiritual assessment than sexual continence, at the same time he offers positive remarks on this sexual state. Therefore, he commends marriage (and in some depth in the verse text) because it produces virgins.[67] Aldhelm also acknowledges that married individuals might strive to follow God's teachings and he assures us that they will be received in Heaven, alongside virgins and the chaste.[68] Indeed, departing from a number of his patristic sources, in his depiction of the Last Judgement, he valorises marriage as much as virginity. Not only does he envisage the married Patriarchs rejoicing around God with the ancient Prophets, martyrs, confessors, virgins and saints, but also he suggests that they will advance into heaven first:

Patriarchae primo, qui gentis germina sacrae

Et sobolem stirpemque rudem genuere nep otem [sic],

Per turmas pariter procedent agmine denso

Et regnatoris stipant sublime tribunal; [69]

Furthermore in the prose text he even stresses that *immaculata matrimonii contubernia* is not to be scorned.[70] This is significant, since he uses the adjective *immaculus*, meaning sinless and unstained, to describe virginity as well.[71] Aldhelm's views on marriage are clearly complex and often contradictory: we must be careful to distinguish between them.

In the same vein, it is important that we consider not merely those patristic views on marriage which Aldhelm transmits but also those which he omits, for these challenge the view that his representation of this sexual state was merely orthodox and derivative.

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[67] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. VIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 236, ll. 10-12; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 157-76, pp. 359-60; admittedly, Jerome is his principal exemplar here, see, *AO*, p. 236 n 3, p. 359 nn 157-76.

[68] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 87-90, 108-10, 203-204, pp. 356-57, 361.

[69] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2879-82, p. 470, (trans.), *LR*, p. 166 'first of all the Patriarchs, who gave birth to the flowering of a holy race, and to the progeny and new stock of their descendants: altogether they will advance in a dense crowd in throngs to crowd about the lofty judgement seat of the Ruler'; for the whole Judgement scene, see, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2877-2898, pp. 470-71; cf., however, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 247, ll. 8-9; also cf. with his patristic exemplars, including, Ambrose, *De virginitate*, III. 14, (ed.), PL, 16, (Paris, 1845), col. 269; Jerome, *Epistola ad Eustochium*, (ed.), I. Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, CSEL, LIV (Vienna, 1910), cap. XLI, pp. 209-11.

[70] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. VIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 235, l. 22 (trans.), *LH*, 'the immaculate companionship of marriage'.

[71] *Ibid.*, cap. XL, (ed.), *AO*, p. 292, ll. 21-23 at l. 22; *Ibid.*, cap. XLV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 299, ll. 14-15.

Perhaps the crucial key to how far Aldhelm stands apart from his sources can be seen in his reticence in listing the woes of marriage: a ubiquitous theme in his literary models. These invectives were closely associated with patristic ideas on Man's Fall from prelapsarian grace.[72] To Aldhelm, Adam's gluttony was the cause of the Original Sin.[73] As a consequence, he argued that postlapsarian Man was burdened with a desire for sumptuous food and excess alcohol that had to be combated with fasting.[74] Whilst Aldhelm's patristic sources also deemed physical greed to be a major burden of the Fall, even so, they also enumerated its negative effect on marriage and sexuality.[75]

Drawing upon existing ideas of sexuality and the Fall, Aldhelm's exemplars, Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome argued that marriage, sexual intercourse and birth from the womb were the burdensome consequences of the Original Sin, rather than part of God's plan at Creation.[76] Their view of the First Transgression affected women especially, for they claimed that, following the Fall, the virgin Eve was expelled from Paradise and married immediately. Thereafter, they argued, wives suffered a host of punishments: they were sold to their suitors like slaves; were subservient to their husbands; lived in fear of his infidelity; gave birth in pain; and then, had to nurture and educate wailing infants. Lest this did not suffice, Jerome associated marriage with death, and argued that sex within marriage was wholly futile, for as Paul had asserted, life on earth was transitory and those who had wives should act as if they had none (1 Cor. VII. 29).[77] Augustine's views on the Fall, like his views on marriage, departed from these early fathers. From around 400, Augustine argued that marriage, sexual intercourse and birth from the womb were present in Paradise, but that after the Fall all Christians, married and ascetics, were dogged

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[72] See, O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 272-74.

[73] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 239, ll. 12-15; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. XII, p. 241, ll. 3-6; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2494-2500, pp. 454-55.

[74] *Ibid.*, ll. 2482-2543, pp. 454-56.

[75] Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 406.

[76] Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 5-29; Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 179-94.

[77] Ambrose, *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*, (ed.), I. Cazzaniga, *S Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi De virginibus libri tres* (Turin, 1948), I. VI. 25-27, pp. 13-14; *Ibid.*, I. IX. 55-56, pp. 29-30; Ambrose, *De virginitate*, VI. 32, col. 274; *Ibid.*, VII. 35, col. 275; Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*, (ed.), Hartel, *S Thasci Caecili Cypriani*, CSEL, III. 1 (Vienna, 1868), cap. XXII, p. 202, l. 28-p. 203, ll. 1-7; Jerome, *Epistola ad Eustochium*, (ed.), Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, see, for example, cap. II, p. 146, ll. 1-4, *Ibid.*, cap. XVIII, p. 167, ll. 12-17-p. 168, l. 1.

permanently by uncontrollable sexual desire and relied upon God's grace for salvation.[78] Yet whilst Augustine valorised the average Christian, he still accepted that marriage (*nuptiae*) was burdensome (*onerosa* and *molesta*),[79] and he too listed married individuals' trials of the flesh: *in suspicionibus zeli coniugalis, in procreandis filiis atque nutriendis, in timoribus et maeroribus orbitatis.*[80]

Negative tropes on wedlock, therefore, are found in the writings of all of the third- to fourth-century patristic authors read by Aldhelm, regardless of their different stances on the virginity-versus-marriage issue.[81] They occur also in Venantius Fortunatus's 400-line eulogistic poem *De virginitate* which was written in the late 560s. Nearly a fifth of this work comprises invectives against marriage, concentrating especially on defilement by sexual intercourse, and the sorrows and pain of pregnancy and childbirth.[82] Fortunatus's decision to associate marriage with mortality and death (albeit in order to emphasise the value of immortal virginity) is significant, when he, not dissimilarly to Aldhelm, dedicated his work to a female royal patroness (Radegund), who had left her marriage for the religious life.[83] It is true that Aldhelm does associate virginity with the angelic life and this perhaps suggests that 'like the Church Fathers, Aldhelm sees virginity as recapturing a state of original glory'.[84] However, *topoi* against the misfortunes of marriage resonated throughout early Christian writings on virginity. They provided Aldhelm with a vast armoury of ammunition with which to attack marriage, but he chose to wield none of it. We must be cautious, therefore, about attributing him with a negative patristic view of

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[78] Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 399-408, 416-27; Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 57-62 esp.; G. Clark, 'The Bright Frontier of Friendship. Augustine and the Christian Body as Frontier', in Mathisen and Sivan (eds.), *Shifting Frontiers*, pp. 217-29 *passim*.

[79] Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, (ed.), Zycha, *Sancti Augustini*, cap. XVI. 16, pp. 248-49, adjectives at ll. 3-4, p. 249; and, see, Schmitt, *Le Mariage Chrétien*, pp. 83-105.

[80] *Ibid.*, cap. XVI. 16, p. 249, ll. 15-18 'in the suspicions of marital jealousy, in the begetting and rearing of children, in the fears and grieving of widowhood'.

[81] *LH*, p. 53.

[82] Venantius Fortunatus, *De virginitate*, (ed.), Fridericus, *Venanti honori Opera poetica*, ll. 321-392, pp. 189-91.

[83] B. Brennan, 'Deathless Marriage and Spiritual Fecundity in Venantius Fortunatus's *De Virginitate*', *Traditio* 51, (1996), pp. 88-91.

[84] O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', p. 274.

marriage. Instead, it appears that Aldhelm's criticism of marriage is in fact remarkably nuanced.

4. 5 Virginity versus Carnality

Aldhelm offers some very derogatory remarks against marriage. However, when these comments are contextualised within his own texts and the literary models he drew upon, it suggests that he attacks forced and pagan marriages. Moreover, he berates wedlock within the wider frameworks of juxtaposing carnality and virginity, and married ornamentation with unadorned chastity.[85] In contrast, he praises lawful wedlock for the producing of children. Aldhelm's negative comments remind his audience to reject marriage, sexual relationships, lavish dress and jewellery, because they are incompatible with the spiritual life. His double treatise therefore directly addresses, and reflects, the contemporary situation, in which, nuns, monks and clerics were indulging in unlawful sexual activity, abandoning their religious vocations to marry and continuing to wear secular items of dress. At the same time, his saints' vehement rejection of marriage valorises the actions of those members of his audience who had left their spouses for the religious life. Furthermore, his condemnation of pagan marriage, together with his praise of licit procreative marriage, reflects the church's concern to reform Anglo-Saxon wedlock.

Aldhelm's comments against marriage occur predominantly in his catalogue of saintly *exempla*. Even then, they are relatively infrequent. In sixty-four saints' accounts in the prose text, for example, references to marriage are made in only a quarter, and of these, under half can be described as defamatory.[86] Where derision does occur it is concentrated principally in his female virgin martyrs' accounts and is shaped by their distinctive narrative formulae. Thus, saints decide to remain lifelong virgins in childhood or in adolescence, which maddens their often-influential pagan parents or suitors, who demand that they marry. The saints' parents (mostly their fathers) try to persuade them to marry,

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[85] For the latter, see, S. O'Sullivan, 'The Image of Adornment in Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*: Cyprian and his Influence', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), 48-57; for recognition that Aldhelm's remarks on marriage may relate to his subject-matter, see, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 63 n 21.

[86] E. Pettit, 'Aldhelm's *De laude virginitatis* and *Carmen de virginitate*. A Study of Anglo-Saxon Discourses on Sexuality', (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of York, 2000), pp. 101-105.

through bribery, force or temptation, while their lusty suitors try to have sex with them, whether through corruption or force. Many saints are thrown into brothels, where prostitutes try to corrupt them sexually and their tormentors attempt to make them sacrifice to pagan gods. In these accounts, sex, marriage and paganism are presented as dangerous and debauched, and saints are tortured and ultimately martyred for refusing to partake in them.[87]

It is not surprising, therefore, that Aldhelm's virgin martyr accounts contain a good number of adverse comments against marriage and associate it with pollution. These invectives predominantly occur in two specific circumstances. This is, first, when virgins contrast impure earthly suitors with their spiritual bridegroom, Christ, and second, when virgins reject 'pagan' marriage betrothals in order to preserve their virginity. Accordingly, Lucia contrasts going *ad corruptionis meae auctorem, hominem moriturum* with going *ad integritatis meae auctorem, dominum nostrum Iesum Christum!*[88] As for Eugenia, *a Philippo patre interpellata et a proco generosis orto natalibus ad nuptias petita ob potiorem virginitatis gloriam ut spurca sterquilinia sprevit, ut proiecta peripsema contempsit, ut caccabatum furvae fuliginis atramentum exhorruit et ad maternum sanctae ecclesiae gremium.*[89] Eulalia receives sanctity: *Nam post rumigerulae virginitatis gloriam, qua carnalis cloacae spurcitias exhorruit et nuptialis copulae contubernia sprevit, ad gloriosam martirii palmam feliciter pervenit.*[90] In fact, Aldhelm is so keen to highlight the dangers of marriage proposals to virgins that he even describes them as more defiling than his patristic exemplars do. For instance, he tells us that Amos, a male virgin martyr, resists the marriage that his parents try to

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[87] For a summation of all of Aldhelm's virgin martyr portraits in the *PdV*, see, *AM*, pp. 60-62.

[88] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 294, ll. 4-5, (trans.), *LH*, p. 108, 'to the author of my corruption, a mortal husband ...to the author of my purity, our Lord Jesus Christ'; A citation taken from his exemplar Surius, *De probatis Sanctorum historiis*, see, *AO*, p. 294 n 1.

[89] *Ibid.*, cap. XLIV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 296, ll. 19-21-p. 297, l. 1, (trans.), p. 110 'urged by her father Philip, and sought in marriage by a suitor born of a noble family, for the sake of the greater glory of her virginity she spurned (the idea) like foul excrement; like tossed-out garbage she scorned it; as from the swarthy blackness of dusky soot she recoiled from it, and ran to the maternal bosom of the holy church'.

[90] *Ibid.*, *PdV*, cap. XLVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 300, ll. 12-14, (trans.), *LH*, p. 113 'For after the glory of her far-famed virginity, through which she shrank from the filth of the carnal sewer and rejected the companionship of the marriage bond, she blessedly arrived at the glorious palm of a martyr'.

force him into *acsi squalentis ceni contagia vel venenatum aspidis morsum*.[91] If we compare Aldhelm's representation of Amos's rejection of marriage with his literary model for this account, Rufinus' *Historia monachorum*, it is clear that Aldhelm coins this invective against marriage, for in Rufinus' text the saint simply enters spiritual marriage with a virgin and bids her to remain continent *quia corruptio sine dubio inveniet corruptionem, incorruptio vero incorruptionem sperat*.[92] Overall, Aldhelm's saints' accounts therefore follow virgin martyr legends and early medieval saints' lives more generally, by juxtaposing the threat of carnality with the preservation of virginity.[93]

That Aldhelm's aim is to contrast 'pagan' carnality and Christian virginity, rather than to disparage wedlock *per se*, is further suggested by the fact that he describes marriage neutrally when it presents no danger to his saints' virginity and religion. Take, for example, Aldhelm's accounts of the male virgin martyr Chrysanthus. In the prose text we simply learn that the saint's relatives urge his father *ut filius blandis conubii nexibus nodaretur et illecebroso matrimonii lenocinio vinciretur*.[94] Marriage is therefore described as alluring, but not as corrupting. Likewise in the verse counterpart, we learn of how the maiden Daria:

> *Nititur haec iuvenem Veneris constringere nexu,*
>
> *Quatenus ad thalami flectat conubia mentem*.[95]

Similar examples are found in Aldhelm's accounts of Julian. In the prose text we learn simply that his parents try to predispose him *ad thalami taedas et copulae consortium*,[96] whilst in the verse text:

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[91] *Ibid.*, cap. XXXVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 285, ll. 2-3, (trans.), *LH*, p. 102 'as if it were the contagion of squalid filth or the poisonous bite of an asp'.

[92] Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, (ed.), E. Scultz-Flügel, *Patristische Texte und Studien*, 34 (Berlin, 1990), cap. XXX, 1. 3, p. 376, ll. 10-11, 'because without doubt corruption discovers corruption but incorruption anticipates incorruption'; a citation based on 1 Cor. 15. 50.

[93] For these wider trends, see, M. Glasser, 'Marriage in Medieval Hagiography', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, Second Series, IV (1981), pp. 6-19.

[94] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 278, ll. 11-12, (trans.), *LH*, p. 97 'that his son be bound with the pleasant chains of marriage and be fastened down by the seductive allurement of matrimony'.

[95] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1164-65, p. 402, (trans.), *LR*, p. 128. 'She tries to entangle the young man in a bond of love to the point that he would [or: in so far as he may] turn his mind to the union of a wedding chamber'.

Cumque pater sobolem vetulus vidissit adultam,

Nititur indolem claris natalibus ortam

Flectere cum precibus, thalamorum ut iura capessat,

Quatenus inde foret post successura nepotum

Progenies, mallet si ditem ducere sponsam.[97]

Arguably marriage does not receive condemnation in these male saints' accounts because Chrysanthus and Julian quickly convert their female suitors to Christianity, and moreover, enter spiritual marriages with them.[98] In the absence of a 'pagan' sexual threat, therefore, Aldhelm does not describe wedlock in damning terms.

A consideration of Aldhelm's catalogue of male virgin *exempla* helps us to appreciate further how his negative comments against marriage belong to his wider rhetorical framework of juxtaposing the sexual and the sacred, for here carnality is disparaged, regardless of whether it is associated with paganism and wedlock. Only four out of Aldhelm's thirty-nine male saints (Chrysanthus, Julian, Amos and Malchus) are virgin martyrs, who achieve sanctity mainly by resisting marriage and sexual intercourse. The rest are biblical figures, church fathers and confessors, who achieve sanctity through sexual abstinence, moral purity and miracle working. Yet despite this, Aldhelm makes negative comments against carnality in these accounts, and moreover, often introduces this theme, or considerably emphasises it, from his literary exemplars. An example is found in his account of St Apollonius, where he remarks that the Virgin Mary's breast is devoid *humanae corruptionis spurcitia et virili complexu.*[99] Aldhelm's account of Apollonius is apparently derived from Rufinus' *Historia monachorum*, whereas his reference to the Virgin Mary is derived mainly from Jerome's *In Isaiam* or Ambrose's *Exhortatio*

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[96] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 281, l. 2, (trans.), *LH*, p. 99 'to wedding-festivities and the companionship of marriage'.

[97] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1265-69, p. 406, (trans.), *LR*, p. 131 'When his aged father saw that his son had grown up, he tried to persuade him [or: to turn him with entreaties] –since he was descended from famous ancestry –to assume the responsibilities of marriage, in order that there would be an offspring of grandchildren to succeed him for posterity, if only he would chose to marry a rich wife'.

[98] Aldhelm does not, however, encourage chaste marriage, see below, pp. 212-14.

[99] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 287, ll. 7-9, citation at 8-9, (trans.), *LH*, p. 104 'of the filth of human corruption and of masculine embrace'.

virginitatis.[100] Yet whilst all three sources mention the Virgin Mary – and whilst Jerome and Ambrose are concerned with her virginity - none refer to her being devoid 'of the filth of human corruption'. Therefore, Rufinus merely asserts that they visited Apollonius, who was living in the region of Hermapolis in Egypt, where *ad quam civitatem salvatorem cum Maria et Iosef de Iudeae finibus venisse tradunt secundum profetiam Esaiae.*[101] In their exegesis of Isias 19. 1, Ambrose and Jerome simply tell us that Mary's body had not been burdened by physical copulation, for in the words of Ambrose: *Nubem itaque Mariam dixit, quia carnem gerebat;[sic] levem, quia virgo erat, nullis oneribus onerata coniugii.*[102] Aldhelm therefore introduces this negative comment against sexuality into his account of Apollonius, perhaps to emphasise its spiritual danger to the sexually continent.

Aldhelm's account of Apollonius is, however, merely representative of a wider trend, and this is clear if we consider how he often makes threats to his saints' sexual integrity central to their accounts, even when it was of minor importance in his literary models. Aldhelm's portrait of John the Hermit provides one illustration of this point. In the prose text Aldhelm demonstrates the saint's preservation of his virginity by recounting how a military tribune went to see John concerning the 'troublesomeness' (*incommoditas*) of his ill wife. He had hoped that the saint would allow his wife to visit in person.[103] John refused, however, seeing *sibi umquam moris non fuisse videndi mulieres et praecipue, ex quo in illius rupis se monasterio conclusisset!*[104] Compare this to Rufinus' *Historia monachorum*, the text from which Aldhelm's account – and this citation - is drawn.[105]

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[100] *AO*, pp. 287-90.

[101] Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, (ed.), Scultz-Flügel, cap. VII, 1. 1, p. 286, ll. 2-3 'they say that the Saviour had come to the city from the lands of Juda with Mary and Joseph, according to the prophecy of Isaiah'.

[102] Cited by *AO*, p. 287 n 2, 'He says that the cloud is indeed Mary, because she carried the flesh; and that she is called light, because she is a virgin, having been burdened by no weight of a sexual union'; likewise, for Jerome, see, *AO*, p. 287 n 2.

[103] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 267, l. 19-p. 268, l. 1.

[104] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 268, ll. 2-3, (trans.), *LH*, p. 89, 'that it had never been a habit of his to see women, and, above all, that he had shut himself up in the monastery on that cliff for that very reason'; cf. his treatment of the theme in his verse counterpart, Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 838-841, pp. 388-89.

[105] *AO*, p. 267 n 5; Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, (ed.), Scultz-Flügel, cap. I. 11, pp. 249-50, ll. 45-46; see, similarly, *Ibid.*, cap. I. 24, p. 252, ll. 97-98.

Whereas Aldhelm depicts the tribune's wife as troublesome, Rufinus instead describes her husband as annoyingly persistent:

tribumus persistere obsecrando et confirmare, quod nisi videret eum esset sine dubio ex multa tristitia peritura.

Cumque iterum ac saepius eadem precaretur et causam mortis eum suae coniugis confirmaret futurum atque inde interitum, unde salutem speraverat, accepturam, tam fidem quam inportunitatem eius aspiciens, senior vade, inquit, videbit me coniux tua hac nocte, non tamen huc veniet, sed in domo sua atque in lecto suo manebit.[106]

Furthermore, although Rufinus does tell us that no woman got close enough to John's cell to see him, nonetheless, he also tells us that men did rarely, and were only permitted to see the saint at certain fixed times.[107] Rufinus' John is prepared to admonish the woman for trying to see him in person, yet he still heals and blesses her, and other women, during the course of his saintly career.[108] More widely, in Rufinus' account, the antagonism between John and women is a minor theme. Instead, the overwhelming concern is with the hermit's prophetic powers and wise counsel on inner spiritual purity. Aldhelm therefore changes the emphasis of Rufinus' account, from a stubbornly persistent husband desiring John's intercession on his wife's behalf, into that of a troublesome woman who endangers the saint's chaste contemplative existence. He also focuses on this theme to the exclusion of all other narrative material.

This example of Aldhelm introducing and emphasising the theme of sexual threats from his literary sources could be extended considerably. Dempsey, for example, has demonstrated how in the *Prosa de virginitate* Aldhelm's account of the hermit Malchus radically departs from his literary model, Jerome's *Vita S Malchi monachi captivi*, in order to emphasise the saint's 'violent defence' of his purity.[109] As we shall see in Chapter Six,

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[106] *Ibid.*, cap. I.11-I.12, p. 250, ll. 46-53 'The tribune continued appealing and asserted, that unless she might see him, she might doubtless die from great grief. And since he prayed repeatedly and asserted that he would be the cause of his wife's death, whence she was hoping for health, the old man, observing the tribune's faith no less than his insolence, said, 'Go, your wife shall see me this night, but she shall not come here, but will stay at home in her bed'.

[107] Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, (ed.), Scultz-Flügel, cap. I. 4, p. 248, cap. 1, 23, p. 252, ll. 93-95.

[108] *Ibid.*, caps. I. 14-I. 16, pp. 250-51; *Ibid.*, I. 24-I. 25, p. 252; and for his vision regarding a pregnant woman, see, *Ibid.*, caps. I. 18-I. 21, p. 251.

[109] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 68-70, citation 68.

by focusing upon how the master of the enslaved monk, Malchus, tries to force him to have sex, Aldhelm divorces this episode from the context in which Jerome presents it, and ignores additional swathes of narrative, including the saint's chaste spiritual marriage to a female slave.[110] Similar examples occur in his female saints' accounts. Take, for instance, his representation of St Agnes. In both the prose and poetic treatise Aldhelm focuses mainly on how this virgin martyr repelled her suitor's marriage proposal and was thrown into a brothel as a consequence.[111] He therefore omits some half of the narrative offered by his model, pseudo-Ambrose, which includes, among other material, attempts to make her sacrifice to pagan gods, a tribunal where Agnes defends her faith against pagan adversaries, and a depiction of her martyrdom.[112]

Thus, Aldhelm's condemnation of marriage in his saints' accounts appears to belong to his wider concern to condemn pagan and forced marriages,[113] and moreover, to pitch sexual desire against chastity. Aldhelm enjoys depicting this conflict, as he exclaims: *O quanta est furibundae libidinis ferocitas et ediverso quanta est reconciliati pudoris pietas!*[114] Furthermore, he often makes the opposition more polarised and pivotal to his saints' accounts than it is in those of his literary exemplars.[115] Sexual intercourse is shown to be spiritually corrupting as a foil to spiritually empowering virginity. Whilst saints' rejection of marriage and sexual relationships provide one example of this, another is found in Aldhelm's decision to make virginity the locus of his saints' miracle-working power, and contrast this with the impotence of the sexually active. Thus, in the prose *De virginitate*, Aldhelm follows his saints' lives with a handful of biblical *exempla* whose

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[110] See below, pp. 219-20.

[111] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLV, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 298, ll. 12-23-p. 299, ll. 1-17 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XLV, p. 298, l. 21, p. 299, ll. 7, 14), see, *AMA*, cap. XLV, p. 633, l. 14, p. 635, l. 25, p. 637, l. 35); Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1925-74, pp. 432-34.

[112] Cf. Pseudo-Ambrose, *Passio S Agnae*, (ed.), PL, 17, (Turnhout, 1845), caps. IV- VII, XII-XVII, cols. 740-42.

[113] *AM*, pp. 46, 54-55, 60-62.

[114] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 299, ll. 2-3, (trans.), *LH*, p. 112 'Oh, how great is the savagery of raging sexual desire, and, on the other hand, how great is the mercifulness of placated chastity!'

[115] For Aldhelm representing virginity and marriage as polarities, see, O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', pp. 60-62.

power waned once they had lost their virginity.[116] In Aldhelm's own words, *post carnalis consortii copulam de utroque minora virtutum praeconia crebrescunt.*[117] Aldhelm's numerous and emphatic warnings against carnality arguably respond directly to some contemporary religious' difficulties in forsaking sexual activity. It reminded these individuals that marriage and sexual activity had to be avoided by at all costs. His virgin martyrs' rejection of marriage also valorised the actions of those individuals who had relinquished their own marriages in order to enter religious communities. From a different perspective, they reminded married individuals, and those involved in preaching to the married laity, that Christians could not marry pagans, that individuals should have a choice in marriage partner (however unrealistic this might be), and that excessive lust was immoral and unchristian. Instead, married Christians should emulate the sexual restraint of saints.

4. 6 Ornamentation

Having considered how Aldhelm condemns wedlock as part of a wider concern to contrast carnality and virginity, as well as to condemn forced and pagan marriages, we now need to consider how he denounces wedlock for its association with elaborate dress and jewellery. This seems to relate to his concern to teach the religious among his audience that ornamentation was incompatible with their spiritual existence. In the theorising sections of his prose treatise Aldhelm draws on scripture (Apoc. XVII. 4, 1 Petr. III. 3, 1 Cor. VII. 34, and ad Gal. 6. 14) and the church fathers' repeated exegesis of this (Cyprian's in particular), to condemn married women's love of jewellery, coiffed-hair and make-up.[118] Married women, like harlots, are associated with worldly outer adornment

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[116] *Ibid.*, cap. LIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 311, ll. 11-22-p. 312, ll. 1-9 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. LIII, p. 312, l. 8), see, *AMA*, cap. LIII, p. 709, l. 63).

[117] *Ibid.*, cap. LIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 312, ll. 8-9, (trans.), *LH*, p. 123 'after their joining in carnal union, the glory of their virtues slackened and became less [or: grew smaller from both sides]'.

[118] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 246, ll. 4-19, *Ibid.*, cap. LVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 315, ll. 4-13; for his exemplars here, see, *AO*, p. 246 nn 2, 4, p. 315, nn 1-6 esp.; R. B. Donna, 'Notes on Cyprian's *De habitu virginum*, its Source and Influence', *Traditio*, 4 (1946), 399-407; O'Sullivan, 'Image of Adornment', pp. 48-57.

and a concern to please men.[119] This is juxtaposed with virgins' inner spiritual adornment and concern to please God. In his catalogue of saintly *exempla* Aldhelm further emphasises the negative association of marriage and adornment, for a number of virgin martyrs vehemently repulse the gems and sumptuous clothing that their parents and/or suitors offer them in betrothal. In these instances, married worldly adornment is contrasted with the spiritual adornment offered by Christ.[120] Aldhelm's account of Agnes illustrates this point, for, in both the prose and verse *De virginitate*, she rejects the gems and silver offered by her suitor (*ut lurida fetentis cloacae volutabra*) in favour of those offered by Christ.[121] When discussing Agnes' marriage proposal, Aldhelm focuses on her suitor's offer of precious gems and her rejection of this. In doing so, he departs significantly from his principal exemplar, the anonymous pseudo-Ambrose's passion of St Agnes, in which the suitor offers (and Agnes rejects) not merely gems, but also costly ornaments, a home, estates, a household, and all the pleasures of the world of this kind. Furthermore, he gets his friends, acquaintances and relatives to try to persuade the virgin to marry.[122]

However, whilst Aldhelm does make a negative association between marriage and adornment, this needs to be interpreted within his wider tirade against ornamentation, for in the prose *De virginitate*, in particular, he censures contemporary religious dress.[123] Thus he condemns the ornate dress that male and female, monastic and clerical religious wear, contrary to monastic rules and canon law. These include, fine linen shirts, scarlet or blue tunics, and garments with silk-embroidered sleeves and necklines.[124] Despite Aldhelm's love of rhetoric, these images are likely to refer to contemporary dress.[125] Recall, for example, St Boniface's complaints that clerics wore clothes emblazoned with

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[119] O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', p. 58.

[120] O'Sullivan, 'Image of Adornment', pp. 49-50, 53-54; See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 278, ll. 2-8 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXXV, p. 278, l. 4), see, *AMA*, p. 465, l. 35); Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 308, ll.12-14.

[121] *Ibid.*, cap. XLV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 298, ll. 15-21, citation at ll. 16-17, (trans.), *LH*, p. 112 'like the yellow-brown scum of a reeking sewer'; Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1934-41, p. 433.

[122] Pseudo-Ambrose, *Passio S Agnae*, cap. II, cols 735-36.

[123] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 66.

[124] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 317, ll. 21-25-p. 318, ll. 1-8.

[125] G. R. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 87-90 esp.

dragons (which arguably refers to animal interlace).[126] Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter Three, seventh- to eighth-century gold thread fragments from items of dress, and silver gilted globular-headed pins, which were perhaps used to secure veiling on headdresses, have been found at the site of Barking *monasterium*.[127] Indeed, Aldhelm is cautious in his condemnation of adornment, relying on patristic exemplars and repeatedly appealing to their authority.[128] Moreover, he devotes some twenty lines of the prose text to justifying and apologising for his diatribe, as well as to anticipating how his critics will receive it.[129] Despite his attempts to appease his critics, it is possible that Aldhelm's comments still offended his audience, for he did not return to the topic of religious adornment in his verse *De virginitate*. Given this context, it may well be that rather than using the condemnation of ornamentation in dress to berate marriage, Aldhelm instead uses married ornamentation to denounce worldly adornment, and moreover, to emphasise its incompatibility with the religious life.

4. 7 Incest and Adultery

Thus far I have interpreted Aldhelm's invectives against marriage mainly within his overarching concerns to juxtapose carnality and virginity, and married physical adornment with chaste spiritual adornment. This has been related to his need to teach his religious audience the importance of sexual and material renunciation. However, not all of Aldhelm's negative remarks on marital or sexual relationships occur within these frameworks. Instead, in a handful of instances they are directed against incestuous and adulterous sexual relationships, hence, against those unions that the contemporary church

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[126] J. Campbell, 'Elements in the Background to the Life of St Cuthbert and his Early Cult', in G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (eds.), *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 14; I owe the observation for dragons potentially representing interlace to John Blair. On contemporary interlace, see, E. Kitzinger, 'Interlace and Icons: Form and Function in Early Insular Art', in R. M. Spearman and J. Higgitt, *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 3-15.

[127] See above, pp. 109-10.

[128] See, especially, Aldhelm, *PdV*, caps. LV-LVI, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 313-16 and *AO*, p. 315 nn 1-6, p. 316 n 2 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in caps. LV-LVI, see, *AM*, p. 313).

[129] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 318, ll. 8-26-p. 319, ll. 1-5.

sought to prevent. This needs to be understood in relation to the church's attempts to regulate contemporary marriage.

In the verse *De virginitate* Aldhelm's condemns incest within the nuclear family, when, as part of his warnings against drunkenness, he describes Lot's inebriated sexual intercourse with his daughters as a monstrous (*infandus*) crime (*scelus*).[130] Equally, Aldhelm berates sexual relationships between affilial kin in his account of John the Baptist, for in this, he describes how the saint reproved Herod's marriage to Herodias, his brother Phillip's wife. In the prose text he describes the relationship as *olidarum ... polluta nuptiarum contubernia*, hence, as defiled and contaminated.[131] In the verse text he makes the crime more explicit, for we learn that John condemned Herod:

> *Qui consanguinei disrupit foedera, fratris*
> *Germani thalamum incestans sine iure tororum;*[132]

Aldhelm describes these incestuous unions using a damning language that is absent from his main source for both stories: the Bible.[133] Furthermore, the lexicon Aldhelm selects to describe incest (the verb *polluere* and noun *scelus*) shows us how utterly loathsome he deemed this crime. For, elsewhere in his double treatise, *polluere* is used to describe impious, spiritually contaminating and moreover, morally evil behaviour.[134] Aldhelm's account of St Babilas, for example, describes how the pagan, Numerianus Augustus, is prohibited from entering a sacred temple *pollutis pedibus* because he is defiled with the blood of the innocent Christians he has killed.[135] *Scelus* is used mainly to describe pagan crimes, from their persecution of Christians to their worship of trees. It is used also in reference to the Original Sin.[136] Aldhelm therefore shames incest by associating it with contamination, profanity and paganism.

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[130] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. l. 2523, p. 455.

[131] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 254, ll. 4-5, (trans.), *LH*, p. 80 'the polluted cohabitation of a reeking union'.

[132] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 442-43, p. 371, (trans.), *LR*, p. 112 'who had broken the laws of consanguineity [sic.] by defiling the bed of his own brother without the sanctity of lawful wedlock [or: the law of marriages]'.

[133] For Lot, see, Genesis 19. 30-38; for John the Baptist, see, Marc. 6. 18 and Matt. 14. 3-4.

[134] For Aldhelm's use of *polluere*, see, *AO*, p. 672.

[135] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 274, l. 14, (trans.), *LH*, p. 94 'with his polluted feet'.

It is not only incestuous sexual unions that Aldhelm dislikes, for he denounces adultery as well. Aldhelm therefore describes how David *illegitimo iugalitatis vinculo foederatur* to Bathsheba, which is punished by the death of their first child.[137] David, as we should recall, had sex with Bathsheba (who conceived) whilst she was still married to Urias the Hethite: only once David had orchestrated Urias' death to conceal his crime did he marry Bathsheba and she bear him a son (II Kings 11). Equally, in his prose account of St Eugenia Aldhelm compares Melanthia, a woman who lusts after this transvestite saint, with the elders in the book of Daniel, who accuse Joakin's wife Susannah of adultery (Daniel 13. 1-65), *quos adulterinae titillationis calcar incesti crimine cruentabat.*[138] Adultery is therefore described as illegitimate and sinful. Notably, concubinage receives merely two comments from Aldhelm. First, he merely mentions that Constantine was borne of a union between his father Constantius and the concubine Helena.[139] Second, Samson the Nazarene, we are told, was sacred to God *antequam fraudulentis Dalilae complexibus caperetur et perfidi pelicatus stupro enerviter deceptus.*[140] Unlike incest and adultery, however, Aldhelm does not describe this union as illicit. Moreover, since he offers Samson, alongside David, as examples of holy men whose loss of virginity is accompanied by a loss of power, in this instance, he probably seeks to highlight that sexual intercourse rather than concubinage undermined Samson's holiness. It is incest and adultery that Aldhelm instead seeks to denigrate. This may relate to the fact that, despite the church's concern to stop concubinage, the Anglo-Saxons continued to form these sexual unions.[141]

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[136] For Aldhelm's use of *scelus*, see, *AO*, p. 700; for its use with reference to pagan crimes, see, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 273, l. 16; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 696, p. 382; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 962, p. 394; and for its use with reference to the Original Sin, see, for example, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2682, 2693, pp. 461-62.

[137] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 312, l. 1, (trans.), *LH*, pp. 122-23 'was joined with an illegitimate bond of marriage'.

[138] *Ibid.*, cap. XLIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 298, ll. 3-4, (trans.), *LH*, p. 111 'whom the spur of adulterous desire had bloodied with the sin of sexuality'.

[139] *Ibid.*, cap. XLVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 302, ll. 20-21.

[140] *Ibid.*, cap. LIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 312, ll. 3-4, (trans.), p. 123 'before he was caught in the fraudulent embraces of Dalila, and weakly deceived by the debauchery of this treacherous concubinage'.

[141] Clunies-Ross, 'Concubinage', pp. 28-29.

4. 8 Aldhelm's Definition of Marriage

Having concentrated mainly on Aldhelm's negative remarks against marriage and sexual relationships in his saintly and biblical *exempla*, I want to turn now to his definition of marriage in the theoretical sections of his double treatise. Aldhelm focuses on two quintessential features of wedlock: its progeny and legitimacy. Starting with its legitimacy, Aldhelm suggests that marriage: *licitis conubii nexibus nodatur*.[142] In both texts of the double treatise, although in the verse text in particular, he teaches that those who maintain lawful ('*licet*', '*legitimus*') marriage will receive heavenly rewards. Thus, for example, he states that heavenly rewards will not be denied to those *qui concessa colunt licitae conubia vitae*, and that *legitimum legalis tori conubium* is not to be scorned.[143] Aldhelm does not define what he means by licit marriage, yet it is possible that he meant those marriages which did not indulge in illicit activities prohibited by the church.[144]

Turning to progeny, when Aldhelm makes negative remarks about marital sex it is usually when he is juxtaposing it with virginity and chastity or when he is contrasting praiseworthy sexual restraint with dangerously lascivious behaviour.[145] In other instances he follows the church fathers by stating that the begetting of children is the principal purpose of marriage.[146] He refers to fertility in marriage as legitimate and lawful (*legitimus* and *licitus*).[147] Moreover, he stresses that 30-fold spiritual rewards will go to

[142] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, l. 5, (trans.), *LH*, pp. 75-76, 'is bound by the legal ties of marriage'.

[143] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 204, p. 361, (trans.), *LR*, p. 107 'who maintain the sanctioned marriage of lawfully wedded life'; Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. VIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 235, l. 22, (trans.), *LH*, p. 64, 'the legitimate union of wedlock'.

[144] In Christian tradition, licit marriages were those consensual unions between a man and a woman ratified by God.

[145] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 246, l. 9.

[146] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. IX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, l. 2; see, for example, Augustine, *De bono coniugali*, (ed.), Zycha, *Sancti Augustini*, cap. VI (6), p. 195, ll. 6-8, 19-20, cap. X (11), p. 203, ll. 2-4; Augustine, *De bono viduitatis*, (ed.), *Ibid.*, cap. VIII (11), p. 317, ll. 14-16; Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, (ed.), *Ibid.*, cap. XII (12), p. 244, ll. 1-2-p. 245, l. 1; this is a view later held by Ælfric, see, P. Jackson 'Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: A Reconsideration of the *Life of Æthelthryth*, lines 120-130', *ASE*, 29 (2000), 235-60.

[147] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. IX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, l. 2.

the married individual who does not abandon sex entirely because he/she willingly desires to have children: *Nec penitus calcat licitae commercia vitae,*

> *Sed magis in mundo sobolem generare nepotum*
>
> *Progeniemque libens exoptat gignere stirpis.*[148]

In a number of his virgins' accounts he emphasises that their parents wanted them to marry in order to bear offspring and heirs.[149] Moreover, he regards marriage as a union *quae ad propagandam posteritatis sobolem* and *ob liberorum posteritatem*, thus, for producing offspring to ensure the continuity of one's lineage.[150] Remarkably, as Ehwald notes, this is not entirely unlike his reference to procreative Old Testament marriage, which Ancient Law permitted *pro nepotum prosapia et posterorum progenie propaganda.*[151] Aldhelm's exegesis of procreative Old Testament marriage indeed sets him apart from his literary models. Whilst Aldhelm makes it clear that the laws regulating patriarchal marriage do not apply in contemporary society,[152] he nonetheless argues that contemporary marriage is not to be scorned, for the Patriarchs led industrious lives and were pleasing to God.[153] In significant contrast, his patristic exemplars show considerable concern to justify and apologise for patriarchal marriage.[154] Even Augustine felt the need to explain the Patriarchs' willingness to procreate as a dutiful and pious obligation.[155] Admittedly,

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[148] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 126-28 p. 358, (trans.), LR, p. 106, 'he does not wholly tread under the (sexual) engagements of wedded life, but rather desires willingly to produce a progeny of offspring in the world and to beget a generation of kindred'.

[149] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 280, ll. 15-18-p. 281, l. 1; *Ibid.*, cap. XXXVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 285, ll. 5-8 at ll. 5-6 and above, p. 137.

[150] *Ibid.*, cap. XIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, ll. 4-5, (trans.), *LH*, p. 75, 'which, for propagating the progeny of posterity'; *Ibid.*, cap. IX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, l. 2, (trans.), *LH*, p. 66 'for the issue of children'.

[151] *AO*, p. 252 n 5; Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 252, l. 20, (trans.), *LH*, p. 78 'for the sake of a family of offspring and for propagating the progeny of descendants'.

[152] *Ibid.*, cap. VIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 236, ll. 8-10; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. XVIII, p. 247, ll. 15-19; *Ibid.*, cap. XXII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 252, ll. 19-22 -p. 253, ll. 1-5.

[153] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 240-247; see also, *Idem.*, *PdV*, cap. VIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 263, ll. 2-7.

[154] See, for example, Ambrose, *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*, (ed.), Cazzaniga, *S. Ambrosii Mediolanensis*, I. VII. 33-34, pp. 17-18; Jerome, *Vita Malchi Monachi Captivi*, (ed.), C. C. Mierow, '*Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Vita Malchi Monachi Captivi*', in R. E. Arnold (ed.), *Classical Essays Presented to James A. Kleist, S. J.* (St Louis, MO, 1946), cap. III, p. 37, ll. 41-45.

Augustine wrote to counter contemporary charges that the Patriarchs were sexually incontinent. Yet Aldhelm chose which patristic material to transmit and how to present it. His decision not to justify and apologise for procreative patriarchal marriage signals his recognition of the importance of wedlock for producing licit kin. Arguably, it also reflects the church's attempts to confine sexual relationships to monogamous and procreative ones within marriage. Certainly much of Aldhelm's guidance on sexual and marital relationships seems to find explanation within his early Anglo-Saxon context.

4. 9 Conclusion

Lapidge and O'Sullivan are surely right to propose that Aldhelm maintained an orthodox position on marriage. Following St Paul and the church fathers, he took the view that this sexual state had worth and was 'not to be despised', even though virginity and chastity were preferable to it.[156] Yet Aldhelm's attitude to marital and sexual relationships needs further qualification. For whilst he praises licit procreative marriage, he levels criticism against it by its association with carnality and worldly adornment. He also disparages mixed pagan-Christian marriages, as well as incestuous and adulterous unions.

What then did it mean for Aldhelm to create such a multivalent model of marriage and sexual relationships? First, Aldhelm's double treatise seems partly to represent his own distinctive views on these themes. We have already noted that his reticence in dealing with the woes of marriage set him apart from not only late antique church fathers, but also from another early medieval writer, Venantius Fortunatus. Furthermore, even a cursory survey of the contemporary Anglo-Saxon sources suggests that Aldhelm's decision not to relay misogynistic patristic clichés on women bearing children in pain and sorrow is unusual in his own culture, for they are found in the works of his near contemporaries Stephen of Ripon, Felix and Bede.[157] In fact, Bede's views appear to be very different from Aldhelm's, which is of interest when he was familiar with our author's double

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[155] See, for example, Augustine, *De bono coniugali*, (ed.), Zycha, *Sancti Augustini*, cap. XVI.18, p. 211, ll. 14-23-p. 212, ll. 1-5; *Ibid.*, cap. XXV (33), p. 228; Augustine, *De bono viduitatis*, (ed.), *Idem.*, cap. VII, p. 314, ll. 8-11, cap. VIII (11), p. 317, ll. 11-14.

[156] *LH*, pp. 53-54, 56 citation at 54; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 293-94.

[157] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi* (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, (ed.), cap. I, pp. 4-5; Felix, *Vita S Guthlaci*, cap. IV, pp. 74-75; Bede, *In*

treatise. In his exegesis *De Templo* (on Solomon's Temple in 3 Kings 5.1-7. 51), for example, Bede repeatedly emphasises that in the church, married Christians who were carnal and weak, were segregated strictly from the sexually continent who were undefiled and perfect.[158] In his exegesis on 1 Peter, he suggests, that marital sex hindered prayer, for St Paul commanded that Christians should pray without ceasing, and their sexual relationships were, therefore, an obstacle to prayer.[159] Thus, as Alan Thacker has proposed, Bede's pastoral theology appears to be so 'austerely monastic' that he took 'a sombre view of sexuality' and effectively denounced the married state.[160] Since Bede's audience, like Aldhelm's, will have included formerly married individuals, their differences in approach cannot necessarily be attributed to variation among their readers and auditors. Instead, Bede's emphatic denunciation of marriage in these texts, perhaps relates, in part, to his monastic status and the fact that he was raised in a *monasterium* from an oblate. In contrast, Aldhelm's views may represent those of an active and moreover, pragmatic cleric. Whilst Aldhelm's and Bede's writings tend to be studied independently, both authors arguably may represent distinctive voices in contemporary debates concerning marital and sexual relationships. Bede's thoughts on marriage point to a rich area for future investigation.

Aldhelm's complex and sometimes contradictory views on wedlock also reflect the climate in which he wrote his double treatise and the audience for whom he wrote it. As I have outlined previously, in this period the nascent Anglo-Saxon church sought to teach the religious the meaning of sexual renunciation and the laity the meaning of Christian marriage.[161] As an active abbot and cleric, Aldhelm arguably was influenced by both concerns, particularly given that his audience comprised virgins, alongside formerly married chaste individuals, priests involved in regulating contemporary marriage and

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Apocalypsin, II. 12, (ed.), R. Gryson, *Bedae Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL, CXXIA (Turnhout, 2001), cap. XVIII, p. 387, ll. 32-42.

[158] See, for example, Bede, *De Templo* (ed.), D. Hurst, *Bedae Venerabilis: Opera exegetica*, CCSL, CXIXA (Turnhout, 1969), I. 7.6-7.7, pp. 164-65, ll. 697-743, and *Ibid.*, II, 17. 6-17. 7, pp. 194-96, ll. 115-71.

[159] Bede, *In Epistolas VII Catholicas*, in anon. (ed.), *Bedae Venerabilis: Opera exegetica*, CCSL, CXXI (Turnhout, 1983), III. 7, pp. 243-44, ll. 29-43.

[160] A. Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, London and New York, NY, 1992), pp. 155-56 esp., citations at 156, 160.

perhaps even married individuals themselves. Aldhelm's model of marriage provided this audience with different meanings depending upon how they approached his texts.

Aldhelm's concern not to offend his audience, together with the church's concern that Anglo-Saxons enter into legal Christian marriages, provides an explanation for why he did not offer a full-bloodied condemnation of this sexual state.[162] The fact that patristic biases against marriage associated postlapsarian sin with women, provides another reason why Aldhelm perhaps decided not to transmit these, for he did not want to offend the female members of his audience, nor single them out from the men by associating them with spiritual disgrace.

Aldhelm also presents a clerical view of marriage which makes sense within early Anglo-Saxon church rulings. Take, for example, his references to licit and illicit marital or sexual relationships. Whilst these may be inspired by inherited Christian traditions on this subject, it is striking that in the same period, the Anglo-Saxon church was using this vocabulary to outline what comprised correct or incorrect marital or sexual customs, and with a view to confining sexual activities to lawful marriage.[163] Aldhelm also condemns adulterous and incestuous relationships in a period when the church sought to make marriage monogamous and within permitted degrees. Furthermore, he depicts virgin saints resisting those marriage unions which their parents sought to impose upon them, in a period when the ecclesiastical rulings associated with Theodore decreed that young men and women could refuse the marriages that their parents orchestrated for them. The fact that his saints reject pagan suitors, but are prepared to live in chaste spiritual marriages if their future spouses convert to Christianity, arguably demonstrates the church's concern that Christians should not be wedded to pagans. Furthermore, whilst Aldhelm's condemnation of unbridled sexual desire was mainly aimed at his religious audience, it also suited the church's concern to encourage sexual restraint and moderation within marriage. In his writings, therefore, Aldhelm internalised the contemporary ideas he had probably discussed and heard at church councils and read in conciliar and penitential literature, perhaps in part with a view to teaching the clergy among his audience, who in turn preached to the sexually active laity.

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[161] See above, pp. 105-108, 123-28.

[162] In addition, he had to respect the fact that some of his saintly exemplar had been married, Aldhelm, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. VII, p. 243, ll. 14-15.

Aldhelm's main aim, however, was to teach his predominantly religious audience the meaning and rewards of sexual continence. There is enough evidence for contemporary religious' sexual activity in the cloister to know that Aldhelm's concerns about carnality were not merely a rhetorical trope. The early Anglo-Saxon church was concerned about contemporary religious indulging in sexual activity within the cloister. Moreover, they wanted to stop individuals leaving the cloister to marry, whether this was voluntarily, through persuasion, or force. Aldhelm's saints' rejection of marriage and sexual relationships offered his audience models of behaviour to emulate. Moreover, they praised the actions of those individuals who had left their spouses to enter the religious life, as well as legitimised these, by demonstrating that the rejection of marriage had a long Christian legacy. By emphasising the richer spiritual rewards awaiting virgins and the chaste, he assured them that sexual continence was well worth pursuing. By associating marriage with carnality, pollution and paganism, he emphasised that it was spiritually dangerous to his audience, and that marriage with professed religious was illicit and unchristian. Likewise, by associating adornment negatively with married women, Aldhelm signalled that it was entirely inappropriate for the spiritual religious and shamed the members of his audience who continued to wear secular apparel. Finally, by juxtaposing the external features of marriage, hence its carnality and worldliness, with the inner spirituality of the sexually continent, Aldhelm sought to provide religious with distinctive identities that would distinguish them from the nominally Christian laity.

Ultimately, Aldhelm may have got the balance between praising and condemning aspects of marriage largely right, for his attitudes to wedlock vary little between the prose text and its verse counterpart. If anything, he uses the verse text simply to develop ideas introduced in the prose *De virginitate*. The major difference between the texts is that Aldhelm did not repeat his diatribe against monastic and clerical dress. Perhaps we can extrapolate from this that, despite the cautious manner in which he presented his argument, some elements of his audience had received it badly after all.

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[163] Aldhelm's concern with licit marriage may stem from his legal education, see above, pp. 114-15.

Chapter Five[1]

Male and Female Religious Renunciation

In the writings of Bede (c. 673-735), early Anglo-Saxon men undertake symbolic acts of relinquishment when entering the religious life. When St Cuthbert (d. 687) entered Melrose, he gave his horse and his spear to a servant, and thenceforth avoided alcohol assiduously.[2] When Eosterwine (d. 686), a former thane of King Ecgfrith (670-85), became abbot of Wearmouth, he deposited with his arms.[3] In contrast, women had to forsake childbirth, as well as lavish dress and jewellery. Thus Queen Iurminburg took on the '*habitus*' of the consecrated life,[4] and from the time Queen Æthelthryth (d. 679) entered Coldingham she wore wool rather than linen.[5] Bede's accounts suggest that men's and women's transitions from the secular to the religious life were different. And indeed, whilst both sexes had to relinquish marriage and sexual relationships, it seems that religious renunciation required a radical transition by elite men: in addition to forsaking material goods, they were expected to relinquish many aspects of the warrior lifestyle. In contrast, for high status women there appears to have been more continuity between the types of roles and activities associated with their religious and secular lives.

In this chapter I set out Aldhelm's representation of gender in his double treatise and relate this foremost to men's and women's different cultural experiences of renunciation. Some important work on this topic has been undertaken recently by Scott Gwara, who observes that Aldhelm's thematic treatment of sanctity differs in his catalogue of male and female saints. Whereas saints of both sexes endure persecution and are martyred, the males typically achieve holiness through zealously proselytising, the females by rejecting their pagan suitors. Gwara relates this to the different roles that Aldhelm

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[1] Note that this chapter formed the basis of an article, see, E. Pettit, 'Holiness and Masculinity in Aldhelm's *opus geminatum De virginitate*', in P. H. Cullum and K. J. Lewis, *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2004), pp. 8-23.

[2] Bede, *Vita S Cuthberti*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), cap. VI, pp. 172-75.

[3] Bede, *Historia abbatum*, (ed.), *VBOH*, cap. VIII, p. 371.

[4] Bede, *Vita S Cuthberti*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Two Lives*, cap. XXVIII, pp. 248-49.

[5] *H. E.*, IV. 19, pp. 392-93.

expected men and women to assume in the conversion of England.[6]   However, with the exception of Gwara, most analyses of Aldhelm's saints have been taken from a feminist perspective, and have focused, therefore, on interpreting his female *exempla* (and then sometimes selected *exempla*) in relation to the female component of his audience.[7]   Thus, Dagmar Schneider proposes that Aldhelm presents strong and learned women who act in a manly way alongside men in the church and perform similar activities, such as missionary, healing and miracle work.[8]   Most scholars, however, emphasise his varied approach to women in the double treatise.   They suggest that on the one hand, his depiction of male and female virgins as equally holy individuals illustrate women's influential involvement in the early church alongside men.   On the other hand, his misogynistic clichés against women demonstrate the Anglo-Saxon clergy's transmission of negative patristic views of the female sex.[9]   Stephanie Hollis, for example, proposes that in the instructional passages of his texts women are depicted as both masculine soldiers of Christ and feminine lovers of self-adornment.   She contrasts this with his asexual metaphors which submerge 'gender distinctions' and his decision to catalogue both male and female warrior saints, which indicates that virginity is 'beyond specificity of gender'.[10]   Likewise, for Aldhelm, Sinead O'Sullivan argues, virginity enables both sexes to transcend earthly gender divisions. Nonetheless, to achieve this coequal state, female saints reject the typically 'female preoccupations' of worldliness and carnality, and instead 'become male', by adopting

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[6] *AM*, pp. 56-62.

[7] See, for example, S. O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* - Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia*, 12 (1998), pp. 277-78; C. A. Lees and G. R. Overing (eds.), *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon Culture* (Philadelphia, PA, 2001), pp. 118-22; other analyses of Aldhelm's saints' accounts have focused on selected examples, see, for example, M. Lapidge, ' "Beowulf", Aldhelm, the "Liber Monstrorum" and Wessex', *Studi Medievali*, Third Series, 23 (1), (1982), pp. 158-62 repr. and rev. M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), pp. 271-312 and J. Stevenson, 'Constantine, St Aldhelm and the Loathy Lady', in S. N. C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds.), *Constantine. History, Hagiography and Legend* (London, 1998), pp. 189-206.

[8] D. B. Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life: A Study of the Status and Position of Women in an Early Medieval Society' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1985), pp. 196-201, 306.

[9] S. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 12, 95, 103 esp.; S. O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background to Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', *Milltown Studies*, 37 (1996), pp. 57-59; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 277-79; Lees and Overing (eds.), *Double Agents*, pp. 13, 111-17.

[10] Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, pp. 82-98, 109.

'masculine spirituality'.[11] Furthermore, in a recent study, Claire Lees and Gillian Overing suggest that Aldhelm's figurations of the female body 'encouraged' his female audience 'to think of themselves as sometimes embodied and gendered – sometimes male, other times female'.[12] Thus scholars argue that Aldhelm represents women as masculine and/or feminine, but what about his representation of men?

Aldhelm's depiction of men deserves studying, particularly given their prominence in his double treatise. As well as beginning and ending with advice on how individuals of both sexes can achieve religious perfection, Aldhelm offers a lengthy catalogue of both male and female saints to illustrate the rewards of sexual continence.[13] Aldhelm's decision to use male saints as *exempla* is of great significance for it is a marked departure from his principal model for these saints, Ambrose's *De Virginibus ad Marcellinam* (377). In this work, which greatly influenced Aldhelm's double treatise and its structure, Ambrose concentrated on exemplary females.[14] In fact, Aldhelm does not merely select holy males as *exempla*, but his male saints are also given considerably more prominence than the females. Thus, in both texts Aldhelm lists the males first, and in the prose text, follows his female accounts with those of 5 Old Testament patriarchs. Furthermore, in total, Aldhelm catalogues 73 male saints compared to 43 females saints across both texts, and devotes almost twice as much line space to these males.[15] The prominence of men in the work undoubtedly relates to the

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[11] O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', pp. 57-59; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 275-79.

[12] Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, pp. 110-25, 148-49, citation at 149.

[13] For Aldhelm's male saints, see, Aldhelm, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, caps, XX-XXI, XXIII-XXXVIII, pp. 249-91 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in a good number of these chapters, see, *AM*, pp. 311-12); Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 248-1652, pp. 363-422; For his female saints, see, *Ibid.*, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, caps, XL-LII, pp. 292-310, (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in a good number of these chapters, see, *AM*, pp. 312-13); Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1673-2445, pp. 422-52.

[14] A point observed by a number of scholars, see, for example, *LH*, pp. 56-57; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', p. 272; G. T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury's Social Theology: The Barbaric Heroic Ideal Christianised', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), p. 61; for Ambrose's saints, see, Ambrose, *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*, (ed.), I. Cazzaniga, *S. Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi De virginibus libri tres* (Turin, 1948), II, pp. 35-56.

[15] I consider Aldhelm's saints and biblical *exemplas*, for the latter, see, Aldhelm, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, caps. LIII-LIV, LVII, pp. 310-13, 316-17 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in caps. LIII and LVII, see, *AM*, p. 313).

fact that Aldhelm dedicated the work to double *monasteria* which comprised both male and female religious, and moreover, to the fact that he envisaged men amongst his wider audience from the outset.[16]

Aldhelm's representation of men and women means that his double treatise provides ideal material to study from the perspective of gender. Gender is a concept based upon socially constructed ideas of 'maleness and femaleness', rather than upon universal biologically determined differences between the sexes.[17] As such, individuals are considered 'not in terms of "men" and "women", but in terms of "masculinity" and "femininity"'.[18] Gender therefore adopts the premise that biological men and women can be socially constructed in both masculine and/or feminine ways, and that they can both undertake male and/or female roles.[19] It also permits individuals to have 'variant notions' of gender attributed to them.[20] In this study I follow Joan Scott and take gender to be a relational concept, which considers how women and men are 'defined in terms of one another' (within the context of their representation).[21] Degrees of masculinity and femininity therefore pertain to both 'perceived differences' as well as to

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[16] See above, pp. 97-98.

[17] Construction of gender therefore changes according to historical period, author and literary genre. Compare, for example, the essays in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *Gender and Christian Religion*, *SCH*, 34 (1998).

[18] L. James, 'Introduction: Women's Studies, Gender Studies, Byzantine Studies', in *Idem* (ed.), *Women, Men and Eunuchs. Gender in Byzantium* (London and New York, 1997), p. xvii.

[19] See, for example, C. Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother. Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (London, 1982), pp. 110-69; G. Roy, 'A Virgin Acts Manfully: Ælfric's Life of St. Eugenia and the Latin Versions', *Leeds Studies in English*, New Series, 23 (1992), 1-27; for the idea of men and women adopting roles, see, James, 'Introduction', p. xx.

[20] D. M. Hadley, 'Introduction: Medieval Masculinities', in *Idem* (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (New York, 1998), p. 5.

[21] J. W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis', *American Historical Review*, 91 (5) (1986), p. 1054; Note that the idea that gender should be contextualised and relationally defined was the subject of a pioneering article by Scott in 1986. While she has subsequently offered a critique of her own methodology and its use by scholars, she maintains that gender should be viewed as a relational and historically variable concept, see, *Idem.*, 'Some More Reflections on Gender and Politics', in J. W. Scott (ed.), *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1999), pp. 199-222.

parallels 'between the sexes'.[22] To explore Aldhelm's representation of gender I therefore undertake a complete and systematic comparison of his depiction of men and women in both his passages of spiritual advice and his catalogue of 116 exemplary saints and biblical figures. To do this I have compared his presentation of male and female *exempla* according to the virtues and miracles he attributes to them by type, proportion and scope, with a view to revealing the differences and similarities between them.[23] As we shall see, his distinctive treatment of men and women may relate, in the first instance, to their divergent experiences of renunciation, but also to their difficulties living alongside each other in double *monasteria* and to contemporary concerns with this monastic form. It is to these contemporary circumstances that we shall turn first.

5. 1 Male and Female Renunciation

When entering the religious life Anglo-Saxon elite men had to forsake a number of secular roles and prerogatives associated with the warrior lifestyle. They were therefore prohibited from carrying weapons and engaging in active combat (including hunting), as well as from the physical potency and aggression associated with these male roles. In the secular life adult men of rank therefore were expected to undertake military service to defend their king (or other lord), in times of feud and/or war, as well as to expand his territories. In return they received material goods, including land.[24] Before becoming monks, Cuthbert was a member of a fighting army, and Benedict Biscop (d. 689), like Eosterwine, had been in military service as a thegn.[25] A number of other male religious recruits had engaged in armed hostilities. King Centwine (c. 676-85) had fought in three

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[22] Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category', pp. 1056, 1067, 1074; for the application of gender as a relational concept, with specific reference to medieval masculinities, see the essays in C. A. Lees (ed.), *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN, 1994).

[23] Here my methodology has been influenced by J. M. H. Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe, c. 780-920', *Past and Present*, 146 (1995), 3-37.

[24] The Laws of Ine, (ed.), F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, (3 vols, Halle, 1898-1916), vol I, no. 51, p. 112; Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* (ed.), *VBOH*, cap. XI, pp. 414-15; Bede, *Historia abbatum* (ed.), *Ibid.*, cap. I, pp. 364-65, also see the comments by F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd end. Oxford, 1971), pp. 301-306; For a summary of Anglo-Saxon male secular roles, see, D. Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Harmondsworth, 1952), pp. 91-92.

[25] For Cuthbert, see, Anonymous, *Vita S Cuthberti* (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Two Lives*, I. 7, pp. 72-73 and for the debate regarding Cuthbert's possible aristocratic status, see, *Ibid.*, p. 344; for Benedict Biscop, see, Bede, *Historia abbatum*, (ed.), *VBOH*, cap. I, pp. 364-65.

victorious battles and Guthlac (c. 674-714), a young nobleman of royal stock, had for 9 years led a warrior band.[26] More widely, Nick Stoodley has shown that within the burials of the Anglo-Saxon male ruling elite, weaponry was symbolic of masculinity. This trend was particularly manifest in the seventh century, even when skeletal evidence casts doubt over whether men were physically able to engage in warfare.[27] Therefore, secular men were associated ideologically with the warrior lifestyle, whether they could fight or not.

In addition to the prerogative to bear arms, fowling and hunting appear to have been important activities for elite males. Thus Bede refers to King Oswine (642/43-651) returning from a hunting trip with his thegns, and, in the mid-eighth century, Boniface (c. 675-754) sent Anglo-Saxon kings birds of prey from the continent.[28] Indeed, on the continent, where evidence for hunting is more substantial, it was a considerably important aristocratic and courtly pursuit of political and military importance. This is also likely to have been the case in early England.[29] Drinking was also a predominantly male communal activity and in the context of the lord's table was used to symbolise the loyalty owed to him and the hospitality received in return. Inebriated men are found in varied sources. In Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry only men consume alcohol and the law-codes make provisions for offences that take place where men are drinking.[30] In the seventh century drinking vessels and containers, which may have been used in drinking rituals, also are interred

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[26] Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica*, III (ed.), *AO*, p. 15, ll. 8-11; Felix, *Vita S Guthlaci* (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956), caps. XVI-XIX, pp. 80-83.

[27] N. Stoodley, 'From the Cradle to the Grave: Age Organisation and the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite', *World Archaeology*, 31 (3) (1999), 460-61; *Idem., The Spindle and the Spear. A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite*, BAR, British Series, 288 (Oxford, 1999), pp. 29-30, 35, 44; cf. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, pp. 86-89, who argues that there were early Anglo-Saxon warrior women, but these have been eclipsed from our sources.

[28] *H. E.*, III. 14, pp. 258-59; Tangl, 69, p. 142; *Ibid.*, 105, p. 231.

[29] S. Airlie, 'The Anxiety of Sanctity: St Gerald of Aurillac and his Maker', *JEH*, 43 (3) (1992), p. 393; J. L. Nelson, 'The Lord's Anointed and the People's Choice: Carolingian Royal Ritual', in D. Cannadine and S. Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 137-80, repr. J. L. Nelson, *The Frankish World 750-950* (London, 1996), at pp. 120-24; see also, J. Campbell, 'Anglo-Saxon Courts', in C. Cubitt (ed.), *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages. The Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, III (Turnhout, 2003), p. 164.

[30] H. Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites: Food and Drink and their Consumption in Old English and Related Literature* (Dublin, 1999), p. 21; The Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric, (ed.), Liebermann, *Gesetze*, nos. 12-13, p. 11; The Laws of Ine, (ed.), *Ibid.*, no. 6. 5, p. 93.

most frequently in high status male weapon burials,[31] suggesting an ideological association between the two. Perhaps most important to observe, however, is that Anglo-Saxon society was patriarchal. High status men therefore exerted control over their male and female kin and as heads of households were legally responsible for their householders' actions.[32] Only when male authority was absent are women likely to have shared power with men or assumed positions of influence in the household.

Renunciation demanded a dramatic lifestyle change from men. It is not surprising, therefore, that the abandonment of male codes of behaviour (like, as we have seen, the abandonment of sexual activity) appears not to have been understood or endorsed by all elements of religious and secular society.[33] A good example of lay reactions is found in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. In this he describes how in the early seventh century Sigebert of East Anglia renounced his kingship and secular responsibilities in order to enter a *monasterium*. However, when Sigebert's people came under attack from the kingdom of Mercia, they dragged him from this religious community to encourage their fearful army. Mindful of his monastic profession the king carried only a staff, and, in the battle that followed, he was killed and his army defeated.[34] As for religious reactions, the hagiographer Felix provided us with a revealing vignette to consider, for Guthlac, he tells us, was intensely hated by his fellow religious for abandoning the warrior prerogative of getting drunk![35] Indeed, a number of contemporary church decrees condemn clerical drunkenness.[36] However, it was not merely large quantities of alcohol that men had

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[31] H. Härke, 'Changing Symbols in a Changing Society: The Anglo-Saxon Weapon Burial Rite in the Seventh Century', in M. O. H. Carver, *The Age of Sutton Hoo. The Seventh Century in North-Western Europe* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 152.

[32] Witness, for example, The Laws of Ine, (ed.), Liebermann, *Gesetze*, nos. 3, 22, 50, 74, pp. 90, 98, 110-11, 120.

[33] For the church's problems distinguishing between aristocratic and secular religious lifestyles in this period, see, P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in R. T. Farrell (ed.), *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, BAR, British Series 46 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 32-69 *passim*, with alcohol at pp. 51-52; for difficulties forsaking sexual activity, see above, pp. 105-108, 121.

[34] *H. E*, III. 18, pp. 268-69.

[35] Felix, *Vita S Guthlaci* (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Felix's Life*, caps. XX-XXI, pp. 84-85.

[36] Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" ', p. 51, these include the canons associated with Archbishop Theodore and the decrees of the Council of Clofesho (746/7); also see, Aldhelm, below, pp. 201-202.

trouble abandoning, for 'the ethic of the *comitatus*' found expression in the religious life.[37] Bishops are therefore depicted travelling with armed associates, suggesting a lack of distinction between secular and religious retinues, and between ecclesiastical and lay lords.[38] Furthermore, both prescriptive and narrative sources suggest that the male secular prerogatives of hunting and weapon-bearing also persisted among monks and clerics.[39]

Men's difficulties forsaking secular customs may relate not merely to the significant transition expected of them, but also to the fact that the religious life did not provide all of them with compensatory male activities. Jane Martindale has shown us how in the ninth-century Carolingian church, the religious careers of the aristocratic siblings Rudolf and Immena (d. pre-856) varied considerably, despite the fact that they were both made oblates in their childhood. Rudolf became the influential Archbishop of Bourges, (840-66) and founder of a successful and well-patronised community of monks, which involved him deeply in politics and the church. In contrast, Immena remained a nun and abbess of a nunnery on family estates. Her foundation at Sarrazac was, moreover, only short-lived, largely because Rudolf redistributed family endowments from this female community to his monastery at Beaulieu. Part of this difference between Rudolf's and Immena's careers and religious communities, she postulates, lay in the fact that men alone had access to 'the most potent of all commemorative services': the celebration of the Eucharist, which in the course of the ninth century, led to the devaluation of women's liturgical services.[40] This model has some application in early Anglo-Saxon England, for as priests some male religious could assume power and authority through performing the important sacraments of Eucharist and ordination.[41] However, priests were not necessarily

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[37] J. Campbell, 'Elements in the Background to the Life of St. Cuthbert and his Early Cult', in G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (eds.), *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 13.

[38] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), caps. II-III, pp. 6-9; also see Bede's complaints on episcopal retinues, Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* (ed.), *VBOH*, cap. IV, pp. 407-408.

[39] Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" ', p. 51.

[40] J. Martindale, 'The Nun Immena and the Foundation of the Abbey of Beaulieu: A Woman's Prospects in the Carolingian Church', in W. J. Shiels and D. Wood, *Women in the Church, SCH*, 27 (1990), 27-42, citation at 40.

[41] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 182-83.

numerous in this period, so few male religious may have had access to this power.[42] Moreover, as Dagmar Schneider has shown, in the early period of monasticism women had considerable involvement in the religious life and could undertake many of the roles that men performed in *monasteria*, including liturgical ones. As well as performing non-sacramental duties, such as assigning penance, preaching and reading lessons, they probably undertook some sacramental duties as well.[43] Abbesses, moreover, generally presided over double *monasteria*. Thus men were expected to forsake many secular activities and customs upon entering the religious life, including, the authority they had previously exerted over women. The church had to teach men that the relinquishment of their secular status did not necessarily mean a concomitant loss of masculinity. Male warrior energies had to be redirected towards a new type of service for Christ.[44]

Men in their prime therefore made a radical break from their secular lives when they entered the religious life. Women also forsook important secular prerogatives, including marriage (which as we have seen, had particular social implications for women), childbirth and ornamentation, in a period when a kin group's status was manifested in its womenfolk's dress and jewellery.[45] Yet despite these sacrifices, there seems to have been a fair amount of continuity between high status women's religious and secular lives. The valued place they held in secular society was reflected by the positions of influence they assumed in the religious life.[46] Both religious and secular women also could undertake a

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[42] A. Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, London and New York, 1992), p. 137.

[43] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 26-31, 144-48, 158-94, citation at 29.

[44] For the difficulty of reconciling early medieval holiness with aristocratic male values, albeit for lay audiences, see, Airlie, 'The Anxiety of Sanctity', pp. 372-95; J. L. Nelson, 'Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity, c. 900', in Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity*, pp. 121-42.

[45] See above, pp. 105, 108.

[46] Here I agree with Schneider and Luecke that women had a valued role in society, see, Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', *passim* and J. Luecke, 'The Unique Experience of Anglo-Saxon Nuns', in L. T. Shank and J. A. Nichols (eds.), *Medieval Religious Women: Peace Weavers* (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1987), pp. 55-65; cf. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*; A. L. Klinck, 'Anglo-Saxon Women and the Law', *Journal of Medieval History*, 8 (1982), 107-22; Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear*, pp. 141-42; and for the suggestion that abbesses, in departure from other women, had positions of influence in secular society because they acted like secular men, see, V. Ortenberg, 'Virgins Queens: Abbesses and Power in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in R. Gameson and H. Leyser (eds.), *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 59-68.

number of similar, socially important roles, three of which I shall concentrate on here. These are influential diplomat and counsellor, commemorator of the dead, and crafter of textiles.

In the secular life married women were active diplomats between their kin group and that of their husband.[47] The significant influence royal women, at least, could exert over secular and ecclesiastical networks are exemplified in the actions of Queen Eanflæd (d. c.704). When Wilfrid (d. 709) decided to pursue a religious career at the age of 14 he went to Queen Eanflæd who appointed him to serve one of the king's companions at Lindisfarne. When he later decided to visit Rome the queen arranged for him to stay at the court of her kinsman, King Erconberht of Kent (640-64), until he found associates with whom to travel.[48] Within the religious life the counsel of abbesses was sought and they acted as political advisors and spokeswomen.[49] A good example is found in Eanflæd's daughter, Ælfflæd (d. 713), whose influence is recorded not merely by Wilfrid's hagiographer, Stephen of Ripon, but equally by Bede and the anonymous author of the *Vita S Cuthberti*.[50] Amongst other activities, she had a vocal role in ensuring the restoration of Wilfrid's *monasteria* and episcopal seat at the Council of Nidd.[51] Thus abbesses, in particular, could be influential diplomats and counsellors within both the secular and monastic life.

Secular women's roles as commemorators of the dead also found expression in the religious life. Whilst women's activities in this sphere are recorded in heroic literature and

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[47] See, for example, L. J. Sklute, "'Freoðuwebbe' " in Old English poetry', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 71 (1970), 534-41, repr. in H. Damico and A. H. Olsen (eds.), *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, (Bloomington, IN, 1990), pp. 204-10; A. H. Olsen, 'Gender Roles', in R. E. Bjork and J. D. Niles (eds.), *A Beowulf Handbook* (Exeter, 1996), pp. 316-18, cf. Chance's suggestion that ideal Anglo-Saxon women were portrayed as passive peacemakers, J. Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse, NY, 1986).

[48] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, caps. II-III, pp. 6-9.

[49] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', p. 34-35, 272, 286-95.

[50] Bede, *Vita S Cuthberti* (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *Two Lives*, caps. XXIII-XXIV, XXXIV, pp. 230-39, 260-65; Anon., *Vita S Cuthberti* (ed. and trans.), *Ibid.*, III, 6, pp. 102-105, IV. 10, pp. 126-29.

[51] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita S Wilfridi*, (ed. and trans.), Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, cap. LX, pp. 128-33.

perhaps in the burial record, it is best demonstrated in their establishment of cults.[52] Not surprisingly, it is royal women's involvement in cults that has been preserved in the historical record.[53] Consider, for example, the cults of the Anglo-Saxon Kings Oswald (d. 642) and his predecessor King Edwin (d. 633), who ruled the Northumbrian kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira respectively. Within the secular life, between 679-97, the Bernician Queen Osthryth and her husband King Æthelred of Mercia (675-704) instituted a cult of the former Bernician King St Oswald at their royal *monasterium* of Bardney in Lindsey, a recently-conquered formerly-Deiran territory.[54] Within the religious life, the royal nuns Eanflæd and her other daughter Ælfflæd established and propagated the cult of the Deiran King Edwin at their royal foundation of Whitby between 680-704.[55] Alan Thacker has suggested that the development of these cults was 'two aspects of a single initiative, enhancing the claims of a chosen family to be the sanctified rulers of a united Northumbria' (that is the kingdoms of Bernicia, Deira and Lindsey). This is not merely because of their striking similarity in timing and manifestation, but also because Eanflæd was Osthryth's mother and former queen of Oswald's brother Oswiu.[56] In this instance not only were women's roles in the monastic and secular life undifferentiated, but they were also inextricably linked. Eanflæd's and Ælfflæd's involvement in controlling commemoration of the dead will not have been an isolated example. Indeed, as we will recall, Hildelith (fl. 700) and Bugga, possible dedicatees of Aldhelm's double treatise, were involved in commemorating Kings Sæbbi (c. 664-94) and Centwine respectively.[57]

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[52] Olsen, 'Gender Roles', pp. 317-18; H. Geake, 'The Control of Burial Practice in Middle Anglo-Saxon England', in M. Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North. Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300-1300* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 259-69.

[53] For an Ottonian paradigm, see, K. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in Ottonian Saxony* (London, 1979), pp. 72-73 esp.; Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 33, 36, 272-86; E. Van Houts, 'Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of Abbess Matilda of Essen and Aethelweard', *EME*, 1 (1) (1992), 53-68.

[54] *H.E.*, III, 11, pp. 246-47.

[55] Anonymous, *Vita S Gregorii*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1968), caps. XVIII-XIX, pp. 100-105; and for Edwin's body being buried in the *monasterium*, *H.E.*, III, 24, pp. 292-93.

[56] A. Thacker, 'Membra Disjecta: The Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult', in C. Stancliffe and E. Cambridge (eds.), *Oswald. Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford, 1995), pp. 104-107; see also, Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, pp. 42-44; D. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 115-21.

[57] See above, pp. 65-66.

Furthermore, many royal and aristocratic monastic founders were buried in double *monasteria* and memorialised by all members of the community.

Turning last to the crafting of textiles, archaeological evidence connects early Anglo-Saxon women with textile processing, for in fifth-to seventh-century burials thread-boxes, thread-pickers, weaving-batons and to a large degree, spindle-whorls, are predominantly female-specific grave goods.[58] Within the monastic life women continued to spin and weave, although not necessarily for ascetic purposes. Bede therefore wrote disdainfully about the virgins at Coldingham weaving elaborate garments to adorn themselves as if they were brides and the Council of Clofesho (747) berated lavish textile working in *monasteria*.[59] Light-weight loom weights, undoubtedly used for weaving light textiles, have also been excavated from the potential monastic site at Flixborough.[60] Religious and secular craft-working, therefore, may have been indistinct.

Women's and men's transitions between the secular and religious lives were thus different. Whilst women religious relinquished some secular roles, there was also continuity between their religious and secular activities; moreover, some women were able to exert considerable power, within their own communities and society at large.[61] The differences between female and male renunciation provides an important context in which to consider Aldhelm's spiritual guidance. It meant that he had to reconcile their different experiences of entering the religious life and spiritually unite them in common religious pursuits. This was especially important when we consider that there was some conflict with female and male religious living alongside each other in this period. Thus, in a letter to St Boniface, written between 719-22, Abbess Eangyth and her daughter Heaburg discussed their difficulties administering the men of their *monasterium*, the monks in particular.[62] Clearly women and men did not necessarily find it easy to live alongside each other in the religious life, and this will have worried such men as Archbishop Theodore

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[58] C. Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 39-40; H. Geake, *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England, c. 600-c. 850*, BAR, British Series, 261 (Oxford, 1997), pp. 58-62.

[59] *H. E.*, IV. 25, pp. 424-27; Canones *Clofesho*, (ed.), *HS III*, no. 20, p. 369.

[60] John Blair, pers. comm.; on the status of Flixborough, see above, p. 110, n 183.

[61] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 3, 109-13, 264-301, 304-306 esp.; C. E. Fell, 'Some Implications of the Boniface Correspondence', in Damico and Olsen (eds.), *New Readings on Women*, pp. 32-33.

[62] Tangl, 14, p. 23, ll. 7-12.

(602-690), who had expressed concern about the double *monasteria* form.[63]   In this context, as well as providing spiritual advice, Aldhelm's work will have entered into contemporary discussions regarding the viability of this institutional form.

5. 2 The Christian Inheritance

Aldhelm's double treatise, on the one hand, needs to be interpreted with a view to the context outlined above.   On the other hand, his representation of men and women needs to be interpreted within inherited patristic ideas on the differences between the sexes.[64] The early medieval world inherited a plethora of late antique ideas on gender.[65] Many of these were linked closely to ideas on the Creation. Since Genesis I. 27 taught that God formed Man in His own image, men were deemed closely aligned to Him and characteristically were associated with the spirit. Because Adam spoke first, men were associated with the mind.[66] Men were also associated with power. In his *Etymologiae* - a work that Aldhelm was thoroughly familiar with – Isidore of Serville (570-636) linked the word for a man, *vir*, with *vis*, a word denoting force, vigour, potency and power, and *virtus*, denoting strength.[67]

Women were often associated with binary traits in relation to men, all of which centred on their relative weakness. Since Genesis II. 7 taught that Adam was formed first and Eve created from his side, females were associated with the flesh and deemed weaker than males.[68] Isidore of Seville also found evidence for women's physical and moral inferiority in the etymology of the noun *mulier*, which he proposed, was derived from

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[63] See above, p. 108.

[64] The extent to which early Anglo-Saxon authors were influenced by these patristic stereotypes is a matter of debate, see, Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, pp. 6-10.

[65] J. M. H. Smith, 'Gender and Ideology in the Early Middle Ages', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *Gender and Christian Religion, SCH*, 34 (1998), pp. 53-54.

[66] See, for example, J. Moorhead, *Ambrose, Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (Harlow, 1999), p. 58.

[67] As cited by Smith, 'Gender and Ideology', p. 56; for Aldhelm's indebtedness to Isidore's *Etymologiae* in his *Enigmata*, see, N. Howe, 'Aldhelm's *Enigmata* and Isidorian Etymology', *ASE*, 14 (1985), 37-59.

[68] M. G. Mara, 'Woman', in A. Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Early Church*, (trans.), A. Walford, (2 vols, Cambridge, 1992), vol. I, p. 882.

mollities, softness.[69] Isidore's interpretation of the sexes gained much popularity, for in his *Moralia in Iob* - a text also used by Aldhelm - Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) noted that whereas *vir* described strong-minded persons, *mulier* denoted those who were weak.[70] Equally damningly, the Fathers associated women with sexual insatiability.[71] Another patristic stereotype, and one that Aldhelm transmitted, was that women were predisposed towards material wealth and ornamentation. He therefore drew upon Cyprian's *De habitu virginum*, in particular, to associate married women with bodily adornment: an association that held true in early Anglo-Saxon England.[72] Moreover, in his account of Judith in the prose text, Aldhelm describes how she used her beauty and adorned body to overthrow the leader of the Assyrians, (Iud. X. 3), before asserting: *En, non nostris assertionibus sed scripturae astipulationibus ornatus feminarum rapina virorum vocatur!*[73] In sum, women generally were described as weak, carnal and ornamented, in contrast to men's physical, spiritual and moral strength.

In addition to these constellations of ideas regarding men and women, Latin ecclesiastical culture inherited a third notion of gender from the classical world, that of the *virago*, the female-warrior or man-like woman. In Late Antiquity the ascetic life of rigorous austerity and abstinence was associated with men and masculinity. Women ascetics were therefore expected to reject their typically female characteristics of sexuality, materialism and passivity, and instead to become honorary males - in soul at least. Jerome (c. 342-419) therefore explained that those women who wished to serve Christ above the world could be called men.[74] Isidore of Seville expressed this concept by linking the noun *virgo* with *virago*, which he defined as a woman who had a man's strength and did a man's

[69] Smith, 'Gender and Ideology', p. 56.

[70] Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, (ed.), M. Adriaen, *Moralia sive expositio in Iob*, CCSL (3 vols, Turnhout, 1979-1985), vol. CXLIII A, XI. XLIX.65, p. 623.

[71] For Isidore, for example, see, Smith, 'Gender and Ideology', p. 56.

[72] See above, p. 109.

[73] Aldhelm, *PdV* cap. LVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 317, ll. 8-9, (trans.), *LH*, p. 127 'You see, it is not by my assertion but by the statement of Scripture that the adornment of women is called the depredation of men!'

[74] V. L. Bullough, 'On Being Male in the Middle Ages', in Lees (ed.), *Medieval Masculinities*, p. 32; Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity', p. 18; O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', p. 58.

jobs.[75] With these patristic notions of men, women and manly-women in mind, let us now turn to Aldhelm's representation of gender.

5. 3 Interior Men

Throughout his double treatise Aldhelm instructs his audience that their discipline is to be performed *hominis ...interioris gestibus*, hence within their invisible spiritual selves.[76] Aldhelm also associates both men and women with inner spiritual strength, which patristic authors ordinarily identify as a masculine quality, and with the warrior action and weapon-bearing, which, as we have seen, Anglo-Saxon culture chiefly associated with males. Both his male and female saints therefore exemplify the virtue of iron-willed minds. Starting with the male saints, Athanasius, for example, suffers all the persecutions brought against him with a mind, *cote durior, ferro fortior, adamante rigidior*.[77] Likewise, Julian's parents try to persuade him to marry against his will, which, *ferreos ... immo adamante duriores*.[78] Turning to his female saints, despite repeated torture, nothing could undermine Agatha's purity: *quin potius ut adamantinus scopulus contra illata carnificum tormenta ferro fortior induruit*.[79] As for Thecla, she rejected worldliness and:

> *In qua fundavit caelestis gratia mentem,*
> *Saecula quam penitus numquam mollire valebant,*
> *Durior ut ferro foret ad tormenta cruenta*.[80]

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[75] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, (ed.), W. M. Lindsay (2 vols., Oxford, 1911), vol. II, XI. 2, l. 22.

[76] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. III, (ed.), *AO*, p. 230, l. 26 (trans.), *LH*, p. 60 'with the actions of the inner man'.

[77] *Ibid.*, cap. XXXII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 274, ll. 7-8 (trans.), *LH*, p. 94 'harder than whetstone, stronger than iron, more rigid than adamantine steel'.

[78] *Ibid.*, cap. XXXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 281, ll. 2-3, (trans.), *LH*, p. 99 'which was not so much iron, as harder than adamant'.

[79] *Ibid.*, cap. XLI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 293, ll. 6-7 (trans.), *LH*, p. 107 'rather, like an adamantine rock, she became harder than iron in the face of the tortures imposed by the executioners'.

[80] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1981-83, p. 435, (trans.), *LR*, pp. 146-47, 'in this pursuit the favour of heaven [or: celestial grace] strengthened her mind, which things of the world could not soften at all, so that she was harder than iron when it came to bloody torturers'.

Aldhelm does not merely provide his audience with examples of strong-minded saints to imitate, for this leitmotif also underlies the metaphors which open the *Prosa de virginitate*. Here he compares his audience's reading exercises to the strenuous physical exertions of the wrestler, javelin-thrower, runner, horse-rider and rower.[81] Inner spiritual strength is also demanded in the ceaseless inner battle against personified and animalistic vices which Aldhelm exhorts his audience to undertake.[82] Therefore, he encourages them to engage in mental warfare as a community in the prose text, whilst 314-lines of its verse counterpart is devoted to providing them with a battle plan.[83] All members of his audience are presented as masculine *bellatores dominici*, regardless of biological sex, sexual status (whether a virgin or chaste) and level of monastic experience.[84] In the prose text he thus envisages the vices fighting *contra tironum Christi catervas et bellicosas virginum cohortes* and refers to how the vices: *non solum segnes sauciant, verum emeritos Christi milites interdum.*[85] In the verse counterpart Aldhelm describes combatants as *virgines, tirones Dei* and *milites Christi.*[86] The savage power and virulence with which Aldhelm associates the vices makes it clear that they can only be thwarted with extreme mental violence. Aldhelm commands his audience to trample, whip and strike them into submission *lacertosis viribus*, indeed, as

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[81] As discussed by Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, p. 83; Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, p. 117; for further discussion of these metaphors, see below, pp. 205-206.

[82] Prudentius' influential allegorical epic *Psychomachia* (405) has been identified by several scholars as a literary model for Aldhelm's spiritual battle, see, for example, S. O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* and the Psychomachian Tradition', *Mediaevalia*, 20 (2001), 313-37 and the discussion below, pp. 207-10.

[83] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, caps. XI-XII, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 239-41 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in cap. XII, see, *AM*, p. 311); Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2446-2761, pp. 452-65.

[84] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 240, ll. 15-16, (trans.), *LH*, p. 68 'warriors of the Lord'; Aldhelm's representation of both male and female religious as masculine soldiers of Christ has been discussed by several scholars, see, for example, Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, pp. 82-98 *passim*; O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', 57-58; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 277-79; Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, p. 118.

[85] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XII (ed.), *AO*, p. 240, ll. 19-20 (trans.), *LH*, p. 68, 'against the throngs of Christ's recruits and the warlike squadrons of virgins'; *Ibid.*, cap. XIII (ed.), *AO*, p. 242, l. 5 (trans.), *LH*, p. 70, 'not only wound the sluggish, but also sometimes bring down the veteran soldiers of Christ'.

[86] For 'virgins', see, Aldhelm, *CdV* (ed.), ll. 2450, 2586, pp. 453, 458; for 'recruits of God', see, *Ibid.*, l. 2645, p. 460; for 'soldiers of Christ', see, *Ibid.*, ll. 2654, 2703, p. 460.

if fighting, *ferocissimas barbarorum legiones*.[87] All religious also are expected to brandish specialised spiritual arms (such as *pudicitiae parma*), as well as those essential weapons, *divini macheram verbi et loricam fidei inextricabilem*.[88] The use of metaphorical armed force is in fact crucial, since these vices Aldhelm warns, will prey upon those individuals who are *inermis*, that is 'defenceless' or 'unarmed'.[89]

If such aggressive imagery did not suffice to encourage both male and female religious to adopt masculine strength in these inner battles, then Aldhelm taught this more explicitly. His addressees are therefore told to act *viriliter*, 'manfully', in their chaste lives.[90] More revealingly, Aldhelm mocks womanly behaviour in warfare by berating those faint-hearted soldiers who fear war *muliebriter*, that is, 'in the manner of women', something that Aldhelm describes as shameful.[91] Thus, in order to fight against vice successfully, the whole community, male and female, must adopt masculine inner strength and warrior ethics in their invisible spiritual lives. Recalling Aldhelm's potential audience, perhaps he encouraged them to undertake this shared spiritual endeavour with a view to creating spiritual unity in the cloister.[92]

5. 4 Aldhelm's Saintly Exempla

Thus far I have argued that in interior spiritual acts Aldhelm masculinises both men and women. In contrast, his catalogue of *exempla* represents a different trend, for here only men are represented in a truly masculine way. Aldhelm's use of the noun *virago*,

[87] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 240, ll. 3-4, (trans.), *LH*, p. 68 'with muscular energy', 'the most ferocious armies of barbarians'.

[88] *Ibid.*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 240, ll. 3, 11, (trans.), *LH*, p. 68 'the shield of modesty', 'the sword of the Holy Word and the impenetrable breast-plate of faith'; Aldhelm borrowed this imagery from Ephesians VI. 11-17.

[89] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. X, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, l. 12.

[90] *Ibid.*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 240, ll. 6-8.

[91] *Ibid.*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 240, l. 7 (trans.), *LH*, p. 68 'effeminately'; cf. O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', pp. 57-58; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', p. 277.

[92] Cf. Hollis, who argues that Aldhelm is encouraging a competitive warrior spirit, *Ibid., Anglo-Saxon Women*, pp. 83-84; for evidence that the Carolingian Church associated women with private interior spirituality, see, Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity', pp. 33-35.

'manly woman', provides our first clue about why we should be cautious in attributing his female saints with male characteristics. Five of Aldhelm's female saints in the prose text and two in its verse counterpart are referred to as *virago*, and yet the contexts in which some of these descriptions occur does not always suggest that they are manly women.[93] Thus, on the one hand, Eugenia, the transvestite saint, is described as a *virago*, but, on the other hand, we learn that many suitors want to marry Demetrias because she had a large inheritance: *Ac segmentata fulgebat veste virago*.[94] The supposedly manly Demetrias is therefore described as resplendently gowned: a characteristic ordinarily associated with femininity. Perhaps Aldhelm's female saints' general lack of substantial manly qualities explains why three different tenth-century copyists of the prose *De virginitate* decided to label four of these women *virgo*, rather than *virago*.[95]

Aldhelm's male and female saints are certainly associated with gender-specific external acts and demeanours. To demonstrate this it is helpful to undertake a systematic and comparative survey of the virtues and miracles with which his male and female saints are associated and to represent these in tabulated form.[96] Saints' lives lend themselves to this mode of analysis because they are formulaic in nature and tend to use similar motifs, which are often drawn from the same pool of exemplary models. Studies by Derouet and Stancliffe have demonstrated the value of analysing hagiographies by plotting the distribution and frequency of different miracle types.[97] This study plots not only miracles,

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[93] See, *AO*, p. 733.

[94] For Eugenia, see, Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 1908, p. 432, for Demetrias, see, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2183, p. 443, (trans.), *LR*, p. 151, 'and the virgin was resplendent in an ornamented gown'.

[95] See, *AO*, p. 295 n a for two scribes using the word *virgo*, even though their two copies of the *PdV* (Ehwald's 'L' and 'O') are based on two different manuscript families. A further manuscript (Ehwald's 'B') glosses *viragines* as *virgines*. See, *AO*, p. 306, n e (2) and *AM*, p. 608 n XLIII.2. It could be argued that such alterations represent miscopying since it would of course be an easy mistake to miss the 'a' out of *virago*, rendering it *virgo*. A more attractive explanation, however, is that these scribes deemed *virgo* a more suitable term for female saints who did not embody substantive *virago* characteristics.

[96] See appendices I-II, below, pp. 240-51, I plot all of the virtuous qualities and miracles which Aldhelm offers throughout his catalogue of saints, including when he refers to one of his saints' virtues or miracles in a different account to their own.

[97] C. Stancliffe, 'The Miracle Stories in Seventh-Century Irish Saints' Lives', in J. Fontaine and J. N. Hillgarth (eds.), *Le Septième Siècle, Changements et Continuités. Actes du colloque bilatéral franco-britannique tenu au Warburg Institute les 8-9 julliet 1988* (London, 1992), pp. 87-115 and J.-L. Derouet, 'Recherches d'histoire des mentalités sur les textes hagiographiques du nord et de

which are defined as those events which excite awe in humans and ascribed to saints because of their special connection with God, but also virtuous qualities, for these also distinguished saints as exemplary Christian individuals.[98] Eight recurring virtuous qualities and nine miracles are identified and categorised together because of their perceived similarities in type. These miracle classifications are: 'predestination', 'phenomena of the mind', 'translocation and telekinesis', 'divine provision of food', 'heavenly signs', 'vengeance', 'healing and exorcism', 'combating dragons and serpents' and 'control over nature'. The virtuous qualities are 'learnedness', 'proselytising, instructing and advising on Christian matters', 'charity', 'rejection or abstention from material goods', 'abstention from food', 'rejection of marriage or not being persuaded to marry', 'living in spiritual marriage' and 'torture or martyrdom for the faith'.[99]

It is true that any method of classification is liable to some subjectivity. Sampling is therefore restricted to only those virtues and miracles that Aldhelm makes explicit. Furthermore, aside from frequency and proportion of virtues and miracles, different aspects of their representation are considered. These include: whether their virtues and miracles are grand or limited in scope; the number of persons their miracles affect; the locus of the saints' miracle-working power; and the lexicon Aldhelm uses to describe them. To further understand Aldhelm's representation of sanctity, a number of his saints' accounts are also compared to the principal literary models from which they are likely to have been drawn.[100] The same criteria used to plot saints' virtues and miracles in the double treatise are used to ascertain those traits he borrowed and omitted from his exemplars, and those he introduced into his accounts.[101] Since Aldhelm's male saints have received comparatively little attention in modern scholarship, I compare a large sample of his male saints, selecting a representative mix of all the different types of holy men he

l'est de la Gaule, VIIe-VIIIe siècles', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Université de Paris X Nanterre, 1972), cap. 2, pp. 44-50 esp., as cited by Stancliffe, Ibid, pp. 94-95.

[98] P. Brown, 'The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity', Representations, 1 (2) (1983), p. 8.

[99] For the criteria used for these categories, see below, appendices I-II, pp. 241, 247.

[100] See below, appendix III, pp. 253-57.

[101] In those instances in which Aldhelm alone includes a virtue or miracle, it tends to be because he embellishes a trait merely hinted at in his sources, or because they cite it with reference to a different holy figure to the one he portrays.

catalogues. In interrogating the evidence from these varying perspectives a consistent image of Aldhelm's treatment of sanctity emerges.

5. 5 Saints' Virtuous Qualities

Across both texts of the double treatise a clear difference exists between male and female saints' virtuous qualities (see appendices I.1-I.5 for a detailed breakdown of these categories and results).[102] Aldhelm's female saints are mainly virgin martyrs, whose lives, as we saw in Chapter Four, are extremely formulaic.[103] Therefore, the large majority achieve sanctity through the torture and martyrdom that follows their rejection of pagan marriage.[104] Even though Aldhelm transmits a number of examples from his principal literary models of male saints being tortured and martyred, even so, across both texts of the double treatise female saints are about twice as likely to be tortured as male saints are.[105] Furthermore, over half of Aldhelm's female saints in the prose treatise and almost two-thirds in its verse counterpart are depicted heroically rejecting betrothals or suitors: 65% of female saints in the prose text and 60% in its verse counterpart. This means that overall, 25 female saints spurn marriage in both texts. In stark contrast, this is the least common of all the virtues associated with Aldhelm's male saints, with only Malchus rejecting marriage outright. This difference between male and female sanctity is emphasised further in the prose text where proportionally more men agree to live in spiritual marriages with their Christian spouses: 8% of Aldhelm's male saints, in contrast to none of his female saints. Therefore, both Julian and Amos, who initially resist marriage, end up taking wives and living in chaste relationships with them.[106] Chrysanthus alternatively obeys his father's

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[102] See below, pp. 241-46.

[103] See above, pp. 134-35.

[104] For the following observations on saints' virtuous qualities, see below, appendices I, pp. 242-45.

[105] See below, appendix I.5, p. 246.

[106] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXVI (ed.), *AO*, pp. 280, ll. 15-19-p. 281, ll. 1-17 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXXVI, p. 281, ll. 2, 7), see, *AMA*, cap. XXXVI, p. 497, l. 18, p. 499, l. 26); Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 284, l. 18-p. 285, ll. 1-14; *Idem., CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1265-97, pp. 406-407.

wish that he marry and yet after converting his wife to Christianity he lives with her in chaste spiritual wedlock.[107]

There is also clear variation in male and female saints' rejection of, or abstention from, material goods. Across both treatises Aldhelm is considerably more concerned to depict female than male saints, repulsing money, and moreover, ostentatious dress and jewellery: indeed seven times as many in the prose text.[108] Anatolia and Victoria exemplify this trend, for they give their inheritance and ornamented possessions (including hair-pins, anklets and pendants) to the poor.[109] Had Aldhelm wanted to lessen this differentiation between male and female saints' rejection of material goods he could have done, for his principal literary exemplars offered him more examples of male saints rejecting material goods than he chose to transmit.[110] He does not relay, for example, Sulpicius Severus's (363-425) and Jerome's descriptions of Martin and Hilarion wearing impoverished clothing and owning no material possessions.[111] This was perhaps deliberate, and a gender distinction that he wanted to retain.

Aldhelm's female virgin saints therefore repulse marriage (and with it sexual relationships), as well as material goods, even though patristic authors associated women with a voracious appetite for both. They therefore present a contrast with the married women who Aldhelm associates with self-adornment in the theoretical sections of his double treatise.[112] Like female ascetics of the late antique period his female saints reject the 'worst' characteristics of femininity (albeit conversely reaffirming women's

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[107] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 278, ll. 11-24 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXXV, p. 278, l. 19), see, *AMA*, p. 471, l. 54); Aldhelm, *CdV*, ll. 1161-83, (ed.), *AO*, p. 402.

[108] Cf. the virtue of charity. Aldhelm depicts a fairly similar proportion of male and female saints acting charitably, although he does not develop this virtue in any depth, see below, appendices I.1-I.5, pp. 242-46.

[109] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 308, ll. 12-17; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2364-67, 2382-84, pp. 449-50.

[110] See below, appendices III.1-III.2, pp. 254-55.

[111] Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S Martini*, (ed. and trans.), J. Fontaine, *Sulpice Sévère, Vie de Saint Martin*, Sources Chrétiennes, 133-135 (3 vols, Paris, 1967), vol. I, caps. II, IX, X, pp. 254-57, 270-73, Jerome, *Vita S Hilarionis*, PL, 23 (Turnhout, 1842), caps. X, XXXVI, cols. 33, 49.

[112] See above, pp. 141-42.

associations with these characteristics by doing so).[113]   The rejection of marriage also requires a number of Aldhelm's female saints to defend themselves with considerable resolve, indeed, with a manly strength reminiscent of that found in the interior battle that he expects his audience to wage against vice. Eugenia, for example, deflects accusations of debauchery, '*velut ferrato ...clipeo*', whilst we learn of Anatolia and Victoria that, *praedictas virgines nulla persecutorum rabies, nulla poenarum acerbitas ab integritatis arce detrudere valuerunt.*[114]   And yet whilst Aldhelm's female saints harbour some masculine characteristics in the virtues that they manifest, nonetheless, they are still associated with some gender stereotypes and remain distinguished from the males in a number of important respects.

A rather surprising difference between Aldhelm's male and female saints is found in the quality of learnedness. Although the proportion of learned holy men and women is fairly similar in the prose text, even so, five times as many males are attributed with this virtue in the verse *De virginitate*. In fact, in the verse treatise only Scholastica holds the banner for educated women and then rather feebly, with Aldhelm merely opening her account:

> *Tempore Gothorum fuerat virguncula quaedam,*
> *Quae proprium ex scola sumpsit Scolastica nomen.*[115]

More line space is devoted to the theme of learnedness in Aldhelm's male saints' accounts as well. It is true that this difference between male and female association with this virtue can be partially qualified by Daria, who lives in spiritual marriage with Chrysanthus, for in both texts of the double treatise she is described as having a truly formidable reputation in the art of debating.[116]   More importantly, Aldhelm could have emphasised men's association with this virtue much more strongly because his literary models offered him

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[113] O'Sullivan, 'Patristic Background', pp. 57-59.

[114] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLIV (ed.), *AO*, p. 297, l. 20, (trans.), *LH*, p. 111 'as if with an iron-clad sword'; *Ibid.*, cap. LII (ed.), *AO*, p. 308, ll. 10-12, (trans.), *LH*, p. 119 'no insanity of the persecutors, no severity of punishment, was able to drive the aforementioned virgins from the citadel of purity'.

[115] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2024-25, p. 436, (trans.), *LR*, p. 147 'At the time of the Goths there lived a certain young girl who, because of her learning, took the name Scholastica'.

[116] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 278, ll. 15-19 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXXV, p. 278, l. 19), see, *AMA*, p. 471, l. 54); Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1167-69, p. 402.

more examples of learned male saints than he chose to transmit.[117] However, the difference between male and female learnedness is further evident in the fact that only men are depicted as writers throughout Aldhelm's catalogue of saints: Ambrose, we learn, wrote the *Hexameron*; Basil, a rule and *Homiliae* on the Hexameron (Aldhelm alludes to the latter); Clement, the *Itinerarium Petri*; and Jerome, tractates and exegesis.[118] Furthermore, much of Aldhelm's depiction of Eustochium focuses not on her learnedness, but rather on the many books which Jerome wrote for her.[119] On balance, therefore, learnedness is manifested more strongly in Aldhelm's male than in his female accounts, a difference perhaps rooted in the greater representation of learned men among his patristic sources.

A final significant difference between male and female saints' virtuous qualities is found in their proselytising and instructing on religious issues. It is true that the proportion of male and female saints associated with this virtue is remarkably similar. Thus it is associated with 23% of males compared to 22% of females in the prose text. This is a balance that Aldhelm achieves by choosing not to transmit many examples of proselytising male saints from his literary sources.[120] However, male and female performance of this virtue generally differs.[121] Whereas female saints are more likely to convert one or two individuals who are often known to them, male saints are more likely to convert on a much greater scale. Women also are more likely to convert by example, whereas men are more likely to preach Christianity actively. Starting with the females, Cecilia, for example, converts her future husband and brother-in-law, whilst Dorothea converts two apostatised

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[117] See below, appendices III.1-III.2, pp. 254-55.

[118] For Ambrose, see, Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 670-74, p. 381; for Basil, see, *Idem., PdV*, cap. XXVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 263, ll. 12-16 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXVII, p. 263, l. 14), see the two examples at, *AMA*, p. 343, l. 30); Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 730-45, pp. 383-84; for Clement, see, *Idem., PdV*, cap. XXV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 257, ll. 13-15; for Jerome, see, *Idem., CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1623-33, pp. 420-21.

[119] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2144-57, pp. 441-42, cf. *Idem., PdV*, cap. XLIX (ed.), *AO*, p. 303, ll. 10-14; admittedly his principal source for Eugenia, Jerome's *Epistola ad Eustochium*, tells us very little about the saint, see, *Ibid.*, (ed.), I. Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, CSEL, LIV (Vienna, 1910), pp. 143-211.

[120] See below, appendices III.1-III.2, pp. 254-55.

[121] For the importance of performance in interpreting gender, see, A. J. Frantzen, 'When Women Aren't Enough', *Speculum*, 63 (1993), pp. 455-71.

women in her charge.[122] After recognising the power of Christianity in the actions of Justina and Anatolia respectively, a soothsayer, and an unnamed snake charmer both convert.[123] This is in significant contrast to the men, with Anthony, for example, gathering disciples throughout Egypt and Didymus preaching throughout eastern India.[124] Furthermore, whilst Aldhelm does represent three females converting Christians on a grander scale, they work alongside their husbands in his male saints' accounts. Thus the spiritual wives of Chrysanthus, Julian and Amos respectively, help to convert a great number of men and women to the Catholic faith, with Julian purportedly presiding over 10, 000 monks and his wife, Basilissa, over 1, 000 nuns.[125] It is men, therefore, that Aldhelm's texts most clearly associate with learnedness and proselytising, qualities that correspond to patristic writers' association of men with the mind and spirituality.

Aldhelm's female saints therefore are overwhelmingly represented rejecting marriage and material goods. In contrast, these virtues are associated rarely with his male saints who instead are presented as more learned than the females and who proselytise on a larger scale. Generally these trends recur with little variation across both texts of the double treatise. This gender differentiation was arguably deliberate, for Aldhelm generally maintains or, on occasion, increases these differences between writing his two texts, even though his catalogue of saints changes.[126] Saints Thomas, Felix, Malchus, Christina, Dorothea and the Old Testament figures Joseph, David, Samson, Abel, Melchisedech and Judith, are therefore given individual accounts in the

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[122] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XL (ed.), *AO*, p. 292, ll. 19-23 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XL, p. 292, l. 23), see, *AMA*, p. 589, l. 26); Aldhelm, cap. XLVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 301, ll. 24-25-p. 302, ll. 1-3; *Idem.*, *CdV*, ll. 1712-35, pp. 424-25.

[123] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 295, ll. 5-20 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XLIII, p. 295, l. 13), see, *AMA*, p. 613, l. 18); *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1854-68, pp. 429-30; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2434-42, p. 452; for the apocryphal nature of the Cyprian story, see, *LH*, p. 196 n 24.

[124] Aldhelm, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. XXVIII, p. 264, ll. 15-20-p. 265, ll. 1-3; *Ibid.*, cap. XXIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 255, ll. 16-19.

[125] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 278, ll. 24-27; *Ibid.*, cap. XXXVI (ed.), *AO*, p. 281, ll. 18-20-p. 282, ll. 1-6 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXXVI, p. 282, l. 2), see, *AMA*, p. 505, ll. 46-47); Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXVII (ed.), *AO*, p. 285, ll. 14-15.

[126] See below, appendices I.1-I.5, pp. 242-46.

prose, but not the verse text.[127] Instead, saints Gervasius, Protasius and Jerome are introduced and the accounts of several saints embellished.[128] To achieve this consistency in number and proportion of virtues Aldhelm will even offer the same number of saints representing a virtue across both texts of the double treatise, but associate it with different saints. Male saints who are presented as proselytisers, instructors and advisors on Christian matters are just one case in point.[129] For in addition to the six males' associated with this virtue in both texts, Didymus, Clement and Amos represent the virtue in the *Prosa de virginitate*, whereas John the Baptist, Paul and Martin represent it in the *Carmen de virginitate*.[130] The meaning of these differences between male and female saints' virtues therefore deserve some further consideration.

As I have suggested, Aldhelm's depiction of sanctity partly reflects his selection of saints and the nature of his sources for these.[131] Male saints in the double treatise include, prophets, apostles, popes, bishops, monks and abbots, spanning the period from the Old Testament to the sixth century. They are drawn from a range of sources, such as, the Bible, *vitae* (including influential *vitae* by Jerome, Paulinus (c. 354-431) and Sulpicius Severus, alongside other non-canonical writings on saints) and ascetic writings by Cassian

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[127] Aldhelm, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, caps. LIII, LIV, LVII, pp. 310-13, 316-17 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in caps. LIII and LVII, see, *AM*, p. 313); note, however, that in the battle of the virtues and vices in the *CdV* Joseph and Judith are offered as exemplars for those who fight against Debauchery, see, Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll 2554-70, p. 457.

[128] These are Saints Jeremiah, Daniel, Clement, Silvester, Benedict, Julian and Constantina.

[129] Female saints who reject or abstain from marriage provide another example. See appendices I.3-I.5, below, pp. 244-46.

[130] These are Silvester, Anthony, Benedict, Chrysanthus, Julian and Apollonius; also see the results for learned males, for males who are tortured and martyred, and for females saints who are represented as proselytisers. See below, appendices I.1-I.5, pp. 240-45.

[131] For Aldhelm's principal sources for these saints, see, *AO*, pp. 544-46 and his footnotes throughout his editions of the *PdV* and *CdV*, *Ibid.*, pp. 226-323, 350-471 and *LH*, pp. 176-78; Note that Ros Love suggests that Aldhelm's saints may have been drawn from a passional, such as, the early ninth-century Paris, BN, lat. 10861, which comprises 18 *passiones* and may be the earliest extant example of this hagiographical genre from England, see, R. C. Love (ed.), *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives* (Oxford, 1996), pp. xiv-xv. Whilst some of Aldhelm's saints were possibly derived from such a source, let us not forget how varied his choice of exemplar were; for possible liturgical influence behind Aldhelm's choice of saints, see, C. Cubitt, 'Unity and Diversity in the Early Anglo-Saxon Liturgy', in R. N. Swanson, *Unity and Diversity in the Church*, *SCH*, 32 (1996), p. 48; also see Aldhelm's reference to the litany in his account of Saints Anatolia and Victoria, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 308, ll. 7-9.

(c. 360-c. 435) and Rufinus (c.345-410).[132] In contrast, his female saints are largely third- and fourth-century virgin martyrs. Aldhelm's selection of saints partly reflects an actual distribution because the celebration of women in the early Christian church is largely confined to the martyrial literature.[133] The fact that many of his female saints were virgin martyrs explains why they are most likely to achieve sanctity by rejecting pagan marriages and by suffering torture and death as a result. Conversely, the absence of this theme in Aldhelm's male saints' accounts reflects its absence from his principal models.[134] However, we must recall that Aldhelm selected these saintly *exempla*, and, since his portraits were digests of more expansive textual accounts, he chose which material to transmit and how to present it. Indeed, Aldhelm himself asserts that his double treatise seeks to reveal general (*genus*) rather than single examples (*singulus*),[135] and, as we saw in Chapter Four, his saints accounts do differ - and sometimes radically - from their literary sources.[136] Furthermore, comparative evidence from Carolingian Europe suggests that even writers who were well-acquainted with a female saint, either personally or through extant written evidence, often disregarded this material when they wrote their *vita*. Instead, they constructed these texts according to male hagiographical traditions.[137] Arguably, therefore, Aldhelm's decision over which aspects of his male and female saints' accounts to select and emphasise illuminates his concept of gender identities.

Aldhelm probably depicted more learned men than women because his literary models offered more examples of the former. However, his decision not to transmit 13 further references to male saints' learnedness from these sources probably relates to the fact that his audience comprised learned women who he did not want to exclude from this

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[132] This includes the lives of Paul the Hermit, Hilarion, Malchus, Ambrose and Martin, as well as Cassian's *De Institutis Coenobiorum* and Rufinus's *Historia Monachorum*. For Aldhelm's knowledge of the latter two, see above, p. 116. For Aldhelm's use of apocrypha for John the Evangelist, Thomas, Paul and Melchisedech, see, A. M. C. Casiday, 'St Aldhelm on Apocrypha', *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, 55 (1) (2004), 147-57. Unfortunately, this work was published too late to incorporate into discussion of Aldhelm's male saints.

[133] For this point with reference to Carolingian hagiography, see, Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity', pp. 10-12.

[134] See below, appendices III.1-II.2, pp. 254-55.

[135] Aldhelm, *CdV*, ll. 468-69, (ed.), *AO*, p. 372.

[136] See above, pp. 137-40, 144 and Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 68-69.

[137] Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity', pp. 14-18, 35-37.

identity. Indeed, further aspects of Aldhelm's representation of sanctity may reflect contemporary circumstances. For example, his decision to depict women mainly preaching to family, or to individuals with whom they were familiar, is a trend which Julia Smith has observed for Carolingian female saints and which may relate to the fact that early medieval women's religious life 'remained closely bound up with kin group interests'.[138] In contrast, men's proselytising widely may be attributed to their greater contemporary involvement in pastoral ministry.

5. 6 Saints' Miracles

Thus far I have argued that Aldhelm masculinises both men and women in their internal spiritual acts, yet he distinguishes between them in their virtuous qualities. Thus Aldhelm's female saints may reject the worst traits of femininity, but they are still cast in a different mould from his male saints. With this in mind, we need to consider the clear distinction between Aldhelm's male and female saints' miracles, for whereas his male saints are associated with an active spiritual potency, his female saints remain relatively passive.

5. 6. 1 Quantity and Type

Miracles, essential qualifiers of sanctity, are overwhelmingly a male activity in Aldhelm's double treatise. Let us start with the quantity and type of miracles he associates with his male and female exemplars (for a detailed breakdown of these miracle categories and results, see below, appendices II. 1-II. 5).[139]. If we consider repeated miracle motifs, while he provides only 38 female saints' miracle stories across both treatises, his male saints can be credited with no fewer than 108. Proportionately, male saints (of which there are 73) thus perform almost twice as many miracles per individual as female saints (of which there are 43). In more than one male saint's account Aldhelm also signals to his audience that they performed more miracles than he

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[138] *Ibid.*, pp. 25-28 at 27.

[139] See below, pp. 247-52.

has time to convey.[140] In addition, whilst the miracle stories associated with both male and female saints range across the miracle spectrum, and they perform some of these (such as healing and exorcism) similarly and in comparable proportions, others are performed only by men.[141] Only the sanctity of male saints, for example, is divinely foreordained. Aldhelm therefore introduces John the Baptist as *sacer materna nondum editus matrice profeta*.[142] Similarly, he begins his account of Jeremiah: *qui antequam maternis ederetur partubus, beata praedistinatione Domino dicatur {dicatus} et ab ipsa rudi incunabulorum {cunabulorum} teneritudine virginitati consecratur {consecratus}*.[143] These saints are not alone, for the miracle recurs 9 times in total across both texts of the double treatise.[144] In contrast, no female saint's holiness is portended in the womb or in childhood. Likewise, only Aldhelm's male saints miraculously receive food from animals or bless scant food reserves so that they become plentiful in supply.[145] In a similar way, even though only a handful of saints perform acts of telekinesis and translocation, they are all males: 3% in the prose text and 6% in its verse counterpart. It is also largely male saints who experience 'phenomena of the mind', which means that they are associated with one or more of the following:

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[140] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 265, ll. 3-5.

[141] Both therefore raise corpses from the dead and cure injured, diseased and mad individuals. Consider, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXVI (ed.), *AO*, p. 261, ll. 4-9; *Ibid.*, cap. XXXVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 285, ll. 18-19-p. 286, ll. 1-2; *Ibid.*, cap. XLV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 299, ll. 10-14; *Ibid.*, cap. LII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 309, l. 26-p. 310, l.1; admittedly, Aldhelm does devote more line space to male saints' performance of this miracle; for female-specific performance of miracles in the Carolingian period, see, Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity', pp. 31-35.

[142] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 253, l. 24, (trans.), *LH*, p. 79, 'a holy prophet even before he had issued from the maternal womb'; also see, *Idem.*, *CdV*, ll. 397-98, (ed.), *AO*, p. 369.

[143] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 250, ll. 15-16, (trans.), LH, p. 77, 'who before he had been brought forth through maternal parturition, was dedicated to the Lord by blessed predestination and from the very early tenderness of the cradle was consecrated to virginity', (with Gwara's lexical changes at *AMA*, p. 233, ll. 29-30); also see, Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 307-312, p. 366.

[144] In addition, Cosmas' and Damianus' predestined sanctity is mentioned in passing, and Aldhelm refers to how Elisha's birth signified future events, see, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXIV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 275, l. 11, *Ibid.*, cap. XX (ed.), *AO*, p. 250, ll. 8-9.

[145] Admittedly, Aldhelm could have made more of this miracle given that it receives more fulsome treatment in his principal exemplars, see below, appendices III.3-III. 4, pp. 256-57.

visions, acts of telepathy and/or prophecy.[146] These miracles are varied. Compare, for example, John the Baptist's prophecy of Christ's advent with Amos' success at routing thieves by portentous knowledge of their misdemeanours.[147] Almost a quarter of male saints perform this miracle in the prose text and more than a quarter in its verse counterpart. In contrast, only a tenth of females perform it in the verse treatise and none do in the prose.[148] In addition to the male saints who carry out phenomena of the mind, Aldhelm mentions in passing the prophetic spirit and signs associated with Elijah, Jeremiah and Benedict, and of course provides accounts of Old Testament prophets.[149] Furthermore, of all the male miracles provided by Aldhelm's literary exemplars, he is particularly keen to transmit this miracle type.[150]

It is of course true that in scripture, patristic literature and some early medieval hagiography, it was overwhelmingly men who performed miracles.[151] However, Aldhelm even gives more prominence to some of his male-specific miracles than his principal sources do. Predestination is a case in point. Consider, for example, Aldhelm's account of Jeremiah. In his prose text he devotes half of his account to the saint's predestination, whereas in the Bible it is given just one verse of a 52-chapter book.[152] Similarly, in his account of Ambrose, Aldhelm embellishes this miracle from his principal literary model, Paulinus' *Vita S Ambrosii* (422). In one chapter of his 57-chapter *vita* Paulinus discusses how bees entered Ambrose's mouth as a baby and then soared high into the sky,

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[146] Cf. Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity', pp. 33-35, who argues that in Carolingian sanctity, women rather than men, are associated with visions, which she relates to the influence of Columbanian monasticism. As Smith observes, visions were among the miracles preserved at Barking *monasterium* in the seventh to eighth century, see, *H. E.*, IV, 6-11, pp. 354-69.

[147] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 253, ll. 26-27-p. 254, l. 1; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 406-15, p. 370; *Idem.*, *PdV*, cap. XXXVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 285, ll. 18-19-p. 286, ll. 1-4; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1478-93, p. 415.

[148] Aldhelm also devotes more line space to the topic in his male saints' accounts.

[149] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, l. 16; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 250, l. 18; *Ibid.*, cap. XXX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 269, l. 4.

[150] It is true, however, that he does not borrow all of the instances provided by these texts, see below, appendices III.3-III.4, pp. 256-57.

[151] Smith, 'The Problem of Sanctity', pp. 29-30.

[152] Cf. Ier. I-LII, with Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 250, ll. 15-17 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XX, p. 250, ll. 16-17), see, *AMA*, p. 233, ll. 30-31, and above p. 179 n 142).

portending the sweet words of scripture that the saint would later articulate.[153] In contrast, in both texts of the double treatise Aldhelm devotes almost two thirds of his account to describing this event; furthermore, he transmits this miracle to the exclusion of a number of other miracle types provided by Paulinus.[154] Comparable trends are found with Aldhelm's representation of phenomena of the mind, for in his accounts of Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Paul he transmits these saints' visions and acts of telepathy and prophecy over and above the other miracles provided by his literary models.[155]

Aldhelm therefore associates the miracles of divine provision of food, predestination and phenomena of the mind largely or exclusively with his male saints, and, in the latter two instances, even embellishes them from his literary exemplars. Notably, Derouet, who has undertaken a study of late Merovingian miracle types, labels these three 'vertical' in terms of function, because they 'portray the saint in direct contact with the divine sphere'.[156] Indeed, the numerical and typological difference between male and female miracle working aligns comparatively more male saints with an active spiritual potency. This is, first, because men are more able miracle-workers and, second, because the miracles with which Aldhelm's male saints are associated can be said to see more interaction with the Divine. The pattern of miracle stories in Aldhelm's double treatise therefore seems to be gender-specific, with his male saints apparently associated with more spiritual power.

5. 6. 2 Miracle-Working Power

Aldhelm's male saints' association with divine power is clear in the first instance from the quantity and scope of their miracle performance. It is further evident if we consider their miracle-working power. Claire Stancliffe's study of Sulpicius Severus' late fourth- to early fifth-century lives of St Martin (335-97) provides an extremely useful model to analyse here. As Stancliffe demonstrates, Sulpicius seems to distinguish between

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[153] Paulinus, *Vita S Ambrosii Mediolanensis episcopi*, PL, XIV, (Turnhout, 1845), cap. III, col. 28.

[154] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 260, ll. 6-12; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 655-669, pp. 380-81.

[155] See below, appendices III.3-III.4, pp. 256-57.

[156] Derouet, 'Recherches d'histoire des mentalités sur les textes hagiographiques', cap. 2, pp. 44-50 esp. as cited by Stancliffe, 'The Miracle Stories', pp. 94-95.

miracles wrought by divine power or by Martin's own power.   Thus in some miracles Martin is a receptor of God's power, since either the Holy Spirit inspires his performance of miracles, or the saint invokes God's power through prayer.   In these miracles, she suggests, 'one might almost say that he becomes a "medium" for the Holy Spirit'. Alternatively, in other miracles Martin seems to bear his own holy power or *virtus*, which he uses as and when he wills.[157] Significantly, if we apply this model to Aldhelm's saints' performance of miracles, it is predominately his male saints who wield their own miracle-working power.   If we plot Aldhelm's use of the word *virtus* throughout his catalogue of saints, he uses the noun proportionately twice as often in his male accounts, and this cannot simply be attributed to his male saints' performance of more miracles.[158] Aldhelm exploits the full semantic range of this noun in his accounts, thus using it to refer to virtue, excellence, strength, the power to perform miracles and moreover, manliness and manhood *per se*.   He is also keen to emphasise the inextricable link between the virtue (*virtus*) of virginity and holy power (*virtus*).[159]   Yet whilst this is the overall message of Aldhelm's use of the noun, he appears to use it differently in his male and female saints' accounts.[160] When depicting female saints Aldhelm predominantly uses *virtus* to mean good moral conduct. We learn of Agnes, for example, that, *Inclita haec fuerat flagrans virtute pudoris* even before she decided to remain a lifelong virgin at the age of 13.[161] In like manner are told of Demetrias that: *usque ad summam virtutis farum virgineis meritorum gradibus conscenderit.*[162] In contrast, in his male accounts Aldhelm chiefly uses *virtus* to refer to their holy power.   Thus, for example, we witness Narcissus converting water to oil,

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[157] C. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer. History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 244-48 esp.; note that Aldhelm drew upon Sulpicius' *Vita S Martini*, see *AO*, pp. 261-62, 546.

[158] For a list of Aldhelm's use of the noun *virtus*, which he uses extensively throughout the double treatise, see, *AO*, p. 735, with Gwara, however, substituting Ehwald's *virtus* for *iustus* in one instance (see, *AM*, p. 311), and substituting Ehwald's *virium* (*AO*, cap. XLIII, p. 295, l. 13), for *virtutum* in another (*AMA*, cap. XLIII, p. 613, l. 18).

[159] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LIII (ed.), *AO*, p. 312, ll. 8-9.

[160] See, Stancliffe, *St. Martin*, p. 9 for the varied meanings *virtus* takes in Martinian writings.

[161] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 1927, p. 433, (trans.), *LR*, p. 145 'This outstanding girl had been glowing with the virtue of purity'.

[162] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 304, ll. 5-6 at l. 6 (trans.), *LH*, p. 116 'she ascended the highest beacon of virtue on the virginal stairs of her merits'.

stupendo virtutis spectaculo,[163] and we learn that Martin, *miris virtutum signis effulsisse memoratur.*[164] Aldhelm indeed repeatedly informs us about the male saints' virtuous signs (*virtuta signa*) and gifts (*virtuta dona*), and in both accounts it is chiefly Aldhelm's male saints who act as media for God's miracle-working *virtus.*[165] This is important, for it aligns his male saints, in particular, with an immense power: a power that is sometimes received from the Divine, but also is wielded independent of Him. Aldhelm's use of *virtus* in his male accounts therefore aligns them with the archetypally masculine quality of active spiritual potency. This spiritual potency is much less evident in his female accounts where the emphasis instead is on virgins' virtuous conduct.

5. 6. 3 Aldhelm's Choice of Lexicon to Describe Saints' Miracles

Having considered the differences in the quantity and type of Aldhelm's male and female saints' miracle-working stories, it remains for us to consider their difference in scope, and how he consistently uses different lexicon to describe them. Such a survey reveals that male and female saints remain distinct, even in those instances in which they perform the same miracle type in fairly equal proportions. One example is found in saints' exorcism of astonishingly fearsome dragons.[166] These dragons represent, variously, actual beasts, demons and 'personified vices'.[167] Whilst Victoria is the only female saint to

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[163] *Ibid.*, cap. XXXII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 271, l. 7, (trans.), *LH*, pp. 91-92 'by a stupendous show of divine power'.

[164] *Ibid.*, cap. XXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 261, l. 4, (trans.), *LH*, p. 85 'is said to have shone forth in the marvellous miracles of his virtues'.

[165] See, for example, *Ibid.*, cap. XXXVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 286, ll. 10-11 at 1.11, *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1098, 1101, 1190, pp. 399, 403.

[166] Another example is the miracle of control over nature. Within this miracle spectrum both males and females, as we shall see later, are linked to a miracle controlled by God in which they remain unharmed during persecution (see below, pp. 185-86). Yet, in addition to this miracle, male saints also control nature by themselves and on an impressive scale. We learn, for example, that Paul spent 24 hours at the bottom of the sea and remained unharmed, that Hilarion prevented the sea from flooding with the power invested in him by God, and that Elijah was able to stop rain by his command, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXIV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 256, ll. 5-6; *Ibid.*, cap. XX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, ll. 17-18 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XX, p. 249, l. 17), see, *AMA*, p. 225, l. 2); Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 267, ll. 3-12.

[167] M. E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'* (London, 1970), pp. 133-35; My use of the term 'exorcism' to describe this miracle type derives from C. Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon: Parallels and Analogues* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 54; for the literary and cultural influence of

perform this miracle in Aldhelm's double treatise, three male saints accomplish it, namely, the Old Testament prophet Daniel, the pope-saint Silvester and the Palestinian Abbot Hilarion. Michael Lapidge has shown that in order to represent virginity as 'a vigorously aggressive virtue', Aldhelm provided his saints with such potent adversaries as dragons, and, in the case of Hilarion, gave this miracle story considerably more prominence than his principal literary source for the saint's account, Jerome.[168]

Significantly, Victoria's dragon is just as harmful as those exorcised by the men, and she eradicates it as fearlessly.[169] In the poetic treatise, moreover, she provides a rare example of a female saint who performs this feat using her own *virtus*; by exercising this miracle-working power in an active way Victoria thus parallels Silvester and Daniel, both of who also use *virtus* to slay their dragons.[170] Nonetheless, despite Victoria's initial presentation in the same masculine terms as the men, in this particular miracle type she remains distinguished from them in a number of important respects. Victoria may use *virtus* to eradicate her dragon, but, uniquely, she does so, *aethrali freta triumpho*.[171] In fact, Victoria is the only dragon-expelling saint to invoke God's authority directly, because in His name she implores the beast to abandon the town it has been tormenting.[172] Furthermore, when Victoria journeys to meet her dragon adversary she is *angeli fulta suffragio*.[173] Victoria's reliance on celestial support sets her apart from the male saints. Not only do they combat the beasts alone, but Hilarion is also the only male saint to appeal to heavenly power and even then it is to fight his dragon *armis orationum*.[174] Victoria is

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Aldhelm's dragons and their relation to the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, see, Goldsmith, *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 133-36 esp.; Lapidge, ' "Beowulf", Aldhelm', pp. 280-82.; P. Sorrell, 'The Approach to the Dragon-Flight in *Beowulf*, Aldhelm, and the "Traditions Folkloriques" of Jacques le Goff', *Parergon*, New Series, 12,(1994), 57-87; Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon, passim*.

[168] Lapidge, ' "Beowulf", Aldhelm', p. 280.

[169] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 308, ll. 23-24-p. 309, ll. 1-19.

[170] For Victoria, see, Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2404, p. 451; For Silvester, see, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 545, p. 376; for Daniel, see, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 355, p. 368.

[171] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2403, p. 451, (trans.), *LR*, p. 155 'relying on the triumph of heaven'.

[172] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. LII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 309, ll. 13-14.

[173] *Ibid.*, cap. LII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 309, l. 9, (trans.), *LH*, p. 120 'sustained by the assistance of an angel'.

[174] *Ibid.*, cap. XXIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 266, ll. 17-18, (trans.), *LH*, p. 88 'with the weaponry of prayer'.

presented in a less overtly masculine way than the males who exorcise these creatures: she is not feminine, but nor is she permitted to be as masculine as the male saints are.[175] This male-female distinction in gender is further illuminated in Aldhelm's representation of the saints' successful eradication of the dragons, for, whereas his male saints either violently kill or make physically impotent these adversaries, Victoria does not fight hers physically. Instead, her beast merely flees rapidly from its lair when she orders it to leave *verbo terrente*.[176] Although Hilarion's actions resemble those of Victoria, since he also commands his opponent with terrifying words, even so, he does not merely banish the beast from its den. Instead, he compels it to climb a pyre, whereupon it is cremated, so that its ribs and spine are cleaved apart by blazing fireballs.[177] Silvester and Daniel use comparable aggression to overcome their dragon adversaries: Silvester binds his in an inextricable collar and Daniel hurls a deadly titbit into his beast's jaws, so that its entrails burst open.[178] In short, Victoria is a powerful saint, yet she is comparatively less belligerent and independently powerful than the males who perform this miracle.[179] Perhaps Aldhelm deliberately intensified his male saints' masculinity in concession to the male religious among his audience, in order to compensate for their prohibition from the male heroic status of secular warriorhood.

Aldhelm's decision to align principally male saints with the typically masculine characteristics of power and warrior strength is not isolated to the miracle of dragon fettering. This trend can be found in Aldhelm's representation of miracles of vengeance,

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[175] Admittedly, there are different ways of interpreting Aldhelm's treatment of gender here. Whilst we may read a gender binary in to it, since Victoria is presented as relatively passive according to archetypally feminine tropes, even so, she is more active that archetypal female saints, which is clear from the fact that she wields *virtus*. As such, it may be best to interpret Victoria as masculine, yet to a much lesser degree than her male counterparts.

[176] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2407, p. 451, (trans.), *LR*, p. 156 'with her terrifying command'; cf. *Idem.*, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. LII, p. 309, ll. 11-15 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. LII, p. 309, ll. 11, 14), see, *AMA*, p. 693, ll. 44, 47).

[177] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap, XXIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 266, ll. 17-19-p. 267, ll. 1-3; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 809-11, p. 387.

[178] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap, XXV (ed.), *AO*, p. 258, ll. 5-8; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 545-46, 551-52, p. 376; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 356-58, p. 368.

[179] Note that Christine Rauer considered Aldhelm's depictions of dragon exorcism as part of her much wider exploration of this miracle type in hagiographical literature composed between the fourth and sixteenth centuries. She argues that overall, whilst speech plays an important part in this miracle type, physical violence does not, see, *Idem.*, *Beowulf and the Dragon*, pp. 52-74, 174-93.

where saints gain retribution for the wrongs performed against themselves or the Christian faith,[180] and in those miracles where saints experience angels, celestial light and music, as well as ambrosial aromas. However, here I want to concentrate on those miracles in which saints remain unharmed despite their persecutors' fierce efforts to torture them. Since this miracle type is extremely formulaic, and is performed by nearly equal numbers of male and female saints, it is particularly useful for gender comparison. Thus saints of both sexes have extraordinary resolve which enables them to endure the harshest of beatings and floggings. Some are bound up in ropes or tied to rocks and then thrown into rivers or the sea, yet are carried to shore safely, whilst others are roasted on pyres or boiled in vats of water or pitch, yet emerge from these unscathed. A few are also thrust into lions' dens, but the beasts placidly ignore them. The miraculous rescue of saints is performed repeatedly through God's intercession: He ensures the saints' safety. Yet despite Aldhelm's use of the same miracle formula for saints of either sex, his choice of lexicon is gender-specific. His different choice of adjectives to describe the tortured male and female saints is particularly revealing, for only male saints are associated with the masculine qualities of strength and invincibility. In significant contrast, female saints are described as comparatively weak and defenceless. The men are thus characterised repeatedly as 'unconquerable' (*invictus*), 'uncompromising' (*inflexibilis*), 'triumphant' (*triumphalis*), and 'steadfast' (*durus*).[181] Conversely, whilst Aldhelm's female saints can be described in similar terms, they are more frequently described as 'pretty' (*venusta*), 'gentle' or 'delicate' (*tener*), 'feminine' (*muliebris*) and 'defenceless' or 'unarmed' (*inermis*).[182] Aldhelm's decision to align females with feminine (*muliebris*) and defenceless (*inermis*)

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[180] Whereas male saints are associated with strength and invincibility, in contrast, the females are comparatively weak and defenceless. Compare, for example, Eugenia and Agnes who are described as 'defenceless' or 'unarmed' (*inermis*) and 'innocent' (*insons*), Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), ll. 1910-11, p. 432, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1960-61, p. 434, with Narcissus, who is described merely as *castus sacerdos*, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 969-70, p. 394, and Martin, who is described simply as *famulus Dei*, *Idem.*, *PdV*, cap. XXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 262, ll. l. 6. Also compare Julian's depiction as a solider (*miles*) with Agnes' depiction as 'fine' or 'pretty' (*bella*), *Ibid.*, cap. XXXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 283, l. 5 with *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 1948 p. 433. For the wider manifestation of this theme in contemporary Insular literature, see, Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, pp. 88-90.

[181] For 'invictus' and 'inflexibilis', see, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 252, ll. 17-18; for 'triumphabillis', see, *Ibid.*, cap. XXXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 283, l. 19; for 'durus', see, *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 1228, p. 404.

[182] For 'venusta', see, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLVII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 301, l. 14; for 'tenera', see, *Ibid.*, cap. XLIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 296, l. 8; for 'muliebris', see, *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2000, p. 435; for 'inermis', *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2262, p. 446.

characteristics is noteworthy when we consider that in the masculinised interior battle against vice he specifically warned men and women that they must not be 'unarmed' (*inermis*) and must not act 'in the manner of a woman' (*muliebriter*).[183]

As well as use different adjectives to describe his persecuted male and female saints, Aldhelm only uses the verbs *defensare* and *defendere*, meaning to defend and to protect respectively, to describe God's intercession to aid his female saints. Starting with *defensare*, throughout his corpus of writings, Aldhelm only uses this verb in the context of God's intercession to help his female saints.[184] Aldhelm's account of Lucia exemplifies this wider trend, for although she is roasted on a pyre:

> *Innocuis prunae coxerunt membra favillis*
> *Defensante Deo flammasque fugante rogorum.*[185]

Likewise, Aldhelm uses the verb *defendere* to describe God's acts of protection in his female saints' accounts.[186] Thus, for example, he describes how, *Deus aeterna defendit ab arce puellam* Thecla, when men sought to mutilate her,[187] and how when persecutors seek to remove the robes of Chionia, Irene and Agape, *Deus ex alto ... cum forti famulas dextra defendit inermes.*[188] Aldhelm's use of the verb *defendere* differs significantly in his male saints' account, for male saints always protect, rather than are protected. Thus, for example, Apollonius defends multitudes of people against starvation with a food miracle,[189] Babilas defends his church against the sinful Emperor Numerianus,[190] and the

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[183] See above, pp. 167-68.

[184] For Aldhelm's use of the verb *defensare*, see, *AO*, p. 592.

[185] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1828-29, p. 428, (trans.), *LR*, p. 143, 'the live coals roasted her limbs with harmless embers, since God was protecting her and driving away the flames of the pyre'.

[186] For Aldhelm's use of the verb *defendere*, see, *AO*, p. 592.

[187] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 1997, p. 435, (trans.), *LR*, p. 147, 'God from His eternal citadel protected the virgin'.

[188] *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2261-62, p. 446, (trans.), *LR*, p. 153, 'God on high ... defended His helpless servants with His strong right hand'.

[189] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 290, ll. 10-12-p. 291, ll. 1-4, at l. 3 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXXVIII, p. 291, ll. 2-3), see, *AMA*, p. 575, l. 99).

[190] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 397, ll. 1039-47 at l. 1045.

priest Timothy defends Athanasius against the deceitful accusations of a prostitute.[191] Thus whereas Aldhelm's male saints are themselves defenders of the Faith and the faithful, Aldhelm's female saints rely on celestial defence.

Clearly Aldhelm's construction of gender differed according to whether acts of holiness were invisible or perceptible. ₒWhereas Aldhelm depicts male and female religious as masculine combatants in their internal spiritual battles, suggesting that he encourages men and women to be masculine in their interior selves, in the palpable act of miracle working they remained bound to the cultural characteristics of their biological sex. In relation to his female audience it is possible that Aldhelm rendered it acceptable for females to imitate masculine qualities in their minds, but did not believe it to be appropriate, nor necessary, for them to imitate overtly masculine virtues or male roles. This hypothesis seems to be supported by Aldhelm's treatment of the cross-dressing Saint Eugenia. Eugenia is the only saint in the double treatise who attempts to disguise her biological sex by dressing in male clothes and by shaving her long hair for a *tonsura masculini sexus*. Her cross-dressing, Aldhelm remarks, is *contra iura naturae*.[192] Throughout his corpus of writings he uses this phrase, and ones similar to it, to refer to acts – including morally contemptible ones - against the natural order which God enshrined at Creation.[193] Visible mimicking of men was clearly inappropriate in Aldhelm's view.[194]

5.7 Conclusion

To conclude, Aldhelm's double treatise pays great attention to male holiness and this sets him apart from his patristic exemplars. Two approaches to the theme of gender can be adduced in the double treatise. First, Aldhelm exhorts all members of his audience

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[191] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 273, ll. 21-23-p. 274, ll. 1-4 at p. 274, l. 4 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXXII, p. 273, ll. 20-21), see, *AMA*, p. 427, l. 90).

[192] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XLIV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 297, l. 4 (trans.), *LH*, p. 110 'short crop of the masculine sex' 'against the laws of nature'.

[193] See, for example, Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica*, IV. 7 (ed.), *AO*, ll. 25-29, p. 27 at l. 29; *Idem., CdV*, l. 1139-41, (ed.), *AO*, p. 401 at l. 1139; for Aldhelm's use of this phrase with reference to same-sex desire in his account of Eugenia, see, A. J. Frantzen, *Before the Closet: Same Sex Love from Beowulf to Angels in America* (Chicago and London, 1998), p. 79, and with reference to Anglo-Saxon female 'transvestite saints', see, *Ibid.*, pp. 72-89.

[194] Cf. O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 278-79.

to regulate their lives through inward contemplative exercises, and, in the interior battle against vice, both male and female religious assume a shared identity as masculinised spiritual combatants. Second, analysis of Aldhelm's lengthy catalogue of saintly *exempla* suggests that in the physical act of miracle performance and in the harbouring of virtuous qualities only male saints are masculinised. In contrast, female saints are more likely to be aligned with feminine characteristics. Therefore, whilst Aldhelm's female saints reject sexuality and materialism, which are negative feminine traits in patristic thinking, in miracle working especially, his female representations wield less power than men and are far less autonomous. Aldhelm's male saints thus perform far more miracles, which tend to be more impressive in scope. It is also predominately male saints who are *virtus*-empowered miracle-workers. Moreover, in those miracles in which saints remain unharmed during torture, Aldhelm's choice of adjectives associate male saints with potency and manliness, females with relative weakness and passivity. Whereas his male saints are defenders of the Faith, his female saints need protection. Thus, whilst Aldhelm's male and female saints are represented as soldiers of Christ, particularly in their minds, in more tangible acts they receive distinctive characterisations.[195]

How then are we to interpret the construction of holiness and masculinity in Aldhelm's double treatise? First, Aldhelm's concern with male holiness undoubtedly relates to his audience. He dedicates the work to abbesses of double *monasteria* and thus addresses not merely women, but also men.[196] Furthermore, Aldhelm is likely to have written the work with the interests of his male students and colleagues, and, indeed, himself in mind. To this end, it is worth noting that he seems to identify with the religious plight of St Jerome especially.[197] Aldhelm's representation of women may have owed much to the patristic stereotype that females were weaker and more passive than males.[198] Indeed, during the course of his double treatise he refers to females as the *inferior ... ordo* of the sexes[199] and to males as the *principalis sexus*.[200] However,

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[195] For women saints being represented according to male models of sanctity, but also departing from these, see, Smith, 'The Problem of Sanctity', pp. 12-37.

[196] See above, pp. 72-82, 97-98.

[197] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 1620-21, p. 421.

[198] See above, pp. 164-65.

[199] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 1301, p. 407, (trans.), *LR*, p. 131, 'lower order.'

Aldhelm did not merely relay patristic values, but instead offers a distinctive interpretation of these. Indeed, it is probable that Aldhelm's distinctive ideas on gender reflect contemporary cultural circumstances as much as inherited Christian traditions. Aldhelm's saints would have appealed to his male and female audiences' literary tastes as they fused secular heroic tradition with Christian holiness.[201] They will have also appealed to aristocrats of both sexes, with women likely to have shown as much devotion to male as to female saints and visa versa.[202] One reason why he may have associated men with outward acts of holiness was because in early Anglo-Saxon England men had privileged access to holy power through their performance of certain sacramental duties. His decision to associate male saints with greater power undoubtedly reflects the patriarchal nature of early Anglo-Saxon society as well. At the same time, however, Aldhelm's ideas are likely to reflect his attempts to create new identities for adult religious recruits. As we saw in Chapter Four, Aldhelm took advantage of the virgin martyr genre to emphasise to religious of both sexes the virtues of avoiding sex and marriage.[203] By providing his audience with a shared masculinised spiritual identity, Aldhelm, on the one hand, perhaps sought to create unity among the disparate members of contemporary double *monasteria*. This was important when male and female religious were having difficulties living alongside each other in these communities. Furthermore, it has significance in a period in which double *monasteria* had their critics. Indeed, by offering male and female religious collaborative contemplative acts to undertake and by cataloguing male and female saints alongside each other, Aldhelm showed that both sexes could live and work together in spiritual harmony.[204] Regardless of how much he intended it, therefore, he vindicated the double *monasteria* form. On the other hand, Aldhelm's differentiated representation of men's and women's virtues and miracle performance arguably appreciates their different

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[200] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 291, l.15, (trans.), *LH*, p. 106, 'the principal sex.'

[201] For further discussion on the fusion of these themes in contemporary Anglo-Saxon literature, see, Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" ', *passim*.

[202] Indeed, women might show even more devotion to male rather than female saints and visa versa, see, Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 110-69.

[203] Cf. *AM*, p. 60, that women were to achieve sanctity by rejecting marriage.

[204] His depiction of married saints also shows this, see, *LH*, p. 193 n 22.

gendered experiences of religious renunciation.[205] As previously suggested, many female secular roles could still be fulfilled in Anglo-Saxon *monasteria*. Therefore most contemporary female religious did not have to act outwardly like men in their daily duties but could continue traditional roles, such as, commemorating the dead and textile manufacture.[206] In contrast, many male religious made a more significant break with their secular lifestyle because they were prohibited from military service. Might Aldhelm have sought to compensate for this loss, by reminding men that they did not have to relinquish completely their masculine association with a warrior idiom, and its associations with strength and triumph? He showed male religious that whilst women could be masculine in their minds and whilst in double *monasteria* a woman ordinarily ruled over them, even so, physically, their sex remained stronger and more able. Aldhelm thus reassured men by demonstrating that even as monks they were still masculine and that the spiritual life of the cloister presented an alternative, yet equally authoritative form of masculinity.

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[205] For contemporary religious iconography perhaps conveying different messages to its male and female audiences, see, J. Hawkes, 'Mary and the Cycle of Resurrection: the Iconography of the Hovingham Panel', in R. M. Spearman and J. Higgitt, *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 260-61.

[206] This indeed provides another reason for why they were experiencing difficulties renouncing secular customs and habits, see above, pp. 105-110, 121.

Chapter Six

Inner Spiritual Perfection

In recent years scholars have offered different interpretations of Aldhelm's representation of virginity in the double treatise *De virginitate*. On the one hand, Sinead O'Sullivan has suggested that he associates virginity with 'spiritual integrity', deeming it to be a quality of the spiritual soul as much as of the physical body.[1] On the other hand, Dempsey has argued that Aldhelm appeals to seventh-century violence by focusing on physical virginity and its preservation.[2] This chapter contributes to this debate by proposing that the double treatise is concerned chiefly with the inner spiritual perfection of both virgins and chaste individuals. Whilst my focus will be on virginity and chastity, some further reference to marriage will be necessary, albeit, from a different perspective to that offered in Chapter Four.[3] To highlight Aldhelm's concern for interiority, I show that even though he deems carnal virginity to be important, nonetheless, he shows little concern for physical ascetic regimes and for physical intactness. Instead, Aldhelm's pre-eminent concern is with inner contemplative acts, which he expects both virgins and the chaste to engage in. This has a fundamental bearing on how he spiritually graded Christians. Aldhelm's patristic models for sexual continence generally classified individuals into three distinct grades, *virginitas, viduitas* and *iugalitas*.[4] As scholars have demonstrated, Aldhelm adopted a tripartite scheme, but unusually substituted the second category of widowhood, *viduitas*, with chastity, *castitas*.[5] However, Aldhelm did not merely relabel the second category, but he also graded virgins and the chaste according to their level of

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[1] S. O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background to Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', *Milltown Studies*, 37 (1996), pp. 62-63; S. O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* - Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia*, 12 (1998), pp. 290, 293; S. O' Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* and the Psychomachian Tradition', *Mediaevalia*, 20 (2001), pp. 330-31; S. O'Sullivan, 'The Image of Adornment in Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*: Cyprian and his Influence', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), pp. 48-57; other scholars also have acknowledged his interest in the interior spiritual nature of virginity, see, *LH*, p. 57; *AM*, p. 55.

[2] G. T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury's Social Theology: the Barbaric Heroic Ideal Christianised', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), p. 68.

[3] See above, pp. 119-51.

[4] See above, pp. 129-30.

[5] *LH*, pp. 55-56; O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', pp. 59-60; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 280-84, 294; Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 59.

inner perfection.[6] In doing so, he made the traditional distinctions between these two spiritual grades less pronounced, by making it possible for the chaste to surpass virgins in spiritual excellence. He therefore stands apart from his patristic models of spiritual perfection, which ordinarily measure spiritual prowess by individuals' degrees of abstinence from sexual activity. They therefore tend to grade Christians in a descending order of merit, with chastity occupying the middle position, between exalted virginity at the pinnacle and low-ranking marriage at the base. Aldhelm's adaptation of patristic traditions arguably was a concession to the formerly married, but now chaste individuals, in his audience.[7] For not only did it flatter these individuals, but it encouraged them to participate in the same race to spiritual perfection as virgins and even gave them the chance to reap equal spiritual rewards at the Resurrection.[8]

6. 1 Sexual and Social Renunciation in Early Anglo-Saxon England

Aldhelm's spiritual guidance relates mainly to the formerly married individuals among his audience, because, as we saw in Chapter Three, these are likely to have comprised the majority of late seventh- to early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon religious entrants. Furthermore, Aldhelm and his associates, Eorcenwald (675-c.693) and Wilfrid (d. 709), appear to have helped to inspire some married individuals to renounce sexual activity and secular society.[9] The spirituality of formerly married individuals needed to be supported and legitimised because Christian sexual and social renunciation was a source of discontent in early Anglo-Saxon England.[10] In the first instance, some

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[6] A number of scholars have discussed how Aldhelm's teachings on pride affects his ranking of Christians, see, *LH*, p. 56; O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', p. 60; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 281-82; Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 65-66. However, Aldhelm's whole focus on interiority can be shown to have made the traditional distinctions between virgins and the chaste less pronounced.

[7] See above, pp. 99-101.

[8] For Aldhelm flattering and paying 'tribute' to his audience, see, *LH*, p. 56; O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', p. 60; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 282-84.

[9] See above, pp. 62-70.

[10] Note that renunciation has been a source of discontent in a number of historical periods. This is particularly the case during times of religious transition when renunciation can present a social or an ideological threat. For the late antique period, see, P. Brown, *The Body and Society*.

spouses objected to their partners' decisions to enter *monasteria*. According to Bede (c. 673-735), the wife of the would-be monk-king, Sæbbi of East Anglia, only conceded to let him renounce their marriage and the throne when he was ill and in old age.[11] Bede also tells us that it was only at length, with difficulty, and with the help of Wilfrid, that King Ecgfrith (670-85) gave Æthelthryth (d. 679) permission to become a nun at Coldingham.[12] Objections to partners entering the religious life are, however, likely to have been more widespread, for as we will see shortly, the canons associated with Archbishop Theodore (602-90) only permitted partners to dissolve their marriages and enter *monasteria* if both spouses were in agreement.[13]

As well as receiving a negative response among some members of the laity, the religious themselves were not necessarily convinced by the merits of sexual renunciation. As we have seen already, contemporary religious were breaking their vows of chastity – both voluntarily and by force.[14] Aldhelm therefore needed to demonstrate the value of virginity and chastity to his audience. More widely, he had to valorise chastity because the contemporary church appears to have been undecided on the issue of marriage renunciation. This is suggested by the fact that different prescriptions on the topic circulated in the late seventh to early eighth century. Thus, at the Synod of Hertford, convened in 672, Theodore issued a stringent decree on marriage annulment, stating that: *nullus coniugem propriam nisi, ut sanctum evangelium docet, fornicationis causa relinquat. Quod si quisquam propriam expulerit coniugem legitimo sibi matrimonio coniunctam, si Christianus esse recte voluerit, nulli alteri copuletur, sed ita permaneat, aut*

Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity (New York, NY, 1988), *passim*; for the Reformation, see, L. Roper, 'Sexual Utopianism in the German Reformation', *JEH*, 42 (3) (1991), 394-418; M. E. Wiesner, *Gender, Church and State in Early Modern Germany* (London and New York, 1998), pp. 36-46.

[11] *H. E.*, IV. 11, pp. 364-65.

[12] *Ibid.*, IV. 19, pp. 392-93; These two examples are also discussed by M. Lapidge, 'A Seventh-Century Insular Latin Debate Poem on Divorce', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 10 (1985), pp. 16-17; Although Lapidge also attributed a debate poem on divorce preserved in a fragmentary ninth-century manuscript to seventh-century England, it was subsequently shown to have been of Breton origin; also see, *LH*, pp. 54-55.

[13] *P. Theodori*, 'D' recension, nos. 112, 158a, pp. 248, 251; *P. Theodori*, 'U' recension, II. XII. 7-8 and II. XII. 13, (ed.), *Ibid.*, pp. 327-28; Lapidge, 'A Debate Poem on Divorce', pp. 16-18.

[14] See above, pp. 106-108, 121.

propriae reconcilietur coniugi.[15] According to this canon, therefore, fornication by a wife was the only grounds for a man to divorce. And yet, despite this, another canon associated with the Archbishop transmits a ruling by Basil of Caesarea (330-79), which states that a woman may only leave her adulterous husband in order to enter the religious life.[16] Thus, the canon states: *Mulieri non licet virum dimittere licet sit fornicator nisi forte pro monasterio. Basilius hoc iudicavit.*[17] Indeed, different recensions of the canons and penitential rulings ascribed to Theodore vary in their rulings on marriage renunciation.[18] By the mid-eighth century more than one version of these canons and penitentials (which were arguably related to Theodore's teachings, even if indirectly) were in existence. Two extant copies deserve our particular attention. The first are the *Iudicia Theodori* (hereafter recension 'D' after Finsterwalder's edition of the text), which comprise mainly canonical rulings. These are thought to represent a very early and perhaps near contemporary record of the Archbishop's teachings made by one of his Irish pupils. Second, there is the work by the 'Discipulus Umbrensium' (hereafter recension 'U' after Finsterwalder's edition of the text). The Discipulus is thought to have edited at least one existing version of Theodore's teachings, written by one or more of his pupils, no later than the mid-eighth century.

Whilst a number of rulings on marriage annulment differ in these two recensions, the canon concerning the couple who separated in order for one to enter the religious life was of direct relevance to Aldhelm's audience. In one ruling the D-recension stated that a woman could not take a religious vow without her husband's consent.[19] In another it

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[15] *H. E.*, IV. 5, no. 10, pp. 352-53 'Let none leave his own wife except for fornication, as the holy gospel teaches. If anyone puts away his own wife who is joined to him by lawful matrimony, he may not take another if he wishes to be a true Christian; but he must either remain as he is or be reconciled to his own wife'; for a discussion of the potential origins of this canon, see, M. Brett, 'Theodore and the Canon Law', in M. Lapidge, (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, CSASE, 11 (Cambridge, 1995), p. 127.

[16] *LH*, p. 55; Lapidge, 'A Debate Poem on Divorce', pp. 17-18.

[17] *P. Theodori* 'U', II. XII. 6, p. 327, 'It is not permitted for a woman to leave a husband, although he may be a fornicator, unless perchance for [entering] a *monasterium*. Basil gave this ruling' cf. (trans.), Lapidge, 'A Debate Poem on Divorce', p. 17, who suggests that it is not permissible for a wife to leave her husband 'unless he is an adulterer'.

[18] For these rulings and Theodore's association with them, see above, p. 101 n 139.

[19] *P. Theodori* 'D', no. 39, p. 242.

stated that if a husband or wife wanted to serve God, but the other did not, they could separate if both consented. It thus stated: *Vir et mulier in matrimonio si ille voluerit servire deo et illa noluerit aut illa voluerit et ille noluerit vel ille infirmatus sive illa infirmata tamen omnino consensu amborum separentur.*[20] The later U-recension included only the second of these canons.[21] In addition, although it stated that a husband or wife might end a first marriage in order to enter a *monasterium* with their spouses' consent, even so, it stated that it was not canonical, and it forbade the annulment of second marriages for religious reasons: *Potest tamen alter alteri licentiam dare accedere ad servitutem dei in monasterium et sibi nubere, si in primo connubio erit secundum Grecos et tamen non est canonicum sin autem in secundo non licet vivente viro vel uxore.*[22]

There are a number of possible reasons why the U-recension of the canons is less tolerant of marriage renunciation than the 'D' recension. For example, it may simply be because the scribes had access to different material, especially since conflicting and muddled accounts of Theodore's rulings were in circulation.[23] And yet given that both recensions depart from the Hertford canon and from the canon based on Basil's teaching, it is possible that different rulings on marriage annulment were circulating because churchmen had yet to agree on this issue. Legislation on the annulment of marriage for the religious life was therefore varied, and had yet to find fixed form. In part this may be because the Anglo-Saxons attached considerable value to adults' ability to marry and to produce heirs, so that the renunciation of these rites was controversial. However, it might also be attributed to the fact that marriage renunciation was, as we shall now see, in direct contravention with Christian teachings.

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[20] *Ibid.*, no. 112, p. 248 'A man and woman in marriage, if he wishes to serve God and she does not, or if she wishes and he does not, or if he is sick or she is sick, undoubtedly they may be separated with the agreement of both'.

[21] *P. Theodori* 'U', II. XII. 13, p. 328.

[22] *Ibid.*, II. XII. 8, p. 327, 'But according to the Greeks, it is possible that one may give license to another to go into a *monasterium* for the service of God, and he [or she] get married if he [or she] is in first marriage, but it is not canonical, but if however in a second [marriage], it is not permitted with the husband or wife alive'.

[23] The Discipulus was indeed inspired by Cummean's penitential; T. Charles-Edwards, 'The Penitential of Theodore and the *Iudicia Theodori*', in Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore*, pp. 151-55.

6. 2 The Christian Inheritance

Whilst rulings on the dissolution of marriage for the religious life are found in sixth-century secular law,[24] as Michael Lapidge has observed, many of Aldhelm's biblical and patristic models forbade marriage renunciation under any circumstances. Jesus (Matt. 5. 32 and 10. 9) and then Paul of Tarsus (I Cor VII. 10-11) prohibited divorce, even though it was customary among the Jewish.[25] These ideas on the indissolubility of the marriage bond were transmitted and developed by the church fathers and in some conciliar literature.[26] Indeed, even though Basil may have allowed a woman to enter the religious life if her husband had committed adultery, other eastern ascetic writers, such as Clement and Origen (c. 185-254), did not permit divorce on these grounds.[27] Furthermore, Gregory the Great entirely forbade the annulment of marriage to join *monasteria*, unless both partners mutually consented to convert and enter monastic communities (a ruling from which the Anglo-Saxons notably departed).[28] There was therefore a very limited patristic tradition on marriage renunciation for Aldhelm to adopt. Moreover, within patristic writings chaste widows ordinarily received an average-to-poor spiritual assessment.

As we saw in Chapter Four, the fourth-century church was troubled by urgent theological debates regarding how sexually continent Christians should be spiritually assessed in relation to the virgin ascetic elite. Christian authors generally commended sexual continence, but following the biblical parables in Matt. XIII. 8 and Marc. IV. 8, assigned virgins, widows and married individuals, 30, 60 or 100-fold spiritual rewards respectively.[29] However, the church fathers' spiritual assessments of sexually continent

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[24] P. L. Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church. The Christianisation of Marriage during the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden, 1994), 58-59, 138-39, 229-30 esp. Rulings on the dissolution of marriage are found in the code of Justinian I especially.

[25] Lapidge, 'A Debate Poem on Divorce', p. 14; also see, Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 41.

[26] A. Esmein, *Le Mariage en Droit Canonique* (2 vols, Paris, 1929), p. 65; *LH*, p. 54; Lapidge, 'A Debate Poem on Divorce', p. 14.

[27] C. Tibiletti, 'Marriage', in A. Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, (trans.), A. Walford, (2 vols, Cambridge, 1992), vol. I, p. 528.

[28] Reynolds, *Marriage*, pp. 140-41.

[29] *LH*, 55; O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', p. 59; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', p. 280; and see above, pp. 129-30.

and active Christians still varied. Let us consider, for example, the views of Aldhelm's exemplars Ambrose (c. 339-97), Jerome (c. 342-419), Augustine (354-430), Cassian (c. 360-c. 435) and Gregory the Great. Augustine was fairly accepting of those celibates who, like himself, had been sexually active.[30] Although he deemed virginity to be the most exalted sexual state, his teachings on the Fall united average Christians and ascetics, for he argued that both felt the physical burdens of the Original Sin, and, moreover, relied on God's grace for salvation. Gregory the Great likewise championed the cause of the Christian rank-and-file, for he held that all Christians had an important place in the church, and were capable of dedicating their lives to God, albeit to different degrees.[31] In contrast, Jerome, who passionately argued for the superiority of virginity, was particularly unsympathetic towards the formerly sexually active. Thus in his *Epistola ad Eustochium*, Jerome reminded Eustochium, his female charge, that her widowed sister Blesilla could no longer rejoice in the rewards of marriage, and, moreover, daily had to regret her loss of virginity and the spiritual rewards which she, as a chaste individual, could never receive.[32] Notably, negative attitudes towards the sexually active also had some currency in early Anglo-Saxon England, for as we have seen, Bede associated sex with spiritual pollution and weakness.[33]

Patristic writers' thoughts on virginity had a bearing on the type of spiritual guidance that they provided virgins and the chaste with. As a general rule, the staunch advocates of virginity believed that the body, rather than the mind, should be the focus of ascetic discipline. Jerome, for instance, lectured Eustochium that she must surround herself with women pale with fasting, fast daily herself and avoid wine entirely.[34] He also recommended sleep deprivation and encouraged Eustochium to read the Bible until overcome with exhaustion.[35] Not dissimilar advice is found in his predecessor Ambrose's *De Virginibus ad Marcellinam*. Ambrose, another ardent supporter of

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[30] See above, p. 129.

[31] C. Straw, *Gregory the Great* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 32, 43-44.

[32] Jerome, *Epistola ad Eustochium*, (ed.), I. Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, CSEL, LIV (Vienna, 1910), cap. XV, pp. 162-63.

[33] See above, pp. 148-49.

[34] Jerome, *Epistola ad Eustochium*, (ed.), Hilberg, cap. XVII, p. 164, ll. 16-17-p. 165, ll. 10-14.

[35] *Ibid.*, cap. XVII, p. 165, ll. 9-10.

virginity, told virgins to imitate the Virgin Mary, who, he claimed, fasted ceaselessly and slept when necessary, rather than when inclined to. Hence he states: *Quid ergo exequar ciborum parsimoniam, officiorum redundantiam, alterum ultra naturam superfuisse, alterum paene ipsi naturae defuisse, illic nulla intermissa tempora, hic congeminatos ieiunio dies? Et si quando reficiendi successisset voluntas, cibus plerumque obvius, qui mortem arceret, non delicias ministraret. Dormire non prius cupiditas quam necessitas fuit et tamen, cum quiesceret corpus vigil erat animus, qui frequenter in somnis aut lecta repetit aut somno interrupta continuat aut disposita gerit aut gerenda praenuntiat.*[36]

Whilst Ambrose and Jerome provided Aldhelm with models of asceticism based on 'one's ... mode of life, food and outward appearance',[37] Augustine, in contrast, offered him a model based on ascetics' inward disposition. Thus this bishop argued that after the Fall, all Christians, regardless of how devout, lost control of their will and therefore involuntary suffered a host of involuntary lusts, of which physically manifested sexual desire was one.[38] Since he was concerned chiefly with the conflict within man's soul, rather than within his body, he did not deem physical deprivation of the body to be a means to control sexuality.[39] Augustine's focus on the will prompted subsequent ascetic writers to generally shift their emphasis away from the physical body to its inner life. Indeed, it profoundly influenced Cassian and Gregory the Great, whose writings were in turn read avidly by Aldhelm.[40] Although Cassian refuted Augustine's

[36] Ambrose, *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*, (ed.), I. Cazzaniga, *S. Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi De virginibus libri tres* (Turin, 1948), II. II. 8, p. 38, 'And so why should I describe her frugality of food, her abundance of prayers, (the one overflowing beyond nature, the other almost falling short of nature), [and] there was no interval of time, [but] rather consecutive days with fasting? And when, if ever, the desire for refreshment would come, the food was mostly what came to hand, [and was taken] to prevent death, not to administer delicacies. Sleep was a necessity rather than so much a desire, but when her body was resting her spirit kept awake, and frequently in her sleep, either repeated the reading or continued those things she had interrupted to sleep or carried out what had been administered, or foretold what was to be carried out'.

[37] R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 39, said in respect of Jerome's views on what it was to be a monk, yet the same applies to his (and indeed, Ambrose's views) on virginity.

[38] Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 402-408.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 417-19; Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 57-62 esp.

[40] For Gregory, see, Straw, *Gregory the Great*, p. 49; R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 17, 40; For Cassian, see, S. M. Lake, 'The Influence of John Cassian on Early Continental and Insular Monasticism to *c.* AD. 817', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University

thoughts on the will and concupiscence,[41] 'interiority' also held primacy in his spiritual teachings. He therefore taught ascetics that physical chastity did not ensure spiritual purity,[42] but instead they would have to devote substantial effort towards achieving a state of total 'spiritual integrity', through a combination of both internal and external disciplines. These included, for example, the eradication of both conscious and unconscious evil thoughts, and the championing of inner virtue, together with fasting and manual labour.[43] Indeed, Cassian believed that visible outward denial was inextricably linked to monks' efforts towards inner spiritual discipline. Furthermore, Cassian proposed that monks achieved different levels of chastity depending on the degree to which they had defeated mentally and physically manifested lust.[44] As for Pope Gregory the Great, although he recognised the spiritual merits of physical asceticism, even so, he proposed that ascetic contemplation and self-control was the means to purity of the soul.[45] It was these contemplative inner practices, together with enforcement of the rules of chastity, poverty, obedience and perseverance, that characterised his recommended monastic regime.[46] Aldhelm therefore had a variety of approaches to asceticism from which to develop his spiritual guidance.[47]

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of Cambridge, 1996), pp. 140-42; *Idem.*, 'Knowledge of the Writings of John Cassian in early Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE*, 32 (2003), pp. 32-34, for Aldhelm's use of these authors, see above, p. 116.

[41] Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 420-22; P. Munz, 'John Cassian,' *JEH*, 11 (1960), pp. 8-11.

[42] T. Kardong, 'John Cassian's Teaching on Perfect Chastity', *The American Benedictine Review*, 30 (3) (1979), p. 255; for Cassian's discussion of chastity, and how it influenced Aldhelm, see, Lake, 'The Influence of John Cassian', p. 208.

[43] C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford and New York, 1998), pp. 41-61, citation at 42; For interior and exterior disciplines in Cassian's spiritual writings, see, P. Rousseau, 'Cassian, Contemplation and the Coenobitic Life', *JEH*, 26 (2) (1975), 113-26.

[44] Kardong, 'John Cassian's Teaching', pp. 249-63.

[45] Straw, *Gregory the Great*, pp. 10, 49-50, 51.

[46] Markus, *Gregory the Great*, p. 70.

[47] *LH*, pp. 52-56.

6. 3 Absence of Physical Ascetic Regimes

With a view to coercing virgins and the chaste, Aldhelm principally advised his audience to achieve mastery of the soul. As a result, he does not encourage physical ascetic regimes, which instead are conspicuous by their absence from the work.[48] Consider, for example, Aldhelm's advice for conquering gluttony, a vice that troubles him greatly. *Ingluvies* is one of only three vices (along with Pride and Vainglory) that Aldhelm discusses in depth in the prose *De virginitate*.[49] The battle against Gluttony is also the first and the lengthiest of those eight spiritual conflicts he instructs his audience to undertake in its verse counterpart.[50] The seriousness with which Aldhelm views Gluttony means that he even attributes the Fall of Mankind to this vice: an idea inspired foremost by Cassian, but also found in other patristic writers.[51]

And yet despite his concern with this vice, revealingly, Aldhelm foremost teaches his audience to conquer it by avoiding secular feasting and drinking habits, rather than by rigorous fasting! They must therefore avoid *nectaris ...pocula mulsa* and *defruti pocula*,[52] that is 'cups of mead' or 'new wine'. Drunkenness, he warns, is a vice, *Ingluviem dapibus quae semper pascit opimis*;[53] indeed, Gluttony devours *dulcis ... fercula victus* and *stomachum farcire studet praepinguibus extis*.[54] Aldhelm's choice of lexicon here is revealing. Elsewhere in his double treatise Aldhelm uses *ferculum*,

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[48] He is concerned, however, that his audience does not indulge their bodies physically. As also noted by Schneider, see, D. B. Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life: A Study of the Status and Position of Women in an Early Medieval Society' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1985), pp. 75-76.

[49] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 241, ll. 3-16.

[50] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2482-2543, pp. 454-56.

[51] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 239, ll. 12-15; *Ibid.*, cap. XII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 241, ll. 3-6; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2494-2500, pp. 454-55; For Aldhelm's indebtedness to Cassian's *Collationes*, see, *AO*, p. 241 n 2, and notes on pp. 454-55, *passim*. For its occurrence in other patristic authors, see above, p. 131.

[52] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2541, p. 456, (trans.), *LR*, p. 159 'honey-sweet draughts of nectar'; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2512, p. 455 (trans.), *LR*, p. 158 'cups of new wine'.

[53] *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2489, p. 454, (trans.), *LR*, p. 158 'which always nourishes Gluttony with sumptuous feasts'.

[54] *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2490, p. 454, (trans.), *LR*, p. 158 'courses of sweet food'; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2492, p. 454, (trans.), *LR*, p. 158 'is eager to stuff the stomach with rich delicacies'.

meaning a dish or course of food, in a regal context, when mentioning the *fercula regum* and *regalia fercula*.[55] Similarly, mead or new wine is a drink which elsewhere in his double treatise Aldhelm associates with royal feasts.[56] Since religious houses will have celebrated liturgical feasts, Aldhelm is not berating feasting *per se*, but rather the persistence of secular feasting habits, arguably of regal proportions. This suggests that some elements of his audience were reluctant to forsake these secular customs. It also indicates that he encourages his audience to eat moderately, rather than to mortify their bodies through fasting.[57] To this end, it is important that only 7 saintly and biblical *exempla*, out of the 116 catalogued in both texts of the double treatise, illustrate the virtue of fasting.[58] Food deprivation is also enumerated amongst his saints' tortures.[59] Furthermore, Aldhelm transmits only selected examples of fasting saints from his principal literary models for these accounts. For example, he did not relay from Rufinus (c. 345-410) that John the Hermit was very thin because he ate only in the evening, and then sparingly. Nor did he transmit from Sulpicius Severus (363-425) Martin's discipline in fasting.[60] Although Aldhelm does on one occasion praise the extreme abstemiousness practised by perfect virgins, even so, this is an exception,[61] and elsewhere in his work the strict fasting recommended by Ambrose and Jerome is absent.

Aside from encouraging moderation in feasting and drinking, Aldhelm provides his audience with no other physical ascetic regime. It is worth noting, however, that he

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[55] Aldhelm, *Enigmata*, XX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 106, l. 3, (trans.), *LR*, p. 74 'the food [feasts] of kings'; *Idem.*, *PdV*, cap. IV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 231, ll. 17-18, (trans.), *LH*, p. 61 'royal feasts'.

[56] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. IV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 231, l. 17.

[57] Cf. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 66-67; Note that in early Anglo-Saxon England it is men who are principally associated with the drinking of alcohol, see above, pp. 157-58.

[58] For these saints, see below, appendices I.1-I.5, pp. 231-35.

[59] See, for example, Aldhelm, cap. XXXV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 277, ll. 13-17 at l. 16.

[60] For John the Hermit, compare, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. XXIX, pp. 267-68, and *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 827-41, pp. 388-89, with Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, (ed.), E. Scultz-Flügel, *Patristische Texte und Studien*, 34 (Berlin, 1990), cap. I. 2. 10, pp. 254-55, ll. 139-45. For St Martin, compare, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXVI, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 260-62, and *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 677-711, pp. 381-83, with Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S Martini*, (ed.), J. Fontaine, *Sulpice Sévère, Vie de Saint Martin, Sources Chrétiennes*, 133-135 (3 vols, Paris, 1967), vol. I, cap. XXVI, pp. 312-13.

[61] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XIV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 243, ll. 16-17.

makes two passing remarks on sleep. Thus he tells us the events that happened after Silvester, *membra sopori dedisset et debitum naturae solveret* and he alludes to the vision that occurred after Martin, *nocturnae membra quieti dedisset.*[62] Aldhelm's reference to sleep as the 'debt of nature' and 'rest' suggests that he considered it to be a necessary and natural activity. Indeed, his reference to Martin's nocturnal rest departs from Sulpicius Severus, who instead depicts this saint fulfilling God's work day and night so that he only slept as nature demanded.[63] Certainly Aldhelm does not encourage sleep deprivation.

Aldhelm's moderate treatment of physical ascetic regimes distinguishes him from some of his patristic exemplars: Ambrose and Jerome especially, but also Cassian - his *Institutiones coenobiorum* (419-26) in particular - for many chapters of this text outline outer monastic regimes.[64] Aldhelm's lack of concern for physical asceticism also sets his guidance apart from some contemporary Anglo-Saxon regimes, especially those inspired by Celtic asceticism. The Irishman Adamnan at Coldingham, for example, is said to have been so concerned with prayer that he only ate and drank on Thursdays and Sundays, and would spend nights awake in prayer and vigils. Notably these actions were undertaken to free himself *internis peccatorum vinculis*, which weighed upon him heavily.[65] Furthermore, St Cuthbert (d. 687), who also adhered to Irish monastic traditions, purportedly undertook heavy labour and stayed up all night in prayer, even immersing himself neck-deep in water whilst doing so.[66]

Aldhelm's reticence on physical ascetic regimes does not mean that he did not want his audience to undertake any such acts. In the least, his addressees will have fasted on various feast days and some perhaps undertook manual labour.[67] Since

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[62] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 258, ll. 23-24, (trans.), *LR*, p. 83 'had given his limbs over to sleep and was paying the debt of nature'; *Ibid.*, cap. XXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 261, l. 1, (trans.), *LH*, p. 85 'had given his limbs over to nocturnal rest'.

[63] Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S Martini*, (ed.), Fontaine, *Sulpicius Severus*, cap. XXVI, pp. 312-13.

[64] See, for example, Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, (ed.), M. Petschenig, *CSEL*, 17 (Vienna, 1888), II, caps. I-XVIII, III; *Ibid.*, caps. I-XII.

[65] *H. E.*, IV. 25, pp. 422-23 'from the inward bonds of sin'.

[66] Anon., *Vita S Cuthberti*, (ed. and trans.), B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, (Cambridge, 1940), III. 1, pp. 96-97; Bede, *Vita S Cuthberti*, (ed. and trans.), *Ibid.*, cap. X, pp. 188-91.

[67] Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', pp. 68-80.

Aldhelm's text was one among many advocating sexual renunciation and asceticism, his audience could have used it in conjunction with works recommending external religious regimes, as well as alongside the practical guidance provided by their monastic rules. However, the absence of physical ascetic regimes in his work does suggest that in his view spiritual perfection was to be achieved foremost through the soul rather than through the body. It may also suggest that some contemporary monastic communities regarded intellectual work to be more important than physical and manual labour.[68]

6. 4 Inward Spiritual Regimes

In the opening preamble to the *Prosa de virginitate* Aldhelm offers the images of five athletes who achieve sporting victories through their physical exertions. He then makes the following unequivocal statement: *Et quidem universa haec, quae per gimnosofistas exerceri deprompsimus inter scolares saecularium disciplinas, apud vestri discipulatus industriam non exterioris hominis motibus aguntur, sed interioris gestibus geruntur.*[69] At the very beginning of his spiritual guide, therefore, he instructs all of his audience to base their lives upon invisible religious exertions. This concern dominates his texts. Aldhelm also expects the religious to practise contemplation as a community, and during the course of his double treatise, recommends different inner spiritual exertions. For example, he regards the singing of psalms in secret to be a praiseworthy contemplative activity.[70] However, Aldhelm takes more interest in his audiences' need to study and to thwart inner vice.

A number of Aldhelm's saints exemplify the virtues of assiduous study and learnedness.[71] Throughout his double treatise Aldhelm encourages his audience to read. This is illustrated, for example, in his suggestion that the only way to understand the

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[68] *Ibid.,* pp. 73, 75-76.

[69] Aldhelm, *PdV,* cap. III, (ed.), *AO,* p. 230, ll. 24-26, (trans.), *LH,* p. 60 'And truly all these things, which we have singled out as being performed by athletes among the teachable skills belonging to worldly matters, are not, according to the industry of your discipline, performed with the motions of the outer man, but with the actions of the inner man'.

[70] *Ibid.,* cap. XIV, (ed.), *AO,* p. 243, ll. 17-18.

[71] See below, appendices I.1-I.5, pp. 242-46.

true glories of the saints is to read about them. Hence, regarding St Ambrose he exclaims: *Qualis autem vel quantus idem patriarcha virtutum gloria et miraculorum signis effulserit, neminem reor expertum, nisi qui gesta conversationis illius a Paulino, viro venerabili, digesta didicerit.*[72] In both texts of the double treatise Aldhelm also cites further reading for his audience to pursue,[73] and, moreover, encourages them to defeat *Accidia*, which undermines diligent reading.[74] More widely, in the prose text he praises study in prophetic texts, ancient law, patristic exegesis, histories, chronicles, grammar, spelling and metrics.[75]

The way in which Aldhelm expects his audience to study (his own double treatise for one), and its importance as a communal contemplative act, is clear from the athletic images with which Aldhelm opens his *Prosa de virginitate*. In chapter two he compares his immediate addressees' intensive studies in Holy Scripture to the remarkably strenuous exertions of five athletes. These are, first, a muscle-bound and dexterous wrestler, who sweats profusely whilst grappling with a partner; second, an archer, who shoots directly and successfully at a fixed target; third, a group of panting runners, one of who, confidant in his own ability, overtakes his participants and victoriously wins the race; fourth, a rider on a spirited horse, who with a crowd of associates speeds around a course at a remarkable pace; and, finally, an oarsman, surrounded by a crowd of fellow athletes, who are incited by the striking hammer of the master-rower (figuratively Christ), who swiftly drives their sailing vessel through the ocean.[76]

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[72] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 260, ll. 13-15, (trans.), *LH*, pp. 84-85 'In what way and how greatly this same Patriarch shone through the glory of his virtues and the signs of his miracles, I think no-one (will have) discovered, except the person who has studied the accomplishments of his life as they are set forth by the venerable Paulinus [i.e. in Paulinus's *Vita S Ambrosii*]'.

[73] See, for example, *Ibid.*, cap. XIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 242, ll. 9-14; As Schneider has rightly proposed, it is not improbable that Aldhelm's addressees in fact asked him for further reading, Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', p. 76.

[74] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2674-77, p. 461.

[75] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. IV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 232, ll. 8-26 (note Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. IV, p. 232, l. 9), see, *AMA*, cap. IV, p. 53, l. 23).

[76] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. II, (ed.), *AO*, p. 230, ll. 5-23.

Aldhelm's use of athletes as a metaphor for interior spirituality provides one example of where his treatment of virginity and chastity departs from patristic writers on these subjects. Even though his images of Christians running in the race of life is indebted to St Paul (1 Cor. IX. 24-26), his athletic imagery is derived from Vergil (70-19 BC).[77] Whilst the metaphor of the athlete was used in Christian writings to represent the curbing of sexual desire, this is not Aldhelm's primary meaning here.[78] Instead he is concerned that his audience mimic these athletes' agility, hard work, discipline and determination, in the mental gymnastics of reading and studying.[79] By describing his sportsmen as 'participants', 'companies' and 'companions', and by offering the image of the rower surrounded by fellow oarsmen, with Christ as their captain, Aldhelm reminded his audience of the competitive, yet also collaborative nature of their particular contest: *congruis quoque operum affectibus {effectibus} concurramus.*[80] He also warns that they will receive spiritual rewards based on the quality of their inner virtues. Therefore, Aldhelm's athletic metaphors epitomise his principal spiritual teachings: foremost he is concerned with the actions of the 'inner man'. In a communal forum the religious must persevere in ceaseless inner disciplines upon which Christ, their spiritual trainer, will ultimately judge them and bestow them spiritual rewards.[81] These same teachings are reiterated in the spiritual battle against inner vice, which, as we saw in Chapter Five, he expects the religious to undertake.

We have observed already how Aldhelm instructs his audience to attack personified and animalistic vices in the *Prosa de virginitate*, and how in the verse

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[77] *Ibid.,* cap. II, (ed.), *AO*, p. 230, l. 19; *AO*, p. 230 n 4; M. Manitius, 'Zu Aldhelm und Baeda,' *Sitzungsberichte der phil.-hist. Classe der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien'*, 112 (1886), p. 554.

[78] Cf. Dempsey, 'Aldhem's Social Theology', p. 60; admittedly, some of his imagery, such as wrestling, rowing, and horse racing, was, however, used in sexual metaphors, see, J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London, 1982), pp. 144, 157-58, 166, 167.

[79] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. III, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 230-31.

[80] *Ibid.,* cap. XVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 248, l. 1, (trans.), *LH*, p. 75 'let us also run together with harmonising desires [causes] for action', (with Gwara's lexical change at *AMA*, cap. XVIII, p. 213, l. 41).

[81] For Christ as spiritual trainer and the ship's captain in this passage, see, S. Gwara, 'Old English *Helm, Hamel, Healm*: Three Lexical Problems in Glosses to Aldhelm's Prose *De Virginitate'*, *Notes and Queries*, 37 (2) (1990), p. 151.

counterpart he devotes 314-lines to providing them with a battle campaign.[82] Coming towards the end of Aldhelm's double treatise, this spiritual battle provides a memorable apogee to his spiritual guidance. Whilst his battle, on the one hand, envisages ranks of male and female religious, on the other hand, it is fought by virgins and the chaste. Indeed, Aldhelm is predominantly concerned with how the vices damage virgins and chaste individuals' hearts and minds.[83] These body parts, which in biblical and patristic usage were deemed responsible for inner thought,[84] are a place where his audience might find some common ground, despite their different social and sexual histories.

The very inclusion of a spiritual battle in a work on sexual and social renunciation is important. To my knowledge, Aldhelm's lengthy and combative spiritual contest is unparalleled in his late antique models on virginity and chastity. Instead, he drew inspiration from texts outside this canon of literature. As a number of scholars have shown, his main literary debts for the battle were to Prudentius' allegorical epic *Psychomachia* (404/5),[85] and to Cassian's *Conlationes* (426-28) (book V in particular), although he knew Cassian's *Institutiones coenobiorum* (419-26) as well.[86] To a lesser extent, he is thought to have drawn upon Gregory the Great's

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[82] See above, pp. 167-68; for their personified and animalistic characteristics, see, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 239-40 and *Ibid.*, cap. XII, pp. 240-41 (for Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in chapter XII, see, *AM*, p. 311); Aldhelm, *CdV*, ll. 2446-2761, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 452-65.

[83] This even includes physically manifested vices, such as Gluttony. See, for example, Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2627, 2646, 2650, 2756-57, pp. 459-60, 465.

[84] A. Guillaumont, 'Le Coeur,' in F. Cavallera and J. de Guibert (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (17 vols, Paris, 1937-1995), vol. II, p. 2282; *Ibid.*, 'Coeur et Âme', p. 2283; *Ibid.*, 'Coeur et Esprit', p. 2286; J. Chatillon, 'Cor et Cordus Affectus', in Cavallera and De Guibert (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. II, pp. 2288-90.

[85] For the more recent literature on this topic, see, M. W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (East Lansing, MI, 1952, repr. 1967), p. 63; *LR*, 99-100; G. R. Wieland, 'Aldhelm's *De Octo Vitiis Principalibus* and Prudentius's *Psychomachia*', *Medium Ævum*, 55 (1) (1986), 85-92; G. R. Wieland, 'The Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts of Prudentius's *Psychomachia*', *ASE*, 16 (1987), pp. 214-16; O' Sullivan, 'The Psychomachian Tradition', pp. 317-28; for Aldhelm having access to Prudentius's corpus of works, see, A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE, 8 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 171-78, 220, 231-32 esp.

[86] For the most recent and comprehensive statement on Aldhelm's debt to Cassian, see, Lake, 'The Influence of John Cassian', pp. 205-211 and for the influence of Cassian in his presentation of the vices, see, *Idem.*, 'Knowledge of the Writings of John Cassian', p. 34. Lake proposes that Aldhelm knew at least the first ten books of the *Conlationes*.

Moralia in Iob.[87] Prudentius appears, foremost, to have inspired Aldhelm's battle imagery and his decision to pitch virtues against vices in a bloodthirsty spiritual battle. However, Aldhelm's selection of vices in the *Carmen de virginitate* was inspired chiefly by the sin-list that Cassian transmitted to the west. This comprised: *Ingluvies Ventris, Fornicatio, Philargiria, Ira, Tristitia, Accidia, Cenodoxia* and *Superbia.* Aldhelm made only one minor departure from this sequence, by substituting *Fornicatio* for the not dissimilar *Blanda.* Yet Aldhelm, like early medieval writers more generally, was also inspired by Gregory the Great's influential seven-fold scheme of capital sins. Following Gregory, therefore, he changed Cassian's sequence of the sins by placing Pride, *Superbia,* as the first and principal vice, and by discussing Envy, *Invidia,* within this vice.[88] And yet whilst Aldhelm selected ideas on the vices he was not inspired by his patristic models' choice of virtues. In fact, no influential list of virtues circulated in the early medieval west and those that did developed independently of work on the vices. Aldhelm's choice of virtues are therefore revealing.[89]

Virginity, as O'Sullivan has observed, is the most commanding virtue in Aldhelm's spiritual battle.[90] However, in the prose text, in particular, Aldhelm envisages not merely virgins, but also chaste adult 'recruits' engaged in perpetual warfare against inner vice.[91] These combatants are presented as two allied corps in a monastic army. They are therefore described as, *tironum Christi catervas et bellicosas virginum cohortes* in the prose *De virginitate,*[92] and as, *virgines, tirones Dei, miles Christi* (a selection of descriptions that could describe both virgins and the chaste) in its

[87] *AO,* p. 242 n 4, p. 453 n 2454; Wieland, 'Aldhelm's *De Octo Vitiis Principalibus*', pp. 87-88; Lake, 'Knowledge of the Writings', p. 34.

[88] For all of these points, see, Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins,* pp. 70-71, 74, 79; *LR,* pp. 99-100; Wieland, 'Aldhelm's *De Octo Vitiis Principalibus*', pp. 87-90; O' Sullivan, 'The Psychomachian Tradition', pp. 314-328.

[89] O' Sullivan, 'The Psychomachian Tradition', p. 316.

[90] *Ibid.,* p. 313, 315-17, 329-33; see also, *LR,* p. 99.

[91] Whereas Prudentius located the battle in the generic Christian soul, Aldhelm, who was perhaps inspired by Cassian, presented it as a spiritual battle to be fought by professed religious.

[92] Aldhelm, *PdV,* cap. XII, (ed.), *AO,* p. 240, ll. 19-20, (trans.), p. 68 'the throngs of Christ's recruits and the warlike squadrons of virgins'.

verse counterpart.[93] In the prose text, therefore, Aldhelm's spiritual battle is crafted to involve the spiritual efforts of the entire monastic community, regardless of their sexual state. His decision to depict *Virginitas* and virgins and chaste individuals engaging in spiritual warfare departs from his sources. Neither Prudentius, Cassian nor Gregory the Great cited *Virginitas* or *Castitas* as virtues, although Prudentius did pitch *Pudicitia* (among other virtues) against the vices.[94]

Indeed, Aldhelm uses the battle against vice as a means of spiritually uniting his audience, regardless of their different sexual statuses. In the prose text, in particular, the whole community are encouraged to take up the virtuous armaments of spiritual contemplation and to use these to collectively attack the vices in their souls. Success in battle, Aldhelm teaches, is to be achieved by the united efforts of the community, as *coenubialis militiae pugiles*.[95] Indeed, the unified action of virgins and chaste alike is fundamental, because they are also expected to fight a battle for the entire Church, and, moreover, the world, against the malevolent forces of the devil and his legions: *adversus principatus Leviathan et potestates tenebrarum* (an idea based on Eph. 6, 12).[96] Aldhelm's description of spiritual battle accordingly complements and describes in greater depth the ideas of communal exertions which he raises in his images of athletes working together.[97] In the true spirit of coenobitic monasticism, individuals achieve perfection through their membership and involvement in the community.

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[93] For 'virgins' *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2450, p. 453; for 'Soldiers of God', *Ibid.*, ll. 2645, 2654, 2703, pp. 460, 463.

[94] Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 65; Wieland, 'Aldhelm's *De Octo Vitiis Principalibus*', p. 88; Note, however, that Cassian and Gregory, like Aldhelm, envisage their audience, rather than the virtues, thwarting the vices. Furthermore, Aldhelm followed Prudentius' pairing of a small number of virtues and vices (witness, for example, *Pervigil mentis* pitched against *Accidia*, and *Humilitas* against *Superbia*), see, *AO*, p. 461 n 2671, p. 464 n 2752; *LR*, 99; Wieland, 'The Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts of Prudentius's *Psychomachia*', p. 217 n 13.

[95] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 240, l. 9, (trans.), *LH*, p. 68 'combatants in the monastic army'.

[96] *Ibid.*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 240, ll. 14-15, (trans.), *LH*, p. 68 'against the dominion of Leviathan and the powers of darkness'; for this theme also see, *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. XIII, p. 241, ll. 17-24-p. 242, ll. 1-9, (note Gwara's minor change to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XIII, p. 242, l. 6), see, *AMA*, cap. XIII, p. 155, l. 20); Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 2465, p. 453.

[97] It is, moreover, found in his image of the bee, see, *Idem.*, *PdV*, cap. VI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 233, ll. 7-9; and a discussion of the metaphor by O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 291-93.

Virgins, moreover, are not seen as the elite forces and the chaste as the rank-and-file, for, instead, both must fight together.

Aldhelm's interest in interiority crops up elsewhere in his corpus of extant writings. For instance, in his letter to an unknown bishop – arguably Hædde (676-705/6) - Aldhelm discusses his studies at Canterbury, which includes exploring the innermost (*internus*) parts of the law, and devoting prolonged consideration to the concealed (*arcanus*) nature of subjects.[98] Moreover, his *Engimata* explore the inner world, for, as Lapidge has observed, 20 of Aldhelm's 100 'mysteries' refer to the object's *viscera*, that is 'the internal organs' or 'womb'.[99] The *Enigmata* are thought to be Aldhelm's earliest work and his letter to the unknown bishop was written whilst he was a student.[100] It is possible, therefore, that he held an interest in the interior life throughout his career. Yet even if this is the case, in his double treatise *De virginitate* Aldhelm's focus on interiority has direct implications for his audience. As well as providing them with a unifying religious regime, it gives virgins and the chaste a distinctive identity, different from that of married individuals, who, as we saw in Chapter Four, he instead associates with carnality and worldliness.[101] Indeed, this is further evident if we consider Aldhelm's use of the noun *castitas*.

6. 5 Aldhelm's Use of the Noun Castitas

As I have suggested previously, Aldhelm's patristic exemplars on virginity generally classified Christians into three distinct grades: *virginitas*, *viduitas* and *iugalitas*, a model from which he made a major departure by substituting the second category of *viduitas* with *castitas*.[102] Aldhelm's choice of label for this second sexual state is significant. It is true that he borrowed this label, and indeed his definition of the second sexual state, from a joint *passio* of Saints Victoria and Anatholia, which he may

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[98] Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Leutherium*, (ed.), *AO*, p. 476, l. 9, p. 478, l. 4; for the possibility that Hædde is the recipient of this letter, see above, pp. 26-27.

[99] *LR*, p. 65; for the riddles, see, Aldhelm, *Enigmata, AO*, pp. 97-149.

[100] *LH*, p. 13.

[101] See above, pp. 134-43 esp.

[102] See above, p. 192.

have read at the school at Canterbury.[103]   Nevertheless, Aldhelm's choice and application of the noun *castitas* is significant.

For Aldhelm, *viduitas*, the label used by the majority of patristic authors, was too limited a term for the second sexual state. He therefore chose *castitas* because this label not only included widows and widowers who had scorned re-marriage, but also those individuals who had renounced their marriage for the religious life.[104]   In the prose *De virginitate* Aldhelm thus defines *castitas* as that, *quae pactis sponsalibus sortita matrimonii commercia regni caelestis causa contempsit.*[105]   In its verse counterpart he describes, in more depth, the chaste:

> *... nupti qui iam conubia spernunt*
>
> *Ac indulta sibi scindunt retinacula luxus*
>
> *Lurida linquentes spurcae consortia carnis,*
>
> *Ut castis proprium conservent moribus aevum,*
>
> *Dum conexa prius thalamorum vincula rumpunt;*[106]

Aldhelm's choice of the label *castitas* for the second sexual state is significant when we consider that Bede instead labeled it *continentia*, a noun suggesting the repressing of passion and desire. Arguably Aldhelm chose *castitas* because it foremost refers to moral purity and integrity, but also to sexual purity, therefore, neatly embracing his wider concern with interior spirituality. Indeed, in many patristic texts *castitas* is enumerated alongside such qualities as *fides, patientia, pax, bonitas* and

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[103] C. V. Franklin, 'Theodore and the *Passio S. Anastasii*', in Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore*, pp. 186-91; Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 64-65; For earlier debate on the source of Aldhelm's borrowing, see above, p. 130 n 64.

[104] *LH*, pp. 55-56; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 280-82; for Aldhelm's concern for widows, see, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 242, l. 21-p. 243, ll. 1-6 and *Ibid.*, cap. LVII, p. 316, ll. 23-25-p. 317, ll. 1-13 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. LVII, p. 317, ll. 3, 13), see, *AM*, cap. LVII, p. 731, l. 9, p. 733, l. 22).

[105] *Ibid.*, cap. XIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, ll. 3-4, (trans.), *LH*, p. 75 'which, having been assigned to marital contracts, has scorned the commerce of matrimony for the sake of the heavenly kingdom'.

[106] *Idem., CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 92-96, p. 357, (trans.), *LR*, p. 105 'who having once been married reject the union and sever the restraining bonds of indulgence allowed to them, abandoning the lurid associations of impure flesh so that they may preserve a lasting age when they rend the chains of marriage previously enjoined'.

pudicitia as a virtue of the spirit and the soul.[107] Furthermore, Cassian, whose writings showed great concern for the interior man, claimed that once the monk had thwarted all his vices with virtues, lust and fornication would be expelled from the heart and *castitas* would take their place.[108]

During the course of his double treatise, Aldhelm refers to *castus* marriage on merely one occasion.[109] All of his references to *castitas* instead apply to both virgins and chaste individuals. As well as refer to the second sexual state as *castitas*, therefore, he also refers to *secundum castitatis gradum* in the prose text and *castorum ...ordo secundum* in the verse.[110] As for virginity, among other references, he states that the virgin birth was made possible without the loss of Mary's *castitas*, and that those virgins who embrace physical and spiritual integrity wholeheartedly will enter heaven *cum caterva castae vexillationis* carrying the standard of *castitas*.[111] Aldhelm's decision to associate *castitas* overwhelmingly with the first and second sexual states is significant, when we consider that his patristic exemplars use it with reference to virgins, chaste and married individuals. Among Aldhelm's patristic literary models, for example, Ambrose and Augustine use *castitas* with respect to virginity and widowhood,[112] whilst Augustine uses it frequently when discussing marriage.[113] In his

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[107] A search for *castitas* in the *Cetedoc Library of Christian Latin Texts: Database for the Western Latin Tradition* (Turnhout, 2000) (consulted May 21st, 2003), finds many references to authors using *castitas* in this sense, see, for example, Cetedoc entries for *castitas* nos. 3, 8, 11.

[108] Cassian, *Conlationes*, (ed.), M. Petschenig, CSEL, 13 (Vienna, 1886), V. XXIII (2), p. 201.

[109] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 242, p. 363.

[110] *Idem., PdV*, cap. XIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 242, ll. 17-18, (trans.), *LH*, p. 70 'the second grade of chastity'; *Idem., CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 91, p. 357, (trans.), *LR*, p. 105 'a second order of the chaste'.

[111] *Idem., PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. XXII, p. 253, ll. 20-21, 23, (trans.), *LH*, p. 79 'with the company of chaste soldiers'; see also, his reference to the *castitas* of his female virgin exemplars, a reference introduced into Ehwald's edition by Gwara. Compare, *AO*, cap. XXXIX, p. 292, l. 1 and *AMA*, cap. XXXIX, p. 579, ll. 13-14.

[112] With to *virginitas*, see, for example, Ambrose, *De virginibus ad Marcellinam*, (ed.), Cazzaniga, I. V. 21, p. 10, ll. 25-26; *Ibid.*, I. VI. 30, p. 15, ll. 16-19 at l. 18; *Ibid.*, I. VIII. 51-52, p. 27, ll. 15-18 and Augustine, *Sermo* CCXIII, cap. VII. 7 (ed.), PL, 38 (Paris, 1845), col. 1064; with reference to *viduitas*, see, Ambrose, *De viduis*, cap. II. 11, (ed.), PL, 16 (Paris, 1845), col. 238; *Ibid.*, V. 30, col. 243; *Ibid.*, IX. 57, col. 251 and Augustine, *De bono coniugali*, (ed.), I. Zycha, *Sancti Aureli Augustini*, CSEL, XXXXI (V. III) (Vienna, 1900), cap. XXIII. 30, p. 225.

[113] Note that the Cetedoc concordance of Christian Latin texts includes 123 hits for Augustine on *castitas* (nos. 90-213), which comprises some third of all its entries for this noun (as consulted May 21st 2003).

De bono coniugali, for example, a work which Aldhelm was certainly familiar with, Augustine states that, *decus ergo coniugale est castitas procreandi et reddendi carnalis debiti fides: hoc est opus nuptiarum*[114] and that, *melior est castitas celibum quam castitas nuptiarum.*[115]

In late antiquity chaste marriage generally meant faithful marriage which was uncorrupted by adultery and incest, rather than individuals living together in sexless marriage.[116] This is what Aldhelm no doubt means in his reference to those married individuals who *iuste vivunt castorum iure tororum*, for, as we will recall, he warned his audience against the sins of adultery and incest.[117] Certainly Aldhelm did not encourage chaste spiritual marriages. This is suggested, first, from the fact that the concept of spiritual marriage is not included in his definition of the second sexual grade, for he describes the chaste scorning and rejecting marriage using the verbs *contemnere* and *spernere*.[118] Elsewhere in his texts he uses these same verbs to describe his saints' spurning of marriage offers.[119] Thus, as we saw in Chapter Four, Aldhelm remarks how when faced with a marriage proposal, Eugenia *spurca sterquilinia sprevit, ut proiecta peripsema contempsit.*[120] As for Eulalia, for the sake of her virginity she vehemently *nuptialis copulae contubernia sprevit.*[121] Aldhelm's use of the same lexicon here is arguably deliberate: his saintly models exemplify the virtue of total marriage rejection which some members of his audience follow by leaving their marriages for the religious

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[114] Augustine, *De bono coniugali*, (ed.), Zycha, *Sancti Augustini*, cap. XI. 12, p. 204 'The glory of marriage is the chastity of procreation and faith in rendering the carnal debt: this is the work of marriage'.

[115] *Ibid.*, cap. XXII. 27, p. 222 'the chastity of the unmarried is better than the chastity of the married'.

[116] C. Leyser, pers. comm. Cf. D. Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, 1993), *passim*.

[117] Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 242, p. 363, (trans.), *LR*, p. 108 'live justly by the right of chaste marriages'; for his warnings against incest and adultery, see above, pp. 143-45.

[118] Cf. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 63-64; *AM*, pp. 55-56.

[119] Aldhelm *PdV*, cap. XIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, l. 4; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 92, p. 357.

[120] *Idem.*, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. XLIV, p. 296, ll. 19-21, (trans.), *LH*, p. 110 'spurned (the idea) like foul excrement; like tossed-out garbage she scorned it'.

[121] *Ibid.*, cap. XLVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 300, l. 13, (trans.), *LH*, p. 113 'rejected the companionship of the marriage bond'.

life or, in the case of widows, by avoiding re-marriage. They do not epitomise the idea of individuals living in sex-free marriage. Indeed, as we saw earlier, Aldhelm regards wedlock as a union, *quae ad propagandam posteritatis sobolem* and *ob liberorum posteritatem*: thus as a union for producing offspring.[122] He also repeatedly stresses the importance of marriage for childbearing. As such, it is possible that Aldhelm, like Augustine before him and Ælfric (c. 950-c.1010) after him, thought that married individuals should be sexually active, with total abstinence instead the preserve of monks, nuns and clerics.[123] To this end it is finally worth noting that Aldhelm is not especially keen to depict celibate spiritual marriages. Whilst he does present Chrysanthus, Julian and Amos living in chaste marriages with their wives (arguably, in part, to show that men and women could live alongside each other chastely in the religious life), his patristic models offered him more examples of chaste marriage than he chose to transmit. Thus he does not refer to Cecilia's spiritual marriage in his *Prosa de virginitate* and in both texts of the double treatise he chooses not to transmit the stories of Amos's and Malchus's spiritual marriages from Rufinus and Jerome respectively.[124]

It is, however, also possible that Aldhelm focused on the *castitas* of virgins and the chaste in order to appeal to the shared spiritual and sexual identities of his religious addressees, and moreover, to emphasise that their lives were distinct from secular and sexually active society. Whether intentional or not, it also fits neatly with Aldhelm's suggestion that virgins and the chaste were capable of receiving comparable spiritual rewards at Judgement. Indeed, we shall now turn to consider how Aldhelm's interior spiritual advice intersects with his spiritual evaluation of his religious audience.

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[122] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, ll. 4-5, (trans.), *LH*, p. 75, 'which, for propagating the progeny of posterity'; *Ibid.*, cap. IX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, l. 2, (trans.), *LH*, p. 66 'for the issue of children'; and see above, pp. 146-48.

[123] P. Jackson, 'Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: A Reconsideration of the *Life of Æthelthryth*, lines 120-130', *ASE*, 29 (2000), 235-60.

[124] For Amos' spiritual marriage, see, Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, (ed.), Scultz-Flügel, caps. 1.2-1.4, pp. 375-76; for Malchus, see, Jerome, *Vita Malchi Monachi Captivi*, (ed.), C. C. Mierow in R. E. Arnold (ed.), *Classical Essays Presented to James A. Kleist* (St Louis, MO, 1946), caps. VI, pp. 44-49.

6. 6 Spiritually Grading Virgins and the Chaste

Aldhelm did not merely relabel the second category in his model of spiritual perfection, but he also assigned virgins and the chaste spiritual statuses based on their level of inner perfection. It has been suggested that Aldhelm followed his patristic exemplars by grading Christians in a descending order of merit, with chastity occupying 'the middling position' between virginity at the pinnacle and marriage at the base.[125] However, I believe that Aldhelm deliberately avoided a steeply hierarchical spiritual ranking between virgins and chaste individuals.[126] He achieved this first by measuring holiness according to the relative virtue of an individual's will: that is by how they had freely and consciously chosen to act, regardless of how they subsequently acted.[127] This had the effect of challenging virgins' rights to spiritual supremacy and of vindicating those individuals who had been forced to marry or have sexual intercourse against their will.

Starting with virgins, in the course of his double treatise, Aldhelm, perhaps inspired by Augustine, taught that it was not enough just to be a virgin: one must spontaneously desire to be one.[128] Virginity, he repeatedly counsels, should be *libero voluntatis arbitrio dediti*.[129] Indeed, he defines *virginitas* as that, *quae ab omni spurcitia carnali spontaneo caelibatus affectu pudica perseverat*.[130] Some of his saintly *exempla* illustrate this virtue by devoting themselves to *spontanea virginitas*.[131] Aldhelm's teachings had important implications for the virgins amongst his audience,

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[125] O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', p. 60; *Idem.*, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', p. 284.

[126] Note Dempsey's comment that Aldhelm at times appeals to 'the shared distinctiveness' of virginity and chastity, see, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 66.

[127] For the theme of the will in the writings of Augustine, see, A. Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (London, 1982), pp. 123-44.

[128] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 247, ll. 13-15; cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, (ed.), anon., CCSL, (3 vols, Turnhout, 1956), vol. XL, CXLVII. X, p. 2146, ll. 25- 26; cf. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 65 n 39, 73-74.

[129] *Ibid.*, cap. XVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 247, ll. 20-21, (trans.), *LH*, p. 74 'dedicated by the free will of their choice [or: by the free choice of their will]'.

[130] *Ibid.*, cap. XIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, ll. 2-3, (trans.), *LH*, p. 75 'which unharmed by any carnal defilement continues pure out of the spontaneous desire for celibacy'.

[131] See, for example, *Ibid.*, cap. XXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 252, l. 3, (trans.), p. 78 'voluntary virginity;' see also, *Ibid.*, cap. XXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 250, ll. 22-23.

for it meant that they must perpetually desire to be virgins: complacency was dangerous. Moreover, it challenged the spiritual supremacy of those individuals, such as child oblates, who were virgins through circumstance rather than choice.

6.6.1 Rape and Suicide

Aldhelm judged not only virgins but also chaste individuals according to their innermost intentions. This can be illustrated by considering his transmission of patristic debates regarding the integrity of victims of rape, and those individuals who had killed themselves as a result of, or to avoid, rape. Aldhelm's interest in this debate is noteworthy, because it does not occur within patristic writings on virginity. Instead, he draws upon a variety of different sources, including, Jerome's *In Ionam prophetam*, Rufinus's translation of Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica*, Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, and Prosper of Aquitaine's *Epigrammata*.[132] Arguably he transmitted the debate because the threat of sexual violence and non-consensual sexual relationships was very real in early Anglo-Saxon England and had implications for spiritually assessing his audience.

Patristic debates on voluntary death were thorny. From the fourth century, as Christian persecution decreased and the opportunity for martyrdom ended, Christian writers, both mainstream and schismatic, began to debate whether there was a distinction between martyrdom and suicide, and hence whether the latter should be condemned. The advent of the barbarian incursions and the rape of Roman women in the early fifth century introduced a new dilemma to the Catholic Church. Although it deemed suicide a sin, even so, it had to decide whether virgins could kill themselves to avoid sexual violation, when it venerated saints who had done just this 100 years previously. Discussion centred on the question of whether virginity was a physical state that was lost through involuntary sexual intercourse or whether it was a spiritual state which could be retained in the mind.[133] In the *Prosa de virginitate* Aldhelm took

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[132] *AO*, p. 269 nn 3-4, pp. 270-71, nn 1-2, p. 319, ll. 9-24 and n. 1.

[133] For the debate in general, see, A. Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages: The Curse of Self Murder* (2 vols, Oxford, 1998-2000), vol. II, pp. 98-121; and for the debate between Augustine and the Donatists, see, J. Bels, 'La mort volontaire dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 18 (2) (1975), 147-80.

citations from both sides of this moral debate.[134] In chapter 31 he defended virgins who had committed suicide by selectively transmitting ideas from his patristic models.[135] He cited Jerome, therefore, who defined virginity as physical intactness and deemed the suicide of virgins permissible to defend chastity, even if suicide *per se* was wrong. He also cited Eusebius (c.260-c.339), who, in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, had venerated Christian women who had committed suicide to avoid rape. In chapter 58, however, Aldhelm cited Augustine and Prosper of Aquitaine (c.390-after 455), who argued that virgins could preserve integrity in their minds and that rape victims who committed suicide were guilty of a damning sin that was comparable to murder.

Aldhelm's decision to use both sides of the debate is puzzling. Dempsey has suggested that his different views may partly reflect his decision to transmit 'the theology of the authoritative source close at hand'. However, he also suggests that Aldhelm may advocate suicide in chapter 31 with a view to virgins, but comment on the importance of inner integrity in chapter 52 in concession to the once-married individuals among his audience.[136] The inconsistencies between the two chapters indeed may simply show Aldhelm's concern to voice both sides of the debate, perhaps even as a pedagogic device for his readers.[137] Furthermore, both of Aldhelm's chapters undoubtedly sought to address the religious needs of both virgins and the chaste. However, Dempsey underrates Aldhelm's overriding concern with spiritual integrity throughout his work: chapter 31 in fact fits oddly in the double treatise for this reason. Furthermore, he overlooks the degree of consistency in both chapters, for they both defend individuals who are forced to act against their will. To demonstrate this let us consider both chapters in turn, starting with chapter 31.

Following the church fathers and, indeed, the contemporary church, in chapter 31 Aldhelm refers to the act of killing oneself as a wicked sin (a *reatus scelus*).[138] In

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[134] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXI, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 268-69 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this chapter, see, *AM*, p. 312); Aldhelm, cap. LVIII, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 317-19, note, that here I follow Ehwald who labels this cap. LVIIII, rather than *LH* who wrongly label it cap. LVII.

[135] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 68-69.

[136] *Ibid.*, pp. 68-74.

[137] For rape as a topic of classroom debate, see, M. C. Woods, 'Rape and the Pedagogic Rhetoric of Classroom Sexual Violence', in R. Copeland (ed.), *Criticism and Debate in the Middle Ages* (Harlow, Essex, 1996), pp. 56-86.

neither chapter 31 nor 58 does he encourage suicide. However, following Jerome he does argue that the crime of suicide should be absolved if it was done to preserve physical virginity. Even then Aldhelm does not seem entirely comfortable with the idea, for in one statement in the chapter he stresses that these individuals are compelled to kill themselves, a notion which of course is at odds with the definition of suicide, which is voluntary death. In his opening to chapter 31, Aldhelm vindicates, *quam qui amittere per vim compellatur {compellitur}* –that is their purity.[139] He also expresses dismay that the church punishes virgin suicides when they have been unwillingly forced to sin and their free will has been ignored: *O mirandum negotium et propemodum investigabile decretum: ceteris facinorum flagitiis, quae mundi statum lugubriter conturbant, cum quispiam mancipari invitus cogitur et spreto libertatis arbitrio reatum sceleris perpetrare compellitur, si sub praetextu cavendi noxam et declinandi delicta quolibet exitii genere vim vitae crudeliter intulerit, extraneus ab ecclesiae societate inter biothanatos {biothanatas} reputabitur!*[140] He then carefully selects from his patristic sources examples of individuals who kill themselves or readily accept martyrdom to avoid having unwilling sex.[141] Indeed, although Jerome's *In Ionam prophetam* I. 12, an exegetical work on the Book of Jonas, provided Aldhelm with a lengthy account of this Hebrew prophet's willingness to die, even so, he transmits just one line. This is that voluntary death is only permissible where chastity is endangered (*manu perire non licet absque eo, ubi castitas periclitatur*).[142] In contrast, Jerome

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[138] Aldhelm, *PdV*, (ed.), *AO*, cap. XXXI, p. 269, l. 25; for early Anglo-Saxon views, see, *P. Theodori* 'D', no. 30, p. 245; *P. Theodori* 'U', II. X. 1-4, p. 324 and for a discussion of Theodore's rulings, see, Murray, *Suicide*, pp. 252-57.

[139] *Ibid.*, cap. XXXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 269, ll. 17-18, (trans.), *LH*, p. 90 'anyone who is compelled by force to relinquish it' (with Gwara's lexical change to Ehwald's edition (*AO*, cap. XXXI, p. 269, l. 18) at *AMA*, cap. XXXI, p. 389, l. 2).

[140] *Ibid.*, cap. XXXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 269, ll. 23-26-p. 270, ll. 1-2, (trans.), *LH*, pp. 90-91, 'Oh, matter of wonder! – and an almost unfathomable pronouncement! When anyone forced unwillingly to be subject to other outrageous sins – which grievously disturb the state of the world – and, his freedom of will having been ignored, is compelled to commit a criminal offense, if, under the pretext of [guarding against] sin and shunning transgression, he shall by any manner of death inflict violence on his life, he is considered, among (other) suicides, an outcast from the society of the Church!' (with Gwara's lexical change to Ehwald's edition (*AO*, cap. XXXI, p. 270, l. 1) at *AMA*, cap. XXXI, p. 391, l. 16).

[141] For his selective transmission of these sources, but with a view to him advocating suicide, rather than with his concern for the will, see, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 68-69.

describes at length Jonas's willingness to die.[143] God, he relays, decided to punish the prophet because Jonas wanted to avoid carrying out His command to preach in the corrupted city of Nivine. God therefore unleashes a violent storm to endanger the ship on which Jonas had hoped to flee. In Jerome's account the prophet desires (*me cupit*) death and encourages the crew to throw him into the sea (*velut in hamo escam!*)[144] This is because he knows that God has created the storm to reprimand him, and he believes that if he willingly (*libenter*) accepts the punishment the crew and ship may be saved.[145] Likewise, in chapter 31, Aldhelm amends Jerome's account of Malchus to present a persecuted saint preferring to die rather than lose his virginity through force. Therefore, he describes how when the male captor of the enslaved Malchus threatens him with forced sexual intercourse at sword point (perhaps intended to be phallic) he 'preferred' to die, rather than to lose his chastity and live.[146] This was a remarkable departure from Jerome's *Vita S Malchi monachi captivi*, where Malchus contemplated suicide under less dramatic circumstances and decided against voluntary death. Therefore Jerome describes how when threatened by a sword, Malchus concedes to his master's demands that he marry a female slave. Malchus and his wife then retreat to their cave habitation, where he fears that he will have to pay his wife the conjugal debt, and debates with his soul whether to kill himself to avoid having sexual intercourse or wait for God to decide when he should die. Only after some deliberation does the saint decide that he would prefer to kill himself, rather than have sexual intercourse. However, Malchus' prospective wife successfully persuades him that they shall instead live in spiritual marriage together.[147] Aldhelm therefore deliberately altered his patristic sources in order to present examples of individuals who had been forced to commit suicide to

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[142] *Ibid.*, p. 69, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 269, ll. 22-23, (trans.), *LH*, p. 90 'It is not allowable to die by one's own hand except in cases where chastity is endangered'.

[143] Jerome, *In Ionam Prophetam*, (ed.), M. Adriaen, CCSL, LXXVI (Turnhout, 1969), I. 12-I. 14, pp. 390-92.

[144] *Ibid.*, cap. I. 12, p. 390, ll. 371, 374, 'I desire', 'just as if bait on a fish-hook'.

[145] *Ibid.*, cap. I. 12, p. 390, ll. 356-57.

[146] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 270, ll. 11-19; For classical Latinists' use of weaponry, including the sword, as a metaphor for the penis, see, Adams, *Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, p. 20.

[147] Jerome, *Vita Malchi Monachi Captivi*, (ed.), Mierow, cap. VI, pp. 44-49, ll. 112-61.

avoid rape[148]: individuals whose wills, he stresses, had been violated. This meant omitting references to suicide as a willingly desired action. Vindicating the suicide of those individuals whose will has been ignored is the principal concern of Aldhelm's chapter.

In chapter 58 Aldhelm carefully selects citations from Augustine and Prosper of Aquitaine to again vindicate individuals who have been sexually violated against their will. In this chapter, however, Aldhelm deems virginity to be a spiritual, rather than a physical quality, and, thus, seems to deny the need for suicide to preserve it. True virginity, he states, is a spiritual quality that is preserved in the will of the mind, rather than in the flesh.[149] He also argues that the bodies and souls of virgins remain unstained if they did not will to be abused.[150] The same theme of unwilling action crops up again in a number of Aldhelm's saints' portraits, when these holy individuals are forced to marry. Amos's parents, for example, 'compelled' (cogere) the saint to marry even though he was 'unwilling' (invitus).[151] Thus despite Aldhelm's different solutions to rape, it is the violation of the will that concerns him most.

Aldhelm's thoughts on the will were radical given that early Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical promulgations (like patristic thought) generally deemed suicide to be a sin, and when contemporary secular and ecclesiastical rulings did not always distinguish between consensual and non-consensual sex.[152] The potential controversy of Aldhelm's ideas may explain why he did not repeat them in the Carmen de viginitate.[153] His decision to vindicate victims of forced sex no doubt relates to his contemporary context

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[148] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 68-69.

[149] Aldhelm, PdV, cap. LVIII, (ed.), AO, p. 319, ll. 6-8.

[150] Ibid., cap. LVIII, (ed.), AO, p. 319, ll. 14-21; for Augustine's thoughts on this theme, see, C. Saunders, Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 95, 99

[151] Aldhelm, PdV, cap. XXXVII, (ed.), AO, p. 284, l. 18-p. 285, ll. 1-3; note that Aldhelm's literary model for Amos' portrait, Rufinus' Historia Monachorum, also refers to how the saint was made to marry against his will, Rufinus, Historia monachorum, (ed.), Scultz-Flügel, cap, XXX, caps. I.2-I. 3, p. 375, ll. 5-7.

[152] J. Coleman, 'Rape in Anglo-Saxon England', in G. Halsall, Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 198 cf. C. Hough, 'Alfred's Domboc and the Language of Rape: A Reconsideration of Alfred Ch. 11', Medium Ævum, LXVI (1) (1997), pp. 8-9, 19.

[153] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 70.

in which Anglo-Saxon nuns, at least, were sexually violated and forcibly removed from the cloister to marry.[154] This was also a patriarchal society where women in particular would have had limited choice regarding their marriage partner.[155] His teachings, therefore, had important implications for his audience. According to Aldhelm, those individuals who were compelled to lose their virginity by force and against their will could still receive the celestial rewards reserved for virgins in heaven (regardless of whether they had killed themselves or not). They could therefore remained virgins in the eyes of God. Moreover, his ideas had implications for once-sexually active individuals who in theory could attain the same level of spiritual perfection as virgins: provided that they had never desired to have sex.[156]

6. 6. 2 Guidance for Virgins

Aldhelm's ideas on the will, therefore, gave some of his readers and auditors the chance to become born-again virgins. This is not, however, to suggest that he does not value the true glories of virginity, including physical virginity in traditional terms.[157] Aldhelm regards virginity to be the highest ranking of all virtues and virgins to be the most exalted of Christians.[158] In the first half of the prose text, in particular, he illustrates its excellence using many well-worn biblical and patristic *topoi*, which are linked to Genesis and salvation-history. Thus, for example, he stresses that virginity is precious to the heavenly citizens,[159] and that virgins alone are at one with Christ and are

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[154] See above, pp. 107-108, 121.

[155] See above, p. 122, cf. the later Anglo-Saxon period, C. Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1984), p. 58.

[156] Abducted nuns could also retain inner purity.

[157] In 1932 Byrne argued that Aldhelm relayed the ideas of his forebears with 'unvarying conformity', M. Byrne, *The Tradition of the Nun in Medieval England* (Washington, 1932), p. 43; cf. *LH*, p. 52; for Aldhelm's indebtedness to patristic ideas on virginity, see, O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', pp. 65-64; O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 271-80, 284-95.

[158] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. VII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 234, ll. 9-17; Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 138-46, pp. 358-59; O'Sullivan, 'The Psychomachian Tradition', p. 329.

[159] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 270, ll. 2-4.

able to follow Christ: *Virgines enim sunt et secuntur agnum, quocumque ierit* (Apoc. XIV. 4).[160] Aldhelm of course offers a catalogue of virgin saints as illustrative models, and he discusses their virginal statuses even where these are absent from his patristic models. In both texts of the double treatise, although most passionately in the verse treatise, Aldhelm eulogises virgins' physically intact bodies. For example, he describes virginity as that: *quae ab omni spurcitia carnali illibata spontaneo caelibatus affectu pudica perseverat*.[161] Aldhelm praises the Virgin Mary's *incontaminata* virginity, and how Christ entered the womb, *sine periculo perpetuae puritatis*, as evidence that God honours sexual purity.[162] He also acknowledges the difficulty of preserving carnal integrity and cites Matt. 19.12, *qui potest capere, capiat*, to challenge virgins' ability to retain it.[163] Furthermore, he makes a handful of references to the need to subdue the flesh.[164]

However, despite praising corporeal virginity, Aldhelm believes that perfect virgins should combine both spiritual and sexual integrity,[165] and he places great emphasis on interior virginity. As O'Sullivan has shown, Aldhelm's discussion of ornamentation encourages virgins to adorn their inner selves whilst shunning outer physical adornment.[166] Throughout the course of the double treatise he often praises virginal *pudicitia* (that is modesty, chastity and virtue) and *castimonia* (purity of morals and morality): nouns that embody spiritual virginity rather than bodily *virginitas*

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[160] *Ibid.*, cap. VII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 235, ll. 17-19, citation at ll. 17-18, (trans.), *LH*, p. 64 'For they are virgins; these follow the Lamb whithersoever [or: wherever] he goeth'.

[161] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 249, ll. 2-3, (trans.), *LH*, p. 75 'which unharmed by any carnal defilement continues pure out of spontaneous desire for celibacy'.

[162] *Ibid.*, cap. VII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 234, ll. 17-20, citation at l. 20, (trans.), *LH*, p. 63, 'uncontaminated; without danger to her perpetual purity'.

[163] *Ibid.*, cap. XVIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 247, ll. 18-19, 'He that can take, let him take it'; Dempsey wrongly deems this passage to be an encouragement of men's 'freely chosen castration ...which women religious could emulate through acts of will', see, Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 67.

[164] *Ibid.*, cap. LVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 315, ll. 8-9.

[165] *Ibid.*, cap. XIV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 243 (note Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this chapter, see, *AMA*, p. 311); O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*', pp. 288, 291, 293, cf. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', p. 64.

[166] O'Sullivan, 'The Image of Adornment', pp. 48-57; for further discussion of ornamentation in the double treatise, see above, pp. 141-43.

alone.[167] Aldhelm also rigorously adheres to the Pauline view that physical virgins will not achieve full perfection without the assistance of other virtues. Frequent and urgent warnings on this matter far outweigh his statements in praise of bodily purity, particularly in the prose text. The mere possession of corporeal purity, he warns, should not allow virgins to exalt in their virginal status;[168] carnal purity is worthless unless accompanied by an impeccable spirit;[169] *corporeis nam anima praefertur gestibus alma*.[170] In both texts of the double treatise Aldhelm also primarily praises his saints for their integrity of mind rather than body. In the prose text, therefore, he celebrates those female virgins, *quae in sanctae virginitatis perseverantia inflexibili mentis rigore*, and in the poetic text, he commends virgins who had left the world, *ut dominum lucis devota mente sequantur*.[171] Aldhelm also teaches virgins that they cannot assume spiritual superiority in life: instead, they, like all monastic entrants, will have to devote their lives to ceaselessly battling against inner vice and the devil's machinations.[172] Indeed, their spiritual status, he warns, will not truly be judged until the Resurrection. The theme of Judgement weighs heavy in Aldhelm's double treatise, with many references, taken from the Apocalypse especially, woven throughout his double treatise.[173] He also reminds his audience of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Matt. XXV. 1-13, which taught that in the absence of a host of virtues, virgins would not be received in heaven and therefore rewarded by Christ their bridegroom.[174] Lest these teachings did

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[167] For *pudicitia*, see, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 291, l. 11, p. 292, ll. 3-4; *Ibid.*, cap. VIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 235, l. 20; *Ibid.*, cap. XXII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 253, l. 13; for *castimonia*, see, for example, *Ibid.*, cap. XVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 245, l. 19.

[168] *Ibid.*, *PdV*, cap. XIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 243, ll. 5-10.

[169] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 245, ll. 19-20.

[170] *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 133, p. 358, (trans.), *LR*, p. 106 'For the blessed soul is preferred to the action of the body'.

[171] *Idem.*, *PdV*, cap. XXXIX, (ed.), *AO*, p. 291, ll. 9-10, (trans.), *LH*, p. 106 'who continually endured in the perseverance of holy virginity with an inflexible strength of mind'; *Idem.*, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, l. 1665, p. 422 (trans.), *LR*, 'so that they might follow with devout mind the Lord of Light'.

[172] *Idem.*, *PdV*, cap. XV, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 244-45; *Ibid.*, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 246-48; O'Sullivan, 'The Psychomachian Tradition', p. 325.

[173] See, for example, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XXXI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 269, ll. 17-20 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this passage (*AO*, cap. XXXI, p. 269, ll. 18, 19-20), see, *AMA*, p. 389, ll. 2, 4-5); *Ibid.*, cap. XXX, p. 269, ll. 7-16.

[174] *Ibid.*, cap. XV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 244, ll. 9-12; *Ibid.*, cap. XVI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 245, ll. 11-15.

not suffice, Aldhelm claims that perfect virgins, above which all other individuals take second place, not only devote their lives to virginity, but also lead strictly contemplative existences, sustaining themselves with holy virtues and remaining modest in heart and mind. Repeated injunctions therefore implore virgins on the need for inner virtue.[175] In fact, their failure to take heed of these warnings could have dire consequences for their spiritual glory.

In the prose text, in particular, Aldhelm teaches that a lack of integrity would also be perceptible in this life. Therefore, he drew upon pre-Christian and biblical wound imagery to warn virgins that spiritual imperfections would visually mar their pure bodies.[176] Although Aldhelm warns that nobody is safe from possible wounding from sin and vice,[177] even so, a number of his more graphic metaphors forcefully illustrate the impact of an impure soul on virgins' physical bodies. Aldhelm therefore counsels that virgins who are proud wrongly suppose that they are free from *naevi* - principally meaning warts, but also blemishes and faults, - and *maculae*, spots.[178] An even more powerful image of the perils of *incompta* virginity is, however, found in the eye. A bright pellucid pupil therefore is used to represent moral and virtuous *virginitas*. In stark contrast, cataracts and heavy eyelids symbolise those virgins with tainted spirits.[179] Aldhelm was therefore keen to warn virgins in particular that they should not become arrogant because their vices would be physically discernible. Although he only used a handful of these metaphorical images, they were not necessarily lost on his audience, for contemporary Anglo-Saxons also made this association. Bede, for example, tells us that during her life the Virgin Æthilthryth believed that God had afflicted her with a large tumour beneath her jaw so that by enduring its pain she would absolve the guilt of vanity from wearing too many necklaces as a girl.[180]

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[175] *Ibid.*, cap. XIV, (ed.), *AO*, pp. 242-43 (for Gwara's minor changes to Ehwald's edition of the *PdV* in this chapter, see, *AM*, p. 311).

[176] Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, pp. 8, 28.

[177] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XIV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 242, ll. 2-6.

[178] *Ibid.*, cap. X, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, ll. 21-24- p. 238, l. 1 at p. 238, l. 24.

[179] *Ibid.*, cap. XXII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 253, ll. 13-17.

[180] *H.E.*, IV. 19, pp. 394-97.

Clearly Aldhelm devotes considerable attention to counselling virgins on the need for inner perfection. However, his most striking challenge to the orthodox superiority assigned to virgins is found in his attempt to make permeable the traditionally rigid distinctions which patristic authors placed between the first and second sexual grades. This arose from his teaching on pride. In the first instance his depiction of this vice drew upon biblical and patristic traditions. Thus, following scripture, he cited Lucifer's fall from pride, and, like Gregory the Great, he deemed it to be the most monstrous of all crimes.[181] However, as a number of scholars have observed, Aldhelm's ideas on pride radically affected his spiritual ranking, because he argued that humble chaste individuals in the second sexual grade might surpass proud virgins in spiritual excellence, whereas virgins might lose spiritual status through pride.[182] His decision to present pride as the deadliest of all vices therefore relates to his wider spiritual teachings.[183] It is true that, according to Aldhelm, even the most modest of once-married individuals could not supercede perfect virgins in spiritual perfection.[184] However, he also argued that since widows, like virgins, are honoured at the beginning of the New Testament, virgins should not sneer boastfully at those in the second grade.[185] Moreover, he proposed that virgins were susceptible to pride and might enter the religious life believing that their pure flesh made them superior.[186] In contrast, humility was often held by chaste members of the second state, who ceaselessly cried with lament about their sexual pasts and their relative inferiority to virgins. As a result, Aldhelm states that very often (*plerusque*) the order of the sexual grades are reversed. Having rejected carnality and worldliness to undertake a chaste religious existence, those in the inferior second grade can gradually make spiritual

[181] For his use of Scripture, see, Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XI, (ed.), *AO*, p. 239, ll. 7-12; Aldhelm, *CdV*, (ed.), *AO*, ll. 2730-51, p. 464, for his use of Gregory, see, for example, *Ibid.*, ll. 2730-33, p. 464. For this theme in Gregory the Great, see, Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 69 and see above, p. 208.

[182] See above, p. 193 n 6.

[183] For the Christian theme of the vices changing according to social and religious circumstances, see, L. K. Little, 'Pride Goes before Avarice: Social Change and the Vices in Latin Christendom', *American Historical Review*, 76 (1) (1971), 16-49.

[184] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. XIV, (ed.), *AO*, p. 243, l. 21.

[185] *Ibid.*, cap. XIII, (ed.), *AO*, p. 242, ll. 14-21-p. 243, ll. 1-10.

[186] *Ibid.*, cap. X, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, l. 21.

progress through remorse, repentance, and, moreover, through God's grace. Thus the raw monastic recruit (*tirocinium*) can supercede the slothful virgin to become the advanced guard (*antecessor*). Hence, in chapter 10 he lectures:

Et tamen plerumque, pro dolor, immutatis ordinibus versa vice contingere solet, ut inferioris vitae gradus usquequaque paulatim proficiens superiorem tepide torpentem praeoccupet et acerrimae stimulo compunctionis instigatus dudum superiorem voti compos victorem anticipet et, qui existimabatur praeteritae conversationis neglegentia posterior, deinceps divinae caritatis flamma succensus existat anterior evangelicae reminiscens sententiae: Cui multum dimittitur, multum diligit, *et qui contempta mundi blandimenta velut quisquiliarum peripsema respuens ac carnalis luxus lenocinia refutans in sancto proposito successor extiterat, sumpto viriliter castae conversationis tirocinio horrendum gehennae tartarum tremescens et aeternae vitae desiderio flagrans gratuita Christi gratia fretus cum sudoris industria efficiatur antecessor.*[187]

Aldhelm's teaching on vice had serious implications for Christians (even though he sometimes presents it melodramatically). Formerly married individuals had much more to renounce than virgins, and although their road to religious perfection might be harder, it was potentially more rewarding. Virgins could not, therefore, afford to be complacent. Instead, all community members had good reason to strive for spiritual perfection, and, through daily contemplative endeavours, the chaste in the second grade might compensate for their loss of virginity.

6. 7 Conclusion

In his *opus geminatum De virginitate* Aldhelm does praise virginity in traditional terms. Such eulogisation of virginity was necessary, not only to conform to

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[187] Aldhelm, *PdV*, cap. X, (ed.), *AO*, p. 238, ll. 5-14 (trans.), *LH*, pp. 66-67 'And yet — unfortunately — it usually occurs the other way around with the hierarchical positions reversed, so that the station of the inferior life, advancing on all fronts little by little, takes the place of the superior grade as it languishes tepidly; and urged on by the goad of most bitter remorse obtains its wish and overtakes the once superior victor; and he who was counted last through the negligence of his past life, henceforth, kindled by the flame of divine love, is in the first place, reminding (us) of the maxim in the Gospels, 'Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much' [Luc. VII. 47]. And he who had been merely a follower in pious resolve, rejecting the pleasures of the world with contempt like the scourings of filth and repressing the enticements of carnal delight, and having undertaken manfully the novitiate of a chaste way of life and, trembling at the horrifying abyss of hell and burning with desire for eternal life, relying on the freely given grace of Christ, becomes the leader through the diligence of his labour'.

orthodoxy, but also because some Anglo-Saxons deemed it an unpersuasive idiom of power. Parents might therefore permit their children to be raised in *monasteria*, but expect them to leave and marry in their teenage years. To encourage these youths to remain in the religious life Aldhelm would have to ensure that nuns, monks and clerics honoured and aspired to virginity. However, alongside his traditional views on virginity Aldhelm offers a more innovative approach to sexual and social renunciation. He therefore digests large quantities of patristic literature and reproduces it carefully with a view to his audience.

Aldhelm encouraged all members of his audience to follow spiritual rather than physical ascetic acts. These acts included reading intensively, praying ceaselessly and devoting their lives to waging inner spiritual warfare against vice. This sets him apart from his exemplars Ambrose and Jerome, both of who encouraged the sexually continent to engage in physical ascetic regimes, such as, constant fasting and sleep deprivation: acts which Aldhelm instead devotes little attention to and encourages moderation in. To find inspiration for his inner religious regime Aldhelm drew upon the spiritual writings of Cassian and Gregory the Great among others. His focus on interiority is found elsewhere in his corpus of writings, suggesting that he had a long held interest in it. However, within his double treatise it has profound implications for his audience.

By concentrating on the interior spiritual life Aldhelm could create unity between the different individuals among his audience. As we saw in Chapter Five, it provided a means of reconciling male and female religious' different experiences of renunciation.[188] In the context of his audience's different sexual histories, he sought to give virgins and the chaste a shared spiritual regime that gave them equal chance of spiritual perfection. In the first instance this would distinguish them from married laity, who, as we saw in Chapter Four, he associated with physicality and outer adornment. Indeed, as we saw in that chapter, Aldhelm encouraged his religious audience to renounce sexuality and secular dress, hence, indulgences of the body which he deemed the preserve of the secular world.[189] This was important in a period in which the church was seeking to define boundaries between the religious and secular life. However, this

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[188] See above, pp. 166-68.

[189] See above, pp. 134-43.

shared spiritual regime would also prevent discord from arising between virgins and the chaste. By measuring holiness by the purity of his audiences' innermost intentions, rather than the outer actions they had been forced to participate in, he vindicated those individuals who had been sexually violated or forced to marry. By judging individuals' levels of holiness by their relative degrees of inner purity he could challenge the traditional superiority of virginity and encourage equality between contemporary religious. This is particularly clear in his spiritual battle, which incessantly taught virgins that inner perfection was vital, for without it their physical perfection would be undermined and their chances of celestial glory seriously impaired. Virgins, therefore, could not assume exalted spiritual prowess in life. Indeed, Aldhelm used wound imagery to warn virgins that spiritual imperfections could physically mar their bodies. Since virgins were in a minority amongst Aldhelm's audience his teachings primarily will have inspired hope in the chaste, who instead formed the majority of early Anglo-Saxon religious recruits. Indeed, his guidance even made it possible for the humble chaste in the second grade of spiritual perfection to surpass proud virgins in spiritual excellence. The implications of Aldhelm's teachings may explain why his boldest challenge to virginity occurs in the *Prosa de virginitate*. His statements regarding the integrity of rape and suicide victims are also confined to the prose text. Perhaps they proved too controversial to transmit in his verse counterpart.[190] Overall, Aldhelm sought to assimilate those who had renounced their marriages for the religious life into patristic models of holiness, and, perhaps most importantly, to legitimise the adult sexual and social renunciation which he and his ecclesiastical associates were involved in promoting.

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[190] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 69-80 *passim*.

Conclusion

Aldhelm, early Anglo-Saxon abbot and bishop, lived through an age of rapid religious and political change. During his lifetime the West Saxon Kingdom and its church would be transformed. When Aldhelm was born around 640, Birinus, founder and first bishop of the West Saxon see, had been in office for less than a decade. By the time he died, in c. 709, expansionist West Saxon kings had conquered large swathes of southern England and had shifted their main centre of influence from the Thames valley to Jutish territories further west.[1] As a consequence, in 705/6 the much-enlarged West Saxon diocese was divided and Aldhelm made bishop of its western sector.

We have no contemporary accounts of the boy Aldhelm. However, had he wandered the breadth of Wiltshire and Dorset as a child, the religious settlements he would have come upon would have been very few and far between. Yet shortly before his death, there were two or more *monasteria* within a 20-mile radius of both his *monasterium* at Malmesbury and his bishopric at Sherborne. Moreover, he may have passed two more of his own religious communities when making the 50-mile or so journey between these two religious centres.[2] In the West Saxon kingdom this monastic explosion occurred mainly in the last three decades of the seventh century. A visual manifestation of the kingdom's increasing Christianisation, these *monasteria*, which germinated rapidly, found favourable growing ground along river routes and Roman roads.[3]

Modern Anglo-Saxonists often overlook Aldhelm's extensive religious and political involvement in this period of change. Instead, they have instead focused on illuminating his pioneering ways of composing Anglo-Latin prose and verse, and its unparalleled influence on later Anglo-Saxon writers.[4] However, his corpus of writings provides rich material for historians to explore and deserves further analysis, especially when we consider that he is one of the few early Anglo-Saxon abbots and bishops for whom extensive writings survive. The fact that Aldhelm was such a gifted and dedicated student, who was educated to the very highest standards of his day, put him in a position to

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[1] For the dates of Aldhelm's life, see above, pp. 18-19, 24-25; For the extent of West Saxon conquests and shifts of influence in this period, see above, p. 37.

[2] Calculated with a view to him travelling along Roman roads.

[3] For the location of some of these monastic communities and the periodisation of contemporary monastic expansion, see above, pp. 94-96.

[4] See above, pp. 1, 15.

become an ecclesiastical politician of some importance.[5] Aldhelm's elevation to the new West Saxon see at Sherborne speaks volumes for the authority he had built among his people. Indeed, the early sources for his life suggest that he was well known and highly regarded churchman. Later traditions suggest that he founded a number of churches and *monasteria*. Aldhelm's writings, together with charter evidence, connect him with many churchmen, churchwomen and religious communities, especially in lands of West Saxon interest. Some of these individuals and institutions were recipients of Aldhelm's spiritual advice, and, during his abbacy, his West Saxon peers chose him to act as a spokesman for the reform of the British church. Furthermore, as a distinguished poet, his verses eulogising the religious and political achievements of the West Saxon Kings Centwine, Cædwalla and Ine, would adorn the walls of a West Saxon royal minster.[6] Aldhelm may, however, have known all three of these West Saxon kings more intimately, for he was an active cleric who attended their courts and was a recipient of their monastic patronage.[7]

This thesis has offered a contextual analysis of Aldhelm's *opus geminatum De virginitate*: a work that allows us to enter the West Saxon church at the cusp of this period of change, through the eyes of an influential churchman. In addition to exploring the nature of Aldhelm's career I have considered three further principal themes. These are, first, the composition of his audience for the double treatise, second, the religious and political circumstances in which his work was written, and, third, the tenor of his spiritual guidance in relation to these contexts.

It seems a distinct possibility that Aldhelm's double treatise was dedicated to a constellation of double *monasteria*, and not merely to Barking Abbey in Essex, as is traditionally believed.[8] It is also possible that these communities may have been located in areas that the West Saxons controlled or sought to expand over, thus in central West Saxon lands, in Essex, Mercia and the Mercian satellite province of the Hwicce.[9] This reminds us that Aldhelm's writings should be used to explore late seventh-to early eighth-century West Saxon Christianity and its inextricable link to the evolving West Saxon kingdom. In

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[5] For his education, see above, pp. 20-24.

[6] For Aldhelm's clerical status and activities in this position, see above, pp. 24-44.

[7] See above, pp. 25, 54-56, 58-59.

[8] See above, pp. 72-82.

[9] See above, pp. 82-83.

the prose text, Aldhelm, who knew his dedicatees (regardless of whether Gwara and I have identified them correctly), shows concern for these women's education and refers to them seeking his spiritual guidance. As a renowned teacher, it is always possible that Aldhelm taught these women religious, perhaps by some form of distance learning.[10] However, it is also possible that they sought his advice because he was involved in promoting and defining adult sexual and social renunciation, in a period when most of his advisees are likely to have been once-married adult celibates.[11]

It appears possible that Aldhelm, together with Bishop Eorcenwald of London and Bishop Wilfrid of York, inspired a number of Anglo-Saxon kings to abdicate in order to enter *monasteria* or to undertake lifelong pilgrimage to Rome. Evidence from contemporary charters and letters suggests that these three men were part of an influential ecclesiastical network that was mainly active in West Saxon lands during the late 680s to early 690s. The churchmen probably became acquainted at the court of the remarkably expansionist King Cædwalla and may have become associates because they had shared religious and political interests. For example, they were all wealthy monastic founders who attended royal courts, keenly acknowledged the power of the papacy and sought to champion Roman customs within the Anglo-Saxon church. Wilfrid indeed had hoped to end his days in Rome, yet Aldhelm and Eorcenwald may have shared his enthusiasm for pilgrimage, and in turn transmitted this to contemporary kings. This is because between them, our ecclesiastical group knew four of the five early Anglo-Saxon kings who went or planned to go on pilgrimage to Rome, including Cædwalla, the first king to actually make the long journey. However, they may have also encouraged kings to enter the monastic life, for they knew three of the six early Anglo-Saxon kings who abdicated to enter *monasteria*. It may be no coincidence that these abdications peaked during Aldhelm's and Wilfrid's most active years in the church and ended a year after both men had died. By encouraging these kings (some of who were aged or ill) to devote their final days to the church, they may have been consciously providing models for other members of the elite to emulate. Indeed, the traditions of the West Saxon King Centwine's and East Saxon King Sæbbi's abdications were preserved in the *monasteria* of two of Aldhelm's potential

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[10] See above pp. 84-85.

[11] See above, pp. 99-101.

dedicatees, further suggesting their mutual interest and involvement in adult renunciation.[12]

Aldhelm's double treatise may have been written partly in response to these abdicating kings' actions. If so, it will have performed political and religious functions at the very highest level of Anglo-Saxon society. However, at the same time, Aldhelm's spiritual guidance was shaped by the needs of his monastic readers and auditors. Scholars' assessment of the nature of Aldhelm's audience has had a fundamental bearing on how they interpret his spiritual guidance. It is the diversity and recent conversion of his audience that I hold to be most important. His work was addressed to an audience of first- and second-generation, predominantly aristocratic, female and male religious. In this early stage of monasticism, religious recruits were overwhelmingly adults and once-married celibates, but they also included virgins, children and adolescents. There were undoubtedly married individuals among his wider audience as well.[13] The religious ardour of monastic entrants also varied greatly. Thus, whereas on the average night the adult monastic recruit Cuthbert prayed whilst immersed neck deep in the North Sea as an ascetic act, not far away at Coldingham, the nuns remained awake in order to entertain men in their cells.[14] In the first instance, Aldhelm needed to teach these individuals new codes of behaviour that would unify them and distinguish them from the nominally Christian laity.

Indeed, as well as unite religious in shared spiritual endeavours, Aldhelm needed to teach them the meanings and rewards of renunciation, because many Anglo-Saxon religious recruits found it difficult to forsake their secular customs in monasteria that were founded by and for the elite. Within the secular life these individuals were used to displaying their wealth conspicuously, and had distinctive secular statuses based upon their participation in society, which included for adults, their ability to marry and produce heirs. Early Anglo-Saxon England was also a patriarchal society where man gained status through their ability to protect and provide for their kin, and to participate in the 'warrior' lifestyle. Male and female religious entrants were expected to renounce these long established and socially important secular statuses and ways of living. They therefore had to forsake their kin, wealth, secular trappings (including dress and jewellery), sex lives, in

[12] See above, pp. 65-66.

[13] See above, pp. 92-104.

[14] See above, pp. 108, 203.

many cases, spouses, and for men, their ability to carry weapons and engage in active combat.[15] It is perhaps no surprise that they rose to this challenge with varying degrees of success.

Contemporary religious therefore continued to wear secular apparel, to feast like noblemen, and, moreover, to have sexual intercourse. Furthermore, secular society continued to compete with and challenge religious renunciation. Sigebert, the first known king to abdicate, therefore was dragged from the *monasterium* into which he had retired in order to fulfil his duties as a warrior king. Sigebert was not alone, for we have evidence for other religious breaking their vows and leaving the cloister, or being abducted unwillingly.[16] The importance, permanence and irrevocability of religious renunciation needed to be impressed upon the early Anglo-Saxons.

As well as have a didactic function, Aldhelm's double treatise promoted his distinctive views on a number of disputed religious and spiritual issues. The fact that Aldhelm possibly dedicated his work to a constellation of abbesses indeed is significant in a period when *monasteria* were often at the forefront of theological controversies. Whilst many of the wide-ranging ascetic debates which troubled and shaped the early Anglo-Saxon church are no longer discernible, if we listen carefully enough we can begin to decipher a few. These included: what constituted appropriate ascetic practices; the behaviour and relative spiritual merits expected of virgin, chaste and married Christians; the validity of sexual and social renunciation; and, the appropriateness of male and female religious living alongside each other in double *monasteria*. In this period different ascetic regimes and forms of monastic life coexisted, but not always comfortably. Aldhelm's letter to Geraint and his bishops provides evidence for this, for although he forged many links with the British church during the course of career, even so, he berated these churchmen's separatist defensive attitudes, their adherence to external purity rituals in particular.[17] Aldhelm's attack on the British churchmen's rituals in part might derive from the fact that he took a great interest in inner spirituality throughout his career, which may also explain why external ascetic regimes are conspicuous by their absence in his double

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[15] See above, pp. 105-106, 108-109, 156, 160.

[16] See above, pp. 106-108, 121, 158, 216.

[17] See above, pp. 38-39.

treatise.[18] Contemporary uncertainty about correct monastic forms is also clear from the fact that Archbishop Theodore expressed his distaste at popular Anglo-Saxon double *monasteria*, in which nuns, monks and clerics lived together in varying degrees of proximity.[19] Late antique debates concerning sexual continence and marriage were also transmitted and revived in early England. °Thus issues surrounding marriage, such as which individuals could marry, the circumstances under which they could marry and what comprised licit and illicit marriage, were points of discussion on which the church had yet to agree legislation.[20] Likewise, the legality of marriage annulment for religious reasons appears to have been a source of dispute, perhaps because it was contrary to biblical and patristic rulings on the indissolubility of the marriage bond.[21] In a church that was no doubt noisy with debate, the double treatise *De virginitate* records one leading churchman's say in these, and provides valuable evidence for early medieval attitudes to renunciation, sexuality and gender.

The climate in which Aldhelm wrote the double treatise *De virginitate* had a fundamental bearing on his spiritual guidance. Ascertaining the nature of this spiritual guidance has formed a large portion of my doctoral research. I have therefore considered how this West Saxon cleric selectively transmitted inherited Christian traditions in concession to his recently converted Anglo-Saxon audience; for whilst Aldhelm worked within patristic traditions, he was also a man of his own times. He was therefore concerned that his audience renounce secular feasting and drinking habits, and dress moderately. This must have been somewhat unwelcome guidance and indeed, as well as berate religious dress directly, he condemned ornamentation more cautiously by negatively associating it with married women.[22] He was less discreet, however, when using his catalogue of *exempla* to present lust and pagan marriage as spiritually polluting.[23] Whilst this message foremost was aimed at dedicated religious, it also had wider application for the laity whose sexual activities the church sought to confine to monogamous and

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[18] See above, pp. 201-204, 210.

[19] See above, p. 108.

[20] See above, pp. 124-28.

[21] See above, pp. 193-96.

[22] See above, pp. 141-43.

[23] See above, pp. 134-41.

procreative Christian marriage. Aldhelm's concern to present carnality and chastity as fundamentally incompatible means that his treatment of this theme in his saints' accounts sometimes differs from the principal patristic models upon which these were based. Aldhelm therefore introduces negative comments against the filth of carnality into a number of his saints' accounts where they are not present in his sources and makes threats to saints' integrity more central to these.[24] His concern to emphasise carnal threats to the chaste provides further evidence that early Anglo-Saxon religious were not necessarily sexually continent. It also highlights a wider theme underpinning the double treatise: namely, that the religious should focus on the actions of the inner rather than the outer man.[25]

At the same time as warning his audience of the dangers of sex, Aldhelm also sought to compensate for their loss of secular roles and prerogatives. Male and female religious had different experiences of religious renunciation, for, whilst there appears to have been a fair amount of continuity between the activities women undertook in the secular and religious worlds, men made a more radical break from their secular lives when entering the religious life. They were therefore prohibited from carrying weapons and engaging in active combat (including hunting). The religious life did not necessarily provide them with compensatory activities either, for in this early stage of monasticism women could perform many of the same roles as men in double *monasteria*.[26] In his passages of religious guidance Aldhelm devoted much attention to encouraging both male and female religious to adopt masculine inner strength whilst fighting their spiritual battles against vice. Whilst this appealed to heroic customs, at the same time it gave them a shared interior identity as masculinised soldiers of Christ. This provided a means of unifying male and female religious, suggesting that they could practise the religious life alongside one another harmoniously and chastely. In his representation of sanctity, however, Aldhelm seems to respond to male and female religious' different experiences of renunciation. Through systematic comparison of the miracles and virtues associated with his 116 *exempla* I suggest that in these perceptible acts only his male saints are masculinised. In contrast, female saints are more likely to be aligned with culturally

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[24] See above, pp. 134-41.

[25] See above, pp. 204-28 esp.

[26] See above, p. 160.

feminine characteristics. Thus, for example, in their performance of miracles, only his male saints are aligned with an active spiritual potency, whereas his female saints remain relatively impotent. These were trends that he sometimes deliberately heightened from his principal literary models for his virgins' accounts.[27] Aldhelm therefore reworked some of the patristic traditions he inherited. His distinctive treatment of gender arguably relates to the fact that Anglo-Saxon women religious could achieve holiness through performing traditional female roles. Alternatively, he may have sought to represent his male saints as particularly masculine individuals to remind them that despite their loss of secular roles, the cloister offered an alternative, but equally authoritative, form of holiness.

Whilst Aldhelm provided his audience with varied religious guidance, sexual continence was his main concern. It was perhaps in response to contemporary discussions on marriage, and with a view to the church's concern to introduce new sexual mores into converting Anglo-Saxon society, that Aldhelm followed general church rulings by berating incestuous and adulterous sexual relations, whilst praising licit and procreative wedlock.[28] However, he was considerably more concerned to valorise the once sexually active, and especially those who had controversially renounced their marriages for the religious life. Aldhelm's patristic exemplars ordinarily deemed virginity to be the most pleasing sexual state. However, the presence of so many postmarital celibates among his audience necessitated a reconsideration of the relative spiritual supremacy of virgins vis-à-vis the chaste. The chaste needed to feel that their sexual renunciation was worthwhile and would be rewarded spiritually. Yet at the same time, Aldhelm needed to praise virginity, not merely to conform to orthodox Christian ideas on the superiority of this sexual state, but also to reassure contemporary Anglo-Saxons – who were not necessarily convinced by the merits of virginity - that it was spiritually empowering.

Aldhelm's solution was first to relabel the traditional patristic model of spiritual perfection. Whereas many of his patristic literary models classified Christians into three grades: *virginitas*, *viduitas* and *iugalitas*, he substituted the more obscure label *castitas* for the second sexual grade of *viduitas*. This is because *castitas* was a label that embraced widows, widowers and those individuals who had renounced their marriages to enter the religious life. Second, Aldhelm ranked Christians according to their inner spiritual

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[27] See above, pp. 178-88 esp.

[28] See above, pp. 127-28, 143-48.

attainments above all. Here he departed from his patristic exemplars who ordinarily measured spiritual worth by degrees of physical abstinence from sexual activity. This meant that they deemed the chaste to be less exalted than virgins, but superior to sexually active married individuals. Uniquely, Aldhelm challenged virgins' spiritual supremacy by reminding them that they could not assume spiritual prowess in life, but instead, they, no different from the chaste, would have to devote their lives to inner contemplative activities. Aldhelm therefore sought to unify virgins and the chaste by encouraging them to engage collaboratively in the inner contemplative activities of ceaseless prayer, reading and spiritual combat against inner vice. More radically, he vindicated those individuals who had been sexually violated against their will. Drawing upon ideas from late antiquity he argued that spiritual virginity could in these instances compensate for loss of physical virginity. Moreover, Aldhelm warned that whereas virgins might be assailed by pride, the rank-and-file of once-sexually active, but now chaste, religious, could achieve spiritual supremacy through fostering humility. Aldhelm's model of spiritual perfection therefore valorises chastity, the sexual category to which the majority of early Anglo-Saxon religious recruits belonged.[29]

Aldhelm's distinctive guidance on sexual continence sets him apart from some of his contemporaries. Bede for example, was less accepting of married Christians and chaste individuals than Aldhelm.[30] The extent to which Aldhelm and Bede, like Jerome and Augustine in late antiquity, might represent two Anglo-Saxon schools of thought on sexuality and asceticism is a topic that warrants further study. Here, however, it is sufficient to state that Bede did not share Aldhelm's views, which may have been controversial among other contemporaries. Indeed, Aldhelm's reference to his critics at the end of his prose and verse *De virginitate* might not be simply a humility *topos*,[31] especially when in the verse text he shows particular sympathy for Jerome (a fellow mentor of female religious), whose outspoken religious views roused enmity against him.[32] More strikingly, Aldhelm appears to have moderated some of his ideas between writing

[29] See above, pp. 99-101, 192-228 *passim*.

[30] See above, pp. 148-49.

[31] G. T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury's Social Theology: the Barbaric Heroic Ideal Christianised', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), p. 74.

[32] See above, p. 189.

the prose text and its verse counterpart. He therefore cautions virgins more fiercely in the prose text, as well as reminds them more forcibly that a lack of inner virtue will undermine their rewards at Judgement. He also provides a diatribe against lavish dress and controversially seeks to vindicate victims of rape, even those who have been forced to kill themselves to avoid sexual violation.[33] Arguably the boldness of these statements, and some negative contemporary responses to them, may explain why he did not repeat them in the verse counterpart.[34]

Aldhelm's concern to valorise the chaste and to vindicate victims of forced sex demonstrate that he was a pragmatic cleric, who was much more accepting of the average Christian, than, for example, Bede was. Indeed, even if there was some contemporary disagreement on Aldhelm's views, his works received immediate and widespread circulation, over and above those of this Northumbrian monk.[35] Aldhelm's legacy is mainly said to have been in the literary field, yet the reception of his spiritual ideas and the extent to which they were felt more widely in the early middle ages offers an important trajectory for future exploration. Gwara's monumental collation of glossings to Aldhelm's *Prosa de virginitate* indeed provides historians with a rich body of evidence to explore from this perspective.[36] For whilst the double treatise was used as a Latin textbook, it was also a spiritual guide with devotional, didactic and polemical functions. Indeed, even a cursory glance at the reception of the double treatise suggests that it was mined as much for ideas as it was for grammar and lexicon. As we saw in Chapter Three, many Anglo-Saxons read the work.[37] Historians need to consider the extent to which Aldhelm influenced these churchmen and women. For example, is Bede responding directly to the double treatise when he discusses virginity, chastity and marriage? Does Aldhelm inspire Lul's (c. 710-86) concept of interior and exterior *castitas*?[38] To what extent do Aldhelm's

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[33] See above, pp. 141-43, 216-21.

[34] Dempsey, 'Aldhelm's Social Theology', pp. 69-80 *passim*.

[35] For Bede representing atypical Anglo-Saxon views, see, Wormald's *tour de force*, P. Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in R. T. Farrell (ed.), *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, BAR, British Series 46 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 32-95.

[36] *AMA*; also see, *AM*, p. 70, for the suggestion that tenth-century interest in Aldhelm's Latin focused on its style and diction.

[37] See above, pp. 85-87.

[38] Tangl, 98, pp. 218-19.

ideas, as much as his Latin, influence the principal leaders of the Benedictine reform movement, including Dunstan (d. 988) and Æthelwold (d. 984)?[39] Aldhelm's works therefore were read alongside the church fathers by many of the architects of the Anglo-Saxon and continental church. Today historians, likewise, must study this West Saxon cleric and his work not merely within[c] wider Christian traditions, but also within the mainstream of the Anglo-Saxon church.

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[39] For Dunstan, see above, p. 91; for Æthelwold, see, M. Lapidge, 'Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher', in B. Yorke (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Ipswich, 1988), pp. 193, 197, 206; with others discussed by Gwara, *AM*, p. 69.

APPENDICES

Appendix One: Aldhelm's Saints' Virtuous Qualities

This appendices plots the occurrence of eight virtuous qualities in Aldhelm's saints' accounts, which are categorised together because of their perceived similarity in type. It only records those virtues that Aldhelm makes explicit: those cases where he merely alludes to saints' virtues are therefore omitted.

The virtues identified in this study include, 'learnedness' (1), which includes those saints who are characterised as educated and writers. 'Religious proselytising, instructing and advising' (2), which includes those saints which convert pagans to Christianity through actively preaching or by example. It also includes those who proffer religious advice and who establish monasteries. Saints whose spiritual writings spiritually enrich Christians are not included in this category. 'Charitable' (3) saints give to the poor. 'Rejection of or abstention from material goods' (4) comprises those saints who reject or abstain from money, ostentatious dress and ornamentation (often in the form of a dowry). 'Abstinence from food' (5) includes saints who fast or avoid lavish meals. 'Rejection of marriage or not being persuaded to marry' (6) sees saints reject wedlock and their pagan suitors. The actions of those saints who resist marriage initially, yet end up living in chaste spiritual unions with their partners are omitted from this category and instead are recorded under the virtue of 'living in spiritual wedlock' (7). Finally, 'tortured and martyred for the faith' (8) includes those saints who are physically tortured and ultimately killed for their faith. More general plots to undermine the saints' virginal and Christian resolve, such as falsely accusing them of a crime, are not included in this category, nor is the 'living martyrdom' of extreme asceticism.

Virtuous qualities correspond to the following categories:

1 = Learnedness

2 = Proselytisers, instructors and advisors

3 = Charitable

4 = Rejection of or abstention from material goods

5 = Abstinence from food

6 = Rejection of marriage offers or cannot be persuaded to marry

7 = Lives in spiritual marriage

8 = Tortured and martyred or the faith

Table 1.1 Male saints' virtuous qualities in the *PdV*

Virtuous quality/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Elijah								
Elisha								
Jeremiah								
Daniel								
Shadrach					✔			✔
Meshach					✔			✔
Abednego					✔			✔
John the Baptist								✔
John the Evangelist	✔							
Didymus		✔						
Paul								
Luke	✔							
Clement	✔	✔						
Silvester		✔						
Ambrose								
Martin			✔					
Gregory (of Nazianzus)	✔							
Basil	✔							
Felix								✔
Anthony		✔						
Paul the Hermit					✔			
Hilarion					✔			
John (the Hermit)								
Benedict		✔						
Malchus						✔		✔
Narcissus								
Athanasius	✔							
Babilas								✔
Cosmas	✔		✔					✔
Damian	✔		✔					✔
Chrysanthus	✔	✔		✔			✔	✔
Julian	✔	✔					✔	✔
Amos		✔					✔	
Apollonius		✔		✔	✔			
Joseph								
David								
Samson the Nazarene								
Abel								
Melchisedech								
TOTALS	10	9	3	2	6	1	3	11

Table 1.2 Male saints' virtuous qualities in the *CdV*

Virtuous quality/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Elijah								
Elisha								
Jeremiah								
Daniel	✔							✔
Shadrach								✔
Meshach								✔
Abednego								✔
John the Baptist		✔			✔			✔
John the Evangelist								
Paul		✔						
Luke	✔							
Clement								
Silvester		✔						
Ambrose	✔							
Martin		✔	✔					
Gregory (of Nazianzus)								
Basil	✔							
Anthony		✔						
Paul the Hermit				✔	✔			
Hilarion								
John (the Hermit)								
Benedict		✔						
Gervasius								✔
Protasius								✔
Narcissus								
Athanasius								
Babilas								✔
Cosmas	✔		✔	✔				✔
Damian	✔		✔	✔				✔
Chrysanthus	✔	✔		✔			✔	✔
Julian	✔	✔					✔	✔
Amos								
Apollonius		✔		✔				
Jerome	✔							
TOTALS	9	9	3	5	2	0	2	12

Table 1.3 Female saints' virtuous qualities in the *PdV*

Virtuous quality/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Mary								
Cecilia		✔				✔		
Agatha								✔
Lucia						✔		✔
Justina		✔				✔		✔
Eugenia	✔			✔		✔		
Agnes				✔		✔		✔
Thecla						✔		✔
Eulalia						✔		✔
Scholastica								
Christina	✔							✔
Dorothea		✔				✔		✔
Constantina		✔						
Eustochium	✔							
Demetrias	✔			✔				
Chionia				✔		✔		✔
Irene				✔		✔		✔
Agape				✔		✔		✔
Rufina								✔
Secunda								✔
Anatolia			✔	✔				✔
Victoria		✔	✔	✔				✔
Judith						✔		
TOTALS	4	5	2	8	0	12	0	15

Table 1.4 Female saints' virtuous qualities in the *CdV*

Virtuous quality/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Mary								
Cecilia		✔					✔	
Agatha				✔				✔
Lucia		✔	✔	✔		✔		✔
Justina		✔				✔		✔
Eugenia								
Agnes				✔		✔		✔
Thecla						✔		✔
Eulalia				✔		✔		
Scholastica	✔							
Constantina		✔						
Eustochium								
Demetrias				✔		✔		
Chionia				✔		✔		✔
Irene				✔		✔		✔
Agape				✔		✔		✔
Rufina				✔		✔		✔
Secunda				✔		✔		✔
Anatolia		✔	✔	✔		✔		✔
Victoria		✔	✔	✔		✔		✔
TOTALS	1	6	3	12	0	13	1	12

<u>Table 1.5 The percentage of male and female saints displaying the defined virtuous qualities in the double treatise *Dv*</u>

Virtuous qualities correspond to the following categories:

1 = Learnedness

2 = Proselytising, instructing and advising on religious matters

3 = Charitable

4 = Rejection of or abstention from material goods

5 = Abstinence from food

6 = Rejection of marriage offers or not being persuaded to marry

7 = Living in spiritual marriage

8 = Tortured and martyred for the faith

Percentage calculations are based on there being 39 male *exempla* in the *PdV* and 34 in the *CdV*, as well as 23 female *exempla* in the *PdV* and 20 in the *CdV*.

Figures have been rounded up to the nearest percent.

Virtuous quality/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Males *PdV*	26 %	23 %	8 %	5 %	15 %	3 %	8 %	28 %
Males *CdV*	26 %	26 %	9 %	15 %	6 %	0 %	6 %	35 %
Females *PdV*	17 %	22 %	9 %	35 %	0 %	52 %	0 %	65 %
Females *CdV*	5 %	30 %	15 %	60 %	0 %	65 %	5 %	60 %

Appendix Two: Aldhelm's Saints' Miracles

This appendices plots the occurrence of nine groups of recurring miracles in Aldhelm's saints' accounts, which are categorised together because of their perceived similarities in type. *Miracula* are defined as those events which are deemed remarkable by humans and are ascribed to saints because of their special connection with God. Only explicit examples of miracles are cited, thus, those cases where Aldhelm merely alludes to a saint's miracle-working are omitted.

The *miracula* identified in this study include, 'predestination' (1) which comprises those *exempla* whose sanctity is prefigured by heavenly omens whilst they are in the womb or in childhood. 'Phenomena of the mind' (2), which includes those miracles in which saints experience visions, are telepathic and prophetic. Those miracles, in which saints transport their own bodies in acts of translocation, or move objects at a distance without physical connection with it, in acts of telekinesis, are categorised together under 'translocation and telekinesis' (3). The 'divine provision of food' (4) includes those miracles in which saints either receive food from animals, or bless scant food reserves so that they become plentiful in supply. Miracles in which saints see angels, celestial light and music, as well as smell ambrosial aromas, are classified as 'heavenly signs' (5).[1] Those miracles where saints' act militantly in retribution for the wrongs performed against themselves or the Christian faith are labelled 'vengeance' (6). 'Healing and exorcism' (7) miracles see saints heal the afflicted, exorcise persons plagued by demons and resurrect corpses. Those miracles in which saints kill or drive away deadly serpents and beasts are labelled 'combating serpents and dragons' (8). Miracles which involve command over nature and the elements (including animals, metals, minerals, fire, water and weather), are classified together as 'control over nature' (9).

Miracles correspond to the following categories:

1 = Predestination

2 = Phenomena of the mind

3 = Translocation and telekinesis

4 = Divine provision of food

5 = Heavenly signs

6 = Vengeance

7 = Healing and exorcism

8 = Combats serpents and dragons

9 = Control over nature

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[1] A classification used by C. Stancliffe, 'The Miracle Stories in Seventh-Century Irish Saints' Lives,' in J. Fontaine and J. N. Hillgarth (eds.), *Le Septième Siècle, Changements et Continuités.*

Table 2.1 Male saints' miracles in the *PdV*

Miracle/ Saints	1	2	3	4 ᶜ	5	6	7	8	9
Elijah				✔		✔			✔
Elisha						✔	✔		✔
Jeremiah	✔								
Daniel		✔		✔					
Shadrach									✔
Meshach									✔
Abednego									✔
John the Baptist	✔	✔							
John the Evangelist							✔		✔
Didymus									
Paul		✔							✔
Luke									
Clement									
Silvester							✔	✔	
Ambrose	✔								
Martin					✔	✔	✔		✔
Gregory (of Nazianzus)		✔							
Basi									
Felix									
Anthony									
Paul the Hermit				✔					
Hilarion								✔	✔
John (the Hermit)		✔							
Benedict									
Malchus									
Narcissus						✔			✔
Athanasius	✔								
Babilas									
Cosmas							✔		✔
Damian							✔		✔
Chrysanthus					✔				✔
Julian		✔			✔		✔		✔
Amos		✔	✔			✔	✔		
Apollonius		✔		✔	✔	✔			
Joseph		✔			✔				
David							✔		
Samson the Nazarene									
Abel									
Melchisedech									
TOTALS	4	9	1	4	5	6	9	2	14

Table 2.2 Male saints' miracles in the *CdV*

Miracle/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Elijah		✔		✔		✔			✔
Elisha	✔					✔	✔		
Jeremiah	✔	✔							
Daniel		✔		✔		✔		✔	
Shadrach									✔
Meshach									✔
Abednego									✔
John the Baptist	✔	✔							
John the Evangelist							✔		
Paul					✔				
Luke									
Clement									
Silvester		✔					✔	✔	✔
Ambrose	✔								
Martin							✔		
Gregory (of Nazianzus)		✔							
Basil									
Anthony							✔		
Paul the Hermit				✔					✔
Hilarion								✔	✔
John (the Hermit)		✔					✔		
Benedict			✔				✔		✔
Gervasius									
Protasius									
Narcissus						✔			✔
Athanasius	✔								
Babilas									
Cosmas							✔		✔
Damian							✔		✔
Chrysanthus					✔				✔
Julian		✔			✔		✔		✔
Amos		✔	✔			✔	✔		
Apollonius		✔		✔		✔			
Jerome									
TOTALS	5	10	2	4	3	6	11	3	13

Table 2.3 Female saints' miracles in the *PdV*

Miracle/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mary									
Cecilia									
Agatha							✔		✔
Lucia									✔
Justina									✔
Eugenia									
Agnes					✔	✔	✔		
Thecla									✔
Eulalia									
Scholastica						✔			✔
Christina									✔
Dorothea									
Constantina									
Eustochium									
Demetrias									
Chionia									
Irene									
Agape									
Rufina					✔				✔
Secunda					✔				✔
Anatolia						✔	✔		
Victoria					✔	✔		✔	
Judith									
TOTALS	0	0	0	0	4	4	3	1	8

Table 2.4 Female saints' miracles in the *CdV*

Miracle/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mary									
Cecilia									
Agatha							✔		✔
Lucia									✔
Justina									
Eugenia						✔			
Agnes					✔	✔	✔		
Thecla									✔
Eulalia									
Scholastica									✔
Constantina									
Eustochium									
Demetrias									
Chionia									
Irene									
Agape									
Rufina					✔				✔
Secunda					✔				✔
Anatolia		✔					✔		
Victoria		✔				✔		✔	
TOTALS	0	2	0	0	3	3	3	1	6

Table 2.5 Male and female saints displaying the defined miracles in the double treatise _Dv_

Miracles correspond to the following categories:

1 = Predestination

2 = Phenomena of the mind

3 = Translocation and telekinesis

4 = Divine provision of food

5 = Heavenly signs

6 = Vengeance

7 = Healing and exorcism

8 = Combats serpents and dragons

9 = Control over nature

Percentage calculations are based on there being 39 male _exempla_ in the _PdV_ and 34 in the _CdV_, as well as 23 female _exempla_ in the _PdV_ and 20 in the _CdV_.

Figures have been rounded up to the nearest percent.

Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Males _PdV_	10 %	23 %	3 %	10 %	13 %	15 %	23 %	5 %	36 %
Males _CdV_	15 %	29 %	6 %	12 %	9 %	18 %	32 %	9 %	38 %
Females _PdV_	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	17 %	17 %	13 %	4 %	35 %
Females _CdV_	0 %	10 %	0 %	0 %	15 %	15 %	15 %	5 %	30 %

Appendix Three. Comparing Aldhelm's Male Saints' Virtuous Qualities and Miracles with those Found in some of his Principal Literary Exemplars

These appendices plot the extent to which Aldhelm's representation of his saintly and biblical exemplars corresponds with, or departs from, his principal literary models. Saints' virtuous qualities and miracles are plotted from almost half of Aldhelm's principal literary sources. The saints selected represent a mixture of the different types of holy men Aldhelm catalogues. It thus includes prophets, apostles, bishops, monks, a pope and an abbot. As previously, saints' virtuous qualities correspond to the following categories: (1) learnedness; (2) proselytising, instructing and advising on religious matters, (3) charitable; (4) rejection of or abstention from material goods; (5) abstinence from food; (6) rejection of marriage or not being persuaded to marry; (7) living in spiritual marriage; (8) tortured and martyred for the faith. Likewise, saints' miracles again correspond to the following categories: (1) predestination; (2) phenomena of the mind; (3) translocation and telekinesis; (4) divine provision of food; (5) heavenly signs; (6) vengeance; (7) healing and exoticism; (8) combats serpents and dragons; (9) control over nature.

The following principal sources (as identified by Ehwald) have been consulted:

Elijah: III Reg. XVII. 1-24; III. Reg. XVIII. 1-46; III Reg. XIX. 1-21; IV Reg. I. 1-21.
Elisha: IV Reg. III-XIII.
Jeremiah: Ier. I-LII.
Daniel: Dan. I-XIV.
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: Dan. I and III.
John the Baptist: Matt. III and XIV; Marc. VI; Luc. I, III, VI and IX.
Paul: Phil.; I Cor.; II Cor.; Acts; Rom.; Epis.
For these Biblical references, consult the Stuttgart Vulgate, *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, (ed.), R. Weber et al., (2 vols, 4th edn., Stuttgart, 1994).

John the Evangelist: Isidore, *De ortu et obitu patrum*, (ed.), C. C. Gómez, *Vida y muerte de los santos Isidoro de Sevilla* (Paris, 1985), cap. LXXI.1, p. 205.
Luke: Isidore, *De ortu et obitu Patrum*, (ed.), *Ibid.*, cap. LXXXI, p. 217.
Clement: *Liber pontificalis*, (ed.), L. Duchesne (2 vols, Paris, 1886-1892), vol. I. cap. IV, pp. 52-53.
Ambrose: Paulinus, *Vita S Ambrosii*, PL, XIV (Turnhout, 1845), col. 27-46.
Martin: Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S Martini*, (ed.), J. Fontaine, *Sulpice Sévère, Vie de Saint Martin, Sources Chrétiennes*, 133-135 (3 vols, Paris, 1967), vol. I, pp. 248-344.
Paul the Hermit: Jerome, *Vita S Pauli eremitae*, PL, 23 (Turnhout, 1842), cols. 17-28.
Hilarion: Jerome, *Vita S Hilarionis*, PL, 23 (Turnhout, 1842), cols. 29-54.
John the Hermit: Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, cap. I, (ed.), E. Scultz-Flügel, *Historia monachorum sive De Vita Sanctorum Patrum*, Patristische Texte und Studien, 34 (Berlin, 1990), pp. 247-75.
Amos: Rufinus, *Historia monachorum*, cap. XXX, *Ibid.*, pp. 375-78.

Table 3.1 Comparing Aldhelm's male saints' virtuous qualities in the *PdV* with those found in some of his principal literary exemplars

□ = qualities which Aldhelm and his principal exemplars share

✕ = qualities which Aldhelm omits from his principal sources

▶ = qualities which are only found in Aldhelm's double treatise

Virtuous quality/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Elijah								
Elisha								
Jeremiah	✕	✕						
Daniel					✕			
Shadrach	✕				▶			□
Meshach	✕				▶			□
Abednego	✕				▶			□
John the Baptist		✕			✕			□
John the Evangelist	□	✕						
Paul	✕	✕	✕					
Luke	□	✕						
Clement	□	□						✕
Ambrose	□	✕	✕		✕			
Martin		✕	□	✕	✕			
Paul the Hermit	✕			✕	□			
Hilarion	✕	✕	✕	✕	□			
John (the Hermit)		✕			✕			
Amos		□					□	
TOTAL of Qualities shared	4	2	1	0	2	0	1	4
TOTAL of Qualities Omitted	7	9	3	3	5	0	0	1
TOTAL of Qualities in Aldhelm alone	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0

Table 3.2 Comparing Aldhelm's male saints' virtuous qualities in the *CdV* with those found in some of his principal literary exemplars

□ = qualities which Aldhelm and his principal exemplars share

× = qualities which Aldhelm omits from his principal sources

▶ = qualities which are only found in Aldhelm's double treatise

Virtuous quality/ Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Elijah								
Elisha								
Jeremiah	×	×						
Daniel	▶				×			▶
Shadrach								□
Meshach								□
Abednego								□
John the Baptist		□			□			□
John the Evangelist	×	×						
Paul	×	□	×					
Luke	□	×						
Clement	×	×						×
Ambrose	□	×	×		×			
Martin		□	□	×	×			
Paul the Hermit	×			□	□			
Hilarion	×	×	×	×	×			
John (the Hermit)		×			×			
Amos		×					×	
TOTAL of Qualities shared	2	3	1	1	2	0	0	4
TOTAL of Qualities Omitted	6	8	3	2	5	0	1	1
TOTAL of Qualities in Aldhelm alone	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table 3.3 Comparing Aldhelm's male saints' miracles in the *PdV* with those found in some of his principal literary exemplars

□ = qualities which Aldhelm and his principal exemplars share

× = qualities which Aldhelm omits from his principal sources

▶ = qualities which are only found in Aldhelm's double treatise

Miracle / Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Elijah		×		□	×	□	×		□
Elisha		×	×	×		□	□		□
Jeremiah	□	×							
Daniel		□		□	×			□	×
Shadrach					□				□
Meshach					□				□
Abednego					□				□
John the Baptist	□	□							
John the Evangelist		×					□		□
Paul		□			×		×		□
Luke									
Clement									
Ambrose	□	×			×	×	×		
Martin		×			□	▶	□		□
Paul the Hermit				□					▶
Hilarion		×		×			×	□	□
John the Hermit		□					×		
Amos		□	□			▶	□		
TOTAL of Miracles shared	3	5	1	3	4	2	4	2	9
TOTAL of Miracles Omitted	0	7	1	2	4	1	5	0	1
TOTAL of Miracles in Aldhelm alone	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1

Table 3.4 Comparing Aldhelm's male saint's miracles in the *CdV* with those found in some of his principal literary exemplars

□ = qualities which Aldhelm and his principal exemplars share

✗ = qualities which Aldhelm omits from his principal sources

► = qualities which are only found in Aldhelm's double treatise

Miracle / Saints	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Elijah		□		□	✗	□	✗		□
Elisha	►	✗	✗	✗		□	□		□
Jeremiah	□	□							
Daniel		□		□	✗	►		□	✗
Shadrach					□				□
Meshach					□				□
Abednego					□				□
John the Baptist	□	□							
John the Evangelist		✗					□		✗
Paul		✗			□		✗		✗
Luke									
Clement									
Ambrose	□	✗			✗	✗	✗		
Martin		✗			✗		✗		✗
Paul the Hermit				□					►
Hilarion		✗		□			✗	✗	□
John the Hermit		□					□		
Amos		□	□			►	□		
TOTAL of Miracles shared	3	6	1	4	4	2	4	1	6
TOTAL of Miracles Omitted	0	6	1	1	4	1	5	1	4
TOTAL of Miracles in Aldhelm alone	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1

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