

The Construction of Male Sanctity in Early Anglo-Saxon Hagiographies

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Abstract

Hagiographical writing was an important tool in the conversion-period England to show to the audience that it was possible for them to achieve Christian perfection in a world that was different to the Biblical one. Early Anglo-Latin *Lives* often achieved this effect by writing about and embedding allusions in the stories of the founders and leaders of the English Church, to demonstrate that they did re-enact the holiness recorded in the Bible and patristic writings. In this case, they should have been able to shed light on the relationship between religious ideas and social reality in early English society. Yet apart from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and Aldhelm's treatise on virgins, these texts focus on male saints, and thus receive little attention in the research on gender in the conversion period, given that earlier studies are mainly concerned with women's history. This thesis studies five of them to show that by extending the research to the study of men's history, it is possible to use them to explore the implications of Christianity for gender norms and gender relations in this period.

This thesis discusses the following examples in turn: the Whitby *Life of Gregory*, the Lindisfarne *Life of Cuthbert*, Bede's metrical *Life* and prose *Life of Cuthbert*, and Felix's *Life of Guthlac*. It examines their distinctive representations of the male saint's roles and relationship with other male and female characters, and discusses the Biblical and patristic contexts of these representations, along with the social ones, especially regarding the intersections of the Church and family. It concludes that these representations reflect how when Biblical and patristic ideas were used in conversion-period England to conceptualise Church organisation; that they opened new roles for men, redefined or affirmed their traditional roles, and framed their relationship with women according to these roles.

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Abbreviations

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
HE	Bede's <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)
RB	Benedict, <i>The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes</i> , ed. by Timothy Fry (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981)
RP	Gregory, <i>Règle Pastorale</i> , ed. by Bruno Judic and Floribert Rommel, trans. by Charles Morel, Sources Chrétiennes, 381-382, 2 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1992)
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
VA	Athanasius, <i>Vita sancti Antonii</i> in 'Die Evagriusübersetzung der Vita Antonii: Reception – Überlieferung - Edition. Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Vitas Patrum-Tradition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Utrecht University, 2005), pp. 160-91
VCA	'Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert', in <i>Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life</i> , ed. and trans. by (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp. 61-139
VCM	Bede, 'Vita Metrica S. Cudbercti', in <i>Bede's Latin Poetry</i> , ed. by Michael Lapidge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2019)
VCP	Bede, 'Prose Life of St Cuthbert', in <i>Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life</i> ,

ed. and trans. by (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940),
pp. 143-307

- VG Felix, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956)
- VGA *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968)
- VM *Sulpicius, Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini*, ed. by Philip Burton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)
- VW Stephen, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927)

The above translations have been used in this thesis unless otherwise stated.

Chapter I

Introduction

With the arrival of the Gregorian mission in England in 597, and the Iona mission in the 630s, most of the major English kingdoms had been converted to Christianity by the end of the seventh century. How the new religion had proposed new roles, regulations and representations for women has attracted a considerable amount of attention, whereas its similar implications on men has often been ignored. Yet considering that manhood is, like womanhood, historically and culturally relative, and both are usually defined in relation to each other, it is impossible to construct a comprehensive picture of gender in the conversion period without asking how the new religion had changed, maintained and diversified men's roles and images based on their gender as it had done to women, and how these impacts on men were related to women.¹ It is also worth noting that these impacts are more visible to modern scholars than any other gender issues in the conversion period. This is because the surviving sources say far more about men than women and what they say about men often outlines how the Church expected them to believe and to act. Failure to explore the impacts of the new religion on men would therefore leave out a considerable amount of material that would otherwise be available for the study of gender in the conversion period. Conversely, a study of these impacts could lead to a better understanding of gender in the conversion period and a fuller utilisation of historical sources for this research.

In this thesis, I explore these impacts by focusing on five hagiographies produced in England in the early eighth century. They are the Whitby *Life of Gregory*, the Lindisfarne *Life of Cuthbert*, Bede's metrical and prose *Lives of Cuthbert*, and Felix's *Life of Guthlac*.² I

¹ Verity Fisher has outlined some basic questions that can be asked about manhood in the conversion period in her 'Muscular Sanctity? Masculine Christian Ideals in Anglo-Saxon Latin Texts', *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*, 5 (2009), 21-34.

² For the basic information of the date, sources and authorial context of these texts, see the introduction sections in Colgrave's edition and translation of them. *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968), pp. 1-58. *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp. 1-

suggest that they can be read as the Church's attempts to define men in English society in relation to a series of new positions, roles and ideals, and they reflect how the Church in the conversion period influenced gender norms with these new elements. Meanwhile, I suggest that they also shed light on the diversity of these influences, as their authors' perceptions of these new elements and target audiences present male sanctity in distinctive ways.

In the first section of this chapter, I will review earlier scholarship about women in the Anglo-Saxon period, as its approaches to gender in early Anglo-Latin hagiographies continue to be influential. In reconsidering these approaches, in the second section I will study male sanctity in the five *Lives* in relation to their genre, and to the Church and its relationship with the family as a gendered organisation. In the third section, I explain how the distinctive treatment of male sanctity in these texts can be better explained by the authors' ideals about roles in the Church than by their perceptions of gender differences.

I. 1 Christianity and English Customs

The *Lives of Gregory, Cuthbert and Guthlac* had been unfairly disregarded in studies of women in the Anglo-Saxon period until the 1980s. The main reason was probably because their historical value, together with those of other contemporary *Lives*, has only been recognised gradually since the 1940s.³ Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and early English law codes, by contrast, were the sources most frequently consulted.⁴ They were used specifically to reconstruct how women lived under early English legal and social customs. As Pauline Stafford has pointed out, this research interest could be traced back to English scholars'

16. *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 1-25. For the metrical *Life of Cuthbert*, see *Bede's Latin Poetry*, ed. and trans. by Michael Lapidge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2019) pp. 70-82. My discussion of these texts will be based on these editions of Colgrave and Lapidge.

³ Early important works on these texts included Bertram Colgrave's edition and translation of the two prose *Lives* of Cuthbert in 1940; see also his 'The Earliest Saints' Lives Written in England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 44 (1958), 35-60. See also Charles W. Jones, *Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1947). But the wider use of these texts in the research on the Anglo-Saxon period would only happen in the 1980s.

⁴ Early scholars read Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* as a historical work in modern sense rather than as a hagiography. For criticism of this approach, see J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede and Plummer', in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. by Gerald Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976), pp. 366-83.

attempt in the nineteenth century to show that their English or Germanic ancestors were a civilised people, who respected women and allowed them high status and freedom.⁵ When scholars in recent decades, such as Stephanie Hollis, considered the *Lives* in relation to the study of gender in the conversion period, this research interest continued to frame the way they employ these sources and, together with the lack of interest in the history of manhood in the conversion period, prevented them from using these sources for more fruitful approaches to the study of the history of gender.⁶

Early scholars tended to view the Anglo-Saxon period as a golden age for women, largely on the basis of their study of the law codes and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.⁷ According to a reading that once prevailed but has now been proved wrong (see below), the law code attributed to Æthelberht of Kent, the first English king converted to Christianity, allowed a wife to have a share of her husband's property after leaving him at her own will.⁸ It was therefore often taken as evidence that women in pre-Christian and early Christian eras had the rights to divorce their husbands and to dispose of property.⁹ Bede was also often cited in favour of the golden-age hypothesis to show how women had played important roles in the conversion of the English kingdoms; how they founded monasteries and ruled both monks and nuns in them.¹⁰

For Doris Stenton, the rights and powers enjoyed by English women before the Norman Conquest could be attributed to the failure of the Church teachers to impose their

⁵ Pauline Stafford, 'Women and the Norman Conquest', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (1994), 221-49 (pp. 221-30), pp. 221-29.

⁶ Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church* (Woodbridge; NY: Boydell Press, 1992)

⁷ Florence Griswold Buckstaff, 'Married Women's Property in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Law and the Origin of the Common-Law Dower', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 4 (1893), 34-64 (pp. 63-64); Lina Eckenstein, *Chapters on Sint-Lore and Convent Life between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), pp. 1-44; Doris Stenton, *The English Women in History* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), pp. 1-28, especially p. 28.

⁸ See C. Hough, 'The Early Kentish 'Divorce Laws': A Reconsideration of Æthelberht chs. 79 and 80', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 23 (1994), 19-34.

⁹ Examples include Buckstaff, 'Origin of the Common-Law Dower', pp. 45-46; Ernest Young, 'The Anglo-Saxon Family Law', in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon Law* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1905), pp. 121-82 (p. 179). Doris Stenton, *The English Women in History*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Eckenstein, *Chapters on Sint-Lore*, pp. 79-105. Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 162-63; Joan Nicholson, 'Feminae Gloriosae: Women in the Age of Bede', in *Studies in Church History Subsidia*, 1 (1978), 15-29.

teachings on the society.¹¹ One example she gave was how Archbishop Theodore, a reformer sent by Rome to England, had to make concession to the English customs, by relaxing the rule about remarriage and accepting the existence of gender-mixed religious communities.¹² Her view remains persistent in more recent studies, including those of Christine Fell. To establish an authentic picture of women's actual life in early English society, Fell focuses on distinguishing the perceptions of women in historical sources that reflect English customs, from those that reflect the views of the Church, which she believes to have been irrelevant to how women actually lived in pre-Conquest England.¹³ For instance, she disregards penitentials on account of their adherence to ideals of foreign origins that had never been put into practice; she points out that Bede's ideal of virginity had let him downplay the fact that Hild, the holy abbess of the double monastery at Whitby, had very probably been married, and that the letters written by women to Boniface regarding their sufferings and asking for support were in fact highly formulaic; thus their emotional appeals do not necessary reflect the reality of women in this period.¹⁴ She instead concludes from these sources that Anglo-Saxon women were treated as equals with men as scholars, advisors and church founders.¹⁵ She makes a few references to Aldhelm's works that were dedicated to women, including his treatise on virginity, which included stories of male and female virgin saints, but only to show that the target female audience must have been well-educated.¹⁶ Just as the scholars before her, she does not make reference to any other *Lives* produced in the seventh and eighth centuries to support her understanding of women in the early Anglo-Saxon period, presumably both because of their dedication to male saints and allegiance to Christian ideals.

¹¹ Doris Stenton, *The English Women in History*, p. 12.

¹² Doris Stenton, *The English Women in History*, pp. 10, 13.

¹³ Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (London: British Museum Publications, 1984), pp. 13-14

¹⁴ Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 20; 'Hild: Abbess of Streonaeshalch', in *Hagiography and Medieval Literature: a Symposium* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), pp. 76-99; 'Some Implications of the Boniface Correspondence', in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. by Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 29-43.

¹⁵ Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 109-28.

¹⁶ Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 109-11, 119-20.

In contrast to the work of Stenton and Fell, some studies focus on the intersection of English culture and society and the Church's perceptions of women. For instance, Helen Damico studies the Valkyrie tradition in Old English literature, while Jane Chance studies them as types and antitypes of peace weavers, respectively framed by the Christian binary perceptions of Mary and Eve.¹⁷ These studies have inspired scholars who focus on the conversion period in terms of how to use the saints' *Lives* to study women. Janemarie Luecke suggests that early English women were able to exert influence on their husbands and their own families as peace-weavers by marriage.¹⁸ She identifies this position as the reason for their powerful roles as rulers and advisors, and Bede's readiness to praise women who were not virgins in his *Ecclesiastical History*, and also Aldhelm's praise of the widows who lived in chastity as a type of spiritual virgins, when he was writing a treatise on virgin saints and on the ideal of physical virginity. Luecke mourns that the 'patristic rhetoric' about the inferiority of married women would then gradually take over English society in later Anglo-Saxon periods.¹⁹ Stephanie Hollis shares a similar view. She criticises Fell for underestimating, and Chance for exaggerating, the influence of the Church in the conversion period.²⁰ She argues that the Gregorian mission had brought with it into England the institutional authority of the Church, and the concepts of individual conscience and of marriage as a mystic union of opposites.²¹ She then contrasts these concepts with how 'Germanic' culture saw women as comrades of men, assigned them power on the basis of kinship and granted them autonomy in marriage.²² She concludes that these foreign concepts had gradually replaced the 'Germanic' ones and dismissed women's social status in the later Anglo-Saxon period because they

¹⁷ Helen Damico, 'The Valkyrie Reflex in Old English Literature'; Jane Chance, 'The Structural Unity of Beowulf: The Problem of Grendel's Mother', both in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. by Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 176-92, 248-61. See also Damico, *Beowulf's Wealhtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

¹⁸ Janemarie Luecke, 'The Unique Experience of Anglo-Saxon Nuns', in *Medieval Religious Women Volume Two: Peaceweavers*, ed. by Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols, Cistercian Studies Series 72 (Cistercian Publications, 1987), pp. 55-66.

¹⁹ Luecke, 'Anglo-Saxon Nuns', pp. 63-64.

²⁰ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 4-9.

²¹ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 9-14.

²² Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 9-14, 63, 85-86, 90-91, 101-05, 152-53, 190.

undermined the importance of kinship, required women's subjugation and conceptualised them as Other.²³

Here, her use of the hagiographical sources deserves some detailed discussion. She is probably the first who places the *Lives* of male saints at the centre of the research on women in the conversion period, and in doing so she also gives weight to the importance of studying the history of manhood for understanding that of womanhood. Among the sources, she argues that the 'Germanic' concept of men and women as comrades still prevails in the Lindisfarne *Life* of Cuthbert, being reflected in its account of the friendship between Cuthbert and Abbess Ælfflæd.²⁴ Yet the Church's concept of marriage, she argues, did gradually take root in English society and change other aspects of gender relations with its emphasis on female alterity.²⁵ In Aldhelm's treatise of virginity, she reads the images of women as Christ's soldiers and the Lamb's Bride as reflecting respectively the Germanic and patristic conceptions of gender relations as comradeship and mystic union.²⁶ Meanwhile, regarding the *Life of Gregory*, which was written in the female-led community at Whitby, she draws attention to how the text emphasised Gregory's reluctance in assuming his papal office, and attributes his authority to his virtue of humility rather than to his office; she then reads this emphasis as advocating a personal rather than an institutional sanctity, and reflecting the Whitby nuns' discontent with increasing episcopal authority.²⁷ By contrast, she calls attention to how Bede's prose *Life* of Cuthbert gives weight to Cuthbert's authority over Ælfflæd as a priest, and thus suggests that Bede is advocating an 'egregiously inhuman and hierarchically authoritarian construction of episcopal sanctity'.²⁸ Here, her study reveals that the main concern of these texts was to construct ideals of perfect men, but they needed to redefine women in order to do so. Indeed, her whole work can be summarised as arguing that the

²³ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 9-14.

²⁴ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 179-207.

²⁵ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 47-48.

²⁶ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 75-112.

²⁷ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 125-27.

²⁸ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 130, 179-207.

decline in women's status in the later Anglo-Saxon period was caused by the establishment of ecclesiastical authority.

Yet while Hollis's work helps to bring in the saints' *Lives* and manhood in the research on women in the conversion period, she in fact studies these texts and gender with the same method of contextualisation that has been used in the studies of Stenton, Fell and nineteenth-century scholars, namely to read them in light of a polarity between two sets of perceptions of women, which they identify as belonging respectively to the Church and to the English customs. This method, however, is itself problematic. First, the establishing of this polarity almost always requires a reconstruction of the customs about women in the pre-Christian English society, which has left no contemporary records. Æthelberht's law has certainly preserved important hints about these customs, but it is difficult to establish a correct interpretation of it, as it is the only text surviving from early seventh-century England.²⁹ To expand the evidence base for reconstructing these customs, Stenton, Fell and Hollis all appeal to Tacitus's *Germania*, and Fell and Hollis also appeal to some Icelandic sagas.³⁰ But their use of these materials to study English society has obviously exaggerated the homogeneity of 'Germanic culture', by assuming the existence of a consistent and unchanging Germanic attitude towards women.³¹ Meanwhile, their binary view of Christianity and English customs also leads to an overestimation of the homogeneity of both. For instance, Fell provides a completely static picture of the history of Anglo-Saxon women by generalising from sources produced at different periods of the pre-Conquest era. Hollis groups all her sources to construct a linear model of evolution of the perceptions of women in the conversion period, and thus fails to pay enough attention to the fact that the sources she uses for this purpose had

²⁹ For the challenges in interpreting the references to women in early English law codes, see Carole Hough's works, including 'The Early Kentish 'Divorce Laws'; 'Two Kentish Laws Concerning Women: A New Reading of Æthelberht 73 and 74', *Anglia*, 119 (2001), 554-78; 'Women and the Law in Seventh-Century England', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 51 (2007), 207-30.

³⁰ Doris Stenton, *The English Women in History*, p. 1; Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 26-27, 31-32, 84-86; Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 49-50, 85-86, 104, 190.

³¹ Doris Stenton, *The English Women in History*, pp. 1-4, 6-9; Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 26-27, 31-32, 84-86. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 9-10. See Berit Åström, 'The Creation of the Anglo-Saxon Woman', *Studia Neophilologica*, 70.1 (1988), 25-34; Stafford, 'Women and the Norman Conquest', pp. 221-24.

in fact been produced in different regions — Bede's works and the *Lives of Gregory, Cuthbert* and *Wilfrid* were products of Northumbria, whereas Aldhelm's works, the *Life of Guthlac* and the law codes were produced in the south.

Regarding the Church's perceptions of women, Stenton only refers to Paul's teachings about women's submission to men. Fell seems to have endorsed her view. She is aware of the opposing view that the Church had in fact introduced to early English society the concept of women as individuals, but she does not feel the need to engage in this debate and instead maintains that the Church's views of women had no impact on pre-Conquest society, without noticing that her failure to define the content of these views had indeed undermined this argument.³² As mentioned, Hollis is able to develop a more complex picture about the Church's perception of women. She even tries to balance this generalisation by saying that Pope Gregory's emphasis on individual conscience had, through the teachings of his missionaries, provided a distinctive basis for the empowerment of women in England.³³ But she does not trace more specifically the debts of her hagiographical sources to different theological and literary traditions, which could have diversified the ways they perceived and presented women. In this case, just as Fell and Hollis, her generalisation from these sources has underrepresented the diversity of the Christian faith in early English society.

Finally, when Hollis develops this model of the gradual depreciation of women's status and freedom in conversion period due to the Church's influence, she is in fact endorsing the time-honoured hypothesis of the existence of a golden age for women in the Anglo-Saxon period — though she dates its end much earlier.³⁴ However, as Pauline Stafford has pointed out, this hypothesis implies an ahistorical and decontextualised understanding of

³² Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 13-14. The view she refers to is Thomas Wright's *Womankind in Western Europe From the Earliest Times to the Seventeenth Century* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1869), p. 71. For a similar view of the Church's positive influence on early English women's social status, see Anne Klinck's 'Anglo-Saxon Women and the Law', *Journal of Medieval History*, 8.2 (June 1982), 107-21 (pp. 111).

³³ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 18, 25-33.

³⁴ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 4-9.

social status and freedom.³⁵ More specifically, as both she and Marc Meyer have criticised, it fails to emphasise that what Early English women could and could not do and possess was highly dependent on their functions to the society and to specific social groups, such as the family.³⁶

Hollis's reading of the saints' *Lives* should therefore be reconsidered in light of these criticisms. For instance, her reading of Aldhelm's treatise on virginity in terms of what she terms as Germanic perceptions of women can be contradicted by Sinéad O'Sullivan's observation, namely that Aldhelm's use of the trope of Christ's soldiers and his view of religious women as spiritual men could both be traced back to the treatises on virginity written by early Church Fathers, which Aldhelm had modelled his work on.³⁷ Meanwhile, her argument that the English society did not see marriage as an indissoluble union has already been undermined by Carole Hough's suggestion that Æthelberht's law did not in fact grant women the right to divorce.³⁸ Moreover, she fails to consider how the establishing of ecclesiastical authority could mean different things to different men and women according to their different positions in social organisations and classes. She does not, for example, discuss the possibility that Bede's emphasis on episcopal authority could have framed his presentation of the relationship between monks and nuns in a different way to that between priests and abbesses, or that the nuns at Whitby, rich and powerful, could have colluded with the episcopal authority to construct their own superiority over lesser religious communities. In fact, Bede praised Hild for having fostered priests in the community with good education, with five of them eventually becoming bishops.³⁹ This hints that the Whitby nuns had actively engaged in the building of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and that their fame and authority were

³⁵ Stafford, 'Women and the Norman Conquest', pp. 229-30, 45-46.

³⁶ Stafford, 'Women and the Norman Conquest', pp. 245-46. Marc A. Meyer, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Penitentials and the Position of Women', *The Haskins Society Journal*, 2 (1990), 47-61 (60-61).

³⁷ Sinéad O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's De Virginitate — Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia*, 12 (1998), 271-95 (pp. 265-79).

³⁸ C. Hough, 'The Early Kentish 'Divorce Laws'', pp. 19-34.

³⁹ See Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 408-11 (Book IV, Chapter 23). This is the edition used in the rest of the text.

at least partially based on this achievement.⁴⁰ In this case, they were unlikely to have seen their interests as in conflict with the growing ecclesiastical hierarchy, nor was it likely that their commission of the *Life of Gregory* was intended to make to a ‘polemical statement’ against it.⁴¹ Overall, Hollis has distorted the meaning of the hagiographical sources by reading into them the opposition between the Germanic and Christian perceptions of gender on the one hand, and that between pro- and anti-women attitudes on the other hand. Alternative ways have to be developed to contextualise these texts in order to explore them in relation to gender with more emphasis on the diversity in social positions and situations.

I. 2 The Church and the Family

My strategy is to explore the presentation of the male sanctity in the *Lives of Gregory, Cuthbert* and *Guthlac* in relation to their social and literary contexts. I will focus on how they functioned to define the roles in the Church organisation and their relationship with family roles. On the one hand, the sources from this period say much about the Church and family organisations and the relationship between them; thus there is good evidence for such contextualisation. On the other hand, all these *Lives* presented their saints in relation to how they acted according to their roles assigned by the Church, and how they interacted with lay households. I suggest that they are here responding to the need for the Church in the conversion period to define its organisation and its relationship with the lay families. Both the Church and family organisations are promising places to study the history of gender, because they shaped gender norms by defining what roles should be assigned to men, to women and to both. In this case, studying how the five *Lives* treated their saints in relation to these roles could help to explore their approach to gender.

Before starting the discussion, it might be worth pointing out that the family organisation that concerns this thesis is the organisation of an aristocratic household, which

⁴⁰ For how Whitby could have participated in the reproduction of patriarchal culture, see Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, ‘Birthing Bishops and Fathering Poets: Bede, Hild and the Relations of Cultural Production’, *Exemplaria*, 6.1 (1994), 35-65 (pp. 44-45).

⁴¹ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, p. 127.

possessed servants and estates, and the *paterfamilias* was often a warrior. Indeed, very little is known about the families of lesser status in this period.⁴² It appears that the *Lives* are not much concerned with them, as the families appearing in them are either aristocratic ones or without context. Thus the lack of information about them does not invalidate my analysis of the texts in relation to how they define their saints in relation to or in opposition to the lay households.

There have been several studies about how the family defined gender roles in the Anglo-Saxon period. Though they are mostly about women, they shed light on the patriarchal authority that defined and governed them. Stafford's works, for instance, show that women's status and power were decided by their functions to their family in this period, and thus could change according to their lifecycle.⁴³ Jane Schulenburg points out that in early medieval Gaul and England, the family was the major political and economic institution on account of the absence of strong bureaucratic institutions, thus allowing women to play active public roles based on their positions in the family.⁴⁴ Regarding the conversion period, it can be clearly observed that the family as the most important institution in society had decisively dictated gender norms. Carole Hough, in her study of the seventh-century law codes, finds out that these texts defined the rights and duties of women mainly in terms of their procreative capacity.⁴⁵ Marc Meyer's study of early Anglo-Saxon penitential literature also shows that the Church was as eager as lay authorities in regulating women according to their functions to the family as mothers and wives.⁴⁶ He concludes that these functions were so important for maintaining social order that their subjugation to their husbands and fathers must have always

⁴² As Doris Stenton has pointed out, very little is known about women of lesser status, p. 5. As Verity Fisher has suggested, this is also true in the case of men, *The English Women in History*, p. 23.

⁴³ Stafford, 'Women and the Norman Conquest', pp. 230-48. See also her *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1983).

⁴⁴ Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Female Sanctity: Public and Private Roles ca. 500-1100', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 102-25.

⁴⁵ Hough, 'Women and the Law', p. 230.

⁴⁶ Meyer, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Penitentials and the Position of Women', pp. 53-61.

been required and stressed — for this reason he rejects the golden-age hypothesis.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, it is important to pay the same attention to the fact that parallels could also be drawn between some family roles of men and women. For instance, both mothers and fathers were expected to teach their children, and both the lords and their wives were expected to govern their households.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the Church defined a very different set of gender-specific and gender-neutral roles, based on the positions of bishops, priests, monastics, hermits and the laity. Both men and women could be monastics, and presumably hermits as well, but whether or in what ways they were expected to act differently in these position basing on their gender is unclear.⁴⁹ Only men could assume sacred offices, and those who assumed these offices were assigned certain prerogatives and duties according to their ranks, including the administering of sacraments.⁵⁰ There is a debate over whether there was a clear distinction in the conversion period between the roles of the monastics and priests in pastoral care, and this is related to a similar debate of whether nuns were expected to preach in this period. For instance, Sarah Foot argues that religious women were expected to be preachers in Bede's time.⁵¹ Presumably this argument was based on her view that monks were expected to undertake pastoral duty as much as priests were, and that it was the norm for religious communities to perform pastoral functions, a view taken by Alan Thacker but opposed by Catherine Cubitt, Eric Cambridge

⁴⁷ Meyer, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Penitentials and the Position of Women', pp. 60-61

⁴⁸ The expectation of mother as teacher in conversion period is particularly reflected in how Abbess Hild was addressed as a mother by all whom she had taught, see *HE*, pp. 410-11 (Book IV, Chapter 23). Meanwhile, Bede addresses a nobleman as the head of Queen Æthelthryth's household, see pp. 338-39 (Book IV, Chapter 3).

⁴⁹ For an overview of nuns' lives, see Foot, 'Flores Ecclesiae: Women in Early Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', in *Female Vita Religiosa between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, ed. by Gert Melville and Anne Müller, Vita Regularis (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011), pp. 173-85.

⁵⁰ For priestly prerogatives in this period, see Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 137-70 (pp. 137-39).

⁵¹ Sarah Foot, 'Women, Prayer and Preaching in Early English Church', in *Prayer and Thought in Monastic Tradition Essays in Honour of Benedicta Ward, SLG*, ed. by Santha Bhattacharji Rowan Williams and Dominic Mattospp (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2014), pp. 59-76 (pp. 62-64).

and David Rollason.⁵² But as Cubitt has pointed out, both Bede and the canon laws in this period obviously identified preaching as a duty mainly for clergy.⁵³ Finally, the Church labelled the majority of the society as the laity and expected them to perform practices and obligations, such as submission to episcopal authority, that could have been different to what men and women had been expected to do in pre-Christian society.

When Church organisation opened up these roles to men and women in English society in the conversion period, it must have felt the need to define them in relation to the roles defined by the family, which, as mentioned, had been the most important social unit in early English society. Although the same need would probably also exist in later periods, it was particularly pressing and visible in the source in the conversion period for two reasons. First, these roles had yet to be integrated into the society and into most people's expectations of respectable men and women, which had so far largely been framed by the family. The Church teachers therefore needed to keep explaining and arguing about them, often in opposition to different and more influential expectations. Second, most of the religious communities were by nature familial institutions in this period. They were built on familial land with familial resources, occupied by members related to each other by blood, and meant to provide services for the founding and patron families, ranging from organising resources to offering prayers, burial-places and other forms of memorialisation for family members.⁵⁴ This meant that the members of these communities performed roles assigned by their families and the Church at the same time. This also meant that their familial roles could occasionally

⁵² Foot, 'Parochial Ministry in Early Anglo-Saxon England: The Role of Monastic Communities', *Studies in Church History*, 58 (1989), 43-54 (47-49); Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care', pp. 137-70; Cubitt, 'Pastoral Care and Conciliar Canons: the Provisions of the 747 Council of Clofesho', in *Pastoral Care before the Parish*, pp. 193-211; Eric Cambridge and David Rollason, 'Debate: The Pastoral Organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a review of the 'Minster Hypothesis'', *Early Medieval Europe* 4 (1995), 87-104

⁵³ Catherine Cubitt, 'The Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), 273-87.

⁵⁴ Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London; New York: Continuum, 2003), pp. 105-43; Yorke, 'Queen Balthild's "Monastic Policy" and the Origins of Female Religious Houses in Southern England', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 20 (2017), 7-16. See also Ian Wood, 'Monasteries and the Geography of Power in the Age of Bede', *Northern History* 45.1 (2008), 11-25.

compromise the social practices and allegiance expected of them as priests and monastics, considering the dependence of the Church on the ruling families. Therefore, church teachers must have felt the need to clarify these practices and allegiance, to argue that by honouring them priests and monastics could benefit the spiritual welfare of both the Church and their families, and to emphasise the priority of their religious vocations. These definitions, explanations and arguments would eventually construct new gender norms by redefining both gender-specific roles and gender-neutral ones. Although they had yet to have such impacts in the conversion period, they still shed light on the relationship between the Church's ideals of clergy, monastics and lay people with the existing gender norms, which were still dictated primarily by the family.

It is in this context that I study the *Lives of Gregory, Cuthbert and Guthlac*. The *Life of Gregory* was produced in the community of Whitby. The community consisted of nuns, monks and priests under the leadership of an abbess. As a series of studies has pointed out, this type of gender-mixed community distinctively integrated Church and family hierarchies and interests.⁵⁵ In the case of Whitby, it was first ruled by Hild and then by Ælflæd, both of whom were members of the ruling house of Deira.⁵⁶ It was also a burial-place for the members of this house, including Edwin, a king of Deira and Eanflæd's father, and probably functioned as a site for his cult.⁵⁷ This meant that the two abbesses continued to bear the traditional duty of women in memorialising ancestors. Meanwhile, both of them were praised by Bede as teachers of their communities; Hild was also praised for engaging the community

⁵⁵ John Godfrey, 'The Place of the Double Monastery in the Anglo-Saxon Minster System' in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede ed. by Gerald*

Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976), pp. 344-50. Dagmar Beate Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon women in the Religious Life: A Study of the Status and Position of Women in an Early Medieval Society' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1985), pp. 31-37. Yorke, "'Sister Under the Skin"? Anglo-Saxon Nuns and Nunneries in Southern England', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1989), 95-117, especially p. 107. John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 85.

⁵⁶ Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 162-65.

⁵⁷ For the familial background of Edwin's cult and the cult of King Oswald that was similar to it, see 'Sites and Sanctity: Revisiting the Cult of Murdered and Martyred Anglo-Saxon Royal Saints', *Early Medieval Europe*, 9 (2000), 53-83 (p. 65). See Wood, 'Monastery and Power', pp. 22-23; Yorke, *Nunneries*, 112-22.

in Biblical study, and either she or Ælfflæd had dedicated an altar in the church of the monastery to Pope Gregory, presumably as a way to commemorate the contribution of the Gregorian mission and to highlight Canterbury's authority in Northumbria.⁵⁸ Here, their actions and allegiance were obviously dictated by both their roles in the Church and in their family.

It is worth noting that these roles had also constructed their relationship with the men in the community in a distinctive way. As mentioned, Hild was praised for having cultivated priests and five bishops. While she could be said as having exerted influence over these men as an abbess, her family background was obviously the main reason for her to have possessed enough resources and influences to do so. These roles and social relationship must have shaped the gender norms in the monastery, and thus they will provide an important context for understanding from a gender perspective the male sanctity presented in the *Life of Gregory*. My analysis, especially regarding how it presents the saint as a pope and his missionaries as priests, will in turn tell us more about the male members of the double monastery, who are in fact far less visible than their abbesses in the texts, especially in terms of how they had similarly got their gender roles defined by the Church and the family.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the community at Lindisfarne, in which Cuthbert had lived as monk and bishop, had commissioned the two prose *Lives* of the saint, written respectively by an anonymous member of it and by Bede. The community was male-exclusive and formed by monks and priests; it was ruled by an abbot but also held the seat of a bishopric.⁶⁰ These positions engaged these men with a set of practices, obligations and authority, on some occasions on the grounds of their male gender, especially regarding sacraments and perhaps

⁵⁸ *HE*, pp. 408-11 (Book IV, Chapter 23), 428-31 (Book IV, Chapter 26) *VGA*, pp. 104-05 (Chapter 20). See Peter Hunter Blair, 'Whitby as a Centre of Learning in the Seventh Century', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes*, ed. by M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 4-32. Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory the Great: the Origin and Transmission of a Papal Cult in the Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries', *Early Medieval Europe*, 7 (1998), 59-84 (pp. 71-82).

⁵⁹ Yorke suggests that the priests' dual loyalty in double monasteries to their abbesses and the bishop could lead to tensions and conflicts in these institutions, see *Nunneries*, pp. 125-26.

⁶⁰ 'Prose Life of St Cuthbert', in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, pp. 143-307 (pp. 208-09) (Chapter 16).

some also hard manual labour, and thus framed the gender norms in the community. These roles could have in turn defined their relationship with women, especially with the nuns in the communities that had close ties with them, such as Whitby.⁶¹ Meanwhile, although the bishop's community, Lindisfarne depended on the support of the ruling families and owed obligation to them. It had been established by the Iona missionaries with the support of King Oswald, but went into decline after his brother and successor King Oswiu ruled against the Irish Easter practice at the Synod of Whitby.⁶² It was obliged to provide food for kings and noblemen and to serve as a burial place for them and their families.⁶³ Moreover, as the seat of a bishopric and thus a pastoral centre, its priests and clerics would have to regulate the lay people's family affairs according to their teachings. The two prose *Lives of Cuthbert* dedicated to this community can therefore be read in relation to the intersections of the Church and the family organisations.

Bede's metrical *Life of Cuthbert* can be read in a similar context, as his twin monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow, to which he had dedicated his metrical *Life of Cuthbert*, resembled Lindisfarne by including both monks and monk-priests, and it had an ambiguous relationship with family interests.⁶⁴ That is, although Bede asserted that the election of the abbots in the community was based on virtue rather than kinship, at least two abbots, and perhaps even Bede himself, were related to Benedict Biscop, its founder.⁶⁵ Finally, the background of the *Life of Guthlac* is obscure, except that its author was a certain Felix, who dedicated the text to Ælfwald, king of East Anglia, although the saint was a Mercian of royal birth.⁶⁶ Yet the *Life* provides good information about how Guthlac pursued his career as warrior, cleric, hermit and priest, how he received training at the royal monastery at Repton,

⁶¹ For the relationship between Aidan and Hild, see *HE*, pp. 406-09 (Book iv, Chapter 23). For that between Cuthbert and Ælfflæd, see 'Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert', in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, pp. 61-139 (pp. 102-05, 126-29) (Book III, Chapter 6; Book IV, Chapter 10).

⁶² *HE*, pp. 306-11 (Book III, 25-26). . For a summary of the history of Lindisfarne after the Synod of Whitby, see Clare Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish* (Jarrow: St. Paul's Church, 2003).

⁶³ *HE*, pp. 228-29 (Book III, Chapter 5).

⁶⁴ *VCM*, p. 76.

⁶⁵ Ian Wood, 'The Foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow', *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 84-96 (pp. 87-88)

⁶⁶ *VG*, pp. 60-61 (Preface)

and how his cult involved his sister Pega, King Æthelbald of Mercia and an abbess named Ecgburh, evidently Ælfwald's sister.⁶⁷ Thus the obscurity of the background of this text does not invalidate it as a source in relation to the gender-specific and -neutral roles defined by Church and family structures.⁶⁸

As I have pointed out, in the conversion period, the roles based on Church organisation and their relationship with the family roles were in need of definition, explanation and clarification in terms of practices, obligations, authority and social relations attaching to them. This was because the roles in the Church were far from well-established in society, and were often less influential than familial practice, even where the administration of religious communities was concerned. It is also worth noting that the late seventh century saw a series of Church reforms and ecclesiastical-political struggles that could have intensified the need for clarity. For instance, Lindisfarne was deprived of its episcopal status as a bishopric for a few years after Wilfrid created a new see at York, but was later restored to it after Wilfrid fell out with King Ecgrith and Archbishop Theodore.⁶⁹ As Thacker suggests, this dynamic could result in the tension between the bishop and the abbot at Lindisfarne.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, according to Wilfrid's biographer Stephen, Wilfrid invoked the king's envy because his followers 'arrayed in royal vestments and arms' (*regalibus vestimentis et armis ornatum*), and the saint's complaint about the archbishop was that the latter did not allow him to pick up his episcopal successors from his *familia*.⁷¹ Here, as Cubitt has pointed out, Wilfrid's complaint might have represented a view of succession that was based on lay

⁶⁷ VG, see introduction and notes in pp. 1-7, 15-16, 191.

⁶⁸ For how the double monasteries served as connections between Guthlac and the royal families, see Barbara Yorke, 'Æthelbald, Offa and the Patronage of Nunneries', *Æthelbald and Offa: Two Eighth-Century Kings of Mercia. Papers from a Conference held in Manchester in 2000*, BAR British Series 383 (2005), 43-48.

⁶⁹ Cubitt, 'Usurping Bishops', pp. 18-24; D. P. Kirby, 'The Genesis of a Cult: Cuthbert of Farne and Ecclesiastical Politics in Northumbria in the Late Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46.3 (1995), 383-97 (pp. 395-96).

⁷⁰ Thacker, 'Shaping the Saint: Rewriting Tradition in the Early Lives of St Cuthbert' in *The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World*, ed. by Yitzhak Hen, pp. 399-430 (pp. 418-25).

⁷¹ See *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), pp. 48-49 (Chapter 24), This will be the edition used in the rest of the text.

customs but contradicted the archbishop's attempt to split the dioceses in order to improve their pastoral functions.⁷² The Wilfridian strife therefore could have exposed the discrepancy among Church leaders about how to understand the distinction between the rulers of lay and ecclesiastical households. Finally, King Ecgfrith's defeat and death in battle in 685 could also have created the opportunity and need for Church leaders to redefine their relationship with the ruling families.⁷³

I.3 Didacticism

The five *Lives* can be studied in relation to the need prompted by these events of defining the Church and its relation with the family. They were produced in places where these needs occurred; second, they were produced partially to meet these needs. Here, a few words can be said about their didacticism. Both Jones and Rollason identify them as didactic literature.⁷⁴ Yet while scholars appreciate the didactic function of Bede's prose *Life*, many of them deny that the Lindisfarne *Life of Cuthbert* and the *Lives of Gregory* and *Guthlac* could have the same function.⁷⁵ While this tendency might reflect a scholarly tradition of seeing Bede as exceptional in his era, these texts, significantly, state in their prefaces that their report of the saints' deeds are meant to increase the virtues of their audience.⁷⁶ The two most important sources for the composition of these texts, namely Athanasius's *Life of Anthony* and Sulpicius's *Life of Martin*, also urge their audiences to imitate their saints' virtues.⁷⁷

⁷² Cubitt, 'Usurping Bishops', pp. 35-36.

⁷³ For the case of Jarrow, see Ian Wood, *The Origins of Jarrow: the Monastery, the Slake and Ecgfrith's Minister* (Jarrow: Bede's World, 2008).

⁷⁴ Jones, *Saints' Lives*, p. 52. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 83-88.

⁷⁵ Alan Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in *Ideal and Reality in Franks and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. by Patrick Wormald, Donald Bullough and Roger Collins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) pp. 130-54, pp. 137-38; Stancliffe, 'Polarity between Pastor and Solitary', *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community*, ed. by Gerald Bonner, David Rollason and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1989), pp. 21-44 (pp. 26-28); W. Trent Foley, 'Suffering and Sanctity in Bede's Prose Life of St. Cuthbert', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 50.1 (1999 April), 102-16 (pp. 107-08). Katy Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Early Anglo-Saxon Saints', *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 29-66 (p. 56).

⁷⁶ VCA, pp. 60-65 (Book I, Chapters 1-2). VGA, pp. 72-73 (Preface). VG, pp. 60-63.

⁷⁷ For the influence of these two texts on the early Anglo-Latin *Lives*, see Colgrave, 'The Earliest Saints' Lives', pp. 27-39.

Meanwhile, these virtues can be more specifically defined as relating to roles pertaining to Church organisation. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* reveals how miracle stories were used in the conversion period to define these roles. For instance, Aidan was reported to have saved the royal fortress at Bamburgh miraculously with his prayer when the pagan king Penda attempted to destroy it by setting fire to it.⁷⁸ This miracle story created the impression that the bishop protected the ruling family, rather than vice versa. Miracle stories were also used to warn people from acting against the roles assigned to them by the Church. For instance, the nuns at Coldingham were reported to have suffered divine punishment for having dressed and acted like earthly brides and thus offended their Heavenly Bridegroom.⁷⁹ A cleric of Bishop John was similarly punished for his failure to resist the temptation of joining a horse race.⁸⁰ Likewise, when King Sigeberht of Essex received hospitality from some kinsmen who had been excommunicated by Bishop Cedd, the bishop prophesied his death and he was eventually killed by those kinsmen.⁸¹ Here, assuming Bede did not completely rewrite these stories, they seemed to have already possessed the didactic function of defining the roles of clerics, monastics and lay people, before they made their way into Bede's work. Note that these stories can more specifically be read as distinguishing between those roles pertaining to the Church and those relating to the family and to prioritise the former over the latter, which included men who were expected to rule and protect their family, especially by physical strength, and women who were expected to represent the status of their husband and family with adornment.

In light of this tradition of using miracle stories for edification, it is possible to explore early Anglo-Latin hagiographies from a gender perspective by situating them in the gendered organisations of the Church and family on the basis of their didactic function. More specifically, this suggests that we can explore how these texts were related to the gender

⁷⁸ *HE*, pp. 262-63 (Book III, Chapter 16).

⁷⁹ *HE*, pp. 420-27 (Book IV, Chapter 25).

⁸⁰ *HE*, pp. 464-69 (Book V, Chapter 6).

⁸¹ *HE*, pp. 284-85 (Book III, Chapter 22).

norms in the conversion period by focusing on how they inculcated ideal roles in the Church and made use of the familial roles for comparison and contrast, because some of these roles were gender-specific and some were gender-neutral. Some studies have already adopted these approaches to study Aldhelm and Bede. Sinéad O’Sullivan draws attention to how Aldhelm in his treatise promised the nuns at Barking that those who had married could still achieve religious perfection by living in chastity just as the virgins did. O’Sullivan explains this argument as an attempt of Aldhelm to adapt the patristic ideal of virginity to a community which included aristocratic widows as its core members.⁸² Meanwhile, Lisa Weston suggests that Aldhelm removes the gender boundary attached to the family structure when he proposes to his audience of both sexes a spiritual model of kinship and fertility — namely that virgins can produce more virgins by teachings and examples — but she maintains that this redefinition of gender could have little effect beyond the texts.⁸³ Another important focus in the study of Aldhelm is how he used the metaphor of *miles Christi* to define the roles of monks and nuns based on their virtues and state of virginity. As mentioned, O’Sullivan draws attention to the use of the metaphor of *miles Christi* to show how female virgins could transcend their gender to achieve holiness.⁸⁴ By contrast, Verity Fisher suggests that Aldhelm presents his male and female soldiers of Christ not as spiritual men, but as sexless angelic beings.⁸⁵ Emma Pettit calls attention to how Aldhelm’s treatise on virginity presents male saints as more active than female ones, thus contradicting his attempt to give equal emphasis to male and female saints for a gender-mixed audience at Barking.⁸⁶ She reads this presentation as an attempt to show that religious men, even casting aside their military career, can still be regarded as men of perfection.⁸⁷

⁸² O’Sullivan, ‘Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?’, pp. 283-84.

⁸³ Weston, ‘Saintly Lives: Friendship, Kinship, Gender and Sexuality’, in *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, pp. 381-406 (pp. 386-89).

⁸⁴ O’Sullivan, ‘Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?’, pp. 265-79.

⁸⁵ Fisher, ‘Muscular Sanctity?’, pp. 32-34.

⁸⁶ Emma Pettit, ‘Holiness and Masculinity in Aldhelm’s *Opus Geminatum De virginitate*’, *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Age*, ed. by P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 8-23.

⁸⁷ Pettit, ‘Holiness and Masculinity’, pp. 8-10.

Regarding Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, Stacy Klein explains Bede's choice of not presenting the foreign wives from Christian kingdoms as active figures for the conversion of the English pagan kings in terms of his attempt to downplay the political motivation of the kings' conversion.⁸⁸ Máirín MacCarron counters this argument by pointing out that Bede indeed does highlight these queens' roles in the conversion history, by presenting them in terms of the missionary task assigned to a Christian wife in 1 Corinthians 7:14.⁸⁹ Weston finds that Bede's account of the monastery at Barking in Essex consists of contesting narratives about Abbess Æthelburg.⁹⁰ She points out that one of them presents her body, buried in the community, as a symbol of the communal identity of the community, whereas another one stresses how the monastery had been founded for her by her brother Bishop Earconwald, presumably with an attempt to emphasise the authority of Canterbury over Essex. Clare Lees and Gillian Overing suggest that the use of the metaphor of motherhood in Bede's account of Hild downplays her family life in favour of her religious practices, and at the same time reduces her role in ecclesiastical history to an auxiliary one, when she in fact played an active role in her lifetime in pastoral care, in educating priests and bishops, and in establishing the vernacular poetic tradition, an achievement that Bede instead credits her herdsman Cædmon for.⁹¹ Christine Williamson studies the 'Hymn to Saint Agnes', suggesting that Bede presents the female virgin martyr as adopting a spiritual type of priesthood in her virginity, thus making her exemplary of monastic virtues for the all-male community at Wearmouth-Jarrow.⁹²

There have not yet been similar attempts to explore the *Lives* of Gregory, Cuthbert and Guthlac in terms of gender by considering them in the context of Church or family

⁸⁸ Stacy S. Klein, *Ruling Women: Queenship and Gender in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2006), pp. 17-52

⁸⁹ Máirín MacCarron, 'Royal Marriage and Conversion in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*', *Journal of Theological Studies* 68.2 (2017), 650-70.

⁹⁰ Lisa M. C. Weston, 'The Saintly Female Body and the Landscape of Foundation in Anglo-Saxon Barking', *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 43 (2007), 12-25.

⁹¹ Lees and Overing, 'Birthing Bishops and Fathering Poets: Bede, Hild, and the Relations of Cultural Production', *Exemplaria* 6.1 (1994), 35-65.

⁹² Christine Williamson, 'Bede's Hymn to St. Agnes of Rome: The Virgin Martyr as a Male Monastic Exemplum', *Viator*, 43.1 (2012), 39-66.

organisations, except Weston's study of Guthlac's Latin and Old English *Lives*, in which she reads them as defining the hermit-saint's spiritual manhood in terms of how he created a spiritual kinship after quitting his familial roles, by serving as an exemplar of holiness for his followers.⁹³ To bridge the gap, I will follow the studies listed above to explore male sanctity as it features in the *Lives* of Gregory, Cuthbert and Guthlac, in terms of how these text define the saints' roles in the Church, and of how they do so by constructing analogy, contrast and metaphorical connections between these roles and the familial ones.

However, I will depart from these studies in two important aspects. First, whereas they focus on the relationship between religious ideals and familial roles when discussing female holiness, with the exception of Weston's works they pay less attention to familial roles when discussing male holiness, and instead focus on how the religious ideals were related to a wider social structure or culture, which expected and required men to fight. This approach can be observed in the studies of Pettit and Fisher, and also in other studies which read the *Lives* from the conversion period in terms of the warrior society. The latter include Patrick Wormald's work, which points out that the accounts of Wilfrid's distribution of treasure and Guthlac's fighting against demons in the fens reflected the values of a warrior aristocratic culture, and also John Damon's work, which argues that the early Anglo-Saxon *Lives* followed Sulpicius's *Life of Martin* to praise those who renounced their military career to embrace a monastic one, while at the same time modifying Sulpicius' negative view of military careers in order to adapt their ideals of holiness to the expectation of the contemporary society.⁹⁴ While such an approach is not necessarily problematic, I propose that the abilities to fight, to distribute treasures and to produce heirs can both be further understood in terms of a man's role in his household. This reading could provide a more specific context to interpret the references to these abilities in the *Lives*, and to understand their functions in constructing the saints' authority.

⁹³ Weston, 'Saintly Lives', pp. 391-94.

⁹⁴ John Damon, 'Soldier Saints and Holy Warriors: Warfare and Sanctity in Anglo-Saxon England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Arizona, 1998), pp. 92-99, 238-92.

This reading is supported by some previous studies. As mentioned, Weston's work has already shown how procreation can be linked to a saint's spiritual fatherhood. Meanwhile, Richard Sowerby points out that the worldly tone of the *Life of Wilfrid* owes much to two concerns of the author — to resolve the succession problems of the land, offices and power left behind by Wilfrid, and to identify that good Church leaders always manage to make good arrangement of the inheritance of their possessions before their death.⁹⁵ Finally, Bede's story of King Sigebert of East Anglia serves as a good reminder of the relationship between warriorhood and family obligation.⁹⁶ The story goes that the East Anglians dragged Sigebert out from the monastery into which he had retired, in order that he could lead them to face the enemy on battlefield, despite the fact that he had already passed his throne to his kinsman Ecgric. Here, Sigebert's renouncing of his ability to fight only became a problem when it went against his obligations to his people as a member of the royal family.

Second, I will also depart from the studies mentioned above by giving more attention to the gender relations presented in the texts. Whereas these studies usually study sanctity in relation to gender by contrasting how male and female saints are presented in similar and in different ways in Aldhelm's treatise and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, this method is not fully possible for the study of the *Lives* of Gregory, Cuthbert and Guthlac, because there are only male saints and other ordinary men and women in these texts. Thus Hollis has to focus on how these texts position the female characters in relation to the male saints in order to understand how their gender is presented. Likewise, I suggest that in these texts it is the positioning of the female characters that defines the roles exemplified by the male saints in relation to gender. Focusing on how they are positioned would also shed light on how the sanctity and roles of the male saints presented in the texts could have been interpreted by a potential female audience.

⁹⁵ Richard Sowerby, 'The heirs of Bishop Wilfrid: succession and presumption in early Anglo-Saxon England', *English Historical Review*, 134.571 (2019), 1377-404.

⁹⁶ *HE*, pp. 266-69 (Book III, Chapter 18).

I.4 Authors, Ideals and Audience

While a shared context for reading the male sanctity presented in the five *Lives* can be constructed in relation to the genre of hagiography and the development of the Church in the conversion period as I have shown, it is also important to establish a context for understanding what had made the authors present their male saints in different ways and how these differences related to gender. This requires the reconstruction of the connection between the authors, the texts and gender. One way is to explore how the authors' perceptions of gender differences framed their presentations of men and women. For instance, Clare Lees and Gillian Overing interpreted early Anglo-Latin texts in light of clerical misogyny. While these texts are not interested in debating what women *are* and what women *are not*, Lees and Overing believe that they still feature authorial misogyny, though not necessarily in the binary form that is familiar to modern readers.⁹⁷ Their research focuses on uncovering these misogynistic views, especially from the use of metaphors.⁹⁸ One example they raise is Aldhelm's riddle of a pregnant book-cupboard, which contains holy words but is incapable of understanding them.⁹⁹ They point out that this riddle uses woman's body as a metaphor but in fact depicts women not as recipients of knowledge but merely as vessels containing it. Likewise, as mentioned, they point out that the metaphor of mothering provides a framework for Bede to both praise Hild and reduce her role as merely an auxiliary one in educating the members of her house, preaching to the laity and fostering the Old English poetic tradition.¹⁰⁰ Regarding Aldhelm's treatise on virginity, they highlight that the metaphor of the soldiers of Christ to describe the Barking nuns in fact encourages them to suppress their female bodies, thought unfit for military service, in exchange for inner manhood.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, 'The Clerics and the Critics: Misogyny and the Social Symbolic in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. by Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 19-40.

⁹⁸ Lees and Overing, 'The Clerics and the Critics', pp. 28-35.

⁹⁹ Lees and Overing, 'The Clerics and the Critics', pp. 29-30

¹⁰⁰ Lees and Overing, 'Birthing Bishops', pp. 35-65.

¹⁰¹ Lees and Overing, *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 157-58.

The same approach has also been used to identify whether a story represents a female or a male voice by looking at how it presents men and women or things relating to them. Andrew Breeze asserts that the *Life of Gregory* must have been written by a female member of the community at Whitby, and points out that this text shows ‘a lack of interest in typical male activities’ but represents the voice and perspective of women.¹⁰² He draws attention to how the text quotes the direct speech of female characters; relates women’s suffering in warfare; celebrates the divine punishment imposed on evil men, and includes some ‘women’s traditional concerns’, such as food preparation.¹⁰³ Similarly, Diane Watt follows Andrew Breeze in celebrating the *Life of Gregory* as an exceptional example of a female-authored hagiographical text.¹⁰⁴ She further suggests that the reference to Edwin’s cult in the text is meant to strengthen the authority of Abbess Ælfflæd, the king’s granddaughter.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, she believes that it is possible to uncover the female voices from the male-authored texts — voices which had contributed to the production of these texts but were then overwritten by the voice of the male authors.¹⁰⁶ She finds that Bede’s accounts of the miracle stories at both Barking and Ely enhanced the communal identities of the two religious communities and so concludes that they must both have drawn on female voices in these communities, and she castigates Bede for only mentioning male witnesses in his account of Ely, and for concealing the female authorship of the lost book of the Barking miracles on which Bede says he has based his account.¹⁰⁷ Regarding Bede’s prose *Life of Cuthbert*, Watt agrees with Hollis that Bede deliberately downplays Ælfflæd’s friendship with Cuthbert, but adds that one story in this text might have represented the abbess’s own voice.¹⁰⁸ In this story, the abbess uses

¹⁰² Andrew Breeze, ‘Did a Woman Write the Whitby Life of St Gregory?’, *Northern History*, 49 (2012), 345-50 (pp. 349)

¹⁰³ Breeze, ‘Did a Woman Write?’, pp. 348-50.

¹⁰⁴ Diane Watt, *Women, Writing and Religion in England and Beyond, 650-1100* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 31-39.

¹⁰⁵ Watt, *Women, Writing and Religion*, pp. 32, 34.

¹⁰⁶ Watt, *Women, Writing and Religion*, pp. 1-20.

¹⁰⁷ Watt, ‘Literature in Pieces: Female Sanctity and the Relics of Early Women’s Writing’, *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. by Clare A. Lees (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 357-80 (pp. 367-70).

¹⁰⁸ Watt, *Women, Writing and Religion*, pp. 14-17.

Cuthbert's linen girdle to heal herself and another nun, which Watt says has the effect of presenting the abbess as a co-worker of miracles with the saint.

In my reading of male sanctity in the *Lives* of Gregory, Cuthbert and Guthlac, I will not give the same weight to the authors' perceptions of gender differences, except when these authors explicitly identify a certain trait of the saints or other characters as a masculine or feminine trait. In most cases, these texts do not make arguments about women and men as general categories, and their female characters are too few for such reconstruction. In fact, the same problem occurs even in the study of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, since the text provides far more stories about women than the five *Lives*. Sarah Foot shows that some of Bede's accounts of abbesses which Hollis, Watt, Lees and Overing have interpreted as representing Bede's misogyny can in fact be interpreted in alternative ways.¹⁰⁹ For instance, she points out that Bede's criticism of Ælflæd in his prose *Life* is similar to his criticism of other religious men for failing to practise what they have learnt.¹¹⁰ Similarly, she suggests that Bede's omission of the details of how Hild had run her monastery should be attributed not to his bias towards women, but to his didacticism — his main concern is the spiritual impact of founding monasteries and teaching, not the practical procedure of how to carry out these tasks.¹¹¹ Julia Barrow proposes a similar view, by suggesting that Bede presents Hild and Aebbe of Coldingham in the mould of the Biblical parable of the wise and foolish virgins, for the purpose of urging the audience to keep watching against temptation.¹¹² Meanwhile, so little is known about women's historical lives that it is not always easy to conclude whether a presentation of a woman in a text reflects the author's own gender perceptions or the woman's actual status. Likewise, it is risky to try to identify some 'traditional concerns' of

¹⁰⁹ Foot, 'Women, Prayer and Preaching', pp. 73-75; 'Bede's Abbesses', in *Women Intellectuals and Leaders in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis and John Van Engen (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2020), pp. 261-75 (pp. 267-75).

¹¹⁰ Foot, 'Bede's Abbesses', pp. 274-75.

¹¹¹ Foot, 'Bede's Abbesses', pp. 272-75.

¹¹² Julia Barrow, 'Bede's Wise and Foolish Virgins: *Streanaeshealh* and Coldingham', in *Cities, Saints, and Communities in Early Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of Alan Thacker*, ed. by Scott DeGregorio and P. J. E. (Paul J. E.) Kershaw, *Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, 46 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), pp. 287-307.

men and women or pro- and anti-woman views in order to decide whether a story represents a male or female voices, as little is known about what these concerns and views were in the context of the conversion period. Therefore, I will not base my reading of the five *Lives* on the authors' perceptions of gender differences, nor will I try to identify whether the Whitby *Life* was written by a woman.

Instead, I focus on how these *Lives* present the saints as exemplars of the roles in the Church. There are several advantages in adopting this approach. First, while the five *Lives* do not define their saints as ideal type of 'men' as opposed to 'women', they do distinguish between whether they are exemplifying the lives of priests, monastics, hermits, lay people or all Christians in general. Second, these roles, as I have pointed out in the previous sections, can be understood from a gender perspective against the wider context of Church organisation and its relationship with existing gender norms, largely dictated by family organisation. Thirdly, how the five *Lives* present their saints as exemplars of these roles are already well-studied. Important examples include Thacker's study of how Bede's prose *Life* presents Cuthbert as an exemplary pastor; Stancliffe's work on how the two prose *Lives* of Cuthbert present him according to the Irish and Roman perceptions of bishops; Britton Brooks' book about how Cuthbert and Guthlac are presented as having restored prelapsarian humanity in their roles as hermits and priests, and Kate Rambridge's study of how the Whitby *Life of Gregory* presents Gregory as an exemplary church leader conforming to his own religious ideas.¹¹³ Note that as these studies have showed, the distinctive representations of holiness in the *Lives* can usually be explained by the roles and ideas they use the saints to exemplify; it is also often possible for modern scholars to establish these connections with good evidence,

¹¹³ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 130-54. Clare Stancliffe, 'Polarity between Pastor and Solitary', pp. 21-44 (pp. 36-42). Foley, 'Suffering and Sanctity', 102-16. Britton Elliott Brooks, *Restoring Creation: The Natural World in the Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives of Cuthbert and Guthlac* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2019). For the ideal of hermit presented in the *Life of Guthlac*, see also Sarah Downey, 'Too Much of Too Little: Guthlac and the Temptation of Excessive Fasting', *Traditio*, 63 (2008), 89-127. Kate Rambridge, 'The Northumbrians and Pope Gregory', in *Rome and the North: The Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe*, ed. R. H. Bremmer, Kees Dekker and D.F. Johnson, *Mediaevalia Groningana*, New Series, 4 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), pp. 1-26.

because they are expressed in the texts with explicit statements and allusions to biblical and patristic sources.

The present thesis further proposes that in these texts the representations of the saints' roles and their relationship with other male and female characters reflect the implications of Biblical and patristic ideas for existing gender norms in early English society. It will study the five texts in sequence to explore such implications in several aspects. First, how these ideas, when being introduced to English society and used to conceptualise the newly-established Church organisation, could have defined new expectations for men and new possibilities for their relationship with women; second, how these ideas could have redefined or affirmed existing norms regarding men's roles and their relationship with women, which had largely been dictated by the family institution. Thirdly, how these redefinitions and adaptations might have related to the experience of men and women in which the five *Lives* were produced, read and listen to.

This thesis discusses the five *Lives* in all these three aspects in five chapters. I chose these texts because they show strong intertextual connections on the one hand but present very different models of sanctity on the other hand. The Lindisfarne *Life of Cuthbert* formed a model for Bede's metrical and prose *Lives* of Cuthbert, and these three texts serve as sources of inspiration for Felix's *Life of Guthlac*.¹¹⁴ It can also be noted that all these texts make use of the following hagiographical works for their presentations of holiness: Athanasius's *Life of Anthony*, Sulpicius's *Life of Martin* and Gregory's *Life of Benedict* in his *Dialogues*.¹¹⁵ Little attention has been paid by scholars so far to the relationship between the *Life of Gregory* and the *Lives of Cuthbert*, but as I shall reveal, it indeed provided an important model for Bede to realign Cuthbert's image with Gregory's ideals in his two *Lives*. Meanwhile, as I shall also show, the five texts are distinguished from each other by how they redefine gender norms and position their saints in relation to these norms, given that the models of holiness they

¹¹⁴ Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', 51-52.

¹¹⁵ Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', 37-40.

represent are idealisation of different social roles. By focusing on these five texts, this thesis highlights how the authors of saints' *Lives* in early eighth-century England were able to present ideals of different male roles even when relying on the same hagiographical tradition. The first chapter of the thesis focuses on the representation of priestly sanctity in the Whitby *Life of Gregory*, while the second chapter examines monastic sanctity in the Lindisfarne *Life of Cuthbert*. The following two chapters discuss how Bede emphasises the role of the pastor in his two *Lives of Cuthbert*, and the final chapter investigates how Felix presents Guthlac as an aristocratic saint for the edification of a lay audience. All these chapters will demonstrate how these ideal roles frame the relationship between male holiness and existing gender norms in the texts.

Finally, it is necessary to explain here the method I will use for identifying biblical and patristic allusions in the texts. As mentioned, these allusions were used to show how the saints had embodied the ideals proposed by the Bible and Church Fathers.¹¹⁶ They were likely to have followed specific patterns, presumably based on didacticism, exegetical and liturgical traditions, and might have been identifiable to the target audience, who were likely to have known about these traditions and purposes.¹¹⁷ But they can be obscure to modern readers, who usually needed to reconstruct the traditions and purposes by studying the allusions themselves. In this case, it is easy to fall into the trap of making circular arguments when looking for allusions in the texts, or to misidentify coincidental resemblance and lexical influences as allusions. However, it is probably safe to identify a story as an allusion when both its plot and use of either words or figures point to similar episodes or ideas in the Bible

¹¹⁶ For the Biblical and hagiographical allusions in these texts, Colgrave and Lapidge have identified some of them in their translations of these texts. For those in the *Life of Guthlac*, see Sarah Downey, 'Intertextuality in the *Lives of St. Guthlac*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2004), pp. 25-66. For the exegetical dimension of the two prose *Lives of Cuthbert*, see Sandra Duncan, 'Signa De Caelo in the Lives of St Cuthbert: The Impact of Biblical Images and Exegesis on Early Medieval Hagiography', *The Heythrop Journal*, 41.4 (October 2000), 399-412. For that of Bede's Prose *Life*, see E. Knibbs, 'Exegetical Hagiography: Bede's Prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 114.2 (2004), 233-52; Sally Shockro, 'Bede and the Rewriting of Sanctity', *The Haskins Society Journal*, 21 (2010), 1-19. For that of the Whitby *Life of Gregory*, see Brian Butler, 'The Whitby Life of Gregory the Great: Exegesis and Hagiography' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College Cork, 2005).

¹¹⁷ Downey, 'Intertextuality', pp. 25-66.

or patristic literature. By considering allusions of this type together with direct quotations of full sentences or paragraphs, I will establish the main sources, themes and patterns of the use of allusions in each text and they will then provide hints for identifying other more obscure allusions, such as a single verbal, figural and narrative resemblance. Yet even when a verbal resemblance seems to conform with the general features of the author's use of allusions, I will only consider it as an allusion either when it consists of two or more words or if it repeats for more than twice in the text.

This method can be most convincingly applied to Bede's two *Lives of Cuthbert* and the *Whitby Life of Gregory*. Bede's other works provide a concrete basis for establishing the ways he tends to insert allusions, and even his views about specific terms, figures and stories in the Bible.¹¹⁸ The *Whitby Life*, as Kate Rambridge's work has shown, is eager to show that Gregory did fulfil his own perception of holiness by quoting directly from his own works.¹¹⁹ In this case, it is reasonable to focus on verbal, figural and narrative parallels between the *Life* and Gregory's own works in order to look for allusions. It is much more difficult to establish the patterns of allusions for Felix's *Life of Guthlac* and the *Lindisfarne Life of Cuthbert*. Yet Sarah Downey has already successfully established some patterns of how Felix uses allusions, especially regarding how he uses them to construct the parallels between the spiritual progress of Guthlac and other saints.¹²⁰ Regarding the *Lindisfarne Life*, this thesis will reveal that the verbal parallels with the Bible and earlier hagiographies concentrate on the descriptions of Cuthbert as a spiritual athlete.

¹¹⁸ An important example of studying Bede's prose *Life of Cuthbert* in relation to his exegetical works is Knibb's 'Exegetical Hagiography', 233-52.

¹¹⁹ Kate Rambridge, 'The Northumbrians and Pope Gregory', pp. 1-26.

¹²⁰ Downey, 'Intertextuality', 25-66.

Chapter II

The Apostolic Saint in the Whitby *Life of Gregory*

The *Life of Gregory* has received far less attention in historical studies of the conversion period than the better-known *Lives* of Cuthbert and Wilfrid. But it occupies a special place in gender studies, being the only surviving text — apart from the nuns' letters included in the Boniface Correspondence — that could be safely attributed to a member of a female-led monastery in seventh-and eighth-century England. The author was anonymous but must have been a member of the double monastery at Whitby, given that the text refers to the monastery as 'our monastery' (*nostrum coenobium*) when describing how King Edwin's body was buried there.¹ It hints that Abbess Ælfflæd was still ruling the house at the time the *Life* was written and thus Colgrave dated it to somewhere between 704-714.²

On account of the female leadership at Whitby, scholars tend to see this text as written from a female perspective. Hollis argues that this text implies an egalitarian relationship between priests and religious women.³ According to her reading, the author's emphasis on Gregory's reluctance to assume the papal office and on his embodiment of Christ represents an 'incarnational conception of holiness' that does not take ordination as an essential criterion for achieving holiness. She even suggests that the text might represent the resistance of Whitby's nuns to the 'developing conception of the power and authority inhering in sacerdotal office'.⁴ Andrew Breeze and Diane Watt go further and argue that the text must have been written by a nun (or the nuns) of Whitby, basing on the female voices and concerns that they believe to have been embodied in the text.⁵

In this chapter, I provide a different reading of the representation of gender in the Whitby *Life*, by showing that its focus is primarily sacerdotal sanctity, which suggests a

¹ VGA, p. 46, 104-05 (Chapter 19).

² VGA, p. 48.

³ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 126-128.

⁴ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 127.

⁵ Breeze, 'Did a Woman Write?', pp. 348-50. Watt, *Women, Writing and Religion*, pp. 31-39

priestly audience, for three reasons. First, the text emphasises that Gregory's ideal of the *doctor* has been fulfilled by Gregory himself and Paulinus, a member of his mission, who became the first bishop of Northumbria. Second, although it is unclear whether this ideal was exclusively about priests in Gregory's writings, the *Life* applies this ideal only to the priests. It says little about the monastic careers of Gregory and Paulinus although both were monk-priests; nor does it show how monks and lay people could achieve the holiness that it advocates.⁶ Thirdly, while it mentions kings, warriors and princesses, it does not elaborate how people who occupy these roles should respond to the teaching of the priests. Instead, it uses them simply as examples of those who are in need of pastoral care. Overall, I suggest that the Whitby *Life* focuses primarily on what a priest should do in order to achieve holiness and says little about how women can achieve the same holiness in their own roles.

My research is indebted to a series of studies that uncover the relationship between the Whitby *Life* and Gregory himself. Colgrave noted a significant use of Gregory's writings in the Whitby *Life*, but he and other early scholars maintained that the text was an ill-written record of oral tales derived from local tradition, and that the author had neither the intention nor the capacity to deal with Gregory's own thought.⁷ This view has been revised by Thacker and Kate Rambridge. Thacker suggests that the stories in the text, at least those regarding Gregory's miracles in Rome, actually derive from written sources produced in Rome not long after Gregory's death.⁸ Rambridge shows that the text draws heavily on Gregory's own ideas to construct his holiness.⁹ She finds that more than half of the chapters in the text refer to Gregory's writings for the purpose of constructing Gregory's sanctity.¹⁰ She also points out that the author, in contrast to other contemporary hagiographers, takes care to acknowledge

⁶ For a useful summary of the debate over whether Gregory's *doctores* only refer to the priests and of the similar debate over Bede's use of this ideal in his writings, see Conor O'Brien, *Bede's Temple: An Image and its Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 113.

⁷ See Jones, *Saints' Lives*, pp. 65-67; VGA, pp. 36-37, 48-56. Rambridge provides a brief review of the development in the scholarship on the Whitby *Life*, see 'The Northumbrians and Pope Gregory', pp. 1-4.

⁸ Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory', 61-71.

⁹ Rambridge, 'The Northumbrians and Pope Gregory', pp. 8-12.

¹⁰ Rambridge, 'The Northumbrians and Pope Gregory', p. 5.

these references explicitly, to show that the depiction of Gregory correlates with the saint's own view of holiness.¹¹ Finally, Brian Butler's work shows that the *Life* was written within the patristical exegetical tradition and the stories that it contains are meant to be read allegorically.¹² These arguments have decisively advanced scholars' understanding of the *Life*, but Hollis, Breeze and Watt do not consider them in their studies. My study will bring these two research strands together by focusing on how the representation of gender in the *Life* is framed by the Gregorian ideal.

Finally, a few words can be said about Butler's allegorical reading of the *Life*. He interprets the Biblical allusions in the text primarily according to the exegetical works of Augustine, Gregory and Jerome. But he establishes these connections in an arguably arbitrary way, as he does not often explain why a certain allusion in the *Life* should be read according to the interpretation of this rather than that exegetical work. This approach therefore fails to consider the diversity of exegetical traditions, the possibility that Whitby might not have access to all the major works of Augustine, Gregory and Jerome, and the fact that the references in the Whitby *Life* are overwhelmingly related to Gregory's own writings. I will not draw on Butler's reading unless stated otherwise, and my own reading of the Biblical allusions in the *Life* focus exclusively on how they represent the ideas in the writings of Gregory mentioned explicitly in the text.

II. 1 Gregory as *Doctor* and Priest

The Whitby *Life*, in spite of its complex structure, consistently focuses on Gregory as a teacher. The prologue addresses Gregory as a *doctor* of the English people. Chapters 1-2 briefly relate his contemplative life as a priest. Chapters 3-6 elaborate this role within a large theological framework that draws on Gregory's writings. Chapter 7 and 8 relate how Gregory proved his worthiness by his reluctance to assume papal office, but they incorporate this story into the same theological framework by annotating it with quotations from the Bible and

¹¹ Rambridge, 'The Northumbrians and Pope Gregory', pp. 8-12.

¹² Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', especially the introduction section, pp. 4-20.

Gregory's works. Two sets of miracle stories then follow in chapters 9-19 and chapters 20-30. They are concerned respectively with the conversion history of the English people and with Gregory's papal career in Rome. But both of them make prominent the priest's role as a *doctor* in the Gregorian mould. Chapters 31-33 conclude the text by emphasising again how Gregory's virtues conform with his own ideal of holiness.

The references to Gregory's own works are highly condensed in the first six chapters. Together, they formulate what Rambridge terms a 'literary representation of sanctity'.¹³ Chapter 1 defines Gregory as a contemplative: 'all transitory affairs were of little importance to his mind. He rose above passing events and accustomed himself to think about nothing but heavenly themes'.¹⁴ Chapter 2 then elaborates on this image by quoting a long passage of Gregory's letter to Bishop Leander.¹⁵ This passage relates how it was his bearing of priestly duties that set his mind free from the corporeal world — a state of mind that he had failed to reach as a monk before his ordination. Chapter 3 asks how Gregory, 'our holy teacher' (*noster sanctus doctor*), could be considered a saint when so little is known about his miracles.¹⁶ The next three chapters then develop a lengthy theological discussion to resolve this seeming paradox. Here, the author is imitating the method Gregory uses in his *Dialogues* to define his sanctity. In the *Dialogues*, Gregory lays out his theological view of sanctity by defending the sanctity of the Italian saints, whom his priest Peter discredits on account of their failure to perform miracles.¹⁷ Similarly, the Whitby author constructs a debate over miracles in order to show how Gregory's sanctity can be understood in his own theological framework. Chapter 4 quotes Gregory to suggest that miracles are merely tools to impress the pagans and should not

¹³ Rambridge, 'The Northumbrians and Pope Gregory', p. 8.

¹⁴ VGA, pp. 72-73: '[...] ubi eius animo labentia cuncta subterfuisse ipse designat. Rebus omnibus qu[a]e voluntur eminebat, nulla nisi celestia cogitare consuevit'.

¹⁵ Noted by Colgrave. VGA, pp. 72-77, citing *S. Gregorii Magni: Moralia in Job*, ed. by Marc Adriaen, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 143, 143A and 143B, 3 vols (Turnholti: Brepols, 1979-1985), 143A (1979), pp. 1-7, see VGA, p. 141 n. 8.

¹⁶ VGA, pp. 76-77.

¹⁷ *Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues*, ed. by Adalbert de Vogüé and trans. by Paul Antin (into French), Sources Chrétiennes, 251, 260, 265, 3 vols (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978-1980), 260 (1979), pp. 14-17 (Book I, Prologue, ll. 57-79).

be regarded as the core nature of holiness.¹⁸ Chapter 5 then draws attention to the saintly teachers whose teaching could miraculously convert people into Christians.¹⁹ Chapter 6 identifies Gregory's apostolic role to the English people as evidence of his holiness, by quoting Gregory that true miracles are about healing of the soul rather than of the body.²⁰ It then combines different quotations from the Pauline epistles to construct a wider picture of sanctity, describing how the 'Father of Lights' (*pater luminum*) distributes different gifts to His saints.²¹ It concludes that among these gifts, 'the word of wisdom and the knowledge of Christ Jesus' revealed in Gregory is the greatest, because — it quotes Gregory again, miracles 'are the greater, the more spiritual they are'.²²

This last statement, along with the view about healing the soul, point to Gregory's worldview. As Carole Straw has pointed out, Gregory regards the world as a hierarchy of beings, descending from the pure spirituality of God and angels to the pure carnality of lifeless things.²³ It is by bringing in this worldview that the Whitby author ranks teaching above physical miracles, and constructs a *doctor-saint's* superiority over the other saints. This cosmology is gender-inclusive by nature, so a religious woman can achieve the same authority as her male counterparts by studying and teaching spiritual truths. In terms of this worldview that one can understand Gregory's ideal of church leadership, which is echoed in the *Life* by the emphasis on his contemplative life in Chapters 1-2 and on his teaching in Chapters 3-6. In Gregory's view, good *rectores* disregard all earthly affairs in order to concentrate on their contemplation of spiritual matters; but to direct others to spiritual truth,

¹⁸ Noted by Colgrave. *VGA*, pp. 76-81. The author is citing *Dialogues*, SC 260, p. 116 (Book I, Chapter 12, ll. 44-49), see *VGA*, 142 n. 14.

¹⁹ *VGA*, pp. 80-83.

²⁰ *VGA*, pp. 82-83. It seems that the author is citing Gregory's idea in a general way rather than a specific work of him. But for one source of this idea, see his homily on Mark 16: 14-20, in *Gregory the Great: Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. by David Hurst (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), pp. 226-35 (Homily 29). Noted by Colgrave, see *VGA*, p. 143 n. 24.

²¹ I Corinthians 5:3; Matthew 12:29; Ephesians 5:8; I Corinthians 12:11; Colossians 1:15; Ephesians 2:10; James 1:17; Ephesians 4:7; I Corinthians 12:8-9, see *VGA*, pp. 82-85, 143 nn. 23 & 25.

²² Noted by Colgrave. *VGA*, pp. 82-85: 'sermonem sapientiae et scientiae Christi Iesu'; '[...] tanto maiora sunt quanto spiritalia'. The latter clause is cited from Gregory's homily on Mark 16: 14-20. See *Forty Gospel Homilies*, p. 229 (Homily 29), see *VGA*, p. 143 n. 24.

²³ Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988) p. 33.

they are willing to sacrifice their contemplative life in favour of teaching.²⁴ He puts so much stress on a *rector*'s teaching duty that he often uses the phrase *rector* and *doctor* interchangeably.²⁵ One can assume that the Whitby nuns, whose gender barred them from sacred office but who could teach, and practise contemplation, would have welcomed this emphasis on teaching and contemplation as the two most important means to achieve holiness and exercise leadership. In fact, Bede uses the word *doctrinx* in his *Ecclesiastical History* to address Abbess Ælfflæd in relation to her governing of Whitby.²⁶ This suggests that Ælfflæd was regarded as a worthy ruler of her monastery in terms of her role as a teacher.

However, given that this presumably gender-inclusive cosmology is outlined in the *Whitby Life* for the purpose of defining the sanctity of a *doctor*, it is important to identify what the term *doctor* really refers to. The *Life* uses this term almost exclusively in a missionary context, except twice, when it applies it in a pastoral context.²⁷ Gregory is addressed as a *doctor* of the English people both in the prologue and at the beginning of the general discussion on sanctity in chapter 3.²⁸ Then when elaborating on this discussion, Chapter 4 relates that miracles are merely tools to make *doctores* respectable among pagans, and criticises those false teachers in the cities who cannot teach but boast about their miracles.²⁹ Finally, Chapter 6, before explaining why teaching is the greatest miracle, describes the *doctores*' apostolic status in the heavenly order on Judgement Day:

According to Gregory's opinion, when all the Apostles bring their own peoples with them and each individual teacher brings his own race to present them to the Lord in

²⁴ Robert Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Rector and His Genesis', in *Grégoire le Grand: Chantilly, Centre Culturel Les Fontaines, 15-19 septembre, 1982. Actes*, ed. by Jacques Fontaine, Robert Gillet and Stan Pellistrandi (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1986), pp. 137-46. See also his *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 17-26, especially his discussion of the two passages in *Moralia* and *Pastoral Rule*. See these passages in *Moralia*, CCSL 143A, p. 222 on Job 3:21 (Book v, Chapter 4 ll. 1-21); *Règle Pastorale*, ed. by Bruno Judic and Floribert Rommel, trans. by Charles Morel, Sources Chrétiennes, 381-382, 2 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1992), 381 (1992), pp. 146-49 (Book I, Chapter 5 ll. 42-56). See also Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, pp. 36-37, 46.

²⁵ Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Rector', p. 142. See also his *Gregory the Great*, pp. 28, 31.

²⁶ *HE*, pp. 430-31 (Book IV, Chapter 24).

²⁷ *VGA*, pp. 84-85, 136-37 (Chapters 7, 31). See below.

²⁸ *VGA*, pp. 72-73, 76-77.

²⁹ *VGA*, pp. 78-81.

the Day of Judgment, he will bring us — that is, the English people — instructed by him through God's grace [...]

Juxta cuius sententiam quando omnes apostoli, suas secum provincias ducentes Domino in die iudicii ostendent, atque singuli gentium doctores, nos ille, id est gentem Anglorum [...] per se gratia Dei [...] edoctam adducer [...]³⁰

Here, a *doctor* is obviously defined as a missionary preacher. This term will appear twice more times in a missionary context in the rest of the text — Paulinus as '*noster doctor*' in Chapter 17 and the *doctores* in Chapter 30 who are said to have won believers with the Apostles and will be glorified with the latter on Judgement Day.³¹ Now it is clear that although the text appeals to a seemingly gender-neutral worldview to define a *doctor's* sanctity, it uses the word mainly to construct an image of the ideal missionary preacher. This figure can only be a priest because only priests were supposed to preach to the laity, and to administer baptism and celebrate mass.³² The Whitby author might have outlined a theological framework that has the potential to put male and female saints on the same footing, but by focusing primarily on a priestly sanctity, the author does not in fact demonstrate how holiness can be achieved by women in the text.

Following this long discussion of sanctity, the Whitby author relates the first miracle story in Chapter 7.³³ First, it tells how Christ urges His followers to imitate his virtue of humility in Matthew 11:29, and how Gregory defines a true *doctor* in terms of the same Christlike virtue in his work.³⁴ It then relates how Gregory once hid in a forest after knowing that he had been elected as the new pope, but was taken back to Rome to assume his office, when a column of heavenly light was cast on him and exposed his hidden location. As

³⁰ VGA, p. 82-83. It is not clear which of Gregory's work is cited here. See Colgrave's discussion, p. 143 n. 22

³¹ VGA, pp. 100-01, 132-33.

³² See Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care', pp. 137-39.

³³ VGA, pp. 84-89.

³⁴ VGA, pp. 84-85, citing *Dialogues*, SC 260, p. 30 (Book I, Chapter 2 ll. 81-85). Noted by Colgrave, see VGA, p. 143 n. 31.

mentioned above, Hollis believes that this story presents a sanctity by nature anti-episcopal and anti-institutional, because it defines Gregory's holiness in terms of his spirituality and praises him for his reluctance to assume his office.³⁵ This reading, however, fails to give enough attention to the concern of this story, which is explicitly stated in the concluding paragraph:

St Jerome says of those who are promoted to the sacred office that the more they resist it because of their humility of spirit, the more they arouse themselves to every exertion... for they are following the example of their master Christ, who deigned to be both priest and sacrifice for us; who humbled himself unto death in obedience to His Father, even the death of the cross.

'Plerique,' ait sanctus Heronimus, 'ad sacerdotium erecti quanto plus pro animi humilitate repugnant, tanto magis in se omni studio concitant [...]' [...] Nam eius qui sacerdos et hostia pro nobis esse dignatus est, Christi magistri sequuntur exemplum, qui in Patris sui oboedientia humiliatus est usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.³⁶

Note that according to these words, the column of heavenly light is not anti-episcopal, but a divine recognition of Gregory's worthiness to assume his sacred office — that was why it stopped rather than helped Gregory's escape. Therefore, the light defines an ideal form of priestly authority based on humility, rather than providing an alternative to this authority, as Hollis's reading of this story would suggest. This image of light features again in Chapter 28.³⁷ In this story, Gregory finds that Pope Siricius had once persecuted Jerome, 'a light upon the lampstand in Rome' (*lucerna candelabri Romae*).³⁸ To take revenge, he extinguishes the candle on Siricius's tomb — an action is guided by 'the light of divine judgment' (*lampas lectionis divine*) that burns in himself.³⁹ Here, Siricius is deprived of the light that would

³⁵ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 126-27.

³⁶ VGA, pp. 86-89, citing Philippians 2:8 ('obedientia [...] usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis'), see 144 n. 37. It is not clear which work of Jerome is cited here. See VGA, p. 144 n. 36.

³⁷ VGA, pp. 124-27.

³⁸ VGA, pp. 124-25.

³⁹ VGA, pp. 124-25.

otherwise be appropriate for him on account of his papal office, because his lack of judgement makes him unworthy. By contrast, Gregory's righteous decision reveals the divine light that burns in him and thus further proves his worth as a pope. The two stories in which light appears define the worthy nature of those who hold sacred office. Not only does this attempt contradict Hollis's argument that the author is trying to construct an anti-episcopal model of holiness, but it also points to the possibility that the text was written specifically an audience consisting of priests and clerics intending to become priests.

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* provides a useful contrast to this use of light imagery in the *Whitby Life*. In his story of the Synod of Whitby, Bede translates *Streanaeshalch*, the English name of Whitby, misleadingly as 'the bay of the lighthouse' (*Sinus Fari*).⁴⁰ In the story of Hild, he further links the image of light to Whitby, by relating how Hild's holiness was prefigured by her mother's visionary dream, in which she found a necklace that 'seemed to spread such a blaze of light that it filled all Britain with its gracious splendour'.⁴¹ Two chapters later, Bede records how the monastery of Coldingham was burned to the ground as a divine punishment, because the nuns were corrupt, and Abbess Aebbe had failed to direct them on the right path.⁴² As Julia Barrow has pointed out, by linking Hild's story to the image of light, Bede intends her story and that of Aebbe to be read in parallel to the parable of wise and foolish virgins who hold oil lamps in Matthew 25:1-13.⁴³ Hild's nuns are the wise virgins who prepare their oil lamps well to welcome Christ the Bridegroom, whereas Aebbe's nuns are the foolish virgins who fail to do so. Here, the image of light highlights the contrast between the good and bad nuns, in a way that is similar to how the Whitby author uses this figure to visualise the worthiness and unworthiness of the sacred-office holders.

However, there is an important difference between the stories of light in the

⁴⁰ *HE*, pp. 298-99 (Book III, Chapter 25). See Tania Styles, 'Whitby Revisited: Bede's Explanation of *Streanaeshalch*', *Nomina* 21 (1998), pp. 133-48.

⁴¹ *HE*, pp. 410-11 (Book IV, Chapter 23): '[...] ut omnes Britanniae fines illius gratia splendoris impleret.'

⁴² *HE*, pp. 420-27 (Book IV, Chapter 25).

⁴³ Barrow, 'Bede's Wise and Foolish Virgins', pp. 294-97.

Ecclesiastical History and the *Whitby Life*. The light is a feminine image in Hild's story, because it is a shining necklace. Yet this necklace is just a figurative representation of Hild's womanhood; it does not point to any specific situations that a nun could face because of her gender.⁴⁴ This is because the Biblical parable that it links Hild to is meant to deliver a universal moral that suits all Christians—namely that they should prepare well for Judgement Day. Presumably the female gender of Hild and Aebbe helps to create a common ground between them and the virgins in this parable, who are supposed to be females, but it does not make the moral that they exemplify gender-specific. In fact, even this common ground turns out to matter little in terms of didactic function. Bede follows the Coldingham episode immediately with the story of how King Ecgfrith was slain when attacking the Picts in the Battle of Dun Nechtain in 685.⁴⁵ As Barrow has suggested, Bede might have intended this incident to be read in relation to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, considering his negative view of Ecgfrith's war against the Picts.⁴⁶ In this case, Ecgfrith serves as another example of what would happen when the Christians act like the foolish virgins. This means that in Hild's story, the allegorical use of the shining necklace has linked her to a Biblical message that can be embodied by examples of both men and women.

By contrast, in the *Whitby Life*, light expresses spiritual messages about priesthood in both literal and allegorical senses. In a literal sense it highlights Gregory's worthiness to be pope. In an allegorical sense, by means of biblical allusion, it points to an ideal of priesthood:

So the same St. Gregory, though he made darkness his secret place round about him, nevertheless, when once he had been placed in the tabernacle of the house of God, shone forth like a lamp upon its stand to all who were in the house.

Sanctus igitur de quo loquimur Gregorius, cum posuit tenebras latibulum suum, in circuitu eius, tamen etiam in tabernaculum domus Dei posita, confestim super

⁴⁴ For how female presence is emptied in Hild's story, see Overing and Lees, 'Birthing Bishops', pp. 35-65.

⁴⁵ *HE*, pp. 428-29 (Book IV, Chapter 26).

⁴⁶ Barrow, 'Bede's Wise and Foolish Virgins', pp. 297-98.

candelabrum lucerna omnibus in ea lucebat.⁴⁷

In Matthew 5, Jesus encourages the apostles to show their good deeds to everyone in order to glorify the Father in heaven, just as a lamp has to be placed upon rather than beneath a lampstand in order to illuminate a house. Meanwhile, according to Gregory's exegesis, the description of the darkness of the secret place in Psalm 17 symbolises a contemplative's awareness of God's mystery.⁴⁸ Now to engage in contemplative life and to glorify God by living an exemplary life would probably not be regarded as expectations specifically for males in the conversion period, as Hild had earned her title 'mother' by fulfilling the second expectation, according to Bede. Yet within the context of the Gregory story, they are defined by the image of light as an integral part of priesthood, as the light is a sign of Gregory's worthiness to assume the papacy. Overall, light, in contrast to its function in Bede's story of Hild, is used in the Gregory story mainly to argue that when humble people receive ordination, their priestly office does not compromise their contemplative life but in fact perfects it. Although this moral could potentially be inspiring for the Whitby nuns, who could risk their spiritual integrity by taking pride in their aristocratic background, it seems clear that this moral is conveyed primarily for a priestly or clerical audience.

Overall, in the first part of the text, Gregory is defined as a saint in terms of the traits which he himself has attributed to an ideal *doctor* — namely that he was humble and dedicated to both contemplative life and preaching. Note that he is shown to have achieved this ideal mainly as a missionary priest and as an elected pope. In fact, the story of his election as pope can almost be read as a summary of his *Pastoral Rule*, in which he likewise conceptualises his ideal priest as a contemplative teacher who remains humble in spite of his office, and repeatedly labels this ideal figure a *doctor*.⁴⁹ The connection of this story and the *Pastoral*

⁴⁷ VGA, pp. 86-87 (Chapter 7), citing Psalm 17:12 ('posuit tenebras latibulum suum in circuitu eius [...] tabernaculum'); Matthew 5:15 ('lucernam', 'super candelabrum' and 'luceat omnibus'), see 144 n. 35.

⁴⁸ *Grégoire Le Grand: Homélies sur Ezéchiel*, ed. and trans. by Charles Morel, Sources Chrétiennes, 327, 360, 2 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1986-90), 327 (1986), pp. 170-71, 196-97 (Book I, Homily V, Chapter 1 ll. 1-6; Book I, Homily VI, Chapter 1 ll. 1-14), see Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', pp. 39-43.

⁴⁹ The word *doctor* appears 23 times in this work. The chapters in Book I focus on humility as a criteria for teachers, while those in Book II focus on the teacher's active and contemplative lives.

Rule is further highlighted by a full discussion of the latter in Chapter 31 that reiterates the principle that humility makes a priest worthy of his office.⁵⁰

This ideal of priesthood can be explored further in a historical context. Whitby was renowned for training men for the priesthood and the episcopate, and thus Gregory's stories could have been used in the monastery for educating those who aimed to take holy orders.⁵¹ Meanwhile, Thacker points out that Gregory's cult might have been established at Whitby to stress the contribution of the Gregorian mission from Canterbury to the conversion of the Northumbrians.⁵² He also suggests that Archbishop Theodore might have been responsible for promoting Gregory's cult in Northumbria, presumably as a way to advance his archepiscopal authority in the north of England and to discredit the attempt to create a separate archbishopric at York.⁵³ If this was the case, then Gregory must have been primarily regarded as a priest- and missionary-saint at Whitby. Reading the *Whitby Life* in this context, it can be said that apart from serving as a model for priests to imitate, Gregory is a source of authority for the archbishops of Canterbury, and definitely not to represent an alternative and non-ecclesiastical model of authority as Hollis claims. Likewise, Gregory's image as a spiritual teacher can be understood in the same context. Theodore set up a school at Canterbury with Hadrian and both were learned teachers.⁵⁴ It seemed natural that in their vision a perfect priest should be a saintly teacher. Bede also says that Hild paid particular attention to the Biblical instruction of those under her rule, and some of her students, such as John and Oftfor, went on to study at a higher level at Canterbury, before they were appointed by Theodore as the bishops of York and of the Hwicce respectively. In this case, Gregory's image as an ordained *doctor* could have reflected how the learned priests at Whitby and Canterbury understood their role.

⁵⁰ *VGA*, pp. 134-37.

⁵¹ *HE*, pp. 408-09 (Book IV, Chapter 23). See also Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's Usurping Bishops', pp. 22-27, 37-38.

⁵² Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory', pp. 77, 83.

⁵³ Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory', pp. 76-77, 79-82.

⁵⁴ *HE*, pp. 332-35 (Book IV, Chapter 2).

II. 2 The Gregorian *Doctores* in a Missionary Context

Ending the account of Gregory's election as pope, the Whitby *Life* suggests in Chapter 8 that Gregory not only embodied Christ's humility, but also fulfilled his commandment of charity.⁵⁵ It then relates that as a reward for this fulfilment, Gregory received the gift of prophecy, which enabled him to understand the needs of the English people. It elaborates on this grace with words from Malachi 2:6 regarding the Levitical priests: 'The law of truth was in his mouth and iniquity was not found in his lips'.⁵⁶ Here, the author is setting out the theme in the next eleven chapters, which contain five stories regarding the conversion of the English people.⁵⁷ These stories focus on how Gregory, Paulinus and a priest called Trimma embody the Gregorian ideal as prophets, by their ability to unveil mysteries and by their willingness to care for others — an expression of love that Gregory considers crucial for an ideal *doctor*.⁵⁸

Note that before being integrated into the narrative of the *Life*, these conversion stories in their earlier forms were unlikely to have much to do with Gregory's ideal of the *doctor*. Thacker puts emphasis on the Roman origin of the stories recounted in the *Life*.⁵⁹ But his discussion gives little attention to these conversion stories. He also admits that the importance given to the Deiran royal house in the *Life* points to the stories' 'elaboration in Northumbria'.⁶⁰ I rather agree with the traditional view that they were of local origins, and that they had strong propagandist function in their original forms.⁶¹ Four of the five conversion stories present Edwin as a divinely-blessed king, by relating how his conversion and glorious reign had been foreseen respectively by Gregory and a mysterious prophet who prefigured Paulinus, and how his body, having been deserted on the battlefield after his

⁵⁵ VGA, 88-91, citing *Forty Gospel Homilies*, p. 219 (Homily 27 on John 15:12-16). Noted by Colgrave, see VGA, p. 144.

⁵⁶ VGA, pp. 88-91, 144 n. 39. Malachi 2:6: 'Lex veritatis fuit in ore eius, et iniquitas non est inventa in labiis eius, [...]'

⁵⁷ VGA, pp. 90-105 (Chapters 9-19).

⁵⁸ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁹ Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory', pp. 63-71.

⁶⁰ 'Memorializing Gregory', pp. 68-69.

⁶¹ For the list of the scholars including Colgrave who support the first point, see Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory', p. 63 n. 23. For the second point, see Jones, *Saints' Lives*, p. 175.

defeat, was recovered by Trimma. This reference to the divine designation of Edwin's kingship should not be surprising, given that Whitby was not only a training centre for priests, but was also a family monastery ruled by the king's descendants Eanflæd and Ælflæd. Given that it was where the king was buried, one of its major functions must have been to commemorate the king and other members of his family in a way that could highlight the divinely blessed status of the family.⁶² The sources for composing the conversion stories in the *Life* could have initially circulated at Whitby for this political purpose, and were thus likely to have presented the priests as kingmaker prophets rather than as *doctores* in a Gregorian sense. Meanwhile, the nature of Gregory's own teachings also contributes to the difficulty in using these materials to promote his ideals. Whereas he shows enthusiasm in evangelism in his letters, he writes his theological works mainly for the Christian society he is living in.⁶³ Thus the ideal of the *doctor* expressed in these works is concerned not so much with preaching to pagans as with providing pastoral care for those who have already received baptism.⁶⁴ The Whitby author therefore has to figure out alone what a Gregorian *doctor* could look like in a missionary context.

The author is able to overcome these problems by reinterpreting the material in an exegetical way. Here, Gregory is again a major source of inspiration.⁶⁵ In his letter to Bishop Leander, Gregory points out that to read the Holy Scripture in its historical sense is just the most basic level of Bible study.⁶⁶ Instead, he believes that one has to read the Holy Scripture in an allegorical sense in order to use it for moral edification. It is with this technique that he, as many other Church Fathers do, is able to read the Old Testament not only as the history of

⁶² See Wood, 'Geography of Power' 11-25, esp. pp. 21-25.

⁶³ Marilyn Dunn makes a similar observation, see *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons: Discourses of Life, Death and Afterlife* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 43-45.

⁶⁴ Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', p. 11.

⁶⁵ Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', pp. 7-11, 18, 48-53. For Gregory's exegetic methods, see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, pp. 46-47. Scott DeGregorio, 'Gregory's Exegesis: Old and New Ways of Approaching the Scriptural Text', *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, ed. by Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013) pp. 269-90, pp. 284-86.

⁶⁶ *Moralia*, CCSL 143A, pp. 1-7. For Gregory's influence on Bede in relation to exegesis, see Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in *Bede: On the Temple*, trans. by Seán Connolly, Translated Texts for Historians 21 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), pp. xvii-lv (pp. xxvi-xxx); Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', pp. 11-15.

the Hebrews, but also as teachings that unveil spiritual truth for the Universal Church. Likewise, the same technique allows the Whitby author to convert the material that had been circulated for political propaganda into stories that recommend the ideal of the Gregorian *doctores*.

The author applies this technique in the very first of the conversion stories in Chapter 9. In this story, Gregory, still a priest, encounters some English people in Rome by chance. He asks them the names of the race, the king and the tribe they belong to. After receiving the answer from them, Gregory interprets *anguli*, the name of their race, as ‘angels of God’ (*angeli Dei*); *Ælli*, the name of their king, as ‘Alleluia, God’s praise must be heard there’; and, *Deira*, the name of their tribe, as ‘they shall flee from the wrath (*de ira*) of God to the faith’.⁶⁷ In this way, he foretells the conversion of the English people. This makes him an apostolic prophet, but not so much a Gregorian *doctor*, who is primarily a teacher unveiling heavenly mystery, rather than simply a foreseer of historical events. Moreover, his prophetic words assign a divinely designated status to *Ælli*’s family, and his political role here makes him similar to the kingmaker prophets of the Old Testament. The latter could be easily found in other hagiographies circulating in the early eighth century, but not so much in Gregory’s own theological writings, which are rarely concerned with the ideal king-bishop relationship.⁶⁸ In fact, even in his commentary on Kings I, Gregory is more concerned with how kings set moral examples for the average Christian.⁶⁹

Yet the prophecy in the Whitby *Life* does in fact have the potential to be read as a piece of spiritual teaching in a Gregorian sense, because both angels and wordplays on names are important elements in Gregory’s exegetical readings of the Bible.⁷⁰ Together they form a common ground for the author to provide a lengthy commentary in Chapters 13-14 on the

⁶⁷ VGA, pp. 90-91: ‘Alleluia. Laus enim Dei esse debet illic’; ‘De ira Dei confugientes ad fidem’.

⁶⁸ Robert A. Markus, ‘Gregory the Great on Kings: Rulers and Preachers in the Commentary on I Kings’, in *The Church and Sovereignty, c. 590-1918: Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks*, ed. by Diana Wood, Studies in Church History Subsidia, 9 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 7-21 (p. 8).

⁶⁹ Markus, ‘Gregory the Great on Kings’, pp. 9-11.

⁷⁰ VGA, p. 148 n. 57.

spiritual meanings of the prophetic words:

Thus the name of the *Anguli*, with the addition of the single letter e, means angels
[...] '[...] having the voice of a celestial army, as the voice of many waters and as the
voice of mighty thundering, saying Alleluia.'

Ergo nomen Angulorum, si una e littera addetur, angelorum sonat [...] Quos [...]
voce exercitus celestis [...] tamquam vocem aquarum multarum et tamquam vocem
validorum tonitruorum dicentium alleluia.⁷¹

Here, the author reads the name of *Anguli* as a reference to the mysterious creatures singing Alleluia at the Lamb's marriage supper in Revelation 19. The author further interprets Ælla's name in relation to the English phrase *all* and thus as a sign of God's universal invitation to His workers: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and so on'; likewise, the author interprets Edwin's name as a universal invitation for all to come to God by baptism.⁷²

The prophetic words now become very similar to Gregory's own teachings in his homilies. For example, Gregory interprets *Cornustibii*, the name of Job's third daughter, as *cornus tibia*, a type of musical instrument.⁷³ He then points out that this signifies how when the Redeemer comes, the song of praise will be offered to God by contemplating Him.⁷⁴ He also links this 'new song' to the Bride's preparation for the coming of the Bridegroom.⁷⁵ In the *Whitby Life*, by applying the same method to read Gregory's prophetic words, the author shows that Gregory's prophetic words were not restricted to a specific family, people and historical event, but instead he was teaching about the mystery of heavenly life. To strengthen this point, the author concludes this commentary in Chapter 14 with words from Hebrews

⁷¹ Citing Revelation 19:6 ('vocem aquarum multarum et sicut vocem tonitruum magnorum dicentium alleluia'). VGA, pp. 94-95 (Chapter 13). Note that whereas the Latin word for Angles is spelled as *anguli* in this statement, the statement itself only makes sense with the alternative spelling *angli*. The latter is used by Bede in relating the same story. See Colgrave's discussion, VGA, pp. 144-45, n. 42; *HE*, pp. 132-35 (Book II, Chapter 1).

⁷² VGA, pp. 94-97 (Chapter 14): 'Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis,'[Matthew 11:28] et reliqua.' See VGA, p. 148 n. 55.

⁷³ *Moralia*, CCSL 143B (1985), pp. 1803-06 on Job 42:14 (Book xxxv, Chapter 17 ll. 1-100).

⁷⁴ *Moralia*, CCSL 143B, pp. 1806 (Book xxxv, Chapter 17 ll. 88-90).

⁷⁵ *Moralia*, CCSL 143B, pp. 1806 (Book xxxv, Chapter 17 ll. 95-97).

7:10: ‘when the prophecy was made, Edwin [...] was perhaps still in the loins of his father Ælli.’⁷⁶ Hebrews 7 is a passage that reinterprets the history of the Hebrews. It points out that Christ is a priest greater than the Levitical priests, because Melchizedek, who gave blessing to Abraham when Levi was still in Abraham’s loins, was in fact a prefiguration of Christ. By quoting this Biblical passage, the Whitby author forces the audience to make a choice about how they should read Gregory’s role in the prophecy story — either to read him in a historical sense as a king-maker prophet blessing a dynasty, or to read him in a spiritual sense as a Christ-like teacher unveiling the Universal Truth for all Christians.

Meanwhile, the same allegorical method is used to interpret the image of the Deirans whom Gregory had met in Rome in the story in order to highlight the saint’s role as a *doctor*:

[Gregory] being puzzled by their new and unusual appearance, and above all, being inspired by God, he received them and asked what race they belonged to. (Now some say they were beautiful boys, while others say that they were curly-haired, handsome youths.)

[Gregory] recenti speci [a] e inconsueta suspensus et, quod maximum est, Deo intus admonente, cuius gentis fuissent, inquisivit. Quos quidam pulchros fuisse pueros dicunt et quidam vero crispas iuvenes et decoros.⁷⁷

Here, the author acknowledges that the exotic appearance of the English people might have incited Gregory to make the prophecy, but balances this statement immediately by stating that no one can remember whether they are boys or youths for certain, and that the divine providence was a more important source of inspiration for the prophecy. A fair guess is that the author is here arguing against the emphasis given to the visual appearance of the English people in earlier versions of this story. After all, their visual appearance is what distinguishes

⁷⁶ ‘Porro cum in lumbis fortasse cum hoc fuit vaticinatum adhuc patris sui Aelii [...] Eduinus’. VGA, pp. 96-97, 148 n. 56. See Hebrews 7:10: ‘adhuc enim in lumbis patris erat quando obviavit ei Melchisedech.’

⁷⁷ VGA, pp. 90-91 (Chapter 9)

them from the Romans, and thus giving emphasis to them would lead to a reading of Gregory's prophecy as confirming the divine designation of a new chosen people, rather than teaching of heavenly things.⁷⁸ Conversely, by downplaying their importance, the author is able to realign the material with Gregory's own ideal of contemplation laid out in Chapter 1, and to emphasise Gregory's ability to see into the transcendent spiritual truth by disregarding all transitory affairs, including visual appearance, earthly rulership, the divisions between tribes and peoples, and history.

This allegorical approach decisively frames the representation of gender in the story. Gregory acts as a priest at both the historical and spiritual levels of interpretation. In the historical sense he is a Melchizedek who blessed a dynasty, while in the spiritual sense he serves as an example of how priests could embody the perfect priesthood of Christ prefigured by Melchizedek. His manhood thus matters at both levels. By contrast, the manhood of Ælli, Edwin and the Deirans whom Gregory encountered in Rome does not make the spiritual truth that they embody gender-specific, as this truth is about the salvation and angelic life of *all* Christians. Although the angels in heaven are described as a 'celestial army' (*exercitus celestis*), this warriorlike image merely serves a male metaphorical representation of a heavenly community, and does not point to the situation of the actual warriors. As has been mentioned above, the same is true for how Hild and the nuns at Coldingham serve in Bede's *HE* as examples of the universal moral of how Christians should prepare for Judgement Day.

Meanwhile, Ælli, Edwin and the Deiran visitors are not actors but merely signs in the story. There is no mentioning of what Ælli and Edwin had done that made them worthy to become the subjects of the prophecy, or what the Deiran visitors did in response to the prophecy. In fact, by presenting Ælli and Edwin as Abraham and Levi, the author stresses that their actions as kings matter far less to their salvation than Gregory's actions as a Melchizedek. This could have been a strategy to avoid giving too much weight to their roles

⁷⁸ See Stephen Harris, 'Bede and Gregory's Allusive Angles', *Criticism*, 44.3 (Summer 2002), pp. 271-89, though his discussion mainly focuses on Bede's version of this story.

as God-chosen rulers. But it also supports my argument that the *Life* was written mainly to show how priests should teach rather than how the laity should respond to their teaching. In this case, the gender of Gregory and the two kings contributes to the construction of the allegorical sense of the story in two different ways. While Gregory has to be a man in order to play the role of a priest and to function as an example for the priestly audience, Ælli and Edwin have to be men in order to be kings, in a way that their names could function as signs of the fate of their people and the universal Christian community. Again, Hild in Bede's *HE* is a useful contrast here. She is able to embody the moral expressed in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins not only because she is a shining necklace in her mother's dream, but also because her actions as a religious woman resemble those of the wise virgins in the parable. In this case, while allegorically she embodies a gender-inclusive ideal that all Christians should prepare for Judgement Day, historically she sets an example for how women could achieve this ideal in their gender-specific situation as nuns. Ælli and Edwin do not have any similar functions in the Whitby *Life* as a sign of salvation, they define what men should do as priests but not what they should do as kings. Finally, in the case of the Deiran visitors, it is not even clear whether their gender matters to their function. As mentioned above, the author stresses that divine inspiration rather than their physical attributes was the major reason for them to have been read by Gregory as a sign of life in heaven. This emphasis subordinates their gender to their symbolic function.

The next story, in which Gregory convinces the Pope to allow him to travel to England to convert the people there, in order to save the 'lovely vessels' (*pulchri vasa*) from destruction in hell, does not mention gender.⁷⁹ Here, the physical beauty of the Deiran visitors that had incited Gregory's desire to preach is compared to the physical beauty of an object rather than of a man or woman. The metaphor also anticipates the lack of emphasis on the agency of the converts for, while on his way to England, a locus (*locusta*) rests on Gregory and he recognises it as a heavenly sign to let him 'stay in the place' (*sta in loco*), as he will be

⁷⁹ VGA, pp. 90-93 (Chapter 10).

called back before he reaches England. The story may have originated to explain why the Apostle of the English people failed to go to them in person, but this seems not to be its main function. In fact, the *Life* overall provides little detail about how the English people historically received the new faith from Gregory. Immediately after this story, the account of how the English kings were converted by the Gregorian mission as fulfilment of Gregory's prophecy takes just a few lines. Instead, in the locust story, the locust seems to function as a symbol of the contemplative teacher, as in Gregory's *Moralia*, for the reason that it can reach both the heavens and humans on the ground.⁸⁰ This function would resonate with how a dove serves as a symbol of divine inspiration in a later chapter of the text when it is said to have rested on Gregory when he was writing his homilies on Ezekiel.⁸¹ In this case, the purpose of the story is to show how Gregory as a missionary sets an example for the clerical audience to preach and contemplate as a *doctor*. In contrast to this gendered role of Gregory, the English people's role is relegated to that of signalling a need of pastoral care.

This discussion of gender cannot be completed without comparing the Whitby *Life* with Bede's account of Gregory in his *HE*. On the one hand, Bede is no less a Gregorian than the Whitby author; he also wishes to present Gregory as a *doctor*.⁸² On the other hand, however, Bede is writing a history of a people for a king and presumably also for his royal court and his writing offers good examples for them to imitate, of whom Gregory is one. His presentation of Gregory is meant to support this aim. He includes his *vita* in the first chapter of Book II, preceding stories about how the English kings led their peoples to receive baptism. He places the scene of Gregory's encounter with the English people at the end of the *vita*, using it as a transition between the *vita* and these stories.⁸³ In Bede's version, Gregory does not say that the Angles *are* angels, instead, he interprets the name *Angli* as referring to

⁸⁰ *Moralia*, CCSL 143B, pp. 1582-85 on Job 39:20 (Book xxxi, Chapter 25 ll. 1-108).

⁸¹ *VGA*, pp. 120-23 (Chapter 26).

⁸² See Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 133-34.

⁸³ For a discussion of the relationship between the two versions of this story in the Whitby *Life* and the *HE*. See Michael Richter, 'Bede's *Angli*: Angles or English?', pp. 69-71. See Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory', pp. 101-102.

how the English people would be the ‘fellow-heirs’ (*coheredes*) of the angels in heaven.⁸⁴ Moreover, Bede also puts words in Gregory’s mouth to acknowledge that their ‘angelic appearance’ (*angelica facies*) is a source of inspiration for the prophetic words.⁸⁵ As a result, this angelic appearance becomes a sign that they are divinely ordained to share the inheritance of heaven with the angels.⁸⁶ Finally, Bede also confirms that the English people whom Gregory met were slave-boys. And why do they have to be such? Bede is here referring to the New Testament observation that Christians are no longer slaves but God’s children and heirs.⁸⁷ The reference to child-slaves directs the audience to read the stories that come immediately afterwards as part of a process of the English people’s spiritual growth that would finally lead to their deserving heaven. Whenever the royal audience took part in this process of spiritual growth by following the examples of the converted kings, they bore witness that Gregory was their apostle.

Bede, however, is not satisfied with this metaphorical expression of Gregory’s influence in Britain. He establishes Gregory’s apostolic status more firmly in a historical context, in order to show that the decisions of men and women in England were crucial to their own salvation. It is significant that these decisions take place in gender-specific situations. In the *HE*, Bede quotes a paragraph from Gregory’s *Moralia* which, he believes, reports the achievement of the Gregorian mission. In this paragraph, Britain is envisioned as a converted ‘he’:

‘[...] he who, as an unbeliever, did not flinch before troops of warriors, now, as a believer, fears the words of the humble. For having received the heavenly Word and being enlightened by miracles as well, he is filled with the grace and the knowledge of God. He is restrained by the fear of God so that he dreads to do evil and with all his heart he longs to attain to everlasting grace.’

⁸⁴ *HE*, pp. 133-34

⁸⁵ *HE*, pp. 134-35.

⁸⁶ See Harris, ‘Allusive Angles’, pp. 271-89.

⁸⁷ Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 4:1-7.

‘[...] et qui cateruas pugnantium infidelis nequaquam metueret, iam nunc fidelis humilium linguas timet. Quia enim perceptis caelestibus uerbis, clarescentibus quoque miraculis, uirtus ei diuinae cognitionis infunditur, eiusdem diuinitatis terrore refrenatur, ut praue agere metuat ac totis desideriis ad aeternitatis gratiam uenire concupiscat.’⁸⁸

Unlike the celestial army in the *Whitby Life*, this warrior ‘he’ points to the historical experience of a warrior people when accepting the teaching of the Gregorian mission. This makes it a proper summary of the stories that follow, regarding how English kings were converted into ‘God-fearers’ — such as when Edwin decided to have his infant daughter Eanflæd baptised by Paulinus after he had defeated the West Saxons.⁸⁹ Here, Bede’s narrative is highly male-centred, but he does assign importance to women in the conversion history.⁹⁰ For instance, he regards Edwin’s marriage to the Christian princess Æthelburh as the main reason why Edwin allowed the Gregorian mission to settle at York.⁹¹ And he frames Æthelburg’s role in her husband’s conversion in terms of Paul’s expectation of how a Christian wife could convert her pagan husband.⁹² Here, both the king and the queen carry out Gregory’s vision of a converted Britain in roles conforming to their gender. Their function, in contrast to the Deiran travellers at Rome in the *Whitby Life*, is not to prefigure the angelic life that has little resonance with how men and women should live in the present world.

Apart from the paragraph about Britain in the *Moralia*, Bede also includes Gregory’s letters written to Augustine in the *HE* to establish a historical representation of Gregory’s apostolic status. It is in these letters that one can see how men and women — such as a pregnant wife and a married husband — each had their own place in society to observe Gregory’s guidance.⁹³ Bede also copies a letter from Gregory to King Æthelberht, in which he

⁸⁸ *HE*, pp. 130-31, citing *Moralia*, CCSL 143B, p. 1346 (Book xxvii, Chapter 11 ll. 74-80), see *HE*, p. 131 n. 3.

⁸⁹ *HE*, pp. 164-67 (Book II, Chapter 9).

⁹⁰ MacCarron, ‘Royal Marriage and Conversion’, pp. 650-70.

⁹¹ *HE*, pp. 164-65 (Book II, Chapter 9).

⁹² 1 Corinthians 7:14. See MacCarron, ‘Royal Marriage and Conversion’, pp. 668-69.

⁹³ *HE*, pp. 82-103 (Book I, Chapter 27, questions 4, 5, 8, 9) See Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the*

urges the king to listen to the Archbishop in order that his own prayers would be heard.⁹⁴ As I have pointed out above, this concern about how a king should behave in his role is totally absent from the conversion stories of Gregory in the *Whitby Life*. Also absent from the *Life* are the references to Æthelburg's contribution to the Gregorian mission in Northumbria, and to how nuns and royal women should carry out Gregory's teachings, although Whitby was a female-led monastery ruled by Æthelburg's female descendants.⁹⁵ Instead, in the two conversion stories in the *Whitby Life* discussed above, the author is concerned almost exclusively with how to align Gregory's priestly role with the Gregorian ideal of the *doctor*, by providing an allegorical reading of this role.

Similarly, the author presents allegorically the two stories about Bishop Paulinus that follow the commentary on Gregory's prophetic words, in order to present Paulinus as a Gregorian *doctor*.⁹⁶ In the first story, King Edwin leaves the hall with his royal company in order to go to church to receive teaching. When the royal company passes through the 'people's street' (*plateam populi*), they stop upon hearing a crow (*cornix*) croaking, and turn towards the bird in stupefaction (*stupore*). The author borrows words from Psalm 39:4 to criticise their reaction: 'as if they believed that the new song (*novum canticum*) in the church was not to be praise unto our God, but something false and useless.'⁹⁷ Now reading omens from the crow's croaking seemed to have been a common practice in early English society. However, the crow can also serve as a metaphor for allegorical usage. Bede, for instance, interprets the crow that did not return to Noah as the stains persisting in the soul of the

Church, pp. 15-45. Although Rob Meens points out that the questions asked in these letters reveal the influence of the British Church on the English people, it seems clear that their main function in the *Ecclesiastical History* is to highlight the connection between the English people and Gregory. See Rob Meens, 'A Background to Augustine's Mission to Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 23 (1994), 5-17 (pp. 11-17).

⁹⁴ *HE*, pp. 112-13 (Book I, Chapter 32).

⁹⁵ See Watt, 'Women, Writing and Religion', p. 37.

⁹⁶ *VGA*, pp. 96-101 (Chapters 15, 16).

⁹⁷ *VGA*, pp. 96-97: 'quasi illud canticum novum carmen Deo nostro non esset vero futurum in ecclesia, sed falso ad nihil utile.' Citing Psalm 39:4 ('canticum novum carmen Deo nostro'), see *VGA*, p. 149 n. 61. For the translation of 'platea polui' as the 'people's street', see C. Daniell, 'York and the Whitby Author's *Anonymous Life of Gregory the Great*', *Northern History*, 29:1 (1993), pp. 197-99 (p. 198).

baptised.⁹⁸ In the *Whitby Life*, it seems clear that the crow's croaking, which is described with the verb *canto*, is meant to be read in contrast to the praise of God sung in the church, described with the phrase *novum canticum*, borrowed from Psalm 39:4. In this case, the crow refers allegorically to the old beliefs and habits associated with paganism in general, in contradiction to the new life represented by the new song in the church. Also, this story begins with an opening statement that highlights the 'uncertainty' about the exact date of the event, saying that it happened 'on a certain Sunday I believe it was' (*quadam ut reor dominica dicitur*); nor do it specifies the location.⁹⁹ Considering the biblical allusions in the story together with this blurring of the historical background, it becomes clear that this story functions as an allegory about. How pagan habits can distract people from their spiritual journey in their new life. The hall, the church and the 'people's street', can accordingly be read in a spiritual sense as the starting point, the destination and the midway of a spiritual journey.

Again, the only gender-specific situation being highlighted in this allegory is that of being a priest. In the story, Paulinus shoots the crow with an arrow and uses the arrow to teach the true meaning of baptism to 'the people of God who were recent converts and still uninstructed' (*'recenti rudoque adhuc populo Dei'*).¹⁰⁰ Here, he acts not only as baptiser and destroyer of the pagan cult, but also as a teacher. Moreover, given that he delivers his teachings in the hall rather than the church, he can be read in an allegorical sense as a *doctor* who sacrifices his contemplative life to remain attached to the earthly community, only in order to lead other Christians heading to the 'new song' in the Church. Taken together, he serves as a role model of priesthood in a Gregorian sense, and a particularly important one when the *Life* was written, when many people followed their lords in receiving baptism but in fact knew nothing about the new faith. By contrast, the 'people of God' (*populus Dei*) refers

⁹⁸ Julia Barrow, 'How Coifi pierced Christ's side: A Re-examination of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, II, Chapter 13', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62.4 (2011), 693-706 (pp. 699-701).

⁹⁹ VGA, pp. 96-99 (Chapter 15).

¹⁰⁰ VGA, pp. 98-99.

to a genderless community of the baptised. Nor are the royal company presented in the story in gender-specific situations. Though a single reference describes them as ‘those who were still bound not only to heathenism but also to unlawful wives’, the story does not further address this gender-specific situation.¹⁰¹ Instead, considering the parallel expression of ‘heathenism’ and ‘unlawful wives’, it seems that the latter is a shorthand indicator of heathen social practices, while the royal company is a male representation of those who are held up at the beginning of their spiritual journey because of their pagan allegiance. The possibility of this reading could hardly escape the audience’s attention, given that in the previous chapter, the English visitors are linked allegorically to the singing attendants at the Lamb’s marriage supper in Revelation 19. In this case, whereas the royal company are men, the community that they represent in a spiritual sense—namely the flock the priest leads in the spiritual journey towards the heavenly life—is a gender-neutral one. Overall, in the allegory, only the priest’s gender matters in a spiritual sense.

The second story of Paulinus seems to give more weight to Edwin’s situation as a nobleman in the conversion history.¹⁰² But a careful examination suggests that this is not the case. This story looks back to the time when Edwin was still an exile in East Anglia. It says that a prophet had come to Edwin and promised him the throne, on condition of Edwin’s obedience to the person who would appear in his form (*specie*) and with the sign (*signo*) that he showed to Edwin. This story then puts words in the prophet’s mouth, saying that this person — who turns out to be Bishop Paulinus — would teach (*docet*) Edwin ‘to submit to Him the one living and true God who created all things’.¹⁰³ However, the story does not elaborate on how Edwin obeyed and received teaching from Paulinus. It is not about the ideal interaction between the *doctor* and the king.

Instead, the story has a more universal theme. The first part of it, which occupies one

¹⁰¹ VGA, pp. 96-97: ‘qui adhuc erant gentilitati non solum, sed etiam et non licitis stricti coniugiis’.

¹⁰² VGA, pp. 98-101 (Chapter 16). Note that Bede tells a very differently worded version of this story in *HE*, 172-83 (Book II, Chapter 12). See Barrow’s discussion of both versions, ‘How Coifi Pierced Christ’s Side’, pp. 697-98.

¹⁰³ VGA, pp. 100-01: ‘Qui te uni Deo qui creavit omnia, vivo et vero docebit obedire [...]’.

third of its length, explains in detail that no one can remember this story for certain and that the source is the faithful who report this story *tam spiritualiter* — a phrase that is better translated as ‘spiritually’ than ‘sincerely’ as Colgrave proposed.¹⁰⁴ Thus it seems that the author is at pains to warn the audience not to read this story in a straight historical sense. But how should this story be read in a spiritual way? Note that the strange phrase *specie* and *signo* obviously refers to the concept of prefiguration in exegetical study. As noted above, the author has already put this concept to use when he presents Gregory as a Melchizedek, a prefiguration of Christ. Likewise, the shadowy prophet in this story could be read as a prefiguration of the bishop-teacher Paulinus. This reading is confirmed by how the author ends the story with a thanksgiving prayer to God, praising Him for sending ‘our’ *doctorem* Paulinus, who had become ‘our’ *doctor* via Gregory.¹⁰⁵ This prayer gives the impression that Edwin’s encounter with the prophet prefigures not of an ideal bishop-king relationship but one between the *doctor* and ‘us’, namely the people under his pastoral care. In this case, the story gives no prominence to kingship at the spiritual level, but instead its focus is on the earthly community that this kingship represents — a community that is gender-neutral.

I would like to end this section by discussing the final conversion story of the *Life* in Chapters 18 and 19, which is related to Edwin’s cult. As I have pointed out in the introduction section, when family monasteries commemorated and venerated a king in order to advance the interests of his descendants, the commemoration and the cult must have foregrounded the gendered roles attaching to the family structure. Bede’s *HE* is particularly generous in providing information about this gender aspect of family monasteries. Two example he gives are Osthryth’s translation of the bones of her uncle Oswald to the monastery at Bardney, which had been placed under the control of her husband King Æthelred of Merica, and Eanflæd’s organising of the foundation of Gilling to commemorate her kinsman Oswine after

¹⁰⁴ This translation is proposed by Celia Chazelle, ‘The Power of Oratory: Rereading the Whitby Liber Beati Gregorii’, *Traditio*, 76 (2021), 29-77 (p. 52).

¹⁰⁵ *VGA*, pp. 100-01 (Chapter 17).

her husband Oswiu had murdered him.¹⁰⁶ Both cases involved women's roles as commemorators of their family members and mediators between their families and those of their husbands. Bede does not say anything about Edwin's burial at Whitby. But it seems clear that Eanflæd was likewise exercising influence on the basis of her family roles, when she buried the bones of her father Edwin and other noblemen from the Deiran house in the monastery at Whitby, which was at that time ruled by her daughter Ælflæd and had already been the burial ground of her husband Oswiu, the head of the Bernician house.¹⁰⁷ In this way, she made her monastery, herself and her daughter powerful emblems of the unification of the two ruling families. Meanwhile, it was also in the roles of daughter and granddaughter that she and Ælflæd were able to forge a posthumous relationship between Edwin and Gregory by placing the former's tomb and the latter's altar in the same church. Presumably, this spatial arrangement was intended to construct an ideal bishop-king relationship, in which women served as brokers.

Yet the *Whitby Life* gives almost exclusive focus to the priestly role in the story of Edwin's burial.¹⁰⁸ The main character in this story is a priest called Trimma, who is urged in a series of visionary dreams to bring Edwin's corpse from where he was killed to Whitby. The story describes in length how Trimma struggles to confirm the divine origin of these dreams, but glosses over Eanflæd's role as Edwin's daughter in two lines.¹⁰⁹ Nor does it tell the reader anything about the interaction between Trimma and Eanflæd. In this case, both the women-Church partnership and the gendered structure of the family monastery slide into obscurity. Instead, the story directs the audience's attention to the battlefield where Edwin was slain — it ends with Trimma wishing to build a monastery there, when he finds that the souls of four baptised warriors keep returning to the battlefield to look after their bodies.¹¹⁰ Here, Trimma acts as an exemplary *doctor* in the story, with his concern over the spiritual welfare of the

¹⁰⁶ *HE*, pp. 244-45 (Book III. Chapters 10, 14).

¹⁰⁷ *HE*, pp. 288-95 (Book III Chapter 24).

¹⁰⁸ *VGA*, pp. 100-05 (Chapters 18-19).

¹⁰⁹ *VGA*, pp. 102-03 (Chapter 18)

¹¹⁰ *VGA*, pp. 104-05 (Chapter 19)

warriors.

Neither does the warriorhood of these souls matter in a spiritual sense in this story. The author recounts how the souls were in splendid array because they were the baptised — this carries the audience back to the theme of the true meaning of baptism that Paulinus has addressed in the story of the crow. Moreover, as Brian Butler has pointed out, the four souls of the warriors seem to be intended to be read in relation to the vision of the dry bones recorded in Ezekiel 37, in which four winds are blown on the slain of the house of Israel in order to restore them into a living army.¹¹¹ This account was explained by Gregory as well as by other early Church Fathers as referring to the promise of salvation on Judgement Day.¹¹² Presumably this is also how the souls of the four warriors are supposed to be read in the *Whitby Life*. In this case, while in a literal sense the souls point to the actual situation of warriors, in a spiritual and thus more important sense, these souls merely serve as a sign for the *doctores* to contemplate a spiritual truth regarding the divine promise embodied in the ritual of baptism — a spiritual truth that relates not to their gendered role as warriors but to that of the *doctores* as priestly contemplatives and baptisers.

II. 3. Priesthood and the People of God

Following the conversion stories, the *Whitby Life* returns to Gregory's papal career in Rome, relating a group of stories between chapters 20-29 in which Gregory does not only perform miracles, but is one 'through whom Christ also speaks'.¹¹³ As I shall show, these stories continue to present Gregory as an ideal *doctor*, and they judge the other male and female figures mainly in terms of their ability to understand the spiritual truth. Nevertheless, this indifferent attitude towards the gender of the characters does not, as Hollis's theory could have suggested, point to an egalitarian model of holiness that both men and women can achieve on the same footing. Instead, it shows that the author cares little about how Gregory's

¹¹¹ Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', pp. 176-81.

¹¹² Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', p. 178. *Grégoire Le Grand: Homélies sur Ezéchiel*, SC 360 (1990), pp. 389-93 on Ezekiel 37: 4-6 (Book II, Homily VIII, Chapter 6 ll. 1-54).

¹¹³ VGA, pp. 104-05 (Chapter 20): 'Christo in se quoque loquente'.

ideal of the *doctor* can be achieved in any gender-specific situations apart from that of being a priest.

In chapter 20, Gregory is celebrating mass. A woman laughs when she hears his declaration that the sacramental bread could be Christ — it turns out that she baked the bread. In response, Gregory does not allow her to partake of the bread and asks the attendants of the mass to pray with him in order to reveal the spiritual truth to the woman. Miraculously, the bread becomes a bloody finger. The story closes with Gregory's words to the woman: 'Now look with bodily eyes on what you were before too blind to see with your spiritual eyes and learn to believe in Him [...].'¹¹⁴ This story is then followed by a very similar one in chapter 21. This time the foil characters are foreign legates, who come to Rome and ask Pope Gregory to give them some relics to bring home. When they complain that they have only been given some dirty cloths, Gregory uses a knife to cut the cloths and blood comes out from them. Gregory then explains to them that these cloths have been blessed with the martyrs' relics on an altar, and thus they have become true relics in their own right.

Regarding the baker woman, Breeze believes that she embodies women's actual concern about preparation of food, which was traditionally their duty.¹¹⁵ Watt believes that she reflects women's supporting role in delivering the teachings of the Church.¹¹⁶ But which women does this female baker really represent? The *Whitby Life* is unlikely to have been written for an audience of such humble status. Instead, its most likely audience were those who were educated well enough to appreciate the exegetical approach of this text. Such an audience must have known far more than the female baker about the mystery of the Eucharist; they were unlikely to make the same mistake she had made and thus play the same role she had played in Gregory's mass celebration. In other words, they did not share the concern, experience and role of the female baker. Therefore, it will be more convincing to read this

¹¹⁴ *VGA*, pp. 106-07: 'Nunc carnalibus considera oculis, quod prius obcecata celestibus minime potuisti conspiciere et disce ei esse credula qui dixit, [...].'

¹¹⁵ Breeze, 'Did a Woman Write?', p. 349.

¹¹⁶ Watt, 'Women, Writing and Religion', p. 38-39.

female baker, and also the male legates in the next story, as representing in a general sense the ‘flock’ whom the priestly saint has put under his pastoral care. They do not represent the actual situations of any specific social groups, but instead they represent the ‘flock’ in a general sense, and their ignorance functions to define the priest in a Gregorian mould, namely that he is not merely an administrator of sacraments but he should also be a teacher of spiritual mystery.

The flock whom they represent here are likewise conceptualised in other parts of the text as different from the priestly-*doctores*. The flock appear three times in the text as a single community under the label of ‘the people of God’. In Chapter 7, they are those who elected Gregory to lead them and urged God to reveal Gregory’s hidden location by offering themselves up to ‘fasting and supplication day and night’; in Chapter 16, they are the baptised but uninstructed people to whom Paulinus explained the true meaning of baptism, and finally in Chapter 20, they are the mass attendants, whom Gregory urges to pray in order that God would reveal to the woman the Eucharist mystery.¹¹⁷ On all these occasions, the people of God take a role that is completely different to that of Gregory as a teacher — they represent those who look for suitable *doctores* and those who benefit from their teachings. Like the female baker and the foreign legates, they do not represent any models of holiness on their own; they are assigned a gender-neutral role in the text not to construct a gender-inclusive model of holiness, but merely because they represent the Universal Church that is in urgent need of priestly *doctores*, which are the role that the text really focuses on.

The same reading can be applied to understand the characters in the stories that follow. In Chapter 22, two pagan magicians are paid to attack Gregory by a wealthy man whom Gregory has excommunicated. They end up being struck blind by divine providence when they attempt to curse Gregory. Then they confess and receive baptism. Now they no longer harm others for money, but instead they are assigned by Gregory the duty of managing

¹¹⁷ VGA, pp. 86-87: ‘ieiuniis et obsecrationibus serviens nocte ac die’, citing Luke 2:37. Noted by Colgrave, see VGA, p. 144 n. 34.

church funds. This story shows how Gregory fulfilled his obligation as a pope by offering spiritual guidance, and it further defines this *doctor*'s role as a 'healer of soul'—an important concept in Gregory's writings mentioned in Chapter 6 of the text, by stressing that the magicians remained blind for the rest of their lives in order to keep them on the right path.¹¹⁸ Here, just like the baker and legates, the magicians represent in a gender-neutral sense the flock who cannot see the spiritual truths with their bodily eyes and thus are in need of the teachings of the priest-saint and the priestly audience. Then in Chapter 23, Gregory convinces a pagan king not to attack Rome by his 'holy instruction'.¹¹⁹ Here, he again fulfils his obligation as a pope by acting as a preacher. This story ends by relating how the king recovered from his illness after he followed Gregory's advice to eat milky food as he had been accustomed to do in his childhood. Note that milk is an important metaphor both in the Pauline epistles and in Gregory's *Pastoral Rule*, referring to the basic teachings a spiritual teacher offers to beginners in the faith.¹²⁰ Presumably, the milky food in the *Whitby Life* is intended to be read in the same way, for the purpose of constructing Gregory as a skilful preacher.¹²¹

The last four stories of this series are concerned with Gregory's possession of 'the apostolic grace of binding and loosing'.¹²² This phrase again brings his priesthood to the foreground, given that apostolic power is traditionally linked to priestly and episcopal authority. In the first story, a dying monk in Gregory's monastery confesses that he once hid some coins for his own use and thus has broken the rule set by Gregory.¹²³ Accordingly, Gregory condemns him to hell. The story stresses that this is for the edification of those who

¹¹⁸ This is a deliberate contrast to the Biblical story of how Paul punished the sorcerer Bar-Jesus by striking him to temporal blindness. See Acts 13: 6-12. For the exegetical context of the 'healer of souls', see Brian Butler, 'Doctor of Souls, Doctor of the Body: Whitby *Vita Gregorii* 23 and Its Exegetical Context', pp. 168-80.

¹¹⁹ VGA, pp. 114-15.

¹²⁰ Such as Hebrews. 5:12-14; I Corinthians 3:1-2; *RP*, SC 382 (1992), p. 528 (Book III, Chapter 39 ll. 1-15), see Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', pp. 93, 97.

¹²¹ Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', pp. 93-100.

¹²² VGA, pp. 123-24 (Chapter 28): 'apostolicam [...] ligandi solvendique gratiam'. Citing Matthew 18:18.

¹²³ VGA, pp. 124-25 (Chapter 28).

are still alive. Thus it shows another example of how Gregory is able to offer spiritual teachings in his capacity as a priest. The next two stories set two foil characters to Gregory's ideal priesthood.¹²⁴ The first one is Pope Siricius, said to have humiliated Jerome on account of his humble dressing; the second one is Gregory's successor Pope Sabinian, said to have misjudged Gregory's charity work, seeing it as an unworthy labour.¹²⁵ Both are punished in the stories by Gregory with his apostolic power of binding and loosing, and both serve as examples of how sacred-office holders can lose their apostolic status when they themselves fail to understand the spiritual nature of holiness. By contrast, in the last story, Gregory acts as a real *doctor* capable of identifying inner virtues.¹²⁶ After knowing that the Emperor Trajan had once helped a widow to claim compensation for the murder of her son, Gregory judges the emperor worthy of receiving salvation in spite of his paganism, and he accordingly baptises him posthumously with his tears.

Note that apart from the avaricious monk, all the other characters in these stories are not of monastic background, and some of them are not even Christians.¹²⁷ In this case, they are remote from the situation of the supposed monastic audience at Whitby and their didactic function to serve as examples for them can only apply in a very broad sense. Instead, their primary didactic function seems to be defining Gregory as a priestly *doctor* in a Gregorian sense, by highlighting the needs for missionary work and pastoral care. Meanwhile, Gregory remains a priestly figure in these stories, just as he does in the first half of the *Life*.

Admittedly, preceding the stories of his apostolic power, there is a lengthy passage regarding his writings, and writing is an activity for monks as well as priests.¹²⁸ Yet this passage praises Gregory's theological writings as having fulfilled two Biblical commandments about preaching, namely to 'preach the gospel to every creature' and to 'let your light so shine

¹²⁴ VGA, pp. 124-27 (Chapter 28).

¹²⁵ For the history of the Siricius story in the Anglo-Saxon period, see VGA, p. 159, n. 120.

¹²⁶ VGA, pp. 126-29 (Chapter 29).

¹²⁷ The story of the avaricious monk is derived from Gregory's *Dialogues*. Noted by Colgrave, VGA, pp. 158-59 n. 118. See *Dialogues*, SC 265, pp. 188-94 (Book IV, Chapter 57, ll. 49-132). The author might feel obliged to include this story because it is rare example of Gregory's own miracles being recorded in his own works, rather than because it is a proper didactic material for a monastic audience.

¹²⁸ VGA, pp. 116-25 (Chapters 24-27).

before men'.¹²⁹ While the former commandant defines Gregory's theological writings as having the function of evangelisation, the latter commandant is derived from the parable of the lamp on a lampstand in Matthew 5:14-16, a parable that has already been used to describe how God recognised Gregory's worthiness to assume the papal office by causing a column of heavenly light to shine. Likewise, as mentioned above, the dove that is said to have rested on Gregory when he was composing the *Homilies of Ezekiel* is meant to be read as a parallel with the locust resting on him on his journey to England to convert the English people in Chapter 10. Taken together, this passage defines Gregory as a writer in a priestly context by creating an impression that his writings were part of his missionary and pastoral works as a priest. In this case, there are in fact no stories in the *Life* that focus on how Gregory achieved holiness as a monk.

I end my discussion of this text by focusing on Chapters 30-32, which form its concluding section. I suggest that they summarise the author's thesis of holiness that I have traced. In Chapter 30, the author apologises that other saints' miracles might have been wrongly attributed to Gregory in this *Life*, but then immediately emphasises that this confusion does not weaken the exposition of the spiritual truth. The author supports this argument by stating that even Biblical accounts are inconsistent in some ways, and that the saints are 'all members one of another' (*alter alterius membra*) even if they 'have not the same office' ('non eundem actum habent').¹³⁰ As should now be clear, this type of rhetorical excuse has already been employed several times for the purpose of constructing the allegorical meanings of the stories. In this construction, as I have pointed out above, how the male and female characters act in an actual society by their gender becomes irrelevant, as they mainly serve as signs pointing to the angelic community in heaven or to the human community on earth — both of which are gender-neutral concepts. In fact, if one pushes the principle of 'all saints are of the same body' further, it seems that even Gregory's priesthood

¹²⁹ VGA, pp. 118-19 (Chapter 24): 'evangelium omni creatur[a]e.' Citing Mark 16:15; 'Luceat lux vestra coram hominibus.' Citing Matthew 5:16. Noted by Colgrave, see VGA, p. 118-19, 156 n. 102.

¹³⁰ VGA, pp. 130-31 (Chapter 30), citing Romans 12:5, see Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', p. 176.

matters little. After all, there are saints who are not ordained but remain great. However, the discussion of Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* in Chapter 31 gives full weight to Gregory's role as a priestly *doctor*. The discussion quotes the preface of the *Pastoral Rule* to recall how Gregory proved his worthiness to bear pastoral duty by declining it. Then it turns to another theme of the *Pastoral Rule* — namely that a *doctor* should formulate his teachings according to the nature of his audience. It concludes that Gregory has exemplified this skill by himself. Here, this discussion does not only reaffirm the combination of the roles of priest, teacher and author, but it serves as a reminder that the primary aim of this text is to construct a priestly model of holiness that its priestly readers can emulate. It is to construct this model that the allegorical method is applied to the *Life*, both to highlight the inner virtues of a priestly *doctor* and to construct an ideal relationship between the *doctor* and the people assigned to his pastoral care. If this method does blur the gender lines in the text to some extent, it nevertheless re-establishes a new one between the worthy priests and those who are not.

Overall, Gregory in the *Whitby Life* serves as an example to show how the priests should achieve the ideal of the *doctor* laid out in his writings, but does not show how men and women could achieve this ideal in any other roles. The same is true of the supporting characters in the *Life*. In the conversion stories, they are not presented as moral agents but as prophetic signs. In the Roman episodes, they are in roles — such as a baker woman, foreign legates and pagan magicians that are very different from those of the immediate audience of the text, namely priests and monastics, and thus could function as examples for them only in a very broad sense. In the conversion period, a religious woman who wished to imitate the virtues of Pope Gregory would probably not find this text a useful guidebook.

Chapter III

The Monastic Saint in the Lindisfarne *Life of Cuthbert*

The Lindisfarne *Life of Cuthbert* was written between 699 and 705 at the commission of Bishop Eadfrith and the community at Lindisfarne.¹ The use of the first-person plural suggests that the anonymous author was a member of the community.² Unlike the members of Whitby, the core members of Lindisfarne were all monks. Thus, this text has a male subject, a male author, and a primarily male audience. Meanwhile, it includes several stories about the saint's friendship with religious women.³ This chapter will show that this text is particularly interesting about the relationship between monasticism and gender in the conversion period, although, with the exception of Hollis, it has rarely been studied on these terms. By depicting Cuthbert as a holy man, the *Life* defines monasticism as an exemplary lifestyle adoptable by all Christians, whether lay people or monastics, men or women.

This chapter has six sections. It reviews in Section 1 the traditional views about the didactic function of the Lindisfarne *Life* and its assumedly 'Celtic' perception of sanctity. It then discusses the monastic ideal Cuthbert embodies in the text. In Sections 2 and 3, it focuses on this ideal of spiritual athleticism as an alternative and more gender-inclusive way of expressing physical strength to warriorhood. In Sections 4 and 5, it focuses on how this ideal conceptualises a monastic worldview based on the Rule of St Benedict in which men and women are ranked according to their expression of obedience and stability when facing disasters, crises and sufferings. Section 6 concludes the discussion by comparing this *Life* with the Whitby *Life of Gregory*, regarding the factors that have influenced their representation of gender.

To begin with a brief outline of what is known about the historical Cuthbert and of how the *Life* presents him: after a military career in his youth, Cuthbert settled in the

¹ *Two Lives*, p. 13.

² *VCA*, pp. 94-95 (Book III. Chapter 1).

³ *Two Lives*, pp. 318-19. Nicholson, '*Feminae Gloriosae*', pp. 15-16.

monastery of Melrose, becoming a monk and a priest.⁴ Then, having served in the honourable position of *praepositus*, he fled the community to avoid human praise, but was soon recruited for the same role at Lindisfarne. More dramatic moves then followed; he first retreated to the island of Farne to live a hermit's life, then became a bishop and held the office for two years, only to resign and return to the island as a hermit again, and die there months later in 687. His body was buried at Lindisfarne, and in 698 was found incorrupt. From that point his tomb became a site of healings and pilgrimage, while the Lindisfarne *Life*, written shortly afterwards, can be seen as an integral part of the cult itself.⁵ Thus, Cuthbert can be said to have been remembered in the community as a perfect man in at least three roles and two forms: as *praepositus*, hermit and bishop, as living saint and incorrupt body. The Lindisfarne *Life* celebrates the varied nature of Cuthbert's holiness in four separate books. The first three books relate his life stages as a layman, a monk-priest, a hermit, and the last book relates his episcopal career, his retirement and the posthumous miracles at his tomb. Nevertheless, as I shall show, the author also links up the four books into a coherent narrative to show that Cuthbert was the same holy man regardless of the changes in his life. It is in this way that he is able to construct a universal model of holiness that all Christians can imitate.

III.1 Didacticism and Monasticism

While the Lindisfarne *Life* has received far more scholarly attention than the Whitby *Life of Gregory*, it has primarily been used to interpret Bede. Bede rewrote it into a new prose *Life* not later than 721, and thus comparing the two works helps to reconstruct how Bede thought and wrote.⁶ Bede's scholars historically considered the Lindisfarne *Life* a plain and innocent record of miracle stories, and Bede's text as revelatory of how he reworks history to reflect his ideals, didacticism and literary ambition.⁷ This view persists in recent scholarship.

⁴ *VCP*, pp. 172-75 (Chapter 6).

⁵ Thacker, 'Origins of the Cult', p. 109.

⁶ *Two Lives*, p. 16.

⁷ Charles Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 1 (1896), pp. i-clxvii (p. xlvi); Wilhelm Levinson, 'Bede as Historian', in *Bede, His Life, Times and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Centenary of His Death*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), pp. 111-51 (pp. 126-28); *Two Lives*, p. 15.

Thacker provides a detail examination of how Bede reworked Cuthbert into a pastor saint in a Gregorian mould to advocate his ideal of Church reform.⁸ The original text, however, he believes to be ‘didactic... [it] did not emphasize his subject’s moral relevance for his contemporaries’ but the author was ‘primarily interested in his hero as a miracle-worker’.⁹ Likewise, Stancliffe argues that the Lindisfarne *Life* ‘remains untouched by Gregory’s didacticism’, and Bede’s prose *Life* is ‘far more didactic’.¹⁰ Accordingly, she believes that the historical Cuthbert is represented more faithfully in the Lindisfarne *Life* than in Bede’s prose *Life*.¹¹

William Foley shares a similar view but criticises the Lindisfarne *Life* for its lack of didacticism. In his reading, the Lindisfarne Cuthbert can hardly be imitated by the audience because he is presented as already living a heavenly life in the present world — ‘like a Christ who works miracles, but who suffers no cross’.¹² By contrast, he notices that Bede’s rewriting expands scenes of suffering and adds new ones, and argues that this rewriting is meant to advocate Gregory’s view that Christians could achieve perfection by experiencing physical suffering and weakness. He does not, however, explain why the Lindisfarne *Life* includes so many scenes of suffering, if not to address suffering didactically. Overall, Thacker, Stancliffe and Foley have all overlooked the didactic functions of the Lindisfarne *Life* both because they pay more attention to Bede’s work and because they treat Gregory as the only source of inspiration for how the *Lives* could exercise a didactic functions. Presumably, Bede’s advocating of these two ideals in his works has led scholars to overemphasise Gregory’s influence in seventh-and eighth-century England. However, the absence of these two ideals in the Lindisfarne *Life* by no means suggests that the text lacks any didactic intents. After all, Gregory was only one of the many sources of inspiration for saints’ *Lives* in the conversion period.

⁸ Thacker, ‘Bede’s Ideal of Reform’, pp. 133-6.

⁹ Thacker, ‘Bede’s Ideal of Reform’, pp. 136-7.

¹⁰ Stancliffe, ‘Pastor and Solitary’, pp. 26, 28.

¹¹ Stancliffe, ‘Pastor and Solitary’, p. 41.

¹² Foley, ‘Suffering and Sanctity’, p. 107.

This tendency to deny the didactic function of the Lindisfarne *Life* has also framed the reading of the allegorical sense and representation of gender in the text. For instance, Sally Shockro believes that the Biblical allusions simply indicate parallels between Cuthbert and Biblical figures, whereas those in Bede's prose *Life* have a didactic purpose.¹³ Hollis takes a similar approach. In a scene shared by both *Lives*, Abbess Ælfflæd presses Cuthbert to prophesy the future of her heirless brother King Ecgfrith.¹⁴ Hollis reads Ælfflæd in Bede's version in relation to Bede's pastoral ideal, suggesting that she is presented in a negative light as a nun trapped by worldly concerns and in need of connection, to emphasise Cuthbert's role as a pastor.¹⁵ By contrast, she does not read her in the Lindisfarne *Life* in relation to any didactic functions, but believes that she is presented in a positive light as a sharer of holy mystery and spiritual leadership with the male saint, because that was how English society perceived female leadership.

As I have pointed out in the Introduction, the Lindisfarne *Life* does emphasise its didactic function in its first preface by quoting Anthony: 'For this record of St Cuthbert is of great gain and value to myself, it is in itself a ready path to know what he was'.¹⁶ Some studies have shed light on this didactic function. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe notes the moral of the first story of the Lindisfarne *Life* in her study of Anglo-Saxon perceptions of obedience.¹⁷ In this story, Cuthbert gives up his childish game in response to another child's prophetic words, even when, the story says, he does not fully understand them. O'Keeffe points out that this story encourages the audience to choose to obey the divine will

¹³ Shockro, pp. 3-4, 6-8. Knibbs holds the same view though his work discusses the Lindisfarne *Life* only very briefly. See his 'Exegetical Hagiography', pp. 235, 237-41, 246.

¹⁴ *VCA*, pp. 104-05 (Book III, Chapter 6); *VCP*, pp. 234-39 (Chapter 24).

¹⁵ For Hollis's comparison of the two versions of this story, see 'Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church', pp. 185, 194-97, 199-207, especially p. 201.

¹⁶ *VCA*, pp. 62-63 (Book I, Chapter 1): 'Et enim ingens mihi lucrum est atque utilitas, hoc ipsum quod recorder sancti Cu[th]berti. Est siquidem perfecta uia ad uirtutem, ilium scire quis fuerit'. See Pascal Bertrand's edition of Evagrius's Latin tradition, 'Vita sancti Antonii' in 'Die Evagriusübersetzung der Vita Antonii: Reception – Überlieferung - Edition. Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Vitas Patrum-Tradition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Utrecht University, 2005), pp. 160-91 (p. 160 ll. 15-17) (Preface).

¹⁷ *VCA*, pp. 64-67 (Book I, Chapter 3). Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience: Narratives of Agency and Identity in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), p. 67-72.

unconditionally. I will expand on this observation and suggest that other stories in the text have the same function. Meanwhile, Matthew Delvaux raises the possibility that the stories in the Lindisfarne *Life*, considering their emphasis on divine grace as the source of all types of wonders in the world, could have been used for the edification of the laity in pastoral care.¹⁸ Note that the ideals which Delvaux and O’Keeffe identify from the *Life* are not those given weight in Gregory’s writings. Their observations show that an early Anglo-Saxon *Life* can have didactic functions but the ideal it promotes is not necessarily a Gregorian one.

A second trend in the comparison of the two prose *Lives* is that the Lindisfarne *Life* is often compared with Bede’s prose *Life* in relation to the differences in Irish and Roman models of Christianity.¹⁹ The two communities where Cuthbert had spent his religious career, namely Melrose and Lindisfarne, were both founded by the Iona mission. He also spent some time in the community at Ripon founded by the Melrose monks, but was then expelled with them on account of their allegiance to the Irish dating of Easter.²⁰ Ripon was then handed over to Wilfrid, an enthusiastic champion of the Dionysian table used in Rome. In 664, King Oswiu ruled in favour of the Dionysian table in the synod of Whitby. Cuthbert with other members of the pro-Irish faction were forced to renounce their own dating method, but their conflict with the Wilfridians persisted in the decades that follow, and Cuthbert’s promotion to the bishopric and his final resignation of it were both closely related to this conflict.²¹ Scholars therefore are justified in regarding Cuthbert as a saint in the Irish style, and in believing that the Lindisfarne monks must have wished to present him in this way. By contrast, they had long regarded Bede and his monastery at Jarrow as ‘pro-Roman’. Thus it is natural for them to have often compared the two *Lives* in terms of an Irish-versus-Roman

¹⁸ Matthew C. Delvaux, ‘from Virtue to Virtue: Diverging Visions of Sanctity and Monasticism in Two *Lives of Cuthbert*’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 27.2 (2019), 226-50 (pp. 249-50).

¹⁹ A third trend of studying this text, which this thesis will not deal with, is by focusing on its relationship with Stephen’s *Life of Wilfrid*. See Stancliffe, ‘Disputed episcopacy’, pp. 12-23; David Woodman, ‘Hagiography and Charters in Early Northumbria’, in *Writing, Kingship and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Rory Naismith and David Woodman, pp. 52-70 (pp. 54-61, 66-70).

²⁰ *VCP*, pp. 180-81 (Chapter 8).

²¹ Cubitt, ‘Usurping Bishops’, pp. 19-20, 24-25.

framework.

Markus, for instance, suggests that Cuthbert is reworked in Bede's prose *Life* into a saint who could live out his old Celtic virtues in a Roman mould, and could therefore serve as a unifier of the deeply divided English Church.²² Rosenthal then adopts this binary division in his comparison of the two prose *Lives*.²³ He picks up the time-honoured view that the Irish saints were more individualistic figures than those in the Roman style, and suggests that this is exactly how Cuthbert is presented in the Lindisfarne *Life*: an isolated and inimitable figure, independent of Church institutions and detached from all worldly ties.²⁴ He does not, however, find much evidence to support this argument. Instead, he provides a close reading of Bede's prose *Life*, identifying the model of holiness presented in this text as 'Roman' in terms of its three characteristics: the emphasis on pastoral care, on lay people's role in the Church, and on Benedictine coenobitism.²⁵

Yet it is Stancliffe who develops the most influential argument in studying the two *Lives* in such a binary framework. She argues that the Lindisfarne *Life* represents an Irish ideal of holiness in two aspects. Firstly, the *Life* gives emphasis to how Cuthbert sought to live a solitary life by abandoning his offices twice, first by his 'escape' from Melrose and then by his resignation from his bishopric.²⁶ This reflects how the Irish Church, with its enthusiasm for the Desert Fathers' tradition, regarded contemplation in solitude as the best way to achieve mystical union with God.²⁷ Secondly, in the opening chapter of Book III, the *Life* praises Cuthbert's life at Lindisfarne as 'following the contemplative amid the active life'; then again in the opening chapter of Book IV, the *Life* praises Cuthbert for being able to balance his episcopal authority with the monk's ideal and hermit's virtue — this time by quoting

²² R. A. Markus, *Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical Historiography* (Jarrow: St Paul's Church, 1975), pp. 6-7.

²³ Joel T. Rosenthal, 'Bede's "Life of Cuthbert": Preparation to the "Ecclesiastical History"', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 68.4 (1982), 599-611.

²⁴ Rosenthal, 'Preparation to the "Ecclesiastical History"', p. 602.

²⁵ Rosenthal, 'Preparation to the "Ecclesiastical History"', p. 603-11.

²⁶ Stancliffe, 'Pastor and Solitary', pp. 31-32, pp. 35-36.

²⁷ Stancliffe, 'Pastor and Solitary', pp. 36-37.

Sulpicius's *Life of Martin*.²⁸ Stancliffe regards these praises as reflecting a tradition in the Irish Church of taking the hermit-bishop Martin as an exemplar of fulfilling the contemplative life and pastoral duty together.²⁹ By contrast, she reads the saint in Bede's prose *Life* as one who perfects his knowledge of God by serving others through pastoral care, and thus dissolves the conflict between contemplation and pastoral care.³⁰ Stancliffe identifies this image as representing a social model of contemplation, which she believes originated with Augustine and Gregory.³¹

This whole approach of studying the two *Lives* in an Irish versus Roman framework can be problematic. Firstly, the Lindisfarne author wrote almost half a century after the Synod of Whitby. It is difficult to say to what extent the Lindisfarne monks still lived in the legacy of Iona at that time. As Thacker has pointed out, there are signs that the Lindisfarne community was divided between the pro-Roman and Irish fashions at the time when the Lindisfarne *Life* was composed, and it could have been written in favour of the former.³² Secondly, as recent studies have rightly pointed out, the Irish and Roman traditions cannot be understood as antithetical; rather, they were highly diverse and influenced each other.³³ Thus it is unwise to attempt to define some core ideals shared by all Irish-founded churches and to assume that monastic tradition at Lindisfarne mechanically reflected these ideals.

For the purpose of my thesis, one disadvantage of this approach is that it has led scholars to underestimate the ability of the Lindisfarne author and his community to construct

²⁸ VCA, pp. 94-97, 110-13 (Book III, Chapter 1; Book IV, Chapter 1).

²⁹ Stancliffe, 'Pastor and Solitary', pp. 25, 35, 38-40.

³⁰ Stancliffe, 'Pastor and Solitary', p. 40.

³¹ Stancliffe, 'Pastor and Solitary', pp. 37-38.

³² Alan Thacker, 'Shaping the Saint: Rewriting Tradition in the Early Lives of St Cuthbert' in *The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World*, ed. by Yitzhak Hen, pp. 399-430 (pp. 404-07, 420-24). See below.

³³ Some elements being labelled as 'Irish' in the Lindisfarne *Life* by Stancliffe can in fact be attributed to a Gallo-Irish milieu, see Thacker, 'Origins of the Cult', pp. 103-122, 107-115. For studies that help to deconstruct the antithesis between the Irish and Roman traditions, see Richard Sharpe, 'Some Problems Concerning the Organization of the Church in early Medieval Ireland', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 230-70; Maire Herbert, 'The Representation of Gregory the Great in Irish Sources of the Pre-Viking Era', in *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly*, ed. by Elizabeth Mullins and Diarmuid Scully (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), pp. 181-190; Albercht Diem, *The Pursuit of Salvation Community, Space and Discipline in Early Medieval Monasticism*, *Disciplina Monastica* 13 (Belgium: Brepols, 2021), pp. 331-40.

and advocate ideals of holiness that met their own demands, by borrowing, combining and reediting ideas and tropes from different traditions. It also led scholars to overlook the weight given to coenobitism and the Rule of St Benedict in the *Life*. Indeed, while Rosenthal reads the *Life* as representing an Irish perception of holiness inimical to Benedictine coenobitism, this text is the earliest English surviving text to mention the Rule.³⁴ Moreover, it never distinguishes sharply between eremitic and coenobitic monasticism. It quotes the *Life of Anthony* to praise Cuthbert's life in the monastery as well as on Farne.³⁵ Then in the stories of Book III regarding Cuthbert's solitary life, it focuses on how Cuthbert and his brethren worked together to make the island habitable, and presents the island as a type of Church and Cuthbert as a Church building, by means of Biblical allusions, as Sandra Duncan's exegetical reading has shown.³⁶ All these references to coenobitism highlight the basic fact that the *Life* was written primarily for a religious community. Therefore, my analysis will give more consideration than previous studies to the ideal of coenobitism in the *Life*, considering it the most crucial factor that frames the representation of gender in the text. I also consider what its textual representation could have meant for a potential female audience in the conversion period.

III.2 The Monk-Saint as a Spiritual Athlete

As mentioned, the four books of the Lindisfarne *Life* recount Cuthbert's life stages as layman, monk, hermit and bishop. Repetition of the story-types in the first two books is crucial for our understanding of his image as a monk-saint. Book I contains two prefaces, four stories and a concluding chapter. The last three stories show Cuthbert providing hospitality to an angel, keeping vigil as a shepherd, and enduring hunger with faith when trapped by a storm on his journey.³⁷ Book II repeats these scenes in its first three stories, but recontextualises them in a monastic context: now Cuthbert shows hospitality to another angel as the guest-master of the

³⁴ Rosenthal, 'Preparation to the "Ecclesiastical History"', p. 607.

³⁵ VCA, pp. 74-77, 104-07 (Book II, Chapter 1; Book III, Chapter 7).

³⁶ Duncan, '*Signa De Caelo*', pp. 403-405.

³⁷ VCA, pp. 66-71 (Book I, Chapters 4-6).

community at Ripon; he keeps vigil when visiting the community at Coldingham, and endures hunger with his brethren on their voyage back to their community at Melrose, when a sea storm deprives them of food.³⁸ Taken together, the repetition of story-types in the two books gives a sense that Cuthbert's way of living as a layman is a prefiguration of his more perfect lifestyle as a monk.

The opening chapter of Book II likewise defines Cuthbert's life stages as a layman and as a monk as two analogous modes of same spiritual progress. It recounts Cuthbert's lay career positively, by glossing over in one short sentence that he renounced it, and adds that it was 'pious' (*religiosa*) and 'undefiled' (*immaculata*).³⁹ Although it borrows a whole paragraph from the *Life of Anthony* to praise Cuthbert's ascetic monastic life, this paragraph originally features in the *Life of Anthony* to describe not the beginning of the hermit-saint's religious career, but the gradual progress of his ascetic life after his first triumph over demonic attack.⁴⁰ This paragraph therefore does not construct an opposition in the Lindisfarne *Life* between the lay and monastic careers. Rather, its reference to a more rigorous law of life (*duriori uite lege*) creates an impression that Cuthbert's monastic life is just an elevated version of his undefiled manner of living as a layman.

Meanwhile, the same paragraph borrowed from the *Life of Anthony* describes how the 'more rigorous law of life' in the monastery 'had become part of his [Cuthbert's] nature' (*verterat in naturam*), via his repeated practises of fasting and night watching.⁴¹ In the original text this statement referred to the formulation of Anthony's ascetic personality, but in the Lindisfarne *Life* it helps to conceptualise how monasticism can be embodied in an individual, rather than an institution. This conception of a 'monasticised man' in turn explains how Cuthbert prefigures his monastic career as a layman in Book I.

This 'monasticised man' can be further identified as a spiritual athlete, a very early

³⁸ VCA, pp. 74-83 (Book II, Chapters 1-3).

³⁹ VCA, pp. 74-75 (Book II, Chapter 1)

⁴⁰ The borrowing is noted by Colgrave. VA, pp. 162-63 ll. 130-36 (Chapter 7).

⁴¹ VCA, pp. 74-75 (Chapter II. Book 1). VA, p. 163 l. 133 (Chapter 7).

Christian trope originating in passages in the New Testament epistles that compared Christians to athletes for their endurance of hardship to achieve an eternal prize.⁴² It was an image that constituted an important element for the construction of Christian models of manhood in early Christian texts.⁴³ Initially used of martyrs who endured persecution, it was later described ascetics who endured self-imposed sufferings and demonic attacks — a tradition that began with Athanasius's *Life of Anthony*.⁴⁴ In early Anglo-Saxon England, it was used to refer to a wide range of spiritual contests. Aldhelm describes the nuns at Barking as spiritual athletes for their struggle to study the Bible.⁴⁵ Bede presents the painful illness in the saints' last moment as a type of spiritual contest, by making reference to II Corinthians 12:9: '...strength might be made perfect in weakness'.⁴⁶ On both occasions the use of the trope draws a sharp distinction between physical and spiritual strength, and, at least in Bede's case, reflects the influence of Gregory's dualistic worldview.

The Lindisfarne author has laid out a different perception of spiritual athleticism in the first story of Book I, which presents the child Cuthbert's victory in a game as a prophetic sign of his holiness:

When he was a boy of eight years, he surpassed all of his age in agility and high spirits, so that often, after the others had gone to rest their weary limbs, he, standing triumphantly in the playground as though he were in the arena, would still wait for someone to play with him...

Dum ergo puer esset annorum octo, omnes coaetaneos in agilitate et petulantia

⁴² Such as II Timothy 2:5, 4:7; I Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 12:9. Hebrews 12:11-13

⁴³ See Mathew Kuefler, *Manly Eunch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 176-178; Joshua R. Eyler, 'Conditioning the Soul: Spiritual Athleticism in Medieval English Theology and Literature' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Connecticut University, 2006), pp. 1-52.

⁴⁴ Anthony never relaxed his asceticism, fearing that he would lose his spiritual contest. VA, p. 162 l. 130 (Chapter 7).

⁴⁵ *Aldelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa De Virginitate*, ed. By Scott Gwara, CCSL 124-124A, 2 vols (Turnhout: Brepols 2001), 124A (2001), pp. 31-47 (Chapters 2-3).

⁴⁶ '[...] uirtus in infirmitate perficeretur'. Bede quotes this statement when relating the illness of Æthelburh, Hild and Cuthbert, as noted by Colgrave, see *HE*, pp. 360-61, 410-11 (Book IV. Chapters 9, 23); *VCP*, pp. 182-83 (Chapter 8).

superans , ita ut sepe postquam fessis menbris requiescebant alii, ille adhuc in loco ioci quasi in stadio triumphans aliquem secum ludificantem expectaret.⁴⁷

The phrase *in stadio* borrows from I Corinthians 9:24, which compares those who discipline their bodies to obtain eternal victory to runners in a race. It brings together the physical contest in this story and the spiritual contest envisaged in the Bible, and thus gives an impression that Cuthbert's holiness as a spiritual athlete has been foreshadowed by his extraordinary ability to bear bodily weariness in a physical contest. This perception of spiritual athleticism is very different to those of Aldhelm and Bede, because it deconstructs the opposition between physical and spiritual strength.

However, in the narrative, the game is suddenly put in a negative light and its function changes from a prefiguration of Cuthbert's spiritual contest into its antithesis:

...some of them stood naked, with their heads turned down unnaturally towards the ground, their legs stretched out and their feet lifted up and pointing skywards...Now among them there was a certain child scarcely three years old who began to call out to him repeatedly: 'Be steadfast and leave this foolish play...O holy Bishop and priest Cuthbert, these unnatural tricks done to show off your agility are not befitting to you or your high office.'

Alii namque stantes nudi uersis capitibus contra naturam deorsum ad terrain, et expansis cruribus erecti pedes ad coelos sursum prominebant. [...] Esto stabilis, et relinque uanitatem ioci amare [...] O sancte episcopo et presbiter Cu[th]berhte hec tibi et tuo gradui contraria nature propter agilitatem non conueniunt.⁴⁸

Here, it is important to see that the prophetic words are reproving Cuthbert not for his involvement in physical contest, but rather for the 'unnatural' nature of the tricks it involves. In Augustine's works, a thing can be regarded as natural when it works according to God's

⁴⁷ VCA, pp. 64-65 (Book I, Chapter 3).

⁴⁸ VCA, pp. 64-65 (Book I, Chapter 3).

plan; thus miracles are not unnatural but sins are.⁴⁹ Given that Augustine likewise refers to the posture of hanging the body upside down as an example of how humans could go against God's plan for them, his concept of natural law might have been the source of inspiration for the Lindisfarne account quoted above.⁵⁰ This concept allows the Lindisfarne *Life* to define Cuthbert as a spiritual athlete in terms of the way he uses his strength, rather than in terms of the contrast between outer and inner strength.

This conception of spiritual athleticism decisively shapes the construction of Cuthbert's monasticised personality in the text. In the story of his physical contest, Cuthbert's renunciation of the unnatural tricks is also the beginning of his monasticised life. In the next three stories, he shows hospitality to an angel in his infirmity, and he bears sleeplessness and hunger with prayers.⁵¹ As mentioned, these practices prefigure his monastic life, and here it can be said that he completes these practices by enduring sufferings with his strength. In other words, he becomes a monasticised man by his spiritual athleticism. Likewise, in the opening chapter of Book II, his life in the monastery is defined mainly in terms of his asceticism, which is basically the endurance of self-imposed sufferings.⁵² In the first two stories, he shows hospitality to another angel at Ripon without breaking his fast, and he keeps vigil at Coldingham by immersing himself in cold water for the whole night — a very extreme form of asceticism.⁵³ In the third story, he bears hunger again on his journey but this time he knows to keep vigil as a way to ask for divine provision. The trope of spiritual athleticism brings together the images of Cuthbert as layman and as monk in Books I and II.

To foreground this connection, the *Life* three times refers to Hebrews 12:11-13, a

⁴⁹ *Saint Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans, Volume III: Book 8-11*, ed. and trans. by David S. Wiesen, The Loeb Classical Library 413 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 492-95, 508-15 (Book XI, Chapters 17, Chapter 22); *Saint Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans, Volume VII: Book 21-22*, ed. and trans. by William M. Green, The Loeb Classical Library 417 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 46-59 (Book XXI, Chapter 8).

⁵⁰ *St Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans, Volume VI: Books 18.36-20*, ed. and trans. by William Chase Greene, Loeb Classical Library 416 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 170-73 (Book XIX, Chapter 12 ll. 94-130)

⁵¹ VCA, pp. 66-71 (Book I, Chapters 4-6).

⁵² VCA, pp. 74-77 (Book II, Chapter 1).

⁵³ VCA, pp. 76-83 (Book II, Chapter 2-3).

passage that promises spiritual growth for those who endure hardship as God-imposed discipline:

Now all chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow: but afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it the most peaceable fruit of justice. [11] Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees: [12] And make straight steps with your feet: that no one, halting, may go out of the way; but rather be healed [13].

Omnis autem disciplina in praesenti quidem videtur non esse gaudii sed maeroris postea autem fructum pacatissimum exercitatis per eam reddit iustitiae. [11] Propter quod remissas manus et soluta genua erigite [12] et gressus rectos facite pedibus vestris ut non claudicans erret magis autem sanetur. [13]⁵⁴

Firstly, words are borrowed from verses 12-13 to describe the young Cuthbert's badly swollen knee in the second story of Book I: 'His knee [genu] swelled, his sinews contracted, and he became so lame [claudicans] that one foot [pede] was unable to touch the ground'.⁵⁵ And then verse 11 is quoted in the opening chapter of Book II to address his habits of fasting and night watching in the monastery. Here, the successive references to this Biblical passage identify the endurance of sufferings as an experience commonly shared by both laity and monastics. In other words, the spiritual athleticism envisaged in this Biblical passage serves as unifying metaphor for Cuthbert's spiritual practice; even in his lay habit, he already lives a monasticised life.

At three points the *Life* implies that such a monasticised life is possible even in a military context. Firstly, the physical contest that prefigures Cuthbert's victory as a spiritual athlete has strong military connotations, as this type of contest must have been important

⁵⁴ The English quotations of the Bible in this thesis are all from the Douay-Rheims Bible, but I will follow the translation of other primary sources when referring to their Biblical borrowings.

⁵⁵ VGA, pp. 66-67 (Book I, Chapter 4): 'Nam quia genu tumente adstrictis neruis claudicans, pede altero terram non tangens [...]'.

in military training.⁵⁶ As pointed out above, Cuthbert is reproved not for showing off his agility in the contest, but for showing it by unnatural tricks. Secondly, the concluding chapter of Book I echoes the same view of the compatibility between military career and spiritual athleticism, by relating how as a warrior Cuthbert was capable of staying strong when his food supply was cut off by his enemies.⁵⁷ Thirdly, the *Life* does not reveal why he renounced his military career for a religious one — a dramatic moment that would be given prominence in Bede's rewriting.⁵⁸ This silence must have been a deliberate attempt to downplay the opposition between military career and spiritual athleticism, because it departs from the emphasis on this opposition in Sulpicius's *Life of Martin*, which is itself an important source of the Lindisfarne *Life*.⁵⁹ Overall, in the Lindisfarne *Life*, Cuthbert begins to live his monasticised life as a spiritual athlete at the point when he quits unnatural tricks and instead puts his strength to the right use, not at the time when he casts aside his military career to become a monk. This means that the holiness he represents in Book I is capable of being imitated by the lay people, as he has shown how they could live like a monk without abandoning their lay habit.

Nevertheless, while the *Life* praises Cuthbert as a spiritual athlete for his enduring of different types of suffering and is uncritical of his military career, it defines only his asceticism as a monk as an ideal form of spiritual athleticism, presumably because the suffering involved in this practice was self-imposed. As mentioned, the opening chapter of Book II quotes the *Life of Anthony* to praise Cuthbert for abandoning his lay career and seeking a more rigorous rule of life in the monastery by fasting and keep vigil.⁶⁰ This quotation, as I have pointed out above, helps to construct the analogy between the lives of the

⁵⁶ Sally Crawford, 'Childhood and Adolescence: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Archaeological and Documentary Evidence', *Childhood and Adolescence in Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, ed. by Susan Irvine and Winfried Rudolf (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2018), pp. 15-31 (pp. 21-24).

⁵⁷ VCA, pp. 72-73 (Book I, Chapter 7).

⁵⁸ VCP, pp. 172-73 (Chapter 6).

⁵⁹ Sulpicius Severus' *Vita Martini*, ed. by Philip Burton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 98-99 (Chapter 4).

⁶⁰ VCA, pp. 74-75 (Book II, Chapter 1)

laity and the monastics, but it also unambiguously defines the latter as superior to the former. Furthermore, it defines this superiority as crucial in terms of spiritual athleticism, because in the original text, it is about how Anthony intensifies his ascetic practices in order to win the spiritual contest envisaged in I Corinthians 9:24.⁶¹ In this instance, it directs the audience to read Cuthbert's endurance of illness, hunger and sleeplessness as a layman as a less perfect form of spiritual athleticism than his asceticism as a monk, though the former prefigures the latter.

Meanwhile, the *Life* does not show that he observed more severe ascetic practices as a hermit, or as a fully mature saint when he became a bishop. Indeed, none of the stories in Books III and IV refer to his ascetic practices. Instead, four stories refer to his ascetic practices in Book II among its seven stories.⁶² They give an impression that it is a monk, rather than a hermit, whose asceticism can most perfectly exemplify spiritual athleticism. This certainly goes against how the *Life of Anthony* presents the desert hermit as the most ideal ascetic, and perhaps also goes against how Cuthbert understood his own career path. Under the influence of the Anthonian model, he was most likely to have considered his hermitage on Farne as the peak of his spiritual athleticism, and this, at least according to Bede, was the reason why he wished to be buried on the island rather than in the community.⁶³

Finally, the *Life* also defines Cuthbert's worthiness as a priest in terms of his spiritual athleticism. As mentioned, Cuthbert is urged to put aside his unnatural tricks in the first story of Book I on account of his predestined priesthood and episcopacy. This suggests that his proper use of strength as a spiritual athlete in the stories that follow is meant to be read as a behaviour that befit these offices. Thus in the third story of Book I, when Cuthbert witnesses the ascension of Bishop Aidan's soul by keeping a night watch as a shepherd, this vision in turn proves his worthiness to succeed the bishop in the future.⁶⁴ The fourth story of Book II

⁶¹ VA, pp. 162-63 ll. 129-130 (Chapter 7).

⁶² VCA, pp. 76-87 (Book II, Chapters, 2-5).

⁶³ VCP, pp. 278-79 (Chapter 37).

⁶⁴ VCA, pp. 68-71 (Book I, Chapter 5).

constructs his worthiness as a priest in a similar way.⁶⁵ In the story, he travels with a young retainer to remote areas to preach and baptise, and teaches the retainer that those who labour for God have no need to worry about food provision. His words are fulfilled when an eagle drops a fish to them. The eagle is described as *ieiunans*, a word that is often used in the Bible to refer to fasting.⁶⁶ Thus when Cuthbert insists on sharing the fish with the eagle to reward its labour, he foregrounds further the interconnection between pastoral care and asceticism. Finally, it is worth noting that in the three stories in which Cuthbert receives food as heavenly reward for his endurance, the food is specified as fish, bread and meat; the first two obviously signify his pastoral and sacramental roles as a priest.⁶⁷

Altogether, the *Life* shows that Cuthbert's roles as a layman, a monk and a priest were bound together by his bearing of suffering as a spiritual athlete. A possible reading of this perception of monastic holiness is that it reflected a shared identity of the members at Lindisfarne, including monks, priests and lay people, as spiritual athletes. Regarding the lay people living at Lindisfarne, it is worth noting that the young Wilfrid had once lived there in lay habit and won the respect of the monks for exemplifying the monastic virtues of humility and obedience.⁶⁸ This example suggests that the lay brethren of the community were expected to live some sort of monastic life. Nevertheless, the same perception of monastic holiness also points to how the monks formed the core of the community, and were the exemplars of the spiritual athleticism that all members were expected to practise. By contrast, the underrepresentation of Cuthbert's ascetic practices on Farne in the text might have reflected the cautious attitude of the community towards solitary asceticism.

Meanwhile, the account of Cuthbert's lay career shows that lay people could fulfil the ideal of spiritual athleticism even when they did not live in monastic communities.

⁶⁵ VCA, pp. 84-87 (Book II, Chapter 5).

⁶⁶ Such as II Samuel 12:23, Luke 18:12 and Matthew 6:16.

⁶⁷ VCA, pp. 70-71, 76-77, 84-87 (Book I, Chapter 6; Book II, Chapters 2, 4-5). See Matthew 4:19; 26:26-29.

⁶⁸ See *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), pp. 4-7 (Chapter 2).

Considering that Lindisfarne was the seat of a bishopric, the stories in the *Life* might have been used for the edification of the flock. Bishop Aidan was said to have shared his ascetic experience of fasting with the lay people, thus the stories in the *Life* could have likewise functioned to present the monks as exemplars for the flock in terms of asceticism.⁶⁹ These stories could also inspire those who had received religious education in monasteries but later chose to pursue a military career, such as the children from noble families entrusted to Wilfrid's monasteries for religious education before their future career was decided, and King Aldfrith, a potential audience for the *Life*, who was said to have spent his youth in the monastery of Iona.⁷⁰ The stories in the *Life* could show these people how to continue to live as spiritual athletes after they left the monastery. This would explain the emphasis on Cuthbert's lay career and the uncritical attitude towards his military activities.

III.3 Spiritual Athleticism and Physical Strength

Cuthbert's spiritual athleticism is not only embodied in his enduring of hardship, but also in his competition with other characters. He is shown to be much superior in strength to other men in three scenes relating his enduring of bodily weariness: he stands triumphantly in the playground when his playmates are exhausted; he remains awake when his fellow shepherds fall asleep, and he searches for divinely-provided food on the sea shore by running ahead of his brethren as a forerunner, when they are exhausted after the storm in which their food was lost.⁷¹ These scenes can be read as referring to men's contest in terms of their strength. The losers are those who use their strength in a way that offends God, and those who are not strong enough to endure suffering for God's sake. Cuthbert wins because he can endure suffering and he does this in a way that pleases God — which is reflected in the divine rewards he receives. Given that he achieves this spiritual victory in his capacity as a monasticised layman, an ascetic monk and a monk-priest, he serves as an example of how a monasticised

⁶⁹ *HE*, pp. 226-27 (Book III, Chapter 5).

⁷⁰ *VW*, pp. 42-45 (Chapter 21)

⁷¹ *VCA*, pp. 64-71, 82-85 (Book I, Chapters 3, 5; Book II, Chapter 4).

man can be the strongest man among all men.

Moreover, as I have pointed out, the *Life* does not define Cuthbert's spiritual strength in contradiction to his physical one; instead, his strength is 'spiritual' because it serves God. This text also presents his body as a site that reveals a Biblical strength. As seen, in the first two stories of Book I, his triumphant and swollen knees embody the spiritual strength of I Corinthians 9 and Hebrews 12.⁷² Then in the third story, as the only shepherd staying awake, he re-enacts the scene of Gethsemane.⁷³ Also, in the fourth story, after eating heaven-provided food, he is said to have continued his journey *in fortitudine* — a phrase that compares him to Elijah because it is used in I Kings 19 to how the prophet walked forty days continuously with divine provision.⁷⁴ Likewise, in Book II, he is a forerunner (*preuiator*) like John the Baptist.⁷⁵ Note that both in this and the shepherd-episodes, the strength revealed in Cuthbert's body links him to ideal pastor figures in the Bible and thus further highlights his predestined holiness as a monk-priest.

The cult of his incorrupt body provides an important explanation of the prominence given to his bodily strength in the *Life*. His body became the major site for the revelation of his posthumous power after his death, both in terms of its incorruption and its healing power. Meanwhile, the *Life* relates that shoes were put on Cuthbert's feet in his coffin to show his 'readiness to meet Christ'.⁷⁶ The latter phrase quotes Ephesians 6:15, envisaging the spiritual warrior, an image that is often used interchangeably with that of the spiritual athlete in the tradition of early Christian literature. Here, the *Life* shows that Cuthbert's dead body continued to represent the spiritual athleticism to which he was dedicated. Also, since on one occasion his shoes were removed from his coffin to heal a boy's limbs, it seems that the spiritual athleticism was believed to have found its expression in the restoration of physical

⁷² VCA, pp. 64-69 (Book I, Chapters 3,4).

⁷³ VCA, pp. 68-71 (Book I, Chapter 5).

⁷⁴ VCA, pp. 70-71 (Book I, Chapter 6).

⁷⁵ VCA, II. 4. Nick Mayhew-Smith, 'Nature Rituals of the Early Medieval Church in Britain: Christian Cosmology and the Conversion of the British Landscape from Germanus to Bede' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Roehampton, 2018), p. 191.

⁷⁶ VCA, pp. 130-31 (Book IV, Chapter 8).

strength to pilgrims, just as it had been embodied in Cuthbert's physical strength in his lifetime.⁷⁷

The emphasis on Cuthbert's physical strength could also have functioned to impress a lay audience. In the conversion period, physical strength provided a universal standard against which all could have been ranked, and the superiority of warriors was established. Lay people might have found this standard particularly relevant, as they probably drew more heavily on physical strength for survival than those in religious communities. Meanwhile, they were part of the target audience when Lindisfarne established the cult of Cuthbert.⁷⁸ Among the three posthumous healings attributed to the incorrupt body in the *Life*, two relate to lay beneficiaries.⁷⁹ The emphasis of the stories of the *Life* on Cuthbert's physical strength can be understood in relation to these lay people as audience. It led them to envisage how a man, by living in the manner of a monk, had become the strongest among all, and thus encouraged them to follow suit. Note that when Cuthbert's cult was established, Oswald's incorrupt right arm had been venerated in the royal fortress of Bamburgh, just miles away from Lindisfarne. Bede claimed retrospectively that the right arm had been blessed for distributing alms.⁸⁰ But it seems clear that it was a relic with strong military connotations, both because it was the weapon arm and because it was chopped off from Oswald's body by Penda on the battlefield, and after being restored to Northumbria, it might also have served as a token of the military victory against Penda.⁸¹ In this case, the cult of the right arm must have been a powerful symbol of the physical strength of the warrior.⁸² It could have been in a response to this cult that Lindisfarne chose to present Cuthbert as a spiritual athlete, and to give emphasis to the strength and power possessed by his body both in his lifetime and after his death.

⁷⁷ VCA, pp. 136-38 (Book IV, Chapter 17).

⁷⁸ Thacker, 'Local Saint', pp. 66-71.

⁷⁹ VCA, pp. 132-39 (Book IV, Chapters 15, 17).

⁸⁰ HE, pp. 230-31 (Book III, Chapter 6).

⁸¹ HE, pp. 250-53 (Book III, Chapter 12).

⁸² For Lindisfarne's attitude towards Oswald's cult, see Thacker, 'Membra Dissecta: the Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult', in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford: Paul Watkins Publishing 1995), ed. by Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge, pp. 97-127 (pp. 97-101).

Spiritual athleticism was a more gender-inclusive way of expressing physical strength than warfare. This is because asceticism, defined as an ideal form of spiritual athleticism in the *Lindisfarne Life*, is accessible to both sexes. Aidan, for instance, is said to have inspired women as well as men to extend their fasting.⁸³ Æthelthryth, meanwhile, was praised by Bede for having observed fasting and night watching and for having a hot bath only on feast days.⁸⁴ Indeed, the cult of her incorrupt body could have been intended to foreground her asceticism, given that, as mentioned, the ritual of elevation and translation used in her cult originated from the cults of martyrs, which were a prototype of ascetics.⁸⁵ Her cult, established in 695, was likely to have inspired the Lindisfarne monks to use the same ritual four years later to establish the veneration of Cuthbert's incorrupt body.⁸⁶ It might also have inspired the *Lindisfarne Life* to present the incorruption of the male saint's body as a sign of spiritual athleticism. Here, the relationship and parallel between the two cults reveal the potential of the ascetic body as a gender-neutral expression of sanctity. Admittedly, this potential was compromised by the weight given in Cuthbert's cult to his episcopal office, and by the emphasis in the *HE* on Æthelthryth's roles as one of King Anna's saintly daughters, and as a virgin queen who resisted the pressure imposed by her husband Ecgfrith to consummate their marriage.⁸⁷ Yet this potential is actualised in the stories of the *Lindisfarne Life*. Admittedly, no female characters are presented as ascetics and spiritual athletes in the stories I have discussed so far. Yet in these stories Cuthbert reveals his physical strength as a spiritual athlete mostly in roles that are gender-neutral, such as a monastic, a host and a traveller, thus showing a potential female audience how they could likewise reveal their physical strength as spiritual athletes in the same roles.

Bede and Aldhelm likewise address women as spiritual athletes. Aldhelm explains to the nuns at Barking that he is referring to the 'inner men' of the nuns, and this hints that for

⁸³ *HE*, pp. 226-27 (Book III, Chapter 5).

⁸⁴ *HE*, pp. 392-93 (Book IV, Chapter 19).

⁸⁵ Thacker, 'Local Saint', pp. 54-62.

⁸⁶ These were in fact the first and the second recorded cases of this type of cults in England. Thacker, 'Local Saint', pp. 45-48.

⁸⁷ *HE*, pp. 390-401 (Book IV, Chapters 19-20).

him the athlete is primarily a male figure.⁸⁸ Similarly, when applying the trope to explain the illness of Hild and Æthelburh, Bede focuses on how their physical weakness aided their inner strength.⁸⁹ The Lindisfarne *Life* does not set spiritual and physical strength in opposition, but rather shows how both men and women can be spiritual athletes. In this way, it hints that this practice could provide a means for women to rival other men and women in terms of their physical strength.

III.4 The Monk-Saint in a Benedictine Mould

Apart from spiritual athleticism, there is another aspect of the monastic ideal exemplified by Cuthbert in the *Life*. In the opening chapter of Book III, the Lindisfarne *Life* praises how Cuthbert perfectly fulfilled his duties as a *praepositus* in monasteries.⁹⁰ It relates that he had been first appointed to this position at Melrose, but later he fled the community to avoid earthly glory, until he was recruited by Bishop Eata to Lindisfarne and was assigned the same position in this community. Then it praises him for arranging the brethren's life there by setting up a rule for them, a rule 'which we observe even to this day along with the Rule of St Benedict'.⁹¹ Here, while the author admits that the Rule of St Benedict was not observed at Lindisfarne under Cuthbert, I suggest that his reference to the *Rule* is an attempt to present Cuthbert as an exemplar of the monastic ideal conceptualised in the *Rule*.

At first glance this argument seems to be implausible, as the *Rule* does not allow one to leave the monastery without permission as Cuthbert did, and it is written for monks, rather than to show how a layman or a priest can live a monasticised life.⁹² However, monastic rules from early days were usually used in this period not as absolute rules that defined the regulation of a community, but as sources of inspiration for perfecting monastic life.⁹³ Indeed,

⁸⁸ PV, pp. 43-47 (Chapter 3).

⁸⁹ HE, pp. 360-61, 410-11 (Book IV. Chapters 9, 23).

⁹⁰ VCA, pp. 94-97 (Book III, Chapter 1).

⁹¹ VCA, pp. 96-97 (Book III, Chapter 1): '[...] quam usque hodie cum regula Benedicti obseruamus.'

⁹² *The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, ed. by Timothy Fry (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981). pp. 168-71, 266-71 (Chapters 1, 58).

⁹³ Albrecht Diem and Philip Rousseau, 'Monastic Rules (Fourth to Ninth Century)', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, pp. 162-194 (pp. 174-192).

the story of the physical contest can be seen as laying out the three major obligations expected for a monk in the *Rule*: *conversatio morum*, obedience (*obedientia*) and stability (*stabilitas*).⁹⁴ In the story, Cuthbert is urged by prophetic words to abandon the childish game and to remain stable (*stabilis*). In the *Rule*, stability refers to how a monk stays in the same monastery where he has begun his career, and how he should persevere in obeying the monastic rule and the seniors' commands.⁹⁵ In this story, this monastic virtue is redefined in opposition to games that are said to be restless, unnatural and unfit for priests and bishops. In other words, stability is the Christian persistence in behaving in line with divinely-assigned roles and duties. Meanwhile, Cuthbert's obedience to the prophetic words (although he does not understand them) resonates with the unconditional obedience required by the *Rule* to commands that seem to be unreasonable.⁹⁶ Cuthbert fulfils the obligation of *conversatio morum* in the same story as well, given that, as pointed out above, from the time he abandons his game he starts to live like a monk.⁹⁷

Indeed, most of the stories in Books I and II can be understood in relation to the virtues of obedience and stability. In the second story of Book I, for instance, Cuthbert's showing of hospitality to the angel in spite of his illness can be seen as an expression of his stability, and he is described as 'obeying' the angel when he follows the prescription provided by the latter and cures his illness.⁹⁸ Although these two virtues are not explicitly mentioned in the remaining stories of Book I, the way Cuthbert insists on praying in spite of hunger and sleeplessness certainly reveals his consistent obedience to God. The same is true for the stories of his ascetic observance and endurance of hardship in Book II. Among them I particularly call attention to the Ripon story.⁹⁹ This story describes the angel who visited the monastery as 'in the form of a well-built man in the flower of his age' (*forma stabilis uiri*

⁹⁴ *RB*, pp. 266-71 (Chapter 58).

⁹⁵ *RB*, pp. 266-71 (Chapter 58). See also pp. 180-87, 274-75 (Chapters 4 and 61)

⁹⁶ *RB*, pp. 290-91 (Chapter 68).

⁹⁷ *RB*, pp. 266-71 (Chapter 58). It is unclear how the Lindisfarne author understood this phrase, as there are different ways of translating it. But he was unlikely to have failed to understand that it is about fulfilling the monastic vow by behaviour. *RB*, pp. 459-63.

⁹⁸ *VCA*, pp. 66-69 (Book I, Chapter 4).

⁹⁹ *VCA*, pp. 76-79 (Book II, Chapter 2).

perfectaque aetate auide), and thus defines stability as a quality of an ideal man — note that this man is meant to be a universal model of ideal manhood, given that the angelic man's habit is not specified. Meanwhile, this angelic man is said to have travelled a snowy winter weather but was able to observe fasting with Cuthbert in the monastery and refused to eat on account of his journey. This description creates an impression that his *forma stabilis* pointed not only to his physical appearance, but also to his Benedictine personality, in terms of his persistence in fulfilling God-assigned tasks despite hardship. It is noteworthy that Cuthbert's Benedictine virtues are meant to be read together with his spiritual athleticism in this story. While stability can be revealed in the endurance of hardship just as spiritual athleticism can be, obedience is defined in II Timothy 2:5 as the most important quality for a spiritual athlete to achieve the eternal prize.

Two other stories in Book II reveal how these Benedictine virtues can be practised by women and lay people. In the first story, Cuthbert visits a village to give pastoral care and preaches in a house. He urges his hearers to maintain their focus on his teachings, having foreseen the devil's plan to distract them with illusions.¹⁰⁰ When a phantom fire breaks out in the house as he has predicted, the hearers forget his command, running away in an unstable manner (*currentes instabiliter*) and exposing their lack of both obedience and stability. The next story is also about fire and has a similar pattern: Cuthbert happens to visit his stepmother Coenswith when a fire breaks out in her village.¹⁰¹ While he is able to maintain a fearless mind (*intrepida mente*), Coenswith, though a veiled woman, runs away in fear and has to be reminded by Cuthbert of the virtue of stability. In both stories, stability refers to the stable state of mind that Christians are expected to maintain when facing dangers. Note that the laity and the veiled woman in these stories are obviously intended to be read as foils to Cuthbert, as their unstable mind and actions contrast with Cuthbert's virtue of stability. This implies that all Christians, regardless of their religious habits and gender, should learn from Cuthbert's

¹⁰⁰ VCA, pp. 86-89 (Book II, Chapter 7).

¹⁰¹ VCA, pp. 88-91 (Book II, Chapter 7).

obedience and stability.

I suggest that the Benedictine virtues likewise occupied an important place in Book III. These stories mostly relate to Cuthbert's life as a hermit on Farne. Yet in contrast to Stancliffe's reading, I suggest that their focus is not primarily on the solitary life. Among the five miracle stories in the Book, only one presents Cuthbert as alone on the island — and even this scene, as I shall show, is meant to be read in a communal context.¹⁰² It is also noteworthy that whereas the concluding chapter praises Cuthbert for his solitary life on Farne, the opening chapter praises him as an ideal *praepositus* who composed a rule for Lindisfarne that the monks there would observe together with the Rule of St Benedict. It is in light of this monastic leadership that I seek to understand the didactic function of the stories of Book III (as also of Book IV), in which Cuthbert functions less as an example of the Benedictine virtues, than as the commander to other characters. These supporting characters, when succeeding or failing to carry out the tasks Cuthbert assigns to them, function as good and bad examples for the audience.

In the first story, Cuthbert builds a wall for his hermitage and urges four brethren to put a huge stone into it. The four brethren respond as Benedict's *Rule* would have expected, and obey the command without delay (*sine mora*) — a phrase presents in the *Rule*.¹⁰³ Yet they finally give up the task, finding that the stone is too heavy for them and they could have hurt themselves by moving it. In this case, they fall short of observing obedience and stability and exercising spiritual athleticism. In the next story, Cuthbert preaches to the brethren, recounting the stories of how God provided water to the Hebrews via Moses and to Samson.¹⁰⁴ However, whereas in both Biblical stories the heroes perform miracles on their own, in our story Cuthbert orders the brethren to build him a well on the rocky island rather than doing it on his own. Eventually, the brethren dug (*fodiunt*) the rock and a fountain of living water (*fons aquae uiuae*) appears, as Cuthbert prays to make this happen. These words

¹⁰² VCA, pp. 100-03 (Book III, Chapter 5)

¹⁰³ VCA, pp. 96-97 (Book III, Chapter 2); RB, pp. 816-89, 292-93 (Chapters 5, 71).

¹⁰⁴ VCA, 98-99 (Book III, Chapter 3)

are borrowed from Jeremiah 2.13, which criticises how the Hebrews abandoned the fountain of living water in favour of digging the land in vain. In the context of the story, these words construct an ideal of coenobitism by showing how the brethren would never work in vain if they obeyed their superior's command. It is also noteworthy that both the stone and fountain episodes are based on similar stories in Gregory's *Life of Benedict* and this further highlights their focus on the Benedictine virtue of obedience.¹⁰⁵ The third and fourth stories foreground the same didactic message by applying the term *obedire*. The former uses it to describe how the sea brought wood to Cuthbert for him to build a little chamber, when the brethren had forgotten to complete this task, and the latter uses the same term to describe how two birds obey Cuthbert's command to them to leave the island 'without delay' after they damage the roof of the guesthouse that Cuthbert built for his brethren.¹⁰⁶

These stories, though set on a hermit's island, are obviously intended to inspire the brethren at Lindisfarne to practise obedience and stability in their communal life. Indeed, they present the island as if it was a monastery, with a wall, a cell and a guesthouse. Cuthbert is a teacher of his brethren as well as a commander. This role is particularly obvious in the stories of the stone and the birds. The latter is based on a similar story in the *Life of Anthony*, in which the saint expels the beasts that eat his crops.¹⁰⁷ Yet in contrast to Anthony, Cuthbert later pardons the birds, receives their gift, allows them to resettle on the island, and thus embodies a monastic teacher's role and authority. Meanwhile, these stories can also teach a lay audience. The absence of the term *monachus* suggests that the brethren in these stories may be either lay brethren or monks.¹⁰⁸ Also, the island can be interpreted as an ideal Church as well as an ideal monastery.¹⁰⁹ The wall into which Cuthbert builds the heavy stone probably signifies the spiritual house which, according to I Peter 2:5, Jesus built up with

¹⁰⁵ *Dialogues*, SC 260, pp. 153-54, 170-71 (Book II Chapters 5,9). *Two Lives*, pp. 326-7.

¹⁰⁶ *VCA*, pp. 98-103 (Book III. Chapters 4-5).

¹⁰⁷ *VA*, pp. 176-77 (Chapter 50 ll. 720-37).

¹⁰⁸ The word 'frater' could refer to monks or lay brethren in the conversion period, see John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 255.

¹⁰⁹ Duncan, 'Signa De Caelo', pp. 401-05.

living stones, namely His elected priesthood.¹¹⁰ The same reading can be applied to the small chamber which Cuthbert built with wood provided by the sea, as the wood is described as a piece of timber twelve feet long.¹¹¹ The brethren are united by the monastic virtue of obedience taught by Benedict's *Rule*.

The references to the wall and well built by Cuthbert with his brethren on Farne deserve further discussions. The wall is said to have composed 'stones of such great size as none would believe except those who knew that so much of the power of God was in him'.¹¹² When Cuthbert lifted up to this wall a heavy stone that four brethren were unable to move, he is praised to have fulfilled the statement about holiness in Psalm 67:36: 'God is wonderful in His saints'. Presumably, the description of the sweetness of the water in the rocky well is likewise meant to be read as physical witness to the power of God and His saints.¹¹³ Considering that the brethren are said to have participated in building the well and wall by following Cuthbert's commands, these artifacts also bore witness to how those who observe obedience and stability can have a share of the saints' wonders. Just like the emphasis on Cuthbert's bodily strength, this focus on physical ability could help Cuthbert's monastic sanctity to appeal to a wider audience, especially to the uneducated lay people, allowing them to understand the strength of those who are obedient and stable.

Another story in Book IV mentions a wall and a well. Cuthbert is visiting Carlisle and is given a guide tour around a city wall and a well, built by the Romans 'in a wonderful manner' (*mire*), but he is distracted by a vision of the defeat and death of King Ecgrith on the battlefield.¹¹⁴ Here, the Roman wall and well symbolise the enterprise achieved by warfare, viewed by the ordinary as invincible but known by the saint to be fragile, and thus contrast with the stone wall and rocky well on Farne, which signify the Church by bearing witness to

¹¹⁰ Duncan, '*Signa De Caelo*', pp. 401-02.

¹¹¹ Duncan, '*Signa De Caelo*', p. 403.

¹¹² VCA, pp. 96-97 (Book III, Chapter 1): '[...] lapidibus incredibilis magnitudinis nisi scientibus tantum Dei uirtutem in eo esse [...]']

¹¹³ VCA, pp. 96-101 (Book III, Chapters 2, 3,4).

¹¹⁴ VCA, pp. 122-23 (Book IV, Chapter 8).

the power of God, the saint and those who observe the Benedictine virtues. In other words, this contrast highlights that men who lived a monastic life could make greater achievement in this world than the lay rulers and warriors. Yet this contrast does not involve women. No female characters appear in the stories that take place on Farne. Presumably the author does not consider hard manual labour a suitable way for women to prove their obedience and stability.

III.5 The Monk-Saint in a Predestined World

Finally, the stories in Book IV can likewise be read in relation to the Benedictine virtues, but more importantly, they function to establish the consistency between the life stages of Cuthbert before and after he became a bishop in terms of his monastic virtues. This function has been clearly laid out in the first of the two prefaces. The first preface borrows the phrase '*propositum monachi virtutemque*' from Sulpicius's *Life of Martin* and expands it to describe how Cuthbert preserved the *propositum monachi* and *anachoritae uirtus* in his episcopal career.¹¹⁵ Yet at the same time, the second preface marks out the distinctive nature of his episcopal career by praising it in terms of his exercising of the apostolic power to bind and loose people's minds and bodies. This is echoed by the stories in Book IV, including six healings that take place in Cuthbert's episcopal career, three posthumous ones, and three stories in which he foresaw the death of himself and others.

In her analysis of the first preface, Stancliffe does not comment on the phrase *propositum monachi* but instead focuses on how it represents the Irish ideal of a perfect balancing between the pastoral duty and solitary life.¹¹⁶ Yet as I have already shown, the ideal of coenobitism is important in this text, in a way that when Book III presents Cuthbert's life on Farne, it mainly focuses on his role as a monastic leader. The function of the phrase *propositum monachi* is therefore worth attention.¹¹⁷ In the *Life of Martin*, this phrase refers to

¹¹⁵ VCA, pp. 110-11 (Book II, Chapter 1); VM, pp. 106-07 (Chapter 10).

¹¹⁶ Stancliffe, 'Pastor and Solitary', pp. 35-42.

¹¹⁷ For an alternative view that the author, by expanding the phrase he has borrowed from the *Life of Martin*, in fact wishes to draw audience's attention to the *anachoritae uirtus* rather than to the

how the saint, after becoming a bishop, built a monastery and lived there together with his monks. It also foreshadows how he continued to supervise his monks in the stories that follow.¹¹⁸ I suggest that it likewise refers to monastic leadership in the Lindisfarne *Life* when being used in the first preface of Book IV, and is meant to be read together with the apostolic authority of binding and loosing praised in the second preface. I will show that it is this connection between monastic and apostolic authorities in the stories of Book IV that helps to highlight both the distinctive nature of Cuthbert's episcopal career and its consistency with his previous careers, and to enable these stories to serve for the edification of a universal audience.

To understand the connection between these two types of authority in the text, it is necessary to return to some stories in the first three books. The first story of Book I, when explaining why God sent an infant to stop his childish game, emphasises that 'God's choice of him to a spiritual office had been predetermined' (*spiritalem Dei electionem predestinam*), and that 'Whom He did predestinate, them He also called' [Romans 8:30]. It also quotes Romans 9:13 to emphasise the predestined nature of sanctity: 'Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated.'¹¹⁹ Yet this emphasis on God's prearrangement of the world order does not lead to the absence of human agency and didacticism in the text.¹²⁰ Rather, as I have already pointed out above, the same story stresses how Cuthbert chose to answer the divine calling by showing his obedience to the prophetic words. It is also noteworthy that the parallel between obeying God and the seniors in the monastery is indeed an important concept in the Rule of Benedict, and in the Lindisfarne story it helps to conceptualise a monasticised worldview, in which Christians are supposed to obey God's commands as monastics do those of their seniors.¹²¹

propositum monachi, see Delvaux, 'from Virtue to Virtue', pp. 229-31.

¹¹⁸ Sulpicius' *VM*, pp. 106-07 (Chapter 10).

¹¹⁹ Colgrave, by contrast, identifies this as a quotation from Malachi I: 2-3. For Stancliffe's explanation of this quotation, see 'Pastor and Solitary', p. 25

¹²⁰ O' Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience*, pp. 67-68.

¹²¹ *RB*, pp. 164-65 186-87 (Prologue, Chapter 5).

Accordingly, the failure to understand the predestined nature of sufferings is presented as a cause of disobedience. At the end of Book II, in the only healing story before Cuthbert's episcopal career, Cuthbert travels with a nobleman Hildmer to administer last rites for his dying wife.¹²² Hildmer is too ashamed to admit to Cuthbert that his wife has been possessed by demons, 'neither knowing nor understanding that such a trial is wont to fall frequently upon Christians' ('Nesciebat etiam nec intellegens, quod talis temptatio frequenter christianis accidere solet'). Here, his concealment of the real cause of his wife's sickness from Cuthbert can be seen as an act of disobedience, and this disobedience is, as the words quoted above have revealed, caused by his ignorance of the predestined nature of suffering. At the end of the story, Cuthbert is able to uphold his priestly authority by identifying the possessed status of the wife through his prophetic spirit, and his prophetic words about the wife's restoration to health reveal the predestined nature of life and death. Altogether, this story reveals Lindisfarne's concern about the lay people's ignorance of the true nature of suffering and their consequential disobedience. In the conversion period, there was a pressing need to counter with pastoral care their ignorance and disobedience, which would have otherwise led to apostasy. Bede, for instance, relates in the prose *Life* how Cuthbert had to win back those who had returned to paganism because of the plague.¹²³

The story of Hildmer also shows how illness can test one's obedience and thus foreground the importance of this virtue, and this provides a context to understand the healing stories in Book IV. In a story of posthumous healing, a brother from Bishop Willibrord's household visits Lindisfarne and is struck down by illness.¹²⁴ He asks a servant to bring him to Cuthbert's tomb, and explains to the servant what he expects:

For I believe and hope in God with pure faith and a faithful heart that in honour of his servant, He will either supply from the whole and incorruptible body fullness of

¹²² *VCA*, pp. 90-93 (Book II, Chapter 8).

¹²³ *VCP*, pp. 184-85 (Chapter 9). For another case of apostate due to the plague, see *HE*, pp. 322-323 (Book III, 30).

¹²⁴ *VCA*, pp. 134-37 (Book IV, Chapter 16).

health to my limbs now wasting with disease; or else He will grant some share of the heavenly glory which his soul possesses, when I have been set free from the bonds of distress.

Credo enim sperans in Deum pura fide, mente fideli, ut aut pro honore serui sui de incorruptibili et pleno corpore membris meis languore marcescentibus plenitudinem sanitatis augeat , aut celestis glorie quam anima eius possidet , mihi de uinculis liberato angustie partem aliquam tribuat.¹²⁵

The same formulae also appear twice in the healing stories in Book IV set during Cuthbert's pastoral tours as bishop: a *gesith* asks the bishop to bless his wife, hoping that the blessing could either cure her or make her death easier.¹²⁶ Likewise, in another story about a nobleman Sibba, Cuthbert is uncertain of the outcome, when he asks Sibba's dying servant to drink the holy water he has blessed.¹²⁷ Altogether, these stories suggest that both pastoral tours and the cult of Cuthbert's incorrupt body provided opportunities for the lay audience to see both health and death as expressions of the divine will — and hence, both must be good. In this case, the apostolic authority of binding and loosing is monastic as well as ecclesiastical because it directs the beneficiaries to show obedience to divine judgement. This is consistent with how Cuthbert, in the stories of Book III, incites his brethren to show obedience by leading them to build his hermitage.

Monastic leadership also defines Cuthbert's pastoral duty as a bishop in relation to his role in the first two books of the text as an exemplar of monastic virtues. In the story of Sibba, hearing that a servant of the nobleman has been struck down by infirmity, Cuthbert blesses a cup of water, and declares that the holy water would either lead to healing or an easy death. Then he asks another servant of Sibba to deliver the cup to the dying man. Given that the cup-bearing servant would later become a priest at Lindisfarne, this whole drama indeed enacts

¹²⁵ VCA, pp. 135-36.

¹²⁶ VCA, pp. 114-15 (Book IV, Chapter 3).

¹²⁷ VCA, pp. 120-23 (Book IV, Chapter 7).

the ecclesiastical hierarchy by highlighting the bishop as the source of the sacramental blessing and the priests who obey him as those who pass this blessing to the laity. Yet the same drama also foregrounds the monasticised nature of this hierarchy, as it describes the servant's handing of the holy water to his sick colleague as an action of 'obeying' Cuthbert's command 'without delay' (*sine mora*) — this scene recalls how the child Cuthbert was once healed by an angel after 'showing obedience' to the prescription provided by the latter, while the phrase 'without delay' recalls the Rule of Benedict and the stories of obedience in Book III.¹²⁸ The phrase is further elaborated with the words 'for the Holy Spirit knows nothing of tardy endeavours', which are borrowed from Ambrose's homily on Luke, where they explain why Mary visited Elizabeth immediately after the Annunciation.¹²⁹ Thus the cup-bearer servant becomes a type of Mary on account of his obedience, in the same way as Cuthbert is in the story of the childish game. This action of obedience can be read as foreshadowing his future career as an obedient priest. Meanwhile, after the infirm servant has been healed, he is said to have prayed (*oravit*) for Cuthbert *sine intermissione*. These words are borrowed from I Thessalonians 5:17, where they define regular praying as part of a spiritual warrior's self-discipline. These words therefore recall Cuthbert's own physical recovery and spiritual athleticism in the stories of Book I. These parallels show that while as a child Cuthbert had himself been converted to the ideal spiritual athleticism, obedience and stability, now as a bishop he is able to convert the lay people to the same monastic ideal, by exercising his apostolic authority of binding and loosing.

One story in Book IV shows that the lay audience includes women as well as men. The story is set in a village devastated by plague.¹³⁰ A woman is weeping for her two children, one dead and the other dying. When Cuthbert encounters her while visiting the village to administer baptism, he blesses the dying child with a kiss, and asks the woman not to cry, saying that this child will recover and her family will survive the plague. Note that

¹²⁸ VCA, pp. 120-23.

¹²⁹ Noted by Colgrave. VCA, pp. 120-23: 'spiritus sanctus nescit tarda molimina'.

¹³⁰ VCA, pp. 118-21 (Book IV, Chapter 6).

here Cuthbert is to some extent a type of Christ, because this story resembles how the latter resurrects a widow's child in Luke 7:11, and both order the women not to cry with the phrase 'O mulier noli flere'. Yet whereas there is only one child in the Biblical story, there are two in Cuthbert's story, and Cuthbert does not resurrect the deceased child. Also, when Cuthbert blesses the child, he is said to have 'approached' (*accessit*) the mother and 'kissed' (*est osculatus*) the infant, 'blessing' (*benedicens*) him.¹³¹ These words are originally used to describe Abraham's blessing of Jacob in Genesis 27:27, and thus Cuthbert's kiss of blessing indeed embodies the predestined nature of life and death, just as prophetic words have revealed that of his holiness in the story of the physical game. When the mother is told not to cry although one of her sons has died, she is being required to obey God's will at once by retraining her tears. Parallel of this can be drawn in Benedict's *Rule*, which also regards emotional self-control as an expression of obedience. A monk must show obedience to his superiors with a *bono animo*, for the reason that 'God loves a *hilarem datorem*.' (II Corinthians 9:7).¹³² The conclusion of Book III arguably refers to this command. In quoting the *Life of Anthony* to praise how Cuthbert lived his solitary life on Farne, it nevertheless omits the account of Anthony's self-constraint of laughter and instead praises Cuthbert for remaining happy and joyful (*hilaris*) at all hours.¹³³ Here, the constraint of sorrow when bearing hardship is part of a hermit's self-discipline. In this light, Cuthbert's command that the mother weep no more can be read both as imposing on her the practice of self-discipline as well as the virtue of obedience. This command shows that the constraint of tears, in contrast with the hard manual labour on Farne, is regarded as a practice of spiritual athleticism and obedience appropriate for women.

Finally, I would like to turn to the three stories in which Cuthbert foresees the death of people who are related to Abbess Ælfflæd. They balance the stories of healing and thus foreground further how both life and death are predestined. They also represent most clearly

¹³¹ VCA, pp. 118-21.

¹³² RB, pp. 188-89 (Chapter 5).

¹³³ VCA, pp. 104-07 (Book III, Chapter 7). VA, p. 165 (Chapter 14 ll. 250-258).

the expectation that women, like men, are meant to show their obedience to these divine judgements. The first story, at the end of Book III, describes how Cuthbert made a prophecy about the length of Ecgfrith's life at the request of Abbess Ælfflæd, the king's sister.¹³⁴ Ælfflæd is said to have 'wept bitter tears' (*fletu lacrimauit*) when knowing from Cuthbert that her brother Ecgfrith would die within six months. In this case, she resembles the weeping mother and Hildmer, described respectively as 'weeping and wailing' (*lacrimantem et plorantem*) and 'weeping and mourning' (*flentem et lacrimantem*) for the misfortune of their family members.¹³⁵ Together, their failure to constrain their tears show that they do not fully accept the divine judgement in obedience when it goes against their family's interest.

These bad examples can be read in contrast to the two good examples in another story about Cuthbert's vision of death.¹³⁶ One of these two examples is Cuthbert, who foretells his own death to a hermit named Hereberht. In contrast to Ælfflæd, he is calm in the face of death. Indeed, his main concern is to teach as much as he can to Hereberht in their last meeting. Meanwhile, Hereberht begs Cuthbert to intercede for him in order that they can die at the same time. Note that he is said to have begged the saint with 'lamentation and tears' (*flens et lacrimans*).¹³⁷ Here, however, his weeping is not a sign of his disobedience to divine judgement. Instead, it contrasts him with Ælfflæd in terms of his ability to understand death as a divine gift.

Cuthbert shows how this perception of suffering can lead to obedience when facing the predestined destruction of his people. In the story of his vision of Ecgfrith's death in Book IV, he responds to the vision of the death with words that put emphasis on the predestined nature of his people's suffering: 'Oh ! oh ! oh ! I think that the war is over and that judgment has been given against our people in the battle... Oh, my sons, look at the sky, consider how wonderful it is, and think how inscrutable are the judgments of God'.¹³⁸ Here, instead of

¹³⁴ VCA, pp. 102-05 (Book III, Chapter 6).

¹³⁵ VCA, pp. 92-93, 118-19 (Book II, Chapter 8; Book IV, Chapter 6).

¹³⁶ VCA, pp. 124-25 (Book IV, Chapter 9).

¹³⁷ VCA, pp. 124- 125 (Book IV, Chapter 9).

¹³⁸ VCA, pp. 122-23 (Book IV, Chapter 8): 'O O O, existimo enim perpetratum esse bellum,

weeping for the fate of his king and his people as Ælfflæd once did, he urges his followers to humbly accept the disastrous defeat as divine judgement. Moreover, his physical reaction to the vision also suggests that the military defeat, like Christ's Sacrifice, can be read as part of the divinely-promised salvation: he is said to have 'his head inclined towards the ground and then he lifted up his eyes heavenwards' ('*inclinato capite ad terram deorsum, et iterum eleuatis oculis ad celum*').¹³⁹ His first bodily action imitates how Jesus bowed his head and gave up his soul on the Cross, while his second action repeats Jesus's posture in His thanksgiving prayer to God for the resurrection of Lazarus.¹⁴⁰ To highlight this connection, this story specifies that Ecgfrith's death took place at the ninth hour, which was the time when Jesus gave up his soul on the Cross.¹⁴¹ It is noteworthy that Cuthbert's episcopal authority is highlighted in this re-enactment of Christ's Sacrifice because it points to his sacramental role as a mass celebrant. Again, it is by his episcopal authority that he directs others to appreciate and obey God's plan — this time regarding the destruction of his people.

Note that although Ælfflæd is compared unfavourably to Cuthbert and Hereberht in these stories in terms of obedience, she is a student of the saint and a co-worker with him in teaching in a story in Book IV, in which she herself reported to the author. The story says that following the fulfilment of Cuthbert's prophecy concerning the death of her herdsman, she learnt more about the predestined nature of the world she was living in:

[...] realising not only that in this matter there was in him a spirit of prophecy, but also perceiving in all things his apostolic foresight whereby he also clearly foretold his own death in many ways.

[...] intellegens in eo non solum in hoc prophetiae spiritum, sed et in omnibus

iudicatumque est iudicium de populis nostris bellantibus aduersum [...] O filioli mei considerate, quam admirabilis sit aer, et recolite quam inscrutabilia sunt iudicia Dei [...].’ Citing Romans 11:33: ‘Dei quam incomprehensibilia sunt iudicia’. Note that here the author is quoting the *Vetus Latina* rather than the Vulgate, considering his use of the word *inscrutabilia* instead of *incomprehensibilia*. See Downey, ‘Intertextuality in the Lives of St. Guthlac’, p. 31.

¹³⁹ VCA, pp. 122-23.

¹⁴⁰ John 11:41; John 19:30.

¹⁴¹ Matthew 27:45.

apostolicam prouidentiam agnoscebat, quae et mortem eius multis modis euidenter praedixit.¹⁴²

The fact that this realisation of her is recorded in the *Life* suggests that she shared what she had learnt from Cuthbert with the author by reporting the story to the latter. In this case she acted not only as a student of the saint, but also as a teacher to the audience, by helping the author to establish Cuthbert as an exemplar of obedience, who remained stable even when foreseeing his own death. Now considering her correspondence with the author, and the fact she was still alive and remained powerful. It is highly possible that she consented to the terms of her literary representation.

At the same time, as she is herself criticised in a previous story for her failure to obey like Cuthbert, she also embodies, together with the weeping mother, the expectation that women, both in religious and lay habits, should imitate Cuthbert's monastic sanctity. In this case, while her failure to constrain her tears when hearing about Ecgfrith's fate exposes her spiritual weakness, this failure makes Cuthbert a saint a universal audience can imitate, including the nuns in her monastery. In fact, it is possible that copies of the Lindisfarne *Life* were sent to her monasteries for the edification of the nuns, considering the importance of her role in the text.

III.6 The Models of Male Holiness in the Whitby and Lindisfarne *Lives*

I close this chapter with a discussion of the factors that distinguish the Lindisfarne *Life of Cuthbert* from the Whitby *Life of Gregory* in terms of the ways they position women in relation to their male saints. Certainly, one of these factors is the difference between the two authors' views about gender. However, as pointed out in the introductory chapter, it could have been difficult to reconstruct these views since the focus of the two *Lives* is not to define manhood and womanhood, and nothing else the authors wrote has survived. Rather, paying attention to their functions as hagiographies can help to contextualise their positioning of

¹⁴² VCA, pp. 126-29 (Book IV, Chapter 11)

women.

Both *Lives* focus on defining the priesthood and monasticism. I have shown in the previous chapter that the major theme of the Whitby *Life* is about how a priest could achieve the ideal of the *doctor* that Gregory recommends. It presents Gregory himself, Paulinus and a priest named Trimma as exemplars of this ideal, and the two evil popes as their foils, but uses other characters mainly as members of the flock in need of a shepherd. In this case, the gender of the female characters is irrelevant to the construction of this ideal. Also, as this text says very little about how people can be a *doctor* in social roles apart from priesthood, it does not show how a potential female audience could achieve this ideal. By contrast, the Lindisfarne *Life* divides Cuthbert's life into four stages corresponding to his roles as layman, monk-priest, hermit and bishop, but then give emphasis to how the saint consistently lived in the manner of an ideal monk in all these life stages, thus making the monastic ideal it advocates imitable by a broad audience, including priests, monastics and lay people. Monastics and lay people of both sexes appear in the text as foil characters to the ideal exemplified by Cuthbert and, in this case, the female ones become important indicators that women as well as men can achieve this ideal.

The fact that the two *Lives* advocate very different ideals is another factor in their treatment of women. In the Whitby *Life*, the ideal *doctores* are teachers who are able to understand and unveil the mystery of heaven for others. Accordingly, their flock are represented as male and female characters who are ignorant of this mystery. The text itself unveils part of this mystery in part by presenting historical stories as allegories, and by providing explanations about God's judgement — God sends His saints to the Church in order that they can teach His people; God rewards and punishes according to their virtues and sins.¹⁴³ As pointed out, this worldview is constructed on the basis of Gregory's own teachings. The Lindisfarne *Life* does not demonstrate such influence from Gregory. It ranks its

¹⁴³ VGA, pp. 72-85, 108-111, 124-29 (Preface, Chapters 1-6, 22, 28-29).

characters according to their practising of spiritual athleticism and the virtues of obedience and stability, but not to their knowledge about the heavenly mystery. In fact, most of the sufferings in the stories are presented as having happened at random, rather than because of sins, or because of some higher purposes — such as the cultivation of spiritual strength through physical weakness, as Gregory's writings would suggest.¹⁴⁴ Three stories have their characters assume that illness is the consequence of sin, without identify the sin in question. Thus they mainly emphasise the piety of these characters, rather than their knowledge about divine judgement.

Indeed, almost in opposition to Gregory's focus on the hidden mystery in his work, the Lindisfarne *Life* repeatedly stresses that divine judgement is inscrutable. Cuthbert's quitting of his childish game is presented as particularly praiseworthy because he chooses to obey the prophetic words when he does not fully understand them. Furthermore, the Esau-Jacob trope creates an impression that God decides the matter of holiness, life and death all according to His inscrutable favour. This impression is strengthened by a quotation from Romans 9:13: 'Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated'.¹⁴⁵ In the original text, this statement emphasises how human salvation depends on Grace, and is immediately followed by God's words to Moses: 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. And I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy'.¹⁴⁶ Likewise, in Book IV, Cuthbert admits that he cannot predict the effect of his blessing on his patients.¹⁴⁷ Then when seeing Ecgfrith's death on battlefield in a vision, he also calls attention to the inscrutable nature of divine judgement.¹⁴⁸ Overall, Cuthbert is not a teacher of heavenly mystery to the male and female characters in the text, but the best athlete among them, whose example shows them how to observe the virtues of obedience and stability in a world full of sufferings and dangers.

¹⁴⁴ VCA, pp. 66-69, 118-19, 120-21 (Book I, Chapter 4; Book iv, Chapters, 5, 7).

¹⁴⁵ VCA, pp. 66-67. Romans 9:13: 'sicut scriptum est Iacob dilexi Esau autem odio habui'.

¹⁴⁶ Romans 9:15. 'Mosi enim dicit miserebor cuius misereor et misericordiam praestabo cuius miserebor'.

¹⁴⁷ VCA, pp. 114-15, 120-21 (Chapters 3, 7).

¹⁴⁸ VCA, pp. 122-23 (Book iv, Chapter 8).

This observation challenges the traditional view that the Lindisfarne *Life* stresses Cuthbert's role as a contemplative. In fact, only the shepherd and Coldingham episodes show Cuthbert contemplating in solitude.¹⁴⁹ But these two stories are less related to an eremitic context than lay, ecclesiastical and monastic ones. The shepherd episode modifies a story in Gregory's *Dialogues* of how Benedict sees the ascending soul of Germanus.¹⁵⁰ However, in the *Dialogues*, the vision is accompanied by the exposure of hidden mystery: 'the whole world was gathered up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light.'¹⁵¹ The shepherd-story in the Lindisfarne *Life* instead gives more prominence to episcopal succession, by showing that Cuthbert was a worthy successor of Aidan because he was a vigilant guardian of the flock.¹⁵² Meanwhile, the Coldingham episode can be read in parallel with the story in the Whitby *Life* about how a dove rests on Gregory when he is working on the *Homilies on Ezekiel*, as both of them involve a spying brother.¹⁵³ However, whereas the dove represents the divine inspiration for Gregory's exegetical works, the sea animals do not point to any mystical knowledge in Cuthbert's story; rather, they exemplify how monks should show hospitality — which the brother who spies on Cuthbert has failed to achieve. Also note that the desire of knowing is indeed presented in this story as a dangerous thing that needs to be constrained. In this case, the characters in the *Life* are not ranked in terms of how well they could contemplate the spiritual truth by escaping from the physical world, but instead by how well they could live according to monastic principles in the present world.

Hollis might have therefore misinterpreted the representation of Ælfflæd in the *Life*, when she says that Ælfflæd is presented in a positive light in the story in which she presses

¹⁴⁹ VCA, pp. 68-71, 79-83 (Book I, Chapter 5; Book II, Chapter 3).

¹⁵⁰ *Dialogues*, SC 260, pp. 236-43 (Book II, Chapter 35).

¹⁵¹ *Dialogues*, SC 260, p. 238 (Book II, Chapter 35 ll. 24-25): *omnis etiam mundus, uelut sub uno solis radio collectus, ante oculos eius adductus est*. *Saint Gregory the Great: Dialogues*, trans. by Odo John Zimmerman, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 39 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1959), p. 105.

¹⁵² DeGregorio observes that Bede gives less emphasis on contemplation in the shepherd episode in his new prose *Life* of Cuthbert than Gregory does in the story of Germanus, 'Prayer and Contemplation', p. 30. Here I apply his judgement to the Lindisfarne account as well.

¹⁵³ VCA, pp. 120-23 (Chapter 26).

Cuthbert to prophesy the future of her brother.¹⁵⁴ Admittedly, she is right to suggest that Ælfflæd is not criticised in this story for focusing on earthly rather than heavenly affairs, as she would be in Bede's rewriting of the story. But this is simply because the Gregorian ideal of contemplation never forms the focus of the Lindisfarne *Life*. Hollis might have also given too much weight to Ælfflæd's role in this story as a 'confidential sharer of Cuthbert's secret mysteries, to whom he imparts his prophetic knowledge of the future', considering that the *Life* ranks the characters not according to how much they share the saint's mystic knowledge, but to how well they follow the saint to submit unconditionally to divine judgement and appreciate the inscrutable nature of this judgement.¹⁵⁵ As pointed out above, Ælfflæd fails to meet the first expectation for being unable to constrain her tears when knowing that her brother would die soon. But she indeed fails to meet the second expectation as well, by the way she reacts to Cuthbert's second prophecy, namely that she will have another brother as king who will be as close to her as is Ecgfrith:

This [Cuthbert's prophetic words] indeed seemed incredible; but she asked him more carefully in what place he [her next brother who would become king] was. He bore with her patiently, saying: 'O handmaiden of God, why should you wonder though he be on some island beyond this sea?'

Hoc quippe et incredibile uidebatur, diligentius tamen interrogauit, in quo loco esset. Ipse uero patienter sustinens earn ait, O serua Dei, quid miraris licet sit in aliqua insula super hoc mare?¹⁵⁶

Here, Ælfflæd requires to know more than the saint wishes to tell her, because his prophetic words go against what she considers possible. In this case, her desire to know more arguably reflects her failure to appreciate the unknowable nature of divine providence. This reading would explain why Cuthbert has to bear with her 'patiently'. Her reaction to the prophecy can

¹⁵⁴ VCA, pp. 102-05 (Book iii, Chapter 6). Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 200-01.

¹⁵⁵ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 185-86.

¹⁵⁶ VCA, pp. 104-05.

also be contrasted with that of the child Cuthbert. As mentioned, when Cuthbert is similarly confused by the prophetic words he receives, he does not require to know more, but instead he ‘[keeps] in mind the prophetic words, just as St Mary kept in her memory all the words which were prophesied about Jesus’.¹⁵⁷ Here, his obedience and humility in the face of an incomprehensible divine arrangement make him a type of Mary, and foreshadows his Christlike holiness. It is in terms of this ideal that Ælfflæd functions as a foil to him by asking to know more.

Ælfflæd’s role is similar in the story of the herdsman’s death.¹⁵⁸ When the bishop tells her that a member of her community has been received into heaven, she wishes to identify who the brother is — but the bishop refuses to tell her. She therefore orders an investigation, but is told that all the members of her community remain alive. The next day, when she is told that one of her herdsman has died, she is said to run (*cucurrere*) into a church to report the news to the saint, although he is celebrating a mass. Here, she is disobedient on two counts: firstly, just like those who run (*currunt*) with fear in the two fire-episodes in Book II, she does not remain calm in the face of her amazement, and thus she falls short of the monastic ideal of the Rule of St Benedict.¹⁵⁹ Secondly, her amazement reflects badly on her because it reveals that she does not have complete trust in the prophetic words in the first place, presumably because they go against what she knows about her own monastery. Here, a contrast can be drawn between her and the baker woman in the Whitby story. The baker woman is similarly depicted in a negative light for doubting the saint’s words.¹⁶⁰ However, her doubt is presented as a result of her lack of spiritual knowledge, not her failure to show unquestioning obedience — which is never the main focus of the Whitby *Life* or the Gregorian works. Accordingly, what she needs is not monastic supervisor who could teach her about obedience but a contemplative who can unveil the spiritual truth to her.

¹⁵⁷ VCA, pp. 66-67: ‘[...] prophetiae uerba in mente retinens, sicut sancta Maria omnia uerba praedicta de Iesu memorans conseruabat’. This statement refers to Luke 2.51.

¹⁵⁸ VCA, pp. 126-29 (Book IV, Chapter 10).

¹⁵⁹ VCA, pp. 86-91 (Book II, Chapters 6, 7).

¹⁶⁰ VCA, pp. 104-08 (Chapter 20).

Finally, their immediate political contexts could have been another factor, apart from their didactic function and ideals, in deciding how these texts position women in their narratives. Whitby was a family monastery controlled by Edwin's family, and some of the stories included in the *Whitby Life* could have been originally circulated in the monastery to commemorate the leading role of Edwin and his family in the conversion history of the English people. This means that when these stories were used by the Whitby author to construct a Gregorian model of holiness, they had to be brought into line with Gregory's ideals by being reinterpreted in an allegorical way. It is in this case that the female and male characters in the text are often presented less as independent actors than as prophetic signs to be read by the saint.

Meanwhile, the *Lindisfarne Life* can be read in relation to Ecgrith's death and defeat in the Battle of Dun Nechtain in 685. Bede tells us that the battle cost the lives of many Northumbrian warriors, and quotes Virgil to describe the impact of this disastrous defeat: 'From this time the hopes and strength of the English kingdom began to ebb and fall away'.¹⁶¹ The Northumbrians must have struggled to make sense of their defeat. Writing in 733, Bede says that Ecgrith's death by the Picts is divine punishment for Ecgrith's attack on part of Ireland not long before, but it was very unlikely that the Northumbrians would have thought the same in the aftermath of the war, when they themselves must have still invested much in the war against the Picts.¹⁶² Instead, their view might have been more faithfully represented in the *Lindisfarne Life*, written between 699 and 705, namely that divine judgment was inscrutable, and no one could say for certain why the defeat had happened, or whether similar disasters could happen again. Also, as I have pointed out, the stone wall and rocky well which Cuthbert had built on Farne is contrasted in the *Life* with the Roman wall and well he visited when witnessing Ecgrith's death on the battlefield.¹⁶³ Taken together, it seems that the *Life*

¹⁶¹ *HE*, pp. 427-28 (Book IV, Chapter 26): 'Ex quo tempore spes coepit et uirtus regni Anglorum fluere ac retro sublapsa referri', citing *Aeneid*, II. 169: 'fluere ac retro sublapsa referri', in *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Secundus*, ed. by R. G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964)

¹⁶² *HE*, pp. 426-29.

¹⁶³ *VCA*, pp. 94-99, 122-23 (Book III, Chapters 1-3; Book IV, Chapter 8).

represents an attempt to exploit the disastrous defeat at Dun Nechtain to establish the superiority of the monk over the warrior, and to promote monastic practice as a better way than military prowess to face a world full of unpredictable sufferings and crisis. In this case, this text also implies the possibility that women could be stronger than warriors when they, as spiritual athletes, endured suffering and crisis with obedience and stability.

Chapter IV

The Priest-Saint in Bede's Metrical *Life of Cuthbert*

IV.1 Bede's Metrical *Life of Cuthbert*

Scholars have devoted plenty of attention to how Bede presents women in his works. They have focused mainly on his *Ecclesiastical History*, except Ward, who discusses Bede's commentary on the Book of Habakkuk, and Hollis, who uses Bede's prose *Life of Cuthbert* as an important basis for her discussion.¹ Little attention has been given to any aspect of his metrical *Life of Cuthbert* and none to how it represents gender. This chapter will shed light on this ill-explored area in Bedan scholarship by discussing how the metrical *Life* represents male and female characters, and also how this representation could have functioned for male and female audiences.

This discussion will adopt the same method that has been used in the previous chapters, namely, to pay attention to the function of hagiography as a didactic form of literature. Some scholars have already applied similar approaches in their studies of Bede's other works. As mentioned, Hollis argues that the representation of Ælfflæd in Bede's prose *Life* was part of the construction of a pastoral ideal in the text; MacCarron reads the queens in the conversion stories in the *Ecclesiastical History* as representing an ideal of the Christian wife, while Barrow draws attention to the allusions in Bede's accounts of Hild's Whitby and Coldingham to the Biblical parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Regarding the metrical *Life*, I suggest that this text is likewise a valuable for exploring Bede's perception of the relationship between gender and holiness. Bede wrote the first draft of the metrical *Life* during the reign of King Osred (d. 716), using the Lindisfarne account as his main source.² Then he made a second draft of this *Life* when he wrote the prose *Life* at some point before

¹ See Benedicta Ward, "'To my dearest sister': Bede and the Educated Woman", in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. by Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), pp. 105-11. For other studies mentioned in this and the next paragraphs, see the Introduction, p. 21.

² Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical Vita', in *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, pp. 77-94 (pp. 78-79)

721.³ The fact that he reworked the metrical *Life* when he was already working on a new prose *Life* suggests that he considered this text important in its own right for his representation of Cuthbert. I suggest that this text mainly functions to show how a priest can fulfil Gregory's ideal of the *doctor*. This means that it makes no attempt to make this ideal accessible to women; in fact, as I shall also point out, it overwrites some of the attributes of holiness described in the Lindisfarne *Life* that helped the text engage a female audience. In this case its didacticism is noticeably similar to that of the Whitby *Life of Gregory*, except that it uses a native saint as an exemplar. Nevertheless, it draws far more heavily on the trope of the spiritual warrior to construct Cuthbert's holiness, thus shedding important light on how Bede could have conceptualised the relationship between warriorhood and priesthood.

Carole Newland's study is one of the few works that have discussed the metrical *Life* in some detail.⁴ My arguments below are inspired by her observation that Cuthbert is presented as a remote figure in the metrical *Life* that is only capable of being imitated by a few, though I do not agree with her that this means that the text does not give weight to Cuthbert's pastoral role.⁵ Some of the previous studies of Bede's prose *Life* are useful for understanding this text as well. Bede does not recycle the four-book structure of the Lindisfarne account, but instead divides both of his *Lives* into forty-six chapters. In this case, scholars' arguments that this change helps to give weight to the saint's spiritual growth arguably applies to both works.⁶ Likewise, Thacker's observation that Bede advocates his pastoral ideal through his depiction of Cuthbert in the prose *Life* can likewise be applied to the reading of the metrical *Life*, because, as I shall show, Bede gives emphasis to the role of the teacher and pastoral care in both texts.⁷ Yet whereas Bede promoted his vision of Church reform in his prose *Life*, it is unclear whether he had already developed this vision at the time

³ Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical *Vita*', p. 85.

⁴ Carole E. Newland, 'Bede and Images of Saint Cuthbert', *Traditio*, 52 (1997), 73-109.

⁵ Newland, 'Images of Saint Cuthbert', pp. 95-98, 102.

⁶ Stancliffe, 'Pastor and Solitary', pp. 27-28. Walter Berschin, '*Opus deliberatum ac perfectum*': Why Did the Venerable Bede Write a Second Prose Life of St Cuthbert?', in *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, pp. 95-102. Newland, however, believes that Bede gives less weight to the concept of spiritual growth in the metrical *Life* than in the prose, see pp. 83-85.

⁷ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 130-53.

he composed the first draft of the metrical *Life*. It is therefore more secure to attribute the pastoral ideal in the metrical *Life* to Gregory's influence. As Scott DeGregorio has shown, Bede adopts Gregory's ideal of unifying pastoral duty and contemplative life in his writings but modifies the ideal by presenting the contemplative life as important not in its own right, but only in terms of pastoral care.⁸ Bede likewise adopts and modifies Gregory's exegetical method, by giving less weight to the mystic senses of the Biblical texts and more weight to its moral meanings.⁹ DeGregorio does not refer to the metrical *Life* when making these observations. Nevertheless, I shall show that his argument matches with how Bede presents Cuthbert's pastoral role in this text.

Furthermore, there has also been much discussion about how Bede defines the roles of monks and priests in pastoral care.¹⁰ As several important studies have shown, Bede is at pains to encourage the religious and the laity of both sexes to take some roles in pastoral duty.¹¹ Nevertheless, as Cubitt has pointed out, most people in the seventh and eighth centuries, including Bede, were obviously well aware that the priests had a special and most essential role in pastoral care, and both the canon law in this period and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* show that pastoral works were primarily led by the bishops and their priests.¹² Both this awareness of the distinctive role of the priest and the ideal of a universal pastoral duty will provide important contexts for my discussion of Bede's two *Lives*.

Finally, Lapidge's works contribute most to the research on the metrical *Life*. Lapidge raises attention to the fact that this text survives in two versions. The earlier version survives

⁸ DeGregorio, 'Prayer and Contemplation', pp. 1-39. See also Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 130-32; 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care', pp. 152-53.

⁹ DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: Exegetical Connections, Spiritual Departure', *Early Medieval Europe*, 18 (2010), pp. 43-60.

¹⁰ O'Brien, *Bede's Temple*, p. 113.

¹¹ 'Homelia 7: In Nativitate Domini (Luc. ii, 15-20)', in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars III Opera Homiletica; Pars IV Opera Rhythmica*, by David Hurst, CCSL, 122 (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1955), pp. 46-51 (p. 49) (ll. 104-17). 'In Ezram et Neemiam Libri III', in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars II Opera Exegetica 2A: De Tabernaculo De Tabernaculo De Templo In Ezram et Neemiam*, ed. by Hurst, CCSL, 119A (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1969), pp. 235-87 (p. 257 on Ezra 2:65) (Book I ll. 638-65). Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 131, 133-34. Foot, 'Parochial Ministry', pp. 19-20.

¹² Cubitt, 'Clofesho', pp. 201-03; 'The Clergy', pp. 273-87. Conor O'Brien, *Bede's Temple*, pp. 111-121.

only in one single manuscript preserved at Besançon, and the later one, which Lapidge names as the ‘Vulgate’ version, survives in more than twenty manuscripts and presumably had a relatively wide circulation in Anglo-Saxon England.¹³ In both versions, Bede divides the text into forty-six chapters and includes the same stories, in the same order. He uses different wording, however, and adds to the ‘Vulgate’ version a prefatory letter and a preface.¹⁴ As Lapidge has pointed out, the stories in both versions are highly compressed and figurative, which means that they do not make sense unless they are read together with the prose *Life*.¹⁵ Lapidge believes that the Besançon version, being completed before the death of Osred in 716, was a supplement to the Lindisfarne *Life*, since, as he points out, Bede seems to have composed his new prose *Life* only shortly before the death of its dedicatee Bishop Eadfrith in 721.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Bede mentions the prose *Life* in a prefatory letter which he includes in the metrical *Life* only in the Vulgate version, and similarly makes a cross-reference to the metrical *Life* in the preface of his prose *Life*. Lapidge therefore suggests that Bede intended his revised metrical *Life* to be read together with his prose work.¹⁷ Note that in the preface of the prose *Life*, Bede states that he wrote the metrical *Life* at the request of some of the brethren at Jarrow. I understand this as referring to the original version of his work, given that the Vulgate version was dedicated to a priest, John, whom Lapidge identifies as John of Beverley, the bishop of York who was responsible for Bede’s ordination.¹⁸

Bede was influenced by five early Christian authors both in composing the metrical *Life* and the new prose one.¹⁹ These authors are Juvenius, Sedulius, Arator, Venantius Fortunatus and Aldhelm. While pre-Christian Roman authors had translated prose into poem and vice versa as a type of rhetorical exercise, Juvenius was the earliest Christian author known to have adopted this technique of *conversio*, with his poetic rewriting of the Gospels in

¹³ Lapidge, ‘Bede’s Metrical *Vita*’, pp. 78-79.

¹⁴ Lapidge, ‘Bede’s Metrical *Vita*’, pp. 78-85.

¹⁵ Lapidge, *Bede the Poet* (Jarrow: Jarrow Parish, 1993), pp. 12-13.

¹⁶ Lapidge, *Bede the Poet*, p. 13.

¹⁷ Lapidge, ‘Bede’s Metrical *Vita*’, pp. 84-85.

¹⁸ Lapidge, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, pp. 77-78.

¹⁹ Lapidge, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, pp. 86-87

the early fourth century.²⁰ Presumably he was trying to engage a well-educated audience by this technique, and to construct a contrast between the Christian heroes in the Bible and the pagan heroes in epic poetry.²¹ Then in the mid-sixth century, Arator likewise translated the Acts into a Latin verse-commentary. Departing from Juvenius, he does not seek to faithfully represent the literal meanings of the original text, but instead his focus is to uncover the allegorical sense of the stories in the Acts.²² Later on, in the late sixth century, Venantius Fortunatus in Gaul used this technique to convert Sulpicius's *Life of Martin* into a poetic *Life*, and reconfigured the miracle stories according to his religious views.²³ Bede can be seen as adding another example to this tradition by converting the Lindisfarne account into a metrical *Life*.²⁴ Meanwhile, by rewriting the Lindisfarne account both in prose and poetic forms, he is writing within the tradition of the *Opus Geminatum*, as he is following the examples of the fifth-century author Sedulius, who composed a twin treatise on the miracle stories in the Gospels, and of the English author Aldhelm, who likewise produced a twin treatise on virginity.²⁵ Bede refers to this tradition by name when he mentions Aldhelm in the *HE*.²⁶ He also quotes all five authors mentioned above extensively in the metrical *Life*, as the footnotes in Lapidge's translation have shown, and he relies heavily on Arator as a source of inspiration in the way he constructs the spiritual sense of the miracle stories in the text with figurative language.²⁷ All these suggest that he saw himself as a successor of these authors in terms of their poetic tradition. Presumably by adopting this tradition, which emphasises exegetical reading, he seeks to construct his own identity and that of his audience as teachers of heavenly secrets, a role of which he sets Cuthbert as an exemplar in the metrical *Life*.

²⁰ Peter Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*: From Aldhelm to Alcuin', *Medium Ævum*, 50.2 (1981), 215-29 (pp. 217-18).

²¹ Godman, 'Opus Geminatum', pp. 217-18. *Juvenius' Four Books of the Gospels*, trans. by Scott McGill (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-14.

²² Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical *Vita*', pp. 87-89.

²³ Godman, 'Opus Geminatum', pp. 221-22.

²⁴ Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical *Vita*', pp. 86-87. Godman, 'Opus Geminatum', p. 222.

²⁵ Godman, 'Opus Geminatum', pp. 217-23.

²⁶ *HE*, pp. 514-15 (Book v, Chapter 18).

²⁷ Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical *Vita*', pp. 87-89.

IV.2 The Metrical *Life* and Bede as a Priest

In the preface to the metrical *Life*, Bede identifies Cuthbert as an apostle, a role that is absent from the Lindisfarne account. He lists a series of apostles who had preached to the Gentiles; then equates Cuthbert to them, and finally identifies himself as a follower of these apostles by begging God to grant speech to his tongue as He had once done to the ‘fire-bearing tongues’ (*flammiuomis linguis*), which is a reference to how the apostles received the Spirit and became teachers fifty days after Christ’s Resurrection.²⁸ As I have pointed out in my discussion of the Whitby *Life*, the emphasis on a saint’s apostleship could imply a priestly model of holiness, considering that only priests could baptise pagans and celebrate mass for the converted. Therefore, a possible reading of Bede’s emphasis on Cuthbert’s holiness as an apostle is that it expresses his own identity as a priest, a role that he had acquired only a few years before starting work on the text.²⁹ This reading is plausible particularly because Bede dedicated the new version of this text to Bishop John of Beverley, from whom he had received his ordination.³⁰ On the one hand, Cuthbert’s apostolic holiness shows the perfection that he should aim at as a priest, while on the other hand, it might also reflect his sense of superiority in terms of this role, as it sets him apart from the non-ordained, by marking out a type of perfection that only priests can achieve.

Among the list of the apostles in the preface, Bede praises Bartholomew for subjugating the Indians with his tongue, when they had proved to be unconquerable by arms.³¹ He would later use the same metaphor of warriorhood in the *HE*, by relating how the Gregorian missionaries conquered the unconquerable Britain and turned it into a fearer of their tongues.³² On both occasions, he defines the apostles’ spiritual warriorhood in terms of their tongues — a symbol of their teaching. Here, he shows that one has to achieve this

²⁸ Lapidge, ‘*Vita Metrica S. Cvdbercti*’, in *Bede’s Latin Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 181-314 (pp. 192-93) (Preface l. 37).

²⁹ For Bede’s ordination, see *HE*, 566-67 (Book v, Chapter 24).

³⁰ Lapidge, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, pp. 77-8. *VC*M, pp. 185-87 (The Prefatory Letter).

³¹ *VC*M, pp. 188-91 (Preface, ll. 15-16)

³² *HE*, pp. 130-31 (Book II, Chapter 1), citing *Moralia*, CCSL 143B, p. 1346 (Book xxvii, Chapter 11 ll. 74-80), see *HE*, p. 131 n. 3.

warriorhood by taking up the apostolic duty of teaching. This vision sheds light on how he could have understood the healing of his own tongue disorder, which he recounted in the prefatory letter to John, and attributed to Cuthbert's posthumous power.³³ He might have seen this healing as saving both his priestly career and spiritual warriorhood, given that without a healthy tongue he would not have been able to preach and administer the sacraments — and thus would not have been able to engage in the spiritual warriorhood exemplified by the apostles. Note that here Bede presents the tongue as a sign of warriorhood not in terms of its physical strength, but on account of its importance to a spiritual warfare that cannot be won by force. Also, he does not specify whether he had his tongue cured at Cuthbert's tomb, but instead he stresses that it was healed during his composing of the metrical *Life*. On both occasions Bede is implying views of holiness that are never given weight in the Lindisfarne *Life*, namely that spiritual strength can be understood separately from physical strength, and miracles can happen without corporeal relics as medium.

Meanwhile, along with his praise of Bartholomew in the preface, he describes John as a preacher sowing the 'light of the Word' (*lucem uerbi*) in Asia and links this role to how John had once derived 'mystical teachings' (*mystica*) from the breast of Christ.³⁴ Again, the role of teacher of mystic knowledge is absent from the Lindisfarne *Life*, but it recalls how Gregory was presented according to his own ideal of the *doctor* in the Whitby *Life*. The same ideal can also be identified at the beginning of the preface, when the saints are compared to lamps reflecting the true light of Christ, and at the end of the preface, when Cuthbert is compared to a golden star guiding the English peoples ascending journey.³⁵ These metaphors can both be read in relation to Gregory's perception of the *doctor*, namely a teacher who unveils heavenly secrets for those on earth. Indeed, the works which Bede likewise composed in the early phase of his life show heavier reliance on Gregory's writings than his later works

³³ VCM, pp. 184-87 (The Prefatory Letter).

³⁴ VCM, pp. 188-89, (Preface, ll. 13-14).

³⁵ VCM, pp. 186-89, 192-93 (Preface, ll. 1-10, 28-29).

do.³⁶ Thus, Thacker's argument of Gregory as a source for Bede's pastoral ideal is even more applicable to the perception of holiness in Bede's metrical *Life* than that in his prose one. It is also worth noting that there are striking parallels between how Bede and the Whitby author present their saints as apostles. Both begin their narratives by relating in the preface how God has sent the apostles to different peoples and both use metaphors of light to define apostleship in terms of the combination between contemplation and pastoral duty.³⁷ Given that this text might have been written as early as 704, it could have been a source for the metrical *Life*, especially in terms of the ideal of saints as apostles and teachers of heavenly mysteries.

The same ideal might have also framed how Bede understood his own apostolic duty as a priest. His metrical *Life* can be seen as an expression of this self-identity, considering the parallel he draws between his work and the speech of the 'fire-bearing tongues', which can be specifically understood as the teaching of knowledge inspired by the divine. Furthermore, Bede would later in his prose *Life* recount that he wrote the metrical work at the request of 'some brethren' at Jarrow, and the emphasis he gave in this text to Cuthbert's apostolic holiness seems to suggest that these brethren were those who had received ordination or were prepared to do so in the future. If this was the case, then his work would have allowed the brethren to understand how a priest could achieve the perfection of apostleship, and thus function as a supplement to the Lindisfarne account, which, as pointed out, focused mainly on monastic virtues. The work would also allow them to conceptualise the superiority of the priest over the monk and the warrior. As mentioned, in the early Christian literary tradition, the technique of *conversio* was mainly used to show that Christian saints are more praiseworthy than the heroes of pagan poetry. The metrical *Life* can therefore be read as creating a contrast between Cuthbert and the heroic warriors praised in classical and Old English poetry. In fact, Bede himself seems to have suggested such a reading when he

³⁶ DeGregorio, 'Exegetical Connections, Spiritual Departure', pp. 50-51.

³⁷ Scholars are now more willingly to believe that the Whitby *Life* could be a source for the conversion stories in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, though there is a lack of discussions about its relationship to Bede's metrical *Life*. Michael Richter, 'Bede's Angli: Angles or English?', *Peritia*, 3(1984), 99-114 (pp. 101-02); Butler, 'Exegesis and Hagiography', p. 192; Barrow, 'Coifi', pp. 697, 699-701. For Colgrave's view that Bede did not know the Whitby *Life*, see *VGA*, pp. 56-59.

addressed the metrical *Life* as a ‘heroic poem’.³⁸ Meanwhile, this work as a poetic translation of the Lindisfarne account can also create another contrast between the apostolic duty and monastic virtues embodied by the saint. This is because another function of the *conversio*, as Arator’s work has exemplified, is to uncover the deeper spiritual sense of the original text. Therefore, the depiction of Cuthbert as an apostle in the metrical *Life* can be said to represent a higher level of spiritual reading of his holiness than the depiction of him as a monk-saint in the Lindisfarne account.

Before moving on to discuss the stories in the text, a few words can be said about its structure. First, Bede uses a different strategy to the Whitby *Life* in emphasising Cuthbert’s apostolic role. Where the Whitby *Life* focuses almost exclusively on Gregory’s career after his ordination, Bede follows the Lindisfarne author in giving roughly equal weight to each stage of Cuthbert’s career — in fact he even expands the accounts of the saint’s early career and retirement but condenses slightly those of the healings occurring in his episcopal career. Yet Bede presents all these miracles as signs that prefigure Cuthbert’s ideal apostleship. This technique echoes the way he interprets Biblical passages to explore the meaning of priesthood, when many of the passages are not related to this theme in a literal sense. Second, as Berschin has pointed out, Bede took the number forty-six as a symbol of perfection because it was the number of the years spent on the building of the Temple and the days needed for the creation of Christ’s human body.³⁹ Therefore, by replacing the four-book structure of the Lindisfarne *Life* with a division into forty-six-chapters, Bede is able to bring the focus from Cuthbert’s spiritual stability to his spiritual growth, presenting his life as a developmental process leading to the perfection of the Christlike apostleship. In the next four sections, I will focus on how this spiritual progress is elaborated in the text by the stories concerning Cuthbert’s four life stages as a layman, a monk, a hermit-bishop and eventually a

³⁸ VCP, Preface.

³⁹ Berschin, ‘Opus deliberatum ac perfectum’, pp. 99-111. ‘Homelia 1 In Quadragesima (Joh. ii, 12-22)’, in *Beda Venerabilis Opera Pars III Opera Homiletica; Pars IV Opera Rhythmica*, by David Hurst, CCSL, 122 (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1955), pp. 184-92 (p. 189) (ll. 191-207).

perfect apostle.

IV.3 Succeeding Bishop Aidan as a Teacher of Mysteries

The first six stories of the metrical *Life* form the initial stage of Cuthbert's spiritual development.⁴⁰ They include the four stories derived from Book I of the Lindisfarne account and two new episodes added by Bede.⁴¹ The first story, just as in the Lindisfarne account, relates how an infant reproved Cuthbert for playing games and foretold to him his episcopal career.⁴² However, Bede adds three points to this story. First, he criticises the game as drawing on 'uncertain power' (*dubiis uiribus*) to fulfil 'transitory pleasure' (*luxu*) — a term that Bede links to carnal desires both in this and his other works.⁴³ Second, by adding to the infant's words, he states that the game undermined Cuthbert's predestined episcopal status by making him behave like the 'common herds'.⁴⁴ He then parallels this bishop-flock contrast with that between the freeborn and the slaves — presumably referring to those who fought in stadiums to entertain the audience in the Roman era. Finally, he concludes the story by comparing it to how the Holy Spirit had once made infants reveal the mysteries of Christ and an ass speak. These are allusions to Matthew 21:26 regarding how Christ received praises from infants in a temple, and to Numbers 22:21-39 regarding how the prophet Balaam was warned by an ass — note that the latter is also referred to in II Peter 2:15 as an important example of the false teacher for misleading God's people for money.⁴⁵ Taken together, Bede uses the first story of the *Life* to show how a priest should be different from his flock — he should be a Christlike teacher, who bases his authority on spiritual rather than physical strength.

⁴⁰ VCM, pp. 194-213 (Chapters 1-6 ll. 39-179).

⁴¹ VCA, pp. 64-71 (Book I, Chapters 3-6).

⁴² VCM, pp. 194-99 (Chapter 1 ll. 39-74).

⁴³ VCM, pp. 196-97 (ll. 51, 52). The term *luxus* appears sixteen times in his works, mostly in relation to carnal desire. See VCM, pp. 248-49, 254-55 (Chapters 20-21, ll. 467, 476, 521); *HE*, pp. 398-99 (Book IV, Chapter 20); 'In Lucae Evangelium Expositio', in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars II: Opera Exegetica 3: In Lucae Evangelium Expositio In Marci Evangelium Expositio*, ed. by D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), pp. 5-425 (pp. 329, 341 on Luke 18:29-30; Luke 19:26) (Book v ll. 1342-47, 1808-14).

⁴⁴ VCM, pp. 196-97 (l. 67).

⁴⁵ Matthew 21:16. Numbers 22: 21-39.

The second story expresses the same ideal by relating how Cuthbert received a prescription from an angelic guest whom he ministered to despite his illness.⁴⁶ While the original account does not mention priesthood, Bede is able to present the remedy as a prophetic sign of Cuthbert's priesthood, by adding that it was boiled in a pot (*olla*) in a kitchen (*culinae*) — both are terms used in the Bible to describe how the priests should boil the meat offerings in the Temple before eating them.⁴⁷ Here, Bede is indeed comparing Cuthbert with the sons of the priest Eli, who insisted on eating the offerings before they had been boiled — a scene that he interprets as showing an example of how priests, in their greed, can violate their duty.⁴⁸ Another addition he makes is the description of how Cuthbert had to 'direct his steps' (*regit uestigia*) with 'a pine-wood staff' (*pino*) due to his disabled knees — a borrowing from Vergil's *Aeneid* that describes how Polyphemus, with his staff, led all his herds into the sea, after being blinded as a punishment for eating his guests.⁴⁹ Given that Cuthbert's healing is compared to how God cured Tobias' eyes, this healing can be regarded as a preparation for him — in opposition to Polyphemus — to become a good pastor whose spiritual insights would lead his sheep in the right direction.

Thanks to these divine gifts, Cuthbert is shown to have become more spiritually mature in the next story: 'he learned to assail the lofty-throned God with his prayers.'⁵⁰ The story goes that when five rafts are attacked by a strong wind in the River Tyne, Cuthbert, who is standing on the opposite bank (*aliam ripam*), reproves the crowd who take delight in the incident and show them what they should do instead, by praying for the ceasing of the wind and the safety of the sailors.⁵¹ Note that the story specifies that the rafts as carrying wood for a monastery, which seems to be a reference to Solomon's Temple, which was likewise built

⁴⁶ VCM, pp. 198-201 (Chapter 2 ll 75-94).

⁴⁷ VCM, pp. 200-01 (l. 88). II Samuel I 2:14

⁴⁸ See 'In Primam Partem Samuhelis Libri IIII' in *Beda Venerabilis Opera Pars II: Opera Exegetica* 2, ed. by D. Hurst, CCSL 119 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), pp. 5-272 (p. 26 on I Samuel 2: 13-14) (Book I, Chapter 2, ll. 614-37) Note that this exegetical account and the metrical story of Cuthbert's illness are the only two occasions when the term *olla* is used in Bede's works.

⁴⁹ VCM, pp. 198-99, n. 76. *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Tertius*, ed. by R. D. Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 44 (ll. 659): 'trunca manum pinus regit et uestigia firmat'.

⁵⁰ VCM, pp. 200-01 (Chapter 3 l. 96): 'celsithronum didicit precibus pulsare tonantem'.

⁵¹ VCM, pp. 200-01 (l. 108).

with timber being carried by rafts.⁵² Also, the word *ripa* appears only twice in the Vulgate. In the metrical story it seems to be an allusion to I Maccabees 9:45, regarding how the Maccabean army fought the enemies on the bank (*ripam*) of the Jordan. This reading is plausible because Bede would later insert in the same story in his prose *Life* a reference to a battle scene in II Maccabees 15:20.⁵³ In this case, the story foreshadows how Cuthbert would fight as a priest to defend the Church, even though it takes place before Cuthbert's ordination. Finally, the story also hints that the spiritual warfare has to be won by pastoral care, when it describes how the rafts were cast onto the shore by the power of his prayer. This description points to the parable of the dragnet, in which Christ compares salvation to fishes being gathered by the fisherman on the shore.⁵⁴ Bede makes a similar reference to this parable in his commentary on Luke, when explaining how Christ assigned pastoral duty to Peter by showing to him where he should fish.⁵⁵ Accordingly, the way that Cuthbert's prayer casts the rafts on the shore can be read as a prophetic sign of how he, as Peter's successor by his sacred office, would save his flocks from destruction by means of pastoral care. This reading is also supported by the description of the inmates of the monastery as 'a group of monks' (*monachorum examine*) — a phrase that is borrowed from Fortunatus's *Life of Martin*, referring to the monks who caught fish according to Martin's guidance.⁵⁶

Altogether, the first three stories of the *Life* function to foreshadow how Cuthbert would reach the perfection of his priesthood and become an apostle with a series of allusions to the good and bad examples of priests and teachers in the Bible. While the third story shows that Cuthbert's priesthood would be about spiritual warfare fighting for the salvation of his flock, the first two stories suggest that God had prepare Cuthbert for this warfare by warning him against carnal desires and reliance on physical strength. The latter warning implies a

⁵² II Chronicles, 2:16.

⁵³ *VCP*, pp. 160-65 (Chapter 3). See below.

⁵⁴ Luke 5:1-11

⁵⁵ *In Lucam*, pp. 113-14 (Book II, ll. 546-54)

⁵⁶ *VCM*, pp. 200-01 (l. 98), 202, n. 98. 'Venantius Fortunatus, Vita Sancti Martini', in *Venanti Honori Clementiani Fortunati: Carminum Epistularum Expositionum: Presbyteri Italici Opera Poetica*, ed. by Friderius Leo, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1881), pp. 291-370 (p. 357) (Book IV ll. 284-304).

contrast between the types of manhood — priests who fought by spiritual strength, and warrior men who fought by physical strength. For whenever the priests started to boast about the physical strength, they became monstrous creatures like Polyphemus, presented in the second story as an anti-type of the good shepherd. Conversely, whenever they resist their carnal desires with their spiritual strength, they would be able to distinguish themselves from their flock, who fought for transitory pleasure like slaves, and to free them from such pleasure in order to guarantee their salvation. Here, it is based on a sharp distinction between the physical and spiritual realms that these stories are able to construct an analogy between priesthood and warriorhood, and to define the superiority and authority of the priests over the warriors. This dualistic view opposes the weight given to Cuthbert's physical strength in the *Lindisfarne Life*, and it is made possible in the stories by the removal of all word borrowings that link Cuthbert's body in the original text to spiritual athleticism and the virtues of obedience and stability. Again, it seems to originate from Gregory's writings or from the *Whitby Life*, which, as pointed out, similarly present Gregory as a *doctor-saint*, based on a sharp distinction between carnality and spirituality.

Finally, while the rewriting of these stories does not give additional weight to Gregory's role as a contemplative, it does imply the importance of spiritual knowledge to a priest, by replacing the allusions to Cuthbert's body with those to hidden spiritual truths. For instance, Cuthbert suffers the 'onslaught of an illness' (*discrimine morbi*), a phrase that is borrowed from a poem of Paulinus of Nola, initially referring to the sin of avarice.⁵⁷ Here, the illness does not— as it did in the *Lindisfarne* account— serve as an object for Cuthbert to struggle against in order to reveal his strength. Instead, it now serves as a sign of spiritual weakness, one which a priestly or clerical audience must understand in order to know what could hinder the spiritual progress of a priest and thus to avoid it. In other words, without the ability of reading signs that reflect the inner truth, a priest would not be able to understand

⁵⁷ *VCM*, pp. 198-199 (Chapter 2 l. 75), n. 75. 'Carmen xxi', in *Sancti Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani Opera: Pars II Carmina*, ed. by W. A. von Hartel, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 30 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1894), pp. 158-86 (p. 175) (l. 517).

how to imitate Cuthbert to become a good pastor.

The next three stories present Cuthbert as a predestined successor of Aidan's episcopal office. In the fourth story, Cuthbert, while keeping vigil as a shepherd, witnesses the ascension of Aidan's soul.⁵⁸ Already in the original account, this story is meant to show Cuthbert as a worthy heir of Aidan, and Bede's rewriting preserves this intent.⁵⁹ However, Bede gives Cuthbert a long speech about how a shepherd should protect the herds from the attacks of the 'dusky lions' (*furvi leones*), a term that refers in I Peter 5:8 to the evil which the elders should keep their youths from through their teachings.⁶⁰ In this case, whereas in the original account, Cuthbert is a spiritual athlete whose endurance of sleeplessness makes him a worthy successor of Aidan, in the metrical *Life* it is his awareness of a teacher's duty that makes him deserve this position. Here, the spiritual athlete is replaced by the apostolic pastor. The same weight is given to the teacher's role in the next story, which is a second new episode absent from the original account.⁶¹ The story relates how Aidan foretold a sea storm that his priest would meet and how his chrism helped the priest to calm the sea. It describes in detail how the voyage went well in its initial stage but then met a storm in the depth of the sea; then concludes the story by comparing the calming of the sea by the chrism to that of the mind by the bishops' words. Here, the voyage is obviously intended to be read as a spiritual journey under the bishop's guidance, and thus allows the audience to picture the spiritual teacher that Cuthbert would become one day after succeeding the episcopacy passed down from Aidan, although the story itself does not refer to Cuthbert. The next story functions in the same way.⁶² It relates how Cuthbert received a divine supply of food in a hut when he was travelling in remote areas. Bede adds to the original account that the hut was a *taberna* built by a guardian (*custos*) for the use of 'solitary wandering' (*sola auia*).⁶³ This addition gives the

⁵⁸ VCM, pp. 204-07 (Chapter 4).

⁵⁹ VCA, pp. 68-71 (Book I, Chapter 5).

⁶⁰ VCM, pp. 206-07 (l. 137).

⁶¹ VCM, pp. 208-11 (Chapter 5).

⁶² VCM, pp. 210-13 (Chapter 6).

⁶³ VCM, pp. 210-11 (ll. 167-68)

impression that the hut symbolically points to the Church that Cuthbert would inherit from Aidan, and that this succession is primarily related to the duty of pastoral care.

Meanwhile, the phrase ‘solitary wandering’ further links this succession to contemplative life. Later in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede would present Aidan as an ideal bishop by referring not only to his ability to preach, but also to his habit of retreating to Farne for solitary contemplation.⁶⁴ This account indeed goes against his own argument in the prose *Life* that Cuthbert was the first one who dared to stay on the island; but it highlights the tradition of contemplative bishops at Lindisfarne.⁶⁵ In the metrical *Life*, apart from the story of the shepherd’s hut, Bede also emphasises contemplation in the account of how Cuthbert saw Aidan’s ascending soul, by using the vision as an example to explain, through Cuthbert’s mouth, how one can see God Himself by remaining aware of the threats of the ‘dusky lions’. Then in the account how Aidan’s chrism calms the sea, Bede relates that Aidan’s priest met the sea storm when his ship crossed the depths (*profunda*) of the sea and it was there that the chrism was dropped.⁶⁶ Now the ‘depths of mysteries’ (*profunda sacramentorum*) is a common phrase in the writings of the Church Fathers. Bede himself uses this phrase in his commentary on Luke in a paragraph that follows his explanation of Christ’s teaching on fishing.⁶⁷ In this paragraph, he urges the preachers to consider the nature of their audience, not to confuse the audience in the depth of mysteries. Presumably, he likewise intends the way that Aidan’s chrism protected the voyage to be read as referring figuratively to how a bishop guides the priests in their journey to understand mysteries.

⁶⁴ *HE*, pp. 262-63. (Book III, Chapter 16).

⁶⁵ *VCP*, pp. 214-15 (Chapter 17). Other examples include Bishop Chad of Mercia, a student of Aidan, and Bishop Eadberht of Lindisfarne, the immediate successor of Cuthbert. See *HE*, pp. 336-39 (Book IV, Chapter 3). *VCP*, pp. 292-93 (Chapter 42).

⁶⁶ *VCM*, pp. 208-09 (l. 154).

⁶⁷ *In Lucam*, p. 114 on Luke 5:4 (Book II, l. 566).

Altogether, the first six stories of the metrical *Life* define ideal priesthood in terms of pastoral care and contemplation, and also in opposition to the use of physical strength, presumably as a way to highlight the contrast between the priest and the flock. But they show no attempts to construct the common ground between them, or to demonstrate how the lay people could imitate Cuthbert's holiness, despite the fact that they take place in Cuthbert's lay career. For instance, when Cuthbert quits the physical contest that gives only transitory pleasure, or when he corrects the crowd who take delight in others' misfortune, he can be read as providing a moral example for a lay audience. Yet these examples do not show the lay audience how they could become teachers of hidden mysteries by remaining in their lay habit; rather, it is the miracles in the stories that foreshadow how he would, as priest and bishop, become a teacher of hidden mysteries. Moreover, these stories exclude all the references in the original text that define Cuthbert's holiness in terms of his monastic practices, and those that show how he could observe these practices as a layman. Overall, it can be said these stories prefigure how Cuthbert would fulfil the ideal of apostleship in his priestly career, but do not show how he had already put this ideal into practice in his lay career. Their didactic function is therefore weaker than in the Lindisfarne account for those who have not received ordination and those not preparing to do so.

IV.4 Fighting like an Eagle as a Contemplative Pastor

There follow seven stories derived from Book II of the Lindisfarne account.⁶⁸ The first three are set in monastic context and the rest in pastoral one. In the original text, these stories are bound together by the same monastic ideal, showing how Cuthbert practises spiritual athleticism, obedience and stability in both contexts. The metrical *Life*, by contrast, draws a clearer line between Cuthbert's monastic and priestly roles, by referencing Cuthbert taking a monastic vow in the first monastic episode and receiving ordination in the fourth one.⁶⁹ Yet, as I shall show, these monastic episodes are no longer about the perfection of monasticism as

⁶⁸ *VCM*, pp. 212-37 (Chapters 7-13).

⁶⁹ *VCM*, pp. 212-13, 226-27 (Chapters 7, 10)

they were in the original text. Instead, they highlight Cuthbert's contemplative life as a monk in order to show how his monastic life prefigured and formed a basis for his role as a teacher of hidden mysteries after his ordination, which is then elaborated in the pastoral episodes with two metaphors: warrior and eagle.

The first story relates how Cuthbert ministered to an angelic guest at Ripon and received a loaf from him.⁷⁰ In the original account, the guest exemplifies the virtue of stability, which the author redefines as persistence, by insisting on continuing his different journey while it is snowing heavily, while Cuthbert embodies the same virtue by providing hospitality to him without relaxing his own observance of fasting and is therefore rewarded with a heavenly loaf — a sign of his predestined ordination. Bede removes all these references. In fact, he does not mention fasting at all in this story. Instead, he gives Cuthbert a speech about the spiritual meaning of the bread:

I now see that my guest had come down from the ethereal hall, and has taken himself swiftly on wing to the stars where he was born: coming to feed, not to be fed, and bringing feasts with him the like of which do not grow from the seed of our crops, nor do our lilies gleam so brightly, nor does our shining rose smell so swell...No wonder that the heavenly citizen scorned our food, given that he is fed with the everlasting bread of life throughout all time.

‘Cerno quod aethereal descenderat hospes ab aula

Cognatisque leuis se reddidit aliger astris,

Pascere, non pasci ueniens et fercula portans,

Qualia non surgunt nostrae de germine messis,

Lilia nec candent nec sic rosa fulgida fragrat

⁷⁰ *VC*M, p. 212-17 (Chapter 7).

[...] Nec mirum, nostras diues quod respuit escas,

perpetuo uitae fruitur qui pane per aeuum.⁷¹

Here, Cuthbert speaks as a contemplative, identifying the heavenly nature of the bread, and in this context, of priesthood as well. His use of the phrase ‘coming to feed, not to be fed’ (*pascere, non pasci*) is borrowed from Sedulius’s *Paschal Song*, referring to how Christ changed water into wine in the wedding at Cana.⁷² For Bede, the wine in this miracle signifies how Christ’s teachings about the Holy Scripture has renewed the Church.⁷³ Therefore, the borrowed phrase from Sedulius may point to both the Eucharist and the ministry of preaching. The reference to lilies further hints that teaching relates to Christ’s mystic nature, given that Bede sees them as a symbol of the contemplative who is willing to teach.⁷⁴ In addition, the reference to the earthly crops and the emphasis on the rejection of earthly food both point to the duty of evangelism, as they remind the audience of the Biblical scene of how Christ refused earthly food and instead took the people waiting for His teaching as food provided for Him by the Father.⁷⁵ In sum, the way that Cuthbert contemplates the meaning of the heavenly bread gives the impression that the angelic guest was a teacher of spiritual knowledge who prepared Cuthbert to take the same role by giving him a loaf that signified priesthood, the mysterious nature of Christ, and the priest’s duty of understanding and unveiling this nature to his flock. It is also noteworthy that the description of the guest coming from the stars echoes the comparison of Cuthbert’s apostolic role to a golden star in the preface.

The next story likewise presents Cuthbert’s monastic life as a contemplative one and a prefiguration of his priestly role as a teacher.⁷⁶ In the story, a brother spies on Cuthbert’s

⁷¹ VCM, pp. 214-17 (ll. 204-08, 212-13)

⁷² VCM, pp. 216-7 (l. 206), n. 206. Sedulius, ‘Paschale Carmen’, in *Sedulius, The Paschal Song and Hymns*, trans. by Carl P. E. Springer, *Writings from the Greco-Roman World* 35 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), pp. 1-183 (pp. 78-79) (Book III, l. 3)

⁷³ ‘Homelia 14: Post Epiphaniam (Joh. ii, 1-2)’, in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars III Opera Homiletica; Pars IV Opera Rhythmica*, pp. 95-104 (pp. 98-99)(ll. 95-134)

⁷⁴ ‘In Cantica Canticorum Libri VI’, in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars II Opera Exegetica 2B In Tobiam In Proverbia In Cantica Canticorum*, ed. by D. Hurst, CCSL 19B (1983), pp. 164-375 (p. 211) (Book I, Chapter 2 ll. 8-18).

⁷⁵ John 4:31-38.

⁷⁶ VCM, pp. 218-21 (Chapter 8)

keeping vigil in the sea, and is struck down with illness, after witnessing how two sea animals ministered to the saint. As in the original account, the brother has to ask Cuthbert for pardon in order to be healed. However, as Lapidge has pointed out, the brother is at the same time presented in the metrical *Life* as a companion (*comes*) of the saint.⁷⁷ More specifically, I read the brother as signifying the saint's followers, as he is described in the story as 'someone, following him [Cuthbert] by a slow path, sought to trace his unfamiliar steps'.⁷⁸ The way that he is struck down by the vision can accordingly be read as how the beginners of the faith can get overburdened in the process of exploring heavenly mysteries, considering that the vision is described as a 'burden' (*pondus*) for the brother in the story. Echoing the previous story, these mysteries are again presented as relating to Christ's divinity and humanity. Firstly, the brother is said to have been 'struck to the heart with fear' (*perculsus corda pauore*) by the vision.⁷⁹ These words are borrowed from Juvenius's *Gospels*, referring to Peter's fear in response to Christ's prophecy of His own death.⁸⁰ In Juvenius's account, Peter's mind is calmed only when Christ unveils to him the spiritual meaning of His death. Secondly, Cuthbert is said to have imitated Christ, 'the great teacher' (*summus magister*), when he requires the brother not to betray the vision to others, as Christ was likewise reluctant to make His healings known to others.⁸¹ This comparison hints that the vision that the brother saw in Cuthbert is about Christ's divinity. Thirdly, Cuthbert is said to have immersed his 'marble-white neck' (*marmoreum collum*) in the sea water and stepped on the 'golden sand' (*fulva harena*).⁸² These words seem to refer to the account in the Song of Songs 5:15, which describes the bridegroom's legs as marble pillars sitting on golden bases. Bede explains these pillars as a symbol of the divine plan of Christ's incarnation, human salvation and the final

⁷⁷ VCM, pp. 218-19 (l. 235). Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical *Vita*', p. 92.

⁷⁸ VCM, pp. 218-19 (l. 221): 'lento quidam quem calle secutus illius incertos studuit dignoscere gressus'.

⁷⁹ VCM, pp. 218-19 (l. 235).

⁸⁰ VCM, pp. 218-19 n. 235. *Gai Vetti Aquilini Iuveni Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor*, ed. by J. Huemer, CSEL 24 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1891), p. 96 (Book III, ll. 296): 'tum Petrus magno perculsus corda dolore'.

⁸¹ VCM, pp. 220-21 (l. 244)

⁸² VCM, pp. 218-219 (ll. 223-24; 228).

judgement.⁸³ Finally, by regarding Cuthbert as a type of Christ revealing His secret nature, the story indeed re-enacts the scene of how Christ's divinity was unveiled at the moment of His baptism.⁸⁴ Taking these Biblical references together, the whole story can be read as reflecting how a priest should unveil Christ's mystic nature by baptising, by teaching and by guiding those who are confused by the mystery. This story thus recalls how Aidan had likewise calmed the mind of those who got lost in the depth of these mysteries.

The third story then relates how Cuthbert led his brethren to search for divinely given food in the feast day of Epiphany when they were trapped by a sea storm.⁸⁵ It follows the original account closely by putting words in Cuthbert's mouth, recounting the three Biblical events that the feast day celebrated: the Adoration of the Magi, Christ's baptism and the wine miracle in Cana. Bede, however, has Cuthbert supply another story relevant to Epiphany, namely how Moses led the Hebrews across the Red Sea.⁸⁶ As Lapidge has pointed out, the description of how the storm covered the sky with dark clouds and the landscape with frost is intended to be read in parallel with how God had guided the Hebrews with dark clouds and filled the land with manna.⁸⁷ Yet reading this description with the allusions to Christ's baptism both in this and the previous stories, it seems secure to say more specifically that it is in fact a reference to I Corinthians 10:2, a statement that refers to Moses as baptising the Hebrews in the cloud and sea. Therefore, how Cuthbert led the brethren in the storm again figures the priestly ministry of baptism. Meanwhile, Bede omits the reference in the original account of how Cuthbert, searching for heavenly food, runs as a forerunner and thus embodies the holiness of John the Baptist. Instead, he adds that Cuthbert roasted the God-given fish — an allusion to the Eucharist, as it is in parallel with the roast lamb used in the Passover sacrifice and the roast fish Christ ate after resurrection, which he interprets as a symbol of the suffering Christ in his commentary on Luke.⁸⁸ He also describes Cuthbert as a prophet by

⁸³ 'In Cantica Canticorum', pp. 293-94 (ll. 826-67)

⁸⁴ Matthew 3:13-17.

⁸⁵ *VCM*, pp. 222-27 (Chapter 9).

⁸⁶ *VCM*, pp. 224-25 (ll. 266-75).

⁸⁷ *VCM*, pp. 222-25 (ll. 252-85). *VCM*, pp. 222-23, n. 252-85.

⁸⁸ Exodus, 12:7-8. John 21:9. Luke 24:42. *In Lucam*, p. 421 on Luke 24:42-43 (Book VI, Chapter 24 ll.

giving him a speech regarding how the three pieces of fish correspond to the days they need to wait before returning to the ‘native land’ (*patrium arvum*).⁸⁹ Presumably he intends these words to be read as prefiguring how Cuthbert would lead the flock to heaven via the ministration of baptism and the celebration of the mass.

In the Lindisfarne account, these three stories are crucial in constructing Cuthbert as a monk saint, with their monastic background and emphasis on spiritual athleticism. The metrical *Life*, by contrast, fails to specify the monastic background of the last two stories, and as I have shown, it no longer focuses on how Cuthbert revealed his spiritual athleticism via fasting and running in hunger, but gives weight instead to his contemplation and teaching of Christ’s mysteries. Note that Bede in fact resembles the Lindisfarne author in the way he defines monasticism. ‘The life of a monk’, he says in chapter 20 through Cuthbert’s mouth, ‘...devoutly obeys the command; rejoice submissively to rein in their vigils, fasting, prayers, and manual labour to the will of their ruler’.⁹⁰ Read in light of this statement, Bede’s downplaying of the importance of asceticism in the three monastic episodes can be understood as a deliberate attempt to draw the audience’s attention away from the monastic nature of Cuthbert’s holiness. Meanwhile, his emphasis on the unveiling of Christ’s mystic nature reconfigures the three stories as relating to a teacher’s contemplative life. This emphasis thus again foregrounds a teacher saint’s intellectual manhood, in contrast to the ascetic manhood being emphasised in the original text.

Bede shows in the next story how Cuthbert materialises this teacher’s role in his priesthood.⁹¹ He defines this story as the beginning of his narrative of Cuthbert’s priestly career by relating a priest’s pastoral duty: ‘Having by then attained to the eminence of station of a priest, he set out to renew the populace with the rivers of life’.⁹² After relating how an

2307-2324).

⁸⁹ *VCM*, p. 224-25 (l. 285).

⁹⁰ *VCM*, pp. 248-251 (ll. 480-82): ‘Sub imperio seruit deuote parenti; excubiasque famemque preces manuumque laborem ad uotum gaudent proni frenare regentis’

⁹¹ *VCM*, pp. 226-29 (Chapter 10).

⁹² *VCM*, pp. 226-27 (ll. 291-92): ‘Inde sacerdotis meritoque graduque potitus, tendebat populus uitae renouare fluentis.’

eagle provided Cuthbert and the retainer with food, he elaborates further how a priest can use water to save life: ‘Cuthbert, by means of admonitions and the waters of baptism, reveals the way for the people to be called to the kingdom of heaven.’⁹³ This story thus brings together the ministries of baptising and teaching, presenting a distinctive teacher’s role that only priests can assume. Then in the story that follows, Bede specifies a priest’s teaching as ‘revealing heavenly mysteries on earth’ (*pandens caelestia terris*), when relating how Cuthbert identifies in his sermon an imaginary fire as the devil’s trick.⁹⁴ Finally, in the story of the healing of Hildmar’s wife, the *viaticum* which Cuthbert is asked to provide for the dying woman is termed as ‘the mysteries of Christ’ (*Christi mysteria*).⁹⁵ Moreover, the focus of the healing is on the mind rather than, as in the original version, the body of the woman. This story can therefore be read as how Cuthbert cures the faithful’s mind by the teaching of Christ’s mysteries. Overall, these three pastoral episodes give emphasis to Cuthbert’s role as a teacher of heavenly mysteries.

Note that in the original text, Cuthbert’s holiness in both the monastic and pastoral episodes is presented as accessible to women in two aspects. First, it is defined in terms of the monastic ideal of spiritual athleticism, obedience and stability. Second, it uses Cuthbert’s brethren, the audience of his sermon, his foster-mother Coenswith and Hildmar as foil characters to this ideal, thus highlighting that this ideal is meant to be practised by monastics and lay people of both sexes. By contrast, in the metrical *Life*, the original references to this monastic ideal are removed and replaced by those to the priestly ideal, namely the teacher of heavenly mysteries. In this case, Hildmar no longer serves as an example of how a family head can achieve the ideal of obedience exemplified by Cuthbert, but rather, he and his wife represent the flock to whom the ideal priest unveils hidden mysteries. Furthermore, in the story of how Cuthbert put out a real fire with his prayer in a village, Bede omits the character of Coenswith but highlights the power of Cuthbert’s words in extinguishing the fire,

⁹³ *VCM*, pp. 228-29 (ll. 309-11): ‘iussis limphisque salutis pandit iter populis Caeli per regna uocandis.’

⁹⁴ *VCM*, pp. 228-29 (Chapter 11 l. 311)

⁹⁵ *VCM*, pp. 232-33 (Chapter 12, 344).

suggesting that this is a task that even the right hand of the young men is unable to accomplish.⁹⁶ Here, he again appeals to the opposition between physical and spiritual strength to distinguish the priest from the flock. In sum, he has removed all references from the monastic and pastoral episodes that in the original text constructed the universal nature of Cuthbert's holiness and replaced them with references to the ideal of priesthood. Therefore, his rewriting, just as is the case in the lay and monastic episodes, has weakened the function of the *Life* for the edification of the female audience, who were excluded from holy orders, and of the male audience who had not received and were not to receive ordination. This suggests that Bede could have composed this text primarily for the clerical members of his community.

It is also worth noting that he adds two important gendered figures in these stories to construct the priestly ideal. One is the warrior. In the account of how Cuthbert identifies the phantom fire as the Devil's trick, his teaching is said to have let the people understand 'the feeble deceits and weapons of the proud Enemy' ('dolos ac tela tyranni').⁹⁷ Likewise, in the account of his putting out of a real fire, he is described as having achieved what even young men are incapable of, and as having repelled 'the arrows cast from Satan's fiery quiver with the heavenly shield of Christ'.⁹⁸ The same is true in the story of Hildmar's wife, in which Cuthbert assures to Hildmar that his wife will survive: 'This Enemy, who is used to being overcome in frequent struggles, will even now be conquered by the victorious sword of faith'.⁹⁹ Here, just as in the story in which he is compared to the Maccabean army for calming a strong wind over the River Tyne, Cuthbert's image as a spiritual warrior does not function to demonstrate how an earthly warrior could imitate his holiness, but rather, it defines the priest, who ruled the Church by the words of truth, in opposition to the warrior, who ruled the society by physical strength. In this case, this image is crucial for the text to achieve the

⁹⁶ VCM, pp. 232-33 (Chapter 7).

⁹⁷ VCM, pp. 230-31 (Chapter 11 l. 331).

⁹⁸ VCM, pp. 232-33 (Chapter 7 ll. 338-39): 'igniferis satanae qui spicula torta pharetris aethereo suerat umbone relidere Christi'.

⁹⁹ VCM, pp. 234-35 (Chapter 13 ll. 364-65): 'Vinci qui rebris solitus conflictibus, et nunc uictrici fidei gladio superabitur hostis'.

traditional function of the *conversio*, namely, to identify a new type of hero according to Christian values, and to apply this function to construct a contrast between two types of manhood.

Another gendered figure used to present the priestly ideal is the eagle which provided Cuthbert and his retainer with a fish in their journey for pastoral care.¹⁰⁰ Having received the fish, ‘Cuthbert cuts it in half, and with one piece he drives away the waiter’s [eagle’s] hunger, and with the other piece they revive their own spirits.’¹⁰¹ Here, she is addressed as a female slave, who eats only in order to satisfy the need of the body. This contrast recalls how Cuthbert’s physical game, due to its connections with transitory pleasure, is identified as befitting the slaves in the stadium but not the freeborn, and common herds but not shepherds. Here, it is noteworthy that the slaves in the stadium are obviously an allusion to a specific gendered role in England, namely the warriors, who serve as a useful contrast to conceptualise Cuthbert’s priestly authority because they were the ruling classing of the society. By contrast, the female servant represents in a general sense the people who only care about the satisfaction of the flesh. Her gender is irrelevant to the way she is used as a contrast to define Cuthbert’s priesthood.

In fact, Bede also means her to be read as an ideal priest. He addresses the fish she gave to Cuthbert as a *viaticum*, thus highlighting how a priest should support his flock’s heavenly journey by teaching and administering sacraments. In Bede’s view, an eagle figures an ideal teacher because she helps her children to touch the heavens when their feathers of virtues are yet to grow, and also because she defends them from the attacks of the Serpent.¹⁰² In this case, childbearing is a metaphor for how a priest takes care of his flock, despite the fact that a woman cannot be a priest. Getting back to the metrical *Life*, the eagle appears in the story after Cuthbert urges his young retainer to have faith in God, and is described as ‘flying

¹⁰⁰ *VC*M, pp. 228-31 (Chapter 10)

¹⁰¹ *VC*M, pp. 228-29 (ll. 307-08): ‘medium secat atque ministræ parte famem pellit, firmant sua pectora parte’

¹⁰² Bede, *In Lucam*, p. 172 on Luke 8:1 (Book 3, Chapter 8 ll. 241-53).

aloft in the bright heaven', thus giving an impression that she is representing a pastoral ideal that Cuthbert is performing in the story.¹⁰³ This impression is further strengthened in the stories that follow, when the devil is addressed as the 'Serpent' (*anguis*) when being blamed for causing both the phantom fire and the possession of Hildmar's wife.¹⁰⁴ In all these cases, the gender of the eagle is completely irrelevant to the male ideal she represents, namely that of a pastor. Presumably this representation is based on the tradition of using it as a symbol of John the Evangelist.

IV.5 Cuthbert as a Hermit-Bishop

There follow two series about Cuthbert's life on Farne and his healing miracles as a bishop.¹⁰⁵ While the original text downplays the importance of eremitic monasticism in Cuthbert's career in favour of coenobitism, Bede gives additional weight to the former. He presents it as a most severe form of monasticism, by relating how Cuthbert had to first experiment with it before settling on Farne, by living on an island closer to Lindisfarne. He also describes Cuthbert as performing his episcopal career like a 'solitary monk among crowds' (*in turbis monachus*).¹⁰⁶ As I shall show below, he brings together these two sets of stories, which were originally related separately in two different books in the Lindisfarne Life, by showing that Cuthbert's life on Farne had in fact foreshadowed the mystic nature of his pastoral role.

The first Farne episode describes the stone wall which Cuthbert built as strengthened with 'portable stones' (*missilibus saxis*).¹⁰⁷ Here, it resembles the original account in presenting the wall as a symbol of the Church Cuthbert built on Christ the Rock.¹⁰⁸ However, Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History* also refer to the English saints as living stones being carried out to heaven by the plague.¹⁰⁹ Presumably, the stone wall on Farne in the metrical

¹⁰³ *VC*M, pp. 228-29 (ll. 303): 'quae celsa sub axe uolarat'.

¹⁰⁴ *VC*M, pp. 228-29 (l. 312)

¹⁰⁵ *VC*M, pp. 236-67 (Chapters 14-28).

¹⁰⁶ *VC*M, pp. 258-59 (Chapter 22 l. 560).

¹⁰⁷ *VC*M, pp. 240-41 (Chapter 15 l. 402).

¹⁰⁸ *VCA*, pp. 96-97 (Book III, Chapter 2)

¹⁰⁹ *HE*, pp. 338-39 (Book IV, Chapter 3). See O'Brien, *Bede's Temple*, p 165

Life is also meant to be read as referring to the Church in heaven, rather than the earthly institution, as the Lindisfarne account seems to direct the audience to focus on. Moreover, whereas the original story relates how four brethren broke their vow of obedience by giving up the task of moving a heavy stone, Bede removes this account and instead asserts that the portable stones were too heavy to be moved even by six (*bis terni*) strong men.¹¹⁰ Note that he likewise terms the number six as twice three in his *On the Tabernacle*, when he explains the spiritual meanings of the six stone jars of water that Christ has turned into wine.¹¹¹ He believes that these jars on the one hand symbolise those preached the mystery of Trinity before and after Christ, and on the other hand the three components of the Church: the married, the chaste and the leaders. In this case, the Farne story, with its reference to the six strong men, can be read as referring to how Cuthbert lifted all types of members in the Church to heaven in a way that outstripped all the teachers in the Old and New Testaments Eras. This reading is further supported by the next episode, which relates how Cuthbert miraculously produced a fountain from the rock and compares this miracle to Christ changing water into wine.¹¹² Here, this story obviously compares Cuthbert to Moses and Christ, thus further highlighting his role as a teacher of the hidden secrets that had been unveiled by the Old-Testament Prophets and Christ. It is noteworthy that in both stories, Bede does not mention that Cuthbert needed other brethren's help to build the stone wall and fountain, thus removing the emphasis on coenobitism and the virtue of obedience in the original version.

Bede continues to give weight to the teacher's role in the next two episodes, which feature birds. In the first one, which is his own addition, he relates how Cuthbert farmed his own crops on the island and reproved two birds for stealing his crops. The whole episode is obviously based on a similar story in the *Life of Anthony*, but it departs from the original

¹¹⁰ VCM, pp. 240-41 (l. 403)

¹¹¹ 'De Tabernaculo', in *Beda Venerabilis Opera Pars II Opera Exegetica 2A CCSL*, 119A, pp. 5-139, pp. 31-32 (ll. 1023-91) For how Bede uses explains this Biblical story, see George Hardin Brown, 'The Miracles of Jesus in the Writings of the Venerable Bede', in *Illuminating Jesus in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Jane Beal (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 49-57 (pp. 52-54).

¹¹² VCM, pp. 240-41 (Chapter 16).

material in two ways.¹¹³ Firstly, it describes the sowing with words from Juvenecus's *Gospels*, relating to how Christ took the people listening to His teaching as His food.¹¹⁴ Secondly, it describes Cuthbert's role as a shepherd of the 'feathered flock' when relating how he reproved the birds. Both of these references highlight Cuthbert's role as a pastor. In the next story, Bede follows the original account closely by relating how the saint reproved two ravens for attacking the roof of the guesthouse he built on Farne. Yet considering that Bede regards the raven as a symbol of spiritual weakness in his commentary, he might likewise intend this story to be read as representing how Cuthbert protected the Church by removing its members' spiritual weakness.¹¹⁵ Then at the end of the Farne series, Bede recounts how Cuthbert shared his experience of spiritual struggle on Farne with those who came to receive his teachings.¹¹⁶ Here, his presenting of Cuthbert as a hermit-teacher might have again been inspired by a similar account in the *Life of Anthony*.¹¹⁷ However by placing the focus of the speech on the rejection of the pleasures of the transient world, he is able to express his own view that a good teacher should teach heavenly things.

Finally, Bede also expresses the same ideal of the hermit-teacher in his rewriting of the account of how Ælflæd questioned Cuthbert about the length of Ecgrith's life.¹¹⁸ He describes the abbess as one of those coming to Farne to receive teaching from the saint, and rewrites the saint's answer as a piece of teaching: 'You call the reigns of men long-lasting which, even if they should endure a hundred years, come to close in a brief moment.'¹¹⁹ Bede then puts further words into Cuthbert's mouth, describing the present life as 'chains and prison-house of the flesh' ('uinclis et carcere carnis').¹²⁰ Here, in contrast to the emphasis on

¹¹³ VA, pp. 176-77 (Chapter 50 ll. 720-37).

¹¹⁴ VCM, pp. 242-43 (ll. 420): 'quae uestro sulcis non est inserta labore', citing *Evangeliorum*, p. 55 (Book II, l. 319): 'quae non est uestro sulcis inserta labore'. See VCM, p. 243, n. 421.

¹¹⁵ See Chapter One.

¹¹⁶ VCM, pp. 248-51 (Chapter 20).

¹¹⁷ VA, pp. 166-74 (Chapters 16-43).

¹¹⁸ VCM, pp. 250-57 (Chapter 21). For Hollis's explanation of this story, see *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 199-202.

¹¹⁹ VCM, pp. 252-53 (ll. 507-08): 'regna uocas longaeua uirum, quae quamlibet annis centenis extenta, breui claudentur in hora'

¹²⁰ VCM, pp. 254-55 (l. 545)

the obedience to God's inscrutable judgement in the original story, Bede's rewriting gives more weight to the transient nature of the present life, and thus again presents Cuthbert as a hermit teacher who was able to fix his mind on heavenly things and to direct his followers to follow suit.

Meanwhile, Bede constructs the spiritual warriorhood of this hermit teacher's image in two aspects. Firstly, as mentioned, in the account of the heavily stones, he compares the strong men to preachers and thus draws a parallel between Cuthbert's superiority in strength and in teaching. Secondly, he repeatedly employs metaphors of spiritual warfare throughout the Farne episodes. He describes how Cuthbert, after performing healings at Lindisfarne by defeating 'the Enemy's black weapons' (*atra arma hostis*), went further to expel the demons from Farne to establish 'celestial fortifications' (*celsa moenia*) there.¹²¹ He also labels the island as then coming under 'the jurisdiction of the Lord's soldier' (*iura militis Domini*).¹²² Therefore, when he puts words in Cuthbert's mouth to recount the spiritual struggle on Farne as an example of how the faithful's weapon can always defeat the devils, he creates an impression that Cuthbert was a teacher in combat, who shared his fighting experience as an experienced warrior.

By contrast, he describes Ælfflæd's anxiety about her brother's earthly life as a reflection of 'womanly cares' (*femineis curis*), a phrase that he would use again in the same story in his prose *Life*.¹²³ He then puts words in the abbess's mouth, relating the variety in men's cares — whereas some sought 'fleeing treasures' (*fugaces gazas*), Cuthbert despised 'worldly glory' (*honorem mundi*).¹²⁴ Note that in his commentaries Bede often regards women, whom he takes as the weaker sex, as representing carnal desire. For instance, he reads Lot's wife as representing the weak mind being trapped by carnal desire, when explaining why she was turned into a pillar of salt when looking back at Sodom.¹²⁵ Likewise,

¹²¹ *VCM*, pp. 236-39 (Chapters 14-15 ll. 383, 398).

¹²² *VCM*, pp. 242-43 (Chapter 17 l. 427).

¹²³ *VCM*, pp. 252-53 (Chapter 21 l. 501).

¹²⁴ *VCM*, pp. 254-55 (ll. 521, 523).

¹²⁵ *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars II Opera Exegetica 1: Libri Quatvor In Principium Genesis Usque*

using Christ's healing of Peter's mother-in-law as an example, he argues that women struck by illness in the Bible refer to the flesh being weakened by lust, whereas men struck by illness point to the mind possessed by the devil.¹²⁶ In light of this binarism, the metaphorical use of *Ælfflæd's* femininity in the metrical *Life* can be understood as representing a failure to resist worldly concerns, whereas that of the warrior's masculinity as representing the capability of doing so, given that warriors were likely to have been considered the most manly figures in society. It is worth noting that *Ælfflæd* does not function as a foil to the ideal exemplified by Cuthbert in the metrical *Life* as she did in the original account. This is because she is presented neither as a type or an antitype of the teacher of hidden mysteries. Indeed, her role in the story is defined as one among the flock who came to Cuthbert to search for advice, rather than as his counterpart as is the case in the original text. In this case, her spiritual femininity functions mainly as a representation of the worldly concerns which the priests should both avoid themselves and set their flock free from.

Closing the Farne episodes, Bede explains Cuthbert's transition from his solitary to episcopal career using the parable of the lamp on a stand.¹²⁷ As I have pointed out, this parable refers to the Gregorian ideal of unifying pastoral care and contemplative life in the *Whitby Life*. The same is true in the metrical *Life*, as Bede then, in terms of the same ideal, praises Cuthbert's episcopal life at the beginning of his narrative of the healing miracles: '...with prayers and admonitions he watches over the flocks entrusted to him...gentle with embittered folk and a solitary monk among crowds'.¹²⁸ On the one hand, these words direct the audience to see Cuthbert's life on Farne as a preparation stage for him to become an ideal bishop, namely a pastor who, in spite of his social life, could preserve a hermit's mind. On the other hand, these words also foreshadow the weight given to pastoral care in the healing stories. Taken together, these words relate both the Farne and healing episodes to the

AD Natiuitatem Isaac et Eiectionem Ismahelis Adnotationum, by Ch. W. Jones, CCSL, 118A (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1967), pp. 227-8 on Genesis 19:26 (Book IV, Chapter 19 ll. 1199-1229)

¹²⁶ Bede's *In Lucam*, p. 111 on Luke 4:38 (Book II, Chapter 4 ll. 446-71).

¹²⁷ *VCM*, pp. 256-57 (Chapter 21 ll. 537-41).

¹²⁸ *VCM*, pp. 258-59 (Chapter 22 ll. 558-59): 'greges precibus monitisque tuetur [...] blandus amaris, in turbis monachus [...]'.

Gregorian ideal of the integration of pastoral care and contemplation.

Bede derives four of his five healing stories from the Lindisfarne account.¹²⁹ Yet again he changes the wordings to express his own ideal. This can be clearly observed in how he relates the healing of Hemma's wife:

The holy teacher [*doctor*], administering celestial gifts on all sides, made his way through the territories belonging to a certain nobleman, whom an ailing wife greatly saddened, [since she] suffered illness and was on the point of death.¹³⁰

In the original account, this story focuses mainly on the bishop's role as a provider of holy water, with which Hemma's wife was healed.¹³¹ Bede, however, assigns Cuthbert the title of *doctor* and describes his pastoral visitation as 'making his way through the territories' ('per... tulit arua gradus').¹³² These are words used to describe Peter's missionary works in Arator's *Acts of the Apostles*.¹³³ Meanwhile, by stating that the territories belonged to a nobleman saddened by his dying wife, Bede also gives an impression that this story is a figuration of how Cuthbert saved the Church by his teaching — the Church that saddened the Bridegroom due to its spiritual illness. Then in another healing story, Bede likewise sets the background in a pastoral tour in which 'the watchful shepherd is making the rounds of the sheepfolds entrusted to him'.¹³⁴

He gives the same emphasis to Cuthbert's pastoral role in the story he adds to the original narrative. The story relates how a dying layman was healed when one of his friends, whom he summoned on his deathbed, gave him a drink of the water into which bread consecrated by Cuthbert had been dipped. The story addresses the dying man as 'himself the

¹²⁹ *VCM*, pp. 261-65 (Chapters 23-24, 26-27). *VCA*, pp. 114-121 (Book IX, Chapters 3-6).

¹³⁰ *VCM*, p. 261-62 (Chapter 23 ll. 565-67): 'Doctor ubique pius caelestia dona ministrans, per comitis tulit arua gradus, quem languida coniunx traistabat perpessa luem letoque propinquans'.

¹³¹ *VCA*, IV. 3.

¹³² *VCM*, pp. 260-61 (Chapter 23 l. 566; n. 566)

¹³³ *Aratoris Subdiaconi De Actibus Apostolorum*, ed. by A. P. McKinlay, CSEL 72 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1951), p. 57 (Book I, l. 756).

¹³⁴ *VCM*, pp. 262-63 (Chapter 26, l. 583): 'iam commissa uigil dum lustrat ouilia pastor'.

father of a household' (*pater ipse domus*).¹³⁵ This points to the parable of the absent master recorded in Mark 13:33-37, in which the same phrase is used by Juvenius to address the master who got back to home suddenly and caught his idle servants in surprise.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, this story also makes an implicit reference to the parable of the heavenly banquet by relating how the dying man summoned all his friends but only some arrived.¹³⁷ In this case, this story presents Cuthbert as a pastor providing the living bread for those who were willing to answer the calling to join the heavenly banquet. Finally, when rewriting the story of the weeping mother, Bede, as I have pointed out above, removes the emphasis on the submission to God's inscrutable judgement. Instead, the phrase 'incidence of death' (*mortis sorte*) he uses to describe the plague is a borrowing from *Ecclesiasticus* 48.5, referring to how God punished His people with the plague in order to make them confess.¹³⁸ The use of this phrase thus parallels the healing and the teaching. Overall, these healing stories highlight Cuthbert's role as an apostolic teacher by showing that he healed the soul as well as the body. Accordingly, the beneficiaries are no longer examples of the virtue of obedience as they were in the original text. In other words, they no longer show the male and female audience how they should imitate Cuthbert's monastic sanctity. Instead, they now function to define the pastoral duty of the priest and the bishop, by representing in a general sense the flock who suffer from spiritual weakness.

IV.6 Facing Death as an Apostolic Teacher

The account of Cuthbert's healings ends in Chapter 28. It is followed by the last eighteen chapters of the text, relating to Cuthbert's visions of death, his dying moments and posthumous miracles. According to Bede's periodisation of the forty-six-day process of human conception, the twenty-eighth day marks the starting-point of the final stage, which

¹³⁵ *VCM*, pp. 262-63 (Chapter 26 l. 583).

¹³⁶ *Evangeliorum*, p. 119 (Book IV. l. 187): 'uir pater ipse domus sapiens nimiumque beatus'. *VCM*, pp. 262-63, n. 575.

¹³⁷ Luke 14: 15-24.

¹³⁸ *VCM*, pp. 264-65 (Chapter 27 l. 595)

sees the formation of the limbs of a human body.¹³⁹ Likewise, the stories that came after chapter 28 in the metrical *Life* can be read as representing the final stage for the perfection of Cuthbert's apostleship. Paradoxically, these chapters define the apostleship in opposition to the physical body. They describe how Cuthbert faced his death as a spiritual warrior fighting with spiritual strength, and identify his legacy not in terms of his incorrupt body but his teachings.

Bede begins the series of visions of deaths by relating how Cuthbert saw Ecgfrith's death in a second vision.¹⁴⁰ He presents the saint as a prophet mourning for the sins and consequential punishment of his own people: 'the ever-vigilant saint foresaw in his mind that these insane furies (of war) were to result in a wretched end...'¹⁴¹ Here, he departs from the original account not only by his negative depiction of Ecgfrith's battles, but also by his confidence in the knowable nature of the divine judgement — God always punishes those who sin. He then puts words in Cuthbert's mouth, grieving that God's ways became incomprehensible because 'a new kind of stupefaction disturbs the atmosphere'.¹⁴² These words likewise point to a belief that God's ways should have been knowable to humans if they do not sin. Bede therefore dismisses the emphasis given in the original account to the inscrutable nature of the divine judgement and Cuthbert's unconditional obedience. Instead, he identifies Cuthbert as a teacher who *knows* God's ways. It is also noteworthy that he also addresses Ecgfrith as a leader (*rector*), a term that Gregory usually preserves for the Church leaders.¹⁴³ Considering this address, with his emphasis that the king's foolish warfare cost not only his own life but also that of his warband, it seems that Bede intends the king to be read as a negative example of leadership. By contrast, Bede depicts Cuthbert as a good leader in the next story, by relating how he gives his last teaching to the hermit Hereberht, when

¹³⁹ Berschin, 'Opus deliberatum ac perfectum', p. 101. 'Homelia 1 In Quadragesima', p. 189 (ll. 191-207).

¹⁴⁰ *VCM*, pp. 268-69 (Chapter 29).

¹⁴¹ *VCM*, pp. 268-69 (ll. 611-12): 'atroces misero iam fine furores cedere mente uigil uatis prospexit [...]'.
¹⁴² *VCM*, pp. 268-69 (ll. 619): 'Nouus ut stupor aera turbet'.

¹⁴³ *VCM*, pp. 268-69 (l. 626). See Chapter One.

foreseeing his own death was approaching.¹⁴⁴ This teaching is that those who ask for eternal life will receive it — which Hereberht dutifully puts into practice by begging to escape ‘the prison of the flesh’ (*carcere carnis*) together with Cuthbert.¹⁴⁵ Here, the audience is directed to identify two types of leaders, namely those who are capable of leading their followers to the way to heaven on account of their heavenly knowledge and those who, like Ecgfrith and Polyphemus, with physical strength but blinded spiritual eyes, can only lead their followers to damnation.

The story that follows repeats the same contrast.¹⁴⁶ He begins the story by describing how Cuthbert, having dinner with Ælfflæd, ‘fed on the banquets of heaven, [...] is suddenly transported away from the food of humans.’¹⁴⁷ It turns out that Cuthbert is directed to a vision in which a shepherd who works for the abbess fell from a tree, dies and is received to heaven. The shepherd is said to have fallen when ‘climbing to the top of a leaf-bearing tree (*frondiferi nemoris*), so that he could cut down some fodder for his flock from the tree’s crown (*arboreo cono*)’.¹⁴⁸ Here, the shepherd can be read in an allegorical sense as a pastor who feeds his flock with spiritual truths. Meanwhile, the leaf-bearing *arbor* recalls the parable in Luke 13:6-9 in which an *arbor* is cut down after not bearing fruit for three years, and thus highlights that the pastor is working to prepare his flock for divine judgement. In this case, the shepherd’s death indeed figures Christ’s sacrifice for human salvation. Note that Bede uses the word *miles* to refer to both the shepherd in this story and Ecgfrith in the previous story. This again draws a contrast between the warriorhood of the king and that of the pastor— one was killed for the ‘insane furies of war’, the other won a spiritual battle by dying for his flock.

Furthermore, by stressing that the earthly banquet Ælfflæd provided to Cuthbert did not distract the saint from the heavenly one, Bede uses the abbess as a figuration of the carnal world — the overcoming of this defines Cuthbert’s episcopal image as ‘a solitary monk

¹⁴⁴ *VCM*, pp. 270-73 (Chapter 30).

¹⁴⁵ *VCM*, pp. 270-71 (Chapter 30 l. 645).

¹⁴⁶ *VCM*, pp. 274-77 (Chapter 31).

¹⁴⁷ *VCM*, pp. 276-77 (ll. 660-61): ‘epulis sed pastus Olympi uatis ab humanis subito secernitur escis’.

¹⁴⁸ *VCM*, pp. 276-77 (ll. 675-76).

among the crowd'. Then when relating how she sent her messenger to Whitby to confirm Cuthbert's vision, Bede borrows words from Esther 3:15 to create an implicit parallel between her messenger and those whom the Persian king sent out to announce his order of massacring the Hebrews.¹⁴⁹ Here, Bede does not assign to her a positive role akin to Esther in his construction of Cuthbert's manhood, but uses her as an allusion to the carnal world that brings death to God's chosen people. This allusion might have again owed much to his view that womanhood is used in the Bible as a metaphor for carnality. Note that Bede also omits the scene of Ælfflæd's amazement to the fulfilment of the prophecy in the original text.¹⁵⁰ In this case, Ælfflæd no longer serves as a moral example for male and female audience as in the original text.

Bede follows the death-vision stories with a long account of Cuthbert's final days on Farne.¹⁵¹ At the beginning of the account, Cuthbert resigns from his episcopal office on account of his desire to escape empty praises and to prepare for his own death.¹⁵² Once returning to Farne, he makes a speech to his brethren, urging them to break the bonds of the present world and to keep heavenly treasures in their hearts in preparation for eternal life.¹⁵³ Here, he does not set his hermit's life in contradiction to his obligation to teach, but instead his retreat gives more power to his teaching about the despising of worldly glory. Then coming to his dying moments, Cuthbert makes a second speech to his brethren, when the latter are so anxious to claim his body for the community at Lindisfarne.¹⁵⁴ In this speech, Cuthbert recounts his suffering from demonic attacks in the five days before, and uses this as an example to explain that the closer Christians are approaching the victory, the fiercer the demonic attacks would become; hence, he asks the brethren to fight harder. Meanwhile, he reminds them to water the crops sown by God and foretells that they will survive the

¹⁴⁹ *VCM*, pp. 676-77 (l. 672): 'quae misso festina suos cursore per omnes'. Esther 3:15: 'festinabant cursors qui missi erant'. *VCM*, p. 276, n. 672.

¹⁵⁰ *VCA*, pp. 126-27 (Book IV, Chapter 10).

¹⁵¹ *VCM*, pp. 277-89 (Chapters 32-36).

¹⁵² *VCM*, pp. 276-79 (Chapter 32).

¹⁵³ *VCM*, pp. 278-81 (Chapter 33).

¹⁵⁴ *VCM*, pp. 282-87 (Chapter 34).

oncoming storm as they have the stone as their foundation. At the end of the speech, he urges them to remember his teachings, stressing that it is better for them to leave their community than to leave the way shown in the Bible. He also warns them— obviously as an implicit criticism of their anxiety in claiming his body — not to take pride in the earth that buried the ashes of those who have ascended to the starry sky, in case they would fall into the temptation of empty praises. These two speeches summarise how Cuthbert performs his apostolic manhood in the metrical *Life*. They define him as a teacher who despises all earthly things, engages in spiritual warfare, sows the Word and builds the Church. They also show that the ideal that Cuthbert exemplifies, rather than his incorrupt body, is his enduring legacy.

This is then followed by a healing story that expresses the same dualistic view of Cuthbert's manhood.¹⁵⁵ In the story, the dying saint is urged to allow a brother to stay with him under the 'sacred roof' of his hermitage in order to take care of him. Yet he chooses to take in a brother with an infirmity, who is healed after 'he enters the sacred threshold' (adit...limina sacra) of the cell. The story shows that Cuthbert's spiritual power remains intact despite his bodily weakness, and that his followers could become worthy servants and successors of his Church — signified by the hermit cell with a sacred roof— not by their physical strength, but by their willingness to follow him on the right path. Finally, in the next story, Cuthbert completes his own journey to heaven: '[he]...tastes the cup of life and fortifies his upward journey with the blood of Christ...and gives up his soul...to the rejoicing stars'.¹⁵⁶ Some of these words are borrowed from Arator's *History of the Apostles*, initially pointing to the two critical moments of Stephen's life: his ordination and martyrdom.¹⁵⁷ Thus in the metrical *Life*, they presents Cuthbert's death as the martyrdom of a successor of the apostles, and thus bring to conclusion the long account of how he embraced death by setting his mind on heaven and bore the duty of a priest till his last breath.

¹⁵⁵ *VCM*, pp. 286-89 (Chapter 35).

¹⁵⁶ *VCM*, pp. 288-89 (Chapter 36 ll. 782-85): 'pocula degustat uitae Christique supinum sanguine munit iter [...] animam [...] laetantibus indidit astris'.

¹⁵⁷ *VCM*, p. 289 n. 782-83. *Actibus Apostolorum*, p. 45 (Book I, l. 555): 'ecclesiae fulgere manus quae pocula uitae'; p. 48 (Book I, l. 597): 'sanguine fecit iter'.

However, Cuthbert's apostleship can only be said to have reached its perfection when his teaching continues to be observed by his followers after his death. Bede has foregrounded this point by preceding the episode of the elevation of Cuthbert's body with a new story about the crisis that followed the saint's death.¹⁵⁸ According to this story, the report of Cuthbert's death arrived at Lindisfarne at a time when the brethren were keeping vigil and singing the part of Psalm 59 that relates how God will restore His people after destroying them. Here, the chanting of the psalm functions as a foreshadowing of the attack which the community would suffer — a crisis that Cuthbert has foretold obscurely by referring to a coming storm in his second speech on Farne. Bede would later in his *Ecclesiastical History* attribute this crisis to Wilfrid, whose one-year rule of the community following Cuthbert's death forced many brethren to leave.¹⁵⁹ In the metrical *Life*, however, his focus is on how the brethren follow Cuthbert's deathbed advice in the crisis, by choosing to leave their community — the saints' burial site, in order to continue to observe their teachings. A second focus of Bede in the story is on how Ealberht, as Cuthbert's successor, was able to bring back 'the scattered sheep to the sacred sheepfold', fulfilling both the prophecies of Psalm 59 and Cuthbert.¹⁶⁰

Bede also reshapes the stories of the posthumous healings in a way that they now represent figuratively how the pastoral ideal Cuthbert had exemplified survived his death. In the original text, the first of these stories relates how a priest at Lindisfarne cured a boy with holy water.¹⁶¹ He blessed the water himself but mixed it with soil taken from the holy ground which had once received the water used to wash Cuthbert's body. Rewriting the story, Bede describes the sacred soil as 'a great salvation' (*grandem salutem*) taken 'from a bit of the rock' (*modico de rupe*), thus showing how the priests at Lindisfarne followed Cuthbert to share Christ's mystery with the laity to heal their souls through pastoral care.¹⁶² Then in the next story, Bede attributes another healing miracle to Cuthbert's 'kindly word' (*vox alma*),

¹⁵⁸ *VCM*, pp. 290-93 (Chapter 37).

¹⁵⁹ *HE*, pp. 442-43 (Book IV, Chapter 29).

¹⁶⁰ *VCM*, p. 293 (l. 810): 'dispersosque sacrum reuocat sub ouile bidentes'.

¹⁶¹ *VCA*, pp. 132-33 (Book IV, Chapter 15).

¹⁶² *VCM*, pp. 298-301 (Chapter 40 l. 857).

despite the fact that the healing occurred at Cuthbert's tomb, thus drawing the audience's attention away from the incorrupt body to the teaching of the saint.¹⁶³ In another story, Bede describes how a man, being healed by Cuthbert's shoes, was like 'a fish washed up from the sea tossed about on the shore' — a description that recalls how the saint had prefigured his priesthood as a youth by rescuing five rafts from destruction.¹⁶⁴

In the final three chapters, Bede brings the audience's attention further away from Cuthbert's body with his focus on the succession of the hermit cell on Farne.¹⁶⁵ He compares the cell to Solomon's Temple, the roof of which he praises as comparable to the starry heaven.¹⁶⁶ He then recounts how the cell was ruined after Cuthbert's death, just as Solomon's Temple had been after being burnt down by the Babylonians, but the calfskin (*pelliculam*) Cuthbert used to repair its wall was distributed as medicine throughout the world by Felgild, the second successor of the cell. Here, Bede obviously means the cell to be read in a figurative way. In his commentaries he regards the skin (*pelliculam*) used to cover the roof of the Temple as referring to the preachers who shared the mystery of Christ the Ram.¹⁶⁷ Thus, the skin, together with the roof, reminds the audience that those who succeeded Cuthbert's Church also inherit his pastoral duty, just as is the case in Cuthbert's succession of Aidan's see. It was their observance of this duty that made the Church comparable to Solomon's Temple and heaven itself.

The next story gives additional weight to this point as it features Oidilwald teaching in the cell.¹⁶⁸ Oidilwald was the first occupant of the cell after Cuthbert's death, being praised in the story as governing the cell by resisting the Serpent's weapons. In the story, he preaches to someone in the cell but the heavenly things that occupy his mind keep interrupting the flow of his speech. He then explains to the listener who complains about this that it is more

¹⁶³ *VCM*, pp. 300-01. (Chapter 41 l. 866)

¹⁶⁴ *VCM*, pp. 302-03 (Chapter 43 l. 885): 'aequore deserti ludunt ceu litore psices'. See also *VCM*, pp. 200-05 (Chapter 3).

¹⁶⁵ *VCM*, pp. 304-13 (Chapters 44-46).

¹⁶⁶ *VCM*, pp. 304-05 (Chapter 44 ll. 894-96).

¹⁶⁷ 'De Tabernaculo', pp. 57-58 on Exodus 26:14 (Book I ll. 611-36).

¹⁶⁸ *VCM*, pp. 306-09 (Chapter 45).

important to converse with heaven than with humans. Regarding this act of explaining, Bede describes it as a hero's answer, which is an implicit reference to the prophet Musaeus, who in the *Aeneid* tells Aeneas how to look for his father in heaven.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, Bede highlights Oidilwald's apostolic role by drawing a parallel (through word borrowing) between the hermit's speech and a sermon of Paul fictionalised in Arator's *Acts of the Apostles*.¹⁷⁰ Taken together, Bede uses this story to show that the worthy successors of Cuthbert's Church are those who could teach the mystery of Christ to the laity as the saint had once did. Then in the final story, he relates how Felgild, before distributing the calfskin to others as medicine, first dipped the skin into holy water and then used the water to cure his face.¹⁷¹ He describes this miracle as follows: 'Felgild, the donor of kindly gifts, himself receives these teachings of health-giving strength'.¹⁷² These words seem to be a reference to a speech of Paul recorded in the Hebrews, in which Paul tells his audience that they need to be taught the basic knowledge again in order to become teachers in their own right.¹⁷³ If this reading is correct, then these words foreground the succession of apostleship. At last, in the concluding chapter, Bede similarly identifies his metrical *Life* as a gift to Christ, 'donor of all gifts'.¹⁷⁴ Here, he implicitly regards himself as an apostle resembling Oidilwald and Felgild, for distributing the divine gifts he has received from God and Cuthbert to others as a teacher. This text can therefore be regarded as a narrative of an apostleship which he himself shares with the saints.

Overall, Bede defines Cuthbert's apostolic holiness in two aspects. First, he replaces the references to Cuthbert's monastic virtues with those that refer to his priesthood, teaching and contemplation. In this case, he shows that a priest could be considered an apostle when he exercises his office by teaching the mystery of heaven which he had achieved as a

¹⁶⁹ VCM, p. 308, n. 923; pp. 308-09 (l. 923): 'paucis ita reddidit heros', citing *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Sextus*, ed. R.G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 22 (l. 672).

¹⁷⁰ VCM, p. 309, n. 927; pp. 308-09 (l. 927): 'non queat aethereas inter dare uerba cateruas'. *De Actibus Apostolorum*, p. 79 (Book II, l. 41): 'Paulus et extemplo properat dare uerba cateruis'.

¹⁷¹ VCM, pp. 310-33 (Chapter 46)

¹⁷² VCM, pp. 310-11 (ll. 944-45): 'Ergo age, Felgeldus, largitor muneris almi, prima salutiferi ipse capit documenta uigoris'.

¹⁷³ Hebrews 5:12.

¹⁷⁴ VCM, p. 313 (Conclusion, l. 970): 'cunctorum largitor, Christe, bonorum'.

contemplative. But this also means that the ideal exemplified by Cuthbert is no longer capable of being imitated by women. Second, he describes Cuthbert as a spiritual warrior who fought to defend his flock by spiritual rather than physical strength. In this case, he defines the priestly authority in opposition to the authority of the earthly warriors, in the same way as how the technique of *conversio* was used in early Christian tradition to define Christian heroes in opposition to the pagan ones. It is noteworthy that a successful military career was an important indicator of success for a nobleman in the conversion period. Accordingly, it is also possible to read Cuthbert's spiritual warriorhood as representing a spiritual form of nobility, together with another two of his important roles in the *Life*, namely as a worthy heir and a father whose legacy proved to stand after his death. Finally, while the whole narrative is mainly about the contrast between the ideal masculinities of the priest and the warrior, at least on one occasion the gender of the female characters helps to define the priestly manhood. *Ælfflæd*, by representing in the text the earthly concerns of the laity on account of her 'womanly cares', serves as a warning to the priestly audience that they could become feminine in a spiritual way whenever they fail to distinguish themselves in mind and actions from those whom they are supposed to lead.

Chapter V

The Servant of Christ in Bede's Prose *Life of Cuthbert*

Bede's Prose *Life of Cuthbert* is the best-studied text among the five *Lives* that this thesis focuses on. As I have shown in the previous chapters, much research has been conducted on it regarding its contexts, religious ideas and exegetical aspects. Yet once again, it is only Hollis who has provided a systematic study of it in terms of gender. This chapter will add to this scholarship by examining how Cuthbert is presented as a servant of Christ in the text. It will show that this presentation positions men and women in relation to holiness in a very different way to how Cuthbert is portrayed in the two previous *Lives*.

The idea of Christians as God's servants had its roots in the Bible; notable instances are Virgin Mary as a 'handmaid of the Lord' (*ancilla Domini*) in the Annunciation, a series of parables made by Christ about serving and labouring for God, the comparison between the ministration of Mary and Martha, and the addressing of Christians as Christ's servants (*ministri Christi*) in the Epistles.¹ The idea enjoyed wide circulation in early Christian texts. Augustine, for instance, suggested that all Christians, whatever their social status, religious habits and gender, should endure the evil of the present world as the *famuli Christi*.² Gregory, meanwhile, conceptualises the servants of Christ (*famuli Dominorum*) as those who always put what the Lord has ordered into practice; he also calls himself 'a servant of the servants of God' (*servus servorum Dei*) in his letters.³

In the early Anglo-Saxon period, the title of the servant of Christ is used in a very broad sense to address those who lived a religious life, including priests, monastics and hermits. For instance, the title is used in all the three *Lives* of Cuthbert, presumably as a way of emphasising the coherence of the saint's life in spite of his change of careers. Bede also

¹ Luke 1:38; Luke 10:38-42. For the parables, see below. For some references to this idea in the Epistles, see 1 Timothy 4:6; Ephesians 6:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

² Augustine, *The City of God, Volume I: Book 1-3*, ed. and trans. by George E. McCracken, Loeb Classical Library 411 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 211 (Book II, Chapter 19 ll 22-34).

³ *Moralia*, CCSL 143, p.1 (ad Leandrum); *Moralia*, CCSL 143A, p. 824 (Book xvi, Chapter 35 ll 2-7).

uses the phrase to describe himself so often that it was used as the title of an important collection of essays dedicated to him in 1976.⁴ However, this phrase has so far received little discussions in studies of Bede, and of holiness and gender in the conversion period. Presumably this is because when the phrase was used in a broad sense in this period, it becomes very difficult to identify it with a specific ideal, or specific perception of gender and holiness. Yet Bede in fact spent much time discussing the concept of the servant of Christ in his commentaries, when providing exegetical explanations of the Biblical passages about serving and labouring for God in his commentaries. Read in the light of these commentaries, this chapter suggests that Bede applies the concept to establish a distinctive model of holiness in the prose *Life of Cuthbert*, one that is both capable of being imitated by monastics and lay people of both sexes, as is the monastic model in the Lindisfarne *Life*, and capable of representing Gregory's ideal of the teacher of the hidden mystery, as is the priestly model in the metrical *Life*. The first section reviews Bede's ideal of the servant of Christ in his writings, and then the next five examine how Bede presents Cuthbert as an exemplar of this ideal in terms of his life stages as layman, monk, religious teacher, hermit, and bishop. This chapter will pay particular attention to the gendered metaphors used to present this ideal of servanthood, and the relation of this ideal to the characters and to audiences from different backgrounds.

V. 1 The Servant of Christ in Bede's Writings

Bede's discussion of the parables of the Lord's servants and labourers forms the core of his conceptualising of this ideal. These parables are presented as stories told by Christ and recorded in all the four Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew provides the most complete record of them and puts them together as a series between chapters 20-25. This explains why Bede frequently makes cross-references to this gospel when discussing the parables in his commentaries on Luke and Mark, and quotes mainly from it when applying the parables to

⁴ *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, edited by Gerald Bonner (London: S.P.C.K., 1976).

the prose *Life*. One of the main themes of these parables is that one has to labour hard in order to receive rewards from the master. In Matthew 20:1-16, Christ tells a parable of how a master goes out from his home five times in order to hire labourers to work in his vineyard; Bede endorses Gregory's interpretation that this refers to the five earthly ages that humans live before the second coming of Christ.⁵ This parable is followed in Matthew 20:20-28 by Christ's teaching about the leader's duty to serve. Asked to allow James and John to sit beside Him in heaven, Christ reprimands them for not knowing what they are asking and points out that only those who share His cup could achieve this status. He then contrasts the princes of the Gentiles, who dominate their subjects by power, with those among His disciples, who will be honoured in heaven by ministering to others as servants (*servi*) — indeed, even the coming of the son of man is meant to serve (*ministrare*) rather than to receive ministration. For Bede, this speech reveals that the apostles shall rule as teachers and leaders not by power but by their humility and martyrdom; also, whereas people who labour to satisfy their lust would seek in vain, those who share His cup of suffering and labour for Him would be rewarded in heaven.⁶ Then in Matthew 21 and 22, Christ relates two similar parables, concerning respectively, a banquet and the fruit in a vineyard which a householder has prepared for his guest. In both cases, the servants sent out to invite the guests are killed, and as a result the householder punishes all those guests and invites those in the street to share his possessions. For Bede, these parables represent how God sends preachers to invite the Gentiles to receive salvation after the Jews killed the preachers whom He had sent to them.⁷

In Matthew 24, Christ stresses that no one shall know the Day of Judgement, and He tells the parable of the faithful and wicked servants. Bede, however, bases his reading on Luke's more detailed version. Luke 12:35-48 urges the disciples to gird themselves and to keep their lights burning. It tells how a master who leaves for a wedding feast requires his

⁵ Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 25-26.

⁶ 'Beda Venerabilis in Marci Evangelium Expositio', in *Badae Venerabilis Opera Pars II Opera Exegetica* 3, pp. 427-648 (pp. 564-65) (Book iii, Chapter 10 ll. 891-963).

⁷ *In Marcum*, pp. 584-86 on Mark 12:1-12 (Book iii, Chapter 7, ll. 1650-726); *In Lucam*, pp. 278-79 on Luke 14:15-24 (Book iv, Chapter 14, ll. 1908-919).

servants to open the door for him immediately when he returns. On his first return, he invites those who remain watchful to sit down and rest. He likewise appreciates those who remain watchful on his second and third return. Also, when he returns at an unexpected hour, he appoints the servants whom he finds labouring to have charge of all his possessions as stewards, and he expels those who are found eating, drinking and beating other servants. For Bede, the reference to the girdle and the burning lamp hints that in order to prepare for judgement day, Christians should constrain their flesh and serve as good examples for their neighbours by good works, rather than spend leisure time on earthly pleasures.⁸ Meanwhile, he sees the servant who only wakes up when the master returns a third time as representing those who only come to their senses in their old age instead of in their childhood and adulthood.⁹ Bede says that these people tremble when the master comes back from the wedding feast and knocks on the door, because their souls are not yet ready to leave their bodies to receive the master.¹⁰ Presumably Bede is here making an implicit reference to the Song of Songs 5:4, in which the bride trembles when the bridegroom knocks the door and hesitates to open the door for him. For Bede, the trembling bride reflects a Church that is weak and unprepared to receive Christ the Bridegroom, on account of her idleness and failure to preach.¹¹ Furthermore, the servant parable compares death to a thief breaking into a house at an unexpected time.¹² Bede elaborates this comparison as that when the sleeping servants leave their bodies unguarded, death would come and kill their sleeping souls, whereas the vigilant servants would resist the death from taking their souls by repentance.¹³ Overall, he identifies two types of rest in this parable — sleep that is caused by the laziness of the mind and can hinder one's labour, and contemplative repose, which is signified by how the faithful servant is permitted to sit down as a reward for his labour.¹⁴ Regarding the former, Bede

⁸ *In Lucam*, pp. 255-56 (Book IV, Chapter 12 ll. 987-1003). For the eschatological sense of the servant of Christ in Bede's works, see Darby, *the End of Time*, pp. 96 and 198.

⁹ *In Lucam*, p. 257 (Book IV, Chapter 12 ll. 1039-047).

¹⁰ *In Lucam*, p. 256 (Book IV, Chapter 12 ll. 1004-13).

¹¹ *In Cantica Canticorum*, p. 278 (Book III, Chapter 5 ll. 267- 278).

¹² Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:39.

¹³ *In Lucam*, p. 257 (Book IV, Chapter 12 ll. 1056-66).

¹⁴ *In Lucam*, pp. 256-7 (Book IV, Chapter 12 ll. 1020-1037).

quotes Romans 13:11 to urge the audience to rise from it as Christ's return is at hand. He identifies the good servant rewarded with stewardship as the diligent *doctores*, who will receive greater reward than the good listeners, whereas the servants who beat the handmaids and children are the false teachers who will be punished for mistreating their subjects.¹⁵

Finally, Matthew 25 brings together two parables relating respectively to keeping vigil and labouring for Christ. The first is about how five wise virgins who prepare enough oils to wait for the coming of the bridegroom at night, whereas their five foolish counterparts fail to do so and fall asleep.¹⁶ As Barrow has pointed out recently, this parable provides Bede with a framework to construct the spiritual sense of the success of the female community at Whitby and the destruction of that at Coldingham.¹⁷ Whereas Bede compares Hild and her nuns with the wise virgins on account of their virtuous monastic life, he equates Æbbe's nuns with the foolish virgins because of their failure to keep vigil, and their misbehaviour. As Barrow has also pointed out, Bede might intend the destruction of the monastery by fire to be read in relation to how King Ecgfrith was killed in his ill-justified war against the Picts.¹⁸ Another parable in Matthew 25 tells how the good servant who multiplies the talents the master gives him receives more talents, whereas the servant who simply hides the money is punished.¹⁹ Bede alludes to this parable on several occasions in his commentaries with the term *talenta*. In his comment on Luke 5:8, for instance, he compares how Levi left everything to follow Jesus to those Christians who renounce the world to gather heavenly treasure in heaven.²⁰ Likewise, in his comment on the account of the tax-collector Zacchaeus, which immediately precedes the parable of the talents in Luke 19, he draws attention to how Zacchaeus gives away half of his property when receiving Christ into his house, and states that a Christian should similarly abandon earthly affairs in order to minister to Christ.²¹ Then

¹⁵ *In Lucam*, p. 259 (Book IV, Chapter 12 ll. 1115-24, 1132-41).

¹⁶ Matthew 25:1-13.

¹⁷ Barrow, 'Wise and Foolish Virgins', pp. 287-308.

¹⁸ Barrow, 'Wise and Foolish Virgins', pp. 289-92, 297-9.

¹⁹ Matthew, 25:14-30.

²⁰ *In Marcum*, pp. 457-58 (Book I, Chapter 2 ll. 812-33).

²¹ 'Homelia 21: In Quadragesima (Marth. ix, 9-13)', in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars III Opera Homiletica Pars IV Opera Rhythmica*, pp. 148-55, p. 148 on Matthew 9: 9-13 (ll. 7-15).

in his comment on Mark 6:8, when explaining why Jesus asked His disciples not to carry bread and money with them but only a staff on their journeys to preach, Bede explains that this is because if preachers are hindered from preaching by their concerns in worldly affairs, they could risk making the same mistake as the servant who hides the talents rather than multiplying them.²² However, Bede's most important use of the parable of the talents is in his letter to Bishop Egbert in 734. At the beginning of the letter, he quotes the parable at length, and defines living a good life and teaching as the twin duties of a servant who has been assigned the custody of divine gifts.²³ He then warns that a bishop cannot surrender himself to idleness. The same parable might have shaped how he understood Church reform in terms of the idleness of the Church as a whole, the ordination of more priests, and the bishop's right to forfeit unproductive monasteries; all are main themes of his letter to Egbert.

I summarise Bede's conceptualisation of the servant of Christ in these discussions as about authority, religious practice and eschatology. First, a Christian, unlike an earthly prince, achieves and expresses excellence not in being served, but in serving God and others. Second, the servants of Christ have to work assiduously and vigilantly because they will face judgement at an unexpected time; and they have to work productively, in terms of multiplying the divine grace assigned to them. Third, as seen, the work can involve teaching, asceticism, and any good deeds that require resistance against spiritual laziness. Keeping watch can be understood in a strict sense as an ascetic practice and in a general sense as a readiness to resist the temptation of carnal desires, which could otherwise cause spiritual laziness. The multiplying of talents can be reflected in passive and active lives, as is the case in Bede's letter to Egbert. In sum, Bede's understanding of the concept of Christ's servant can be applied to priests, and monastics and lay people of both genders. It is also worth noting that this understanding, in contrast to that of the metaphor of Christ's soldier in the metrical *Life*, do not give weight to the distinction between priests and their flock or between physical and

²² *In Marcum*, pp. 505-6 (Book II, Chapter 6 ll. 662-667).

²³ 'Epistola Baedae ad Ecgbertum Episcopum', in *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. by C. Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), I, pp. 405-23 (pp. 405-06, 409-10).

spiritual strength.

Meanwhile, Bede's use of the concept can occasionally be subjected to his perception of gender. As pointed out, he takes the female as the weaker sex and therefore interprets some female Biblical figures as signifying human flesh, or those who cannot resist carnal desires. For instance, in Matthew 8:14-15, Peter's mother rises from her bed and ministers to Christ as soon as He heals her. Bede calls attention to her gender and accordingly sees her as representing the Christians whose flesh has been destroyed by lust and will be able to serve Christ again only after being healed by Him. By contrast, he sees good servanthood as a type of manhood because the good servant needs to possess *virtus* to fight against carnal desires.²⁴ When Song of Songs 8:11 describes how a peaceable man (*pacificus*) let his vineyard out to some 'keepers' (*custodibus*), 'every man (*vir*) bringeth for the fruit thereof a thousand pieces of silver', Bede interprets this verse as representing one who gives up all carnal things, signified by the silver, in order to labour in God's vineyard and to receive reward.²⁵ The reason why this has to be a man (in an allegorical sense), he explains, is because the *vir* refers to *virtus*. It is also noteworthy that while Bede regards keeping watch as an important characteristics of a good servant, I Corinthians 16:13 defines it as a male trait: 'Watch ye: stand fast in the faith: do manfully and be strengthened.'²⁶ Bede, in his comment on this statement, further suggests that the figure of a man represents perfectness in the Bible because it refers to one who is not corrupted by feminine softness (*feminea mollities*).²⁷ Nevertheless, Bede does not always consider the gender of the servants in the Bible relevant to his interpretation of them. For example, Bede regards Mary as exemplifying the virtue of humility that every Christian should possess, when she addresses herself as a handmaid of God in the Annunciation. Likewise, he does not take note of the gender of Martha and Mary

²⁴ Bede's *In Lucam*, p. 111 on Luke 4:38 (Book II, Chapter 4 ll. 446-71).

²⁵ 'vir adfert pro fructu eius mille argenteos'. See '*In Cantica Canticorum*', p. 354 (Book v, Chapter 8 ll. 626-29).

²⁶ 'Vigilate state in fide viriliter agite et confortamini'

²⁷ 'Homelia 2 in Quardagesima' (Ioh. vi, 1-14)' in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Pars III Opera Homiletica Pars IV Opera Rhythmica*, pp. 193-99 (p. 197 on Job 6:1-14) (ll. 152-55).

when he explains the story of how they minister to Christ in Luke 10:38-42 as reflecting the ideal of the combination of contemplative and active lives.²⁸

Finally, turning to how Bede used the concept of the servant of Christ in his prose *Life of Cuthbert*, it is important to take note of the context in which Bede composed the work. Bede wrote the prose *Life* at the request of the bishop and the community of Lindisfarne around 721, presumably as an updated version of the Lindisfarne account, which had been written fewer than twenty years before. This means that just like the Lindisfarne account, this work was expected to serve the needs of the community as a whole, and unlike his metrical *Life*, it was not expected to focus only on how priests can achieve the perfection of apostleship. As I have shown in my discussion of the Lindisfarne account, the original text constructed a model of holiness that could meet the needs of the community in at least three aspects. First, this model of holiness represented the monastic identity of the community. Second, it stressed the universal nature of monastic virtues, and thus showed that they were adoptable by the whole community, even when it included clerics, monks and lay brethren. Third, it also helped these brethren to advocate these virtues outside the community to other religious and lay people, presumably including both men and women. A reasonable expectation is that as a replacement of the Lindisfarne account, Bede's prose *Life* was expected to fulfil the same function for the same diverse audience. Nevertheless, the prose *Life* resembles the metrical *Life* and departs from the Lindisfarne account in terms of the prominence it gives to the ideals derived from Gregory's writings. As Thacker, Foley and Stancliffe have pointed out, under the influence of Gregory, Bede presents Cuthbert as a saint who was able to enhance his spiritual strength by experiencing weakness and sufferings, and who was able to combine his pastoral duty with his contemplative life.²⁹ In the sections that follow, I will show that it is the concept of the servant of Christ that enables Bede to promote these ideas and to respond to the needs of Lindisfarne at the same time in the prose text.

²⁸ In *Lucam*, pp. 224-25 (Book III, Chapter 10 ll. 2333-55).

²⁹ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 134-46; Stancliffe, 'Pastor and Solitary', pp. 36-42; Foley, 'Suffering and Sanctity', pp. 107-110, 114-16. See Chapter 1, pp. 65-66.

V. 2 Spiritual Servanthood in a Lay Context

Bede recounts in his prose *Life* all the stories he has related in the metrical account regarding Cuthbert's lay career.³⁰ But he reconfigures them to foreground the saint's image as a holy servant. He adds a new opening paragraph to the first of them:

The prophet Jeremiah...praising the hermit's state of perfection, he says: 'It is good for a man to have borne the yoke in his youth; he shall sit in solitude and be silent because he will raise himself above himself.' [Lamentations 3: 27-28] [...] Cuthbert [...] submitted his neck from early youth to the yoke of monastic discipline; and at a favourable opportunity, he also took to the hermit's way of life, rejoicing to sit in solitude for no short time, and, for the sake of the sweetness of divine contemplation [...]

Principium nobis scribendi de uita et miraculis beati patris Cuthberti Ieremias propheta consecrat, qui anachoreticae perfectionis statum glorificans ait, Bonum cum portauerit iugum ab adolescentia sua, sedebit solitarius et tacebit, quia leuabit se super se [...] Cuthbertus, ab ineunte adolescentia iugo monachicae institutionis collum subdidit, et ubi oportunitas iuuuit, arrepta etiam conuersatione anachoretica, non paucio tempore solitarius sedere, atque ob suauitatem diuinae contemplationis [...]³¹

While this paragraph does not explicitly mention the servant of Christ, it makes references to the 'yoke of monastic discipline', a symbol of servitude, and sitting as a pose of contemplation, which, as seen, he refers to in his commentary on Luke when explaining the parable of the faithful and wicked servants in Matthew 24. These references direct the audience to read Cuthbert's life as that of a servant of Christ, namely one to be rewarded by sitting to enjoy the sweetness of contemplation after a long labouring life. Note that the same paragraph also situates Cuthbert's role as a servant of Christ in a monastic context.

³⁰ VCP, pp. 154-71 (Chapters 1-5).

³¹ VCP, pp. 154-55 (Chapter 1).

This paragraph is then followed by the description of how Cuthbert abandoned his childish games after an infant had warned him against them with prophetic words. The game is described as ‘idleness’ (*otio*) and ‘vanity’ (*vanitate*).³² Both words are Biblical. The former is used in the parable of the Lord’s vineyard to describe the status of the workers before they are called to work for the Lord, while the latter recalls Paul’s promise that Christians would not work in vain whenever they could remain stable.³³ Both show that the abandoning of the childish game was the starting point for Cuthbert to live as an assiduous servant of Christ. Finally, being a good servant is also defined in this story as a criterion for ideal priest and bishop, considering that the divine warning given to Cuthbert is about his predestined priestly and episcopal offices.

Bede likewise adds an opening statement to the next story to foreground the same ideal of the servant of Christ.³⁴ This statement states that Cuthbert became worthy of receiving an angelic guest after he obeyed, with a ‘diligent heart’ (*sedulo corde*), the prophetic words of the infant who had reproved his childish game, and explains the causal relation of these two divine gifts by citing the statement in the parable of talents that ‘to everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance’.³⁵ As Newland has suggested, this statement identifies the two miracles as two successive steps in the same spiritual progress.³⁶ I here add to her observation by suggesting that this statement compares this spiritual progress to an assiduous servant multiplying the divine gifts entrusted by God. Also, Bede adds to the story that Cuthbert’s servant was taking him outside when the angel greeted Cuthbert. In this way he credits the servant for Cuthbert’s encounter with the angel and the consequent healing. Presumably he is here trying to express that the Lord’s good servants do

³² *VCP*, pp. 157-58 (Chapter 1).

³³ Matthew 20:3. I Corinthians 15:58.

³⁴ *VCP*, pp. 158-61 (Chapter 2).

³⁵ *VCP*, pp. 158-59 (Chapter 2): ‘omni habenti dabitur et abundabit’, citing Matthew 25-29, as noted by Colgrave. See Knibbs, pp. 246-7.

³⁶ Newland, ‘Images of St Cuthbert’, p. 87. Newland has rightly observed that the lay episodes in the prose *Life* give more weight to the concept of spiritual progress than they were in the two earlier *Lives*. But she does not link this to the trope of Christ’s servant: see pp. 84-94.

not only labour for their own gifts, but for others to receive the same gifts.

The third story echoes the same rationale.³⁷ It begins by relating how Cuthbert dedicated himself more wholly to God after this healing and as a result he often received angelic help, and how on account of his habit of praying for others, his prayer became so powerful that he was able to save five rafts that met a storm on the Tyne. The same story also addresses the monks on the rafts as the ‘servants of Christ’ (*famuli Christi*) but highlights the failure of their labour, by describing how the crowd take delight in their misfortune, because they do not teach them the new religion after destroying the old one. In this case, Cuthbert can be seen as completing the work of God’s servants by showing the crowd what the new religion is about — it is about praying for those who suffer. By contrast, the fourth story places the servant’s role in an ascetic context, by relating how Cuthbert received the vision of the ascension of Aidan when keeping vigil as a shepherd, and how the vision in turn inspired him to exercise a more rigorous discipline in order to share in the glory of the ‘servants of Christ’.

These stories present a model of holiness that was likely to be regarded as gender-inclusive by the audience. They describe how Cuthbert had already started to live as a good servant even when still in his lay habit and foreshadowing that his holiness would reach its perfect form when he was rewarded for his service to sit in contemplation. In this case, this model of holiness, like that of the spiritual athlete in the Lindisfarne *Life*, is capable of being imitated by both laity and monastics, and is consequently more gender-inclusive than the model of holiness in the metrical *Life*. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the metrical *Life* defines Cuthbert’s apostolic holiness as that of a teacher who unveils hidden mystery, but it presents him in this way only in the events that take place after his ordination. The stories of his lay career serve merely as a preparation for and prefiguration of his role as a teacher. By contrast, in the prose *Life*, although these stories give the same emphasis to Cuthbert’s

³⁷ VCP, pp. 160-65 (Chapter 3).

predestined priesthood, they present it as another expression of the same spiritual servanthood that had been embodied in his lay and monastic careers, showing that a good servant has to serve other humans as well as God.

Another important gendered aspect of Cuthbert's spiritual servanthood in these stories is that it is defined as a form of spiritual manhood. The story of the childish games quotes I Corinthians 13:11 to foreshadow that Cuthbert would achieve the knowledge of a *vir* by renouncing childish things.³⁸ The shepherd episodes describes Cuthbert as a 'youth beloved of God' (*Deo dilectum adolescentem*) being motivated by his vision of the ascension of the 'mighty men' (*magnificorum uirorum*, referring to Aidan) to seek for monastic discipline.³⁹ It then defines these two images in terms of the trope of the servant of Christ: 'Alas...wretches that we are, who are given up to sleep and sloth and are not worthy to behold the glory of those servants of Christ who are ever watchful.'⁴⁰ Here, the youth is one who becomes aware of his own idleness after witnessing how a fully grown man could achieve heavenly glory as a watchful servant. Considering this together with how the stories are linked up by a narrative of spiritual progress framed by the parable of talents, in each story Cuthbert can be seen as getting one step closer than he was in the previous story to becoming a knowing and mighty *vir*.

His servanthood is also defined as spiritual warriorhood with the allusions to the warrior-priest Maccabeus. In the healing episode, while Cuthbert attributes his illness to his sins, the angelic guest is said to have come to his rescue just as an angel had come to defend Maccabeus and the Temple in a battle.⁴¹ This suggests that Cuthbert's sins would have cost his spiritual warriorhood, had he not, with the aid of his servants, received the divine gifts of health. In the next story, his prayer carries the rafts to a 'convenient place' (*in loco oportuno*) — a phrase that is used in II Machabees 15:20 to refer to how Maccabees defended the

³⁸ VCP, pp. 154-55 (Chapter 1).

³⁹ VCP, pp. 164-67 (Chapter 4). Newland, 'Images of St Cuthbert', p. 89.

⁴⁰ VCP, pp. 165-67: 'Heu miseri inquit qui somno et inertiae dediti, non meremur semper uigilantium ministrorum Christi cernere lucem'.

⁴¹ VCP, pp. 160-61 (Chapter 2)

Temple by arranging his warriors to face the enemies in a ‘convenient place’.⁴² Considering the two stories together, Cuthbert restores the spiritual warriorhood of the Lord’s servants by his prayer after he had been restored to his own by the angelic guest. This connection between the two stories foreshadows how he would lead God’s servants as a bishop to defend the Church, by distributing to them the divine gift of spiritual warriorhood that have been given to him.

Finally, in the last story about Cuthbert’s lay career, Bede expands the account of the provision of heavenly food.⁴³ The story goes that on a certain journey Cuthbert entered a housewife’s home in order to feed his horse, but refused to accept the housewife’s food for himself, given that it was a fast day.⁴⁴ In reward for this observance, he later received heavenly bread and meat as a divine gift when feeding his horse with straw in a deserted shepherd hut. The story then returns to the rationale of the parable of the talents, by stating that this divine gift in turn affirms Cuthbert’s decision to adopt the monastic habit.⁴⁵ Note that here Cuthbert multiplies his talents not only by ascetic observance but also by an action that foreshadows his pastoral role, namely his feeding the horse with straw.⁴⁶ His sharing of half of the God-given bread with the horse likewise prefigures how he would share divine grace with his flock as a celebrant of mass. In this case, this story again defines Cuthbert’s lay, monastic and priestly careers as different expressions of the same spiritual servanthood. Regarding the meat, the story specifies that it was only sufficient for Cuthbert himself, thus making an implicit reference to the parable of the ten virgins. This serves as a reminder that if the audience focuses on carnal food just as the horse does, rather than imitating the diligence exemplified by Cuthbert, they would not be able to share in his divine gifts. This also shows that the spiritual servanthood embodied in Cuthbert’s holiness can indeed be exemplified by

⁴² *VCP*, pp. 164-65 (Chapter 3)

⁴³ *VCP*, pp. 168-71 (Chapter 5)

⁴⁴ This expansion might have based on a story in Gregory’s *Dialogues*, SC 260, pp. 174-77 (Book II, Chapter 12).

⁴⁵ See Newland, ‘Images of St Cuthbert’, p. 93.

⁴⁶ See Newland, ‘Images of St Cuthbert’, pp. 93-94.

both male and female servants.

This scenes of feeding the horse could possibly be an implicit reference to Genesis 24, regarding a steward of Abraham who is sent to bring back a wife for Abraham's son. The servant recognises Rebecca as the bride when she provides his camels with water.⁴⁷ While he let his camels be fed by the bride's family with straws, he delays the meal provided by them until he, to complete the task assigned by his master, proposes to them the marriage between Rebecca and his master's son.⁴⁸ If the herding scenes in Cuthbert's story are meant to be read in parallel with this Biblical account, then their function in the *Life* might have been to highlight the role of the servants of Christ in uniting the bride (the Church) and the bridegroom (Christ), which is indeed the major task assigned to the servants in the parable of the ten virgins and the faithful servants. Furthermore, Bede mentions Abraham's servant Eliezer once in his commentary, when he draws attention to how Eliezer had been nominated by the heirless Abraham as his successor before the birth of Isaac.⁴⁹ If Bede does identify Eliezer as the servant who would later bring back Rebecca for his master, then his inserting of the implicit reference to Genesis 24 might also function to highlight how God's servant, by resisting carnal desires and feeding the flock, will be able to become a *paterfamilias* of His household. This reading would echo his long comment on the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, regarding how the son has his heirship restored when he offers himself to his father to work as his servant.⁵⁰ Finally, as pointed out above, the hut in the metrical *Life* figures the Church over which Cuthbert would rule as a spiritual heir of Aidan. Yet it becomes a hut 'roughly built' (*infirmite posita*) and deserted in the prose *Life*.⁵¹ This change foregrounds Christ's servanthood because it shows that Cuthbert had to repair the ruined Church before becoming the *paterfamilias*. Here, it also becomes clear that the use of the trope of Christ's servant in the prose *Life* implies a more pessimistic view on the spiritual status of the English

⁴⁷ Genesis 24:18, 25.

⁴⁸ Genesis 24:33, 56.

⁴⁹ Genesis 15:3. In *Genesim*, p. 194 (Book iv, Chapter 15 ll. 9-33)

⁵⁰ Luke 15:11-32. In *Lucam*, pp. 287-95 (Book iv, Chapter 15 ll. 2277-79). See below.

⁵¹ VCP, pp. 170-71 (Chapter 5).

Church than that of the triumphant apostle in the metrical *Life*. Presumably, when Bede became more anxious about the corruption of the Church in his later life, he also tended to give more weight to the labour and hardship involved in pastoral care, which is best represented by the trope of Christ's servant.⁵²

V. 3 The Servant of Christ in a Monastic Context

Regarding Cuthbert's monastic life, Bede inserts two additional accounts between the original stories that he took from the Lindisfarne *Life*, both of which relate to the role of Christ's servant.⁵³ The first of the monastic narratives relate how Cuthbert adopted the monastic habit; here, Bede twice addresses the saint as a servant of Christ. He gives him the title of the 'reverend servant of the Lord' (*uenerabilis Domini seruus*), because Cuthbert was willing to abandon 'the things of the world' (*seculi rebus*) and to endure 'temporal hunger and thirst' (*esuriem sitimque temporalem*), in order to have a sharing of the heavenly banquet.⁵⁴ Here, he defines the holy servant as a monk who labours in suffering in order to receive a heavenly reward. He then describes how Cuthbert handed over his spear and horse to a servant in front of the monastery of Melrose, where he wished to begin his monastic life. As Barrow has pointed out, the spear and horse signify in this scene the lay career that Cuthbert cast aside in order to become a monk.⁵⁵ It can further be added that they remind one of the metaphor of spiritual warfare. The servant who receives them, meanwhile, can be read as prefiguring how Cuthbert would fight spiritual battles at Melrose as a servant of Christ. This is because immediately after the servant receives the weapon, Cuthbert has his holiness recognised from afar by the prior Boisil at the gate of the monastery: 'Behold the servant of the Lord...Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile'.⁵⁶ These are the words of Jesus about Nathanael, whom he chooses as his follower in John 1:47. Bede identifies the Israelite with no guile mentioned in this verse as representing a type of spiritual warriorhood, which has already

⁵² Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 132-133.

⁵³ *VCP*, pp. 172-75, 180-87 (Chapters 6, 8-9).

⁵⁴ *VCP*, pp. 172-73 (Chapter 6)

⁵⁵ Barrow, 'Coifi', p. 702.

⁵⁶ *VCP*, pp. 172-73 (Chapter 6): 'Ecce inquit uere Israelita in quo dolus non est'.

been prefigured by the strongest men of Israel who guarded Solomon's bed with swords in Song of Songs 3:8.⁵⁷ Taken together, the scene of Cuthbert's entering of Melrose shows that a monk should serve God both by labouring in suffering and by struggling as a spiritual warrior.

Apart from bringing together Cuthbert's spiritual servanthood and warriorhood, the same story also elaborates what makes monastic life a form of labouring for the holy servant. It relates that Cuthbert's monastic life involved reading, working, watching, praying, and abstinence from alcohol and food.⁵⁸ The last practice can be seen as a form of labouring because at the beginning of the story, the enduring of hunger and thirst has already been defined as an effort to receive the divine reward. Meanwhile, Cuthbert's abstention from alcohol links the images of labourer and warrior again, as regarding this habit he is said to have imitated Samson, another priest-warrior in the Bible. His abstinence is said to have been moderate, in order that he could be 'robust of body and sound in strength and fit for whatever labour he cared to undertake'.⁵⁹ In this case, Bede makes it clear that monasticism is about labour.

This story is followed by the Ripon episode.⁶⁰ Bede follows the original account by relating how Cuthbert received an angel in his monastery in the hour of fasting and was rewarded with three heavenly loaves for his observance of hospitality and fasting. Yet he addresses Cuthbert again as a servant of Christ and brings in Biblical references for this role in his detailed description of the interior structure of the monastery. He relates that Cuthbert found the angel in the guesthouse after leaving 'the inner dwellings' (*interioribus aedibus*) of the monastery, and it is in the 'conclave' (*conclau[e]*) of the monastery that he discovered the heavenly loaves.⁶¹ These architectural terms do not frequently appear in his commentaries, but they do appear together in his comment on the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-

⁵⁷ 'In Cantica Canticorum', p. 29 (Book ii, Chapter 3 ll. 340-57).

⁵⁸ VCP, pp. 172-75 (Chapter 6).

⁵⁹ VCP, pp. 174-75: 'robustus corpore, et integer uiribus, atque ad quaecunque uolebat aptus exercitia laboris'.

⁶⁰ VCP, pp. 174-79 (Chapter 7).

⁶¹ VCP, pp. 176-77.

32.⁶² In the parable, a rebellious son leaves his father and starts to starve after spending all the property he has inherited. Realising that even the servants in his father's house have bread to eat, he decides to return there to work as a servant. Yet when he comes near to the house, he is recognised by his father from afar and has his heirship restored. In his commentary on Luke, Bede refers to the father's house as *aedes*, and interprets it as a figuration of the Church.⁶³ He elaborates that the servants labouring for God in the Church shall receive heavenly bread, and those who leave the Church to seek for worldly things shall receive nothing. He also describes the son as sinning against the father in the 'inner chamber of consciousness' (*conscientiae interioris conclauis*).⁶⁴ Presumably, in the prose *Life*, Bede might have already made an implicit reference to this story by relating how Boisil recognised Cuthbert's holy servanthood at the gate of Melrose. By using in the Ripon episode the words he has used to explain the parable of the prodigal son, he creates an impression that Cuthbert, by giving up carnal satisfaction in favour of labouring for God, likewise receives the living bread that can remove sins from his heart and restore his heirship of the heavenly reward.

Another new story follows, relating how Cuthbert was struck down by the plague at Melrose, but knew he would soon recover when he learned that his brethren had prayed for his health:

[He said:] 'And why do I lie here? For doubtless God has not despised the prayers of so many good men. Give me my staff and shoes.' And immediately he arose and began to try to walk, leaning upon his staff; and his strength grew from day to day, he recovered his health.

Et quid iaceo inquit. Neque enim dubitandum est, quia tot taliumque uirorum preces

⁶² In *Lucam*, pp. 287-95 (Book IV, Chapter 15 ll. 2277-79). Apart from this comment and the two *Lives* of Cuthbert, the term 'conclauis' appears only five times in Bede's work. Twice in *De orthographia*; one of each in *in Lucam*, p. 193 on Luke 8:40-56 (Book III, Chapter 8 l. 1076); in *In Marcum*, p. 501 on Mark 5:21-43 (Book II, Chapter 5 l. 486) to address the house in which Jairus's daughter was raised by Christ, and in *In Cantica Canticorum*, p. 280 on Song of Songs 5:6 (Book III, Chapter 5 l. 344).

⁶³ In *Lucam*, p. 289 (Book IV, Chapter 15 l. 2351).

⁶⁴ In *Lucam*, p. 289 (Book IV, Chapter 15 l. 2366).

Deus non despexit. Date baculum et caligas. Statimque exurgens, coepit temptare
incessum baculo innitens, et crescente per dies uirtute sanitatem quidem recepit [...]⁶⁵

This paragraph is indeed an implicit reference to the Biblical scene of Christ's pardoning of a disabled man's sin and His ordering of him to rise from his bed and to walk.⁶⁶ Bede reads this healing as how the humans rose from their earthly desires.⁶⁷ As mentioned above, in his comment on the parable of the faithful servant, Bede quotes to urge his audience to rise up from sleep in order to labour for God and receive heavenly reward. He also draws attention to the action of rising up when explaining the confession of the prodigal son and the healing of Jairus's daughter.⁶⁸ Likewise, in his account of Cuthbert's healing, although he does not address the saint explicitly as Christ's servant, he obviously intends his rising from his bed to be read as a restoration of spiritual servanthood.

Note that this story also defines the relationship between suffering and the perfection of servanthood. It relates that Cuthbert suffered pain throughout his life even after his recovery, because, as it quotes II Corinthians 12:9, 'strength was made perfect in weakness.'⁶⁹ The reference to Cuthbert's staff echoes this view. In the Bible, the Hebrews are asked to carry staff and shoes when they leave Egypt.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, whereas Matthew and Luke record that Jesus urged the apostles to leave behind their staffs when travelling to preach, Mark records that Jesus urged the apostles not to carry any possessions with them except for a staff.⁷¹ Bede resolves this contradiction in a lengthy comment on the role of Christ's servant.⁷² He explains the staff as a type of Christ, and the apostles were asked to abandon their physical staff in order to manifest the power of Christ.⁷³ Likewise, in the prose *Life*, he highlights

⁶⁵ VCP, p. 180-81 (Chapter 8).

⁶⁶ Mark 3:12

⁶⁷ *In Marcum*, pp. 456-57 (Book I, Chapter 2 ll. 774-78).

⁶⁸ *In Lucam*, p. 290 (Book IV, Chapter 15, ll. 2376-78). *In Marcum*, pp. 500-01 on Mark 5:41 (Book II, Chapter 5 ll. 436-85).

⁶⁹ VCP, pp. 182-83 (Chapter 8): 'uirtus in infirmitate perficeretur'.

⁷⁰ Exodus, 12:11.

⁷¹ Matthew 10:10; Luke 22:35; Mark 6:7-11.

⁷² *In Marcum*, pp. 504-6 (Book II, Chapter 6 ll. 602-667)

⁷³ *In Marcum*, p. 504 ll. 602-619.

Cuthbert's God-given spiritual strength in opposition to his physical strength by referring to his staff. Then by specifying that Cuthbert regained his ability to walk only gradually, with the help of the staff, Bede also incorporates this healing into the wider picture he has established at the beginning of the text regarding the gradual progress in the formation of spiritual servanthood. As Foley has pointed out, Bede aimed to promote Gregory's teaching about suffering by composing the prose *Life*.⁷⁴ In this story, it can be further suggested that Bede's concept of the servant of Christ provided an important framework for him to promote this teaching — namely by defining the bearing of suffering as a type of labouring for Christ that can result in the increase in spiritual strength. It is also noteworthy that he is here using the concept to refer to a gender-neutral experience, which he presents in other works as being shared by women. For instance, he likewise quotes II Corinthians 12:9 in the *Ecclesiastical History* to explain the severe pain of illness which Abbess Hilda endured in her dying moments.⁷⁵

Bede makes it clear that Cuthbert's miraculous restoration of strength was meant to let him continue to serve others for God, by emphasising that the brethren prayed for Cuthbert's health for their own sake.⁷⁶ He then gives further weight to the duty of serving others in his account of Boisil's dying moments.⁷⁷ Boisil foretells that he will die from the plague, whereas Cuthbert will fully recover and later become a bishop. He then decides to read a book about John the Evangelist with Cuthbert before his death, not in order to explore 'deep matters of dispute' (*profunda questionum*), but to highlight the basic principle of 'faith which worketh by love'.⁷⁸ As I have pointed out in my discussion of the metrical *Life*, Bede seems to regard John as an exemplar of the teacher of hidden mysteries, for the reason that John had shared the knowledge he had learnt from Christ's breast with the others.⁷⁹ But it is in this description of Boisil's dying moments that he specifically defines what this knowledge is

⁷⁴ Foley, 'Suffering and Sanctity', pp. 102-66.

⁷⁵ *HE*, pp. 410-11 (Book IV, Chapter 23).

⁷⁶ *VCP*, pp. 180-81 (Chapter 8).

⁷⁷ *VCP*, pp. 182-85 (Chapter 8).

⁷⁸ *VCP*, pp. 182-83: 'fidei quae per dilectionem operatur', citing Galatians 5:6. Noted by Colgrave.

⁷⁹ *VCM*, preface.

about— it is about an understanding that one stays in this present world to labour for the spiritual welfare of others, and one should remain labouring life's final moments.

This definition is echoed by the account that follows, which relates how Cuthbert followed Boisil's example in dedicating himself to teaching: 'he was busy with spiritual works, as befitted a holy man [...]'⁸⁰ As Thacker has pointed out, this account is one of the places in the *Life* that reflects Bede's ideal about teaching which can be traced back to Gregory's writings.⁸¹ I will here add to his observation that Bede defines this ideal as an expression of Cuthbert's spiritual servanthood. Note that this use of the trope allows the duty of teaching to be read together with the monastic practices stressed in previous chapters as two dimensions of the same holiness. As pointed out, this emphasis can be explained by the fact the *Life* was meant to serve for the edification of the whole community at Lindisfarne, which included both priests and monks. This also explains why the ministry of teaching is defined in a general sense in this account. It first relates how Cuthbert had honoured the office of a prior by teaching the neighbours, and then changes to an ideal picture of how clerks and priests visited remote villages to preach and points out that Cuthbert was one among them. Here, by bringing together how Cuthbert taught as a monk and a priest, this account identifies both as ways for a servant of Christ to serve others. Thus here Bede might not necessarily be emphasising the pastoral duty of monks as part of his vision of a church reform as Thacker has suggested.⁸² Rather, he is more likely to be highlighting the shared identity of the community at Lindisfarne as Christ's servants by emphasising how both priests and monks were sharing the same duty of teaching in a broad sense.⁸³ Note that here he is also showing how Gregory's ideal of the teacher can be applied to both monks and priests, whereas in his metrical *Life* the same ideal is used in a narrower sense to construct a vision of ideal priesthood.

⁸⁰ *VCP*, pp. 184-85: 'per aliquot annos spirituali ut sanctum decebat exercens industria'.

⁸¹ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 139-40.

⁸² Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 139-40.

⁸³ See Cubitt's similar observation, 'Clofesho', pp. 201-03.

Finally, the same account also shows that the lay people can imitate Cuthbert by becoming servants of Christ. It relates that Cuthbert managed to reconvert those who had apostatised after forgetting the ‘sacred mystery of faith’ (*fidei sacramento*) because of the plague, and thus needed to be reminded by Cuthbert that, as Bede quotes Luke 3:8, one could only escape the wrath of God by bearing fruits in repentance.⁸⁴ Here, they can be read as foils to Boisil and Cuthbert, who in the previous story are shown to have been eager to serve God and others despite their suffering. This contrast could encourage a lay audience to learn from the priests and monks about how to remain in service to God in suffering rather than turn their back on Him. Overall, Bede uses the trope of Christ’s servant in the monastic episodes in a very general sense to refer to the duties of priests, monastics and lay people. This confirms the use of this trope in the lay episodes. On both occasions, it has the effect constructing a model of holiness that, compared to the one in the metrical *Life*, is more accessible to a female audience and also is accessible to a wider audience including laity.

V. 4 The Servant of Christ as a Perfect Man

Following the two additional accounts and the Ripon episode, the remaining stories concerning Cuthbert’s life in the monastery are all borrowed from the Lindisfarne account, but they are likewise reconfigured to present Cuthbert as Christ’s servant.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, these stories focus mainly on how Cuthbert raised the Church from carnal desires to make her a worthy servant of God just as he himself was. At the beginning of the Coldingham episode, Bede describes Cuthbert as ‘going from strength to strength by his signs and miracles’ (*succresceret uirtutibus signisque*) when relating how him was invited to the monastery to teach.⁸⁶ He then describes the otters that had served Cuthbert and received his blessing as ‘four-footed creatures’ (*quadrupedia*).⁸⁷ In his commentary on Genesis, he interprets four-footed creatures as representing those who are bound by carnal desires, and Peter’s dream in

⁸⁴ Noted by Colgrave. *VCP*, pp. 185-86.

⁸⁵ *VCP*, pp. 188-207 (Chapters 10-15).

⁸⁶ *VCP*, pp. 188-89 (Chapter 10).

⁸⁷ *VCP*, pp. 190-191.

Acts 10:12 in which he was ordered to eat a ‘four-footed creature’ as representing the apostolic duty of removing the sins of the Gentiles.⁸⁸ Thus it is possible that in the prose *Life*, he likewise intends Cuthbert’s blessing of the otters to be read as the saint’s releasing of the Church from carnal desires. In other words, this scene provides an allegorical representation of Cuthbert’s role as a teacher.

The same role is highlighted in the Pictland episode that follows, in which Cuthbert and his brethren are cut off from food supply by a sea storm when returning to Melrose from Pictland.⁸⁹ In the Lindisfarne version, this story presents Cuthbert as a spiritual athlete who keeps vigil in crisis and runs like a forerunner in order to achieve food provided by God.⁹⁰ Bede realigns this story with his ideal of the servant of Christ. He sets this story at a time when Cuthbert ‘began to grow strong in the spirit of prophecy’.⁹¹ As Colgrave has observed, these words are in fact borrowed from the opening statement of a story in Gregory’s *Dialogues*, in which Benedict, in a vision, discovers that his brethren ate in a woman’s house.⁹² Bede then follows these words by relating that Cuthbert and his brethren did not bring enough food with them because they had expected an ‘early return’ (*esse redituros citius*).⁹³ Presumably, he is here drawing a parallel between those who commit the sin of gluttony and the foolish virgins who do not prepare enough oil for their lamps to wait for the return of the bridegroom. At the end of the story, he echoes this allusion further by describing Cuthbert’s acquiring of the God-given fish as an example of how God prepared food for His servant. Note that he has constructed similar allusions to the servant’s role in the story of the shepherds’ hut, in which, as mentioned, he presents the God-given bread and meat as reward for Cuthbert’s labouring, but also specifies that the provision of this reward is not sufficient for those who do not labour for God as Cuthbert did.

⁸⁸ *In Genesim*, p. 108 on Genesis 6:16 (Book II, Chapter 6 ll. 1254-61); p. 132 on Genesis 9:1-3 (Book II, Chapter 9 ll. 2120-29).

⁸⁹ *VCP*, pp. 192-95 (Chapter 11).

⁹⁰ See Chapter One.

⁹¹ *VCP*, pp. 192-93: ‘Coepit [...] prophetiae spiritu pollere’.

⁹² *VCP*, p. 192. *Dialogues*, SC 260, pp. 172-75 (Book II, Chapter 11).

⁹³ *VCP*, pp. 192-93.

At the same time, in the Lindisfarne account, the brethren function as foils to Cuthbert because unlike the latter they fail to remain stable and express via their bodily actions the divine triumph promised to the spiritual athletes. In the prose account, Cuthbert instead reproves them for committing themselves to ‘sluggish sloth’ (*marcida otia*) and ‘idle slumber’ (*somnis inertibus*) in their ‘time of leisure’ (*luxu*), and he urges them not to remain inactive in laziness (*tanta ignavia torpemus*) anymore, before leading them to search for divine provision.⁹⁴ In his poem *On Judgement Day*, Bede identifies ‘idle slumber’ as one of the sins that will lead to divine punishment on Judgement Day.⁹⁵ In his comment on the parable of the talents, he likewise accuses those who fail to preach for spending their ‘leisure time’ in ‘sluggish sloth’.⁹⁶ Furthermore, Bede uses the phrase ‘inactive in laziness’ three times in his commentaries. The first occasion is in his comment on Ezra 8:33.⁹⁷ In the Biblical account, a group of priests carried treasures from Babylon back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, and the weight of their treasures, measured in talents, was recorded in detail. Bede interprets this account in terms of his pastoral ideal, warning that the labour of the teachers is all recorded in heaven and those who are inactive in laziness will be punished on Judgement Day. Here, he might have the parable of the talents in mind as well. On the second occasion, he praises Nehemiah for investigating the wall of Jerusalem with great care and criticises those teachers who do not take care of the Church in the same way as being inactive in laziness due to their earthly concerns.⁹⁸ Finally, in his comment on Songs 5:4, he describes the bride as a weakened and softened Church on account of her laziness, and therefore although she is awaked when the bridegroom knocks at the door, she trembles and hesitates to open the door to receive him.⁹⁹ As mentioned, he quotes this verse elsewhere to assign this feminine weakness to the wicked servant who is unprepared to welcome the master returning

⁹⁴ *VCP*, pp. 192-93.

⁹⁵ ‘*De die iudicii*’, in *Beda Venerabilis Opera Pars III Opera Homilietica Pars IV Opera Rhythmica*, pp. 439-46 (p. 443) (ll. 120).

⁹⁶ *In Lucam*, pp. 340-41 (Book v, Chapter 19 ll. 1787-1814).

⁹⁷ *In Ezram*, pp. 323-4 (Book 2 ll. 1415- 1482)

⁹⁸ *In Ezram*, pp. 343-4 (Book 3 ll. 180-217).

⁹⁹ *In Cantica Canticorum*, p. 278 (Book 3, Chapter 5 ll. 267- 78)

from the wedding feast.¹⁰⁰ Overall, in the Pictland episode, the brethren function as examples of bad servanthood by their inactivity and laziness.

The eagle episode then provides another example for the same didactic message.¹⁰¹ Just as in the Lindisfarne account, in this story Cuthbert and his young companion receive food from an eagle on their way to preach. But here the youth is made to complain that they would not be able to complete their journey without suffering because they have no food — an unjustified concern indeed, given that a good servant of Christ is meant to labour in suffering. Cuthbert responds by telling the youth that those who serve God will not die of hunger. After an eagle drops them a fish, he fulfils these words by ordering the youth to share half of the fish with the eagle, which he describes as a handmaid (*ministra*), as a reward for her ministration.¹⁰² At the end of the story, Cuthbert and the youth roast the fish and share it with others as a banquet (*conuiuium*) in a house.¹⁰³ Note that Bede has already used the roasted fish in the metrical *Life* as a symbol of the suffering Christ. Meanwhile, the word *conuiuio* is used in the parable of the Lord's banquet in Luke 14, in which servants are sent out to invite guests to join a banquet in order to share the living bread. Bede interprets these servants as a figuration of pastors who lead their flock to receive eternal reward.¹⁰⁴ Thus when he relates how Cuthbert shares the fish as a *conuiuium* with others after completing his pastoral tour, he highlights the saint's pastoral activities as a fulfilment of the good servanthood conceptualised in the Bible.

Considering this eagle story together with the Coldingham and Pictland episodes, the concept of Christ's servant again functions in these stories to show that Gregory's teachings about suffering and duty of teaching can be observed by Christians of different occupations and sexes. This is because it provides a framework to combine Cuthbert's three different roles into a single model of holiness— namely as a monastic teacher, a priestly pastor and an ascetic

¹⁰⁰ See above.

¹⁰¹ *VCP*, pp. 194-97 (Chapter 12).

¹⁰² *VCP*, pp. 196-97.

¹⁰³ *VCP*, pp. 196-97.

¹⁰⁴ *In Lucam*, p. 279 on Luke 14:13 (Book IV, Chapter 14 ll. 1916-19)

who labours in suffering for God. Whereas the priestly preacher is a male-exclusive role, the monastic teacher and the ascetic, as I have pointed out, are roles assigned to religious women as well as men in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Thus to some extent, the combination of these three roles also gives emphasis to the similarity between men and women in terms of their shared role as servants of God.

Finally, in two later episodes regarding Cuthbert's life in monastery, Bede again defines the good servanthood as a form of spiritual manhood.¹⁰⁵ When relating how when Cuthbert visited his foster-mother's village and put out a fire at the request of the latter, Bede explains:

Nor is it to be wondered at that such perfect men who served God faithfully, received great power against the strength of flames, when, by daily practice of virtue, they learned both to overcome the lusts of the flesh and 'to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one' [Ephesians, 6:16].

Nec mirandum perfectos et fideliter Deo seruientes uiros tantam contra uim
flammarum accipere potestatem, qui cotidiana uirtutum industria et incentiua suae
carnis edomare, et omnia tela nequissimi ignea norunt extinguere.¹⁰⁶

Here, Bede presents this 'perfect man' as a warrior, by praising him for defeating the weapons of the devil. He also identifies him as an ascetic, by attributing his triumph to his spiritual warfare against the 'lusts of the flesh'. In fact, a few lines later, he also identifies the fire extinguished by Cuthbert as symbolising the 'flames of vices' and the eternal fire in Hell. Furthermore, his use of the phrase 'perfect men' could be read as an allusion to the *viri* working in the Lord's vineyard in the Song of Songs 8:11. In his comment on this passage, which I have discussed in the first section of this chapter, he identifies these men as those who are able to get rid of carnal desires in order to work for God, explaining that the Scripture is

¹⁰⁵ VCP, pp. 201-07 (Chapters 14, 15)

¹⁰⁶ VCP, pp. 202-03 (Chapter 14).

used to call a human of perfect virtue a ‘man’.¹⁰⁷ Thus in the fire story, his addressing of Cuthbert as a perfect man can be read as referring to how those who disciplined their body in order to serve God more faithfully would embody a spiritual form of manhood. Reading in this context, this is a manhood that can be adopted by both men and women.

He also sets this story in a pastoral context, by saying that Cuthbert was preaching in his stepmother’s village when the fire broke out, and hints that the foster-mother’s house can be understood as a type of the Church, by specifying that Cuthbert saved both her and her possessions (*tibi tuisue*) from the fire. This emphasis on pastoral care can be understood in light of one of few occasions when Bede uses the phrase ‘perfect men’ in his commentary. James 3 states that those who cannot control their tongues can never become teachers, because a perfect man is one who can bridle the whole body.¹⁰⁸ Bede, unsurprisingly, interprets this perfect man as an exemplar of his pastoral ideal.¹⁰⁹ Thus in the prose *Life*, Cuthbert’s spiritual manhood can be read as relating not only to his asceticism, but also to how he serves God as a pastor, by extinguishes the ‘flames of vices’ of his flock, in order to help them escape from the fires of hell.

Finally, in the episode regarding the exorcism of Hildmer’s wife, Bede describes the wife as able to ‘rise as if wakened from a deep sleep’ immediately after the escape of the demons.¹¹⁰ These words recall Romans 13, which urges Christians to rise from sleep and to prepare themselves for Judgement Day by getting rid of carnal desires.¹¹¹ As pointed out above, Bede makes reference to this verse in his comment on the parable of the faithful servant, when relating how one has to get rid of worldly concerns in order to serve God. Meanwhile, he describes how the wife, after rising from bed, welcomed Cuthbert by handling the bridle of his horse and had her strength fully recovered so that she was now able to

¹⁰⁷ ‘In Cantica Canticorum’, p. 354 (Book v, Chapter 8 l. 626) ‘Virum autem perfectae uirtutis hominem scriptura uocare consuevit’

¹⁰⁸ James 3:2.

¹⁰⁹ Bede, *In Epistulas Septem Catholicas*, ed. by D. Hurst, CCSL 121 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), pp. 206-7 on James 1-11 (Chapter 3 ll. 157-190).

¹¹⁰ *VCP*, pp. 206-07: Quasi graui experrecta de somno surrexit de somno.

¹¹¹ Romans 13:17.

minister to Cuthbert. This recalls a similar scene of how Peter's mother served Christ after being healed by Him, a scene that Bede will explicitly refer to in the same text when concerning the curing of Hemma's wife. For Bede, this scene represents how those who have the lust of their flesh (represented by the femininity of Peter's mother) bridled are able to serve Christ again.¹¹² Taken together, Hildmar's wife can be read as the Church freed from carnal desires by Cuthbert and thus able to become a good handmaid of Christ again.

Bede closes the monastic series with an account of Cuthbert's life at Lindisfarne.¹¹³ At the beginning of the account, he addresses it as a house of servants of Christ, praising it for being capable of restoring the life of the early Church by serving as a monastery and the seat of a bishopric at the same time. He calls attention to the fact that this vision of the early Church had in fact already been laid out in Gregory's letter to Augustine. He then relates how Cuthbert was eager both to teach his brethren, and to direct the laity to look for rewards in heaven — this echoes the previous story of the conversion of the Church into a good handmaid of Christ. At the end of the account, he praises Cuthbert's watching as well, relating how the saint greeted those who woke him accidentally for allowing him to have more time to labour in useful things. Altogether, in this account, Bede in fact quite explicitly reveals that his use of the concept of Christ's servant is meant to reflect how Gregory's ideal had been embodied in the dual nature of the community he was writing for. Presumably his emphasis on the spiritual manhood of the good servant can be similarly explained by its exclusively masculine nature. Yet as pointed out, this emphasis did not make the text less useful for a female audience in showing them how to serve God as Cuthbert had once done. Instead, the spiritual manhood presented in the text is one that can be performed by women as well as by men.

V. 5 The Servant of Christ in an Eremitic Context

Bede opens the Farne series by defining Cuthbert's solitary life as a reward for labour, saying

¹¹² In *Marcum*, pp. 448-49 (Book I, Chapter 1 ll. 445-472). Note that Bede uses the word *frenum* in both this commentary and in the story of Hildmar's wife, p. 448 ll. 451.

¹¹³ *VCP*, pp. 206-13 (Chapter 16).

that he was ‘worthy to rise to the repose of divine contemplation’ because of his ‘long and blameless active life’.¹¹⁴ This opening statement echoes the first story of the text, which similarly identifies Cuthbert’s solitary life as a reward for his labour. Both recall how in the Bible the faithful servant is invited to sit down and eat after fulfilling his duty. Another relevant Biblical story is the ministration of Mary and Martha. In the story, Mary sits at Christ’s feet to listen to His teaching when Martha was busy with household tasks to serve Him. Bede follows the early Christian tradition to explain the two women in these scene as representing the perfection of contemplative and active lives.¹¹⁵ For him, Mary’s sitting in contemplation is a reward that can be achieved only after engaging in the active service represented by Martha. Presumably this scene inspired Bede to interpret the pose of sitting in the parable of the faithful servant as an allusion to how God rewards His servants by granting them a contemplative life.¹¹⁶ The words quoted above show that Cuthbert’s solitary life can be read in a similar way as a reward for his monastic and pastoral careers. Yet Bede does not argue that a servant should stop labouring after entering a contemplative life. As mentioned, regarding the parable of the faithful servant, he draws attention to how the servant is appointed as a steward at the same time as he is invited to sit, and interprets the stewardship as symbolising the pastoral role; regarding the ministration of Mary and Martha, he also quotes Gregory’s comment on the same scene to suggest that the contemplatives are always ready to engage in active life again for the sake of the salvation of others, and that their practice of resisting carnal desires in the contemplative life would make them serve God better in their active life.¹¹⁷ Reading the Farne episodes in light of this ideal, I suggest that they could similarly be read as a preparation stage for Cuthbert’s episcopal career. This would explain the emphasis on asceticism and pastoral care in these episodes.

¹¹⁴ *VCP*, pp. 214-17 (Chapter 17): ‘Gaudebat namque quia de longa perfectione conuersationis actiuae, ad otium diuinæ speculationis iam mereretur ascendere’. See Newland, ‘Images of St Cuthbert’, p. 91.

¹¹⁵ For how Bede’s comment of this scene has been influenced by John Cassian, Augustine and Gregory, see Stancliffe, ‘Pastor and Solitary’, pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁶ *In Lucam*, pp. 256-7 (Book IV, Chapter 12 ll. 1020-1037).

¹¹⁷ *In Lucam*, p. 225 (Book III, Chapter 10 ll. 2320-32). See *Grégoire Le Grand: Grégoire Le Grand: Homélie sur Ezéchiel*, SC 360, pp. 106-07 (Book II, Homily II, Chapter 8 ll. 1-14)

Indeed, immediately following his description of Cuthbert's solitary life as a reward for his labour, Bede defines this practice as a more challenging labour by itself, one that can only be borne by a well-prepared servant.¹¹⁸ He quotes Psalm 83:3, '[the blessed men] shall go from strength to strength', to relate how Cuthbert started on a nearer island to practise living in solitude before moving to Farne.¹¹⁹ This embeds Cuthbert's phase as a hermit into the wider process of his spiritual progress that would lead him to the fullness of his servanthood. Meanwhile, Bede brings together his servanthood and warriorhood in the account of how he occupied the island. He states that because of the power of the demons that occupied the island, no one had dared to approach it, 'before Cuthbert the servant of the Lord' (*ante famulum Domini*).¹²⁰ He then follows this statement by praising how the 'soldier of Christ' (*miles Christi*) was able to expel these demons, with the 'helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit'.¹²¹

The ascetic nature of his servanthood is then elaborated on in the description of his hermitage:

It is a structure almost round in plan, measuring about four or five poles from wall to wall; the wall itself on the outside is higher than a man standing upright; but inside he made it much higher by cutting away the living rock...

Est autem aedificium situ pene rotundum, a muro usque ad murum mensura quattuor ferme siue quinque perticarum distentum, murus ipse de foris altior longitudine stantis hominis. Nam intrinsecus uiuam cedendo rupem [...] ¹²²

Given that Bede uses the same words to describe Christ's tomb in his treatise on the holy places, here he obviously intends Cuthbert's asceticism on the island to be read as re-enacting

¹¹⁸ VCP, pp. 214-15 (Chapter 17). Bede's prose *Life* in fact gives additional weight to Cuthbert's solitary life than the original account does. See Christian Aggeler, 'The Eccentric Hermit-Bishop: Bede, Cuthbert and Farne Island', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 16 (1999), 17-25.

¹¹⁹ 'Ambulabunt de uirtute in uirtutem'. For the significance of this verse in this *Life* and other contemporary Lives, see Delvaux, 'from Virtue to Virtue', pp. 226-50.

¹²⁰ VCP, pp. 214-15.

¹²¹ VCP, pp. 214-15: 'galea salutis, scuto fidei et gladio spiritus', citing Ephesians 6:16-17.

¹²² VCP, pp. 216-17.

Christ's suffering and death.¹²³ Meanwhile, his emphasis on the correspondence between the height of the wall and a standing man both in the cases of Cuthbert's hermitage and Christ's tomb could have been an implicit reference to Revelation 7:15, which states that those who are before God's throne should serve Him in the Temple day and night. In his commentary, Bede explains that those who stand before the son of man are worthy to serve God as teachers because they are able to keep vigil and resist earthly temptation — a strength that Bede seems to have regarded to be represented by the posture of standing.¹²⁴ In this case, by paralleling Cuthbert's hermitage with Christ's tomb and linking it to Revelation 7:15, Bede is able to reiterate the ascetic nature of Cuthbert's servanthood.

The hermitage also symbolises the pastoral nature of his servanthood as it is intended to be read as a type of the Church as well. The description quoted above shows that the hermitage was built on 'living stone', which refers to Christ.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the wall of the hermitage is said to have been built not with 'cut stone' (*secto lapide*) or 'bricks' (*latis*) but with 'unworked stones' (*impolitus lapidibus*).¹²⁶ In his commentary on Genesis, Bede interprets the bricks as representing the false teachers, as they were used to build the tower of Babel but not the Temple.¹²⁷ Also, in his commentary on Ezra, he mentions that whereas the court preserved for the priests in the First Temple was built with cut stones, it was built with unworked stones in the second Temple.¹²⁸ Taking consideration of these explanations, it seems fair to read the materials Cuthbert uses to build his hermitage as signifying the true and renowned teachers whom he would appoint when he became a bishop to build up the Church. Meanwhile, he is said to have built a room for general use in his hermitage, the roof of which he constructs with 'rough-hewn timber and straw' ('*lignis informibus et foeno*').¹²⁹ This is probably a figuration of every single Christian under his pastoral care, as it seems to be an

¹²³ 'Bedaе Venerabilis De Locis Sanctis', in *Itineraria et Alia Geographica*, ed. by Fraipont, J., CCSL 175 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), pp. 249-80 (p. 255) (Chapter 2 ll. 20-25).

¹²⁴ In *Lucam*, p. 372 (Book VI, Chapter 21 ll. 367-76).

¹²⁵ Duncan, '*Signa De Caelo*', p. 401.

¹²⁶ *VCP*, pp. 216-17.

¹²⁷ In *Genesim*, pp. 158-60 on Genesis 11:3 (Book III, Chapter 11 ll. 580-630).

¹²⁸ In *Ezram*, pp. 293-4 on Ezra, 6:3-4 (Book II ll. 207-38)

¹²⁹ *VCP*, pp. 216-17.

implicit reference to 1 Corinthians 3:12: 'Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble... it shall be revealed in fire. And the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is'.¹³⁰ Overall, the heritage is presented in this story as a prefiguration of how Cuthbert would take care of the Church as an episcopal teacher.

The next three episodes continue to focus on Cuthbert's bearing of suffering and labouring. In the fountain episode, Cuthbert opens a well in a rock and washes his brethren's feet with the water, but does not bother to wash his own feet, because he cared for the soul but not the body.¹³¹ As a result, a scar developed on his feet. Note that this image of a humble servant is in contrast to how, in the Lindisfarne version, he orders his brethren to open a well for him.¹³² Meanwhile, the water from the rocky fountain, which is obviously a figuration of Christ's grace, is said never to have dried up or gone beyond the well.¹³³ This description provides a Biblical framework to understand the scar on the saint's feet, as it points to II Corinthians 12:9: 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity'.¹³⁴ This multiplying in strength via suffering is reflected in the increasing severity of Cuthbert's solitary life. He is said to have stop receiving visitors and later even shut the window of his hermitage.¹³⁵ Also, just as in the case of Anthony, he had to work on his own hand in order to exclude himself more entirely from humans — a plot that highlights how one has to achieve a higher level of contemplation via labouring.¹³⁶ Note that Cuthbert first sows wheat and then barley when the wheat proves unable to grow on the island.¹³⁷ This highlights the pastoral nature of Cuthbert's labouring, considering Bede has on one occasion regarded barley as a symbol of teaching given to beginners.¹³⁸ Presumably Bede is using this story to show how Cuthbert provided teaching according to the nature of his audience, just as Gregory has

¹³⁰ 'si quis autem superaedificat supra fundamentum hoc aurum argentum lapides pretiosos ligna faenum stipulam...in igne revelabitur et uniuscuiusque opus quale sit ignis probabit'

¹³¹ *VCP*, pp. 216-21 (Chapter 18).

¹³² *VCA*, pp. 98-99 (Book III, Chapter 3).

¹³³ Duncan, '*Signa De Caelo*', p. 406.

¹³⁴ 'sufficit tibi gratia mea nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur'.

¹³⁵ *VCP*, pp. 220-21 (Chapter 18).

¹³⁶ *VCP*, pp. 220-21 (Chapter 19).

¹³⁷ *VA*, pp. 176-77 (Chapter 50 ll. 720-37).

¹³⁸ Duncan, '*Signa De Caelo*', p. 407. In *Lucam*, p. 199 (Book III, Chapter 9 ll. 1298-302).

advised in his *Pastoral Rule*. Accordingly, the birds that attack the crops can be read as representing the demonic temptations against which Cuthbert would defend what he had taught. Finally, when relating how two birds did penance after being expelled from the island by Cuthbert for damaging the guesthouse, Bede quotes Proverbs 6: 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise'.¹³⁹ This quotation again points to the wicked servants that need to be converted by Cuthbert's teaching, as the original sentence in the Bible forms part of the criticism of those who fall asleep.

Bede then returns to the theme of the transition of a faithful servant into a *paterfamilias* in the next story.¹⁴⁰ When relating how when the brethren had forgotten Cuthbert's request to bring him timber, the sea wave completed the task by bringing him what he needed, Bede explains: '...we lose dominion over the Creation which was made subject to us, because we ourselves neglect to serve the Lord and Creator of all things. The very sea...was ready to do service to the servant of Christ when he needed it.'¹⁴¹ Just as in the Lindisfarne account, the timber was twelve feet long (signifying the Church) and thus was able to fill in the hole in a rock in order that Cuthbert could construct a new building on it.¹⁴² Yet Bede adds that the rock has a hole because it has been excavated (*excavata*) by the tides. Presumably, this is an allusion to Gregory's statement that a soul can be hollowed out, little by little, by minor sins.¹⁴³ Moreover, he defines the brethren's fault as a result of their 'slothful minds' (*tarditatem mentis*), and relates how they were asked by Cuthbert to stay on the island at night, before rising up (*exurgentes*) in the morning, and finding that the tide has sent them timber.¹⁴⁴ Taken together, this story can be understood as relating to how Cuthbert restored the servanthood of the Church by rising it from the slothfulness that had gradually

¹³⁹ VCP, pp. 222-25 (Chapter 20): 'Vade ad formicam o piger, et considera vias eius et disce sapientiam'

¹⁴⁰ VCP, pp. 224-27 (Chapter 21).

¹⁴¹ VCP, p. 224-25: 'Qui enim auctori omnium creaturarum fideliter et integro corde famulatur, non est mirandum si eius imperiis ac uotis omnis creatura deseruiat'.

¹⁴² Duncan, '*Signa De Caelo*', p. 403.

¹⁴³ *Moralia*, CCSL 143A, pp. 642-43 on Job 14:18-19 (Book XII, Chapters 18).

¹⁴⁴ VCP, p. 226-27.

emptied it. It was by serving God in this way that he was given power to rule over nature.

The last two Farne episodes both relate to Abbess Ælfflæd. In the first, a newly added story, Bede calls Ælfflæd a handmaid of Christ, and follows this title with praise that recalls the rationale of the parable of the talents — namely that Ælfflæd was able to multiply the spiritual nobility attached to her noble birth by her virtues, and to extend the joyfulness of virginity to other handmaids of Christ under her maternal care.¹⁴⁵ In the story, Ælfflæd recovers from mortal illness by divine grace, but is still unable to stand straight and has to walk on all fours. This description recalls how in Luke 13, Christ heals a woman in a synagogue suffering from the same illness— a scene that Bede, in line with his interpretation of the four-footed beast in Peter’s dream, understands as the healing of those who bend to carnal desires.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, in the prose account, Ælfflæd’s failure to stand straight even after receiving the gift of health can signify the failure of Christians, on account of carnal desires, to make good use of the divine gifts that they have received. Accordingly, in the next scene, she can be seen as restraining her own carnal desires and thus get her own servanthood restored, when she binds herself with a girdle, which Bede regards as a symbol of the self-restraint of the flesh in his description of John the Baptist, and is then able to stand straight again.¹⁴⁷ The girdle is said to have been sent to Ælfflæd from Cuthbert, immediately after she has prayed to receive something from the saint as a medicine to cure her disease. Here, her healing can be attributed to both the saint’s blessing and her faith in asking the right gift. At the end of the story, she also uses the girdle to heal one of her nuns, but the girdle disappears after she attempts to preserve it in a box. On this evidence, she is indeed performing the roles of both the diligent and the lazy servants in the parable of the talents. Cuthbert, by contrast, acts consistently as a faithful servant of Christ on Farne. Not only is he able to cast aside his carnal desires and stand straight in front of God in his hermitage, but he also continues to share his divine gifts with others even in isolation.

¹⁴⁵ *VCP*, pp. 230-35 (Chapter 23).

¹⁴⁶ *In Lucam*, p. 268 on Luke 13:11 (Book IV, Chapter 13 ll. 1465-68).

¹⁴⁷ *In Marcum*, p. 441 on Mark 1:6 (Book I, Chapter 1 ll. 162-164).

The next story relates Cuthbert's prophecy about Ecgfrith's death at the request of Ælfflæd.¹⁴⁸ As pointed out previously, in the metrical version of this story, Bede identifies Ælfflæd's concern about Ecgfrith's earthly life and kingdom as a womanly one, because he regards earthly concerns as a sign of feminine weakness in a spiritual sense.¹⁴⁹ In the prose *Life*, he similarly describes Cuthbert criticising Ælfflæd's anxiety; and reminding her that human life is always short and fragile. He then describes how Ælfflæd, with 'womanly daring' (*audacia feminea*), pressed the saint to prophesy who would inherit her brother's kingdom.¹⁵⁰ The word *audacia* appears only once in the New Testament. It is in a passage that encourages the audience to have the boldness to ask for divine grace, but not for what they have not been taught by Christ to ask.¹⁵¹ In his commentaries, Bede sees the woman healed by touching Christ's garment as offering an example of the right use of boldness, whereas the mother of James and John is an example of using it in the wrong way, because she asked Christ to let her sons sit beside Him in Heaven, not knowing that this honour is inseparable from the duty of serving others in hardship.¹⁵² In the prose *Life*, Ælfflæd sets a good example to the audience in the story of the girdle by daring to ask for a divine gift from the saint to release her from her pain. But then by pressing the saint to tell her more about her brother's earthly kingdom, her daring has violated her role as a handmaid of Christ.

Moreover, she is also criticised in this story for failing to see the sufficiency of grace for the servants of Christ. She is amazed when Cuthbert tells her that Ecgfrith will be succeeded by another brother of hers, and has to be reminded by him that she still has a surviving brother, Aldfrith, who is living on Iona: 'Do not say that these are lacking... You see how this great and spacious sea abounds in islands? It is easy for God to provide from any of these a man to place over the kingdom of the English.'¹⁵³ Considering that the sufficiency

¹⁴⁸ *VCP*, pp. 234-39 (Chapter 24).

¹⁴⁹ *VCM*, pp. 250-57 (Chapter 21).

¹⁵⁰ *VCP*, pp. 236-37.

¹⁵¹ Romans 15:14-19.

¹⁵² Mark 5: 25-34. In *Marcum*, 2.8, p. 538 ll. 1798-1801 on Mark 8:22. In *Marcum*, 3.10, p. 566 ll. 941-944 on Mark 10:35-45.

¹⁵³ *VCP*, pp. 236-37: 'Ne dicas inquit quia caret... cernis hoc mare magnum et spaciosum quot abundet insulis?'

of God's grace for His servants has been referenced twice in the stories of the rocky fountain and Cuthbert's feeding his horse, these words can be read as another reference to the same idea. Ælfflæd fails to see both the fragility of the material world and the abundance of grace, both of which are important reasons to motivate a servant of Christ to labour. By contrast, when prophesying his own episcopal career in the same story, Cuthbert's despising of earthly glory is revealed in his reluctance to assume the sacred office, while his faith in the divine reward for his bearing of this pastoral duty is revealed in his vision that God will reward him by granting him rest within two years.

Finally, a few words can be said about Hollis's reading of this story, which forms the backbone of her comparison between the two prose *Lives* of Cuthbert. Hollis reads the Lindisfarne version of this story as presenting an equal partnership between the saint and the abbess, whereas Bede's prose *Life* advocates women's submission to patristic authority by giving weight to Cuthbert's criticism of Ælfflæd.¹⁵⁴ Yet as I have pointed out previously, the difference in the depiction of Cuthbert she observes between the texts might have reflected how Bede was more exposed to the influence of the Gregorian ideal than was the Lindisfarne author, rather than how he perceives holiness in a more androcentric way than the latter. Here, I would also like to add that Hollis has missed the gender-inclusive nature of Cuthbert's holiness revealed in the two stories of Ælfflæd in Bede's prose *Life*. As shown above, Ælfflæd performs the roles of the good and wicked servants of Christ in the first story and is reproved by Cuthbert in the second story for being distracted from her servant's role by earthly concerns. Thus it is clear that Bede views the holy servanthood exemplified by Cuthbert as a form of holiness accessible to both men and women. In this case, his reference to Ælfflæd's 'womanly daring' should not be read as an emphasis on the necessity of women's unconditional submission to episcopal authority. Quite the opposite, this reference highlights their agency by implying the possibility that they could act with 'unfeminine' daring. In other words, it refers to a spiritual femininity that both men and women can suffer

¹⁵⁴ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 179-207, especially pp. 200-02.

from and get rid themselves of depending on how they serve God.

V. 6 The Servant in an Eschatological Context

As in the Farne series, Bede realigns episodes from Cuthbert's episcopal career with his construction of how a servant of Christ behaves.¹⁵⁵ Yet he also rearranges the order of these stories to highlight the eschatological sense of the ideal of servanthood. In both the Lindisfarne and metrical accounts, the healing stories precede the visions of death. In the prose *Life*, by contrast, Bede moves the last healing story to the front, and follows it by relating the visions of the death of Ecgfrith and Cuthbert, before returning to other healing stories. I suggest that this rearrangement defines Cuthbert's episcopal career as a preparation stage for him to face his death and divine judgement.

As I have mentioned in the first section, in his comment on the parable of the faithful servant in Luke 12, Bede interprets the thief breaking into the house unexpectedly as an allusion to death catching humans unprepared and stealing their souls. He also interprets how the master returns to judge the works of his servants at an unexpected time as representing how Christ will return in the same way to judge humans. Therefore, he urges his audience that they should constantly guard their souls and always prepare themselves for divine judgement. In the episcopal episodes in the prose *Life*, the healing story being moved to the front could be read in light of this moral. In the story, Cuthbert gives a nobleman's fainting (*languens*) servant a cup of water he has blessed.¹⁵⁶ The servant then falls into a quiet sleep, which he rarely has had before, and is healed the next morning. This scene recalls Bede's interpretation of the mandrakes in the Song of Songs 7:13, a gift from the Bridegroom to his Bride. Bede believes that mandrakes can cure those who cannot sleep due to their concerns over carnal things, and thus he takes Song 7:13 as referring to how Christ's teaching can save those who are fainting (*languentes*) because of their carnal desires.¹⁵⁷ In the Cuthbert story, the good

¹⁵⁵ *VCP*, pp. 238-67 (Chapter 25-35).

¹⁵⁶ *VCP*, pp. 238-41 (Chapter 25).

¹⁵⁷ 'In Cantica Canticorum', p. 336 (Book v, Chapter 7 ll. 766-781, 772).

sleep of the fainting servant can accordingly be read as a sign of his release from carnal desires. Furthermore, the story specifies that it is the master who finds that the servant has been healed when he visits him in the morning. This scene therefore can be read as an allusion to the faithful servant envisaged in the Bible, who is well prepared to serve his master when the latter returns to him.

This also lays out the theme for the next story, in which Bede highlights the importance of preparing for the eschatological moment, by exploiting the spiritual sense of Ecgfrith's death.¹⁵⁸ To achieve this didactic aim, Bede makes several important additions to the original account of how Cuthbert saw the king's death on the battlefield by a second sight. First, he begins the story by attributing Ecgfrith's war against the Picts to his 'reckless daring' (*ausu temerario*). Second, he quotes at length a sermon that Cuthbert delivered on the day after receiving the vision of the king's death to a group of brethren when dedicating a church for their monastery.¹⁵⁹ Bede states that this sermon was intended to expose the spiritual sense of the king's death in an implicit way. In the first part of the sermon, two Biblical passages are quoted to highlight the importance of keeping watch:

‘Beloved, I beseech you to watch, in accordance with the warnings of the Apostle, ‘stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong’ [I Corinthians 16:13, 15], lest perchance some temptation coming upon you may find you unprepared; but rather be always mindful of that command of the Lord, ‘Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation’ [Mark 14:38].

Obsecro dilectissimi iuxta apostoli monita uigiletis, stetis in fide, uiriliter agatis et confortemini, ne forte superueniens aliqua temptatio uos imparatos inueniat, sed memores potius semper illius dominici praecepti, uigilate et orate intretis in temptationem.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ *VCP*, pp. 242-49 (Chapter 27).

¹⁵⁹ *VCP*, pp. 242-43.

¹⁶⁰ *VCP*, pp. 244-45. Note that the statement is recorded in Matthew 26:41 as well. See Colgrave's side

The context of Mark 14:38 is the famous Gethsemane scene. In the scene, Christ prepares for His own death by leaving His disciples to keep vigil in solitude. Finding that his disciples have all fallen asleep when returning to them, he makes the teaching of which Mark 14:38 forms a part. Furthermore, whereas the sermon only quotes the first half of the verse, Bede must have expected his audience at Lindisfarne to know the second half of it as well: ‘the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak’. He interprets this verse in his commentary in a general sense as a criticism of those reckless (*temerarius*) people who do not realise the flesh is weak but believe that they can get whatever they desire.¹⁶¹ Note that as mentioned above, Bede also uses the term ‘reckless’ to describe Ecgfrith’s boldness in waging war. This gives a sense that just like the disciples in Gethsemane, Ecgfrith was ignorant of the fragility of the flesh and the power of carnal temptations. It was this ignorance that drove him to seek transitory glory on the battlefield, and let him be caught unprepared by death. Finally, his failure to watch against carnal temptations has also feminised him, given that the quotation of I Corinthians 16 in the paragraph quoted above has defined this action as a manful one. In this case, his ‘reckless daring’ to attack the Picts was just as feminine as Ælfflæd’s ‘womanly daring’, as both were caused by an ignorance of the fragility of the physical world.

In the second part of the sermon, Cuthbert recounts how the community of Lindisfarne was nearly completely destroyed by the plague when he was still a hermit on Farne. Bede states that by recounting this incident, Cuthbert is indeed implicitly warning of the king’s death. In his account, Cuthbert recalls that he once left his hermitage on Farne at the time when he was still a hermit to celebrate Christmas Eve with his brethren with feasts and storytelling. In the middle of the night, he urged the brethren three times to remain watchful as carelessness could lead them into temptation, but they were only willing to take his advice at the third warning. Then a plague attacked the community the next morning, carrying away the lives of most of the brethren. On the one hand, this story recalls the

note in p. 244.

¹⁶¹ *In Marcum*, p. 617 (Book IV, Chapter 14 ll. 863-81, 878).

Gethsemane scene, in which Christ twice returns to find the disciples asleep, but eventually finds them awake on returning the third time. On the other hand, it is almost certain that Bede intends this story to recall the parable of the faithful servant as well, in which the master likewise returns from the wedding feast three times to check whether his servants are working or not. This reading is further confirmed by the fact that Bede would, later in his *Ecclesiastical History*, bring together the destruction of Coldingham and the king's death on the basis of the parable of the ten virgins.¹⁶² Thus in the prose *Life*, by recounting both the king's death and the fall of their forefathers during the plague, the account of the sermon is able to show to the audience at Lindisfarne that it is important to always be ready for divine judgement as the watchful servant is. Considering that this account begins by quoting I Corinthians 16 to define keeping watch as a masculine trait, its reference to Ecgfrith's death can also be read as showing to the audience how, despite their non-combatant status, they as servants of Christ can become more manly men than a warrior-king by watching.

Finally, by adding the queen's role to the story, Bede also directs the audience to understand the eschatological sense of Ecgfrith's death in a pastoral context. He relates that when foreseeing the king's death, Cuthbert urged the queen to escape in a chariot. At the beginning of the next story, he also relates that Cuthbert veiled the queen following the king's death.¹⁶³ Here, the queen might signify the Church; her escape by chariot seems to be an allusion to the Song of Songs 1:8: 'To my company of horsemen, in Pharaoh's chariots, have I likened thee, O my love.'¹⁶⁴ In this verse, the Bridegroom compares his Bride to Pharaoh's chariots because, according to Bede's reading, the Lord wishes to remind the Church how He had once delivered her from slavery, and as well to promise her that He would preside over her way to the path of salvation.¹⁶⁵ In light of this comment, the queen in the Cuthbert stories

¹⁶² *HE*, pp. 420-27 (Book iv, Chapter 25). However, in contrast to the prose *Life*, the *Ecclesiastical History* is dedicated to a king. This means that Bede's use of the parable is to expand the didactic sense of the destruction of a monastery in a way that it can teach the lay audience how to avoid making the same mistake as Ecgfrith did.

¹⁶³ *VCP*, pp. 248-51 (Chapter 28).

¹⁶⁴ 'equitatui meo in curribus Pharaonis adsimilavi te amica mea'.

¹⁶⁵ 'In Cantica Canticorum', p. 201 (Book I, Chapter 1 ll. 436-44).

can be read as the Church that becomes the Lord's bride at the time when the physical world is destroyed. If this reading is correct, then Cuthbert can be seen as acting as the good servant Eliezer in this story by taking the Bride to the true Bridegroom. Accordingly, his dedication of a church and delivering of a sermon the day after the king's death, can both be read as preparing the Church for this moment of union.

In the next story, Cuthbert foretells his own death to the hermit Hereberht.¹⁶⁶ As mentioned, by relocating this story to the front of the healing episodes that took place during pastoral activities, Bede is able to define Cuthbert's episcopal career as the labouring of a servant who is prepared to receive the judgement of his master. Indeed, in the story, Hereberht asks Cuthbert to pray for him in order that both of them can be taken together to heaven, by recounting how they together serve God in the present world, thus giving emphasis to how one has to labour for God assiduously in order to receive heavenly glory after death. Whereas Hereberht is said to have suffered from severe illness in his last days in order to make him worthy to receive such glory, Cuthbert had first to complete his pastoral duty as bishop before committing himself to the same suffering. His pastoral role is highlighted by Bede's relocation of the six healing stories that follow.¹⁶⁷ In one of them, he cures a noblewoman at the request of her husband when travelling in the countryside to preach and baptise.¹⁶⁸ He is said to have his hands and feet washed when entering the nobleman's house — a scene that recalls how Aaron and his sons are required to clean themselves in the same way before entering the tabernacle in Exodus 30:19. For Bede, this is about how the priests should clean their carnal desires with their tears in order to serve in God's temple.¹⁶⁹ Then once the noblewoman gets healed, she ministers to Cuthbert and is for this reason compared to Peter's mother at the end of the story. As mentioned, Bede reads the scene of how Peter's mother ministered to Christ after being healed as signifying how the ability to serve God is restored

¹⁶⁶ *VCP*, pp. 248-51 (Chapter 28).

¹⁶⁷ *VCP*, pp. 252-61 (Chapters 29-33).

¹⁶⁸ *VCP*, pp. 252-55 (Chapter 29).

¹⁶⁹ 'De tabernaculo', p. 137 (Chapter 3 ll. 1700-08).

when the body is cleansed from lust.¹⁷⁰ Taking the allusions to the tabernacle and Peter's mother together, this story can be read as representing how Cuthbert by his pastoral care removes carnal weakness from the Church at the request of her Bridegroom and makes her a good servant of Christ again. Likewise, in another healing story, Cuthbert preaches in a newly converted village and raises a child from the mat (*grabato*) he has lain on in his illness.¹⁷¹ This healing again signifies the effect of his pastoral care, considering that Bede takes the mat as a figuration of carnal desires, when commenting on how Christ raised a man from his mat and orders him to walk into a synagogue.¹⁷²

The episcopal series is closed by two stories relating to female communities. In the first story, Cuthbert is invited to dedicate a church on an estate belong to Ælfflæd's monastery, when travelling around to visit his flock, before retiring to Farne to prepare for his death.¹⁷³ Just as in the metrical account, he raises his mind from the 'carnal banquet' (*carnalibus epulis*) in order to 'contemplate spiritual things' (*contemplanda spiritualia*), and therefore receives a vision of how the soul of a shepherd who works for the abbess ascends to heaven.¹⁷⁴ Departing from the metrical account, however, the prose account borrows the phrase '*ascendens arborem*' from Luke 19:4 to describe how the shepherd climbs into a tree before he falls from it and died. This borrowing links the shepherd to the tax-collector Zacchaeus, who climbed on a tree in order to see Christ's face and promised to give away half of his property to the poor when receiving Christ in his house.¹⁷⁵ Bede in his commentary takes Zacchaeus as a figuration of the Gentiles who, although despised by the Jews, are able to accumulate heavenly treasure and even to share it with others, because they are willing to give up their earthly possessions.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, he also sees Zacchaeus's climbing of the tree as symbolic of his seeking heavenly things.¹⁷⁷ By contrast, Bede points out that the Jewish

¹⁷⁰ Bede's *In Lucam*, p. 111 on Luke 4:38 (Book II, Chapter 4 ll. 446-71).

¹⁷¹ *VCP*, pp. 256-59 (Chapter 32).

¹⁷² *In Marcum*, pp. 456-7 on Mark 2:1-12 (Book I, Chapter 2 ll. 774-79).

¹⁷³ *VCP*, pp. 260-65 (Chapter 34).

¹⁷⁴ *VCP*, pp. 262-63.

¹⁷⁵ Luke, 19:1-10.

¹⁷⁶ *In Lucam*, p. 333 (Book v, Chapter 19 ll. 1495-1511).

¹⁷⁷ *In Lucam*, pp. 333-4 (ll. 1519-1522, 1542-1544).

people who murmured about Christ's willingness to be the guest of a tax collector were to lose the grace that they had possessed.¹⁷⁸ Note that Bede could have seen this giving and taking of heavenly treasure as relating to the parable of the talents, which is told in Luke 19 immediately following the story of Zacchaeus.¹⁷⁹ Likewise, in the prose *Life*, the shepherd can be read as a figuration of the Church which, following the example of Zacchaeus, is at pains to raise itself from earthly things to heavenly ones, and eventually receives the reward of salvation as a good servant. Finally, Ælfflæd is said to have been amazed with 'womanly stupidity' (*femineo stupore*) when finding that Cuthbert's prophetic words come true, as if what the saint has foreseen is 'something new and doubtful' (*nouum incertumque*).¹⁸⁰ Considering that in Bede's account, Æthelberht explains to Augustine that he cannot accept the Christian faith because it is something new and doubtful (*noua et incerta*) to him, a possible reading of Ælfflæd's 'womanly stupidity' is that it refers to her lack of faith in the heavenly reward for the servants of Christ.¹⁸¹ Again, this is feminine weakness that can damage the souls of men as well as women.

In the second story, one set in a female community, Cuthbert is staying in Abbess Verca's monastery.¹⁸² Rising from the 'midday rest' (*meridiana quiete*), he asks the brethren there to give him something to relieve his thirst.¹⁸³ He declines the offer of beer and wine but receives some water and by blessing it gives it a taste of wine. This miracle is witnessed by the priest who stands beside him and asks to share his cup, and then by a servant who stands beside the priest and takes the cup from him to taste the water. This miracle is obviously an allusion to how Christ turned water into wine in the wedding at Cana. As mentioned, Bede reads this story as referring to how Christ's teaching of the Holy Scriptures has renewed the Church. Thus, in the prose account, the priest's sharing of Cuthbert's cup with others can be read as symbolising how Cuthbert's followers would continue to carry out his pastoral duty

¹⁷⁸ *In Lucam*, p. 336 (ll. 1606-1612)

¹⁷⁹ *In Lucam*, p. 336 (ll. 1621-1623).

¹⁸⁰ *VCP*, p. 265.

¹⁸¹ *HE*, pp. 74-75 (Book I, Chapter 25).

¹⁸² *VCP*, pp. 264-67 (Chapter 35)

¹⁸³ *VCP*, pp. 264-65.

and spread his teachings after his death. Yet at least three other sets of allusions can be spotted from this account. Firstly, as Bede must have known, the Rule of Benedict highlights in chapter 48 the sinfulness of being idle and the importance of labouring daily, but it also allows the brethren to take a midday rest at the sixth hour.¹⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the sixth hour was also the time when the world fell into temporary darkness during the crucifixion of Christ.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, Cuthbert's rising from midday rest can be read as representing how the Church was reborn and became capable of labouring for Christ again. Secondly, the story is comparing Cuthbert to John the Baptist when describing his abstinence from beer and wine.¹⁸⁶ Bede interprets the same habit of John in his commentary as representing how a preacher refuses to let his preaching being hindered by carnal desires.¹⁸⁷ Finally, Cuthbert's sharing of his cup with a priest and a servant again points to Christ's teaching in Matthew 20 that only those who are willing to serve and endure suffering can receive the honour of sitting beside Him on heaven.¹⁸⁸ Overall, this story can be read as laying out the criteria of becoming the successors of Cuthbert — namely that they must be good servants of Christ who are able to spread his teaching, to endure hardship and to get rid of spiritual slumber and carnal desires. Meanwhile, the emphasis on suffering in this story (signified by the wine) also foreshadows the last section of the text, in which Cuthbert would experience the most severe suffering in order to reach the perfection of his holiness as Christ's servant.

V. 7 The Perfection of Servanthood

When rewriting the last part of the text, Bede expands the accounts of both Cuthbert's last days on Farne and of the aftermath of his death. In the former account, he highlights how Cuthbert had persisted in watching and labouring for God in severe suffering and thus met his death as a perfect servant of God. In the latter account, he shows how Cuthbert's successors at

¹⁸⁴ *RB*, pp. 248-53.

¹⁸⁵ Luke 23:44

¹⁸⁶ Luke 1:15

¹⁸⁷ *In Lucam*, p. 25 (Book I, Chapter 1 ll. 244-62).

¹⁸⁸ Matthew 20: 20-28.

Lindisfarne were able to continue his legacy by acting as good servants.

In the first story of this section, Cuthbert, having returned to Farne, receives a group of brethren on the island and offers them a goose that is hung on the wall in order that they could refresh themselves before starting their return journey.¹⁸⁹ These brethren, however, don't bother to accept the offer because they believe that they have prepared enough food for their journey. Here, they fail to realise that they also need to be provided with spiritual food in order to complete their spiritual journey — spiritual food that Cuthbert has derived for them from Christ's Crucifixion, which is here signified by the goose hung on the wall. In this case, they resemble the foolish virgins who do not prepare enough oil for them to wait for the return of the bridegroom. As a divine punishment for this fault, they are detained on the island for seven days until they follow the saint's advice to put the goose in a pot and cook and eat it. The phrase 'cook and eat' (*coquite et comedite*) is borrowed from Leviticus 8:31 regarding how Aaron and his sons are required to stay in the tabernacle for seven days and to eat the lamb offered to God during this period, whereas the pot (*caldarium*) is a container used to cook the lamb offered to God in the Bible.¹⁹⁰ In Bede's view, the priests' consumption of the lamb can be read as representing how the preachers are refreshed by the grace derived from the suffering Christ.¹⁹¹ In this case, the goose episode in the prose *Life* can be read as relating how those who fail to prepare enough spiritual food for their journey may forfeit their heirship of Cuthbert's pastoral role.

Bede then relates Cuthbert's farewell to his brethren.¹⁹² In the scene, the brethren gathering on the seaside ask Cuthbert, who has boarded a boat, when they will see him again. Here, the topographical reference and the Latin phrase *ascenderet nauem* are both allusions to the account in Mark 4, regarding Christ's teaching from a boat to the crowd gathering on the seaside with the parable of the sower, which serves as a warning that not everyone hearing

¹⁸⁹ VCP, pp. 266-71 (Chapter 36).

¹⁹⁰ I Samuel 2:14.

¹⁹¹ 'In Primam Partem Samuelis', p. 26 on I Samuel 2: 13-14 (Book I, Chapter 2, ll. 614-37).

¹⁹² VCP, pp. 270-71 (Chapter 37).

His words would understand His teachings.¹⁹³ Meanwhile, the brethren's question resembles that of the disciples to Christ during His ascension in Acts 1:6. While Cuthbert responds by saying that the reunion will happen when they bring back his body from Farne, Christ's answer is that the disciples are not supposed to know the time of His return. Taking the two Biblical allusions together, Cuthbert's prophetic words are about the end of the world as well as about his own death, and the words are to make the brethren to prepare for both.

Bede follows this scene by returning to the trope of Christ's good servant. He describes how Cuthbert has been disciplining his mind and body with the same strictness when he is struck down suddenly by illness.¹⁹⁴ This creates an impression that, in contrast to Ecgrith, Cuthbert was well-prepared when death came upon him. Bede then provides a lengthy description of Cuthbert's final days on Farne, which is in fact an eyewitness account by Herefrith, who was the abbot of Lindisfarne during Cuthbert's final days.¹⁹⁵ Herefrith recalls that he offered to stay with Cuthbert to take care of him when finding that the saint had been attacked by illness.¹⁹⁶ However, Cuthbert asked him to board the boat and return to Lindisfarne. Here, the phrase *ascenderet nauem* is used again. Yet considering the storyline, this time it seems to point to Mark 5:18, in which Christ heals a man but refuses his company when boarding a boat; instead, He urges the man to go home to tell everyone about the healing. Bede reads this account as reflecting the tension between bearing the duty of teaching and uniting with God in contemplation.¹⁹⁷ In this case, in the prose *Life*, Cuthbert can be read as deciding to dedicate himself more to his union with God and to pass the teacher's duty across to his followers, when urging Herefrith to leave him and go back to Lindisfarne. Here, the good servant prepared for his death not only by self-disciplining, but also by arranging for his labour to be carried on by his followers after his death.

Herefrith then explains that a storm that lasted for five days had prevented everyone

¹⁹³ Mark 4:1-4.

¹⁹⁴ *VCP*, pp. 270-71.

¹⁹⁵ *VCP*, pp. 270-89 (Chapters 37-39).

¹⁹⁶ *VCP*, pp. 272-73 (Chapter 37).

¹⁹⁷ *In Marcum*, p. 495 (Book II, Chapter 5 ll. 238-49).

from reaching the island, leaving Cuthbert alone to struggle with the severe pain of his illness and with the strongest demonic assault he had experienced in his life.¹⁹⁸ It is at this point that Herefrith addresses Cuthbert as a servant of Almighty God:

For in order that Almighty God might, by chastisement, purify His servant from all blemish of worldly weakness and in order that He might show his adversaries that they could avail nothing against the strength of his faith, He wished to test him by bodily pain and by a still fiercer contest with the ancient foe, cutting him off from mankind for that space of time.

Ut enim omnipotens Deus famulum suum ab omni labe mundanae fragilitatis ad purum castigaret, utque aduersariis eius quam nichil contra fidei uirtutem ualerent ostenderet, uoluit eum tanto tempore segregatum ab hominibus et suae carnis dolore et antiqui hostis acriori certamine probari.¹⁹⁹

Here, the trope of Christ's servant directs the audience to read the final struggle of the dying hermit as a type of labouring for Christ. Just as in the previous chapters, this combination of Cuthbert's servanthood and warriorhood again defines his manhood in relation to how he had served God by combating his bodily weakness and the temptation of the carnal world. Furthermore, Herefrith states that Cuthbert was observing a vigil when he surrendered his soul to heaven, thus highlighting how he was well prepared to receive the master who comes at an unexpected time to check his labour and reward him accordingly.²⁰⁰

Apart from his bearing of hardship and his night watching, Cuthbert's role as a servant of Christ is also highlighted in Herefrith's account in relation to his distribution of his possessions.²⁰¹ He is said to have managed to distribute his possessions to others in his dying moments, especially to those who had once sent him gifts, as a way to pay off his debts

¹⁹⁸ *VCP*, pp. 274-75 (Chapter 37).

¹⁹⁹ *VCP*, pp. 274-75.

²⁰⁰ *VCP*, pp. 284-85 (Chapter 39).

²⁰¹ *VCP*, pp. 274-79 (Chapter 37).

(*recompensationes*). This scene could have been an allusion to the parable of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31, considering that Bede uses the same term to describe why the rich man is punished in hell, and that his description of the ulcer (*ulcus*) on Cuthbert's feet also recalls the ulcer on Lazarus's body described in the same parable. In the parable, Lazarus's suffering from his ulcers raises his soul to heaven, whereas the rich man has to pay off his debts in hell after death for his accumulation of earthly treasure. Yet Cuthbert's sharing of gifts can also be read in relation to the parable of the talents — namely that he shared his divine gifts with others which he had received before going to meet the Lord. Note that he is said to have distributed his gifts with the aid of a certain 'Bede the elder', who recorded the gifts which he had received and which he had given away. Bede could have identified with this namesake, as in his twin *Lives*, he has likewise recorded the gifts of spiritual knowledge Cuthbert had received from God and shared with others, in a way that these gifts can continue to be distributed to the world. Finally, Cuthbert's body was of course another medium for his gifts to continue to be distributed after his death. According to Herefrith, he wished to be buried on Farne because it was where he had fought his spiritual war, and he predicted that many 'fugitives' (*profugi*) and 'guilty men' (*noxii*) would flee to his body after his death because he had gained widespread fame as a servant of God.²⁰² Here, his prediction highlights that his body would function in line with his role as God's servant. On the one hand it would recall how he had struggled against the devil, while on the other hand it would continue to possess healing power that pointed to his pastoral role as a gift-giver and protector to those in need.

One has likewise to be a good servant in order to inherit Cuthbert's gifts as his successor. Herefrith makes this point clear when he relates that Cuthbert appointed a brother, Walhstod, to serve him in the hermit cell 'by merit of his piety, prudence and seriousness' (*merito religionis, prudentiae, et grauitatis*), in spite of Walhstod's disability, and that

²⁰² VCP, pp. 278-79.

Walhstod got his illness healed immediately after entering the cell.²⁰³ Similarly, other brethren proved to be Cuthbert's worthy successors on account of the criteria of a good servant. They are said to have kept watch and prayed at Lindisfarne on the night when Cuthbert died, just as Cuthbert had taught in his sermon on Ecgfrith's death.²⁰⁴ Meanwhile, when the brother who awaited the news of Cuthbert's death in the watchtower received the signal from Farne, he is said to have immediately run to 'some higher ground' (*locum eminentiorem*) to give the news to all the brethren.²⁰⁵ Note that this description is indeed an allusion to how Judith, having assassinated Holophernes, announced the invading general's death first to a guard on a watchtower and then to the Jewish people on a loftier place.²⁰⁶ It is also worth noting that Judith calls herself a handmaid (*ancilla*) of God and it was by her hand that God Himself killed the general.²⁰⁷ In the prose *Life*, Bede's allusion to this Biblical scene allows him to present the night vigil at Lindisfarne as a prefiguration of the triumph that the brethren would achieve as servants of Christ. Bede links this victory to Psalm 146, which the Lindisfarne brethren were said to have been singing when the news of the saint's death arrived.²⁰⁸ The psalm is about the fall and restoration of Israel.²⁰⁹ Bede points out that this psalm foreshadowed the period of turmoil that the community would suffer after the saint's death.²¹⁰ Nevertheless, considering his repeated emphasis on the eschatological moment in the *Life*, both his references to this psalm and the Judith story can also be read as alluding in a more general sense to the suffering of the servants of Christ in the present world and the eventual triumph of them with Christ's Second Return.

In the posthumous miracles, Bede's focus is on how Cuthbert's servanthood can be imitated by those who come after him.²¹¹ For instance, he gives a short *vita* of Bishop

²⁰³ *VCP*, pp. 278-79 (Chapter 37), pp. 280-83 (Chapter 38).

²⁰⁴ *VCP*, pp. 284-89 (Chapter 40).

²⁰⁵ *VCP*, pp. 286-87.

²⁰⁶ Judith 13:13, 16. Note that this is the only place in the Bible where these words occur together.

²⁰⁷ Judith 13:18

²⁰⁸ *VCP*, pp. 286-87.

²⁰⁹ Psalm 146:2, 3.

²¹⁰ This refers to how Wilfrid ruled the community for one year after Cuthbert's death. See *HE*, pp. 442-43 (Book IV, Chapter 29).

²¹¹ *VCP*, pp. 288-307 (Chapters 41-46).

Eadberht at the end of the text. He describes how the bishop ordered the removal of Cuthbert's incorrupt body from the original coffin; dedicated a poem to the incorrupt body concerning the suffering and restoration of God's People; suffered a painful illness before death, and how his own body was then placed in the original coffin of Cuthbert.²¹² A possible reading of this account is that Eadberht was able to remember Cuthbert's life and worked out his own life according to it, and the filling of the empty coffin was a sign of his success to multiply the talents left behind by the saint through suffering and labouring. Meanwhile, two other posthumous healings involve the servant's role. In one of them, a servant carries a sick man to the tomb of Cuthbert by 'leaning on a stick' (*innitentem baculo*), 'with no small effort' ('*cum non paruo labore*'), while in another one, the servants remain awake and watching at night and are therefore able to witness the miraculous healing of their master.²¹³ Here, both stories use the tropes of the servant that have repeatedly appeared in previous chapters, and they can be read as foreshadowing how Christians would continue to — as diligent servants do — help distributing the saint's gifts of healing (both of the mind and the body) to the flock. Finally, the last story of the text is related to Felgild, the second hermit who occupied Cuthbert's cell.²¹⁴ In response to the many requests for the saint's relics, he cuts into pieces the skin used to repair the hermit cell and distributes the fragments among the faithful. In this case, he follows Cuthbert to multiply the divine gifts as a faithful servant of Christ.

Overall, the last section of the *Life* praises Cuthbert for remaining in service to God till the end of his life both by teaching and ascetic practices in spite of the torture of illness, and for setting an example for his followers of how they should prepare for the eschatological moment as Christ's servants. Note that parallels can be drawn between this account with that of Hild's dying moments in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Like the dying Cuthbert, Hild was said to have suffered a long illness before his death but remained a diligent teacher to her nuns. Also, at the moment when she died at Whitby, a nun in the daughter house at Hackness was

²¹² VCP, pp. 290-97 (Chapters 42-43).

²¹³ VCP, pp. 296-301 (Chapters 44-45).

²¹⁴ VCP, pp. 300-07 (Chapter 46).

woken by the sound of a bell ringing and received a vision of her soul ascending to Heaven; then the nun woke other members of the monastery to keep vigil for her, although news of Hild's death would only reach Hackness the following day. This scene resembles that of how the brethren at Lindisfarne kept vigil the night of Cuthbert's death. Here, Bede's detailed description of both scenes, apart from recording an existing custom in monastery of keeping vigil for the dying and dead members, can also be read as a praise of both saints for having left behind as spiritual father and mother a group of watchful servants for Christ. Here, it can be said that Bede's praise of both saints in terms of their service to God is similar and shows an indifferent attitude towards their gender.

This account of Cuthbert's last moments also resembles that in the metrical *Life*, with both emphasising how the saint persisted in his duty as a teacher until the end of his life. However, the metrical account gives far less weight to his suffering as a dying man. Also, the whole text has repeatedly stressed the distinction between the priestly teacher and his flock, and omits the references to the saint's ascetic practices in the original text. All these create an impression that Cuthbert lived and died primarily as a priestly saint who fulfilled the ideal of apostleship. The prose *Life*, by contrast, presents Cuthbert as serving God in different tasks throughout his whole life till his death. Some of these tasks, such as carrying pastoral tours, were for priests and bishops, whereas others, such as ascetic practices and teaching, were for all. It is in light of this universal nature of spiritual servanthood that one can understand how a male saint could live and die in a similar way to a female saint.

Chapter VI

The Warrior Saint in Felix's *Life of Guthlac*

The *Life of Guthlac* was written at some point between 721 and 749, relating the life of a hermit named Guthlac, who died in 714 or 715.¹ Felix, the author of the *Life*, relates that Guthlac had been born in a Mercian noble family, and engaged in a military career in his early life but then renounced it in favour of a religious career. He received clerical tonsure in the community at Repton and stayed there for two years, before moving to the Fens and settling on the island of Crowland as a hermit for the rest of his life. The text reports that his body was found to have remained incorrupt by a group of Church leaders in the first year after his death; it records two posthumous miracles that were attributed to him. This whole process of establishing Guthlac's tomb cult was obviously inspired by that of Cuthbert. But Guthlac's cult was clearly not as popular as Cuthbert's at the time the *Life* was composed. The author dedicated the text to Ælfwald, the King of East Anglia, and addressed himself as a 'servant of the Catholic community' (*catholicae congregationis vernaculus*), with the pen name Felix, a name that recalls Bishop Felix, an early missionary from Gaul to the East Anglians.² Besides this, no other information can be confidently established regarding his life.

Previous studies mostly focus on three aspects of this text. First is its political context — a justified concern indeed, given that the text was dedicated to a king of East Anglia, and that it describes at length the interaction between the saint and an exiled prince Æthelbald, who had become a powerful king of Mercia when the text was composed.³ Secondly is its engagement with literary traditions. As a series of studies have pointed out, the text borrowed heavily from the Bible and hagiographical texts in a way that it constructed an 'intertextual

¹ This was because Felix had quoted Bede's prose *Life of Cuthbert*, which was written in 721, and Ælfwald, its dedicatee, died in 749. See Colgrave, VG, p. 19. For the dating of Guthlac's death, see Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker, 'Introduction to Guthlac's Life and Cult', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, ed. by Roberts and Thacker (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2020), pp. xv-xlvi, p. xxvii.

² VG, pp. 60-61 (Preface).

³ See N.J. Higham's 'Guthlac's Vita, Mercia and East Anglia in the First Half of the Eighth Century', in *Æthelbald and Offa, Two Eighth-Century Kings of Mercia: Papers from a Conference Held in Manchester in 2000*, edited by David Hill and Margaret Worthington (Oxford: Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 85-90; Joseph Grossi, 'Felix and his Kings', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, pp. 157-79.

reading' of Guthlac's holiness.⁴ It also engaged with the tradition of classical and vernacular heroic poetics by resembling them in terms of style and syntax and by providing a picturesque description of Guthlac's fighting against the demons.⁵ Finally, this resonance of the text with the tradition of heroic literature has also led scholars to conclude that it must have been written in an aristocratic milieu. Here, it is also worth pointing out that the text dedicates almost half of its length to relate how Guthlac grew up in a noble family and adopted a successful military career before taking a religious one. Wormald also points out that the text was written at a time when most monasteries were founded by noble families, and argues that it must have been a product of a monastery that was deeply immersed in aristocratic culture, presumably one of the kind that was criticised by Bede in his letter to Egbert for resembling too much a lay household.⁶ Other scholars attributed its heroic tone to the nature of its target audience.⁷ Given that it was written for a king, presumably it was meant to appeal to a lay audience by presenting Guthlac as a heroic figure that they could admire.

Most of these studies give scant attention to the didactic function of the text. In Cubitt's view, for instance, this text was produced mainly for political purpose, although she acknowledges that some of its stories could serve a monastic audience in terms of didacticism.⁸ Thacker and Orchard acknowledge Felix's appeal to a lay audience, but do not explore whether this appeal involved didacticism.⁹ Indeed, it can be said that Wormald has adequately explained the presence of the epic elements. However, some studies do emphasise

⁴ Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', pp. 50-57. S. Downey, 'Intertextuality in the "Lives of St Guthlac"', PhD thesis (University of Toronto, 2004); Audrey Meaney, 'Felix's Life of Guthlac: History or Hagiography?', in *Æthelbald and Offa*, 85-90; Thacker, 'Guthlac and his Life: Felix Shapes the Saint', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, pp. 1-24.

⁵ See Andy Orchard, 'Lege feliciter, scribe felicius: the Originality of the Vita S. Guthlaci', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, pp. 25-54.

⁶ Wormald, 'Bede, Beowulf and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England: Papers in Honour of the 1300th Anniversary of the Birth of Bede Given at Cornell University in 1973-4*, edited by R. T. Farrell (London: BAR, 1978).

⁷ Thacker, 'Guthlac and his Life', pp. 4, 23. Orchard, 'Originality', pp. 25-27. Meredith Bacola, "'Vacuas in auras recessit'? Reconsidering the Relevance of Embedded Heroic Material in the Guthlac Narrative', pp. 72-85 (pp. 72-76).

⁸ Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', p. 51.

⁹ Thacker, 'Guthlac and his Life', pp. 4, 23. Orchard, 'Originality', pp. 25-27.

the didactic function of the text. Bacola notes that the text could encourage a lay audience to contemplate their own lives, in a detailed account of how Guthlac gives his military career for a religious one, and how he dedicates his life to the greater purpose to which God assigns him.¹⁰ Grossi, meanwhile, argues that the text was dedicated to Ælfwald in order to teach him the virtue of humility — the East Anglian king should submit himself to the authority of the God-chosen overlord Æthelbald in the same way as the faithful had submitted themselves to the authority of the Mercian saint.¹¹

This focus on the didactic function of the *Life* for a lay aristocratic audience is a promising way to understand it from a gender perspective. Both Hollis and Weston have studied it in terms of gender. Hollis suggests that it conceptualises the ideal relationship between men and women as a mystic union of opposites, when it quotes Guthlac to explain that he had cut ties with his sister Pega in his lifetime in order to unite with her permanently in heaven.¹² Weston points out that by presenting Guthlac as an exemplar of asceticism, it is able to define his relationship with a monastic audience in terms of spiritual kinship and fertility.¹³ In this chapter, I will further situate this text in relation to the gender norms of its social context by focusing on how it presents Guthlac as a spiritual warrior for the edification of an aristocratic audience, and show that both the observations of Hollis and Weston can in fact be explained in light of this aristocratic model of holiness. I will discuss the text in five parts according to their function in constructing Guthlac as a spiritual warrior: episodes regarding his growing up to become a warrior in chapters 1-17; the transition period that turned him from a worldly warrior into a spiritual one in chapters 18-26; his conflicts with demons in chapters 27-36; his lordly authority following his successful spiritual warfare in chapters 37-47, and his spiritual heirs who continued his warfare in chapters 48-53.¹⁴

¹⁰ Bacola, 'Heroic Material in the Guthlac Narrative', pp. 73-76, 79-80.

¹¹ Grossi, 'Felix and His Kings', pp. 176-9.

¹² See Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, pp. 289-95.

¹³ Weston, 'Saintly Lives', pp. 391-94.

¹⁴ For alternative ways of dividing the text, see Downey, 'Intertextuality', p. 17; Thacker, 'Guthlac and his Life', p. 5.

Finally, a few words can be said about the sources of this text. Felix drew heavily on Athanasius's *Life of Anthony* (in Evagrius's translation), Jerome's *Life of Paul the Hermit*, Sulpicius's *Life of Martin*, the *Life of Fursey*, Bede's twin *Lives of Cuthbert* and Stephen's *Life of Wilfrid*.¹⁵ He also quotes extensively from the Bible. Isidore and Vergil's works are potential sources. It is difficult to know for certain to what extent Felix got access to Isidore's works, but as will be pointed out below, his periodisation of Guthlac's life can be best explained in relation to Isidore's perception of the lifecycle and the structure of the Bible. Meanwhile, many words used in the text can be found in Vergil's *Aeneid*, but there are debates over whether this verbal resemblance functions to draw parallels between Aeneas and Guthlac or it simply reflects how much Felix's lexical usage was exposed to the influence of Vergil.¹⁶ I will take the former position and suggest that the references to *Aeneid* were in fact crucial for the text to construct the aristocratic nature of Guthlac's holiness.

VI.1. Guthlac as a Nobleman

The first part of the text focuses on Guthlac's early life.¹⁷ It begins with an account of Guthlac's family background.¹⁸ Regarding his father Penwalh, it dates his life to the time of Æthelred, king of Mercia, traces his lineage back to the legendary king Icel, and describes his house as 'furnishing with an abundance of goods of various kinds'.¹⁹ Regarding Guthlac's mother Tette, it relates that she was also of noble birth and that she 'lived in maidenly modesty (*puellari verecundia*)'.²⁰ Here, by showing that Guthlac was born in an ideal noble family with a rich father and a virtuous mother, the text underlines the fact that Guthlac was a member of the nobility.

Nevertheless, this emphasis does not simply aim to please an aristocratic audience,

¹⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the use of these words, see Downey, 'Intertextuality', pp. 25-66.

¹⁶ For the former view, see Britton Brooks, 'Felix's Construction of the English Fenlands: Landscape, Authorizing Allusion, and Lexical Echo', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, pp. 55-71 (pp. 59-64). For the latter view, see Thacker, 'Guthlac and his Life', pp. 16-18; Bacola, 'Heroic Material in the Guthlac Narrative', pp. 78-82.

¹⁷ VG, pp. 72-81 (Chapters 1-17).

¹⁸ VG, pp. 72-75 (Chapters 1-3).

¹⁹ VG, pp. 72-75 (Chapters 1-2): 'diversarum rerum fluxu praedita'.

²⁰ VG, pp. 72-73 (Chapter 3).

but defines Guthlac's holiness as a type of spiritual nobility. The reference to Tette's 'maidenly modesty' is likely to be a Biblical allusion. The word modesty (*verecundia*) appears ten times in the Vulgate and on one occasion it is linked to femininity — I Timothy 2:9 urges women to express the virtue of modesty by dressing in simple clothing. In the *Life of Guthlac*, this phrase demonstrates that Guthlac had a mother whose virtues matched with the perfection of women described in the Bible. More specifically, Tette is a type of Mary. In the detailed account of the scene of Guthlac's birth, it is said that Tette had experienced violent labour-pains, but at the same time God 'sent a sign to make His soldier known' with a hand appearing in heaven pointing to the house in which the 'holy woman' (*sancta puerpera*) was giving birth to Guthlac.²¹ Here, the scene recalls two Biblical verses: one is Genesis 3:16, which identifies the pain of childbirth as a punishment for Eve's sin. Another one is John 16:21, in which Christ compares His second coming to the moment when a woman receives her child with joy after enduring the pain of childbirth. Considering these two verses with the phrase 'holy woman', Tetta's holiness resembles that of Mary. Guthlac thus appears as a type of Christ, made flesh in the world of the descendants of Icel in order to heal the suffering caused by sins.

Meanwhile, Felix praises Penwalh for his possession of wealth, which, in a warrior society, would quite naturally be attributed to his warriorhood, especially considering the reference to Icel, a founder figure in Mercian king list.²² As quoted above, he also interprets the birth miracle as sign of Guthlac's holiness as God's chosen soldier, and a few paragraphs later he translates Guthlac's name as the 'reward of war' (*belli munus*), and explains it refers to the eternal life that Guthlac will receive after fighting against sin.²³ These references to the father and ancestor as earthly warriors and holiness as a spiritual warriorhood direct the audience to the connection between the aristocratic background of Guthlac and the nature of

²¹ VG, pp. 74-75 (Chapter 4): 'sigillum manifestandi militis sui'.

²² See Nicholas Brook, 'The formation of the Merican Kingdom', in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. Steven Bassett (London: Leicester University Press, 1989), pp. 159-170 (pp. 163-64).

²³ VG, pp. 72-75, 78-79 (Chapters 1, 4, 10)

his holiness. Thus, rather than nobility and holiness, Felix, in presenting Penwalh's gathering of wealth in positive terms, suggests that the worldly prefigures the spiritual; Penwalh's earthly warriorhood foreshadows his son's spiritual warriorhood (as envisaged in the Bible).²⁴ Tette likewise links Guthlac to historical and Biblical worlds, but primarily as a type of Eve whose pain of labour symbolises a world waiting for salvation, and a type of Mary who serves as a holy vessel for a Christlike warrior. Therefore, the functions of the father and the mother in the construction of Guthlac's aristocratic holiness are arguably distinguished according to Felix's perception of the gender division of labour in an aristocratic family, namely the father and son as warriors and the mother as a non-combatant. Note that this presumably idealised picture of family echoes the Biblical account of the holy family only in terms of the mother's role. While Tette's Marian image parallels Guthlac's birth with the Incarnation, Penwalh is not a Joseph, whose career is in fact quite obscure in the Biblical account, but instead he seems to have reflected the gender norm of a warrior society that a father usually passed his military career to his son, and his allegorical function in this account reflects the Church's attempt to employ this gender norm to represent holiness as a form of spiritual nobility, for the purpose of inspiring a lay audience.

This account of Guthlac's birth is followed by that relating his childhood, which continues to elaborate on the relationship between his holiness and his family. Felix mentions that he received baptism a week after his birth:

And so after eight days had run their course, and he was brought to the sacred waters of the life-giving font, he received the personal name of Guthlac from the name of the tribe known as the Guthlacingas...

*Igitur decursis bis quaternis dierum voluminibus, cum ad salutaris lavacri sacratas undulas propinquasset, ex appellatione illius tribus, quam dicunt Guthlacingas...*²⁵

²⁴ The specific connection between Guthlac's image as a spiritual warrior and Biblical accounts of spiritual warfare only becomes obvious in the second half of the text. See below.

²⁵ VG, pp. 76-77 (Chapter 10).

Note that the first half of this paragraph is in fact an allusion to Luke 1:59-61:

And it came to pass that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child: and they called him by his father's name Zachary. And his mother answering, said: Not so. But he shall be called John. And they said to her: There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

Et factum est in die octavo venerunt circumcidere puerum et vocabant eum nomine patris eius Zacchariam et respondens mater eius dixit nequaquam sed vocabitur Iohannes et dixerunt ad illam quia nemo est in cognatione tua qui vocetur hoc nomine.

By alluding to this passage, Felix places emphasis on divine grace as the source of Guthlac's holiness. Yet he also departs from the Biblical account in terms of his depiction of kinship. The original passage emphasises how John's God-given name broke the tradition of his priestly family — presumably as a way to foreground the rupture between the Jewish tradition and the new faith preached by John. Felix, by contrast, stresses that Guthlac's name was derived from his kin group. In this case, he reinterprets Luke 1:59-61 as relating to the continuity rather than the rupture between the Old and New Testaments, and creates an impression that Guthlac's holiness was an elevated version of the aristocratic status of his kin group, rather than in opposition to it.

This attitude towards nobility can be compared with that in the *Whitby Life* of Gregory. This text glosses over the pope's noble birth in one statement and immediately follows by saying that he disregards all transitory things in favour of heavenly reward.²⁶ Later on, as I have pointed out, it also downplays the importance of Edwin's royal lineage in favour of the role of priestly missionaries — which it links allegorically to the high priest Melchizedek, who is said in Hebrews 7 to have no father, mother and genealogy.²⁷ It can be

²⁶ VGA, pp. 72-73 (Chapter 1).

²⁷ VGA, pp. 96-97 (Chapter 14). Hebrews 7:3.

said that in the *Whitby Life*, an ideal priest sees things as a hermit does, disregarding earthly families as transitory things, whereas in the Guthlac account, the reinterpreting of Luke 1:59-61 allows the holiness of a hermit saint to be read as an elevation of aristocratic status. The differences between the two authors in their attitude towards nobility can be explained by their different target audience. As pointed out, the Whitby author was probably writing mainly for a priestly audience, but Felix wrote for lay as well as monastic audiences.

Felix continues by further elaborating the relationship between spiritual and earthly warriorhood. As mentioned, he translates Guthlac's name as 'the reward of war', and explains that it had prefigured how he would battle against sins to achieve eternal life.²⁸ In light of his reinterpretation of Luke 1:59-60, this pun highlights not the opposition between earthly and spiritual warfare, but the analogy between them. But where Luke mentions John's mother, Felix defines Guthlac's holiness mainly as an elevated version of male nobility; and does not elaborate on Tette's role.

This asymmetry continues as Felix successively relates how 'the infant of marvellous nature' (*infans mirae indolentiae*) had received baptism that set him apart from 'the sins of his parents' (*delicta parentum*); how he was taught the 'noble learning of the ancients' (*nobilibus antiquorum disciplinis*) in the halls of his fathers (*in aulis paternis*); how he learned to speak in a childish manner (*pueriliter*) at the end of his infancy (*infantia*); how he developed 'a noble desire for command' (*egregius dominandi amor*) and 'remembered the valiant deeds of heroes of old' (*pristinorum heroum facta reminiscens*), and eventually, how he became a warrior with the increase of his 'youthful strength' (*adolescentiae vires*), fighting triumphantly for nine years.²⁹ All this highlights his aristocratic background further, tracing his career in the path of his warrior father; by contrast, they say nothing about the modest mother.³⁰ The account also defines his life as a nobleman according to an androcentric perception of the lifecycle borrowed from Isidore's *Etymologies*. Isidore labels the first seven

²⁸ VG, pp. 78-79 (Chapter 10).

²⁹ VG, pp. 78-81 (Chapters 11-17)

³⁰ VG, pp. 80-81 (Chapters 16-17).

years of a man's life as infancy (*infantia*), referring to the incapability to speak (*in-fari*); the next seven years as boyhood (*pueritia*), as it is a period of purity (*puritas*); from 15 until 28 years old as adolescence (*adolescentia*), a period when a man becomes mature enough to procreate; from 29 until 50 years old as youth (*iuventus*), a period when men peaks in their strength and become capable to help (*iuvare*).³¹ Felix's account echoes this description of lifecycle both by terms and concepts — he relates that Guthlac learned to speak at the transition from infancy to boyhood and defines his adolescence as a stage of becoming stronger. Isidore complements his perception of the lifecycle with some brief references to the life stages of woman in a separate section but Felix does not refer to this.³²

In moulding the life of a young nobleman according to Isidore's model. Felix constructs a universal framework for Christian manhood, according to which Guthlac emerges as an example to show how a secular nobleman can observe the Church's teachings. He relates how the saint, when learning to speak in his boyhood, refused to follow the wrong examples of using spoken words.³³ He quotes the *Life of Anthony* to praise him for his obedience to parents, his affection to his foster-siblings and his refusing to return evil for evil.³⁴ Regarding the saint's adolescence, he emphasises his success as a leader of a war-band but also his willingness to return one third of booty to the original owners — the latter reference seems to represent a Christian version of warrior code.³⁵ Here, his account of how the nobleman saint grew up a good warrior by possessing all these Christian virtues arguably exemplifies the Church's ideal of a tamed warrior society.

Yet his adoption of Isidore's lifecycle does not only construct Guthlac as a model for imitation by the warrior class, but also defines the relationship between his military and religious careers. While he links Guthlac's military career to his adolescence, in the

³¹ *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 241 (Book XI, Chapter 2 ll. 1-9).

³² *Etymologies*, pp. 241 (Book XI, Chapter 2 l. 12).

³³ VG, pp. 78-79 (Chapter 12).

³⁴ VG, pp. 78-79 (Chapters 13-14). VA, p. 160 (Chapter 1 ll. 31-32). Noted by Downey, 'Intertextuality', p. 36.

³⁵ VG, pp. 80-81 (Chapter 17).

paragraphs that follow, he mentions that Guthlac abandoned his military career for a religious one at the age of 24, only four years before the starting point of the period of youth defined by Isidore.³⁶ In this case, his adoption of Isidore's scheme gives the impression that Guthlac's religious career was a more mature stage than his military one. Nevertheless, this also shows that the two careers were just two different stages of the same spiritual progress, rather than being opposed to each other — in other words, Guthlac achieved his holiness not by turning his back against the warriorhood he had inherited from his heroic ancestors, but rather by taking this warriorhood to a higher spiritual level. The virtues that made Guthlac a good Christian nobleman will also make him an ideal hermit. His good relationship with his kin as a child foreshadows his solitary life, considering that it is inspired by the account of Anthony's holy childhood. Similarly, his talent for the spoken word will be repeatedly mentioned in the later part of the text as an important means for him to fight against the demons. Following Isidore, his lay career shows what makes a good Christian nobleman but also defines a superior form of nobility for which it serves as the preparatory stage. Both functions are crucial for the text to define him as an aristocratic saint.

Finally, his ability to use spoken words in a correct way deserves some further discussion. The power of spoken words was fully appreciated in the conversion period. The Whitby *Life* has recorded how Gregory received the epithet 'golden mouth' (*aurea oris*) for his teaching of heavenly mystery; Bede's metrical *Life* of Cuthbert, as mentioned, refers to a priest's tongue as signifying his apostolic duty, and he links his ideal of the *doctores* to the 'perfect men' (*perfecti viri*) praised in James 3:2 for the ability to control their tongue; the *Life of Wilfrid* accuses Queen Iurminburg of being used by the devil to ruin the friendship between King Ecgfrith and Wilfrid, describing how the devil 'shot poisoned arrows of speech from her [Iurminburg] quiver into the heart of the king'.³⁷ Yet in the *Guthlac* account, the

³⁶ VG, pp. 82-83 (Chapter 19).

³⁷ VGA, pp. 116-17 (Chapter 24). VW, pp. 48-49 (Chapter 24): 'de faretra sua venenatas sagittas venifica in cor regis'. VCM, pp. 192-93 (Preface). In *Epistulas Septem Catholicas*, pp. 206-7 on James 1-11 (Chapter 3 ll. 157-190).

proper Christian use of language is defined by its opposite, which the infant Guthlac does not follow:

He did not imitate the impudence of the children nor the nonsensical chatter of the matrons, nor the empty tales of the common people, nor the foolish shouts of the rustics, nor the lying triflings of flatterers, nor the different cries of the various kinds of birds as children of that age are wont to do...

Non puerorum lascivias, non garrula matronarum deliramenta, non vanas vulgi fabulas, non rucolarum bardigiosos vagitus, non falsidicas parasitorum fribulas, non variorum volucrum diversos crocitus, ut adsolet ilia aetas, imitabatur,³⁸

Here, the first four figures can all be read as representing the ‘other’ of noble warriors. In a story in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, a nobleman named Imma is said to have tried to conceal his combatant status to escape from revenge, by claiming that he was a rustic (*rusticus*) among the poor people (*paupere uulgo*), responsible only for carrying provisions to the battlefield.³⁹ This story hints that just like children and women, the rustics and common people were not regarded as warriors on account of their social inferiority. When these four figures are used as examples of misusing the talent of speech, they help to define its correct use as a trait of the good aristocratic warrior, and thus prepare the audience to read Guthlac’s uses of language as a hermit for spiritual combat and teaching, described in the later part of the text, as exemplifying a form of spiritual aristocratic warriorhood. Here, it can be clearly observed how women, based on the gender norms of a warrior society, are used together with other non-combatant figures to define Guthlac’s aristocratic holiness.

Note that Felix also refers to the lying flatterers and birds as examples of misusing voices. The birds could signify those who teach against the doctrine of the Church as their cries could have a strong pagan connotation in the conversion period, as can be seen in the

³⁸ VG, pp. 77-78 (Chapter 12).

³⁹ HE, pp. 400-405 (Book IV, Chapter 22).

story of how Edwin's noblemen thought that the crow's voice could foretell their future.⁴⁰ By adding them and the lying flatterers to the list of non-combatant figures, Felix defines the fault of misleading others with deceptive words and teaching against Christian doctrine as a sign of false aristocratic warriorhood.

VI. 2. From the Old-Testament Warriorhood to the New-Testament One

The second section of the *Life* begins with Guthlac leaving behind his military career, parents and comrades at the age of 24.⁴¹ This age comes four years before the starting point of youth in Isidore's lifecycle, but it is almost certainly a reference to the number of books included in the Old Testament, which Isidore discusses in the *Etymologies*.⁴² Felix evidently intends Guthlac's early life as a layman to be read as the 'Old Testament' life phase, whereas his later life as a hermit as the 'New Testament' phase. Yet the text also constructs a transition period, when it says that Guthlac stayed at Repton for two years, which it then notes as containing 24 months.⁴³ This period thus can still be read as forming the last part of Guthlac's Old-Testament life phase, although it took place when Guthlac was already more than twenty-four years old. The construction of this transition period in the text echoes Felix's emphasis on the continuity between Guthlac's earthly and spiritual warriorhood on the one hand, and that of the Old and New Testament Eras on the other hand.

This emphasis on continuity suggests that the transition phase can only be properly interpreted when read together with the chapters that form the 'Old Testament' life phase. The moment when Guthlac decided to adopt a military career as an adolescent is described in the text as a spiritual awakening inspired by ancient tales:

Now when his youthful strength had increased, and a noble desire for command
burned in his young breast, he remembered the valiant deeds of heroes of old, and as

⁴⁰ VGA, pp. 96-99 (Chapter 16).

⁴¹ VG, pp. 82-83 (Chapter 19). As mentioned, I identify chapters 18-26 as the second section of the text, pp. 80-91.

⁴² Isidore, *The Etymologies*, p. 135 (Book VI. 1 l. 8).

⁴³ VG, pp. 86-87 (Chapters 23, 24). Note that the chapter number of the latter might have been intended to be read in terms of the same numerological symbolism.

though awaking from sleep, he changed his disposition and gathering bands of followers took up arms.

*Igitur cum adolescentiae vires increvissent, et iuvenili in pectore egregius dominandi amor ferveret, tunc valida pristinorum heroum facta reminiscens, veluti ex sopore evigilatus, mutata mente, adgregatis satellitum turmis, sese in arma convertit,*⁴⁴

The moment when the exhausted Guthlac renounced his military career is presented as another moment of spiritual awakening inspired by the same ancient tales:

For when, with wakeful mind, he contemplated the wretched deaths and the shameful ends of the ancient kings of his race in the course of the past ages, and also the fleeting riches of this world and the contemptible glory of this temporal life... So when the mists of the dark night had been dispersed and the sun had risen in fire over helpless mortals...he dressed and raised his limbs from his rustic bed...[and] bade his companions choose another leader for their expedition.

*Nam cum antiquorum regum stirpis suae per transacta retro saecula miserabiles exitus flagitioso vitae termino contemplaretur, necnon et caducas mundi divitias contentibilemque temporalis vitae gloriam pervigili mente consideraret...Ergo exutis umbrosae noctis caliginibus, cum sol mortalibus egris igneum demoverat ortum... tunc indutos artus agresti de spatulo surgens arrexerat...se comitantibus praecepit, ut ducem alium itineris sui elegissent...*⁴⁵

Both the old and new interpretations of the tales of the ancient heroes are presented in a positive light as both lead to spiritual awakening.⁴⁶ After all, while the old interpretation is less perfect than the new one, it had nevertheless, as I have pointed out above, transformed Guthlac from a child into an adolescent who fulfilled the Christian ideal of warriorhood.

⁴⁴ VG, pp. 80-81 (Chapter 16).

⁴⁵ VG, pp. 82-83 (Chapter 19).

⁴⁶ For the use of parallelism in the text and its relation to the tradition of heroic poetry, see Orchard, 'Originality', pp. 33-35.

Meanwhile, the fact that Guthlac experienced a second spiritual awakening not by casting away the heroic tales but by responding to them differently shows a sense of confidence that these tales, in spite of their pagan connotations, can serve a Christian purpose in a Christian context. In this case, these tales in fact function as a type of the Old Testament, as when being read by beginners they show how those who followed God could perform heroic deeds by force of arms, but when being subjected to a more spiritually mature reading, they are also able to reflect the fragility of all enterprise in this present world. Finally, Guthlac's decision to lead a solitary life is likewise presented as a spiritual awakening inspired by ancient tales, though this time they are the tales 'about the solitary life of monks of former days' (*priscorum monachorum solitariam vitam*), which Guthlac had read in the community at Repton.⁴⁷ This repetition helps to fix the tales of the warriors and the hermits of the old days in a relationship of prefiguration resembling that between the Old and New Testaments. In other words, it defines the hermits as spiritual aristocratic warriors and also as spiritual ancestors of the audience.

Felix's treatment of Guthlac's life at Repton deserves further attention. By linking the length of Guthlac's stay (24 months) at Repton to the number 24, Felix highlights the 'Old-Testament nature' of his communal life. By doing so, he downplays the significance of Guthlac's transition from a military to religious career — both of which he identifies here as belonging to his 'Old Testament' life phase; instead, he identifies the watershed in Guthlac's life as the moment when he decides to leave his community and become a hermit.⁴⁸ These life stages reflect the changes in Guthlac's relationships with human society. Felix describes how Guthlac left behind both his parents and comrades when deciding to abandon his military career.⁴⁹ Yet he also gives weight to the fact that Guthlac was involved again in human relationships after entering the community at Repton, which allows one to consider this move as part of his 'Old Testament' life phase, along with his military career. In Felix's account,

⁴⁷ VG, pp. 86-87 (Chapter 24).

⁴⁸ VG, pp. 86-87 (Chapter 24).

⁴⁹ VG, pp. 82-83 (Chapter 19).

both life stages involve the saint in the vices of human society. While Guthlac, as mentioned, has to stay away from the bad influence of false examples in lay society, he also needs to face the hatred of other brethren at Repton when his abstinence from alcohol has inspired their envy, until he is able to gain their respect by proving his virtue.⁵⁰

However, both life stages are also presented as preparation for the solitary life. As pointed out above, living in lay society provides the opportunity for Guthlac to fulfil his Christian duty to his family, to acquire the ‘noble learning of the ancients’ in his father’s hall and the ability to manage language as a child by rejecting negative examples. Likewise, living in the community at Repton provides the opportunity for him to learn about the ancient hermits’ stories, to observe a series of virtues, which Felix quotes from the *Life of Fursey*, and to learn from his brethren different types of virtues, which Felix borrows from the *Life of Anthony*.⁵¹ In the original sources, these virtues respectively make Fursey worthy to receive visions of heaven and hell, and prepare Anthony for a higher level of asceticism. Thus, Felix’s references to them creates the impression that Guthlac’s early life in human society prepared him for his eremitic monasticism. It also shows to the audience that even when they do not intend to follow Guthlac to become a hermit, they could — irrespective of whether they are monks or lay people — learn from the saint in terms of how to live a good Christian life in human society, which has both positive and negative sides because it involves both love and strife, good and bad examples. Finally, Felix specifies that the community at Repton taught Guthlac how to read and to sing psalms.⁵² Whereas the former was crucial for Guthlac to read the hagiographical texts about ancient hermits, the latter, as I shall elaborate below, was crucial for him to defeat demons.

⁵⁰ VG, pp. 84-85 (Chapters 20-21). This account recalls the accounts of Cuthbert’s abstinence from alcohol and his strife with the brethren at Lindisfarne in Bede’s prose *Life*, and also the account of the strife between Benedict and his brethren in Gregory’s *Dialogues*. Noted by Colgrave, VG, p. 179. See VCP, pp. 174-75, 210-11 (Chapters 6, 16); *Dialogues*, SC 260, pp. 140-51 (Book II, Chapter 3)

⁵¹ VG, pp. 78-79, 86-87 (Chapters 12, 23). Both borrowings are noted by Colgrave, VG, pp. 86, 179-80. ‘Vita Et Miracula S. Fursei: 1. Vita S. Fursei’, in *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex codice Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, ed. by W. W. Heist, Subsidia Hagiographica, 28 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1965) pp. 37-50 (p. 38; Chapter 2). VA, p. 161 (Chapter 4 ll. 73-78).

⁵² VG, pp. 84-85 (Chapter 22).

Following the account of Guthlac's communal life, Felix relates how Guthlac left Repton and travelled to the Fens to find somewhere to begin his solitary life.⁵³ It is difficult to establish for certain the allegorical meanings of his detailed description of the topographical features of the Fens. Yet it seems clear that he means to highlight the militaristic nature of Guthlac's solitary life by mentioning the fortress of Cambridge that was close to the Fens.⁵⁴ Also, by calling the fen a desert, he presents Guthlac as a new Anthony.⁵⁵ Furthermore, he relates that a man named Tatwine told Guthlac about the island of Crowland in the middle of the 'desert' and carried the saint across 'trackless bogs' and onto the island in a 'fisherman's skiff' (*scafula*).⁵⁶ The latter seems to be a borrowing from Vegetius's *On Military Things*.⁵⁷ In this case, Tatwine can be seen both as a guide and a comrade of Guthlac who accompanied him to the battlefield for his spiritual warfare. Here, again, Felix does not hesitate to show that Guthlac drew on the knowledge of human society in order to prepare for his spiritual warfare. Indeed, this Tatwine could have been a local leader in Cambridge, and the memory of his comradeship with the saint might have been circulated around the area in order to strengthen the political position of his family.

However, the fact that Tatwine's status and family connection are not mentioned in the text suggests that he is primarily meant to be read in a figurative way. In his report to Guthlac about Crowland, he attributes the failure of previous attempts to settle on the island simply to 'the unknown portents of the desert' (*incognita heremi monstra*) and 'its terrors of various shapes' (*diversarum formarum terreros*).⁵⁸ This reflects his ignorance about the true danger on the island, namely demonic temptation. Nevertheless, this ignorance did not prevent him from carrying Guthlac to Crowland because, according to Felix, he had Christ as his company.⁵⁹ Here, he could be read as a type of Moses, who was able to lead the Hebrews

⁵³ VG, pp. 86-89 (Chapters 24-25).

⁵⁴ VG, pp. 86-87 (Chapter 24).

⁵⁵ VG, pp. 86-87 (Chapter 24).

⁵⁶ VG, pp. 88-89 (Chapter 25).

⁵⁷ Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, edited by Trad. A. Önnfors (Stuttgart: Bibliotheca Teubneriana, 1995), pp. 126, 259 (Book III, Chapter 7, l. 450; Book IV, Chapter 46, l. 870).

⁵⁸ VG, pp. 88-89 (Chapter 25).

⁵⁹ VG, pp. 88-89 (Chapter 25).

to overcome the physical dangers and hostile peoples in the wilderness, and to lead the peoples under the guidance of the Lord, but did not disclose to the Hebrews that their true warfare was to fight against temptations of the demons, a revelation that they would only receive in the Promised Land in the New Testament Era. Meanwhile, considering that the ‘fisherman’s skiff’ could signify apostolic status, Tatwine could also be read as a prefiguration of St Bartholomew, who would later become an important protector of Guthlac against the temptations of the demons. If this reading is correct, it can be said that Tatwine serves in the text as an Old Testament Prophet who directed Guthlac to move on to the New Testament phase of his life.

According to Felix, Guthlac investigated the island carefully once arrived and decided that it was the right place for him to live as a hermit, he returned to stay with his brethren for ninety days before coming back again to Crowland.⁶⁰ Felix explains that this was because Guthlac had been bound with these brethren in ‘no common brotherly love in the bosom of a Catholic community’.⁶¹ In the preface, Felix uses the phrase ‘*catholicae congregationis*’ to identify himself as a member of the universal Church; thus, his use of the same phrase to address the brethren at Repton could be read as presenting them as a figuration of the whole of Christian human society.⁶² The reference to the ninety days could be an allusion to how the pregnant Mary stayed for three months with her cousin Elizabeth, who was bearing John the Baptist at that time.⁶³ Perhaps Felix reads this Biblical account as representing how people have to serve their human fellows before they can receive Christ. Furthermore, Felix describes how Guthlac returned to his brethren when ‘the light of the next day had risen over hapless mortals’ in the same wording as he has used to describe the dawn in which Guthlac had made up his mind to leave behind his military career, comrades and parents.⁶⁴ These two

⁶⁰ VG, pp. 90-91 (Chapter 26).

⁶¹ VG, pp. 90-91 (Chapter 26): ‘quos sibi eximiae fraternitatis caritas in gremio catholicae congregationis iungebat...’.

⁶² VG, pp. 60-61.

⁶³ Luke 1:56.

⁶⁴ VG, pp. 90-91 (Chapter 26): ‘mortalibus aegris lux crastina demoverat ortum, cum ille unde egressus est..’ See Orchard, ‘Originality’, pp. 34-35

descriptions of the dawn can be read as relating how Guthlac responded to the divine grace promised to the mortals first by seeking it as a hermit and then by sharing this grace with other mortals. But how could a hermit share grace with others? Felix says that Guthlac brought two boys with him on his trip back to Crowland. This echoes how Abraham travelled to the place designated by God with two youths to sacrifice his son as an offering to God.⁶⁵ This suggests that Guthlac, by fighting demons in an isolated place, made himself an offering to God that would help to cleanse the sins of the human society which he had left behind. Note that he is to have returned to Crowland on the feast of St Bartholomew.⁶⁶ His two trips to Crowland, therefore, can be read as respectively representing the contemplative and pastoral aspects of apostleship. Altogether, Felix defines the relationship between a hermit and human society in terms of three aspects — one has to learn from other humans and to serve them as a dutiful Christian in order to become qualified to assume a solitary life. To adopt this lifestyle, meanwhile, is by itself a way to redeem the humankind.

Felix ends the account of Guthlac's search for a solitary life by presenting him in terms of two images. First, he presents Guthlac as a soldier of Christ, by quoting Ephesians 6: 11-17 to describe how the hermit-saint armed himself with the 'shield of faith, the breastplate of hope, the helmet of chastity, the bow of patience, the arrows of psalmody, making himself strong for the fight.'⁶⁷ Second, he compares him to Paul, whom Christ likewise provided with guidance on the way to Damascus.⁶⁸ For him, divine guidance was on the one hand to direct Paul to renounce the world in order to receive eternal rewards, and on the other hand to release him from the faults of the Jews in order to make him a teacher of the Gentiles. This reading echoes how Felix understands the pastoral and contemplative aspects of Guthlac's two trips to Crowland. This reference to Paul's conversion also functions as a proper conclusion for the whole account of Guthlac's Old-Testament warriorhood.

⁶⁵ Genesis, 22:3.

⁶⁶ VG, pp. 90-91 (Chapter 27).

⁶⁷ Noted by Colgrave. VG, pp. 90-91 (Chapter 27): 'scutum fidei, lorica spei, galea castitatis, arcum patientiae, sagittas psalmodiae, sese in aciem firmans...'

⁶⁸ Romans 11:33. Noted by Colgrave. VG, pp. 92-93 (Chapter 27).

This conclusion also serves as a reminder that in this account the building up of knowledge and the establishing of warriorhood are closely related. Two types of knowledge can be identified here. The first type of knowledge that is crucial for the construction of Guthlac's warriorhood in the text is related to the proper use of words. Guthlac's learning to speak in his childhood can be seen as achieving this knowledge at a basic level. Yet he handled words on a more advanced level when he learnt to remember and use the Biblical words which he had heard—he renounced his military career when he remembers the words from Matthew 24:20: 'Let not your flight be in the winter neither on the sabbath day.'⁶⁹ Given that this verse does not straightforwardly urge one to abandon a military career and take a religious one, the way that Guthlac applied this verse to his life decision suggests that he had already possessed a proper understanding of the spiritual meaning of the verse, despite still being an illiterate. Presumably this account is intended to show to the lay audience that even when they might have to rely heavily on oral translation in order to understand the Bible and this text, it would not prevent them from developing a good understanding of the spiritual sense of these texts.

However, Felix notes that Guthlac learns his letters at Repton, and so can 'read' (*legere*) about 'the solitary life of monks of former days'.⁷⁰ This establishes a symmetry between written texts and the construction of spiritual warriorhood and spiritual genealogy. While Guthlac, through his ability to read, learns about the heroism of hermits and so transforms his own warriorhood, these hermits were not his ancestors, but the Desert Fathers of the East, the spiritual ancestors of all religious men thanks to the written records of their lives. In this case, the ability to read frees Guthlac from the network of earthly kinship and, allows him to imitate heroes beyond the warrior tradition and his own genealogy.

While this emphasis on the written form of accounts of monks' solitary lives might not make the *Life* more appealing to a lay audience, it creates an analogy between Guthlac's

⁶⁹ 'ne in hieme vel sabbato fuga vestra fiat'. VG, pp. 82-83 (Chapter 18).

⁷⁰ VG, pp. 86-87 (Chapter 24).

role as a spiritual warrior and Felix's role as an author and a teacher. In the preface, Felix does not identify himself with any institutions except the universal community of Christians, but instead consider himself a stranger (*alienus*) ambushed by English scholars who, against the advice of Pope Gregory, write about heavenly mysteries according to the rules set by the grammarian Donatus.⁷¹ Felix then quotes Romans 11:25 to criticise these scholars: 'Blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.'⁷² This quotation compares English scholars who venerate Donatus to the Jews who venerated Abraham. By contrast, his borrowings from the *Lives* of the hermit-saints suggests that he recognised the authors of these *Lives*, rather than Donatus, as his true ancestors. This work thus re-enacts Guthlac's reading of the *Lives* of the ancient hermits, whose heir he sought to be by leaving his kin group to become a hermit.

Meanwhile, he describes his writing as a spiritual journey towards 'the haven of life', which can only be completed by others' verbal attacks:

Let us stop our ears against the pestiferous incantations of our detractors as though we were traversing the waters of a vast whirlpool and let us steer our pen towards the life of St Guthlac as though we were making for the haven of life.

pestiferis obtrectantium incantationibus aures obturantes velut transvadato vasti
gurgitis aequore, ad vitam sancti Guthlaci stilum flectendo quasi ad portum vitae
pergemus.⁷³

This description of Felix's writing as a dangerous journey parallels his description of Guthlac's heroic adventure in the Fens. Meanwhile, the emphasis on the destructive power of hostile words also highlights the militaristic nature of his role as a writer who exposes the true nature of holiness, and the similarity between his battle of words and Guthlac's struggle

⁷¹ Noted by Colgrave. *VG*, pp. 60-63. *Moralia*, CCSL 143A, p. 7 (Ad Leandrum ll. 216-22).

⁷² Noted by Colgrave. *VG*, pp. 62-63: 'Caecitas ex parte contigit in Israhel, donec plenitudo gentium subintraret'.

⁷³ *VG*, pp. 62-63 (Preface).

against the demons on Crowland, which, as shall be discussed in detail below, is likewise presented as involving the correct use of words to fight against the deceptive rhetoric. While it is true that Guthlac fights the demons by recounting psalms and other Biblical verses orally, as mentioned, he is said to have learned to sing psalms at Repton at the same time as his learning of letters. Indeed, the Psalms were probably central to learning to read in this period. Also, he is like Anthony in the way he fights the demons with words, and so his experience is arguably inspired by the tales of the ancient hermits, which he read about at Repton. So, while his education prepares him for his career as a spiritual warrior, it also makes his spiritual struggle more similar to that of a good Christian author like Felix.

The second type of knowledge crucial to the construction of Guthlac's warriorhood is the ability to discriminate between good and bad models. This enables him to grow up into a warrior on the model of ancient heroes, but also to realise the fragility of lay warriorhood and to reject it for spiritual warfare. As I have pointed out above, the heroic warriors in the ancient tales serve as types of Old Testament figures. Those who are only able to see their glorious triumphs would risk repeating the mistakes of the Jews, whereas those who are able to recognise the transitory nature of all these triumphs would experience spiritual conversion as a good Gentile does. It is noteworthy that the spiritual awakening of Guthlac is caused by his new interpretation of the heroic tales as his rising up from the bed of the rustics (*spatulo agresti*).⁷⁴ This links the ignorance of the fragility of secular warriorhood to the rustics, already defined, together with the chattering women, as antitypes of warriorhood. In this case, those who are unable to do so are presented as spiritually rustic, female or Jewish, whereas those aware of the fragility of secular warriorhood assume spiritual aristocracy and warriorhood.

Significantly, Felix showed he had this spiritual aristocracy and warriorhood when he wrote the *Life*, as he identifies Guthlac as the right model for the audience to learn from and

⁷⁴ VG, pp. 82-83 (Chapter 19).

exposes the true nature of Guthlac's holiness. For instance, in his account of Guthlac's childbirth miracle, he relates that after a human hand had appeared in the sky, a woman came out from the house and announced to those who were waiting outside: 'Stand still, for a man child who is destined to future glory has been born into this world.'⁷⁵ Felix then describes two different responses to these words; some assume they foreshadow Guthlac's future earthly glory, but the wiser ones know that these words refer to 'the reward of everlasting bliss' (*perpetuae beatitudinis praemia*) that awaits Guthlac.⁷⁶ Here, Felix makes it clear that even when people have recognised the saints with the help of divine signs, they are not necessarily able to understand what lesson they should learn from them. Felix himself, however, correctly identifies how Guthlac's secular and spiritual warriorhood relate. His role as a teacher is thus analogous with that of Guthlac as a warrior, as both are based on the ability to identify the right models. Meanwhile, he also follows Guthlac to assume the role of a teacher of Gentiles akin to Paul by offering Guthlac as a model for an audience who might not be directly related to Guthlac but nevertheless could be inspired by the saint to experience the same spiritual awakenings which the saint himself had experienced.

Here, he can be read as making an argument to an aristocratic audience regarding why Church leaders should be considered as worthy of praise and imitation in spite of their non-combatant status. As pointed out, he has already used a similar method to establish Guthlac's holiness as a form of spiritual nobility. In both cases, he focuses on how holiness and Church leadership can be compared to the warriorhood of the earthly aristocracy, but not to any feminine or gender-neutral traits of earthly nobility, although he does mention an abbess named Ælfthryth when relating Guthlac's life at Repton, and she must have been a woman of noble birth. Yet at the same time, he also hints at the possibility that Guthlac's spiritual warriorhood, in contrast to the earthly one which he had cast aside, can be accessible to a female audience. This is because he defines it in terms of two abilities that the Church

⁷⁵ VG, pp. 76-77 (Chapter 8): 'Stabilitote, quia futurae gloriae huic mundo natus est homo.'

⁷⁶ VG, pp. 76-77 (Chapter 8).

was likely to have expected all Christians to have possessed, namely to identify the right models for the practising of Christian virtues and to use spoken words according to the Church's teachings, are traits of spiritual nobility. In other words, he defines a saint's holiness by comparing him mainly to a warrior, but he does not assume that this holiness can be achieved only by men.

VI. 3 Guthlac as a Spiritual Warrior

Felix begins his narrative of Guthlac's solitary life on Crowland with mention of his sources:

So to begin the account of St Guthlac's solitary life as I have proposed to do, I will seek to narrate the story as I heard it from Wilfrid and Cissa who were his frequent visitors, and in the order in which I learnt it.

Igitur ut de sancti Guthlaci solitaria vita, sicut proposui, scribere exordiar, quae a frequentatoribus eius Wilfrido et Cissan audivi, eodem ordine, quo conperi, easdem res narrare curabo⁷⁷

This paragraph creates an impression that Guthlac's settling on Crowland as a hermit marked a new beginning of his life, thus providing another support for my argument that Guthlac's solitary life is intended to be read in the text as the New Testament phase of his life. As I shall show, the stories of this life phase give more emphasis to the distinction between earthly and spiritual warriorhood than do those focusing on the Old Testament life phase.⁷⁸ This does not mean that they are didactic material suitable only for those who had already given up their military career in favour of a religious one. Indeed, the vivid description of the demons in the narrative seems to represent an attempt to appeal to a lay audience, as Thacker has suggested.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, they continue to stress the parallel between nobility and holiness, by showing that using spoken words in the correct way and following the right models — the two types of ability that had once made Guthlac a good nobleman — were important to his

⁷⁷ VG, pp. 92-93 (Chapter 28).

⁷⁸ VG, pp. 92-117 (Chapters 27-36).

⁷⁹ Thacker, 'Guthlac and His Life', p. 23.

spiritual warfare.

Felix highlights the difference between the two types of warfare in his account of how Guthlac occupied an excavated mound on Crowland as his hermitage.⁸⁰ He reports that the mound had been hollowed out by people who wished to find treasure inside. This mound, as scholars have generally agreed, was an ancient tomb that was assumed to be filled with burial goods, and it recalls the account of how Anthony had lived in a tomb in the desert.⁸¹ The emptying of the mound therefore signifies the fragility of the glory of ancient heroes and of kinship ties, whereas its conversion into a hermitage signifies the victory of spiritual warriors and of their new ancestors — the Desert Fathers. Here, Felix gives far more emphasis to the contrast between the two types of warriorhood than in previous chapters, in which he presents Penwalh's house full of goods and Guthlac's naming as prefiguration of Guthlac's spiritual warriorhood. It is with this emphasis that he is able to foreground the distinctive nature of spiritual warfare, namely that Guthlac fills in the tomb with treasure not by arms as his carnal ancestors did, but by following Anthony in abstaining from food, sleep and luxury clothes.⁸²

Felix then relates a number of stories about Guthlac's struggle against demons. The first may derive from a single reference to despair in the *Life of Anthony*.⁸³ In this story, the demons attack Guthlac with the feeling of despair, attempting to make him believe that he will never be able to be cleansed of the sins he earlier committed. For three days, the demons seem to have the upper hand, as Guthlac becomes deeply troubled and even starts to question his religious practice. But then Guthlac comes to his senses and starts to resist the wicked thought by singing Psalm 17:7: 'In my distress I called upon the Lord'.⁸⁴ Immediately, Bartholomew appears and releases him from the demonic attack. Being restored to his sound mind, Guthlac praises God with Psalm 117:7: 'The Lord is my helper and I shall see my

⁸⁰ VG, pp. 92-95 (Chapter 28); see Colgrave's discussion about the mound, pp. 182-4.

⁸¹ VA, p. 163 (Chapter 8).

⁸² VG, pp. 94-95 (Chapter 28). VA, pp. 163, 176 (Chapters 7, 47 ll. 133-43; 688-91).

⁸³ Noted by Colgrave, VG, p. 184. VA, pp. 169 (Chapter 25 ll. 404-06).

⁸⁴ Noted by Colgrave. VG, pp. 96-97 (Chapter 29): 'In tribulatione invocavi Dominum...'

enemies'.⁸⁵ Note that this account is embedded with a series of militaristic imageries. For instance, the demons are said to have 'shot, as from a bow fully drawn, a poisoned arrow of despair... in the very centre of the mind of the soldier of Christ', while Guthlac is said to have received help from Bartholomew 'like a soldier fighting in the serried ranks'.⁸⁶ These images help the lay audience to envisage resistance against feelings of despair as a form of warfare.

Meanwhile, Guthlac's use of psalms as weapons against the demons recalls how he was at pains to learn the right form of speech as a child and thus creates a sense of continuity between his lay and religious careers. In fact, his use of the Biblical words to fight against demons might not be very different from their use in human warfare in his time. As Thacker has observed, some of the psalms which Guthlac sings to defeat the demons, such as Psalm 67:2, are similar to those inscribed on armour of this period.⁸⁷ Furthermore, Bede relates how King Æthelfrith regarded a group of British priests as combatants and thus slaughtered all of them, after knowing that they had appeared on the battlefield to support their warriors with prayers.⁸⁸ Bede also quotes at length from the *Life of Germanus* about how the saint led the Britons to defeat the Saxons by teaching them to shout 'Alleluia!' on the battlefield as a battle cry.⁸⁹ Both accounts might have represented a contemporary view of how sacred words of Church leaders could help to guarantee victory in secular warfare. Nevertheless, although Guthlac's chanting of words from the Bible in the story resembles that in worldly warfare, his spiritual warfare departs from the latter as it requires a higher level of comprehension — namely to create a correct understanding of words in the Bible. This is because by sowing in Guthlac's mind the belief that humans are too sinful to be saved, the demons are trying to provide him with a misleading interpretation of the Bible, by directing him to forget the salvation promise in the New Testament and to focus exclusively on the sinful history recorded in the Old Testament. Overcoming this temptation would involve providing a correct

⁸⁵ Noted by Colgrave. *VG*, pp. 96-97 (Chapter 29): 'Dominus mihi adiutor est, et ego videbo inimicos meos'.

⁸⁶ *VG*, pp. 96-97 (Chapter 29): 'veluti miles inter densas acies dimicans'.

⁸⁷ Thacker, 'Guthlac and his Life', p. 12.

⁸⁸ *HE*, pp. 140-41 (Book II, Chapter 2)

⁸⁹ *HE*, pp. 62-65 (Book I, Chapter 20).

interpretation of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. In this case, this story serves as a proper beginning for a New Testament life phase.

This account defines spiritual warriorhood in opposition to the earthly one. It relates in detail how Guthlac's mind was troubled, and his will was shaken by the demonic attack, obviously to highlight the importance of God's aid — the theme of the two psalms Guthlac sings, and in the story's conclusion: 'he placed his faith with constancy and uncommon strength in the Lord Jesus'.⁹⁰ Felix reshapes the concept of warriorhood in a more radical way than do his hagiographical sources for the *Life*, as in these texts the saints are usually depicted as invincible once they take the religious habit. Here, the depiction of Guthlac as a spiritual warrior constructs a Christianised picture of warriorhood in parallel with the close relationship between a hermit and God, a picture that directs the audience to understand that the first step to achieve victory in spiritual warfare is to recognise their own weakness as humans and thus to request divine support.

The second demonic episode delivers similar didactic messages.⁹¹ The demons now tell Guthlac in a flattering manner that as they are too weak to defeat him, they will instead teach him to fast to an extreme in order to wash away his sins and to make him a follower of the hermit-saints of Egypt. They also urge Guthlac to eat only once every seven days, pointing out that God likewise rested on the seventh day after creating the world in six days. Here, they cite the right exemplars of holiness and Biblical passages, but give wrong interpretations of them to drive Guthlac to over-fasting and vainglory. Unsurprisingly, Guthlac does not fall into their trap because, as the previous chapters have related, he has been able to discern and interpret the right models since his childhood, and also to establish the correct reading of the Bible when he grew up. Again, he sings a psalm (Psalm 55:10) to expel them and after that he slightly relaxes his habit of fasting to avoid the temptation of over-fasting.⁹² Here, this story departs from the *Life of Anthony*, which relates that Anthony

⁹⁰ VG, pp. 96-97 (Chapter 29): 'indissolutam eximiae valitudinis fidem in Domino Iesu defixit'.

⁹¹ VG, pp. 98-101 (Chapter 30).

⁹² Noted by Colgrave. VG, pp. 100-01 (Chapter 30).

tightened his ascetic observance after his first triumph against the demons to prepare for the oncoming attacks.⁹³ This story thus creates an impression that a hermit's spiritual warfare is based more on the correct understanding of the Bible and hagiographies than on the severe disciplining of the body. This again reiterates the intellectual nature of Guthlac's spiritual warriorhood. At the same time, the demons can be read as inadequate warriors in this story as their deceptive words have made them become similar to the flatterers and the chattering women.

The same story also highlights the difference between carnal and spiritual nobility in terms of their relationship with kinship. It says that the demons deceived Guthlac with *familiari fiducia*, a phrase that can be interpreted as 'trust based on family connections'.⁹⁴ In other words, it presents them as false teachers who spread their harmful doctrines by manipulating the network of families. In this presentation, kinship no longer serves as an Old Testament world that prefigures and prepares for a New Testament type of holiness. Instead, it becomes a threat to the latter. On the one hand, this explains why Guthlac had to abandon his family to order to live a religious life; on the other hand, it helps the audience to envisage their resistance against temptation as a type of warfare that requires not the advice of kin, but a correct reading of God's words and the holiness of His saints. Furthermore, by positioning Guthlac's solitary life in opposition to kinship, it also helps the audience to envisage resistance against temptation as a form of individual experience, in opposition to the experience of how noblemen fought side by side with their kin on the battlefield.

The third demonic episode relates how Guthlac is tortured and carried to hell by the demons.⁹⁵ A group of demons breaks into Guthlac's hermitage. Their terrifying and beastlike physical appearance is described in detail. Considering that words are borrowed from *Aeneid*, this description is almost certainly an allusion to the hybrid creatures which Aeneas had met

⁹³ Downey, 'Temptation of Excessive Fasting', pp. 93-98. VA, pp. 162-63 (Chapter 7 ll. 123-34).

⁹⁴ VG, pp. 98-99 (Chapter 30).

⁹⁵ VG, pp. 100-107 (Chapter 31).

in the gate of hell, which likewise possessed beastlike body parts.⁹⁶ Felix relates how the demons torture Guthlac, first by throwing him into the ‘muddy waters of the black marsh’ (*atrae paludis coenosis laticibus*) and then into the ‘dense thickets of brambles’ (*densissima vimina veprium*).⁹⁷ Then when Guthlac strengthens himself by quoting Psalm 15:8: ‘The Lord is at my right hand, lest I should be moved’, the demons respond by beating him with whips.⁹⁸ This whole torture scene is obviously inspired by a similar one in the *Life of Anthony*, but is re-contextualised in terms of the topographical features of the fens.⁹⁹ Eventually, the demons decide to shake his faith by taking him to look at hell,

So when Guthlac, the man of God, was horrified at the innumerable varieties of torture, the crowds of attendant demons, as if with one voice, cried out and said: Lo, the power has been granted to us to thrust you into these pains; and we have been commissioned to torture you there with manifold punishments in the torment of the most cruel depths of hell. Behold! the fire which you have kindled by your lusts has been prepared to consume you. Behold! The fiery entrances of Erebus gape for you with yawning mouths. Behold! the bowels of Styx long to devour you and the hot gulfs of Acheron gape with dreadful jaws...

Igitur vir Dei Guthlac, cum innumerabiles tormentorum species horresceret, satellitum sibi velut ex uno ore turmae clamabant dicentes: ‘Ecce nobis potestas data est te trudere in has poenas, et illic inter atrocissimarum gehennarum tormenta variis cruciatibus nobis te torquere commissum est. En ignis, quem accendisti in delictis tuis, te consumere paratus est; en tibi patulis hiatibus igniflua Herebi hostia patescunt; nunc Stigiae fibrae te vorare malunt, tibi quoque aestivi Acherontis voragines

⁹⁶ They were Centaurs, Scylla, Briareus, Lernean Hydra, Chimaera, Gorgons, Harpies and Geryon, see *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Sextus*, p. 10 (Book vi, ll. 285-89). The words are borrowed from *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Primus*, ed. by R.G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 10 (Book i, l. 301): ‘remigio alarum’; (Book xi, l. 210). VG, pp. 108-09.

⁹⁷ VG, pp. 102-03.

⁹⁸ VG, pp. 102-03: ‘Dominus a dextris est mihi, ne commovear.’

⁹⁹ VA, p. 163 (Chapter 8). See Thacker, ‘Guthlac and his Life’ pp. 11-12.

horrendis faucibus hiscunt.¹⁰⁰

Here, these demons reveal their goal to torture Guthlac — namely that they want to convince him to believe that God has already given them the power to destroy him. The tools for them to achieve this goal included the topographical features of the fens, the physical attacks, the vision of hell and their deceptive rhetoric, and as well Virgil's poem— considering that both their beastlike outlook and the references to the God Erebus, the rivers Styx and Acheron are all feature in Aeneas's visit to hell.¹⁰¹ These allusions encourage the audience to read Guthlac as a type of Aeneas.

Yet again Guthlac fights back not with physical strength, but by rejecting the lie:

Woe unto you, you sons of darkness, seed of Cain, you are but dust and ashes. If it is in your power to deliver me into these tortures, lo! I am ready; so why utter these empty threats from your lying throats?

Vae vobis, filii tenebrarum, semen Cain, favilla cineris. Si vestrae potentiae sit istis me trader poenis, en praesto sum; ut quid falsivomis pectoribus vanas minas depromitis?¹⁰²

This account is similar to Anthony's riposte to demons, but there is more emphasis here on words as temptation, and on the correct understanding of Christian doctrine, especially regarding salvation and damnation.¹⁰³ Significantly, the demons not only misinterpret the teachings in the Bible, but with verbal borrowings they also provide a misleading reading of the account of hell in the *Aeneid* as well. In the original text, Aeneas visits the underworld not to receive punishment, but to look for guidance about where the Trojans should build a new kingdom, and he does so according to the instruction and under the protection of the deities — thus he is not harmed by any beastlike creatures. The demons in the Guthlac story,

¹⁰⁰ VG, pp. 106-07 (Chapter 31).

¹⁰¹ P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Sextus, pp. 4, 13-14 (Book vi, ll. 107, 403, 439).

¹⁰² VG, pp. 106-07.

¹⁰³ VA, p. 164 (Chapter 9 ll. 189-91)

however, deceptively use this account to argue that they have the power to send innocent men to hell. By contrast, Felix borrows words from the same poem to describe how the demons had to carry Guthlac back to his hermitage gently according to Bartholomew's order and how, as dawn breaks, Guthlac, back in his hermitage, gave thanks to God for his triumph.¹⁰⁴ Here, he might have wished to show that even in a pagan and secular poem one can see that God does not abandon His people. In this way, he directs the audience to re-read *Aeneid* in the same way as how Guthlac re-read the tales of the ancient heroes.¹⁰⁵ He also Christianises a pagan motif when he has Bartholomew appear to help Guthlac from 'the heavenly dwellings of glorious Olympus' ('*aethereis sedibus radiantis Olympi*').¹⁰⁶

Finally, this vision of hell is often compared to that in the *Life of Fursey*, but the connection between them should not be overstated. Whereas Felix describes Guthlac's life at Repton with words borrowed from the *Life of Fursey*, he does not do so in this episode. Also, in the *Life of Fursey*, the angels show the saint the vision in order to explain to him the correspondence between various types of sins and torture, and also to show how humans could avoid hell.¹⁰⁷ Guthlac's vision lacks this didactic message. Instead, the latter is more at pains to parallel Guthlac with Aeneas and Anthony than with Fursey. Presumably Felix took a positive view of the *Aeneid* on account of its emphasis on the divine support that allows warriors to achieve victory—a theme highlighted in the two psalms which Guthlac chants when being carried to the hell and also in the previous two demonic episodes. Moreover, in the conversion period, one major reason for lay rulers to invest in the Church was to give their authority a sense of *Romanitas*. It was therefore very possible that they saw Aeneas as an archetype of their rulership. In this case, by providing a Christian reading of the *Aeneid* based on Guthlac's solitary life in his account of the hell vision, Felix was able to construct a Christianised picture of warriorhood, namely that a good warrior always knows to rely on

¹⁰⁴ Noted by Colgrave. *VG*, pp. 106-07 (Chapter 33).

¹⁰⁵ For the potential of Aeneas to be a Christian hero, see Bacola, 'Heroic Material in the Guthlac Narrative', pp. 79-82.

¹⁰⁶ *VG*, pp. 106-07 (Chapter 32).

¹⁰⁷ 'Vita S. Fursei', pp. 40-47 (Chapters 9-22)

divine support. This ideal, exemplified by the hermit saint Guthlac, is primarily about spiritual warfare, but it is also adaptable to those who fight in earthly warfare, as Aeneas's example has shown.

The next episode further explores the lay context of this ideal of warriorhood.¹⁰⁸ The demons attack Guthlac in the form of a British troop at a time when King Coenred was reigning, and the Britons kept attacking the English people. The demonic Britons burn Guthlac's hermitage, and raise him up on spear heads, but eventually vanish when Guthlac chants part of the psalm 67:2: 'Let God arise' (the latter part of it is 'and let his enemies be scattered').¹⁰⁹ On the one hand, Guthlac is here a type of Christ, who was lifted up on the Cross and pierced by a lance. On the other hand, he is a type of Aeneas, as words from Vergil's account of the burning of Troy describe the burning of his hermitage.¹¹⁰ This borrowing recalls how Aeneas rebuilds a new kingdom for the Trojans with divine support, in a similar way to how Guthlac overcomes the demons and recovers his hermitage with the same support. Again, this parallel, together with the psalm chanted by Guthlac, helps to foregrounds that one should always rely on divine support no matter whether a battle is spiritual or worldly. Finally, this story also proposes a re-reading of the suffering of the English people at the hand of the Britons at the time of Coenred. While the demons capitalised on this suffering to create an atmosphere of despair among the English people, in the same way as they had used the topographical features of the Fens to terrify their hermits, Guthlac's victory shows that this suffering is not a sign that God had already abandoned the English people. Instead, this suffering is like that of Christ, and will end in victory, once the English people were willing to place their faith in God as Guthlac had once done.

The final two demonic episodes return to the theme of imitation of the right models in the right way. In the first of them, a cleric named Beccel, who visits Guthlac regularly to

¹⁰⁸ VG, pp. 108-11 (Chapter 34).

¹⁰⁹ Noted by Colgrave, VG, p. 110.

¹¹⁰ Noted by Colgrave. VG, pp. 110-11: 'arrectis auribus adstan'; 'flamma superante ardere'. *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Secundus*, p. 10 (Book II, ll. 303, 311). See Bacola, 'Heroic Material in the Guthlac Narrative', pp. 78-79.

tonsure him and to live a good life according to the saint's teachings, has his mind confused by the demons and decides to kill Guthlac and to occupy his hermitage, in order to 'enjoy the great veneration of kings and princes'.¹¹¹ Guthlac exposes his ill intention, corrects him and promises that he will come to his help in his future trials. Here, although Beccel has served a true saint, demons deceive him with regard to the nature of saint's holiness. He thinks that holiness is about the worldly glory to be gained from occupying a holy site, when in fact it is about placing hope in God, as the previous episodes have shown, and directing others to follow suit, as Guthlac has done to him by promising him spiritual support. It is also noteworthy that although the regular tonsuring can serve as a reminder of Guthlac's responsibility towards human society as a cleric, which he has dutifully fulfilled by redirecting Beccel to the right path, Beccel indeed provides an example of how human society, including the court and the Church, can bring forth the sins of envy, vainglory and betrayal, and thus a potential obstacle for one to imitate the saint in the correct way. Finally, in the next episode, Guthlac defeats the demons for a final time by mocking them for the fact that although they once compared themselves to God, now they can only imitate the sounds of beasts in order to show that they are strong.¹¹² Here, the demons expose an important point of their weakness, one that has indeed already been hinted in the previous episodes, by making a mistake that Guthlac has successfully avoided since his childhood, namely, to imitate those who produce meaningless sound and misleading words. By making this mistake, the demons become the equal of the flatterers and chattering women, and fall short of becoming true warriors as Guthlac does.

Overall, these demonic episodes develop the analogy between the earthly and spiritual warriorhood established in the previous chapters. They identify human struggle with temptations as a form of warfare, but one that humans can only win by recognising their weakness and putting their hope in divine support. While these episodes could furnish

¹¹¹ VG, pp. 112-13 (Chapter 35): 'cum maxima regum principumque venerantia'.

¹¹² VG, pp. 114-17 (Chapter 36). 186-87. This story is inspired by the *Life of Anthony*, pp. 163-64 (Chapter 9). Noted by Colgrave, VG, pp. 186-7.

didactic material for priests, monastics and hermits, they could also instruct the earthly warriors, who would also need to learn to persistently put their faith in God in both their earthly and spiritual warfare, when their human enemies seem to be unconquerable and when the words of the demons, spoken to them via human agency, appear convincing. Indeed, these episodes show that it is by imitating Guthlac that the noblemen can assume the *Romanitas* exemplified by Aeneas. Yet again, as in the previous episodes, this analogy between earthly and spiritual warriorhood does not necessarily lead to a reading that Guthlac's holiness is only accessible to men. Indeed, considering that the Church was likely to have expected all Christians to look for divine support to resist temptations, these episodes can be read as proposing that even noblewomen could become a type of Aeneas when they engage spiritual warfare according to Guthlac's example.

Meanwhile, by describing how the demons first tempted Guthlac with *familiari fiducia* and then incited a cleric to kill him, these episodes create an opposition between divine aid and human society, which they present as an agency of temptations. On the one hand, this opposition reflects the nature of the subject — namely that Guthlac was primarily famous for being a hermit. On the other hand, it highlights the fact that spiritual warfare is an internal and individualised experience, which can happen in any social contexts and positions. In other words, whether being a warrior like Penwalh or a mother like Tette, Christians' spiritual triumph depends exclusively on their relationship with God and has little to do with their roles in society. This presentation of religious experience could therefore help to engage a female audience in spite of the focus of the text on warriorhood.

Finally, the demonic episodes also define spiritual warfare as a conflict between sacred and deceptive words, and as a struggle to establish the correct understanding of the Bible and holiness. This presentation helps to highlight the continuity between Guthlac's life phases as a secular and a spiritual warrior, given that in previous chapters his spiritual progress is likewise driven by his abilities to identify the right models and using words in the correct way. Meanwhile, this presentation also constructs a parallel between the spiritual

warrior and the church teacher, who similarly fights the devil with sacred words. In fact, the scenes of how Guthlac was attacked by the demons' deceptive words recall Felix's description in the preface that he and his audience were being ambushed by 'pestiferous incantations of our detractors' (*pestiferis obtrectantium incantationibus*).¹¹³ Furthermore, when these scenes show that the lay warriors can become a type of Aeneas by learning from Guthlac's experience of spiritual warfare, they also assign a leading role to the Church teachers in the warrior society, considering that these teachers were the ones who could construct the society into a new Rome by exposing noblemen to the true doctrine of the Bible and the true nature of holiness.

VI.4 Guthlac as a Ruler

Following the demonic episodes are a series of stories about how Guthlac was able to tame some aggressive crows, heal the sick and become a figure of authority in human society.¹¹⁴ In the early part of the text, Guthlac's ambition as a lay warrior is explained as 'a noble desire for command' (*egregius dominandi amor*).¹¹⁵ In other words, the purpose of fighting is to become a ruler. In this sense, Guthlac's mastering of the natural and human world can be read as an achievement of his spiritual warfare against the demons and an elevated version of his previous role as a leader of a war-band.¹¹⁶ At the same time, as shall be shown below, this authority is also presented in the text as closely related to his role as a teacher. This presentation clarifies the parallel between Guthlac's holiness as a spiritual warrior and as a teacher of the Gentiles akin to Paul — having defeated the demons by his sacred knowledge, he shared this knowledge with others as their ruler in order to prepare them for their own battles.

In the first of these stories about Guthlac's authority as a ruler, a crow steals some

¹¹³ VG, pp. 62-63 (preface).

¹¹⁴ VG, pp. 116-47 (Chapters 37-47).

¹¹⁵ VG, pp. 80-81 (Chapter 16).

¹¹⁶ Brook has called attention to Guthlac's role as a ruler of the Nature. But he interprets this role as reflection of the author's vision of human's prelapsarian state. See *Restoring Creation*, pp. 173-228, especially pp. 182-183, 198-221.

parchment from a visitor.¹¹⁷ But Guthlac urges the guest to have faith in God, ‘without whose power not a leaf of a tree is blown down and no single sparrow falls to the ground’.¹¹⁸ He then instructs the guest to take a boat to go into the middle of a lake and prophesies that the position of the reeds in the lake would show him the right way to get back the parchment. At the end of the story, the guest finds the parchment lying on a bent reed in the lake, as if they have been put there by human hand. The episode that comes after was derived from the eyewitness account of Guthlac’s visitor Wilfrid.¹¹⁹ It relates how Guthlac housed, fed and won over the obedience of two sparrows that had destroyed the possessions in his hermitage. Then in the third bird episode, Wilfrid, visiting Guthlac with Æthelbald, leaves a pair of gloves in his boat when landing the island.¹²⁰ With the spirit of prophecy Guthlac reminds him of his loss, saying that his crows have possessed the gloves. They then saw a crow tearing one of the gloves on the roof of Guthlac’s house. Guthlac convinces the crow to renounce the glove and Wilfrid then recovers the glove with a staff. Now Wilfrid believes that Guthlac has the power to restore the other glove as well, and Guthlac promises him that this would happen if they put faith in God. Eventually, a group of brethren who have just arrived the island give them back the other glove, saying that a crow dropped it.

All these three stories are to some extent inspired by the bird episodes in Bede’s prose *Life of Cuthbert*, but they are also meant to support the theme that has been repeatedly emphasised in previous chapters, namely the importance of relying on the divine support that has already been promised to humankind.¹²¹ As pointed out above, previous stories show that this was the key to success for Guthlac’s spiritual warfare, and now in these episodes, he shares this experience with his followers like a veteran warrior. The parchment paper, the bird-petting and the gloves are arguably intended to be read figuratively. I read the parchment

¹¹⁷ VG, pp. 116-19 (Chapter 37). Colgrave translates *corvus* as jackdaw, see VG, p. 187. For the translation of this term, see Barrow, ‘Coifi’, p. 700, n. 37. VG, 37.

¹¹⁸ VG, pp. 116-17: ‘sine cuius potestate nec folium arboris defluit nec unus passerum ad terram cadit’.

¹¹⁹ VG, pp. 118-21 (Chapter 38).

¹²⁰ VG, pp. 120-23 (Chapter 39).

¹²¹ For Bede’s *Life* as a source of inspiration for these stories, see Colgrave, p. 187. VCP, pp. 220-25 (Chapters 19, 20).

as a symbol of the doctrine of the Bible, and its undamaged state in the middle of the lake as representing how God would always guard this doctrine for His people from the threats of an untamed world. Note that this scene repeats a previous story about how Guthlac remained unharmed even after being dropped into a lake in the fens by the demons, but here it assigns Guthlac the role of Church teacher rather than warrior, by relating in an allegorical way that he was able to direct his followers to put their hope in God in their search for the true doctrine of the Bible in the untamed world.

Meanwhile, these stories link this teacher's role to that of a ruler. The episode of the taming of the aggressive birds repeats how, in Bede's prose *Life*, Cuthbert reproves, forgives and hosts two birds that have destroyed the roof of his guesthouse, which, as I have pointed out previously, signifies the Church.¹²² The conclusion, which suggests that those who serve God faithfully can command Nature, is similarly a quotation from Bede's prose *Life*, originally being used to explain why Cuthbert could command the sea to bring him wood.¹²³ Here, both in the Guthlac and Cuthbert stories, the focus is on the role of a hermit-saint as a type of *paterfamilias* for the Church and the world. Yet considering the weight the *Life of Guthlac* gave to the parallel between holiness and warriorhood, his mastering of the birds was likely meant to be read as part of his spiritual warriorhood. As mentioned, as a youth Guthlac's vision of a successful military career was to fight in order to rule. This vision, which must have resonated with the noblemen's lived experience, helps to bring together the two phases of Guthlac's religious career as a warrior and a ruler. Nevertheless, the same story also draws a distinction between the households of lay and spiritual warriors, by relating two types of familial relationship. The birds are said to have broken into Guthlac's house with familial daring (*familiaribus ausis*).¹²⁴ They therefore offer an example of the unreliable nature of kinship, namely that this type of relationship could be a potential source of strife and damage to the Church. By contrast, Felix relates that Guthlac created a new type of

¹²² *VCP*, pp. 222-25 (Chapter 20). Noted by Colgrave, *VG*, p. 187.

¹²³ *VCP*, pp. 224-27 (Chapter 21). Noted by Colgrave, *VG*, p. 187.

¹²⁴ *VG*, pp. 120-21 (Chapter 38).

relationship with all creatures by feeding them with ‘the grace of his excellent charity’ (*gratia eximiae caritatis*), and that he explained to Wilfrid why as a hermit he could unite the world in his holiness: ‘...a man is joined to God in purity of spirit, all things are united to him in God’.¹²⁵ This statement reveals why he was capable of taming the aggressive birds and turning them into members of his household, and it also explains why it is said that he was bound with his guest Wilfrid by the connection of spiritual love (*foedere spiritualis amicitiae*). It therefore supports Weston’s reading of Guthlac in this text as a hermit-teacher who had exchanged his carnal kinship for a spiritual one.¹²⁶ More specifically, this story can be read as revealing how a hermit-saint, having been self-isolated from his kin group in order to create a closer spiritual connection with God, is able to build up and rule over a spiritual kin group, which is in opposition to the carnal and corruptible kinship; in other words, he becomes a spiritual father.

In light of this reading, I suggest that in the story that comes immediately after, Guthlac’s restoration of the gloves reflects his power to restore both monastic and lay rulers; otherwise, it is difficult to see why Felix would feel the need to include Æthelbald, the exiled nobleman. The glove dropped on the roof could represent the kingdom that Æthelbald, as related in a later episode, was going to receive from God through the prophetic power of Guthlac. Meanwhile, the scene of how Wilfrid used a stick (*virgam*) to reach the glove could have been an allusion to how Moses had once lifted a rod to guarantee the divine support for the Hebrews in a battle.¹²⁷ Perhaps this scene is meant to show that Wilfrid, who was an abbot when Guthlac composed the text, was assigned by Guthlac as a spiritual protector of Æthelbald’s kingdom. Likewise, the glove that the brethren receive from the crow and return to Guthlac could refer to the restoration of Wilfrid to his leadership in the Church via the prophetic power of Guthlac. Admittedly, too little is known about Wilfrid’s career to confirm

¹²⁵ VG, pp. 120-23 (Chapters 38, 39): ‘...qui Deo puro spiritu copulatur, omnia sibi in Deo coniunguntur...’

¹²⁶ Weston, ‘Saintly Lives’, pp. 391-94.

¹²⁷ Exodus 17:9.

this reading. Nevertheless, it seems clear that this story is intended to show that as a successful spiritual warrior, Guthlac was able to guarantee divine support for both lay and church leaders.

These bird episodes are then followed by two healing stories. In the first of them, a youth (*iuvenis*) of noble rank who lives in the domain of the East Anglians is possessed by the devil.¹²⁸ According to Felix, this turns him from an obedient son into a mad man with unusual physical strength, to such an extent that he uses an axe to kill three people who attempt to control him. In this case, he becomes an antitype of a good warrior despite his physical strength, because his use of strength goes against a warrior's duty to protect his family and people, a violation that will probably result in the loss of his heirship. It is also noteworthy that his use of physical strength also goes against Isidore's definition that a youth is one who is able to help. After four years of madness, this youth's strength finally collapses, and his parents are able to take him to Crowland for healing. Guthlac receives them and allays the 'anxiety of the parents' (*sollicitudinem parentum*) in a 'fatherly manner' (*velut paterno*) and finally heals the youth by baptising him.¹²⁹ Here, he restores the youth's social role as an heir of his worldly family by bringing him into his spiritual family. In other words, he is able to repair kin relationships in the mould of the spiritual relationship among Christians, one that he exemplified as a hermit by his mysterious connections with God and as a spiritual father by his paternal authority over the other creatures. Likewise, in the next story, a retainer of Æthelbald is possessed by madness though remaining physically strong.¹³⁰ He is brought to Guthlac by his relatives and is then healed by the saint with the latter's girdle, usually used as a symbol of self-discipline in the hagiographical tradition. Here, this story shows that even when being physically strong, a warrior would not be able to fulfil his duty to his relatives and his lord if possessed by the demons. It also shows that one's mind and kin relations can be restored, by learning from a hermit-saint's life of self-discipline. Note that this and the

¹²⁸ VG, pp. 126-31 (Chapter 41).

¹²⁹ VG, pp. 130-31.

¹³⁰ VG, pp. 130-33 (Chapter 42).

previous healing stories can be read in a wider context, as representing how the saint, though as an exile from human society, is capable of acting as a patron saint of the East Anglians and the Mercians, as his teaching can restore social order.

The way that Guthlac protect the Church, families and kingdoms by his teaching continues to occupy the focus of the three stories that follow. In the first, an abbot visits Guthlac with his two clerics in order to receive the saint's teaching.¹³¹ The two clerics, however, make some excuse and leave the abbot in the middle of the journey. The abbot arrives Crowland alone. Then when they are 'drinking deep draughts from the holy Scriptures', Guthlac tells the abbot that through his prophetic vision he finds that the two clerics are at that moment getting drunk (*inebriari*) at a widow's house.¹³² Here, this account defines Guthlac as a spiritual householder by comparing him with the widow in terms of how they minister to their guests. This comparison shows that Guthlac was the better householder to those who had been bound to him with spiritual connections, because as a teacher he ministers to them with knowledge of Bible rather than with alcohol.¹³³

Finally, Felix relates how the ecclesiastical institution recognised him as a Christian leader by assigning him to the sacred office in spite of his solitary life. He begins the story of ordination by relating Bishop Headda's first visit to Guthlac.¹³⁴ On his way to Crowland, Wigfrith, one of his followers, boasted that he could identify whether Guthlac was a true or false saint because he had once lived with the Irish and he had witnessed both the false and true saints among them. Then when Headda met Guthlac and they 'began to pour out upon one another draughts of the gospel nectar', Headda was so surprised by Guthlac's knowledge of the Holy Scripture that he ordained him as a priest.¹³⁵ Guthlac, meanwhile, was able to put

¹³¹ VG, pp. 132-37 (Chapter 43).

¹³² VG, pp. 132-33: 'cum sese alterutrum divinarum scripturarum haustibus inebriarent'.

¹³³ Gregory's *Dialogues* and Bede's *Prose Life of Cuthbert* are possible sources of inspiration for this account as they both include similar stories, see Colgrave, VG, p. 189. But they do not make comparison between the female householder and the saint. *Dialogues*, SC 260 pp. 174-77 (Book II. Chapter 12). VCP, pp. 168-71 (Chapter 5).

¹³⁴ VG, pp. 142-45 (Chapter 46).

¹³⁵ VG, pp. 144-45 (Chapters 46-47): '...sese alterutrum haustibus evangelici nectaris circumfundere coeperunt'.

Wigfrith to shame by recounting with his prophetic spirit what Wigfrith had boasted before arriving at Crowland.¹³⁶ Two points of this account are worth noticing. Firstly, Guthlac and Headda consecrate the hermitage as a church immediately after the ordination. But apart from this, this story or the remainder of the text do not reference any of his deeds as a priest. Most of the miracles recorded in the text also seem to have been unrelated to his priesthood. In contrast to them, many of the miracles in the *Lives* of Cuthbert are signs of priesthood and episcopal office. Therefore, it can be said that Guthlac does not represent any priestly ideals in his *Life* although his ordination is recorded; that his ordination mainly marks the Church's recognition of his authority as a hermit, and that the consecration of his hermitage marks his final conquest of the haunted island. Secondly, Wigfrith describes the false saints as those who could make prophecy and perform miracles but could not prove the sources of their power. Headda obviously recognises Guthlac's holiness according to the same principle, given that he is impressed neither by Guthlac's solitary life nor his prophetic visions concerning the future, but by the saint's knowledge of the Bible. Presumably this was Felix's own view as well, given that in his account of Guthlac's struggle with the demons, what distinguishes combatant images of the saint and the demons is how they understand, use and interpret the Bible. In this case, this story has foregrounded the role of the teacher of Holy Scriptures.

Overall, these episodes continue to parallel the development of Guthlac's holiness with the lifecycle of a nobleman — namely achieving lordship after fighting successful battles. They show how Guthlac was able to rule over Nature and protect the Church, the realm and the family as a spiritual ruler; they attribute such power to his strong connection with God and emphasise how he fed his subjects with spiritual food and healed them as a spiritual householder by teaching. Note that in the context of the lay society, lordship was likely to have been a more gender-inclusive role than warriorhood. Indeed, Tette as a noblewoman and the wife of a man of royal birth, and Ælfthryth as the abbess of Repton,

¹³⁶ VG, pp. 144-47 (Chapter 47).

must both have employed some men and women in their service. Meanwhile, Guthlac's spiritual authority is not presented as a priestly one in these episodes. Taken together, it is possible to read the spiritual lordship which he exemplifies in the text as accessible to both the male and female audience. Yet while women might not have been expected to achieve their rulership by fighting battles as men did, the *Life* would have shown them that all Christians have to fight spiritual battles in order to achieve spiritual lordship. Finally, these episodes seem to be defining a form of spiritual lordship that is accessible primarily to men and women in religious careers, considering their emphasis on the correlation between Guthlac's spiritual lordship and his role as a teacher of the Bible. Apart from showing to a monastic audience how they could act as good spiritual leaders, these episodes could also direct the lay and aristocratic audience to appreciate the superiority of the Church teachers.

VI. 5 Guthlac's Heirs

In the text's final chapters, Guthlac makes arrangement for his heirs when his death is at hand.¹³⁷ The previous chapters have offered several antitypes of good heirs, such as Beccel, who thought that he could inherit Guthlac's holiness by killing him and occupying his hermit cell; the possessed youth who received unusual physical strength but lost his role as an obedient son; and Wigfrith, who boasted that he had the ability to identify true saints, when his arrogance revealed that he learnt nothing from them. Meanwhile, the previous chapters also present Guthlac as a good heir of God for managing His household by teaching, and as a good heir of Penwalh as well, considering that he inherited Penwalh's noble status by becoming a warrior, collecting booty and leading a warband, and then taking this nobility to a higher spiritual level by becoming a spiritual warrior. In this case, it is reasonable to expect that the chapters concerning his heirs would define their heirship in terms of their continuation of his teaching and imitation of his holiness. This expectation, however, is only partially correct.

¹³⁷ VG, pp. 146-71 (Chapters 48-53).

In the first story in this section, Abbess Ecgburh sends a messenger to deliver a lead coffin and a linen cloth for his burial, and to ask Guthlac who will inherit his hermit cell.¹³⁸ Guthlac responds that it will be inherited by someone who is still a pagan at that moment; this turns out to be Cissa, one of Felix's sources. Interestingly, Felix does not explain what made Cissa worthy to succeed Guthlac. This suggests that he is not interested in explaining how one can become the saint's heir by observing the eremitic ideal exemplified by him. Then in the account of Guthlac's dying moment, he also shows a lack of interest in how Guthlac's teaching can be continued by his spiritual heirs in sacred offices.¹³⁹ The account borrows heavily from Herefrith's witness of Cuthbert's last moment inserted in Bede's prose *Life*.¹⁴⁰ Apart from describing how Guthlac suffered from his illness in his final days just as Cuthbert did, it also assigns Beccel the role of Herefrith as an eyewitness of the saint's final instructions. However, departing from Cuthbert's deathbed speech, Guthlac's speech excludes all concerns in pastoral care and communal life and only focuses on how his burial should be arranged and recounts how he had been accustomed to minister to the angels in solitude. In this case, Beccel does not show how one could observe the saint's teaching as his heir in the role of a cleric.

By contrast, Felix provides two stories about how Æthelbald became Guthlac's spiritual heir by observing his teaching. In the first story, Æthelbald, persecuted by King Ceolred, visits Guthlac to seek advice.¹⁴¹ Guthlac tells him that on account of his intercession, God has already decided to destroy Ceolred and hand to him the kingdom, which he will receive 'not as booty nor as spoil...but...from the hand of God'.¹⁴² He is also warned by the saint that those who put their hope in evil will have their lives shortened. After that, according to Felix, Æthelbald put his trust completely in God. The didactic function of the text for kings and noblemen is most obvious here — they should strengthen their realms by relying on the

¹³⁸ VG, pp. 146-49 (Chapter 48).

¹³⁹ VG, pp. 150-61 (Chapter 50).

¹⁴⁰ Note by Colgrave, VG, p. 192.

¹⁴¹ VG, pp. 148-51 (Chapter 49).

¹⁴² VG, pp. 150-51: 'non in praeda nec in rapina regnum tibi dabitur, sed de manu Domini obtinebis...'

power of God rather than that of their arms, just as Guthlac did when fighting against the demons on Crowland. In this case, this story shows the way to the audience how they should implement the saint's teaching in their capacity as lay rulers. Then in the second story about Æthelbald, which is one of the three posthumous miracles recorded in the text, the king, having heard that the saint was dead, comes to Guthlac's tomb and mourns that he has now lost the support from whom he calls as father and lord.¹⁴³ Guthlac, however, appears at night in front of him to give him his last teaching. He foretells that in the next morning the people in the island will receive food from 'an unexpected source' (*unde non sperant*) and points out that this is a sign that Æthelbald would receive a kingdom from God soon. Here, in contrast to his last instruction to Beccel or his prophetic word about Cissa, his speech to Æthelbald is didactic by nature, as it reiterates the importance of putting hope in God, which is usually regarded by the mortal as an unexpected source of support. This contrast happens not because Felix regards Beccel and Cissa as less worthy heirs of the saint than Æthelbald, but because his focus is to show how earthy rulers should follow the saint to appreciate the debt of their achievements to God and should draw on His support when these achievements are at stake. This contrast thus conforms to my argument that he wrote this text to establish Guthlac as an aristocratic saint for the edification of an audience that includes lay nobility. Yet this contrast does not contradict the view that he must have written primarily for a monastic or priestly audience, who had the ability to read. But instead, in light of how monasteries were closely connected with ruling families politically, economically and culturally, as the works of Wormald and Wood have shown, the text could be read as a spiritual guidebook written for both lay and monastic audiences of noble birth, at a time when both owed their rights and obligations to their families.

The roles of women in these episodes can likewise be interpreted in light of such didactic function and audience. In his deathbed speech, Guthlac assigns his sister, a virgin named Pega, the task of organising his burial and explains that he has cut off his contact with

¹⁴³ VG, pp. 164-67 (Chapter 52).

her in this life in order that ‘in eternity...[they] may see one another in the presence of... [the] Father amid eternal joys’.¹⁴⁴ Here, Pega’s role could have been read together with that of Tette. While Tette functions as a type of Mary to highlight Guthlac as an incarnate Christ in an aristocratic family, Pega represented a present world suffering from the departure of its Christlike teacher, just as a household without its paterfamilias, but would eventually be able to reunite with the teacher in heaven in spiritual kinship. Based on their family roles as women, both Tette and Pega embodied Guthlac’s paradoxical relationship to the world — while he had left his warriorhood and kinship behind, he also re-enacted both of them in a spiritual way as a saint.

Meanwhile, it is also noteworthy that Pega could have served as an example of how the audience could assume Guthlac’s spiritual nobility in a lay habit. Though she was a nun, in the story she is presented mainly as Guthlac’s sister. Being informed about the news of Guthlac’s death, she is said to have ‘lost all life and strength, just as if she were dead. After an interval she aroused herself as though from sleep and...she gave thanks for the Almighty’s judgement’.¹⁴⁵ This description highlights that she had experienced a spiritual awakening, akin to those which Guthlac had himself once experienced, first when reading the tales of the ancient heroes, and then when reading those of the ancient monks, which led him to carry out a military career and then to abandon it. In the case of Pega, her spiritual awakening was about the awareness of the divine judgement behind her brother’s death, which she gave thanks to after waking up. Presumably Felix is here contrasting Pega and Ælflæd in the *Lindisfarne Life*, as the latter is criticised precisely for failing to have such awareness.¹⁴⁶ But more importantly he is paralleling Pega with her brother, by highlighting her faith in divine providence. For in the stories that follow immediately after, she spends three days commemorating her brother’s soul with divine praises; she arranges the elevation ceremony

¹⁴⁴ VG, pp. 154-55 (Chapter 50): ‘ut in aeternum coram Patre nostro in gaudio sempiterno ad invicem videamur’.

¹⁴⁵ VG, pp. 160-61 (Chapter 50): ‘...omnique vivali vigore velut exanimis evanuit. Post vero interventum temporis, ceu somno expergefata... arbitrio omnipotentis grates egit’.

¹⁴⁶ VCA, pp. 102-05 (Book III, Chapter 6).

of her brother's body, declaring that it has remained incorrupt, and, as guardian of the tomb, she cures a blind man with the salt blessed by the saint.¹⁴⁷ Here, she acts as the saint's heir not only by blood but also by practising the three main virtues which her brother once exemplified in spiritual warfare, namely to place hope in divine support, to use spoken words in the correct ways, and to be able to identify true holiness. She and Æthelbald, as two spiritual heirs of Guthlac witnessing his two posthumous miracles, respectively show to the audience how they should imitate Guthlac's spiritual nobility in a kin-based society. Note that it is in line with the gender norms of an aristocratic family that she is distinguished from Æthelbald in the text — the son fights whereas the sister does not, but both of them fulfil their family roles by following the model of the *paterfamilias*.

Finally, Ecgburh functions in the text as another example of how the aristocratic audience should follow the saint's model. In the story about the inheritance of Guthlac's hermitage mentioned above, she is introduced as an abbess, a virgin, and Aldwulf's daughter (and thus the sister of King Ælfwald, the dedicatee of the *Life*).¹⁴⁸ But while her role is obviously based on that of Ælfflæd in the two prose *Lives of Cuthbert*, her question to the saint is about the inheritance of the saint's hermitage, rather than the fate of her family nor the succession to the throne, as is the case of Ælfflæd. In light of this contrast, she can be said to have understood the word with the insight of a hermit, considering that she, just as Guthlac once did, is concerned more with the saint's than with her family's legacy. Meanwhile, her gifts used for the saint's burial seem to be inspired by Bede's prose *Life of Cuthbert*, in terms of the linen cloth and stone coffin given by Abbess Verca and Abbot Cudda to Cuthbert. These gifts allude to the death of Christ and they signify the faith of the donors in holiness and resurrection; in other words, they show that Ecgburh shared the same faith as Guthlac in eternal life and reward.

Overall, Felix presents Guthlac's holiness as a type of spiritual nobility. This enables

¹⁴⁷ VG, pp. 160- 63, 166-71 (Chapters 50-51, 53).

¹⁴⁸ For the debts of this story to Bede's *Life of Cuthbert*, see Colgrave's notes in VG, p. 191. See VCP, pp. 234-39, 272-73 (Chapters 24, 37).

an aristocratic audience to understand how saints are superior to them but also capable of imitation by them, even in lay habit. In the first part of the text, when constructing the analogy between holiness and nobility, Felix focuses mainly on that between spiritual and earthly warriors, and thus the female characters function primarily as the Other of Guthlac's aristocratic sanctity rather than as types and examples of it. Yet in the middle of the text, Felix attributes the success of Guthlac's spiritual warfare and the creation of his spiritual lordship to faith in divine support, to the knowledge about the true nature of holiness, and to the correct understanding and use of words from the Bible. Here, he seems to be presenting a spiritual aristocratic manhood that can be imitated by both male and female audience. Then at the end of the text, while Æthelbald shows how kings and warriors could follow Guthlac's example in their social positions, Pega and Ecgburh demonstrate that in spite of their non-combatant status, they could still practise the virtues which the saint had once exemplified in his spiritual warfare. Thus the function of the female characters in the text can be said to have been dictated by Felix's perception of the gender roles in the aristocratic society as much as by his perceptions of the militaristic holiness of Guthlac.

Conclusion

To understand the history of gender through hagiography is always a challenging task, on account of its specific character. Yet research on gender during early England's conversion period cannot afford to ignore the saints' *Lives*, because they constitute a large proportion of sources that survive from this period. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and Aldhelm's treatise on virginity are quite often consulted in this research field, but other *Lives* have been given far less attention, presumably because scholars are interested primarily in women's history and have normally not thought of them as obvious sources for them to use. This thesis, however, has used the *Lives* of Gregory, Cuthbert and Guthlac to show that their presentation of male holiness can shed a fuller light on gender in early English society.

It has studied these texts on the basis of two main premises. First, gender is only one of the categories that frame social roles, practices and expectations; second, the articulation of gender can vary according to a text's genre. It is particularly important to stress these two premises when using early Anglo-Latin texts to study gender history, because these texts do not define holiness according to the binary category of 'men' and 'women'. Moreover, they are highly formulaic, representing the social reality in a completely different way from modern historiography. Having often overlooked these premises, previous studies often impose overly reductive readings on these texts, treating them as straightforward reflections of the social reality of gender, or reducing them to pro- and anti-women narrative; thus leading to a series of simplistic debates about whether the Anglo-Saxon period was a golden age for women or whether Bede was pro- or anti-women. These approaches also isolate scholarship on gender from the main body of the studies focusing on these texts, which are usually concerned with their religious ideas, their use of exegesis and their didacticism. To criticise these approaches is not to say that early English society did not give weight to gender differences or that its authors were not misogynistic, rather it is to highlight the importance of recognising the distinctive capability and limitation of hagiographical sources to shed light on gender in early English society.

Regarding the *Lives* of Gregory, Cuthbert and Guthlac, this thesis has taken their genre as a starting-point to rethink their relationship with gender. These texts use their saints as exemplars of Christian virtues; thus their representation of the saints' roles and their relationship with other characters are often dictated by these ideals. In the *Whitby Life*, Gregory and Paulinus exemplify Gregory's own ideal of the *doctor* by acting as teachers of heavenly mysteries, and other characters play the role of students, ignorant of spiritual truth and thus in need of instruction. In the *Lindisfarne Life*, meanwhile, Cuthbert practises spiritual athleticism and observes the virtues of obedience and stability conforming to the *Rule of Benedict*.; other characters are foils to and imitators of these ascetic and monastic virtues. Bede rewrites Cuthbert in a Gregorian mould in his two *Lives*, presumably under the influence of the *Whitby Life*. In the metrical *Life*, he uses Cuthbert to show how a teacher can offer protection as a spiritual warrior for the Church against worldly temptations, and thus he presents other characters as examples of those who required his protection on account of their spiritual weakness. In the prose *Life*, he uses the trope of the servant of Christ to show how Cuthbert unites ascetic and pastoral ideals, both of which can be traced back to Gregory, and accordingly presents other characters as examples of those Cuthbert serves, or those who are supposed to imitate him by serving God and others. Finally, Felix's *Life of Guthlac* presents a hermit saint's spiritual struggle and authority as representing a type of spiritual nobility, and accordingly positions other characters as the kin of a nobleman, either in a worldly or spiritual sense or in both.

These ideals are indeed the best-evidenced factor for identifying how these texts construct male holiness. They usually have Biblical and patristic origins, and are introduced and explained in the texts with citations to these sources. Moreover, the texts borrow words and stories from these sources to relate the saints' roles and their relationships with other characters, to show that in spite of their patristic and Bible origins, such ideals may be, and have already been, fulfilled in the present society. These allusions thus provide good evidence of how the ideals dictated the nature of the saints' roles and their relationship with other

characters. By contrast, there are no such references for establishing how these representations have been shaped by perceptions of gender differences. Instead, in most of the cases, such influence has to be reconstructed by generalising about how the authors treat men and women differently. This method is particularly unreliable for the study of early Anglo-Latin *Lives*, apart from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and Aldhelm's treatise on virginity, given that these texts assign completely different roles to the male saints from the rest of the characters; neither provides enough information for generalisation.

Meanwhile, while religious ideals in these texts can be reconstructed on good evidence and have been relatively well-studied, their relationship to gender has so far received little attention. The present thesis has shown that their patristic and Biblical sources do not decide this relationship, because the authors do not slavishly follow their sources. Indeed, it seemed that some of these ideals could have been exemplified by female saints as well as by their male counterparts, as is reflected by the parallel between Bede's accounts of the final sufferings of Cuthbert and Hild, and that between the cults of the incorrupt bodies of Æthelthryth and Cuthbert, which could in turn have framed Cuthbert's image as an ascetic in the *Lindisfarne Life*.

Instead, this thesis has pointed out that the Church situated these religious ideals in existing gender norms when it established the saints as exemplars of them in gender-neutral and gender-specific roles in its gendered organisation. Both the *Whitby Life* and Bede's metrical *Life*, present their saints as *doctores* mainly to define the worthiness of priesthood, and thus they do not emphasise women as imitators of the saints, but instead position them, together with other men not ordained, as examples of the flock. By contrast, the *Lindisfarne Life of Cuthbert* relates in four separate books how the saint lived a monk's life as, in turn, a layman, a cleric, a hermit and a bishop, and thus constructs a universal model of holiness based on monasticism. The same is true of Bede's prose *Life*, which emphasises Cuthbert serving God and others across his four life stages. Both texts demonstrate that men and women alike can imitate these models of holiness.

These four texts reflect how religious ideals could place men and women in both identical and different roles in the gendered organisation of the Church. When the term *doctor*, is used to define priesthood, this identifies some men as teachers but all women as students, and positions both men and women as eligible to receive instruction and spiritual protection from priests. Meanwhile, although spiritual athleticism is a masculine metaphor and the Rule of Benedict seems to have been written for monks, they can apply to men and women in a gender-inclusive way to define a monasticised way of life which all members of the Church should observe. Moreover, these texts show how the gender-inclusive categories introduced by the Church —‘the flock’, ‘the monastics’ and ‘the laity’— could reduce gender differences, by assigning identical functions to male and female characters. In the *Whitby Life*, the woman baker and the foreign legates are both directed by Gregory to look into the spiritual truth of the sacramental bread, while in the *Lindisfarne Life*, the nobleman Hildmer, Abbess Ælfflæd and a mother who lost one of her two children are described with similar ways in terms of their weeping for the misfortune of their family, and all of them are urged to accept divine judgment.

Felix’s *Life of Guthlac* serves as an important contrast to these four *Lives*, as it establishes Guthlac as a role model for the aristocracy, rather than of a social category classed according to Church organisation. In the text, he ennobles himself spiritually, by recognising that the Desert Fathers are the right model for imitation, and by putting his trust in God when he engages in spiritual warfare. His virtues are then imitated by his heirs, when his spiritual son Æthelbald learns to place his trust in God when he fights for the throne, and when his sister Pega identifies and proclaims his holiness when organising his burial. Here, his virtues are achieved by a male heir and a female heir, not in an identical way, but according to gender roles familiar to aristocratic society. This reflects how the Church had to realign its visions of Christian perfection with the gender roles of the English aristocratic society when it tried to define the aristocracy according to these visions.

Meanwhile, as the present thesis has pointed out, this text also provides an obvious

example of how the Church situated religious ideals in existing gender norms by defining their relations to family roles, which is in fact also the case for the *Lives* of Gregory and Cuthbert. The Guthlac account uses family as a metaphor for the community of the faithful — the way the hermit saint becomes a spiritual father to his followers after fighting spiritual battles can be read in parallel with how a nobleman would establish his household. Yet the same account also focuses on family as the place where Christian virtues are expected to be put into practice — it is where Guthlac learns to follow the right example, namely the ancient heroes, and to use language in a Christian way, and it is also the context in which Pega imitates his virtue and manifests his holiness. In this case, the practising of Christian ideals is highly dictated by the gender norms of an aristocratic household. By contrast, the Gregory account consistently depreciates the family in favour of the priesthood. It includes tales that could have originally served as royal propaganda, in which priests prophesy and receive visions about the Deiran kings and royal daughters. But the author embeds biblical allusions in them, to direct the audience to prioritise the spiritual sense of these tales as allegories identifying the priests as types of Christ, and to warn them against from giving too much attention to the lineage of the Deiran house as the Jews had once done to Abraham's lineage. At this spiritual level of reading, what is relevant to human salvation is the Church and the distinction between the priests and the rest of the Christian community, rather than the family institution and its gender roles. The text reflects that Gregory's ideal of the *doctor* could encourage priests to make light of their family roles, by its emphasising that a teacher should disregard all earthly things. In other words, the more a priest could fulfil this ideal, the more he might depart from the gender norms pertaining to the family.

Compared with the Gregory and Guthlac accounts, the three *Lives* of Cuthbert show a more ambiguous attitudes towards the relationship between familial roles and Christian perfection. The Lindisfarne *Life* does not establish an opposition between monastic virtues and family obligations, but rather it relates how Cuthbert, when saving his foster-mother from a fire, at the same time reminds her of the virtue of stability. It also relates him directs others

to show obedience in the face of the divine judgement regarding the fate of their families. In these stories, however, Hildmer, Ælfflæd and the bereaved mother are expected to observe this monastic ideal in the same way, and so demonstrate that this ideal can reduce family-dictated gender differences when it defines ideal types of behaviour on the part of ‘monastics’, ‘laity’ and ‘Christians’. By contrast, the eremitic ideal in the Guthlac account foregrounds these differences when it defines an ideal type of aristocracy.

Bede’s two *Lives* pay little attention to the institution of the family as a locus for fulfilling religious ideals, as he reconfigures the relationship between Cuthbert and the beneficiary families as figuring allegorically that between teachers and the Church. But his metrical *Life* relates how Cuthbert became a worthy heir of episcopal authority by fighting spiritual battles, and a spiritual father passed over his legacy to his spiritual heirs. In this case, the text parallels the career of the priest with that of a *paterfamilias*, but it also contrasts between these two masculine roles — especially with that of Ecgfrith, who failed to win victory and to protect his family because he put his trust in physical rather than spiritual strength. In the prose *Life*, Cuthbert’s holiness link metaphorically to the roles of servant, steward and heir, but both male and female characters in the text observe the ideal of spiritual servanthood in an identical way, and not according to family-based gender norms. Altogether, the three *Lives* of Cuthbert show that the Church was arguably challenging traditional family distinctions between genders in prescribing the ideal behaviour for the various social categories classified according to the Church’s organisation.

Finally, the present thesis has analysed how the ways these texts position holiness and gender may relate to the experiences of men and women in which they were produced, read and listened to. Scholars often attempt to use the *Life* of Gregory to study the gender-mixed composition and female leadership of the community in which it was produced. However, the text itself says little about Whitby’s historical circumstances. Instead, it presents male and female characters in relation to priesthood and the royal family, and Bede does in fact take note of the royal background of the community and its achievement in fostering priests and

bishops. In light of Bede's accounts, it is possible to read the text as primarily for the edification of the community's clerical members. It directs them to appreciate from a Gregorian perspective their own leading roles and corresponding duties in a Christian society, even under the rule of an abbess, and to prioritise their roles over their obligation to the Deiran ruling house, to which some of them may have been connected. On the one hand, its stress on a hierarchical relationship between the priests and the 'flock' could have undermined Ælfflæd's authority; as could its depreciation of the family, especially when its only reference to the abbess is about her dual roles as abbess and princess. Yet on the other hand, the text could also have strengthened her influence over the Church by preparing clerics under her control to assume leading positions in the Church.

The Lindisfarne author and Bede, by contrast, dedicated their prose *Lives of Cuthbert* to the community of Lindisfarne. The community was a male community, but it was also a pastoral centre, responsible for teaching both men and women in the society. When the two texts present women as well as men as imitating Cuthbert's monastic holiness in an identical way, they could be reflecting on how the community historically offered their monk-saint as a gender-inclusive model for a universal audience — and an androcentric model indeed, as it did not take into consideration the fact that women often needed to lead monastic lives in ways different to men. Meanwhile, Bede put women as well as non-ordained men in passive roles in his metrical *Life*. This does not mean that he was embracing a more patriarchist view towards authority than he would be when composing the prose; but it reflects the nature of his audience — he might have written the work mainly for a clerical audience in his monastery. Likewise, given that the *Life of Guthlac* was dedicated to a king, it could have been written for the edification of a court audience. This could explain why it reflects more faithfully than the other texts the influence of the family-based gender norms on the practising of Christian virtues in early English society.

Overall, these *Lives* construct male sanctity not according to the binary categories of 'man' and 'woman', but according to how the Church understood the composition of society.

This does not mean that these texts cannot be used for the study of gender history, or that modern scholars should read their own gender binarism into them. Instead, as the present thesis has pointed out, the saints' roles and their relationship with other characters in these texts reflect how the Church's categorisation of society cut across gender, how such categorisation could redefine, or adapt to, existing gender norms according to specific religious ideals, and what these redefinitions and adaptations could have meant in the specific contexts that produced the texts. It can be expected that other early Anglo-Latin *Lives* may likewise shed light on the complexity of gender in the conversion period, were the same attention given to their genre and the way they categorise society.

Moreover, this thesis has also highlighted the importance of studying men in order to understand gender at large in the conversion period. While the sources that survive from this period are concerned primarily with men, they supply excellent material for studying the constructed nature of manhood because, at least in the case of the *Lives*, they reflect how the Church was at pains to argue for its own views regarding what makes some men better than other men and women, at a time when these views had not yet been widely accepted. The *Lives* also often reveal how the Church defined women according to and for the purpose of defining men. In this case they shed light on how the Christianisation of early English society could have been an androcentric process in diverse and complex ways. As this thesis has shown, the Church's definitions of men could sometimes give weight to women's gender and sometimes not; they could open new roles to women and depreciate their existing functions and these implications could be varied according to the context. Altogether, they suggest that the Church in the conversion period cannot be simplistically understood as pro or anti-women.

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