

**CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITIES: IDENTIFICATION AND  
SELF-UNDERSTANDING IN THE TWELFTH-CENTURY  
NORTH OF ENGLAND**

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## ABSTRACT

This is a study of local communities in the north of England between 1069 and 1200. It examines the way these communities were constructed, imagined and perceived by contemporary individuals. This involves a consideration of the narratives, actions and ideas that allowed people to understand who they were and to identify with others. In the course of this inquiry, certain methods of historical practice and approaches to the narrative source material are discussed and debated. As for methods, the thesis demonstrates the utility of analysing the processes and relationships that underlay perceived 'identities'. By building on recent work in the humanities and social sciences, this study conducts a close reading of a small number of carefully selected texts. With these aims in mind, each chapter examines a different element that was vital to the processes by which people identified with one another and communities were formed. The way the past was conceived and history constructed is the subject of the first. The second focuses on local saints' cults. Hermits and priests are considered in chapter three. The end result is an analysis that seeks to examine the interface between the authors of certain twelfth-century texts and the people whose stories they recorded. Through doing so, this work aims to reveal more about the way local communities were constructed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The acknowledgements at the start of any thesis or book have always seemed to me remarkably similar to the prologues of medieval narrative texts. No matter how the author is feeling, the words tend to fall into formulaic phrases, and the reader finds themselves skimming over them as if there is nothing meaningful or original in what they say. This is highly unfortunate, because everything I have to say here is truly heartfelt, and meant with the greatest sincerity. I hope at the very least that the people for whom it is written read it as such.

The care and attention Amanda Power has offered in her role as supervisor, often while having a whole host of more important things to be thinking about and doing, has been fantastic. She has been conscientious and engaging in equal measure, while her insight on a vast range of matters has been exceedingly important. Our numerous conversations have been one of the great driving forces behind the project. Her ability to send my mind whirring for days with a single scrawled comment or off-hand reading recommendation is testament to a tremendous intellect that has helped, prodded, and critiqued me into becoming a better historian. On top of all this, she has always been friendly, funny, and willing to help with wider concerns, to an extent that seems to be found rarely in academia. I consider myself to be very fortunate to have had Amanda as a supervisor.

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A brief mention of other friends and, in particular, my family, is also necessary. For those who have read drafts, discussed ideas, or simply been there to have some fun when it was needed, thank you. As for my family, in a world where the first question most people ask a history PhD student is 'what is the point in that then?' my parents unwavering belief in the value of education and knowledge for its own sake is as supportive as it is inspirational. They have always encouraged my scholarly ambitions, and have proven with their own example how important it is to never stop learning.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*Alia Miracula I*: ‘Alia Miracula, Auctore ut Plurimum Teste Oculato’, ed. J. Raine, *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops* vol. 1 (London, 1879), pp. 293-320.

*Alia Miracula II*: ‘Alia Miracula Ejusdem Sancti Patris’, ed. J. Raine, *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops* vol. 1 (London, 1879), pp. 321-25.

ANS: Anglo-Norman Studies

*De Admirandis*: ‘Reginaldi Monachi Dunelmensis, Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus quae novellis patratae sunt temporibus’, ed. J. Raine (London, 1835).

*De Institutione Inclusarum*: Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘De Institutione Inclusarum’, ed. C. Dumont, *La Vie de Recluse. La Prière Pastorale* (Paris, 1961), pp. 42-78.

*De Miraculis*: ‘Capitula de Miraculis et Translationibus Sancti Cuthberti’, ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia* vol. 1 (London, 1882), pp. 229-61.

*De Sanctis*: Aelred of Rievaulx, ‘De Sanctis Ecclesiae Haugustaldensis et eorum Miraculis Libellus’, ed. J. Raine, *The Priory of Hexham, Its Chronicles, Endowments and Annals* vol. I (Durham, London, Edinburgh, 1864), pp. 173-203.

*Foundation History*: ‘Historice fundaciones abbatiarum de Bellalanda et Iorevallis’ ed. and trans. J. Burton, *The Foundation History of the Abbeys of Byland and Jervaulx* (York, 2006), pp. 1-60.

*Fundatione Fontains*: ‘Narratio de Fundatione Fontanis Monasterii in Comitatu Eboracensi’ ed. J. Walbran, *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary of Fountains* (Durham, London, Edinburgh, 1863), pp. 1-129.

*HE: Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969).

*H. Reg.:* 'Historia Regum', ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia* vol. II (London, 1885), pp. 3-283.

*HSC: Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, ed. T. Johnson South (Cambridge, 2002).

*JH, Historia:* 'Historia Johannis, Prioris Haugustaldensis Ecclesiae', ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia* vol. II (London, 1885), pp. 284-332.

*LDE:* Symeon of Durham, 'Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius, hoc est dunhelmensis, ecclesie', ed. and trans. D. Rollason (Oxford, 2000).

*LE: Liber Eliensis* ed. and trans. J. Fairweather (Woodbridge, 2005).

*MSJ:* 'Miracula Sancti Johannis, Eboracensis Episcopi', ed. J. Raine, *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops* vol. 1 (London, 1879), pp. 261-91.

*Relatio:* Relatio Venerabilis Aelredi, Abbatis Rievallensis, de Standardo' ed. R. Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I* vol. III (London, 1886), pp. 179-99.

*RH, De Gestis:* Richard of Hexham, 'De Gestis Regis Stephani, et de Bello Standardii', ed. R. Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I* vol. 3 (London, 1886), pp. 139-78.

*RH, History:* 'The History of the Founding of the Church of Hexham, and of the Bishops of that Place, by Richard, Prior of Hexham', ed. J. Raine, *The Priory of Hexham, Its Chronicles, Endowments and Annals* vol. I (Durham, London, Edinburgh, 1864), pp. 1-62.

*SCH:* Studies in Church History

*V. Barth.*: Geoffrey of Durham, 'Vita Bartholomaei Farnensis', ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia* vol. 1 (London, 1882), pp. 295-325.

*V. Godr.*: 'Libellus de Vita et Miraculis S. Godrici, Heremitaе de Finchale, auctore Reginaldo Monacho Dunelmensi', ed. J. Stevenson (London and Edinburgh, 1847).

*VSJ*: 'Vita Sancti Johannis, Episcopi Eboracensis, Auctore Folcardo', ed. J. Raine, *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops* vol. 1 (London, 1879), pp. 239-60.



## THE AREA FOR THIS STUDY



Figure 1 – Important Rivers and Locations for this Study

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

To a greater or lesser degree, most people narrate their own and other peoples' lives by telling stories about events and experiences. The stories people tell and re-tell help shape the way they understand and present themselves and form relationships with others.<sup>1</sup> Whether consciously or unconsciously, people structure, understand and give meaning to their experiences by constructing narratives and telling stories. This is a study of the way this process of narrating experience helped people in the twelfth century to identify with one another and construct a sense of community within their immediate locality. As will be shown, many twelfth-century authors collected personal tales from their neighbours and wove these into narratives of the local past, saints, or holy people which reinforced this communal identification. This dissertation is a study of the stories collected and the narratives produced by some of these authors. My primary concern is to explore how the remembering, telling and retelling of stories about the community and its past worked to shape the experiences of individuals and groups, providing them with meaning, understanding and a sense of who they were. It will be shown that the narratives recorded in contemporary texts offer a window on the ways in which connections with others were made, and a sense of community was built, in various localities in the north of England. In reading the texts in this way, I hope to demonstrate how voices beyond those of the authors can be recovered from contemporary narrative texts.

This work aims to think about medieval society as a set of relationships that were fluid and under constant development. The focus is a series of bonds that people perceived to exist between and among them, which helped them to negotiate those relationships, and in the process constructed contemporary social collectives. These bonds possessed both practical and imaginary elements, but all had subjective meanings and understandings attached to them, which caused them to have integrative power. In order to conduct such a study, the focus has to be on local communities, for it was at this level that the majority of social relationships were formed. However, one should bear in mind that for the authors of the texts, wider

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<sup>1</sup> For an extended discussion of this, see below, pp. 18-21.

forces were also shaping the way they thought about things like the past, the saints, or the role of hermits and priests. Throughout this study it will be important to remember this larger context.

When examining narratives, the focus can remain on the authors of the texts. However, an increasing body of work is demonstrating that voices beyond those of the author can be heard as well.<sup>2</sup> I intend to build on this work, by taking some of its principles and applying them to specifically selected and promising texts from my chosen region. The current study is therefore two-fold. Through a close reading of the source material it seeks to deconstruct the narratives produced by the authors and to reveal the ideas they were trying to express in their writing. This is then used as a foundation from which to examine the stories of other people that are present in the texts. I believe that it is possible to find within these stories traces of individuals, experiences and lives otherwise lost to history.

To begin with, the parameters of the study need to be set out. My focus is on local communities in the north of England. A perception of the north as a distinct region clearly existed in the contemporary imagination.<sup>3</sup> Writers at Durham sought to develop an image of the people of former Northumbria as a united collective bound together by a shared past and devotion to a regional patron saint.<sup>4</sup> Southern authors also conceived of the north as a distinctive region. William of Malmesbury, for example, noted common characteristics of those who lived there, and confessed to being almost incapable of understanding their speech.<sup>5</sup> However, this sense of the north as a distinct region did not mean it was exceptional. Indeed, the opposite is true – a multitude of sources show the importance of this kind of regional identification within medieval societies. Many studies of local communities have highlighted the importance of regional connections in other areas of England.<sup>6</sup> Places like East Anglia and the Fenlands also developed regional identification through recourse to symbols

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<sup>2</sup> For an extended discussion of this, see below, pp. 34-48.

<sup>3</sup> H. Jewell, *The North-South Divide: The Origins of Northern Consciousness in England* (Manchester, 1994), pp. 28-40.

<sup>4</sup> See below, pp. 70-3, 91-2, 100.

<sup>5</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum: The History of the English Bishops*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson vol. 1 (Oxford, 2007), bk III, 'prologus', p. 326.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, M. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983), and A. Wareham, *Lords and Communities in Early Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, 2005).

such as regional patron saints.<sup>7</sup> With this in mind, it should be stated from the outset that mine is not an investigation into how the north was different, but a case study that examines processes of identification that can be observed elsewhere as well. Occasional comparisons of northern material to stories emanating from other places will make this wider context apparent throughout the work.

It must also be made clear that one of this study's chief concerns is not connections across the region as a whole, but much more localised ties within this area. While the process of regional identification is apparent in many of the over-arching narratives produced in the north, most individual stories dealt with subjects that bound people to their more immediate neighbours. Once again, the sorts of stories told, and the ways in which the events they described produced a sense of community, were not exclusive to the north. Rather, this region has been chosen because a number of particularly promising texts for this kind of investigation were produced there in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Several of these have received relatively limited scholarly attention in the past, and will therefore benefit from further study.<sup>8</sup>

When assigning precise spatial boundaries to the region of study, they must reflect the fact that the focus of this study is on local communities within the north, rather than the region itself, and that the ties being examined are principally imaginative. The first question when defining the area being studied relates to the border with Scotland. Many historians, most notably Geoffrey Barrow, have demonstrated the impossibility of talking of a permanent border. On the occasions when it can be located with relative precision, it is usually found to have moved from its last placement.<sup>9</sup> Also at issue is the eternal question of how far south is still north.

To the north-east, the Tweed offers a useful boundary. Several historians have suggested that a final settlement on the Tweed as the border did not occur until

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<sup>7</sup> A. Gransden, 'The Legends and Traditions Concerning the Origins of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds' *English Historical Review* 100 (1985), pp. 1-24, at pp. 3-4. See also J. Paxton, 'Textual Communities in the English Fenlands: A Lay Audience for Monastic Chronicles?' *ANS* 26 (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 123-37, and *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond concerning the acts of Samson, Abbot of the Monastery of St. Edmund* ed. and trans. H. E. Butler (London, 1949), pp. xxiv-xxvi.

<sup>8</sup> For discussion of some of these texts see below, pp. 25-30 and 37.

<sup>9</sup> G. Barrow, 'Frontier and Settlement: Which Influenced Which? England and Scotland, 1100-1300' in R. Bartlett and A. Mackay (eds) *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 3-21, especially pp. 3-5; *Idem*, 'The Scots and the North of England' in E. King (ed.), *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 231-44.

1237.<sup>10</sup> However, Barrow has produced a convincing synthesis of the evidence that makes it clear that this final settlement was based on long-standing traditions and agreements. Although the border moved from time-to-time, from the tenth and eleventh centuries it had largely settled on the Tweed.<sup>11</sup> For example, the *Historia Sancto Cuthberto*, which dates from the tenth and eleventh centuries, began the story of an invasion by saying ‘the Scots crossed the Tweed’.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the river was considered a boundary between the two kingdoms long before the twelfth century. It therefore forms the northern limit to the region examined in this study.

The distinction between a northern and southern province was demonstrated in ecclesiastical terms through the presence of two archbishops, one at Canterbury, the other at York. As a diocese, York covered Nottinghamshire and parts of Lancashire, Cumberland and Westmorland, as well as Yorkshire.<sup>13</sup> This area stretches as far as the Trent. The importance of the Trent as an ecclesiastical boundary can be seen in certain contemporary texts. Hugh the Chanter described a meeting between Archbishop Thomas II of York and a cardinal. The latter was an important guest as he was providing Thomas with the pallium that signified his archiepiscopate. Thomas was therefore careful to ensure that the cardinal received all due care and attention. The visit ended in the following manner: ‘After receiving the pallium, and having been there [York] for three days, the archbishop led the cardinal, to whom he had given as magnificent a present as his means permitted, with honour and care right beyond the Trent.’<sup>14</sup> This mention of the Trent as the boundary beyond which the archbishop felt obliged to conduct his esteemed guest demonstrates the river’s significance as an ecclesiastical border. Thomas was ensuring that the cardinal received his full attention while still within his jurisdictional territory.

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<sup>10</sup> W. Dickenson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603* (1961), pp. 70 and 81; J. C. Holt, *The Northerners* (1961), p. 209; M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1962), p. 574.

<sup>11</sup> G. Barrow, ‘The Anglo-Scottish Border’ *Northern History* 1 (1966), pp. 21-42.

<sup>12</sup> *HSC*, ch. 33; *Relatio*, p. 179.

<sup>13</sup> J. Burton, *English Episcopal Acta, 5, York 1070-1154* (British Academy, 1988), p. xix.

<sup>14</sup> ‘post pallei suscepionem, factis ibi tribus diebus, archiepiscopus cardinalem, magnifice donatum iuxta facultatem suam, honorifice et accurate reduxit usque ultra flumen Trentam’, Hugh the Chanter, *The History of the Church of York 1066-1127*, ed. Charles Johnson, rev. ed. (OMT, 1990), pp. 50-1.

The use of the Trent as a jurisdictional boundary was enshrined in certain legal practices established by the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> There were two escheators, one for north and the other for south of the Trent.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, in the 1230s, jurisdiction for the forest law was divided along the same line.<sup>17</sup> This use of the Trent as a dividing line may have had its roots in much earlier political delineation. Bede described the Trent as being the river that separated the southern Mercians from the northern Mercians.<sup>18</sup> This was sufficiently well known in the twelfth century for the passage to be copied verbatim by Henry of Huntingdon in his *Historia Anglorum*.<sup>19</sup>

Given this use of the Trent as a marker, it would seem to be a reasonable southern perimeter for the current study. However, in several texts and stories from the twelfth century, another river, the Humber, often appears to be a more significant boundary in the contemporary imagination. In Aelred of Rievaulx's account of the Battle of the Standard, he described King David of Scotland as intending to subdue 'all the northern part of England'.<sup>20</sup> The people of that region, tasked with defending it, were then described as 'the barons from across the Humber'.<sup>21</sup> When Orderic Vitalis recounted William I's expeditions against the north, he explicitly defined the Humber as the border of this region.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, when a father from Chester-le-Street feared for the death of a son who had gone on pilgrimage, it was on the banks of the Humber that he waited for his child's homecoming.<sup>23</sup> While this brief reference to the river does not explicitly suggest a concept of a separate region, it does show that the Humber had symbolic and practical value as a marker for the area that this particular family considered to be home.

On a larger scale, the Humber was historically considered to be the border that separated the northern and southern English. While Henry of Huntingdon mentioned that the Trent was a boundary between northern and southern Mercians, he made frequent reference to the Humber as the river that divided all the English into

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<sup>15</sup> Jewell, *North-South Divide*, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> C. Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England* (Leicester, 1979), p. 74.

<sup>18</sup> *HE*, bk III, ch 24.

<sup>19</sup> Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. Greenway (OMT, 1996), bk III, ch. 42, pp. 198-9.

<sup>20</sup> 'omnem borealis Angliae partem', *Relatio*, p. 181.

<sup>21</sup> 'proceres Transhumbranos', *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>22</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1969-80), vol II, p. 233. See Jewell, *The North-South Divide*, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 139, p. 268.

‘northern’ and ‘southern’.<sup>24</sup> This distinction was again based on Bede.<sup>25</sup> When Bede was writing the distinction was made clear by the kingdom of Northumbria being defined by the river, even in its name. In mentioning the importance of the Humber, Symeon of Durham said it was one of the borders of Northumbria.<sup>26</sup> The work of Symeon and Henry suggests the authors of the period still perceived a distinction between northern and southern English people based on the former kingdom of Northumbria, even though they were fully aware that political realities had altered jurisdictional borders by the time they wrote. This is most pronounced in the work of William of Malmesbury, who highlighted differences between the people that were largely unfavourable to those on the north side of the river, and, as mentioned above, said their language was almost incomprehensible.<sup>27</sup> Symeon continued to refer to people as ‘Northumbrians’ after the kingdom ceased to exist.<sup>28</sup> Although legal definitions had changed by the twelfth century, to an extent concepts of social geography remained rooted in the past.

It is on this basis that Helen Jewell said we are ‘presented, by the twelfth century, with a recurring definition of the north as north of the Humber’.<sup>29</sup> It is of course possible to reconcile this view with the increasing administrative significance of the Trent. One simply has to take the two rivers together, to form a combined boundary that follows the Trent as far as its entry into the Humber, and from there the Humber estuary down to the North Sea. The present study examines communities located north of this line, as far as the Tweed. Yet it must be made clear that of the two rivers, it was the Humber that carried the greater imaginative weight, and therefore from the point of view of the current study it is often the more significant of them. The focus of this work is therefore heavily weighted towards those places within the historic boundaries of former Northumbria.

There are two further reasons for this. The first is that more evidence exists from this area than from elsewhere in the region. The nature of this study means texts have been selected that are particularly promising for seeing how narratives are

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<sup>24</sup> See especially Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, bk III, ch 3, pp. 140-1.

<sup>25</sup> *HE* bk I, ch 25.

<sup>26</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 9, p. 170.

<sup>27</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, bk III, ‘prologus’, p. 326; Jewell, *The North-South Divide*, pp. 37-8.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, *LDE*, bk III, ch. 15, p. 182.

<sup>29</sup> Jewell, *North-South Divide*, p. 23.

constructed and help identification. The texts themselves largely derive from religious houses in the north-east. This is not to say that the north-west will be wholly excluded. The available information for this region is not as plentiful as for its eastern neighbour, but certain local communities within it will be considered. However, the vast majority of the present work is an examination of communities in the east.

The second reason for the focus on places in former Northumbria is the way in which the history of that kingdom and earldom weighed so heavily on contemporary identification. As the next chapter will show, people in the north of England constructed narratives of their pasts that helped to define communities in the present. The chapter will also demonstrate how the importance of the past often drew the authors of the available texts to focus on Northumbria.<sup>30</sup> This was due to a number of factors, including a desire among the authors to see themselves as the heirs of Northumbrian Christianity. Perhaps most importantly, the history of the English in the region above the Trent-Humber line was defined by the varying fortunes of that kingdom. Processes of identification and community construction that focused on the past were therefore embedded with a Northumbrian consciousness. This is one of the reasons modern studies on a perceived north-south divide have located its origins in the kingdom of Northumbria.<sup>31</sup> It also has an obvious impact on the current study, which in following twelfth-century narratives of the past, is inevitably led to focus on Northumbria and its place in contemporary consciousness.

The impact of these two factors is that communities in the north-east receive far greater attention in this work than those in the north-west.<sup>32</sup> This is partly in keeping with contemporary understandings of what constituted the north of England. The region to the west was not part of the kingdom at the time of the Norman Conquest, and integration was a very slow process, only achieved in earnest during the reign of Henry I.<sup>33</sup> Even after this, royal power took time to become established there,

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<sup>30</sup> See below, pp. 70-3.

<sup>31</sup> Jewell, *North-South Divide*, pp. 17 and 28-35.

<sup>32</sup> For work on the latter, see, for example, C. Phythian-Adams, 'From Peoples to Regional Societies: The Problem of Early Medieval Cumbrian Identities' *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. vol XI (2011), pp. 51-64, and A. Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh, 1987).

<sup>33</sup> On the questionable status of Cumbria see Barrow, 'The Scots', especially pp. 233-4, 237, and 241. On the slow establishment of Norman power in Cumbria see F. Barlow, *William Rufus* (London, 1983), pp. 197-8; C. W. Hollister, *Henry I*, ed. and completed A. C. Frost (New Haven and London, 2001), p. 394; W.



and during Stephen's reign the region was controlled by David I of Scotland.<sup>34</sup> This may be another reason why northern writers focused on Northumbria when narrating their pasts. For those who considered themselves to be in the kingdom of England, Northumbria was a more obvious predecessor than a notional 'north of England' that included the north-west. It also arguably correlates better to a modern understanding of what constitutes the north imaginatively, if not geographically.<sup>35</sup> Once again, it should be said that stories from outside former Northumbria did make their way into the collective traditions of people in the twelfth-century north, and when these occur they will be considered. Yet the emphasis on the Northumbrian past by religious authors, and the significance of their narrative constructions for communal identification, mean that this study is focused on the region of former Northumbria.

Chronological boundaries must also be established before the study can begin. The ideas to be studied here appear throughout history, making precise dating a scholarly imposition. Since new cultural, social and political currents can be discerned in the great continuous tide of English history in the late-eleventh and twelfth centuries, the study can be usefully limited to this period.<sup>36</sup> These changes have been primarily identified by modern historiography, but contemporary historians like Symeon of Durham also recognised the existence of this shift, even if they interpreted it in a different way.<sup>37</sup> In the north, a convenient start date for the period can be given with the foundation of the first post-Conquest monastery, at Selby in 1069, which coincided with the tentative beginnings of Norman political power in Yorkshire. Finding a point at which to end is considerably more difficult. Allowing the sources to dictate limits seems prudent in an exercise which, while absolutely necessary for logical historical study, is at the same time dangerously arbitrary. A burst of historiographical activity at the very end of the twelfth century provides a termination point of c. 1200.

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Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North: The Region and its Transformation 1000-1135* (London, 1979), pp. 146-57; and Winchester, *Landscape and Society*, pp. 13-19.

<sup>34</sup> Barrow, 'The Scots', pp. 245-53.

<sup>35</sup> For this idea see Jewell, *North-South Divide*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>36</sup> For general overviews of this period see R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings* (Oxford, 2000); M. Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England 1066-1166* (Oxford, 1986); B. Golding, *Conquest and Colonisation: the Normans in Britain, 1066-1100* (Basingstoke, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> See below, pp. 56-73.

The decision to focus on this region and period is based on there being a number of particularly promising sources for a study such as this one.<sup>38</sup> It also allows us to examine local social ties against the backdrop of wider change. Many of the cultural, social and political shifts in the north of England during this period were driven by the effects of conquest by the Normans. The political take-over was gradual in the north, with slow installation of Norman lords and changing policies towards the region.<sup>39</sup> This process occurred alongside significant ecclesiastical alterations. New monasteries were founded, old clerical communities replaced by monks and canons, while in the mid-twelfth-century new orders, in particular the Cistercians, were introduced.<sup>40</sup> Yet such fundamental shifts in the institutions of the church and the practice of Christianity were far from unique to the north of England.<sup>41</sup> While these changes were certainly in part the product of specific, regional factors, they also represented a state of anxiety and reform that was reverberating across Christendom.<sup>42</sup> Drives to separate church and state, to distinguish the clergy from their lay neighbours, were being directed by the papacy. The behaviour, morals, and roles of priests were being put under increasing scrutiny. The ways in which one could lead a life devoted to God were changing and multiplying. This is not the place to consider these developments in any depth, but it is important to remember that they form the backdrop to so much of what will be discussed in this study. Occasionally, lines of thought clearly influenced by conquest, church reform, or the changes associated with them, will become the focus of this investigation, at which point the wider context will be touched upon, but for now it is enough to let it remain in the background.

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<sup>38</sup> For a discussion about these texts, and why they are so promising, see below, pp. 21-48.

<sup>39</sup> For the political background of the north of England see Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, and P. Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lordship: Yorkshire, 1066-1154* (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> For religious developments in the period see generally J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994); G. Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996); and D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 943-1216* (Cambridge, 1940); and for the north specifically J. Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire, 1069-1215* (Cambridge, 2006) and R. Dobson, 'The First Norman Abbey in Northern England: The Origins of Selby' in Idem (ed.), *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England* (London, 1996), pp. 29-46.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Janet Burton's discussion of changes in contemporary monasticism: J. Burton, 'Reform or Revolution? Monastic Movements of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries' *Medieval History* 1:2 (1991), pp. 23-36.

<sup>42</sup> For general overviews see Constable, *Reformation of the Twelfth Century*; C. Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: the Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 7-173.

## Communities, Identification and Narrativity

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word 'community' has thirteen major definitions and many more sub-definitions. Most notably, it can be used to describe a body of people viewed collectively, a body of people with equal rights and rank, or a body of people living in the same place, often with a shared culture or ethnic identity.<sup>43</sup> The variety of uses to which it can be put is one reason for the term's popularity in contemporary discourse. Equally significant are a series of emotive connotations the word conjures in the mind. First among these is an image of amicable social relations, in which neighbours or colleagues give free assistance to one another due to a perception of an underlying, innate unity. While this has made community an indispensable word in the canon of political or journalistic rhetoric, it has presented problems for academics studying the social collectives denoted by the term.

The term was first used in historical scholarship during the nineteenth century, when nostalgia for a mythical past led people to contrast geographically-bounded groups, complete with common objectives and a sentiment of belonging, with impersonal modern society.<sup>44</sup> While twentieth-century sociologists sought to rid the term of this subjectivity, Alan Macfarlane still saw the traditional connotations as being problematic in the late 1970s.<sup>45</sup> He suggested attempts to limit their impact had only been partially successful, and had resulted in too much ambiguity over the meaning of community. Macfarlane therefore proposed dropping the term altogether, and focusing instead on networks of individual interaction.

Craig Calhoun reacted to Macfarlane by defending the term community, which he felt had lost its essentialism and provided an opportunity to study the bonds that created a sense of unity among individuals.<sup>46</sup> Calhoun put forward a concept of community that focused on social interaction, rather than a list of attributes.<sup>47</sup> Instead

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<sup>43</sup> 'community, n.' OED Online (September 2012), <http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/37337?redirectedFrom=community> (accessed 10 October 2012).

<sup>44</sup> See the overview in A. Macfarlane, 'History, Anthropology, and the Study of Communities', *Social History* 2:5 (1977), pp. 631-52, at pp. 631-3. The most influential example of such work is F. Tönnies, *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)*, ed. and trans. C. P. Loomis (East Lansing, 1957).

<sup>45</sup> Macfarlane, 'Study of Communities', pp. 631-52.

<sup>46</sup> C. Calhoun, 'History, Anthropology, and the Study of Communities: Some Problems in Macfarlane's Proposal', *Social History* 3:3 (1978), pp. 363-373.

<sup>47</sup> C. Calhoun, 'Community: Toward a Variable Conceptualization for Comparative Research', *Social History* 5:1 (1980), pp. 105-129.

of looking at relationships created within a social structure, he considered how a perception of that structure was constructed by relationships between individuals. A sense of belonging grew out of this process, and so both the structural and subjective aspects of communal identification were built simultaneously.

Calhoun was developing a concept of communities as imagined entities. This idea was advanced by Anthony Cohen, who replaced structuralism with semiotics as the methodological framework within which to study communal interaction.<sup>48</sup> Instead of looking at community as an objective social structure, Cohen examined it as a symbolic creation, endowed with meaning by the people who produced and consumed the constructed symbols. Since symbols carry meaning, it is in the perception of shared meaning that a group considers itself to be a community. There is, of course, no inherent meaning in the symbols, so the whole framework is highly adaptable.

Despite this new focus on the imaginative quality of any community, recent decades have witnessed the continuation of anxiety and debate over the usefulness of the term. Susan Reynolds had reservations about the meaningfulness of the word, which she saw as overused and carrying too many definitions.<sup>49</sup> Although she felt the study of community still offered a corrective to excessive emphasis on the vertical ties of medieval society, by the time the second edition of her book was published Reynolds' concerns had hardened.<sup>50</sup> She believed community, as the alternative to the focus on vertical bonds, had ended up in a dichotomous relationship with the very thing it was trying to critique.

While Reynolds continued to try to refine the term, Christine Carpenter abandoned it altogether, instead advocating a network approach focused on the study of relationships.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, Walter Pohl believed studying communities was still a useful way to think about society, as long as one remembered they are products of human agency, and the scholar's task is thus to ask how they are constructed.<sup>52</sup> Many

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<sup>48</sup> A. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London, 1985).

<sup>49</sup> S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 1-9, especially p. 2 for the defining characteristics of a community.

<sup>50</sup> S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford, 1997), pp. xi-lxv.

<sup>51</sup> C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *The Journal of British Studies* 33:4 (1994), pp. 340-80.

<sup>52</sup> W. Pohl, 'The Construction of Communities and the Persistence of Paradox: An Introduction', in R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger, and H. Reimitz (eds), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 1-15.

other historians have also continued to use community in their studies, often qualifying it with an adjective that seeks to give more strength to its meaning.<sup>53</sup> It has proved particularly enduring in studies of local and regional connections, with work such as that by Peter Cross or Michael Bennett using it as a tool to analyse the ties that bound families of knightly status.<sup>54</sup>

It would seem, then, that despite hesitation and the occasional dissenting voice, most academics think the word community needs refining and better definition rather than complete rejection. Peter Cross in particular sought to avoid using the term for any given social collective. He argued that once one goes beyond the immediate village, manor, town or religious house, mapping a sense of community becomes hazardous.<sup>55</sup> Yet careful definition and examination of local networks did reveal ties that could be considered communal, as well as those that could not.<sup>56</sup> The first step in a study of this sort, then, is to be clear that in academic study not every social collective can be considered a community. At the lowest level, a set of people united in some categorical way, for example by coming from the same village or town, can be termed a group. When those people interact with one another, possibly in multiple ways, they become a network. But to consider them a community, something additional is needed. They need to have a subjective sense of belonging together, that is, they must identify with one another.

This distinction between a network and a community is the reason I think network analysis, advocated by people like Macfarlane as a replacement for studies of community, is an inadequate substitute for the latter.<sup>57</sup> Traditional network analysis is useful for the historian, but it often comes up frustratingly short when one wishes to understand a society, rather than simply map its connections. While I believe relationships between individuals are an appropriate concern of historians, a network

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<sup>53</sup> See, for example, B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983); B. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (New York, 2006); and B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983), where the idea of 'textual' communities was first proposed.

<sup>54</sup> Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*; P. Cross, *Lordship, Knighthood and Locality: A Study in English Society c. 1180 – c. 1280* (Cambridge, 1991).

<sup>55</sup> Cross, *Lordship, Knighthood and Locality*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, pp. 54-6, and pp. 154-6.

<sup>57</sup> On networks and network analysis see M. Emirbayer and J. Goodwin, 'Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency', *The American Journal of Sociology* 99:6 (May, 1994), pp. 1411-1454.

approach is only useful if it helps elucidate what people's social connections meant to them, and how this affected the way they thought and acted. This line of thinking follows Calhoun, who questioned the efficacy of merely finding a network.<sup>58</sup> For him, the most important question was how, and to what extent, members of a network were bound together.<sup>59</sup> Building on this, the current study asks what meaning people found in their social ties. This is as much an issue of mentalities as it is formal bonds and obligations. It is through this that we come to the sense of belonging aspect of identification, which is such an important part of defining a social collective as a community.

Sense of belonging should not be considered a minor issue in the process of identification. Nor should one see it as a later development from interactions within a network; the model I am using is not an evolutionary one, with more complex forms of social collective developing out of simpler ones. The work of John Turner and Henri Tajfel has shown that a perception of belonging in the same category is enough to induce individuals to conceive of themselves as a unified collective.<sup>60</sup> It could therefore act as a primary motivation in group formation. Turner used the word 'group' as a catch-all term for social collectives, while I find it preferable to break the latter down into groups, networks and communities. In my model, feeling of belonging could be described as the primary motivation behind *community* formation.

Once one has accepted that to be a community, a group of people must imaginatively identify with one another, one can move from talking in terms of the characteristics of a community, to discussing those elements that contributed to this mutual identification. Long-term interaction, a shared system of values and morals, shared customs and traditions, and a collective view of the past in which all members participated, were important. However, they were significant not as qualities inherent in an innate group, but rather as understandings that allowed a process of identification to develop. Not all these elements need have been as strong as one another, but most would have acted on the members of a community at some point.

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<sup>58</sup> Calhoun, 'History, Anthropology, and the Study of Communities', pp. 367-8.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368.

<sup>60</sup> For a summary of their ideas, see J. Turner 'Social Identification and Psychological Group Formation' in H. Tajfel (ed.) *The Social Dimension: European Developments in Social Psychology* vol. 2 (2 vols., Cambridge, 1984), pp. 518-538.

In this model of constructed communities, the process by which mutual identification took place is the object of study. It must be remembered, after all, that the community itself is not essential or inherent; it exists only in the mental processes by which it is produced and believed in by its members. The aim here is not to study communities as objective realities from the outside, but as subjective creations from the inside, to see how members experienced them.<sup>61</sup> What one is looking for is the process by which norms, values, traditions, histories, customs, and feelings of belonging were built. Ultimately, I am asking what it was that allowed people to identify with one another. The focus of study is thus shifted to the process of identification.

The choice of terminology in this focus on identification is deliberate. One must avoid thinking of an underlying essence called 'identity', which acted as the unseen glue in these communities. Doing so would simply replicate the problems involved with thinking of community in an objective, essentialist way. 'Identity' is a word that has become increasingly popular in both academic circles and public use over the last few decades.<sup>62</sup> Behind this apparently simple term stands a concept even more contested than community, with a complex set of meanings and uses. It is important not to miss this vital point, or to seize upon the idea of 'identity' without pausing to consider its wider implications. Its prominence in contemporary discourse, the original and interesting method it provides for examining past societies, and its apparent ability to explain aspects of behaviour and mentality otherwise difficult to comprehend, all add to its attraction. However, historians like William Frazer have highlighted the danger of under-theorising the concept.<sup>63</sup> The present study seeks to avoid this pitfall by building on a critique of 'identity' developed by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See Cohen, *Symbolic Construction*, p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Contemporary interest in 'identity', its connection to society's increased engagement with the concept, and other potential reasons for the boom, are explored in R. Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London, 1996), ch. 2. See also K. Woodward, 'Introduction' in Idem, (ed.) *Identity and Difference* (London, 1997), pp. 1-6.

<sup>63</sup> W. Frazer, 'Introduction' in Idem and A. Tyrrell (eds), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (London, 2000), pp. 1-22, at p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', *Theory and Society* 29:1 (2000), pp. 1-47. See also the comments by Lawrence Grossberg, who while accepting 'identity', does call for its removal from a central position in all cultural and political studies: L. Grossberg 'Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?' in S. Hall and P. du Gay (eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), pp. 87-107.

The critique begins by considering how the concept's essentialist character, which presented it as natural, assigned and existent in all people, has been challenged by a constructivist approach that prefers to highlight its fragmented and ever-changing nature. Brubaker and Cooper argued that constructivist work on the subject had become complacent and clichéd. They highlighted an inappropriate overlap between 'categories of analysis' and 'categories of practice' within 'identity' theory.<sup>65</sup> As a category of practice 'identity' is used by all people in everyday life. For example, an individual may see themselves as English. However, historians also have to use it as a category of analysis, such as when examining ethnic feeling among the English. The problem arises when the historian, consciously or not, allows the two to influence each other, believing, for example, that because they see themselves as English, there must be an English 'identity'. Such thinking leads to implied essentialism.

The second major complaint concerned the ways in which 'identity' as an analytical concept was used. In short, Brubaker and Cooper believed it was used to do too much. It was not just the sheer volume of work relying on 'identity' they criticised. The concept was used to examine and explain elements of thought and behaviour too diverse to be investigated through a single analytical concept. In light of this, Brubaker and Cooper suggested the model had become amorphous and unhelpful, conveying no real meaning.<sup>66</sup>

Such difficulties with the concept were compounded by the manner in which 'identity' had become a reified word that refused to shed its essentialist values. In this light, there seemed no reason for academics using a constructivist concept of 'identity' to revert to using the same terminology as its essentialist forebear. The use of the term resulted in the need for numerous, yet theoretically limited, clichéd constructivist qualifiers, such as 'flux', 'negotiation' and 'fragmented', themselves so overused as to have lost all real meaning. Ultimately, for Brubaker and Cooper, the reconceptualising and overuse of 'identity' had left it as an amorphous concept, too weak to do serious analytical work.<sup>67</sup>

In the face of this critique, one must break up the concept of 'identity' and reassess the terms with which the historian should work. Brubaker and Cooper offered

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<sup>65</sup> Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', pp. 4-6.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.



a set of alternative concepts that could replace 'identity'.<sup>68</sup> I believe that since 'identity' is a reified term used to do too much theoretical work, one needs a set of alternative concepts that between them cover this work, without any one of them becoming over-stretched. Each of these concepts should describe a process, because they will be used to study subjective thoughts that are always under development and never static or innate. For the purposes of the current thesis, I wish to focus on one term in particular, identification.

The use of this concept was also favoured by Brubaker and Cooper, among others.<sup>69</sup> It is the process by which individuals come to perceive themselves as sharing characteristics with others, and thereby to view themselves as belonging in the same social collective. The term is durable, lacks reification, and describes a process. It also places emphasis on the relationship between individuals, rather than treating the ideas and social collectives it helps form as essential, pre-determined, or unchanging. This is the reason for my insistence on the importance of studying identification when trying to understand how communities were constructed in the twelfth century. What I intend to examine is not 'identity' as it has been traditionally formulated, but the ideas and beliefs prevalent in the medieval north of England which enabled and created a process of identification between individuals.

Alongside this main focus, the study will touch on the way in which individuals came to perceive who they were and produced an image of themselves. This consideration of the individual has an important bearing on collective identification, for although it is a different process, the two have a profound impact on one another. Beliefs, meanings and interpretations vital to the process of identification can be internalised by the individual, and thus be fundamental to how they perceive themselves. This perception will in turn reflect back on the communities the individual helps to construct.

A final point on this subject must be made. One should not confuse the processes that I believe the historian should study, and the perceptions they produced in one's subjects. I am not suggesting that all people in the twelfth-century north of England spent time actively thinking about how a particular action, event, or story

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-21.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17. S. Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?' in Hall and du Gay, *Cultural Identity*, pp. 1-7, at p. 2.

helped construct their perception of themselves and their community. A great deal of this thesis is concerned with barely conscious feelings, unexplored assumptions, and implicit conceptions of the world. Most people did, and still do, perceive their 'identity' as innate and their community as an essential category. Indeed, rather than extensive contemplation, in the twelfth century, a time before explicit discussion of socio-psychological angst or the pervasiveness of 'identity-politics', such things rarely warranted mentioning. However, this is why the difference between practice and analysis is so important. The aim here is not merely to repeat the perceptions of the study's subjects, but to explain why they saw the world in this way. In order to do so effectively, one must examine the process of identification that underlay the ideas people had and the communities they formed.

When seeking to examine and explain the process of identification, it is vital to appreciate the importance of narrativity, that is, the manner in which people create stories of themselves and others.<sup>70</sup> It is by shaping words, events and memories into narratives that people impart meaning to these things. Gabrielle Spiegel said literature is directed towards the construction of social meaning rather than transmitting an image of reality; this idea can be extended to anything, written, oral or even just thought, which builds its constitutive elements into a narrative.<sup>71</sup> The power of a story to act in this way is the result of it being, in Bruner's expression, 'the most universal means of organising and articulating experience'.<sup>72</sup> By structuring things that have happened into a system of cause and effect, narrative offers a degree of coherence from which meaning and understanding can emerge.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, by giving organisation, understanding and meaning to our past experiences, people are able to

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<sup>70</sup> For the technical side of the study of narrative see G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. J. Lewin (Oxford, 1980), and G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. J. Lewin (New York, 1988). See also B. Herrnstein-Smith, 'Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories', *Critical Inquiry* 7:1 (1980), pp. 213-36, which is a critique of the two- or three-part model of narrative (discourse, story, narrator) adopted by people like Genette.

<sup>71</sup> G. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 65:1 (1990), pp. 59-86, at p. 61.

<sup>72</sup> E. Bruner, 'Experience and its Expressions', in V. Turner and E. Bruner (eds), *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana, 1986), pp. 3-30, at p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> H. White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry* 7:1 (1980), pp. 5-27.

shape their future conduct accordingly.<sup>74</sup> Finally, by introducing all of these elements into the individual's experience of events, narrative also allows morality to be developed, as the attachment of meaning helps create an idea of what constitutes right and wrong.<sup>75</sup>

An individual cannot hold the memory of every experience they have had in their head, and even if they could, the information would be an incoherent jumble of mixed messages.<sup>76</sup> Only through placing them into the story of one's existence can some sense be made. By this method, an endless series of random occurrences can be turned into a limited, significant, and meaningful set of episodes.<sup>77</sup> If this is true of an individual, then it is arguably even more important from the point of view of a social collective attempting to differentiate and understand itself. In this case, there will be an even larger range of potential experiences to draw on, and the need will be all the greater for members to have shared narratives that order and interpret these experiences.

Since arranging experiences into narrative form is what gives them meaning, understanding and significance, it is through this that the process of identification operates. Common stories allow the development of common interpretations of reality, common understandings of the meaning and significance of events, and common designations of morality. All these aspects have already been identified as requirements for the construction of a community, since all bring a sense of unity to a given group of people.

The idea of narrativity's centrality to how people think about themselves and identify with others has been posited by several other theorists and historians. Margaret Somers put forward the concept of 'ontological narrativity', in which the self is constituted by being placed in a story built on the experiences of one's social life. While there will be many experiences to select from, the final pattern and shape of the narrative is not unlimited. It will be placed under constraints by the social situation and power relations within which it is created. This is also true for the stories told by social

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<sup>74</sup> R. Rosaldo, 'Ilongot Hunting as Story and Experience', in Turner and Bruner, *Anthropology of Experience*, pp. 97-138. E. Bruner, 'Ethnography as Narrative', in *Ibid.*, pp. 139-55 also subscribes to this idea.

<sup>75</sup> White, 'Narrativity', pp. 5-27.

<sup>76</sup> Herrnstein-Smith, 'Narrative Versions', p. 229.

<sup>77</sup> M. Somers, 'The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach', *Theory and Society*, 23:5 (1994), pp. 605-649, especially p. 616.

collectives, labelled 'public narratives' by Somers. These will be informed by the members that constitute the collective, but they will also influence those members.<sup>78</sup>

Douglas Ezzy suggested the understanding of a continuous, unified self through time is only possible because people narrate themselves into a coherent story formed out of the events they experience in life. This was itself based on a synthesis of George Herbert Mead's conception of the temporal and intersubjective nature of the self and Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory of narrative identity.<sup>79</sup> Phillip Hammack also considered 'identity' to be manifest in the personal narratives constructed and reconstructed by an individual throughout their life.<sup>80</sup>

In recent historiography, attention has been paid to the way in which narrative operates. Elizabeth Tyler and Ross Balzaretto recognised that although there are multiple ways in which narrative can be interpreted, it is usually to be understood as 'the principle means by which coherence or order is given to events'.<sup>81</sup> Catherine Cubitt takes this further, saying 'narrative, the way in which we tell stories and the stories we tell, plays a vital part in making sense of human experience'.<sup>82</sup> The current study develops these ideas by applying them to the concept of identification, and examining different texts and stories through this framework.

Since it is by creating stories that the individual understands who they are and a social collective shares meaning, understandings, and ultimately a sense of belonging, it makes sense to begin any investigation of identification with the stories people told. The method for doing this is somewhat similar to Clifford Geertz's notion of interpretive anthropology. For Geertz, studying another culture was not about playing a part, trying to experience reality as a "native", but instead required an examination of the means by which reality is perceived and the self defined.<sup>83</sup> If this is indeed the case, and much of what has been said here would concur with it, then the

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 605-649.

<sup>79</sup> D. Ezzy, 'Theorizing Narrative Identity: Symbolic Interactionism and Hermeneutics', *Sociological Quarterly* 39:2 (1998), pp. 239-252. See P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, (Chicago, 1984-8), especially vol. 3.

<sup>80</sup> P. Hammack, 'Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity', *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 12:3 (2008), pp. 222-247.

<sup>81</sup> E. Tyler and R. Balzaretto, 'Introduction', in E. Tyler and R. Balzaretto (eds), *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 1-9, at p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> C. Cubitt, 'Folklore and Historiography: Oral Stories and the Writing of Anglo-Saxon History', in *Ibid.*, pp. 189-224, at p. 220.

<sup>83</sup> C. Geertz, "'From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding', in *Idem, Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Culture* (New York, 1983), pp. 55-70.

investigation and interpretation of the stories people told is a suitable way of examining past societies.

## **THE SOURCES**

First, though, one requires access to those stories. This is the reason I have chosen to focus on narrative texts as the evidence for this study. They were constructed out of the stories people had heard and read, and were presented in narrative form. There are further advantages to using this material. A high number of narrative texts have survived from the twelfth-century north of England. As a result, a wide body of evidence exists for numerous local communities, which were themselves diverse in character. This allows for a well-rounded, comparative study, and the ability to corroborate findings from one place with those from another. Many of the narrative texts available are also exceptionally detailed, building on a varied body of stories, and thus providing a vast range of information on contemporary mentalities. Some of these texts, or certain stories they contain, have been relatively under-examined and deserve closer attention.

Narrative texts also have a number of advantages over other potential evidence. Material culture, such as images, carvings, or buildings, can tell us much about the thought-world of the people who created it. However, the voices of the past do not speak as clearly through these objects as they do through written stories, as an extra level of interpretation is required to access them. Likewise, charter evidence may say a lot about the connections people had, but the more imaginative elements of human thought are frequently absent from such records. Meanwhile, court records for the twelfth-century north of England are far less plentiful and revealing than they are for later periods. This is not to say that productive analyses of these types of material cannot be done, or that studies on them will not add to our picture of society. However, I believe narrative texts offer a particularly revealing image of the process of identification.

The context within which a text is produced has an inevitable impact on the way it is constructed, the stories it tells, and the meaning it tries to derive from them. It is therefore important to be aware of certain basic information about the production

of the written narratives to which one has access. Questions of who wrote them, when, and where, are important, and will be dealt with here for the most frequently used sources in this thesis. Equally significant is who the narratives were written for, what purpose they served, and what source material they used and why. These are more complex issues, and as well as being touched on in the following two sections, they will receive deeper analysis at various points in the rest of the study.

Many of the written sources produced in the north in the late-eleventh and early-twelfth centuries came from Durham. The individual leading this production seems to have been a monk named Symeon, although details about him, including his exact role, remain quite vague. A number of factors suggest he joined the monastery, itself only instituted in 1083, in the early 1090s.<sup>84</sup> Palaeographic evidence indicates he was from Normandy or northern France, so he was not a native of northern England.<sup>85</sup> It might therefore be assumed that many of the stories and traditions prevalent in the area were unknown to Symeon, at least when he first arrived. However, many of the tales that appear in his works demonstrate a willingness to listen to local stories and incorporate them into his writing.<sup>86</sup> As will be shown, Symeon was intensely interested in the history of his new home and the memories of the people who lived there. His writings present one with the view of an intrigued outsider, who being new to a community desired to gather as much information about it as he could, perhaps seeing this as a means of integrating into the region.

While at Durham, he took on the role of precentor, in which position he was given charge of the monastery's books and oversight of the activities of the scriptorium.<sup>87</sup> His writing duties included producing and copying important charters and documents, and certain narrative sources, including those written by Bede. This gave him access to a plethora of written information. He seems quickly to have

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<sup>84</sup> See the list of Durham monks at *LDE*, 'exordium', p. 8, where Symeon's name occurs at no. 38, suggesting he arrived a little after the original 23 brothers; see also D. Rollason, *LDE*, pp. xlv-l, especially p. xlv.

<sup>85</sup> For the palaeographic evidence see Rollason, *LDE*, p. xlv. See also M. Gullick, 'The Hand of Symeon of Durham: further observations on the Durham martyrology scribe', in D. Rollason (ed.), *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North* (Stamford, 1998), pp. 14-31, especially p. 18, and M. Gullick, 'The Scribes of the Durham Cantor's Book (Durham, Dean and Chapter Library B.IV.24) and the Durham Martyrology Scribe' in D. Rollason, M. Harvey, and M. Prestwich (eds), *Anglo-Norman Durham, 1093-1193* (Woodbridge, 1994), pp. 93-124, especially pp. 102 and 104.

<sup>86</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. lxxvi.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xliii.

become a highly respected figure in the north, asked by people from outside of Durham to write on matters of history, and also sent news by people who wanted it recorded. For example, he wrote a letter to Hugh, Dean of York, outlining the biographies of the archbishops of that church.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, when a priest heard the story of a vision of the afterlife from one of his parishioners, he had it transcribed and sent to Symeon, who copied down a permanent record.<sup>89</sup>

The most significant work that can be ascribed to Symeon with certainty is a history of his church, entitled *Libellus de Exordio atque Procursu Istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, Ecclesie*.<sup>90</sup> Symeon seems to have had overall authorial and editorial control of the narrative, which was written by a team of scribes presumably working under his direction.<sup>91</sup> Internal evidence shows it was written after the translation of St. Cuthbert in 1104 and before the death of prior Turgot, which occurred between 1107 and 1115.<sup>92</sup>

More will be said on the production of this work in the first chapter, though it is worth noting now that Symeon constructed his narrative of the past out of textual and oral sources with which he became familiar at Durham.<sup>93</sup> The wider situation within which he wrote should also be mentioned. Durham was a hotbed for historiographical production at this time, something partially driven by Symeon, but also fitting into a longer tradition of such work.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, Symeon lived at the beginning of a period of excellent and intense historiographical research and writing across the wider Anglo-Norman world. This work seems to have been part of a conscious attempt to rehabilitate the English past within the Anglo-Norman present, thereby uniting the

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<sup>88</sup> *Epistola de Archiepiscopis Eboraci*, ed. T. Arnold, *Symeon Monachi Opera Omnia* vol. 1 (London, 1882), pp. 222-8.

<sup>89</sup> *The Vision of Orm*, ed. H. Farmer, *Analecta Bollandiana*, lxxv (1957), pp. 72-82.

<sup>90</sup> *LDE*. Although the first manuscript explicitly to name Symeon as author is from the late-twelfth century, Gullick, Piper and Rollason have laid to rest any doubts about the accuracy of this ascription. See Rollason, *LDE*, p. xliii.

<sup>91</sup> S. Crumplin, 'Rewriting History in the Cult of St. Cuthbert from the Ninth to the Twelfth Centuries' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2004), p. 74; Rollason, *LDE*, p. xliv; Idem, 'The Making of the *Libellus de Exordio*: The Evidence of Erasures and Alterations in the Two Earliest Manuscripts', in Rollason *Symeon of Durham*, pp. 140-56, at pp. 140-2.

<sup>92</sup> *LDE*, bk I, ch. 10, p. 52. See Rollason's comments at p. xlii.

<sup>93</sup> See below, pp. 73-5 and 83-92.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, *HSC* and E. Craster, 'The Red Book of Durham', *English Historical Review* 40 (1925), pp. 504-32, especially pp. 523-9.

diverse population of the new kingdom.<sup>95</sup> However, there were specific local aims and characteristics within this general trend, and so work such as Symeon's cannot be fully understood without placing it in its local context. It should be made clear, though, that this kind of text, a local, institutional history that gathered together various pieces of evidence to tell the story of a communal past, was being produced in other Benedictine communities in England during the twelfth century. The *Liber Eliensis* and William of Malmesbury's *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* offer two further examples of these composite histories.<sup>96</sup> Symeon's work was therefore part of a wider pattern of writing, as well as a product of his immediate local context.

As well as the *Libellus*, Symeon was probably involved in writing a more general history, now called the *Historia Regum*.<sup>97</sup> In truth, this was less a history than a collection of materials pertaining to the past. They were collated from various written sources, and copied verbatim. Several of these sources overlapped, and the whole construction feels rough and unfinished. The only completely original portion of the work is a set of annals for the years 1119 to 1129. I believe the *Historia* should be seen not as a chronicle, but as an incomplete collection of historiographical data, collected from various sources and added to with the annals, possibly with the intention of re-writing the whole into a chronicle at some point in the future. Attribution of this work to Symeon has been disputed, because parts of the *Historia* disagree with what was said in the *Libellus*.<sup>98</sup> However, if one sees the former as a work in progress, then it is possible the collator intended to smooth out such discrepancies in the final version. This was never done, probably because Symeon died before he had the chance.

Around the same time Symeon was writing, a collection of miracle stories about Durham's principal saint, St. Cuthbert, were also being written. This collection has become known as the *Capitula de miraculis et translationibus sancti Cuthberti*, although as with the *Historia*, labelling it as a specific tract can be somewhat

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<sup>95</sup> See R. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing 4: The Sense of the Past' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 23 (1973), pp. 243-63. For a fuller discussion of this aspect of contemporary historical writing see below, pp. 53-5.

<sup>96</sup> LE; J. Scott (ed.), *The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* (Woodbridge, 1981).

<sup>97</sup> *H. Reg.* For the background to this text and its composition see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), pp. 148-51, and P. Hunter-Blair, 'Some Observations on the 'Historia Regum' Attributed to Symeon of Durham' in K. Jackson *et al* (eds), *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 63-118.

<sup>98</sup> Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 149.



misleading.<sup>99</sup> Sally Crumplin has shown that it was frequently included in manuscripts immediately after Bede's *Vita* of the saint, while in other places it forms a combined text with the *Brevis Relatio de sancto Cuthberto*.<sup>100</sup> The stories in *De Miraculis* were evidently written by the Durham monks, although a definite author does not emerge. The recording of the tales seems to have been a rather piecemeal affair.<sup>101</sup> As a result, there was a degree of reciprocal borrowing between this text and Symeon's *Libellus*, as some of the earlier stories from *De Miraculis* were copied into the *Libellus*, and a narrative from the latter was then used in the former. *De Miraculis* provides an important source for local traditions that had grown up around St. Cuthbert, as well as recording the earliest detailed account of the translation of the saint in 1104.

Hagiographical writing continued at Durham throughout the twelfth century. Arguably its greatest exponent was a monk named Reginald. He seems to have joined the monastery c. 1153, while he died c. 1190.<sup>102</sup> A fourteenth-century manuscript associated him with Coldingham, suggesting he was either born there, or he lived in Durham's daughter-house there for some time. Victoria Tudor considered the latter more likely, and also suggested he was of English descent.<sup>103</sup> Reginald certainly had knowledge of Old English, for he commented on various phrases in his writings.<sup>104</sup> Reginald also spent some time living at Finchale, where he was the companion of the hermit Godric, the subject of one of his longest works.

The project to record the life of Godric was initiated by several people, including Aelred of Rievaulx and Thomas, prior of Durham.<sup>105</sup> Given the latter died between 1161 and 1163, the original idea must have taken root by this time. Reginald went to Finchale to collect information and found the hermit to be a rather unwilling subject of biography.<sup>106</sup> However, over the next few years the two men seem to have become very close, with Reginald nursing Godric through years of illness, until the

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<sup>99</sup> *De Miraculis*; See W. Aird, 'The Making of a Medieval Miracle Collection: the *Liber de translationibus et miraculis sancti Cuthberti*', *Northern History* 28 (1992), pp. 1-24.

<sup>100</sup> Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', pp. 124, 132-4, and 162-72.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>102</sup> V. Tudor, 'Coldingham, Reginald of (d. c. 1190)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23318>, accessed 28/09/2012].

<sup>103</sup> V. Tudor, *Reginald of Durham and St. Godric of Finchale: A Study of a Twelfth-Century Hagiographer and his Major Subject* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Reading, 1979), pp. 58-67.

<sup>104</sup> See, for example, *De Admirandis*, ch. 15, pp. 24-7 and ch. 90, p. 194.

<sup>105</sup> *V. Godr.*, p. 19; p. 269.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-70.

latter died in 1170. Reginald continued to work on the life, re-writing it several times, and adding stories of posthumous miracles to the end.<sup>107</sup> The latest identifiable date in the work is 15<sup>th</sup> July 1177, so it was completed at some point after this date.<sup>108</sup>

The work was written in long, verbose Latin, which at times becomes difficult to understand. At first it was based on stories about Godric told by local people, but as Reginald got to know the hermit, the former corroborated what he had been told with Godric. In the process, Reginald derived a great deal of information from Godric himself. The author also drew upon what he had seen while living at Finchale. The tract is therefore entirely composed of oral stories and traditions circulating in the locality in the mid-twelfth century. Those included contain an exceptionally high level of detail and incidental comment, which, as will be shown shortly, makes this an especially good source for the present study.<sup>109</sup>

Reginald's other major work, a collection of the miracles of St. Cuthbert, is very similar to his *Vita* of Godric in this regard.<sup>110</sup> It was written in several stages. One major break is clear, as it seems the first 111 chapters were written c. 1165-c. 1167, while the remaining 30 were produced between 1172 and 1174.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, slight changes in style, length of chapter, and favoured vocabulary, indicate smaller groups of chapters were produced one by one, as the stories upon which Reginald relied came to him.<sup>112</sup> Often priests or pilgrims who had come to Durham brought with them several tales of Cuthbert's divine actions in their local town or village.<sup>113</sup> Once again, current stories of contemporary miracles were the author's main resource. His manner of recording them has led Rachel Koopmans to describe the text as 'rich and exuberant', and one that is deserving of greater attention from historians.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> On the different versions see J. Stevenson, 'Preface', in *V. Godr.*, pp. ix-xi.

<sup>108</sup> *V. Godr.*, p. 385; for the year see Tudor, *Reginald and Godric*, p. 84.

<sup>109</sup> See below, pp. 34-48.

<sup>110</sup> *De Admirandis*.

<sup>111</sup> V. Tudor, 'The Cult of St. Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century: The Evidence of Reginald of Durham' in Bonner, Rollason and Stancliffe, *St. Cuthbert*, pp. 447-67, at p. 449.

<sup>112</sup> Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', p. 203.

<sup>113</sup> See, for example, *De Admirandis*, ch. 57, p. 115; ch. 66, pp. 133-4; ch. 71, p. 146; ch. 72, p. 148; ch. 135, p. 284; and ch. 140, p. 290.

<sup>114</sup> R. Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia and Oxford, 2011), p. 122.

Reginald decided to record these stories after hearing Aelred speak about St. Cuthbert.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, the original tract was dedicated to Aelred, whom Reginald asked to review it, and who provided some of the material for it himself.<sup>116</sup> Reginald was shocked that so many stories of the saint had not been properly recorded, and sought to bring honour to Cuthbert through his work. It was, of course, also about promoting Durham's chief saint.<sup>117</sup> Yet by setting it within the context of other miracle collections produced at the time, Koopmans argues persuasively that the author's main concern was simply to ensure the preservation of oral stories about the saint in a written text.<sup>118</sup>

There is something of a shift in the depiction of Cuthbert in these stories, as fewer punishments and more cures are reported than in earlier texts. Several theories for this have been put forward, including the need to react to St. Thomas' success at Canterbury and wider trends in hagiography.<sup>119</sup> However, it is also worth considering that Reginald could only work with the material his informants gave him. If the local devotees required cures more than protection, this in part dictated the miracles that were requested, and therefore the stories to which the author had access. The expectations and narrative conventions of the miracle seekers, as well as the author, determined the stories that appeared in collections such as Reginald's.<sup>120</sup>

Durham was not the only northern community that sought to celebrate and promote its saints in the twelfth century. Hexham also venerated several of its long-deceased residents. The text in which they were chiefly celebrated was not, however, written by a canon of the Augustinian priory in Hexham, but by Aelred. To understand why this was, it is necessary to consider Aelred's background.<sup>121</sup> Although he was a

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<sup>115</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 2, p. 4

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 1-2, pp. 1-7; for a story told by Aelred see ch. 16, p. 32.

<sup>117</sup> Tudor, 'Cult of St. Cuthbert', pp. 449-50.

<sup>118</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 122.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-8. For the debate over these issues, see Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', p. 182.

<sup>120</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 36-46.

<sup>121</sup> Aelred's *Vita* was written by Walter Daniel: *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx*, ed. and trans. M. Powicke; introduction by M. Dutton (Kalamazoo, 1994). For further information on Aelred's family and background see M. Dutton, 'The Conversion and Vocation of Aelred of Rievaulx: A Historical Hypothesis', in D. Williams (ed.), *England in the Twelfth Century: Proceedings of the 1988 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 31-49, esp. pp. 34-5; B. McGuire, *Brother and Lover: Aelred of Rievaulx* (New York, 1994), pp. 11-38; J. Raine (ed.), *The Priory of Hexham, Its Chronicles, Endowments and Annals* vol. I (Durham, London, Edinburgh, 1864), pp. I-lxvii; A. Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study* (London, 1969), pp. 4-12.

Cistercian monk by the time he was writing, he only joined the religious life as a grown man. He had been born in Hexham in 1110, the son of a local priest who had care of the church prior to the Augustinians' arrival. After an early childhood in Hexham, Aelred was schooled in Durham, before joining the court of King David of Scotland, first as a companion to the king's son and then as a steward in the royal household. He became a monk around 1134, shortly after visiting Rievaulx for the first time.<sup>122</sup> As Elizabeth Freeman notes, his varied personal background means he can be made to fit any one of a number of group identities. However, Freeman cautions against this, stating that allegiance need not be singular or exclusive; rather, Aelred was a product of all his multiple allegiances mixed together, and therefore so were his writings.<sup>123</sup>

*De Sanctis Ecclesiae Haugustaldensis et Eorum Miraculis Libellus* has to be read in this context. It was one of many works by Aelred. Several others will be noted very occasionally in the following study, but this tract is of the greatest interest.<sup>124</sup> It is a short piece, following an odd format, as stories of the miracles and translations of Hexham's saints were interwoven with information about the church's history and significant people in its past. Its rather rough and ready nature makes it remarkably valuable, as it offers a route into the imagination of Aelred and the people of Hexham.<sup>125</sup> Marhsa Dutton described it as stylistically different from many of Aelred's works, citing the 'nostalgic tone of the work' and the way it 'echoes with places known and stories heard in childhood'.<sup>126</sup> The stories it contained were, therefore, likely to have been heard from childhood, told by his family and other people in the neighbourhood.<sup>127</sup> It has received less attention than many of Aelred's other works in modern scholarship. However, its central place in this study demonstrates how important it is for understanding Aelred and his contemporaries.

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<sup>122</sup> For this episode see Dutton, 'Conversion and Vocation', pp. 31-49.

<sup>123</sup> E. Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150-1220* (Turnhout, 2002), p. 44. See also E. Freeman, 'Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Bello Standardii* and Medieval and Modern Textual Controls', in M. Cassidy, H. Hickey and M. Street (eds) *Deviance and Textual Control: New Perspectives in Medieval Studies* (Melbourne, 1997), pp. 78-102, at p. 90, and A. Lawrence-Mathers, *Manuscripts in Northumbria in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 236-51.

<sup>124</sup> *De Sanctis*. Also of occasional use are *De Institutione Inclusarum* and *Relatio*.

<sup>125</sup> See below, pp. 34-48.

<sup>126</sup> M. Dutton, 'A Mirror for Christian England' in Idem (ed.), *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Lives of the Northern Saints* (Kalamazoo, 2006), pp. 1-32, at pp. 15-16.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17 and 20.

There are admittedly some difficulties with the tract. Although an early manuscript attributes the work to Aelred, the use of 'we' in the prologue when discussing the community of Hexham might suggest authorship by a local canon.<sup>128</sup> However, this was probably because it was written as a sermon, to be read out by one of the canons on the feast day of the saints' translation.<sup>129</sup> Dutton points out that there are other occasions in the tract where the writer clearly distinguishes between himself and the canons.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, implicit references to the author's childhood, a familiarity with the first canons, and a wealth of knowledge about the family of priests who had previously held the church all point towards Aelred as the writer.<sup>131</sup> As a result, few historians have seriously questioned the designation of Aelred as author. The nostalgic tone of the writing would certainly fit someone who grew up in Hexham and loved the saints of the northern British Isles.<sup>132</sup>

As for the date of the work, it must have been written after the translation of the saints in 1154. Beyond this it is difficult to be sure. Aelred died in 1167, so it was produced before then.<sup>133</sup> One would be tempted to believe it was completed shortly after the translation, as a sermon intended for the new feast day that the ceremony had created. However, the end of the tract is very abrupt, possibly suggesting Aelred was prevented from properly finishing it, maybe by his own illness or death. It is equally likely that this sudden cut-off is the result of subsequent manuscript losses, so one can only speculate so far.<sup>134</sup>

The next question is over the originality of the stories Aelred included in *De Sanctis*. Some of the material in *De Sanctis* also occurs in a set of twelfth-century interpolations into the *Historia Regum*. These seem to have been written before 1154, since they recorded previous translations of the saints of Hexham, but not the one occurring in that year.<sup>135</sup> Aelred's tract must therefore post-date the *Historia* interpolations. The latter seem to have been primarily designed to refute suggestions emanating from Durham that saints Acca and Alchmund had been moved there from

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<sup>128</sup> *De Sanctis*, 'prologus', pp. 173-6.

<sup>129</sup> Dutton, 'Mirror', p. 15; Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx*, p. 112. For more on the authorship of the tract see Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, pp. 173-4, nn. c and d, and Dutton, 'Mirror', pp. 14-16.

<sup>130</sup> Dutton, 'Mirror', p. 15.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>133</sup> On Aelred's death see *Life of Aelred*, pp. 56-64.

<sup>134</sup> Dutton, 'Mirror', p. 19.

<sup>135</sup> Hunter-Blair, 'Observations', pp. 87-90.

Hexham in the eleventh century.<sup>136</sup> While this indicates that they are the work of someone at or close to Hexham, the author remains anonymous. This leaves their relationship to *De Sanctis* open to interpretation. The interpolations may have been written first, and Aelred copied some of the stories from them. The interpolations could have been written by Aelred or someone under his guidance, and he subsequently rewrote the stories. Alternatively the two versions might be independent of one another, but built on the same body of legendary material.

Raine favoured a version of the third hypothesis, suggesting there was an earlier written legend, now lost, from which Aelred, and presumably the interpolator, derived their information.<sup>137</sup> I find this unlikely, not only because there is no proof, but also because there is no need to imagine such a text. As a childhood resident of the town, closely connected to the church, and with a later interest in the northern saints, it is unlikely Aelred required such a text to furnish him with information.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, Aelred included many stories that did not appear in the *Historia*, suggesting that the two did not share exactly the same origins.

While the stories are basically the same in each, the *De Sanctis* renditions contain more specific information and local knowledge. For example, ‘a certain anonymous man’ in a story from the *Historia* was referred to by Aelred as a vitally important craftsman, who was the only one to practice his craft in Hexham.<sup>139</sup> Elsewhere saints who remained anonymous in the *Historia* were named by *De Sanctis*.<sup>140</sup> I believe that Aelred was aware of the stories in the *Historia*, either because he informed the author of them, or simply because he had read the text. However, he also had contact with the same stories though oral tradition via his connections to Hexham. When he came to reproduce the tales, he was able to supply additional information derived from local knowledge and tradition.

Aelred was not the only person writing about Hexham in the mid-twelfth century. Richard and John, successive priors of the Augustinian house, also produced narratives. Little information is known about either man. Richard was a canon by 1138,

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.

<sup>137</sup> Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, pp. lxxv-lxxvi.

<sup>138</sup> Dutton, ‘Mirror’, pp. 15-20.

<sup>139</sup> *H. Reg.*, s.a. 740, p. 36; *De Sanctis*, ch. 9, p. 188. See below, p. 160.

<sup>140</sup> See, for example, *H. Reg.*, s.a. 740, pp. 36-8; *De Sanctis*, ch. 2, pp. 177-81, especially p. 179.

and became prior in 1141.<sup>141</sup> He oversaw the translation of the saints, but Aelred praised him posthumously in *De Sanctis*, so he must have died between 1154 and 1167. Little can be said about his background or personality beyond impressions gained from his writing. Aelred claimed he had been honourable from his youth, something that may indicate he was from near Hexham and they grew up together, but this could equally be a formula adopted by Aelred to praise his friend.<sup>142</sup>

Richard's works are serious and matter-of-fact, linking events to the will of God, but generally seeking to present information with limited embellishment. *De Gestis Regis Stephani, et de Bello Standardii* was a chronicle covering the years 1135 to 1139.<sup>143</sup> It had particular focus on events in the north of England, especially a series of invasions by King David of Scotland. Richard sought to be accurate, basing his account of the period on reliable evidence, even to the point of copying various documents into the text verbatim.<sup>144</sup> The overall narrative is, however, original to Richard.

Despite his drive for accuracy, personal feelings clearly colour the account, especially in describing the depravity of the Galwegians, who come across as the most vicious and barbaric of David's troops.<sup>145</sup> It is likely he produced the text before becoming prior, writing it between 1139 and 1141.<sup>146</sup> This was just a few years after the events he was describing, when feelings were still raw and the signs of war evident for those living in the area.

As well as this general history, Richard wrote an account of his church's past, from its foundation by Wilfrid to c. 1138.<sup>147</sup> As will be seen, this work was heavily influenced by Symeon of Durham, and relied to a large extent on a collation of pre-existing material.<sup>148</sup> It is short, and rather bland. Its main aim appears to have been to

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<sup>141</sup> See RH, *History*, bk II, ch. 9, p. 55, where Richard seems to describe himself as a canon of Hexham in 1138; see also the notice of him becoming prior in *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, p. 193. M. Strickland, 'Hexham, Richard of (d. 1155x67)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23509>, accessed 18 April 2014].

<sup>142</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, p. 193.

<sup>143</sup> RH, *De Gestis*.

<sup>144</sup> See the charter of Henry I at *Ibid.*, s.a. 1135, pp. 142-4; the letter of Pope Innocent II at *Ibid.*, s.a. 1136, pp. 147-8; the charter of King Stephen at *Ibid.*, s.a. 1136, pp. 148-50; and the articles of the Council of Westminster at *Ibid.*, s.a. 1138, pp. 173-5.

<sup>145</sup> See, for example, s.a. 1138, pp. 152-3 and 156. This depiction of the Galwegians, men from the region of Galloway, occurs in other sources for this period. See, for example, *Relatio*, pp. 187-8.

<sup>146</sup> R. Howlett, 'Preface' in Idem (ed.), *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I* vol. 3 (London, 1886), p. lvii.

<sup>147</sup> RH, *History*.

<sup>148</sup> See below, pp. 56-73.

confirm the antiquity and continuity of the noble church of Hexham. A brief mention of the 1154 translation indicates it was written after this event, although probably not by much.<sup>149</sup>

Symeon also influenced John of Hexham, whose only significant literary contribution was a continuation of the *Historia Regum*. As a man, very little is known of John. He was definitely prior of Hexham in 1189, and had died by 1209, but beyond this, exact dates are hard to come by.<sup>150</sup> It is almost certain he succeeded Richard as prior, as no-one else is mentioned in the role between them, so a date of c. 1160 has been put forward for his elevation to the position.<sup>151</sup> His origins are unknown. Most of the information in his chronicle was derived from his connections as a canon of Hexham and a member of the York chapter.<sup>152</sup>

John's writing, like Richard's, is sober in style, seeking to inform rather than entertain. The overall narrative is a rather dry and factual account of the past, focusing in particular on northern ecclesiastical affairs. The chronicle extends from 1130 to 1154, and was written between 1162 and c. 1170.<sup>153</sup> John was therefore writing with the benefit of hindsight, when the traumas of civil war and ecclesiastical disputes had been concluded. Even so, the narrative occasionally shows itself to have been marked by contemporary experience, either because of John's own memories, or due to his reliance on texts written at the time, including Richard's. The passages on the Scottish invasions offer the most colour and emotion, although John remained dispassionate in most of his reporting.

The last group of texts I wish to highlight in this introduction were written in Beverley. They are all twelfth-century miracle collections associated with St. John of Beverley. The earliest of these tracts was ascribed to William Ketell by the Bollandists.<sup>154</sup> Although there is no authorial identification available through the

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<sup>149</sup> RH, *History*, p. 49; see Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, pp. cxliii-cxliv.

<sup>150</sup> J. Taylor, 'Hexham, John of (d. before 1209)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14850>, accessed 18 April 2014].

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* See also Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, pp. clii-cliv.

<sup>152</sup> See the discussion in J. Taylor, 'Hexham, John of (d. before 1209)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14850>, accessed 18 April 2014].

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*; on this work see Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, p. 261.

<sup>154</sup> *MSJ.*



manuscript, the most recent editor of the work did not argue with this ascription.<sup>155</sup> In truth the question over the author's name is somewhat irrelevant, since even if it was Ketell, nothing more is known about him, except the fact he was a member of the clerical community in Beverley. The text itself was definitely written after the Norman Conquest, but exact dating is difficult. James Raine dated it to c. 1150, believing the 'Thurs.' to whom it was dedicated to be Thurstin, a provost of Beverley who died in 1153 or 1154.<sup>156</sup> Susan Wilson preferred an earlier year, believing it must have been written before Alfred of Beverley composed a set of annals around 1150, possibly as early as 1100.<sup>157</sup> This idea has itself been questioned by others, and it is perhaps safest to leave the dating as open as possible, placing the text within the first half of the twelfth century.<sup>158</sup>

The miracles recorded in the Ketell text were either events the author had seen himself, or stories he had been told by reliable witnesses. Most were therefore taken from local oral tradition. There was, however, method to Ketell's selection. Writing at a time when various religious communities were seeking to protect their liberties and rights, and the honour of their saint, Ketell appears to have focused on stories with this aim in mind.<sup>159</sup> The text's position in surviving manuscripts straight after an earlier *Vita* of St. John strongly suggests it was seen as a companion, or perhaps continuation, to this work.<sup>160</sup> The stories included are fairly simple, probably designed to edify the canons, while also appealing to pilgrims who visited the shrine. Although the work is relatively short, the stories incorporate a diverse range of people, from kings to peasants, individuals to the whole population of Yorkshire.

The same is true of three further miracle tracts, all written anonymously, which seem to have been produced later, in several stages, as supplementary material to the Ketell collection. Again dating is an issue, although I am ruling out the third of these works as it was certainly a product of the thirteenth century. The first tract explicitly

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<sup>155</sup> S. Wilson, *The Life and After-Life of St. John of Beverley: The Evolution of the Cult of an Anglo-Saxon Saint* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 9.

<sup>156</sup> J. Raine (ed.), *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops* vol. 1 (London, 1879), pp. liv-lv.

<sup>157</sup> Wilson, *St. John of Beverley*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>158</sup> For a critique of Wilson's dating of the sources see T. Licence [review], 'Susan E. Wilson, *The Life and After-Life of St. John of Beverley: The Evolution of the Cult of an Anglo-Saxon Saint* (Aldershot, 2006)', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58:2 (2007), pp. 311-12, at p. 312.

<sup>159</sup> See, for example, the story about King Athelstan, at *MSJ*, pp. 263-4, or the one concerning William I, at *Ibid.*, pp. 364-9, especially pp. 368-9.

<sup>160</sup> On the manuscripts see Raine, *Church of York*, pp. liv-lx.

states that only Ketell had recorded miracles before, and some that deserved mention had been missed.<sup>161</sup> Given the author said he was a boy in Beverley during Thurstan's archiepiscopate, which ended in 1140, but the tract describes Alfred of Beverley as deceased, a date of 1170 to 1180 is a suitable estimate.<sup>162</sup> As for the author, not only did he recall memories from when he was a child in Beverley, he also said his parents and a female relative lived there, strongly suggesting he had grown up locally.<sup>163</sup> His use of 'we', 'us' and 'our' when describing the clerical collective in Beverley further indicates he was a clergyman at the church.<sup>164</sup>

The second anonymous tract is the most difficult of all to find basic information on.<sup>165</sup> Once again the author was almost certainly a cleric in Beverley, but his background, and the date of its composition, is impossible to identify. Its position between the first and third collections perhaps indicates that it was written between them, possibly in the late-twelfth century, but this is highly speculative. The tract itself is very brief, as if it was a continuation of the work that came before. The thing that really commends these two anonymous tracts, as difficult as they are, to the current study is their source material. Both were built on oral traditions.<sup>166</sup> In the case of the first, several events were witnessed by the author, but many more involved people the author had known and grown up with in Beverley.<sup>167</sup> They are reminiscent of *De Sanctis*, filling gaps in the miracle tradition with oral stories the authors had encountered throughout their lives. This is important for the current study, for the source of the material used in narrative texts has a major impact on how the historian can use them. This will be discussed further in the next section.

## THE NARRATIVES IN THE SOURCES

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<sup>161</sup> *Alia Miracula I*.

<sup>162</sup> Wilson, *St. John of Beverley*, pp. 11-12. Licence [review], p. 312, raises a credible objection to this dating, but without offering any alternative. So long as one remembers that it is a best estimate I think these dates can suffice.

<sup>163</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 307-8 and pp. 315-7.

<sup>164</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, pp. 294, 310, 312; Wilson, *St. John of Beverley*, p. 12.

<sup>165</sup> *Alia Miracula II*.

<sup>166</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 11.

<sup>167</sup> For the former see *Alia Miracula I*, p. 315; for the latter, *Ibid.*, pp. 300-1, 310, and 315. For the same in the second anonymous tract see *Alia Miracula II*, p. 322.

While all of these sources contain narratives, there is still a question of whose stories one can read in them. Whose perception of reality, sense of belonging, and process of identification are actually available to study? The answer often hinges on the power different individuals or groups had to express their experience of reality.<sup>168</sup> The power to put forward a vision of society was not open to everyone, and what we have in the sources is a conception of reality largely developed by those with a degree of authorial control.<sup>169</sup> This has long been a problem for historians, since the ability to get beyond the normative voice of the author and hear others speak is a prerequisite for obtaining a fuller and more nuanced understanding of past societies. Narrative texts that have survived from the twelfth-century north of England were written by religious men, both individually and in groups. They had authorial control, therefore the first and most obvious perceptions, understandings and meanings available to the historian are those of these men.

It is thus no surprise that work on narrative sources often looks first at what they can tell the historian about the worldview of the author.<sup>170</sup> The present study will initially seek to do the same. In particular, it will focus on the works of Symeon, Richard of Hexham and Aelred to elucidate the ideas of these authors and the reasons why they constructed the narratives they did. The aim is to increase our growing understanding of these men, and in the case of Richard and Aelred to reveal more about two of their obscurer texts.<sup>171</sup>

However, although the views of the authors dominate these textual narratives, they are not the only voices that can be heard in the sources. There are several reasons for claiming this. First, any text was a product of the specific social situation

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<sup>168</sup> C. Clarke, *Writing Power in Anglo-Saxon England: Texts, Hierarchies, Economies* (Woodbridge, 2012), esp. pp. 1-10.

<sup>169</sup> On power and authority dictating whose narratives of the past, and whose constructions of reality, we read, see Bruner, 'Ethnography as Narrative', pp. 139-55; Spiegel, 'Social Logic', pp. 69-70; and White, 'Narrativity', pp. 5-27.

<sup>170</sup> See, for example, recent work on William of Malmesbury, Orderic Vitalis, and William of Newburgh, including K. Fenton, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the Works of William of Malmesbury*, (Woodbridge, 2008); S. Sonnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the Ethics of History*, (Woodbridge, 2012); A. Hingst, *The Written World: Past and Place in the Work of Orderic Vitalis*, (Notre Dame, 2009); A. Lawrence-Mathers, 'William of Newburgh and the Northumbrian Construction of English History' *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007), pp. 339-57; and N. Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago and London, 1977), pp. 51-113.

<sup>171</sup> For previous work on these authors see especially Rollason, *Symeon of Durham*; McGuire, *Brother and Lover*; and Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx*.

within which it was constructed. The ideas, understandings, and meanings it contains therefore reflect wider perceptions as well as the author's.<sup>172</sup> Paul Strohm has demonstrated that even heavily fictionalised texts can lay bare their historicity and reveal the common imagination and interpretive structures that enabled contemporaries to believe in them.<sup>173</sup> Sigbjorn Sonnesyn explicitly notes that concern for 'the matrix of values and presuppositions' which provided the framework within which texts were produced is both new and rare, yet has to be considered.<sup>174</sup> Consideration of the wider social understandings that went into the construction of texts is helping to break down the perceived barrier between religious authors and their subjects. This represents part of a wider appreciation in recent scholarship for the relationship between religious houses and neighbouring society.<sup>175</sup> Building on this work, this thesis seeks to draw out some of the wider ideas embedded in the narratives being studied by placing the texts within their local social context.

Having said this, I must immediately admit that the common thoughts accessible through the text are still first and foremost those of the clergy. The strongest social influence on a narrative came from the author's immediate community, in the case of most of our sources his fellow monks or canons, although as will be discussed shortly these men also had a family influence outside the religious life.<sup>176</sup> Yet the wider worldview available through written narratives extends to some people outside the cloister. This is particularly apparent in certain texts. Rachel Koopmans has shown that miracle collections, especially those produced after c. 1140, were constructed from stories that focused on the needs and concerns of lay supplicants to the saint.<sup>177</sup> The requirements and beliefs of these devotees were

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<sup>172</sup> Spiegel, 'Social Logic', pp. 76-86. For the impact of socialisation and the dominant discursive framework of society on the ideas of the individual, see Woodward, *Identity and Difference*, pp. 39-43, and C. Weedon, *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (Maidenhead, 2004), pp. 6-19.

<sup>173</sup> P. Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, 1992).

<sup>174</sup> Sonnesyn, *Ethics of History*, p. 9. For the ability to see the values of wider society in the writing of William of Malmesbury see also Fenton, *Gender, Nation and Conquest*, p. 7, while for the same in the work of Orderic Vitalis, see M. Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis*, (Oxford, 1984), esp. p. 182.

<sup>175</sup> See, for example, J. Burton and K. Stöber (eds), *Monasteries and Society in The British Isles in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2008), and E. Jamroziak and J. Burton (eds), *Religious and Laity in Western Europe 1000-1400: Interaction, Negotiation, and Power* (Turnhout, 2006).

<sup>176</sup> L. Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Washington, 1997), pp. 4-5.

<sup>177</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 111-38.

necessarily built into the texts that recorded their stories. The anonymous miracle tracts regarding John of Beverley fit this pattern, with Susan Wilson stating that they embody the perceptions and attitudes of all the saint's devotees, not just the clerks who served his church.<sup>178</sup> Reginald of Durham was also reliant on contemporary stories for his material, and his work reflected the needs of those seeking the saint's help as a result.<sup>179</sup>

As well as the context within which a text was produced, the background of the author could open the narrative to influence from a broader worldview. Most of the churchmen of the twelfth-century, including monks, had grown up or lived for some time outside the monastery. The experience of each individual was unique to them, and depended on factors such as social status and family connections. As was said earlier, Aelred was a young child in Hexham. He later lived at the Scottish court, imbibing the culture of high status secular life. A man like Aelred was a product of many diverse social environments. The ideas projected in his writings were influenced by his various experiences, and the result was a worldview that was exclusive to Aelred, but shared elements with others, both inside and outside the church.<sup>180</sup> Different aspects of those shared elements would come to the fore in different texts, depending on the context, aim, and material included in the particular work. In the case of *De Sanctis*, returning to the stories of his childhood was likely to emphasise the conception of the world he had shared with his family, neighbours and friends in the town. These were the people whose stories Aelred recalled and recorded in *De Sanctis*.

As well as personal experiences, many authors had family outside of the church from whom they drew ideas and information. Aelred told one story that originated with his uncle, who worked for the local church in a non-clerical capacity.<sup>181</sup> The author of one of the John of Beverley tracts reported hearing the tale of an impaired woman from his parents, who lived nearby.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, it seems relatives could often be found living locally.<sup>183</sup> The stories of these family members made their way into clerical texts. However, the example from Beverley shows these were not just family stories.

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<sup>178</sup> Wilson, *St. John of Beverley*, p. 65.

<sup>179</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 121-2.

<sup>180</sup> Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, p. 44.

<sup>181</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 11. pp. 191-2.

<sup>182</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 307-8. See below, p. 164.

<sup>183</sup> A. Livingstone, 'Brother Monk: Monks and their Family in the Chartrain, 1000-1200 AD' in D. Blanks *et al* (eds), *Medieval Monks and their World: Ideas and Realities* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), pp. 93-115.

The author's parents were surprised he had not heard of the tale they told, as everyone in the neighbourhood knew the person it involved, and the story of the miracle was equally well-known as a result.<sup>184</sup> In cases such as this, the stories picked up from family members were narratives being passed around the local neighbourhood, and were based on the ideas and needs of the people who lived there.

The tendency of texts to reflect the prevailing worldview of the society within which they were produced is one reason that I believe the historian has access to understandings beyond those of the author. There are other, more direct, reasons for my belief. The messages and ideas contained in a text will be shaped by the audience as well as by the author, because a story had to be believable to the audience in order to be effective.<sup>185</sup> If it purported to contain real events, people had to believe they had happened, or at least to have had the potential to happen. Even if the story itself was accepted as fictional, it had to make sense in its own internal logic. The imaginary structures and value systems contained in texts had to correspond to the constructs of the audience in order for the text to be of any value or use.<sup>186</sup> One might even go as far as Barbara Herrnstein-Smith and suggest that a narrative is an act rather than a structure, a transaction between two social actors, author and audience, and as such must meet the expectations of both.<sup>187</sup>

In appealing to its audience, a story must contain information that matches, at least in part, the expectations of those intended to read or listen to it. This does not have to be 'factual' in the sense of empirically accurate data, but it will have to correspond to the expectations, beliefs and perceptions of the audience. Narratives build on these in order to be accepted by the audience. In doing so, they also mould and reaffirm these elements. The need to appeal to, and the inevitable shaping of, the social truths held by the audience is a characteristic common to all narrative texts. For example, the story of a miracle that was to be read to an audience of local devotees on a feast-day had to adhere to ideas and understandings of the saint acceptable to those listening. If the story was built on local memories of a miracle, it could not stray too far

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<sup>184</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 307-8. See Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 11.

<sup>185</sup> See the comments on this in S. Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth Century England* (Oxford, 2006), at pp. 15-18.

<sup>186</sup> Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, p. 3.

<sup>187</sup> Herrnstein-Smith, 'Narrative Versions', pp. 213-36. See also A. Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. J. M. Bak and P. A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 33-8, who saw texts as a relationship between author and audience.

from the commonly agreed version of events. More importantly, it had to be put forward in a way that matched the moral and normative expectations of the audience. So while a miracle story may tell the historian almost nothing about the actual event and people involved, it does say a great deal about the ideas, memories, values, morals and understandings, of the audience to whom it had to appeal. The same is true for historical narratives from the same period. This is not to suggest the authors had no power over what they presented. The person or people responsible for the narrative still had much control over its shape, and what was admitted and omitted. But the resultant story had to be shaped in accordance with audience beliefs. It also helped to reaffirm, or even subtly reshape, those beliefs. This meant it matched the audience's perceptions in two ways, both shaping and being shaped by them.

To what extent were the texts under scrutiny here intended for a wider audience than the immediate monastic milieu of the author? The historiographical narratives were designed chiefly to preserve memories and records within the house, although Jennifer Paxton has shown that similar texts produced elsewhere were used to negotiate external relationships.<sup>188</sup> More will be said on the audience and purpose of these texts in the following chapter.<sup>189</sup>

Miracle collections are a more complex matter. Koopmans argues that these were almost exclusively aimed at a monastic audience. While the oral cult flourished and produced material for sermons, the written records of these stories were simply being preserved for monks to read in the future. In the case of several Becket collections, she cites the limited circulation and the lack of evidence that they were used for preaching in support for this argument.<sup>190</sup> The potential problem with this argument is the assumption that what ultimately happened to the texts is what the original authors intended. The fact that circulation of these texts was so limited is not something the author could control. Moreover, if the aim was to preserve contemporary stories for the future, it is just as likely that the authors envisaged the need for the tales to be preserved ready to re-enter oral circulation once memories had failed. Even so, Koopmans' argument remains a persuasive one. However, it is one that deals with the text as a whole, rather than the individual stories which made it up.

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<sup>188</sup> Paxton, 'Textual Communities', pp. 123-37.

<sup>189</sup> See below, pp. 64-5.

<sup>190</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 125-34.

Even if we accept that the overall work was aimed at future monks, this does not rule out individual stories being taken from it in order to supplement performances to a wider audience, such as through preaching.<sup>191</sup>

As an example, it has been suggested that the stories of St. John of Beverley's miracles were designed to be used in sermons.<sup>192</sup> Susan Wilson noted that the second anonymous tract stands out in particular as being intended for a 'popular' audience. It was designed to be entertaining in style, and had a very literal and physical feel to its spirituality.<sup>193</sup> *De Sanctis* served a similar purpose. It is clear from the prologue that it was designed to be read out on the annual feast day of the saints. It was principally addressed to the canons of Hexham, who were its primary audience. However, on such days, crowds of devotees from the surrounding area were also present.

If the stories were being read to a local audience of canons and townspeople, they needed to conform to the expectations and levels of veracity that this audience had. Inventing names, people, sayings and events which no-one else in the community had heard of would remove some of the believability. If, on the other hand, the author or speaker drew on stories genuinely told in the area, or included names and descriptions of people who were known or remembered, then the overall message became stronger and more engaging for their audience.

This use of local traditions and stories known and told by people in the wider community is final and arguably most important reason for believing the perceptions put forward in narrative texts represented an understanding of the world shared by individuals other than the author. Taken from local folklore, or borrowed from personal narratives, such stories were a product of a shared oral culture.<sup>194</sup> Although

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<sup>191</sup> See Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, pp. 1-8. For common characteristics of texts meant for a non-monastic audience see *Ibid.*, pp. 12-33.

<sup>192</sup> Wilson, *St. John of Beverley*, pp. 65 and 71.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-1.

<sup>194</sup> For the use of oral traditions and stories in narrative texts see J. Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England', in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (eds), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 455-94, esp. pp. 476-86; Chibnall, *Orderic Vitalis*, pp. 208-20, especially p. 208; C. Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity: Revisiting the Cult of Murdered and Martyred Anglo-Saxon Royal Saints' *Early Medieval Europe* 9:1 (2000), pp. 53-83; Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, pp. 1-8; A. Gurevich and A. Shukman, 'Oral and Written Culture of the Middle Ages: Two "Peasant Visions" of the Late Twelfth-Early Thirteenth Centuries' *New Literary History* 16:1 (1984), pp. 51-66; Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*; J. McNamara, 'Problems in Contextualizing Oral Circulation of Early Medieval Saints' Legends' in F. Satman *et al* (eds), *Telling Tales: Medieval Narratives and the Folk Tradition* (London, 1998), pp. 21-36; J. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany, c. 850-



the authors had the final say over what was included, if they were building on pre-existing stories, wider ideas will be accessible through these tales.

Before discussing this argument further, an important caveat has to be acknowledged. Only the stories that the author was interested in, wanted to draw attention to, or fitted his overall purpose, were included. Every author was working within a wider social and intellectual context. They were producing texts due to specific needs, and these were dictated as much by external pressures as local ones. These pressures, and therefore the agendas of the authors, were also subject to constant change, and as a result priorities of what to record also evolved. To take just two examples relevant to this thesis: Meryl Foster has shown how the presentation of the former clerks of Durham changed in monastic writing during the twelfth century according to a mix of local factors and wider ideas.<sup>195</sup> Meanwhile, Rachel Koopmans has demonstrated that miracle collections across England changed from prioritising tales from the cloister to stories from the laity between c. 1140 and c. 1170, a trend which affected the stories northern authors chose to record.<sup>196</sup>

Despite this prerogative of writers to report stories in line with their own purposes, there is still great value to examining these narratives. The agendas that the authors were working with had an impact on local communities outside of the texts. As a result, the priorities that shaped those texts were also shaping local communities; to an extent, then, the shape of the text reflects the forces shaping society. As was noted above, the narratives produced were always in part a result of the wider social context within which they were formed. Secondly, the authors of our sources were interested in many aspects of human life, and diligently recorded a vast range of events and ideas.<sup>197</sup> The breadth of this interest means the texts are far more promising for social history than one might expect, and deserve to be treated as such. Many of the ideas that underpinned identification among a diverse range of people were recorded in these narratives. Symeon's *Libellus* told stories heard from the former clerks of

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1250' *Speculum* 65:2 (1990), pp. 309-343; C. Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry' *Past and Present* 160 (1998), pp. 3-24.

<sup>195</sup> M. Foster, 'Custodians of St. Cuthbert: The Durham Monks' Views of their Predecessors, 1083-c. 1200' in Rollason, Harvey and Prestwich (eds), *Anglo-Norman Durham*, pp. 53-65. See below, pp. 205.

<sup>196</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 111-38.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

Durham and their extended families.<sup>198</sup> Reginald's material on Cuthbert was collected from labourers, knights, priests and many others.<sup>199</sup> His work on Godric reported tales of poor farmers alongside monks and bishops.<sup>200</sup> Some important ideas may not be represented in these texts, but one can only study the elements for which one has evidence. This is, of course, a perennial problem for the study of history. Yet while there is only access to one part of the picture, far more can be learnt by examining this part than surrendering to the fear that without the whole image, study is worthless.

The form of an oral story was inevitably altered when it was written down.<sup>201</sup> However, this does not mean that the content was entirely changed. One must remember that twelfth-century people valued oral testimony much more highly than many do in the twenty-first century.<sup>202</sup> While some authors attempted to discern a lesson or moral point from the stories told to them, and shape elements of the story around this, the basic outline of the tales often appears well preserved. After all, the meaning that the author wanted to place on the story was best done through explicit explanation. The stories Aelred told, for example, reported the events of the miracle, and then added an explanation of what meaning should be taken from them at the end.<sup>203</sup> Reginald also followed this pattern.<sup>204</sup> It was easier, not to mention more honest to God and the saints, to draw meaning from events that had been witnessed or heard about, than to invent a story from scratch.

A high level of detail and specific local knowledge in a story is often indicative of a tale taken from oral folklore or personal stories.<sup>205</sup> Contemporary writers were generally unwilling to add entirely false information; everything had to be corroborated by trustworthy sources. As John Blair has pointed out, those authors who did not have access to genuine oral traditions produced work that was little more than 'vacuous padding-out' of what could be found in Bede.<sup>206</sup> The difference is particularly

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<sup>198</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 6, p. 104; ch. 12, p. 116; bk III, ch. 1, pp. 146-8. For further discussion of some of these, see below, pp. 84-92, esp. 90-1. See also Rollason's comments at *LDE*, p. lxxvi.

<sup>199</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 108-10, pp. 242-7; ch. 132-5, pp. 280-4; ch. 64, pp. 126-30.

<sup>200</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 153, p. 291; ch. 104, pp. 218-19; ch. 26, pp. 74-5.

<sup>201</sup> Gurevich and Shukman, 'Oral and Written Culture', p. 51.

<sup>202</sup> Cubitt, 'Folklore and Historiography', esp. pp. 189-90 and 221.

<sup>203</sup> See, for example, the case of Raven's blindness, *De Sanctis*, ch. 7, pp. 186-7. For more on this story see below, pp. 170-1.

<sup>204</sup> See, for example, *De Admirandis*, ch. 25, p. 56; ch. 106, pp. 236-9.

<sup>205</sup> Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', pp. 53-83.

<sup>206</sup> Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', p. 478.

noticeable when comparing texts by the same author. Reginald's *Vita* of St. Oswald was relatively short, based largely on Bede, and derived very little information from contemporary sources.<sup>207</sup> This is in stark contrast to same author's works on Cuthbert and Godric, which were long, colourful, lively, highly original, and packed with detail. The difference with these two texts was that Reginald had access to a much more substantial body of oral information and tradition.<sup>208</sup>

On the whole, twelfth-century authors avoided direct invention of details. While interesting and exact information was sought for such narratives, it was usually only included if some sort of authority could be found; this included the oral testimony of respected individuals, or the common knowledge of the community as a whole.<sup>209</sup> As a result, certain characteristics can mark a narrative out as a product of a local oral culture. The situating of the story within a real landscape, complete with exact reference points, is one such attribute.<sup>210</sup> In several of our sources one meets such details: a huge thorn bush on the road to York; detailed descriptions of local streams and rivers; named hills on the outskirts of town; even human-made elements, like stone crosses.<sup>211</sup> Many further examples could be given. In demonstrating knowledge of the neighbouring landscape and the meaning attached to certain points in it, these narratives have the hallmarks of local traditions.

Exact details of people from the area, protagonists in the tale, are also indicative of communal folklore. Reginald of Durham discussed the origins of the nicknames of locally important individuals.<sup>212</sup> Several decades earlier, Symeon of Durham had recorded the names of people and places, and the genealogies of some families.<sup>213</sup> Aelred was equally informative when writing *De Sanctis*. Many individuals

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<sup>207</sup> *Vita Sancti Oswaldi Regis et Martyris*, ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia* vol. 1 (London, 1882), pp. 326-85.

<sup>208</sup> A similar comparison is used in Gurevich and Shukman, 'Oral and Written Culture', pp. 53-4 to distinguish between two different versions of an afterlife vision received by a man named Gottshalk, one of which they show to be more heavily based on folkloric oral culture than the other.

<sup>209</sup> For some examples of the former, see *LDE*, bk I, ch. 1, p. 20; ch. 2, p. 22; bk III, ch. 6, p. 160; ch. 7, p. 162; ch. 10, p. 174; for the latter see *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 6, p. 104; bk III ch. 12, p. 176.

<sup>210</sup> Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', pp. 60-5 and 80; Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', pp. 483-6.

<sup>211</sup> For examples of each see respectively *Alia Miracula I*, p. 297; RH, *History*, 'prologus', p. 2, and bk I, ch. 1, p. 8; *De Admirandis*, ch. 73, p. 149; *Alia Miracula I*, p. 297.

<sup>212</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 15, pp. 24-7. See further discussion of these below, at pp. 84-92.

<sup>213</sup> For example, *LDE*, bk III, ch. 1, pp. 146-8. See further discussion below, at pp. 84-92.

were named, and some had their nicknames reported.<sup>214</sup> The social status of these people was frequently recalled, something made more interesting by the fact they were rarely people of note.<sup>215</sup> Even physical appearances were sometimes detailed.<sup>216</sup> Local sayings, familiar to the people of the town, were also mentioned.<sup>217</sup>

A high degree of originality is another feature suggestive of a narrative taken from local oral tradition. For example, the miracle collections of St. John of Beverley do not fit easily into the stereotypical patterns of contemporary texts.<sup>218</sup> This suggests they were the product of a vibrant local oral culture. Common folk motifs are often to be found in such stories. Catherine Cubitt drew attention to this, offering examples like wicked step-mothers, or the story starting with a violent and unjust death.<sup>219</sup> Even where apparent hagiographical patterning does occur, one must be attuned to the possibility that it was present in the oral telling of the story, rather than being added when the tale was written down. This was especially true of miracle stories, since people sought out miracles that they heard had happened before, or interpreted events in their own lives according to ideas recalled from previous narratives.<sup>220</sup>

All of this evidence strongly suggests that many of the stories included in our sources were the products of the wider local community. Furthermore, the authors often went to great length to describe how the story had reached them. Long chains of spoken interaction were often recorded, providing a window on to a much larger web of conversation.<sup>221</sup> We have already seen the example from the *Alia Miracula* text where a canon wrote down a story told to him by his parents who had heard it from their neighbours.<sup>222</sup> Aelred recorded one story which was brought back to the townspeople of Hexham by two of their number who had been on a pilgrimage.<sup>223</sup> Reginald often deferred to the testimony of priests, who brought stories to Durham

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<sup>214</sup> For the recollection of names see *De Sanctis*, ch. 3, p. 181; ch. 4, p. 182; ch. 7, p. 186; and ch. 12, p. 198. For nicknames see *Ibid.*, ch. 4, p. 182. See above, pp. 27-30 and below, pp. 79-80.

<sup>215</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 3, p. 181; ch. 4, p. 182; ch. 7, p. 186; and ch. 12, p. 195.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 4, p. 182. See further discussion of this below, at pp. 79-80.

<sup>217</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 1, p. 177.

<sup>218</sup> Wilson, *St. John of Beverley*, pp. 98-103.

<sup>219</sup> Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', esp. pp. 65-6 and 73-4.

<sup>220</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 28-46.

<sup>221</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 9-26, esp. p. 17; B. McGuire, 'Friends and Tales in the Cloister: Oral Sources in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum*' *Analecta Cisterciensia* 36 (1980), pp. 167-247, at pp. 168-70.

<sup>222</sup> See above, pp. 37-8.

<sup>223</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 10, p. 188-9. See below, pp. 81 and 109.

from their parishioners.<sup>224</sup> The overall structure of the texts examined here was shaped by their authors. But the material included recalled the ideas and traditions of those people who took part in these conversational currents. This means narrative texts offer a view of a shared worldview, an imaginative outlook that encompassed the authors and those they wrote about.

Many of the stories recorded by authors like Symeon, Reginald and Aelred were originally oral in form. However, one should not assume that oral and written versions related to each other in a simple, evolutionary way. In short, it was not the case that the laity told oral stories, which were malleable in form, and the religious wrote them down, thereby permanently fixing their content. Stories could of course keep circulating orally after they had been written down.<sup>225</sup> There was also a high level of what John Blair called 'back-and-forth' interaction between written and oral versions, in which the former recorded the latter, but then went on to influence future spoken renditions of the tale, which would change the story before it was again put down in writing.<sup>226</sup>

This process can clearly be seen in certain twelfth-century texts, with the best examples from Durham, because it had the highest level of written output in the region. If one compares the tenth-century *Historia Sancto Cuthberto*, Symeon's *Libellus*, *De Miraculis*, and Reginald's book on the miracles of St. Cuthbert, one can trace the development of certain stories over a period of two and a half centuries. As will be shown throughout this thesis, these narratives offer clear evidence of stories that were still extant and evolving in oral culture.<sup>227</sup> As a result, examining various texts produced in the same communities but at different times offers snapshots of the process by which local stories were exchanged and reformulated.

Even more important than recognising this exchange is moving away from associating the oral forms of the stories exclusively with the laity, and the written forms with the clergy. What we see in these texts is not a lay tale that has survived in a clerical narrative, but rather a shared story, the product of constant re-telling by

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<sup>224</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 64-5, pp. 126-34; ch. 69-72, pp. 141-8; ch. 136-40, pp. 284-90. See below, 121-2 and 201-2.

<sup>225</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 5 and 109-111.

<sup>226</sup> J. Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', pp. 455-94, esp. pp. 476-86. See also Clarke, *Writing Power*, esp. pp. 1-10 and 171-3.

<sup>227</sup> See below, pp. 84-92 and 154-5.

various members of society.<sup>228</sup> The author engaged in discussion with whoever told him the story, and wrote down a version that was a product of this interaction.<sup>229</sup> The teller might reshape the story according to the person with whom they were engaging in conversation.<sup>230</sup> The example of the vision of Orm shows there could be several stages to this interaction; in this case, a young man reported a story to his priest, who then told Symeon. As noted before, Reginald also heard many local tales in this way.<sup>231</sup> The hermits Godric and Bartholomew both had lives written for them that derived much material from stories witnessed and told by themselves, their neighbours, and even the authors.<sup>232</sup>

Many historians who have been convinced of the presence of stories taken from oral culture in textual sources have encountered difficulties in trying to isolate the original tale.<sup>233</sup> Such a task is impossible, because one can never know for certain what was being said before the written version was produced. Instead of trying to separate the textual rendition from the oral one, the stories should be treated as products of a shared local culture. I am not suggesting the author was presenting a story exactly as he found it, or necessarily derived quite the same meaning from it as other people.<sup>234</sup> But I am suggesting that separating all the ideas within the narrative into those deriving from the oral original and those added by later writers is unhelpful. It is better to try to understand what the different elements of the story meant to different people, and how this helped them to identify with one another and negotiate their social relationships. Rather than trying to perfectly recreate the original tale, I intend to examine each part of it, each element of the content, its form, its meaning, and ask what plausibly reflects the views of the various people involved in the story and its narration.

It is of course problematic if the final author's reading of the story was substantially different to that of other individuals, for he may have over-written other meanings and understandings derived from the tale. The issue is not, however,

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<sup>228</sup> Gurevich and Shukman, 'Oral and Written Culture', pp. 63-5; D. Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts: The Social Meanings of Saintry Clothing in the *Vitae* of Godric of Finchale and Wulfric of Haselbury' *Journal of Medieval History* 28:3 (2002), pp. 205-226, at p. 220.

<sup>229</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 18-25.

<sup>230</sup> Gurevich and Shukman, 'Oral and Written Culture', pp. 54-6.

<sup>231</sup> See above, p. 45.

<sup>232</sup> See below, pp. 183-7.

<sup>233</sup> McNamara, 'Oral Circulation', pp. 21-36.

<sup>234</sup> On this point see Gurevich and Shukman, 'Oral and Written Culture', p. 51.

insurmountable. A close reading of the text often reveals alternative perspectives on the same event. No matter how carefully constructed a text is, it will usually contain evidence of different conceptions of the world.

As an example of this, it is worth turning to a story about Godric recorded by Reginald.<sup>235</sup> It reported events that happened shortly after the hermit settled at Finchale. A number of the local peasants offered gifts to Godric in order to support his holy way of life, but not wishing to burden the poor he set about cultivating his own tract of land. A group of neighbouring *rustici* took exception to this, and in a moment of vindictiveness, they allowed their sheep and cattle to run wild in his garden, eating his crops and destroying his property. According to Reginald this was because they were jealous of the hermit. However, he also indicated an alternative reason for their displeasure. The *rustici* claimed the land Godric was cultivating was supposed to be used as common grazing land, according to ‘usual custom’ (*morem solitum*).<sup>236</sup> This explains not only their attack, but the manner of it; in the conception of the *rustici*, releasing their animals on to the land may not have been an assault at all, but the justifiable practice of local custom. This belief is present in the text, despite the fact it does not correspond to Reginald’s reading of the episode.<sup>237</sup>

According to Paul Strohm, there are two major reasons for the failure of a dominant version of a tale to obscure completely other potential interpretations of what had happened.<sup>238</sup> First, in order to condemn an action, it must first be described, at which point a shadow of the original rationale may appear. Secondly, as was shown above, the authors often shared their interpretive scheme with wider society.<sup>239</sup> As a result, even in the most obfuscating and partisan of texts, one can read what the author wanted to say, and then look for alternative perceptions within the account.

Studying the narratives of the twelfth-century north of England in this way requires a close reading of the sources, something akin to Clifford Geertz’s concept of “thick description”. Geertz wanted to look at all the imaginative dimensions of every aspect of behaviour in a given culture. He was trying to understand the social situations which framed, acted upon, and were enacted by that culture. For him, the

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<sup>235</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 26, pp. 74-5. See below, p. 200.

<sup>236</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 26, p. 74.

<sup>237</sup> For a similar reading of this story, see Alexander, ‘Hermits and Hairshirts’, pp. 222-4, esp. p. 224.

<sup>238</sup> P. Strohm, “‘A Revelle!’: Chronicle Evidence and the Rebel Voice”, in Idem, *Hochon’s Arrow*, pp. 33-56.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

way to do this was through highly detailed study of specific examples.<sup>240</sup> By trying to describe and understand every permutation of an event or story, while always retaining a sense of its original context, one is better able to grasp the meaning, or meanings, it held for contemporary individuals.

Geertz remained convinced that in this act of interpretation we can never apprehend another people's or period's imagination neatly, but to suggest we can therefore not apprehend it at all is false. He suggested the way between these two extremes is achieved not by looking behind interfering glosses, but through them.<sup>241</sup> Following this line of reasoning, I believe there is profit to be made from considering what a text was trying to say, as well as scouring it for what it was trying to conceal. Using these two lines of investigation, multiple meanings for each story are revealed. This allows us to see how medieval people narrated their lives, and thus how they understood themselves, identified with one another, and constructed their communities.

#### **THE PLAN FOR THIS STUDY**

It should now be clear what I mean when I say I intend to examine the process of identification in the twelfth-century north of England through the study of contemporary narratives. What remains to be done is outline the framework of the thesis itself. Each of the following chapters will take one highly significant element for identification and the construction of communities, and examine it in detail. Chapter 2 looks at history, memories and traditions, as shared ideas about the past are a common feature in the process of identification, and rendering history in an acceptable way is vital for the construction of any community.<sup>242</sup> The chapter will examine the ways in which dominant narratives of the past were constructed, as well as the wider pool of memory that informed these creations. In the third chapter, the ways in which conceptions of local saints helped to create a sense of community, and

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<sup>240</sup> C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973), especially 'Chapter 1: Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', pp. 3-30. See also Idem, *Local Knowledge*, pp. 3-16, where some of these ideas are followed up.

<sup>241</sup> C. Geertz, 'Found in Translation: On the Social History of the Moral Imagination', in Idem, *Local Knowledge*, pp. 36-54, at p. 44.

<sup>242</sup> Weedon, *Identity and Culture*, pp. 24-8; Woodward, *Identity and Difference*, pp. 19-20.



provided a common focus around which shared meanings and values could be negotiated and articulated, will be examined. Living holy people could be just as important as deceased saints in this regard. These men and women form the focus of the fourth chapter, which shows they played numerous roles that helped the integration of local people into a community.

While considering these aspects individually, one must always have in mind the way they acted together. They all worked in unity in the narratives and imaginations of contemporary people. Moreover, the underlying principles of the current study must also be remembered while considering these factors. The way people understood themselves and identified with others came about through individuals and groups creating meaningful stories that ordered their experiences. The narratives preserved in certain texts allow us access to this process. This thesis is going to examine these processes in a local context through the stories people told and the narratives they constructed. I seek to demonstrate how a variety of people, not just the authors of our texts, constructed their communities. By building on innovative approaches to narrative sources I intend to analyse certain stories from a new angle. Doing this will allow new light to be thrown on some of the people who were telling, writing, reading and listening to these narratives.

## CHAPTER 2: IMAGINING THE PAST

In Symeon of Durham's *Libellus de exordio* there is an account of a monk named Aldwin. He had read in a history of the English, presumably Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, of the many monasteries that had once filled Northumbria, and the saintly inhabitants who lived there. 'He desired to visit the places of those men – namely, the monasteries – and to lead a life of poverty there in imitation of those people, although he knew the sites had now been reduced to wilderness'.<sup>243</sup> And so, sometime around 1073-4, he travelled north with two companions and settled on the northern bank of the Tyne. Not long after, Walcher, bishop of Durham, invited the small band to move to the site at Jarrow where Bede himself had been resident. New followers, some from nearby, others from the south, came to join Aldwin. From this initial outpost, monks made their way to Whitby, and from there, to York. Further journeys were undertaken, reviving the monastic life across Northumbria and rebuilding ruined churches. 'Plainly', wrote Symeon, 'two hundred and eight years are calculated from the time in which the churches in the province of Northumbria had been ruined by the pagans, and the monasteries had been destroyed and burned, up to the third year of Walcher's office, when, through the coming of Aldwin into the province, the residence of monks began to be revived in that place'.<sup>244</sup> Symeon explicitly linked the new foundations of Aldwin to those written about by Bede, describing the whole episode with the language of restoration and revival.<sup>245</sup>

Such a conception of these events only made sense because of the way they were fitted into a broader narrative of the past as constructed by Symeon. In order for Aldwin to represent renewal, there had to be an earlier portion of the story dealing with the original birth and greatness of monasticism in the north, and its untimely destruction. These topics form earlier sections of the *Libellus*. This demonstrates two

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<sup>243</sup> 'Quorum loca (videlicet monasteria) licet iam in solitudinem sciret redacta, desideravit inuisere, ibique ad imitationem illorum pauperem uitam ducere', *LDE*, bk. III, ch. 21, p. 200.

<sup>244</sup> 'Plane a tempore quo a paganis ecclesie in prouincia Northanhymbrorum euerse, et monasteria sunt destructa atque incensa, usque tertium annum presulatus Walcheri, quando per Aldwinum in ipsam prouinciam venientem monachorum in illa cepit habitatio reuiuiscere, ducenti et octo computantur anni', *Ibid.*, bk. III, ch. 22, p. 210.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. III, ch. 21-22, pp. 200-10.

related ideas that will be explored in this chapter: first, that an understanding of the past was vital to perceptions of the present, and secondly, that narratives and interpretations of the past were constantly being moulded by those in the present.<sup>246</sup> The two may seem contradictory, but imagining the past in a particular way and finding meaning in it are processes that complement and reinforce one another, and contribute significantly to conceptions of community and identification.

These ideas are well-established in scholarly work on history and memory. Academics have built upon Maurice Halbwachs' idea of collective memory, a concept which posits that a group of people can construct an image of the past which is independent from the memories of any individual, but which helps to structure the memory of each person in the group.<sup>247</sup> This dichotomy between individual and collective memory has, however, been criticised.<sup>248</sup> Meanwhile, others have sought to correct what they see as the 'excessive emphasis on the collective nature of social consciousness' by modifying the concept of collective memory into social memory.<sup>249</sup> Since social memory is about the relationships between different people's recollections, it allows for a greater appreciation of the way individual and communal memories relate to each other. This makes it a more nuanced and useful tool for the historian than an opposition between individual and collective memory.

Social memory does not open up boundless options for the individual or the group. There are limits on how the past can be recalled and presented; these can be the result of deficiencies of the human mind, but more often are the product of social constraints or contemporary requirements and pressures.<sup>250</sup> There is also a need to believe in what is remembered, to consider it truthful in some way. I would therefore suggest that an agreed version of the past is not a product of pure imaginative fantasy, but a reconstruction from available evidence. The evidence used, or the truth put forward, can of course differ. As we shall see, twelfth-century ideas of what

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<sup>246</sup> On this theme see B. Schneidmüller, 'Constructing the Past by Means of the Present: Historiographical Foundations of Medieval Institutions, Dynasties, Peoples, and Communities', in G. Althoff, J. Fried, and P. Geary (eds), *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 167-92; and E. van Houts, 'Introduction: Medieval Memories', in Eadem (ed.), *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700-1300* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 1-16.

<sup>247</sup> M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. L. Coser (Chicago, 1992).

<sup>248</sup> P. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), p. 10.

<sup>249</sup> J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992), p. ix.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.

constituted secure proofs or important truths could be very different from the notions of a modern historian.

This process of constructing the past through social memory is important for the present study, as how one views the past is vital to how one perceives oneself and society at large in the present. As James Fentress and Chris Wickham suggest, everything is given meaning through being associated with particular memories, including relationships between individuals, and social collectives.<sup>251</sup> It is thus in the perception of the past that people can find the reasons for considering themselves to be a member of a particular community, and discover what it means to identify oneself with that group. This corresponds to Emilia Jamroziak's view that 'building a common identity between individuals and a group of people or institution, such as a religious community, was based, to a large degree, on creating a body of shared memories.'<sup>252</sup> The process of identification is, in part, a result of how a group of individuals remember a perceived common heritage, a set of traditional values or norms, or a collection of common stories, myths and legends, which appear to unite them and distinguish them from other groups.<sup>253</sup>

Sometimes a loose, but broadly shared, understanding of the past among a given group of people is enough to foster this sense of unity.<sup>254</sup> However, in some cases the creation of a dominant historical narrative, which selects particular memories and places them into a single storyline, is required to demonstrate homogeneity. According to Catherine Cubitt, such narratives helped to produce a collective past, which engendered a feeling of unity.<sup>255</sup> Meanwhile Elizabeth Freeman points out, 'historiography is a powerful weapon in the campaign to create and

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>252</sup> E. Jamroziak, 'How Rievaulx Abbey Remembered its Benefactors', in Jamroziak and Burton, *Religious and Laity*, pp. 63-76, at p. 63.

<sup>253</sup> G. Constable, *Culture and Spirituality in Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 49-70; Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, pp. 3-9, especially p. 8; M. Innes, 'Introduction: Using the Past, Interpreting the Present, Influencing the Future', in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1-8, at p. 1; A. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca and London, 1995), pp. 1-4, 42-86, especially 42-3, and 289-301.

<sup>254</sup> See P. Magdalino (ed.), *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London, 1992), esp. p. xi.

<sup>255</sup> C. Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Early Anglo-Saxon Saints', in Hen and Innes, *Uses of the Past*, pp. 29-66. On the power of narrative to order and give meaning to experience more generally, see above, pp. 18-21.

maintain community identities'.<sup>256</sup> There are certainly examples of communities in the twelfth century producing texts that structured memories into a single, unifying narrative. Symeon's *Libellus* is one such work. Yet even at Durham these over-arching historical narratives were accompanied by a wider sense of the past, which, while it did not necessarily conform to a single storyline, still allowed the inhabitants to identify with one another. In what follows, it will be shown that historical narratives were important, but often existed within what one might term a pool of memory, from which they drew much of their material. This pool was principally made up of oral narratives. At some religious houses in the north, most notably Durham, these were accompanied by a stock of textual information gathered from older writings.

There seem to have been certain times when communities and individuals were more likely to seek a single narrative for their past, rather than relying on a collection of memories. A perception of a recent crisis or disjuncture could prompt a person, group or entire generation to take a deeper interest in the past, and construct a continuous narrative out of their investigations. For example, Patrick Geary believed that, in the eleventh century, religious institutions in the former Carolingian empire searched through written records and oral stories and used the evidence to produce a single account of their histories. This was prompted by their perception of a crisis in the tenth century, which led to a loss of connection with their past. In the process of reconnecting, certain things were left out in order to create a version of events with a clear meaning for contemporaries. So the pool of memory solidified into an over-arching narrative, although Geary does concede that a few tales of the past, which did not fit into the narrative, may have remained elsewhere in local memory.<sup>257</sup>

Geary has not been the only one to link a perception of crisis with increased interest in the past and the production of historical narratives. Richard Southern believed the same process happened in England, chiefly between 1090 and 1130, and was precipitated by the Norman Conquest. He suggested a generation of English or half-English people felt their land had been devastated, their heritage was under threat, and they had been detached from their pasts. For some, chiefly men who had

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<sup>256</sup> E. Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150-1220* (Turnhout, 2002), p. 9; see also pp. 52-3.

<sup>257</sup> Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*. See pp. 23-46 for the perceived disjuncture, which has been so persuasive that many modern historians have accepted it as fact, and pp. 115-33 for the new narrative histories of the religious institutions; for the final caveat, see p. 180.

entered monasteries, the response was to scour all the written and oral records they could find, copy and preserve them, and use this material to produce new histories. They were encouraged to do so by their monasteries, which benefitted from evidence that justified land claims and contemporary custom. The cumulative efforts of these men caused the historical boom of the early twelfth century.<sup>258</sup>

Southern's ideas are particularly interesting when he considers the nature of the material that was saved, reproduced and created by these people. He suggests that some of it may seem trivial to modern eyes, but for contemporaries what mattered was the web of associations that linked each event, person, piece of land, and object with the community. The recollection of the community's past and all its previous members was the object of the work, and this was best achieved through making connections with existing people, objects and institutions. Southern concluded that 'the aim was a total recall of the past in order to give the community its identity in the present'.<sup>259</sup>

Southern's views on using the past to construct the present community foreshadowed ideas on social memory. However, it was his work on the historical output of 1090-1130, and its motivation, that has proved especially influential. The stimulation of historical inquiry by the crisis of conquest has become an accepted and frequently repeated concept in English historiographical study.<sup>260</sup> The interest of historians has often concerned the English as a whole, but it has long been recognised that most of the work undertaken during the eleventh and twelfth centuries was focused on local history.<sup>261</sup> The construction of local history, and its importance for

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<sup>258</sup> Southern, 'Sense of the Past', pp. 243-63.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>260</sup> See, among others, J. Campbell, 'Some Twelfth-Century Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', in *Idem, Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 209-28, esp. p. 209; J. Gillingham, 'Henry of Huntingdon and the Twelfth-Century Revival of the English Nation', in S. Forde, L. Johnson and A. Murray (eds), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leeds, 1995), pp. 75-101, at p. 78; Partner, *Serious Entertainments*, p. 5; Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, pp. 164-86. Similar ideas of a pan-ethnic historiography have been explored for other groups, for example E. Albu, *The Normans in their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge, 2001). It was not just in textual historiography that English memory and tradition was sought; in the courts of England, the customs and recollections of local Englishmen provided trustworthy testimony. See Williams, *Norman Conquest*, pp. 155-64.

<sup>261</sup> M. Brett, 'John of Worcester and his Contemporaries', in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 101-26, at p. 126.

individual communities, has received increasing focus in a number of studies.<sup>262</sup> Several of these have noted the use of historical narrative to cope with periods of perceived crisis, or to smooth over apparent disjuncture in the past.<sup>263</sup> The current chapter seeks to build on these, while also exploring certain narratives of the past that have received less attention, including written and oral stories from Hexham, and a particular group of folkloric tales that appear in several texts from Durham. The regional focus of this study should make it possible to examine the historical revival in a wide context, while still appreciating its local interests and motivations.

In approaching the material in this way, this chapter will feed into the more general concerns of the thesis, by examining how the imagined past formed a vital element in the processes of collective identification and self-understanding. It has already been argued that narrativity shapes and gives meaning to experience, and that this meaning is what allows people to understanding themselves and their connections with others.<sup>264</sup> As will be shown, stories of the past created a perception of shared experience and ancestry that allowed people to identify with one another at both a local and regional level.

The chapter will start with the narrative histories produced by communities in the north of England during the twelfth century, for these offer direct access to certain contemporary constructions of the past. The overall story these narratives presented is important, as is the way they were structured. Any investigation must also include consideration of the intended audience and purpose. It is only through looking at all

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<sup>262</sup> For the north see, for example, J. Burton, 'Selby Abbey and its Twelfth-Century Historian', in S. Jones (ed.), *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad* (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 49-68; J. Burton, 'The Abbeys of Byland and Jervaulx, and the Problems with the English Savigniacs', in J. Loades (ed.), *Monastic Studies II: The Continuation of Tradition* (Bangor, 1991), pp. 119-31; Burton, 'Introduction'; E. Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150-1220* (Turnhout, 2002); E. Jamroziak, 'Making and Breaking Bonds: Yorkshire Cistercians and their Neighbours', in T. Kinder (ed.) *Perspectives for an Architecture of Solitude: Essays on Cistercians, Art and Architecture in Honour of Peter Fergusson* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 63-70; C. Norton, 'Richard of Fountains and the Letter of Thurstan: History and Historiography of a Monastic Controversy, St. Mary's Abbey, York, 1132', in Kinder *Perspectives*, pp. 9-33; D. Rollason (ed.), *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North* (Stamford, 1998).

<sup>263</sup> H. Blurton, 'Reliquia: Writing Relics in Anglo-Norman Durham', in J. Cohen (ed.), *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England* (New York, 2008), pp. 39-56, at pp. 47-50; Burton, 'Introduction', pp. x-xii; Rollason, 'Introduction' in *LDE*, pp. xc-xci; John Scott (ed.), *The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* (Woodbridge, 1981), pp. 1-5 and 27.

<sup>264</sup> See above, pp. 18-21.

these elements that the true value given to these narratives by their creators can be understood.

The next significant issue is how such narratives were put together. The resources of the authors require consideration. What biblical and literary models were they echoing in their works? How did their wider conceptions of their community help create the imaginative framework for their histories? What source material did they draw on when putting together their narratives? This last question leads to an examination of the use of a local or regional pool of memory, preserved in oral culture and occasional written documents. This provides a useful reminder that the perception of the past is not only about historiographical narratives, but a wide range of materials, including memories associated with particular places or objects.<sup>265</sup>

An investigation of the sources also leads outside the religious institution, to the final, and most important, line of inquiry.<sup>266</sup> Certain respected, often elderly, individuals from the local laity and secular clergy provided personal stories and folkloric tales from which these narratives were constructed.<sup>267</sup> They frequently contain legendary material and are rarely derived from an obvious single source. In the form that they take in the texts these are a product of a shared oral culture involving the author, the person telling him the story, and other individuals who had participated in its construction.<sup>268</sup> Such material has tremendous value in providing an insight into the imaginations of those people who told and listened to these stories. Certain parts of it, such as the stories of St. Cuthbert's coffin-bearers, can benefit from a closer examination than they have received in the past. This approach will reveal that the pool of social memory was as important for the construction of local and regional communities as the over-arching narratives produced by the churchmen.

## **NARRATIVES OF THE PAST**

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<sup>265</sup> Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, p. 13.

<sup>266</sup> On the necessity to consider textual history narratives within the context of wider conceptions of the past see E. Tyler and R. Balzaretto, 'Introduction', in Idem (eds), *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 1-9, at pp. 2-3.

<sup>267</sup> On the difference between personal and folkloric stories see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 12-25, esp. 12-14.

<sup>268</sup> On the concept of a shared oral culture see above, pp. 34-48; see also Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 11-27, for a similar idea.



There were two main types of historical narrative produced in northern religious houses during this period. The first were institutional histories, principally concerned with the foundation and history of the church and its brethren. The second were more wide-ranging in their interests, offering an account of the history of the whole kingdom. Symeon's *Libellus*, Richard of Hexham's *History of the Church of Hexham*, and a collection of Cistercian tracts from the late-twelfth century represent a selection of the former category.<sup>269</sup> Symeon and Richard also produced examples of the latter, as did John of Hexham, Alfred of Beverley, and William of Newburgh.<sup>270</sup> The differences between the two genres are not as great as they first appear. Institutional history was often linked to wider affairs, while histories of kingdoms or people usually privileged local events. Nevertheless, for present purposes institutional histories have greater relevance, because they were specific constructions of the local, communal past. Therefore they provide the main focus for the first part of this chapter.

The first consideration is what it was that motivated the religious authors to write. They gave some indication of this in their works. At the most basic level, Symeon said he was commanded by the authority of his seniors, probably meaning his prior and other superior monks, to write about the origins of the church of Durham.<sup>271</sup> This deflects the question from the motivations of the individual to those of the collective, although one must be careful with prologues, which had a tendency to say what the author felt was required to justify the work, rather than focusing on specific or personal motivations.<sup>272</sup> However, Symeon also dropped a hint that personal interests drove him as much as communal pressure. After the usual protestations of his own unworthiness, he mentioned an eagerness for the work, suggesting he had a genuine interest in history.<sup>273</sup> A desire to know about the past is a common human trait, and

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<sup>269</sup> *LDE*; RH, *History*; *Foundation History*; *Fundatione Fontains*.

<sup>270</sup> *H. Reg.*; RH, *De Gestis*; JH, *Historia*; William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs* ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh and M. J. Kennedy (Warminster, 1988); *Aluredi Beverlacensis Annales*, ed. T. Hearne (Oxford, 1716). On William of Newburgh see Lawrence-Mathers, 'William of Newburgh', pp. 339-57, and Partner, *Serious Entertainments*, pp. 51-113. On Alfred of Beverley see Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 212.

<sup>271</sup> *LDE*, 'prologus', p. 2.

<sup>272</sup> A. Gransden, 'Prologues in the Historiography of Twelfth-Century England' in D. Williams (ed.), *England in the Twelfth Century: Proceedings of the 1988 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 55-81. See the comments in William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella: the contemporary history*, ed. and trans. E. King and K. Potter (Oxford, 1998), at pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

<sup>273</sup> *LDE*, 'prologus', p. 2.

many of Symeon's contemporaries shared his enthusiasm.<sup>274</sup> Yet until recently modern historians have shied away from ascribing historiographical work in the middle ages to a pure interest in the subject. Greater appreciation has now been given to this cause of historical writing, with many scholars seeing it as one reason among several, and Richard Vaughan privileging it above all others.<sup>275</sup> Certainly in the case of Symeon, one should not underestimate the importance of his desire to know about the past simply because he was eager to learn.

This still leaves open the motivation of the rest of the community, including the senior members who suggested the project. To an extent they probably shared Symeon's interest, but other issues would also have encouraged them. Later in the tract, Symeon reported that he was recording things for posterity, in order to preserve the memory of the past.<sup>276</sup> This was also the driving force behind an institutional history produced at Byland towards the end of the twelfth century. Byland was a relatively new foundation, looking into a past less than a century old, but its narrative was just as carefully constructed as Durham's. The impetus for writing was provided by a gradual loss of the first generation of monks, and thus the eye-witness testimony to fundamental events, such as the foundation of the house. Janet Burton saw no reason to dispute the statement by the author of the tract, Abbot Philip, that this was a primary motivation for writing.<sup>277</sup> Burton also suggested a number of secondary motives, including new-found stability of location, ongoing land and filiation disputes, and general trends in the Cistercian order.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Henry of Huntingdon wrote at some length about the joy, comfort, and excellence of historical enquiry, interest in which he saw as a characteristic that separated rational beings from brutes; see *Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. D. Greenway (Oxford, 1996), 'prologus', pp. 2-4. William of Malmesbury was interested in saving the English past from oblivion, not least because reading history added flavour or zest to morality; see *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, vol. I (Oxford, 1998), bk I, 'prologus', p. 14, and bk II, 'prologus', p. 150. See also the description of his own 'usual love of study' (*solitus amor studiorum*), at *Ibid.*, bk III, 'prologus', p. 540.

<sup>275</sup> See Vaughan, 'The Past in the Middle Ages', pp. 1-14, who convincingly argues that a personal interest in history was the main motivation for a great many writers of historiography in the middle ages. Campbell, 'Twelfth-Century Views', pp. 210-1, goes further, suggesting a broad interest in the past extended to much of the laity, as well as the religious authors. For those who have given it as one reason among many see Partner, *Serious Entertainments*, pp. 2-3; A. J. Piper, 'The Historical Interests of the Monks of Durham' in Rollason, *Historian of Durham*, pp. 301-32, at pp. 319-20 and 331.

<sup>276</sup> *LDE*, ch. 1, p. 18. For the need to preserve memories of the past more generally, see C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London and New York, 2004), pp. 57-60.

<sup>277</sup> Burton, 'Introduction', p. x.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. x-xii.

Philip explicitly emphasised the need for preservation. He said he was working from the recollections of the oldest members of the community.<sup>279</sup> They could still remember the monastery's origins, but Philip desired to write these reminiscences down, to preserve them for future generations, and combat the weaknesses of human memory.<sup>280</sup> A written record of events was perceived as the only way to ensure their continued remembrance. The same motivation encouraged Philip to continue the historical account to include Byland's daughter-house, Jervaulx.<sup>281</sup>

The provision of a single tract to preserve memories in this way was particularly desirable. Often the information had previously been, in Symeon's words, 'scattered through documents'.<sup>282</sup> Richard of Hexham's only direct statement concerning purpose suggests similar thinking. He used similar phrasing to Symeon when he said the aim of his work was to gather information scattered through writings to piece together a single volume of the church's history.<sup>283</sup> The comparable wording is not surprising, since Richard knew of Symeon's work and was heavily influenced by it. Indeed, his tract, although much smaller than Symeon's, borrowed a great deal structurally and stylistically from the *Libellus*, as will be shown shortly.<sup>284</sup> However, the wording was not unique to northern texts. The *Liber Eliensis* was also written, according to its author, in order to assemble things in an orderly fashion and preserve their memory.<sup>285</sup> This was to be achieved by bringing together documents and stories relating to the past that had previously been scattered in various places.<sup>286</sup>

At the same time Abbot Philip was constructing a history for Byland and its daughter-house, a monk called Hugh, who lived at Kirkstall, was writing one for his mother-house, Fountains. The design of the work and its principal source were strikingly similar to Philip's, while its aims mirrored those of Symeon and Richard. The memories of Serlo, an old monk who could remember back to the foundation of Fountains, and who now lived at Kirkstall, were recorded for posterity.<sup>287</sup> As with Philip's tract, Hugh included documents, such as letters and charters, probably to add

<sup>279</sup> *Foundation History*, p. 1.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1. For the importance of passing on information concerning the past see also *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35 and 57. On oral sources see also pp. 39 and 50-1.

<sup>282</sup> 'sparsim in scedulis', *LDE*, 'prologus', p. 2.

<sup>283</sup> 'scriptis sparsim', *RH*, *History*, 'prologus', p. 3.

<sup>284</sup> See Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, vol. I, p. cxlv.

<sup>285</sup> *LE*, bk I, prologue, pp. 1-3.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, bk I, prologue, p. 7, and bk II, prologue, p. 84.

<sup>287</sup> *Fundatione Fontanis*, pp. 2-3.

weight to the claims of his account.<sup>288</sup> The aim, as with other writers, was not only to preserve memory, but to mould it into a single, acceptable version of the community's past.<sup>289</sup>

The creation of a single narrative of the past allowed the community to ensure that a suitable version of history, which fitted contemporary needs, was put forward.<sup>290</sup> These needs encompassed various elements. Symeon included details of gifts of land, objects, and sanctuary rights in his narrative.<sup>291</sup> In post-Conquest England, religious houses like Durham found that having trustworthy accounts of past land-holdings and rights was important for supporting their modern claims.<sup>292</sup>

Historical prose was considered the correct medium for elucidating truth, but the nature of that truth could take different forms.<sup>293</sup> Facts, such as who held a certain piece of land, could be conveyed by historical texts. Yet there were also universal truths, such as the protection offered by God to his servants, or the divine plan for the world, which could also be made clear through recording the past.<sup>294</sup> At Durham, Symeon recorded both sorts of truth in the *Libellus*. Alongside entries detailing gifts of property, there was throughout the truth of the community, its continuous existence, and its defining characteristics. Similar truths were built into the histories of other contemporary religious houses. For example, Janet Burton highlighted the presence of two distinct truths running through the *Historia Selebiensis Monasterii*, the first being the protection given to the community by St. Germanus, the second the fact it was a royal abbey.<sup>295</sup> Narrative constructs an image of reality according to the conscious and

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<sup>288</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, pp. 36-45, 81-3; *Foundation History*, pp. 5, 7-9, 12-3, 15-8, 22-3, and 26-34.

<sup>289</sup> For brief comments on the way Hugh acted as the editor of Serlo's memories see L. Baker, 'The Foundation of Fountains Abbey' *Northern History* 4:1 (1969), pp. 29-43, at pp. 31-2, and Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 259.

<sup>290</sup> On meeting contemporary needs, see Piper, 'Historical Interests', pp. 319-20, and Rollason, *LDE*, p. xvii. For this idea more generally see Tyler and Balzaretto, 'Introduction', p. 6.

<sup>291</sup> See especially *LDE*, bk II, ch. 1, p. 78, and bk II, ch. 13, pp. 124-6; for objects see, for example, bk III, ch. 11, p. 176.

<sup>292</sup> Campbell, 'Twelfth-Century Views', pp. 209-11 and 215-9; Rollason, *LDE*, pp. lxxxv-lxxxix. For a southern English comparison see Scott, *Early History of Glastonbury*, pp. 1-33.

<sup>293</sup> Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp. 1-20. See also G. Spiegel, 'Forging the Past: The Language of Historical Truth in the Middle Ages' *The History Teacher* 17:2 (1984), pp. 267-83, where the use of historiography to convey 'truth' is described as particularly important during or shortly after a period of perceived crisis.

<sup>294</sup> On different notions of truth in historical writing see J. Beer *Narrative Conventions of Truth in the Middle Ages* (Geneva, 1981); E. Freeman, 'Meaning and Multi-Centeredness in (Postmodern) Medieval Historiography: the foundation history of Fountains Abbey' *Parergon* ns, 16:2 (1999), pp. 43-84; Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp. 1-20.

<sup>295</sup> Burton, 'Selby Abbey', pp. 54-60.

unconscious understandings of the person telling or receiving the story.<sup>296</sup> The qualities that Symeon perceived as essential characteristics of his community were woven into his version of the past. This meant Symeon was not only constructing the past, he was also constructing the community, by creating a series of ways in which it could be identified and people could identify with it.<sup>297</sup>

One of those characteristics was monasticism. The brethren of the church of Lindisfarne were monks from the very beginning, and the monastic vocation of its most highly regarded members, including Cuthbert, was emphasised in an overt way.<sup>298</sup> Symeon even commented that after the original group of monks dispersed during the ninth century, the clerks who took over the care of Cuthbert's body continued to sing the daily office. The author also believed the bishops of Lindisfarne, and later Chester-le-Street and Durham, continued to be monks.<sup>299</sup>

There were two reasons why Symeon wanted to emphasise the monastic nature of the community throughout its history. Both become clear towards the end of the narrative, when the new bishop, William of St. Calais, decided that the current religious care at Durham was inappropriate. Symeon described what he did:

So he asked the older and more prudent men of the whole bishopric how things had been done in the beginning, at the time of St. Cuthbert. They replied that his episcopal see had been on the island of Lindisfarne, and that monks had served there honourably, both while he was living and in his grave. Their assertions agreed with the little book about his life and the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.<sup>300</sup>

The story of the past inspired William and he set about making fundamental changes, removing the clerks from Durham and replacing them with Benedictine monks. This was presented in the *Libellus* as a definitive break, with a complete change of

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<sup>296</sup> See above, pp. 18-21.

<sup>297</sup> On the narrative process of identification see above, pp. 15-21.

<sup>298</sup> See in particular Symeon's account of Cuthbert's conversion to the monastic life: '...factus est monachus. Plane monachus! Monachus inquam...' at *LDE*, bk I, ch. 3, p. 26. For further emphasis of monasticism see bk I, ch. 2, p. 20, and ch. 6, p. 34.

<sup>299</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 6, pp. 102-4.

<sup>300</sup> 'Igitur senes et prudentiores totius episcopii homines qualiter in initio apud sanctum ageretur Cuthbertum ab illo exquisiti, sedem illius episcopalem in insula Lindisfarnensi fuisse, monachosque tam uiuo quam ibidem sepulto uenerabiliter seruasse responderunt, quorum quoque assertioni uite illius libellus et *Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum concordat Hystoria*', *LDE*, bk IV, ch. 2, p. 226.

personnel at the church.<sup>301</sup> Such upheaval would not necessarily have been welcomed by the clerks and other local people. Certainly it would help if it could be justified, and this need appears to have been one of the reasons why Symeon emphasised Durham's previous monasticism. Just as bishop William looked into the distant past to find a model on which to base his new community, so Symeon used it to justify the bishop's decision.<sup>302</sup>

The second reason for emphasising the monasticism of the first brethren was to provide continuity. The chapters describing the transfer of the church to the monks presented it as a rather severe break. In order to avoid appearing as novel usurpers, continuity had to be shown, which allowed the monks to lay claim to Durham's past.<sup>303</sup> By emphasising the monastic nature of the original brethren and the church's greatest saint, Symeon provided the community with continuity as well as justification.

This stability through history was particularly significant because it implied stable identification had occurred over a long and occasionally tumultuous period.<sup>304</sup> A clear idea of the community's past therefore helped contemporaries to define it in the present. Telling the story of that past allowed those involved to place themselves within wider history and understand how their part in it related to others. By sharing conceptions of the past, through historical narrative, the monks of Durham were able to identify with one another and create a sense of a shared, communal experience.<sup>305</sup> Symeon was chiefly interested in linking the distant past, the origin of the church, to the present, because for him the monks represented a revival. Symeon's challenge was to demonstrate an overhaul of the church while indicating it was the same community as had always existed; it was renewal, not a new beginning. This fits a more general pattern visible in historiographical writing at the time. To an extent the writers of the

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<sup>301</sup> *LDE*, bk IV, ch. 3, pp. 228-34.

<sup>302</sup> For previous ideas on Symeon justifying the existence of his monastic community and its take-over of Durham see Piper, 'Historical Interests', p. 302, and Rollason, *LDE*, pp. lxxxi-lxxxv. On using the past to legitimate present-day circumstances more generally, see M. Innes, 'Introduction', p. 1.

<sup>303</sup> On historiography as a means to demonstrate continuity and lay claim to a past see Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, p. 11.

<sup>304</sup> See the discussion of *LDE* in S. Crumplin, 'Re-writing History in the Cult of St. Cuthbert from the Ninth to the Twelfth Centuries' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2004), pp. 74-123.

<sup>305</sup> On the sharing of meaning and experience being vital to the definition of a community see above, pp. 11-15.

twelfth century were effacing difference, but as Freeman has shown, they were also subtly building change into their narratives.<sup>306</sup>

In the early twelfth century Hexham was also given over to the care of a new religious group. Augustinian canons replaced the hereditary owner and his clerical representative, the church's priest. The Augustinians could not link themselves directly with any monastic group in the church's past, so one might think it an odd place to look for continuity or justification. However, history still had an important part to play in explaining the take-over. Richard's tract on the church established an image of an ancient and noble institution.<sup>307</sup> He took particular care to link the church to a host of seventh- and eighth-century saints, including Wilfrid and Cuthbert, and to highlight the holiness of many of Hexham's bishops. Such a place deserved appropriate care, the sort an absentee cleric and a married priest could not provide, but which the Augustinians could. Even at Hexham, with its somewhat novel religious community, explanation and justification for the present could be found in the past.

The need to justify present-day events, claims and ideas through recourse to the past also affected Abbot Philip's writing. As noted above, his narrative of Byland's history was extended to include the story of its daughter-house, Jervaulx. Philip may have had specific reasons for wanting to present Jervaulx's past the way he did. Both houses had been members of the Savigniac order, and Philip claimed that Savigny would only accept Jervaulx if Byland agreed to take it as a daughter-house. The brethren of Jervaulx apparently acquiesced to this arrangement.<sup>308</sup> However, a single contradictory paragraph in the text suggests an alternative version of events, one in which the monks of Jervaulx were far from happy at being subjugated to Byland. A later abbot of Jervaulx complained there was no proof that Byland had the right of visitation of his house, a claim that the author dismissed as based on a misunderstanding.<sup>309</sup> Perhaps, then, Philip's decision to record the earlier proceedings with Savigny, emphasising the good deed Byland had done its daughter, was about justifying the events of the past, and healing present tensions between the two communities.

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<sup>306</sup> Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>307</sup> RH, *History*, 'prologus', p. 3; bk I, ch. 3, pp. 10-4.

<sup>308</sup> *Foundation History*, pp. 40-4.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

The contemporary needs and beliefs of the monks at Byland certainly influenced Philip's account of its history. Great emphasis was laid on the fact that Byland was not subjugated to the houses of Furness or Calder, both of which claimed otherwise.<sup>310</sup> Janet Burton considered the issue of affiliation and relationships between houses to be the dominant issue in the text.<sup>311</sup> In this sense, the ideas put forward in both the Jervaulx and Byland portions of the text complement one another; Byland's contemporary independence and Jervaulx's lack of it were both important motivations for Philip.

The next question one must ask is for whom were these histories preserving the past? The most obvious answer is the religious community itself, since its members requested the work. Present and future monks and canons were assured of their own past through recourse to these tracts. Manuscripts provide plenty of evidence to suggest the histories were highly prized by their houses. Within a decade of being written, a sumptuous and exceedingly rich copy of the *Libellus* had been produced at Durham, a sign the monks valued the work and wanted a suitably beautiful copy of it.<sup>312</sup> The text itself also provides a clue to the community's use of the *Libellus*. Between the prologue and the main body of work there is a list of the bishops and monks of Durham, with explicit instructions for future members to add their names and remember all those listed.<sup>313</sup> The history thus appears to have been an ongoing piece of collective recollection.<sup>314</sup>

Richard was also writing for his own community. It is unlikely his history was well known outside Hexham, although he may have envisaged a wider audience while he was writing. His tract was a presentation of the church's past, and an explanation of its present, however it is unclear whether he intended this solely to preserve memory at Hexham or as a means to promulgate it elsewhere. That such narratives of the past were sometimes meant for a wider audience is clear from the *Libellus*. Durham's historical influence was very strong in the early twelfth century, clearly extending to

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<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3, 9-10, and 25-32.

<sup>311</sup> Burton, 'Introduction', p. xxi-xxiv; Eadem, 'The Abbeys of Byland and Jervaulx', pp. 121 and 129.

<sup>312</sup> Piper, 'Historical Interests', p. 324.

<sup>313</sup> *LDE*, 'prologus', pp. 4-14.

<sup>314</sup> For comments on this see D. Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution to Historical Writing in Northern England' in *Idem, Historian of Durham*, pp. 1-13, at p. 7.



places like Hexham.<sup>315</sup> Some material was also sent to Worcester, another centre of historiographical production.<sup>316</sup> Moreover, the Cistercian house of Sawley had two manuscripts containing work from Durham in its library by the later twelfth century.<sup>317</sup>

Evidence from elsewhere in England suggests that composite histories like Symeon's, which wove together an overarching narrative of the past with stories of miracles and evidence of charters, were also intended to be used in interaction with lay people who were in contact with the monastery.<sup>318</sup> While not meant to be read by this wider audience, they were intended to provide tools for the monks, who through recourse to stories from the past could negotiate their rights and promote the monastery's interests.<sup>319</sup> It is possible that Symeon and Richard were doing the same, but it should be stressed that there is no evidence that their work was ever read by a non-monastic audience. This is also in keeping with wider patterns. For example, John Scott noted in relation to William of Malmesbury's *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* that such local histories rarely made it outside of their monastery, but the stories they contained were spread by word-of-mouth.<sup>320</sup> The audience for these oral retellings of the past will be considered later in the chapter.<sup>321</sup>

The structure and substance of textual historical narratives were moulded to fulfil their authors' aims. Symeon's *Libellus* had a narrative structure predicated on the rise, fall, and renewal, of the church. The glorious early years on Lindisfarne were presented as a time of saintly individuals and wonderful deeds.<sup>322</sup> However, the Viking attack of 793 was a disaster, and despite a brief recovery, the Danish invasion of 875 resulted in a lasting collapse. The bishop had to leave Lindisfarne, accompanied by the body of St. Cuthbert, the monks dispersed, and the church, like many others, was destroyed.<sup>323</sup> This ushered in a period of seven years during which members of the

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<sup>315</sup> See above, p. 59 and below, p. 66.

<sup>316</sup> Brett, 'John of Worcester', pp. 119-22.

<sup>317</sup> On which see Hunter-Blair, 'Observations on the "Historia Regum"', pp. 64-76.

<sup>318</sup> J. Paxton, 'Textual Communities in the English Fenlands: A Lay Audience for Monastic Chronicles?' *ANS* 26 (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 123-37.

<sup>319</sup> See esp. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>320</sup> Scott, *Early History of Glastonbury*, p. 31.

<sup>321</sup> See below, pp. 90-1.

<sup>322</sup> *LDE*, bk I, pp. 2-76, and bk II, ch. 1-4, pp. 78-86. On the power of origin myths see Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, p. 4, where this power is also linked to the desire to portray change as rebirth.

<sup>323</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 6, pp. 102-4.

community wandered the north carrying St. Cuthbert, before finally settling at Chester-le-Street. Yet even as he described this great fall, Symeon structured the work in such a way that a degree of continuity remained. This great disjuncture occurred in the middle of book II of the *Libellus*, so the narrative continued to flow until a degree of stability returned. The author successfully created an account of the rise and fall of the church, but left enough of a connection with the past to show the church and its community survived.

Richard produced a similar structure in his narrative, which suggests a degree of influence from Symeon's work. The invasion of 875 again produced the final collapse of the church. This is strange, for Richard admitted that the church ceased to be the seat of a bishop fifty-four years prior to this date.<sup>324</sup> This would suggest the church as an institution was already in decline. However, slow decline lacked the drama of heathen destruction, so Richard appears to have followed the dominant historiographical narrative emanating from Durham and emphasised the disruptive nature of the events of 875. The Hexham chronicler exaggerated the significance of that period by using it as the point that separated the first and second books of his history. The chaos of the invasion straddles this divide, with Halfdene's vicious plundering ending book I, while the flight of the community of Lindisfarne begins book II.<sup>325</sup> In between, an elaborate dating clause was used to link the flight from Lindisfarne with the year of the Lord's birth, the foundation of Lindisfarne, the death of Cuthbert, the end of the bishopric of Hexham, the end of the abbacy of Hexham, and the year of the bishop of Lindisfarne's episcopacy.<sup>326</sup> This was modelled directly on Symeon. Both authors used such clauses to draw together and provide links between the most significant elements in their communities' pasts.

Despite the dramatic fall presented by Richard, he still had to produce some sense of historical stability for Hexham. The bishopric could not give this, as Hexham was never again furnished with one. Indeed, Richard claimed that when the former bishop of Lindisfarne settled in Chester-le-Street, the bishopric of Hexham, not Lindisfarne, was refounded.<sup>327</sup> The implementation of an Augustinian community at Hexham in the twelfth century was also seen as a dramatic break from past

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<sup>324</sup> RH, *History*, bk I, ch. 19, pp. 41-2.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, bk I, ch. 19, p. 42 and bk II, ch. 1, pp. 43-5.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 1, p. 43.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 1, p. 45 and ch. 2, pp. 47-8.

traditions.<sup>328</sup> One factor that did provide continuity at Hexham was the church itself, that is, its building and location. The latter never changed, and it is thus not surprising that Richard described the place and the derivation of its name at the start of his history.<sup>329</sup> As for the church itself, Richard described its wonderful appearance in the time of Wilfrid, but subsequently said little more concerning it.<sup>330</sup> The implication throughout, however, was that while personnel disappeared or changed, the fabric of the church remained, connecting the present-day community with its noble past.

A further way in which Richard provided a link between the past and the present was through the saints of the church. In the fourth chapter of book II, he stated unequivocally ‘the church of Hexham was never deprived of the patronage of its bishops, that is of Saints Eata, Acca and Alchmund, and of other venerable patrons Frethbert and Tilbert, and being protected by divine piety, it was never, I say, destitute of its sacred relics.’<sup>331</sup> This needed to be made clear, since Symeon had claimed the relics of Acca and Alchmund had been transferred to Durham.<sup>332</sup> The community of Hexham was now promoting a new truth, one in which the relics had never been moved, the patronage never lost. Not only did this help counter Durham’s claims, it also allowed the saints to be seen as a lasting symbol of the community, stretching far back into the church’s past.

Symeon had a different set of problems when it came to finding continuity. Location was obviously not a factor that brought stability. Symeon and the monks of Durham evidently knew this made their claims to be the direct descendents of Lindisfarne problematic. The issue was therefore tackled at the start of the *Libellus*. Symeon said:

Although for various reasons this church stands in a different place from where Oswald located it, nevertheless by the stability of its faith, the dignity and authority of its episcopal seat, and the status of the dwelling-place of monks,

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<sup>328</sup> A. Lawrence-Mathers, ‘The Augustinian Canons in Northumbria: Region, Tradition, and Textuality in a Colonizing Order’, in J. Burton and K. Stöber, *The Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 59-78, at p. 61. For a full discussion of this take-over see below, pp. 70 and 76-8.

<sup>329</sup> RH, *History*, ‘prologus’, pp. 1-2 and bk I, ch. 1, pp. 8-9.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, bk I, ch. 3, pp. 10-4.

<sup>331</sup> ‘nunquam tamen patronorum suorum, ejusdem ecclesiae episcoporum, scilicet Sanctorum Eatae et Accae et Alchmundi, et caeterorum venerabilium praesulum, Fredberti et Tilberti, Divina pietate protegente, nunquam, inquam, eorum sacris reliquiis destituta est’, *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 4, pp. 48-9.

<sup>332</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 7, pp. 160-6.

which was established there by the king himself and Bishop Aiden, it remains the same church founded by God's command.<sup>333</sup>

Three pieces of evidence linked Lindisfarne and Durham: constant faith, the bishopric, and the monastic nature of the religious community. The last, although cleverly linked, did not always exist, and the first is a somewhat ephemeral reason, but the continuation of the bishopric seems a reasonable claim; except, of course, that Richard believed the bishop was descended from Hexham. This is qualified in Richard's history by the apparent suggestion that the two episcopates of Lindisfarne and Hexham were merged.<sup>334</sup> However, it does raise an issue that has rarely been interrogated. Symeon's narrative has been so readily accepted that the considerable amount of choice the Durham monks had when thinking about their past has often been missed.

This requires further explanation. The church of Durham, according to Symeon, was the same as that founded at Lindisfarne and then transferred to Chester-le-Street. This was the view of the Durham monks and is the accepted version now. But at the time of writing, Symeon could easily have construed things differently. He could have traced the monastic community back through Aldwin and his companions from the south, finding the community's past in southern Benedictine houses. Alternatively, he could have looked to Jarrow and Monkwearmouth, the houses Aldwin originally rebuilt, from where the monks of Durham had been drawn, and whose relics Durham then possessed. According to Richard, the bishopric of Hexham could also have played a part in Durham's story.

Symeon ignored these potential pasts, and instead chose to build a narrative around the links to Lindisfarne. This decision may seem obvious to the modern observer, as Lindisfarne appears to have the strongest link to Symeon's Durham. However, everything we know about those links, about that history, was copied, produced or promulgated by the monks of Durham in the late-eleventh and early-twelfth centuries. Lindisfarne seems the obvious past because Symeon and his companions decided it was their past. Why shape history to emphasise this one version over all other possibilities? If the clerks traced their roots back to Lindisfarne,

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<sup>333</sup> 'Licet enim causis existentibus alibi quam ab ipso sit locata, nichilominus tamen stabilitate fidei, dignitate quoque et auctoritate cathedre pontificalis, statu etiam monachice habitationis que ab ipso rege et Aidano pontifice ibidem instituta est, ipsa eadem ecclesia Deo auctore fundata permanet', *Ibid.*, bk I, ch. 1, p. 16.

<sup>334</sup> RH, *History*, bk. II, ch. 1, pp. 43-5 and ch. 2, p. 47.

then there was good reason for the monks to do likewise. By ignoring their own history and instead making themselves part of someone else's they further justified the Benedictine take-over in 1083. This fits Freeman's characterisation of contemporary historiographical output as evidence for new groups laying claim to conceptual ownership of insular pasts.<sup>335</sup>

Since they could not rely on stability of location, the monks took a different symbol of continuity, the body of St. Cuthbert. Using the saint as a symbol of continuity, a point around which the community's past could be arranged, occurred at other Benedictine houses, for example Ely.<sup>336</sup> At Durham, it appears this was adopted from the clerks, as Cubitt has suggested that the wandering community of post-875 found their 'continuing identity' in the body of St. Cuthbert.<sup>337</sup> This may be another reason for Symeon's choice of past; it allowed him to tie the monks of Durham to the uniting principle of the clerical past, the house's saint. The continuing importance of the saint was noted by Southern, who stated that Durham, more than anywhere else, concentrated its past on to a single individual, Cuthbert.<sup>338</sup> There has, however, been some disagreement. Sally Crumplin saw the *Libellus* as a book with surprisingly little focus on Cuthbert or his cult.<sup>339</sup>

There are two problems with this idea. Crumplin sets up a false distinction between the history of the saint and of the community. The two were closely entwined in the *Libellus* and it was quite possible for one to represent the other. Secondly, Crumplin seems to extrapolate a lack of focus on Cuthbert in book I to the rest of the tract.<sup>340</sup> While his role appeared muted early on, his importance increased remarkably as the narrative progressed. It was during the account of the years of wandering that he reached his greatest significance, for it was then that the community required the greatest protection, and where the argument for continuity was most at threat.<sup>341</sup> After it had been driven from Lindisfarne by the Danes, the collective was depicted as a nomadic one, stripped of all possessions and land. This disjuncture also harmed the

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<sup>335</sup> Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, p. 53.

<sup>336</sup> V. Blanton-Whetsell, 'Tota integra, tota incorrupta: The Shrine of St. Æthelthryth as Symbol of Monastic Autonomy' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32:2 (2002), pp. 227-267.

<sup>337</sup> Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', p. 34.

<sup>338</sup> Southern, 'Sense of the Past', pp. 251-2.

<sup>339</sup> Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', p. 80.

<sup>340</sup> See especially *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>341</sup> See in particular *LDE*, bk II, ch. 10, p. 110.

community's sense of itself, as all former social and historic connections seemed to have been severed. Symeon claimed the wanderers rediscovered all that had been lost in the body of their saint.<sup>342</sup> Cuthbert came to symbolise the community, and all that it had been or was destined to be.<sup>343</sup> In this construction of history, the saint became the link between past, present and future, thereby providing Symeon with the symbol of continuity that his narrative needed.

As we have seen, Symeon focused on the return of monasticism when discussing renewal.<sup>344</sup> For Richard, the Augustinians were responsible for Hexham's revival.<sup>345</sup> The scene was set by two chapters which lamented the miserable condition of Hexham, controlled by the oppressive absentee Richard de Maton and a married priest, Eilaf.<sup>346</sup> Once again an elaborate dating clause linked the revival to various significant events in history, while the title of the chapter looked back to the depredations of the heathens in 875.<sup>347</sup> Thomas II, archbishop of York, was said by Richard to have 'liberated the aforementioned church of Hexham from the hands of the aforesaid Richard de Maton'.<sup>348</sup> The author not only said the Augustinians were granted care of the church, but also its land and its *consuetudines*, possibly referring to the church's customs and traditions.<sup>349</sup> Everything was given over to the canons, including the community's past, and for Richard, this represented the freeing of the church. Taking over the communal past in this manner was similar to Symeon's writing at Durham.

The Durham and Hexham writers included significant local and regional events in their institutional histories. Symeon went further still, explicitly connecting the history of Northumbria and its Christianity with the community of St. Cuthbert. The start of his narrative concerned the rise of the kingdom of Northumbria under King

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<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 10, p. 110.

<sup>343</sup> See below, p. 100.

<sup>344</sup> For more on Symeon's narrative of revival see Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', p. 118, and Piper, 'Historical Interests', p. 302. On Benedictine narratives of renewal more generally see Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 46-50.

<sup>345</sup> For this episode see J. Burton, 'The Regular Canons and Diocesan Reform in Northern England' in Burton and Stöber, *Regular Canons*, pp. 41-57, at pp. 46-8.

<sup>346</sup> RH, *History*, bk II, ch. 5, pp. 49-51, and ch. 7, pp. 53-4.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 8, p. 54.

<sup>348</sup> 'de manu praedicti Richardi de Maton praefatam ecclesiam Haugustaldensem liberavit', *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 8, p. 54.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 8, p. 54.

Oswald, and its Christianisation through Aidan and his fellow monks.<sup>350</sup> This occurred simultaneously to Lindisfarne's foundation, thus linking the origins of the community, Northumbria and Christianity in the north.<sup>351</sup> Meanwhile, when Lindisfarne fell, the kingdom fell: 'Now when the bishop, together with the venerable relics, had fled from the aforesaid island and deserted the church, there soon followed a dreadful ravaging of that place and of the whole province of the Northumbrians'.<sup>352</sup> Christianity also suffered, as churches were put to flame and churchmen killed. In this crisis, Symeon saw St. Cuthbert as the symbol that allowed not only the clerics of Lindisfarne to connect to what they had lost, but for all the people of Northumbria to do likewise.<sup>353</sup> This created a sense of a single, continuous, social collective. From this point on in his narrative, the Christian natives of Northumbria were referred to as 'the people of the saint'.<sup>354</sup>

For Richard too, the narrative of his church mirrored the story of the town of Hexham and the surrounding region. Remensnyder has argued that religious foundation legends are particularly adept at providing an inclusive version of history, because they are frequently based on imaginary space – that is, the church, its lands and its surroundings – and as such can be adopted, or pushed upon, anyone, religious or lay, living in that imaginary space.<sup>355</sup> This was certainly true of Richard's history of Hexham, which wove an account of the past for the people of the town and, to a certain extent, Northumbria.

The foundation of the church was linked to the conversion of Northumbria.<sup>356</sup> Important figures in the early spread of Christianity were all explicitly connected with the church of Hexham.<sup>357</sup> Meanwhile, the invasion of 875 was once again seen as causing the collapse of the kingdom, and the devastation of local people and their

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<sup>350</sup> *LDE*, bk I, ch. 2, pp. 20-24.

<sup>351</sup> See Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, p. 98, for a similar process in the south of France.

<sup>352</sup> 'Cum ergo episcopus una cum uenerandis reliquiis fugiens insulam pefatam et ecclesiam deseruisset, mox et ipsius loci et totius Northanhymbrorum prouincie seua depopulatio est secuta', *LDE*, bk II, ch. 6, p. 104.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 10, p. 110. For further discussion of this see below, p. 100.

<sup>354</sup> See, for example, *LDE*, bk II, ch. 16, p. 132; bk II, ch. 19, p. 140; bk III, ch. 1, p. 144; bk III, ch. 5, p. 156; bk III, ch. 15, p. 186; bk III, ch. 20, p. 196. For more on this role for the saint in *LDE* see below, p. 100.

<sup>355</sup> Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>356</sup> *RH*, *History*, bk I, ch 2, pp. 9-10.

<sup>357</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, bk I, ch. 1, p. 9, ch. 2, pp. 9-10, ch. 6, pp. 21-2, ch. 7, pp. 23-4, ch. 10, pp. 27-8, and ch. 11, pp. 28-9.

religion.<sup>358</sup> In contrast, the recovery stage of the narrative was quite limited geographically for Richard. The return of proper religious observance at the church of Hexham was certainly seen as positive for the neighbouring town and its people, but there was no grand statement linking this to a wider revival of Northumbrian religion or culture.<sup>359</sup> Even so, the connection of events in Hexham's history with those of the local people and the surrounding region was still clearly made throughout the tract.

Both Richard and Symeon produced narratives of rise, fall and renewal, which encompassed the people, region and religion of the surrounding area, as well as their own churches. This framework for Northumbrian history has proved remarkably enduring. Until recently the idea of a Northumbrian 'Golden Age', coterminous with Christianisation, the monastery at Lindisfarne, and individuals such as Cuthbert and Bede, was common. The Viking attacks were still believed to have brought this age to an end, and ushered in an era of deprivation and disaster. Even the monasticism of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries was presented positively and as a revival.<sup>360</sup> Symeon's and Durham's construction of the past survived as the accepted version of history not just of their church, but of the whole kingdom.

This attempt by Symeon and Richard to produce a narrative for people and places outside their churches had significance beyond its endurance. Such creations were important because they provided a broad sense of unity and belonging together through time. For Symeon, the 'people of the saint' were together as one during a period of great struggle and continued to experience unity after the renewal. The Benedictines of Durham were able to use the past to integrate themselves into an existing local community, for through their care of St. Cuthbert's body and cult they too were linked to the saint's people. Moreover, by adopting the history of the clerical community that had preceded them, and finding links to the monastery of Lindisfarne,

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<sup>358</sup> For the attack see *Ibid.*, bk I, ch. 19, pp. 41-2 and bk II, ch. 1, pp. 43-5. For the consequences, see bk II, ch. 5, pp. 49-51 and ch. 8, pp. 54-5.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 7, pp. 53-4.

<sup>360</sup> See, for example, N. Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria, AD 350-1100* (Stroud, 1993), esp. p. 155 for the use of the phrase 'golden age', p. 176 for explicit mention of decline, and pp. 233-51 for the final destruction of the kingdom, which the author tempers somewhat by considering economic and religious revival under the Normans at pp. 247-51. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (eds), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud, 1999), is a collection of essays with no general attempt to interrogate the idea of a 'golden age'. For a further way in which Durham's post-1083 historiographical output continues to shape modern views of Northumbria's past see D. Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 290.



they were able to strengthen this integration. It also ensured that the monks were seen as the appropriate guardians and carers of St. Cuthbert, a role that not only drew them into the wider community, but also gave them a privileged and elevated position within it.

Richard probably sought to follow Symeon's model for similar reasons. At Hexham as well, a new group of religious men had taken over the church, and Richard's language of liberation made it clear that this was seen as a significant break with the past. Yet by justifying the move through recourse to the past, and presenting history as something that the religious and the wider population of Hexham shared, Richard was able to smooth over the disruption and encourage a sense of a continuous community. As we shall see, these narratives were far from unique in their presentation of a unifying past. It was not just the religious who imagined a collective past centred on Christian institutions and local saints. They often drew on stories and traditions of local people that already contained these ideas.

## **THE POOL OF LOCAL MEMORY**

It was suggested earlier that Richard and Symeon were constructing narratives of the past from material they found in the pool of local memory. The exact nature of what is meant by this must now be established. Many written texts, oral traditions and stories circulated northern England at this time. Together they formed a perception of the past, sometimes contradictory, often confused, but always providing the people who knew of it with a sense of who they were and how they were connected to one another. In essence, the memories and stories that were told helped create the process of identification that allowed people inside and outside the church to develop a sense of belonging together.

Symeon and Richard both explicitly stated that they were bringing together information found elsewhere.<sup>361</sup> Bede's *Ecclesiastical History and Life of St. Cuthbert* were common sources to both. The influence of Bede during the twelfth century was

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<sup>361</sup> LDE, 'prologus', pp. 2-4; RH, *History*, 'prologus', p. 3.

phenomenal.<sup>362</sup> This is not only attested to by frequent verbatim copying of his works, but also by the credit given to his writing for inspiring the monastic changes at the end of the eleventh century. Aldwin and his followers were said to have been spurred into heading north by what they read in the *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>363</sup> Meanwhile, it was the work of Bede that finally convinced Bishop William that Durham should become a Benedictine monastery.<sup>364</sup>

When Richard directed his readers to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, he also mentioned two further sources with which he was working. Eddius' *Life of Wilfrid* was one he relied on heavily, while a *Life* of St. John of Beverley was the other, although it is not clear which one.<sup>365</sup> It has already been stated that Richard was further influenced by Symeon's work, and was familiar with both the *Libellus* and the *Historia Regum*. Finally, the Hexham chronicler claimed to have used the *Gesta Veterum Northanhumrorum*, a text that is now lost, but is probably synonymous with the Northumbrian annals of which Symeon also had a copy.<sup>366</sup> Richard therefore had access to a number of texts from which to piece together his narrative.<sup>367</sup> These texts seem to have been largely well-known and used by churchmen across the north of England during this period.

Bede and the Northumbrian annals were certainly well-known at Durham, and Symeon worked material from both into the *Libellus*. Indeed, it is possible that the Durham monks had access to two versions of the annals, since Symeon also used a set when compiling the *Historia Regum*, and these showed differences from the account given in the *Libellus*.<sup>368</sup> A number of other written works, including letters and profession slips, were also used by Symeon.<sup>369</sup> On top of this, three further narrative works provided him with information. The first, sometimes called *Chronica monasterii*

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<sup>362</sup> On Bede and the *LDE* see Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', pp. 98-103. On his influence more generally see A. Frantzen, 'The Englishness of Bede, From Then to Now' in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 229-42, at pp. 231-3.

<sup>363</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 21, p. 200.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, bk IV, ch. 2, p. 226.

<sup>365</sup> *RH, History*, bk I, ch. 13, p. 30.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 13, pp. 60-1.

<sup>367</sup> Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 255; Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, vol. I, p. cxlvi.

<sup>368</sup> For the sources of the *Historia Regum* see Hunter-Blair, 'Observations', pp. 76-113.

<sup>369</sup> For the sources of the *Libellus* see Rollason, *LDE*, pp. lxxviii-lxxvi.

*Dunelmensis*, is now lost, but was written up to c. 1072-83. It was probably similar in style to the second, which was the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*.<sup>370</sup>

Although Symeon borrowed information from the latter, he rearranged elements of the narrative, and gave emphasis to different parts.<sup>371</sup> The wandering of the community received only brief attention in the *Historia*, the main focus of which was the relationship between St. Cuthbert, the Danish King Guthred, and the royal house of Wessex.<sup>372</sup> In the *Libellus*, the story of Cuthbert helping King Alfred received only half a chapter.<sup>373</sup> Admittedly, Symeon later returned to these wider connections, but there can be no doubt that greater focus was being placed on the years of wandering by the early twelfth century.<sup>374</sup>

This was reflected in the nature of *De Miraculis*, which also emphasised the itinerant period. Crumplin regarded it as a companion text to the *Libellus*, with one providing the history of the church, and the other the history of the saint.<sup>375</sup> This is plausible, although the piecemeal construction of *De Miraculis* makes it very difficult to state anything with certainty. What is clear is that the *Libellus* used information from the earlier sections of *De Miraculis*, sometimes copying the text verbatim, while the latter half of *De Miraculis* derived material from the *Libellus*. Both became part of Durham's common stock of textual information on its past.

Part of the reason for transforming a collection of writings on the past into a single narrative was so that a 'true' account of history could be put forward. However, it was quite possible for different versions of a community's past to emerge from the same pool of memory. We have already seen how two neighbouring groups could give alternative accounts of events. While the *Libellus* claimed the relics of Acca and

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<sup>370</sup> *HSC*. See L. Simpson, 'The King Alfred/St. Cuthbert Episode in the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*: Its Significance for mid-tenth-century English History' in G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (eds), *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 397-411.

<sup>371</sup> For the different emphasis that various texts from Durham laid on past episodes see Crumplin, 'Rewriting History'.

<sup>372</sup> Only one chapter deals with the wandering of the community, *HSC*, ch. 20, pp. 207-8. For Guthred see ch. 13, p. 203. For King Alfred see ch. 14-9, pp. 204-7.

<sup>373</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 10, pp. 110-2.

<sup>374</sup> For the later chapters partially derived from *HSC*, see *LDE*, bk II, ch. 13-20, pp. 120-42. For further discussion of this see below, pp. 84-92.

<sup>375</sup> Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', p. 80.

Alchmund had been moved from Hexham to Durham, Richard's *History* insisted no such translation had occurred.<sup>376</sup>

It was equally possible for the same community to produce divergent narratives of its past. One of the most unusual things about Abbot Philip's history of Byland is that at times he recorded two different versions of the past side-by-side, without privileging one over the other.<sup>377</sup> This feature of the tract is also a strong reason to believe that Philip was working from genuine oral tradition.<sup>378</sup> Since his sources were still living, and there was no apparent benefit to choosing one over the other, Philip may have seen it as preferable to simply include both. His decision to do so has left a demonstration of the way various memories could co-exist within a single community. As Burton notes, Philip's picture of the past is not neat, but rather one that is surrounded by uncertainty.<sup>379</sup>

Most texts, though, sought a smoother, uniform, and internally coherent version of history. As a result, only communities that produced several written historical narratives normally allow access to divergent accounts of the past. In Aelred's tract on Hexham's saints, the author included several chapters that detailed Hexham's history, and one in particular contradicted the narrative of events produced by Richard. Aelred's version of the recent past began with the devastation wrought by the Danes, who destroyed the church and left it without a priest.<sup>380</sup> Aelred particularly lamented the loss of the church's ancient library, saying 'it is agreed that in the devastation, the memorials, through which the holy fathers had transmitted in writing the lives and miracles of the saints for the notice of posterity, were destroyed.'<sup>381</sup> The loss of records meant disconnection from the past, something that seriously threatened any community's sense of itself. From this low point Aelred moved on to consider Hexham's renewal. He was therefore following the narrative structure used by Symeon and Richard. However, unlike the latter, Aelred made his own ancestors the main protagonists in this process.

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<sup>376</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 7, pp. 160-6; *RH, History*, bk II, ch. 4, pp. 48-9.

<sup>377</sup> See *Foundation History*, pp. 2-6, esp. p. 5.

<sup>378</sup> Burton, 'Introduction', pp. xii-xv.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv. For a suggestion that this characteristic of the text makes its tale more convincing from the point of view of modern historians see Burton, 'The Abbeyes of Byland and Jervaulx', p. 121.

<sup>380</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, p. 190.

<sup>381</sup> 'In qua denique devastatione monumenta, quae de vita et miraculis Sanctorum sancti patres ad posteritatis notitiam stilo transmiserant, constat esse consumpta', *Ibid.*, ch. 11, p. 190.

As stated in the Introduction, Aelred was descended from the family that had held the office of priest at Hexham prior to the Augustinians' arrival.<sup>382</sup> His great-grandfather was Alfred, who Symeon claimed had brought the relics of Acca and Alchmund to Durham. Aelred disagreed, concurring with Richard that Alfred did not remove any relics from Hexham. According to Aelred, his great-grandfather had understood the holiness of the place, and foresaw the people needing their saints.<sup>383</sup> By retaining its saints, Hexham was saved from complete disaster at its lowest point, and the revival of the church could begin.

Alfred's son, Eilaf, had been a clerk at Durham, but was removed in 1083 to make way for the Benedictines. He became priest at Hexham and began repairing the church, a task that was taken over on his death by his son, another Eilaf. This man was Aelred's father, and the monk reported his good work with enthusiasm. He rebuilt the church, erected an altar, and decided to move the church's relics into more appropriate places.<sup>384</sup> In the final act of renewal, Eilaf voluntarily handed control of the church to the Augustinians, as he thought himself unworthy to look after the saints.<sup>385</sup> This is quite different to Richard's portrayal of an unworthy priest from whom the church required liberating, and who continued to have possession of church lands even after he left office. It gave a version of events that shifted the time of renewal back, and in doing so gave Aelred's ancestors a more positive role in the communal story.

Aelred demonstrates a desire to portray his family in the best possible light in this story. Janet Burton certainly found his version of events to be questionable, and concluded that the initiative for handing the church over to the canons probably came from Thomas II and Thurstan, successive archbishops of York.<sup>386</sup> It is possible Aelred was reacting to the history that Richard had written, perhaps hoping to change opinions before they became widely accepted. Yet the different memory pool from which Aelred drew his account also created disparity. Unlike Richard, he had personal reminiscences from people outside the Augustinians to work with, including some of his own. Aelred's tract is full of stories that appear to be local tales, some passed down

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<sup>382</sup> See above, pp. 27-30.

<sup>383</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, p. 190.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 11, p. 191.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 11, pp. 192-3.

<sup>386</sup> Burton, 'Regular Canons and Diocesan Reform', p. 48.

through several generations of the same neighbourhood families.<sup>387</sup> By using this evidence, he was able to construct a very different version of the past from Richard. Yet it was no less 'true' for those who believed it, and it still served to create a sense of unity through common heritage. The work of Elizabeth Freeman has shown that Aelred was profoundly aware of the power a shared history had in building contemporary communal cohesion.<sup>388</sup> In Aelred's perception of Hexham's past, the canons, his family, local people, and the saints, worked together. This show of unity was important, as it demonstrated that the people of Hexham were together as one. Through this story of Hexham's history, Aelred was able to think of himself as a member of the community, and consider his ancestors and the canons as one communal group. Versions of the past could therefore exist separately from the institutional narratives of the religious and still remain a potent means of identification with the community.

Texts made up a very small percentage of the overall pool of local memory. Rachel Koopmans has shown in relation to miracle stories that surviving texts are nothing more than a snapshot of a much larger oral culture.<sup>389</sup> As will be shown it what follows, the same was true for tales of the past. In the case of *De Sanctis*, Aelred clearly relied a great deal on what he had heard from his own family. However, oral stories from other local people were also vital for his view of the past. This was true of all contemporary writers, and it is through their renditions of those tales that we can get a good idea of the sorts of memories that helped build connections between people outside the author's monastery.<sup>390</sup> Knowing the kinds of stories which local people told about the past is important for understanding their social relationships. Through these stories, memories, and traditions, people identified with the local church, or saint, or holy person, and thus felt a sense of unity and commonality.

A variety of local stories relating to the saints of Hexham were included in *De Sanctis*. Aelred was prepared to use written sources, especially for details of the lives of saints Wilfrid and Acca, but many of the miracles he recorded had happened within

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<sup>387</sup> Dutton, 'Mirror', pp. 15-16. See above, pp. 27-30.

<sup>388</sup> See in particular Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, pp. 31-53, esp. p. 33. On Aelred's interest in history more generally see Dutton, 'Introduction', pp. 24-5 and 31-5.

<sup>389</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 5 and 9-12.

<sup>390</sup> On relationships beyond the cloister see Jamroziak, 'How Rievaulx Abbey Remembered', pp. 63-76, esp. p. 63, and Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 215-88. On monasteries as sites of memory for lay people as well as religious, see Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, pp. 48-114.

the last two or three generations, and were preserved in local memory.<sup>391</sup> The first miracle reported in the tract involved a young man saved from execution by the intervention of St. Wilfrid.<sup>392</sup> While on the scaffold, the youth had called out ‘help now, Wilfrid, because if you refuse to now, soon you will not be able to.’<sup>393</sup> At first glance this appears to be an authorial addition to the tale. However, Aelred concluded the story by saying ‘this miracle came to the notice of so many that the youth’s words, proven effective in such great necessity, became a common proverb among all the people.’<sup>394</sup> It is possible, then, that Aelred presented a genuine local saying, one which was the product of the townspeople’s memory of a miraculous event. Marsha Dutton believes the inclusion of the saying demonstrates the significant place the story had in local memory.<sup>395</sup> Aelred designed the tract to be read aloud on the feast day of the saints, a time when many local people were present. In this situation he had to report past events in a way perceived as truthful by his audience. The invention of a neighbourhood adage was not really an option, lest it undermine the plausibility of Aelred’s whole rendition of the tale. On the other hand, adding in a genuine local saying offered the opportunity of greatly strengthening the believability of the story, as it allowed the audience to connect the events to their everyday lives. The originality of closing a miracle story with a saying lends further credibility to the notion that this story represented a genuine local tradition, since it does not fit comfortably with common hagiographical tropes. In quoting the adage directly, Aelred was also providing a degree of specificity and individuality that is indicative of well-rehearsed oral tradition.<sup>396</sup>

It was not just local sayings that found a place in Aelred’s tract. Memorable people were also recalled. One such person was a relatively wealthy land-owner who gave up his possessions to become a labourer for the church. Aelred said ‘he was living

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<sup>391</sup> For the Wilfrid and Acca details see *De Sanctis*, ‘prologus’, pp. 175-6 and ch. 6, pp. 184-5. For accounts that Aelred may have based these descriptions on, see Eddius Stephanus, ‘Vita Sancti Wilfridi Episcopi Eboracencis’ ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid* (Cambridge, 1927), especially ch. 22; *H.Reg.* s.a. 788, p. 52; and *HE*, bk V, ch. 20, pp. 530-2.

<sup>392</sup> For further discussion of this story, and what it says about the saint, community and justice, see below, pp. 127-8.

<sup>393</sup> “‘adjuva,” inquit, “nunc, Wilfride, quia si modo nolueris, paullo post non poteris’, *De Sanctis*, ch. 1, p. 177.

<sup>394</sup> ‘Hoc sane miraculum ad tantorum pervenit notitiam, ut verbum adolescentis in tanta necessitudine probatum, versum sit in commune totius plebis proverbium’, *De Sanctis*, ch. 1, p. 177.

<sup>395</sup> Dutton, ‘Mirror’, p. 16.

<sup>396</sup> See above, pp. 40-7.

soberly, justly, and piously, beyond the congregation of the brothers, untorsured and bearded. So it happened he was called Bearded Hugh by everyone.<sup>397</sup> By using the individual's moniker, Aelred betrayed the local providence of the story. Those who lived around Hugh were more likely to remember him through reference to his appearance and nickname than those who did not. It is clear from the story that he was highly regarded by the community, and proved to be invaluable to the church. Indeed, despite being untorsured, he was considered a vital part of religious life in the town.<sup>398</sup>

Elsewhere in *De Sanctis* there are further examples of the names of major protagonists being recalled, all of them said to have been living in or around the town at the time of the events described.<sup>399</sup> Even when individuals are not mentioned, the townspeople as a whole could provide the witnesses to a miracle. This was a common trope of hagiographical writing, but in one case it seems plausible to believe that many people had seen what happened. A member of an invading Scottish army attacked the church of St. Mary in Hexham, and was driven mad for his impertinence.<sup>400</sup> Aelred reported that he created quite a spectacle for the townspeople, who eventually had no choice but to drag him beyond the boundaries of Hexham.<sup>401</sup> Whatever the truth of the original events, by the time Aelred came to write, it is likely he was recording the story as it was remembered by those who had witnessed it.

A similar tale, relating to a Scottish assault on a local church, was reported by Richard in both his *History of the Church* and his chronicle of the reign of King Stephen.<sup>402</sup> Three substantial differences occur between this version and the one told by Aelred. In Richard's account, it was a church on the other side of the Tyne, dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, which was attacked. Secondly, this act was carried out by two Scottish soldiers rather than one. Finally, at the end of the story, the

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<sup>397</sup> 'extra congregationem fratrum sobrie, juste et pie intorsus et barbatus degebat. Unde actum est, ut ab omnibus vocaretur Hugo cum Barba', *De Sanctis*, ch. 4, p. 182.

<sup>398</sup> Another miracle story involving Bearded Hugh was given later in the tract. See *Ibid.*, ch. 12, pp. 198-9. For the recollection of the nicknames of other individuals who were the subject of local stories, see *De Admirandis*, ch. 15, pp. 24-7 and ch. 54, pp. 111-2.

<sup>399</sup> For example, *De Sanctis*, ch. 3, pp. 181-2 and ch. 7, p. 186.

<sup>400</sup> Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, pp. 14-5, n. x, suggests that the church of St. Mary, which stood near the Augustinian church of St. Andrew, was the one used by the townspeople as their parish church. This may have increased the importance of stories told about it.

<sup>401</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 5, pp. 183-4.

<sup>402</sup> RH, *History*, bk I, ch. 4, p. 17; RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, p. 80.



two soldiers, having been driven mad, killed themselves. Richard gives a fairly graphic portrayal of this event, which suggests that either he, or the person from whom he had heard the story, had embellished the finale. Alterations and additions such as this must have been common in oral tales of local history.

Clearly stories of particularly memorable events, such as invasions, were especially important for local people. Given the similarities between Aelred and Richard's tales, it is possible that they represented different versions of the same original story. The exact location changed, and some details were exaggerated or altered, but the basic outline remained the same. This would further argue for the significance of the events to the local community, since a desire to keep re-telling and re-working a story strongly implies recognition of its importance. The meanings and lessons drawn from such tales added further value. For example, in this case, the protection afforded to the community by heaven was evident in the stories.<sup>403</sup>

Miracles did not necessarily have to be witnessed by the whole town for the tale to become common currency among the people. One miracle was witnessed by two people from Hexham while they were on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, who told everyone they met about what had happened when they returned.<sup>404</sup> In this case, the memories of two people became enshrined in local folklore, which Aelred in turn tapped into when writing his tract. This story fits the pattern of conversational saints' cults discussed by Koopmans, with individuals telling their tales to associates, some of which get remembered in wider tradition or written down.<sup>405</sup>

All these stories show that a vibrant oral culture existed in twelfth-century Hexham.<sup>406</sup> Local people, regardless of their ability to read or write, exchanged memories of people, places and events. These memories helped integrate those people who participated in the telling and hearing of such stories into the community in much the same way that Aelred's narrative of his ancestors helped integrate him. Unfortunately, one must accept that very few of the stories told are now extant.<sup>407</sup> Only those considered particularly important to the history of the church or its saints

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<sup>403</sup> For further discussion of this theme, see below, pp. 152-5.

<sup>404</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 10, pp. 188-9. See above, p. 44, and below, p. 109.

<sup>405</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 12-18 and 25-7.

<sup>406</sup> This concurs with Dutton, 'Mirror', pp. 15-16.

<sup>407</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 14-15 and 45.

were written down, so a great number that dealt with other concerns may have been lost.

Nevertheless, enough evidence has survived for conclusions to be drawn about the way in which communal identification operated. Through stories of past events, told and retold by the local inhabitants, a sense of a united group of people, under the protection of their saints, was created. Whether it was by explaining a local adage or telling tales of past invasions, individuals within Hexham participated in a collective narrativity that bound them together. These stories carried meaning that was pivotal to identifying with one another as a community. Aelred's family stories, for example, tied him to the church, town and people of Hexham by associating his ancestors with their renewal. Those who used the saying attributed to the youth facing execution were linking themselves to a local tradition and thus creating a sense of belonging with others who did the same. When people told stories of invasions, how they had gathered together in the church, or watched aggressors be punished, they were identifying themselves as a select group of people, all living within the town or local area. Through being built into shared narratives, memories of the past shaped social connections and built a sense of community.<sup>408</sup>

The stories recorded by Aelred show that social memory was not just harnessed by authors writing what we term historiography. Local traditions, memories and perceptions of the past were also worked into miracle tracts and saints' lives. After all, a saint, like any individual, needed a past, to give the saint and his or her miracles meaning. Thus Aelred prefaced a group of miracles attributed to Acca with an account of his life.<sup>409</sup> The same requirement was probably what drove the community of Beverley, in the late-eleventh and twelfth centuries, to produce a series of texts detailing the life and posthumous miracles of their saint, John.<sup>410</sup> The authors had little beyond Bede's writings to base their work on, so once again local memories played a major part in the construction of the work. This is demonstrated by the way in which they offer more than the 'vacuous padding-out' of Bede highlighted by Blair as a trait of texts that did not incorporate oral material.<sup>411</sup> Koopmans also considers the

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<sup>408</sup> On the power of narrative to do this see above, pp. 18-21.

<sup>409</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 6, pp. 184-5.

<sup>410</sup> See the translations and related analysis in Wilson, *St. John of Beverley*.

<sup>411</sup> Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', p. 478. See above, p. 42.

Beverley material to be ‘rich with oral references’.<sup>412</sup> These tales were part of a local culture which existed independently of written accounts, but which played a highly significant role in the community’s sense of itself.<sup>413</sup>

This was as true for Durham as it was for Hexham or Beverley. Once again, the remains of this oral culture were preserved in certain written texts. Symeon stated at the start of the *Libellus* that he intended to fill gaps left by his written sources with the ‘truthful accounts of our elders’.<sup>414</sup> Some of these accounts were of events witnessed by those elders themselves, and others had been passed down through families. Exactly who the ‘elders’ in question were can only be ascertained in certain cases. Occasionally, Symeon names his source, or at least states that the person was a monk or priest.<sup>415</sup> Many of those described as priests seem to have been connected to the former clerical community of Durham in some way; indeed, sometimes the testimony of descendents of the clerks themselves was relied upon.<sup>416</sup> At other times the tale was simply told by ‘many who had seen it’.<sup>417</sup>

A variety of long-held customs and ideas were supported by oral testimony. The fact that the bishops of Lindisfarne had always been monks was corroborated by ‘the tradition of our elders’.<sup>418</sup> Meanwhile, a venerable old man named Swartebrand, who died just before Symeon wrote the *Libellus*, confirmed that the right arm of St. Oswald was incorrupt due to a blessing by Aiden.<sup>419</sup> Sometimes a particular object provided a point of reference for local memory. A cross in the churchyard of Durham, visible to anyone passing, was one such object. It was believed that it had originally been erected at Lindisfarne in memory of St. Cuthbert, but had been damaged in the Viking raid of 793. This explained a crack in the head of the cross.<sup>420</sup> Later, it was moved by the community, and was sometimes carried around on the feast day of St.

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<sup>412</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 11.

<sup>413</sup> More will be said about these stories in the following chapter; see especially pp. 102, 130, 138-40, 160-5, 167-9 and 171.

<sup>414</sup> ‘seniorum autem vercium relatione’, *LDE*, bk I, ch. 1, p. 20. See the discussion by Rollason, *LDE*, p. lxxvi.

<sup>415</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 6, p. 160; ch. 7, p. 162; ch. 10, p. 174; ch. 16, p. 188.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 6, p. 104.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, bk III, ch. 12, p. 176.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, bk I, ch. 2, p. 20.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, bk I, ch. 2, pp. 22-4.

<sup>420</sup> On stories associated with certain objects being a strong indicator of a shared oral culture centred on those objects, see above, pp. 40-7.

Cuthbert.<sup>421</sup> This object focused the memories of those who saw it and knew its stories. In doing so, it allowed them to connect with the distant past. Lindisfarne, St. Cuthbert and even the terror of the Viking raid, were recalled by the clerks, townspeople and monks who knew the stories of the object, and linked to contemporary Durham through appreciation of the cross.

Much of what Symeon said about the early years of his community's past was derived from Bede and other textual sources. But the narrative of the period of wandering, which Symeon saw as a formative stage in the community's history, lacked detailed written records.<sup>422</sup> Instead, a wealth of oral traditions had grown up around these years. It was clear that it was not only Symeon who believed the 'people of the saint' were forged in the crisis of the ninth century. He was building on long-standing beliefs of certain local people, who traced their connection to St. Cuthbert, and their sense of unity with one another, back to the itinerant years after 875.<sup>423</sup>

In order to demonstrate this point, it is first necessary to consider how the stories of the wandering were presented in different texts. Symeon was not the first writer to mention the movement of the saint's people. A shorter version of events appeared in the *Historia Sancto Cuthberto*, but the concept was already fairly well developed in that text.<sup>424</sup> The text claimed that Bishop Eardulf and Abbot Eadred left Lindisfarne with the body of St. Cuthbert and wandered from place to place for seven years. At Derwentmouth they tried to cross to Ireland with the body, but all the saint's people, who had followed them this far, were so distraught at this abandonment that a miraculous storm prevented the departure. Instead, the wanderers moved to Crayke, and after four months relocated again to Chester-le-Street.

Symeon retained many of these elements in his version of the wandering, although all the stories were embellished. As in the *Historia*, the itinerant period was believed to have lasted seven years and ended at Crayke.<sup>425</sup> The *Libellus* also mentions the saint's people accompanying the body; indeed, it says all the indigenous Christians

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<sup>421</sup> *LDE*, bk I, ch. 12, p. 60.

<sup>422</sup> On wider Benedictine use of oral traditions when textual information was not available see C. Cubitt, 'Folklore and Historiography: Oral Stories and the Writing of Anglo-Saxon History', in Tyler and Balzaretto *Narrative and History*, pp. 189-224, at pp. 200-4.

<sup>423</sup> For a discussion of who these people were, see below, pp. 90-1.

<sup>424</sup> *HSC*, ch. 20, pp. 207-8.

<sup>425</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 13, pp. 120-2.

of Northumbria followed Cuthbert.<sup>426</sup> The episode involving the attempt to get to Ireland is given in an extended version, although the major details remain unchanged.<sup>427</sup> However, some new details do appear in Symeon's account. For example, a date of 875 is given for the departure from Lindisfarne, something not noted in the *Historia*.<sup>428</sup>

A much more noticeable change from the *Historia* account to the *Libellus* is the inclusion of stories about those who accompanied the body of the saint during this period. Seven men were assigned the duty (or rather, the privilege) of carrying the coffin in which Cuthbert resided. These men 'were accustomed to be called by nicknames given to them as a result of the offices to which they had been assigned.'<sup>429</sup> This recollection of nicknames is reminiscent of some of Aelred's stories, although Symeon himself did not give details of what those names were.

There was, however, more to the legend of the seven coffin-bearers than a set of monikers. As the rest of the 'people of the saint' began to disperse, the seven bearers remained. According to Symeon, 'four of these, who are remembered as being more important than the other three, had these names: Hunred, Stitheard, Edmund, and Franco.'<sup>430</sup> The author then told a story in which Hunred had a vision of St. Cuthbert, found a lost gospel book, and was provided with a miraculous bridle and horse.<sup>431</sup>

Much later in the *Libellus* Symeon traced the history of two families descended from the coffin-bearers. The story of the first family starts with the settling of St. Cuthbert and his servants at Durham. 'Amongst those who then came to Durham with the body of the holy confessor was a certain man called Riggulf, who lived for 210 years, the last 40 of which he led in the condition of a monk.'<sup>432</sup> Riggulf was important, because he was the grandson of Franco, one of the coffin-bearers. The family line did not end there: 'Franco was the father of Reinguald, after whom the vill of Rainton was

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<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 10, p. 110.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 11, pp. 112-14.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 6, p. 102.

<sup>429</sup> 'ex officiis quibus deputati fuerant, positis sibi agnominibus uocari solebant', *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 10, p. 110.

<sup>430</sup> 'Quorum quattuor qui tribus aliis maiores esse memorantur, hec fuerunt nomina: Hunred, Stitheard, Edmund, Franco', *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 12, p. 116.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 12, pp. 116-20.

<sup>432</sup> 'Ex his autem qui tunc cum sancti confessoris corpore in hunc locum conuenerant, erat quidam uocabulo Riggulfus, qui omne tempus uite sue ducentos et decem annos habuerat, quorum quadraginta in monachico habitu ante mortem duxerat', *Ibid.*, bk III, ch. 1, p. 146.

named, which he had founded. Reinguald was the father of Riggulf, whose son was Ethric, who had a daughter, who bore the priest Alchmund, the father of that Elfred who is still alive.<sup>433</sup> The names of the male line of the family of Elfred were recalled back to the years of wandering.

It was through Franco that the second family was introduced. Symeon wrote: 'As was said above, Franco was a companion of Hunred, whose son was Eadwulf, whose son was Eadred.'<sup>434</sup> Thus far it was a simple genealogy. However, as with the descendents of Franco, certain stories about notable ancestors were passed down along with their names. Eadred was one such notable. 'Of him it is said that for six years before the end of his life he was never able to speak outside the church, although inside the church no one could have been readier and prompter to sing or to recite psalms.'<sup>435</sup> The general consensus of local people was that this inability to speak outside the church was a gift that prevented his tongue from making pointless or harmful speech when it was used so well for reciting prayers and psalms.

Having noted this interesting aside, the genealogical information continued. 'The son of this Eadred was Collan, whose son was Eadred, whose son was Collan, from whose sister were born Eilaf and two priests who are still alive today, Hemming and Wulfskill.'<sup>436</sup> And so the audience was brought back to the present day, with the living people who still vividly recalled their ancestors and the notable attributes some of them possessed.

The details of these families are unique to Symeon's work. However, the stories of their coffin-bearing ancestors were integrated into other twelfth-century works. Writing sixty years later, Reginald was in no doubt that those who had the honour of accompanying Cuthbert's body during its travels had been blessed with a great privilege.<sup>437</sup> However, he was not in denial about the hardships faced. Famine, Danish violence, a growing number of wolves, and various other distressing circumstances all

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<sup>433</sup> 'Franco quippe pater erat Reingualdi, a quo illa quam condiderat uilla Reiningtun est appellata. Reingualdus vero pater extitit Riggulfi, cuius filius Ethric, ex cuius Ethrici filia progenitus est presbiter Alchmundus, pater eius qui nunc usque superest Elfredi', *Ibid.*, bk III, ch. 1, p. 146.

<sup>434</sup> 'Huius Franconis socius erat (ut supra dictum est) Hunred, cuius filius Eadulf, cuius filius Eadred fuerat', *Ibid.*, bk III, ch. 1, p. 146.

<sup>435</sup> 'qui ut fertur sex annis ante finem uite extra ecclesiam nunquam loqui poterat, cum in ecclesia nemo ad cantandum uel psallendum expeditior et promptior esse potuisset', *Ibid.*, bk III, ch. 1, p. 146.

<sup>436</sup> 'Huius Eadredi filius erat Collanus, cuius filius Eadred, cuius filius Collanus, ex cuius sorore progeniti sunt Eilafus, et qui usque hodie supersunt Hemmingus et Wlfkillus presbiteri', *Ibid.*, bk III, ch. 1, p. 148.

<sup>437</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 14, pp. 20-1.

persecuted the faithful servants of the saint.<sup>438</sup> These conditions took their toll on the travellers:

The servants of Blessed Cuthbert, who so far had carried his body on the tops of their shoulders and arms, passed away, out of the length of time and from the exhaustion of the journey. No more than four of the bearers, servants who had always held fast to him, remained to bear the burden.<sup>439</sup>

In this situation, the survivors prayed for help, and St. Cuthbert granted it. He appeared in a vision to one of them, Hunred, and promised assistance, which duly came. Stitheard found a bridle on a nearby tree, Edmund heard a horse, which came to them tamely when it saw the bridle, and Hunred found a wagon, which they attached to the horse. They now had the means to transport the body of the saint without further injury to themselves.

This story contained more than just miraculous events. It explained the cognomens given to each of the men due to the help they had received. All the names came from Old English words associated with the things they found. For finding the cord and bridle, Stitheard was known as *Rap*. For hearing the horse, Edmund was called *Coite*. And for finding and attaching the wagon, Hunred was named *CreteI*.<sup>440</sup> Symeon had said the companions had nicknames, but did not give them. Several decades later, the story was still in common currency, and was well-developed enough for Reginald not only to give the names, but to provide an account of how the bearers acquired them.

This, however, only accounted for three of the brethren. The fourth was called Eilaf. When Symeon discussed the four most important coffin-bearers, he called the fourth man Franco. Either Reginald was referring to a different person, or names had been mixed up in the intervening years. Given that both authors emphasised the importance of four particular men, the first explanation seems less likely than the

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<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 15, pp. 23-4.

<sup>439</sup> 'Famuli igitur Beati Cuthberti, qui eatenus corpus suum collo humeris brachiisque detulerant, ex longitudine temporis et pro fatigatione itineris pene defecerant; nec amplius quam quatuor onerarii, qui familiarius ei semper inhaeserant, ad opus oneris superstites erant', *Ibid.*, ch. 15, p. 24.

<sup>440</sup> For the story and the monikers see *Ibid.*, ch. 15, pp. 24-5.

second. What this demonstrates is that Reginald was not working with information drawn directly from Symeon, but was actively using contemporary oral traditions.

According to Reginald, the cognomen of Eilaf was the result of another miracle. Despite the aid offered by St. Cuthbert, the bearers were still in trouble, as famine continued to afflict the region they were in. They were soon left with no provisions other than some cheese and the head of a horse (it is unclear whether this was the head of the horse Cuthbert had provided or that of another). The strict rationing this destitution necessitated was too much for Eilaf to take, and he resorted to stealing the cheese. On the discovery that it was missing, he feigned ignorance, and his companions had no way of knowing who the perpetrator was. So they prayed, and asked for St. Cuthbert to punish the one responsible. This was done in a rather odd way, as Eilaf was suddenly transformed into a fox. The fox ran all around the place where they had stopped, apparently somewhat hysterical (a trait we can probably forgive in someone who had just been turned into a fox). Eventually the astonished onlookers prayed again, and through his mercy St. Cuthbert returned Eilaf to human form. Apologies were made, the cheese was restored, and forgiveness received, but from that day on, Eilaf was known as *Tod*, which was the English word for the sound made by a fox.<sup>441</sup>

The narrative of the wandering, and the stories of those involved, clearly changed over time. From an initial outline in the *Historia*, which was primarily concerned with a single maritime miracle, the tale had grown in length, detail and prominence. This suggests that the available texts were providing snapshots of an evolving set of oral traditions. A similar process happened with a legend of dislocation relating to St. Edmund that was developing at Bury.<sup>442</sup> Reading Rachel Koopmans' study of miracle collections brings to mind an image of authors trying to keep pace with rapidly changing oral renditions, with multiple versions of the same basic

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<sup>441</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 15, pp. 25-7.

<sup>442</sup> A. Gransden, 'The Legends and Traditions Concerning the Origins of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds' *English Historical Review* 100 (1985), pp. 1-24, at p. 21; see also fn 2, in which Gransden suggests the Bury tale was directly influenced by the story of Cuthbert's wanderings.



narrative indicative of this process.<sup>443</sup> The same thing was happening with the stories of the wanderers during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

This point is substantiated by a number of features that the stories all share. For a start, the genealogical tales that Symeon included in the *Libellus* are an aside to the main narrative. Yet they include specific information on a number of individuals, not least their names. There is also an attempt to situate the people and events within a local landscape, for example in the section explaining the name of Rainton. Cubitt has demonstrated the importance of this as an indicator of genuine oral tradition.<sup>444</sup> There was no reason for Symeon to invent this information, for strictly speaking it was unnecessary for the account he was constructing. Information such as the names of ancestors and the stories of their deeds did however mean something to members of the families involved. It is more likely that Symeon received the accounts from these families, and included them because they were both interesting and connected to Durham and its saint. The lack of any earlier textual source adds weight to this argument, since it heavily implies that Symeon was working with non-textual traditions. As was noted in the Introduction, Symeon was an important contact for people in the north of England who felt they had stories which needed sharing.<sup>445</sup> Collecting these genealogical stories therefore fits the character of Symeon and the way in which he worked. It also fits Benedictine writing on tales related to English saints more broadly, where gaps in textual records were filled by turning to oral folktales known in the immediate locality.<sup>446</sup>

A further piece of evidence that the stories of the wandering represented living oral tradition is the manner in which they continued to expand and change up to the time when Reginald was writing. Stories from history were fluid and people's memories malleable. Even those tales with long-standing pedigree were subject to adaptation, exaggeration and perhaps even forgetfulness. What makes Reginald interesting is that although he had access to Symeon's versions of the stories, he preferred to work with his own. Slight changes in detail, some of them as significant as

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<sup>443</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, esp. pp. 109-11 and p. 122, where she explicitly mentions the way Reginald of Durham ignored previous written versions of stories in order to record contemporary oral ones.

<sup>444</sup> Cubitt, 'Folklore and Historiography', pp. 194-5.

<sup>445</sup> See above, p. 23.

<sup>446</sup> Cubitt, 'Folklore and Historiography', pp. 200-4.

the names of the coffin-bearers, demonstrate that these were drawn from freshly told narratives, not the textual record of the early-twelfth century.<sup>447</sup>

Far more information was provided on the four coffin-bearers in *De Admirandis* than in the *Libellus*. For example, rather than just stating that the individuals had nicknames, Reginald provides those monikers and gives detailed accounts of how they were acquired. The men now had back-stories as well. They were shown in distress, or at fault by committing sin, as well as being remembered for their great devotion to St. Cuthbert. The saint himself emerges as their protector, something that was important for the contemporary community of the saint, which saw him in a similar role. Like Symeon, Reginald was known to borrow from local oral folklore.<sup>448</sup> The extending and humanising of the tales of the coffin-bearers, and inclusion of memorable events, miracles and nicknames all mark them out as a product of this spoken culture.

The question therefore emerges of who participated in this spoken culture. Rollason considered the image of the whole native, Christian population travelling with the body of their saint as a scene borrowed from hagiographical topoi.<sup>449</sup> In this case, the construction of the over-arching narrative should be placed firmly with the religious community at Durham, people familiar with such tropes and keen to work them into their narratives. The picture is certainly reminiscent of the biblical wanderings of the Israelites.<sup>450</sup> However, the individual stories and family memories that were woven into the overall account betray a wider popularity and participation in the stories of the wandering.

When discussing the coffin-bearers, Symeon himself claimed that ‘many of their descendants in the province of the Northumbrians, both clergy and laity, take great pride that their ancestors are said to have served St. Cuthbert faithfully.’<sup>451</sup> Rollason believed that the further development of stories about the bearers, evident in Reginald’s work, supported this statement by Symeon, as it suggests that enough pride was felt to warrant passing down the tales.<sup>452</sup> As for who the clergy and laity were,

<sup>447</sup> On the change in name from Franco to Eilaf see above, pp. 87-8.

<sup>448</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 121-2; see above, pp. 25-7.

<sup>449</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 110, n. 61; Idem, *Cuthbert: Saint and Patron*, (Durham, 1987), pp. 45-59.

<sup>450</sup> Exodus 12:31-19:25, especially 17:1, and 33:1-3.

<sup>451</sup> ‘de quorum stirpe multi in Northanhymbrorum prouincia tam clerici quam laici se descendisse tanto magis gloriantur, quanto progenitores sui sancto Cuthberto fidelius deseruisse narrantur’, *LDE*, bk II, ch. 12, p. 116.

<sup>452</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 148, fn 7.

some clues appear in the stories themselves. Of the living family members, most were priests. Hemming and Wulfgar were described as such by Symeon, and charter evidence supports this statement.<sup>453</sup> Elfred was not described as a priest, although his father Alchmund was.<sup>454</sup> Reginald added further information, explaining that one of those claiming descent from the coffin-bearers in his time held Bedlington.<sup>455</sup>

However, these were not just priests, they were priestly families. Although the women in the genealogies were not named, they were still included in the stories. These families made up a proportion of the pre-monastic clerical community at Durham.<sup>456</sup> When speaking of the second family, the story stated that the second Collan had a sister who was the mother of Eilaf, Wulfgar and Hemming. Collan's sister was in fact married to Alfred Westou, Aelred's great-grandfather, and the Eilaf mentioned here was Aelred's grandfather, a one-time clerk of Durham.<sup>457</sup> As well as the women, it is known that there were younger siblings in Aelred's family who were not priests, although it seems they were later drawn to a religious life.<sup>458</sup> These wider familial connections must account for some of the 'laity' that Symeon described as tracing their lineage back to the coffin-bearers. By the twelfth century, a substantial number of people in Northumbria had the potential to claim such links.

The stories of the coffin-bearers and their descendents clearly had a prominent place in the oral culture of the twelfth-century north of England. These tales obviously meant a great deal to those who told them and believed in them. Symeon explicitly stated that those who traced their roots back to the period of wandering took pride in this heritage.<sup>459</sup> In their family pasts, some laypeople and secular clergy found a close association with St. Cuthbert, which still meant a great deal to them over two hundred years after the events recorded.

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<sup>453</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 1, p. 148, and Rollason, *LDE*, p. 148, fn 7.

<sup>454</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 1, p. 146.

<sup>455</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 16, p. 29.

<sup>456</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 147, fn 6.

<sup>457</sup> For the full family tree see Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, vol. 1, pp. li-iii. See also Rollason, *LDE*, p. 147, n. 6 and p. 148, n. 7. For further information on Aelred's family see Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx*, pp. 4-12; M. Powicke, 'Introduction' in Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, pp. ix-lxxxix, at pp. xxxiv-xxxvi; J. Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, vol. 1, pp. l-xvii; McGuire, *Brother and Lover*, pp. 11-38.

<sup>458</sup> See *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, pp. 191-2.

<sup>459</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 12, p. 116.

Throughout the story of the wandering in the *Libellus*, there is a sense that Cuthbert was being looked after on behalf of his people, that the bearers were custodians for the whole of Northumbria. Centuries later, Symeon was seeking to fashion a similar role for the monks of Durham. That was only possible because many people still identified with the saint and his church, and vital to that process was a shared conception of the past that included the ancestors of laypeople and clergy alike.

The individuals who told these stories were creating a narrative of their own family's past and the whole region's history that helped to position themselves and others in contemporary society. These stories allowed people to create meaning out of past connections and identify with others who were doing the same. For example, through his family past, the Elfred mentioned by Symeon had connections with St. Cuthbert, the other families who were descended from the coffin-bearers and the contemporary monastic community at Durham. This provided him with a feeling of belonging to a wider community, a community regarded as the 'people of the saint', among whom he, as a descendent of Franco, could take a special place.

Aelred was another who created a clear sense of who he was by telling stories of the past. Through his father and grandfather he was bound to the community of Hexham and its saints; through his great-grandfather he had links all across Northumbria, including Durham; and through his great-grandmother's family he was connected to the bearers of Cuthbert and thus to the saint himself. So while Aelred could truly count himself as one of the 'people of the saint', he was also tied to other holy individuals and other communities. As Freeman has stressed, Aelred, like any individual, did not have singular and exclusive allegiance to one particular group; rather, he was a product of multiple allegiances mixed together.<sup>460</sup> His position does serve to highlight the regional nature of many social relationships at the time. Many links existed between the various people, churches and communities of old Northumbria. Each local community sat within a wider regional collective, a collective that had a sense of a shared past. The people of the region were united in a common heritage, which emphasised years of semi-nomadic struggle as much as any past glories.

Understanding one's ancestors was about understanding one's origins, and that obviously helped create one's sense of self. It also enabled a process of identification

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<sup>460</sup> Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, p. 44. See also Dutton, 'Introduction', pp. 2-8, esp. pp. 2 and 8.

to take place, as the people who shared these stories came to recognise one another as having a shared history.<sup>461</sup> As a result, the creation of narratives of the past built ties and applied meaning to them. They gave those involved a sense of belonging to a particular group of people defined by an itinerant past and the protection of their saint. The stories became local traditions, tales and folklore; these in turn were simultaneously individualised by families and socialised by the community, resulting in the two being brought into close association.<sup>462</sup> Through all available mediums, a sense of individual pasts, Durham's past, Hexham's past, and ultimately Northumbria's past, was conceived, presented, believed and utilised by living people.

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<sup>461</sup> Innes, 'Introduction', p. 1.

<sup>462</sup> For a discussion on the way private individual memory can be transferred into the public realm see E. Freeman, 'Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Bello Standardii* and Medieval and Modern Textual Controls', in M. Cassidy, H. Hickey and M. Street (eds), *Deviance and Textual Control: New Perspectives in Medieval Studies* (Melbourne, 1997), pp. 78-102, esp. p. 83.

### CHAPTER 3: THE VENERATED DEAD

The second chapter of *De Sanctis* tells the story of an invasion of England by King Malcolm III of Scotland. The text says that he normally preserved peace with Hexham, because he associated the place with its highly regarded saints. However, on this occasion some of his men were robbed near the town, and flying into a rage he threatened to lay waste to the region, destroy the church and kill the local population. In terror the people fled to the church and begged for help from the saints. That night, saints Wilfrid and Cuthbert appeared in a vision to the priest of Hexham. They talked with him, and observed the sorrow and terror of the people. Moved by this, the saints reassured the priest that they would not allow any harm to come to that place or its people. The following day, a miraculous cloud of fog prevented Malcolm's planned attack. For three days after this, the king waited to cross the Tyne and exact his revenge, but the river flooded and provided an impenetrable barrier. At last Malcolm came to his senses, acknowledged the holiness of the place, and moved his army on. For the people of Hexham terror turned to joy and much celebrating followed.<sup>463</sup>

This story gave the saints three broad roles in relation to the community. First, they symbolised the community as an entity. King Malcolm had always been reluctant to strike Hexham because in his mind saints whom he revered represented it symbolically. Secondly, the saints acted as individual members of the community. They appeared to the priest as ordinary people, and displayed a human response to the suffering of those gathered in the church. They also offered consolation and hope to the priest in a personal conversation with him. Finally, they took on the role of heavenly patrons and through their holy power provided miraculous protection to their people.

This multiplicity of roles was built into the miracle stories of many local saints, including those written about in the north of England. The current chapter is structured around an examination of each role individually, and then finishes by considering how they all worked together. Observing the manner in which these three functions of the venerated dead operated offers an insight into the social significance

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<sup>463</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 2, pp. 177-81.

of the northern saints. Comparative examples will also be given throughout, to demonstrate that these saints were not unique, but representative of a much wider pattern.

It will be shown that the local saint or saints often formed the focal point of a community, providing a sacred centre with which living members of the neighbourhood could identify and which often cut across other social divisions.<sup>464</sup> It was noted in the introduction that to be termed a community, individual members of a group must share an understanding of belonging together and imaginatively identify with others in the group.<sup>465</sup> Sharing the patronage of a saint placed people within the same network, but did not necessarily make them a community. However, through sharing stories of their saint's actions, those people added meaning to the bonds provided by mutual heavenly patronage. This follows the ideas of Rachel Koopmans, who suggests that it was not miracles *per se* that acted as a bonding device within society, but the stories that were told about them.<sup>466</sup> These stories added a level of meaning that is a defining feature of community construction, and separates it as a concept from groups and networks.<sup>467</sup> As will be shown, telling stories about the saints was one of the ways in which values, traditions and norms were negotiated. These were not inherent characteristics of collectives, but imaginative constructions that helped to build a sense of identification among those who narrated and heard the tales.<sup>468</sup>

As well as providing a shared symbol around which ideas of belonging could be articulated, a local saint was believed to perform a variety of functions that were vital to the internal connections of their community. As a symbol of the collective, a personal friend of its members, and a patron of the community, the saint was a potent

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<sup>464</sup> For similar ideas see Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', especially pp. 62 and 83; T. Head *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: The Diocese of Orléans, 800-1200* (Cambridge, 1990), especially pp. 118-21; Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 141-66, especially 142, 154 and 166; A. Angenedt, 'Relics and Their Veneration', in M. Bagnoli, H. Klein, C. Griffith Mann and J. Robinson (eds), *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (London, 2011) pp. 19-28, at p. 24; M. Goodich, 'Miracles and Disbelief in the Late Middle Ages' in Idem, *Lives and Miracles*, pp. 23-38. See also B. Töpfer, 'The Cult of Relics and Pilgrimage in Burgundy and Aquitaine at the Time of the Monastic Reform', in T. Head and R. Landes (eds), *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response Around the Year 1000* (Ithaca and London, 1992), pp. 41-57.

<sup>465</sup> See above, pp. 11-15.

<sup>466</sup> R. Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 26.

<sup>467</sup> See the wider discussion of how narrativity shapes meaning and constructs experience on pp. 18-21.

<sup>468</sup> Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, see especially comments on this subject on pp. 1 and 21.

force for integration and mutual identification. This will be demonstrated throughout this chapter through reference to the stories that people told and the events that these tales represented.

Using saints' cults to study the ties of local society necessitates building on a large body of more general literature on the venerated dead. The formation, nature, and promotion of the cult of the saints has been closely scrutinised by historians.<sup>469</sup> Many of these studies have emphasised the fact that saints' cults and their associated texts provide an excellent opportunity for the historian to examine the social aspects of medieval life.<sup>470</sup> It is often claimed that this is particularly true for groups that are otherwise obscured from the historical record, such as lower status members of the laity, or for the study of local collectives, such as parishes.<sup>471</sup>

What justification is there for using texts associated with saints' cults as a window on to wider social ideas and practice? The texts were, after all, structured and pieced together by a small group of religious authors. However, as with the narratives of the past studied in the last chapter, these writers built on material gathered from the stories of a much larger and more diverse range of people. Koopmans has demonstrated that the miracle collections of twelfth-century England in particular focused on recording local oral stories.<sup>472</sup> This focus corresponded to the great value

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<sup>469</sup> Among many excellent studies, some of the most important are P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981); T. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988); A. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 1997); B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (London, 1982); D. Weinstein and R. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago, 1982); S. Wilson (ed.), *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* (Cambridge, 1983). For a study focused on England in the twelfth century see Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*.

<sup>470</sup> M. Goodich, *Lives and Miracles of the Saints: Studies in Medieval Latin Hagiography* (Aldershot, 2004), p. ix; D. Rollason, 'The Miracles of St. Benedict: A Window on Early Medieval France' in H. Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (eds) *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis* (London, 1985), pp. 73-90; Ward, *Miracles*, p. 214; S. Wilson, 'Introduction', in Idem, *Saints and their Cults*, pp. 1-53, esp. p. 1. For studies that highlight the local social aspects of cults see Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, pp. vi, 1-13, esp. 13 and 215; Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', pp. 455-94; C. Cubitt, 'Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England', in Thacker and Sharpe (eds), *Local Saints and Local Churches*, pp. 423-53; A. Thacker, '*Loca Sanctorum*: The Significance of Place in the Study of the Saints', in *Ibid.*, pp. 1-43; Idem, 'The Making of a Local Saint', in *Ibid.*, pp. 45-73.

<sup>471</sup> H. Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Shrine: The Miracles of St. Frideswide' in Idem and Moore, *Studies in Medieval History*, pp. 193-206, esp. pp. 193-4; Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, p. 3, reiterated on p. 214.

<sup>472</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*. See especially pp. 1, 3-5 and 111-38.



placed on oral reports by contemporaries, especially when it came to recent events.<sup>473</sup> The resultant texts will never give a full picture of the cult, as they were never more than stale reflections of wider oral culture, or *aides memoires* to encourage spoken retellings of the stories.<sup>474</sup> However, the nature of their production does mean that the stories within them are as much a product of the people who experienced and reported the events, as they are the final authors.<sup>475</sup> Yet while this oral culture cannot be tracked in full, the residue that it has left in these texts offers a tantalising window onto some aspects of it, and the vital role it played in constructing communal relations and identification.<sup>476</sup>

In order to make the most of this material, miracle stories have to be read with at least one eye on the local circumstances within which they were produced.<sup>477</sup> Since such narratives were dependent on the society that produced them, they will always reflect that society.<sup>478</sup> Thomas Heffernan believed that for a cultic text to function properly, it must represent the normative values of the community who write it and for whom it is written. The text will therefore both reflect and shape collective ideas and traditions, as the community continuously re-evaluates itself, its values, and its past.<sup>479</sup> Helen Birkett shows that this is especially true of miracle stories, since this was a genre that was particularly responsive and adaptable to society's changing needs.<sup>480</sup> Marcus Bull adds further weight to this argument by suggesting that these were texts that were intended to form a dialogue with society beyond the religious house that produced them.<sup>481</sup> Studying such narratives in their original context, through a close study of the collectives that shaped them and were shaped by them, allows for a fuller understanding of how they related to those who told and heard them.

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<sup>473</sup> H. Birkett, *The Saints' Lives of Jocelin of Furness: Hagiography, Patronage and Ecclesiastical Politics* (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 115-16.

<sup>474</sup> Koopmams, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 5; Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, pp. 137-8.

<sup>475</sup> M. Bull, *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour: Analysis and Translation* (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 15.

<sup>476</sup> Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, pp. 116-27.

<sup>477</sup> Goodich, *Lives and Miracles*, p. x.

<sup>478</sup> Goodich, *Lives and Miracles*, pp. ix-x; Ward, *Miracles*, p. 215; Wilson, 'Introduction', pp. 6-7 and 37.

<sup>479</sup> Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 18-22. See also pp. 59-65, where Heffernan extends these ideas further, saying that the texts clearly represent a collective mentality and reflect group consciousness. See the discussion of similar ideas in the Introduction, above, pp. 35-8.

<sup>480</sup> For miracle texts reflecting contemporary society and its ideas see Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, pp. 141-278, esp. 141-225. For the responsiveness and adaptability of this genre see esp. pp. 2 and 280.

<sup>481</sup> Bull, *Miracles of Our Lady*, pp. 92-3.

This chapter offers just such a close study. It builds on the ideas discussed in the previous three paragraphs to drill down into specific texts and further our understanding of how the stories they contain functioned in local society. By doing so, one can start to break down the dichotomy between author and subjects, and think instead about the relationship between the author, his material and the text.<sup>482</sup> This in turn allows one to see something of the ideas and imaginations of the wider populace referenced in the texts.<sup>483</sup> We shall see how feelings of friendship, unity and social cohesion were created by the interaction of people with their saint and the telling of miracle stories. Previous historians have seen local saints' cults as a force for communal unity. I intend to develop these ideas further by clearly linking them to the roles that certain specific narratives presented the saint as playing in everyday life. In acting as representative, patron, and human companion, the saint did more than just defend, avenge and heal people. These actions were vital constituents of communal identification and understanding them will allow us to comprehend the way a social collective negotiated the values, norms and shared understandings that created a sense of community.

#### THE SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY

When Malcolm thought of Hexham, his mind was drawn to its saints. They were symbols of the community that represented it in the imagination of the king. In this way, the saints could stand for the community as a whole, acting as shorthand for thinking about Hexham, its church, and its people. While this may say more about Aelred's conception of the situation than Malcolm's, it seems that many people in

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<sup>482</sup> See Schmitt, 'Religion, Folklore, and Society', pp. 376-87, where he suggests historians should be studying relationships between different groups of people, such as religious and lay, rather than imposing a rigid framework of separation. Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', pp. 53-8, also emphasises relationships, although she does so within an elite-popular model.

<sup>483</sup> Once again this builds on existing ideas within modern historiography. See, for example, M. Goodich, 'The Use of Direct Quotation from Canonization Hearing to Hagiographical *Vita et Miracula*' in Idem, *Lives and Miracles*, pp. 177-187, at p. 187, where, in a different historical context, the author notes the close interdependence between the written word and oral stories in medieval hagiography. See also M. Goodich, 'Mirabilis Deus in Sanctis Suis: Social History and Medieval Miracles,' in K. Cooper and J. Gregory (eds), *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 135-56. For the best discussion of this subject see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 9-46.

contemporary society thought about churches and their associated communities in this way. The use of a saint as a symbolic representation of the local community appears in many sources. It was particularly apparent when the community in question held relics belonging to their saint or saints.

Before turning to contemporary narratives, it is worth noting that this conceptualisation of the saint as a symbol representing the whole community was also present in simpler texts, such as charters. In the case of relic-housing monasteries and churches, the standard formula described land being given to the saint. For example, land given to Durham was recorded in its charters as being donated to St. Cuthbert.<sup>484</sup> There may be a practical explanation for this. The religious house at Durham would have been keen to hold land or other donations in perpetuity. Granting it to an individual human within the community was not an option, as each had, in theory at least, forsaken personal property. Offering land to the church itself was equally difficult. As we have seen, the community traced its history back to the religious establishment on Lindisfarne, and had spent many years at Chester-le-Street before moving to Durham.<sup>485</sup> In these itinerant years, dedications to a specific church would have been at risk if the community moved on.

Recording gifts as being presented to St. Cuthbert was a solution to this problem. Land could be dedicated to the saint in perpetuity, and looked after on his behalf by the religious house. This use of the saint as what David Rollason has labelled an 'undying landlord' was increasingly common from the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>486</sup> The formulas that recorded these gifts were written by the clergy of Durham, who applied their own constructions to the text. Yet through constant reference to this formula, both these clerics and those who donated and lived on the land were familiar with the idea of the saint representing the community. What is more difficult to establish is whether the textual construction reflected an imagined reality, or whether constant reference to the formula created the mental framework for these ideas. The most likely explanation is that they fed each other; an understanding of the saint *being*

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<sup>484</sup> See, for example, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum 1066-1154* vol. III, ed. H. Crone and R. H. C. Davis (Oxford, 1968), no. 257; *Durham Episcopal Charters, 1071-1152*, ed. H. Offler (Gateshead, 1968), no. 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 28, 29, 30, 35, and 35(a).

<sup>485</sup> See above, pp. 56-73.

<sup>486</sup> D. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 196-214; A. Thacker, 'Saint-making and Relic Collecting by Oswald and his Communities', in N. Brooks and C. Cubitt, *St. Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence* (London and New York, 1996) pp. 244-68, at p. 245.

the community reinforcing itself through constant, explicit reference in everyday documents and agreements.

The narrative sources from Durham also show this concept at work. Many of them were explicitly constructed around St. Cuthbert, including the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, which emphasises the difficulties faced by a community with no permanent home and whose lands were threatened by war. Donations recorded in the *Historia* were granted to the saint. The style of such donations transformed the saint into an embodiment of the whole community, an understanding that was mirrored in the way later generations recalled the period of wandering.<sup>487</sup> When Symeon came to record the history of his community, he constructed the narrative around St. Cuthbert and his body. One passage in particular articulated the idea of symbolic representation:

With the pagans roaming everywhere and settling for many years in the province of the Northumbrians, the indigenous Christian people with their children and their wives accompanied the holy body of the blessed confessor, thinking that all they had lost – country, homes, possessions – to be preserved in the single body of the saint.<sup>488</sup>

This was an all-inclusive model, involving the people of Northumbria as a whole, which constituted a sense of mutual identification through reference to St. Cuthbert. Newcomers to this community were integrated through interaction with its heavenly representative. When the Benedictine monks were established in Durham, it was said the bishop had ‘inseparably bound them to the sacred body of the most holy father Cuthbert’.<sup>489</sup> This was an idea employed at other religious houses with powerful saints. At Ely, the oaths of allegiance taken by monks were sworn over the relics of St. Æthelthryth.<sup>490</sup> Stories of Hereward’s resistance to the Normans at Ely also referred to using this technique to integrate new rebels into his army.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> For St. Cuthbert embodying the community while it was still on Lindisfarne, see Cubitt, ‘Universal and Local Saints’, p. 437. For the saint as symbol of the community see above, pp. 70-1.

<sup>488</sup> ‘Discurrentibus undique paganis et per multos annos Northanhymbrorum prouinciam inhabitantibus, Christianus indigenarum populus cum liberis et coniugibus sacrum beati confessoris corpus comitabatur, omnia que amiserat – patriam, domos, suppellectilem – in uno ipsius corpore se reputans conseruasse’, *LDE*, bk II, ch. 10, p. 110.

<sup>489</sup> ‘ad sacrum sanctissimi patris Cuthberti corpus inseparabiliter astrinxit’, *Ibid.*, bk IV, ch. 3, p. 230.

<sup>490</sup> V. Blanton-Whetsell, ‘*Tota integra, tota incorrupta*: The Shrine of St. Æthelthryth as Symbol of Monastic Autonomy’ *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32:2 (2002), pp. 227-267, at p. 228.

<sup>491</sup> *LE*, bk II, ch. 102, p. 207; Blanton-Whetsell, ‘The Shrine of St. Æthelthryth’, p. 249.

The idea of St. Cuthbert embodying the community of Durham evidently spread. Richard of Hexham regularly referred to the 'land of St. Cuthbert'.<sup>492</sup> Interestingly, when Richard referred to vills that belonged to his own church he rarely mentioned the saints, but simply stated that the land belonged to Hexham.<sup>493</sup> There are, however, parallels to Durham's relationship with Cuthbert from elsewhere in twelfth-century England. For example, St. Edmund symbolised Bury, and indeed was significant for regional identification in East Anglia in a manner similar to Cuthbert's role in Northumbria.<sup>494</sup> Similarly, Virginia Blanton-Whetsell has demonstrated that texts and narratives from Ely constructed a sense of identification through symbolic representations of Æthelthryth.<sup>495</sup>

One of the things that prevented any one saint achieving pre-eminence at Hexham was the multiplicity and equality of the community's heavenly representatives. Instead of there being a unique embodiment of the community, the church's saints, all former bishops, acted together as a symbolic representation of the social collective. The brotherhood of saints was thought to act in unison, working together for the benefit of earthly members of the community. Marsha Dutton says that 'with their individuality largely buried in the past' the former bishops of Hexham 'tend in this work [Aelred's *De Sanctis*] to act in concert'.<sup>496</sup> As well as performing miracles in together, the saints called each other brothers and always acted in common.<sup>497</sup> Conceptualised in this way, the saints acted as a community, and thus formed a heavenly mirror-image of the worldly community. Although Hexham was not symbolised by its saints in the same manner or to the same extent as Durham, the act of imagining a community through its saints occurred there as well.

One of the best pieces of evidence for local saints representing their communities comes from a reference to the Yorkshire village of Walkington. It appears in a story about a miracle attributed to St. John of Beverley. The place is described as follows: 'there is a certain village separated from Beverley by about two miles, which is

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<sup>492</sup> See, for example, RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, pp. 153, 155, 156, and 158.

<sup>493</sup> For example *Ibid.*, s.a. 1138, pp. 154 and 171.

<sup>494</sup> Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, pp. 24-62.

<sup>495</sup> Blanton-Whetsell, 'The Shrine of St. Æthelthryth', pp. 227-67.

<sup>496</sup> Dutton, 'Mirror', p. 18.

<sup>497</sup> For examples of each of these see *De Sanctis*, ch. 1, p. 177, ch. 2, p. 179, and ch. 4, p. 183 respectively.

called Walkington, of which one part provisions the refectory of St. John, and another part pertains to St. Cuthbert by hereditary right.'<sup>498</sup>

Ownership of Walkington was split between Durham and Beverley, a situation understood in terms of the representative saints of each church. In the narrative itself, a young boy from the part belonging to St. John was given the power of speech by the same saint. The implication was that the people of the village considered themselves connected to either Beverley or Durham through the saint on whose land they lived. This may simply demonstrate the understanding of the author, but for those living in the part owned by Beverley, the short distance to the church, and therefore the relics of the saint, may well have made them aware of their place in the community of St. John. Since John was the only saint of Beverley, he symbolised the community in a way similar to Cuthbert's embodiment of Durham. Unfortunately, the comparative scarcity of evidence from Beverley means it is difficult to compare the two fully.

The three cases looked at so far concern local communities that housed the relics of their saint or saints. Possession of relics was vital to being symbolically represented by a saint. Hexham, Beverley and particularly Durham came to be large communities which thought of themselves on a regional as well as a local level. This was in part due to the power of their saints on the imaginations of all people. But as well as embodying the community, a saint could act as its patron. A saint might play this role at both the cult centres and smaller communities without immediate access to relics. This was because even the smallest church was dedicated to a saint, and that saint was often believed to look after the community in existence around that church. It is to this aspect that we shall now turn.

### THE HEAVENLY PATRON

In the opening passage of *De Sanctis*, after the first mention of the saints, Aelred wrote, 'we live in this most holy place under their patronage.'<sup>499</sup> Patron-client relationships were highly important for contemporary social practice, so it is unsurprising that the

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<sup>498</sup> 'Est villa quaedam distans a Beverlaco quasi duobus milliariis, quae Walkintona vocitatur, cujus altera pars ad refectorium Sancti Johannis dependet, altera vero Sancto Cuthberto haereditario jure pertinet', *Alia Miracula I*, p. 300.

<sup>499</sup> 'In his sacratissimis locis sub eorum patrocinio vivimus', *De Sanctis*, 'prologus', p. 174.

associated imagery became applied to the ties of a saint to their community. For example, the idea of the saints interceding in the heavenly court was drawn from similar practice by patrons at the royal court.<sup>500</sup> Meanwhile, the practice of granting land to a particular saint meant people who lived on the donated land considered themselves under the patronage of the saint.<sup>501</sup> In the case of Durham, there was a conscious idea of ‘the people of the saint’, those who lived on land belonging to St. Cuthbert and traced their lineage back to the wandering people of the ninth century. Symeon made numerous references to them, building heavily on previous Northumbrian traditions when doing so.<sup>502</sup> The vernacular equivalent of the Latin *populus sancti* was *Haliwerfolc*, a term used by Reginald of Durham.<sup>503</sup> Aird recognised the significance of *Haliwerfolc* as a label for a specific community of people, united through their common past and present connection with St. Cuthbert.<sup>504</sup>

Cuthbert was not unique in this respect. The manner in which people living on land given to his church were considered his people is a feature repeated elsewhere in Christendom. Arnold Angenedt traced this characteristic back to ninth-century monastic documents, which stopped classifying the local peasantry into free, half-free and unfree and described everyone as being a person of the saint on whose land they lived.<sup>505</sup> This type of patron-client relationship was therefore neither new nor specific to northern England, but was rather a feature of local society across Europe. St. Edmund again provides a useful comparison. Several stories referred to either ‘the men of St. Edmund’ or ‘the knights of St. Edmund’ when discussing those living on monastic lands.<sup>506</sup> In France, those people who worked the lands belonging to Conques were sometimes described as ‘Sainte Foy’s peasants’.<sup>507</sup> Connections such as these

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<sup>500</sup> Wilson, ‘Introduction’, pp. 22-6.

<sup>501</sup> S. J. Ridyard, ‘*Condigna Veneratio*: Post-Conquest Attitudes to the Saints of the Anglo-Saxons’, *Anglo-Norman Studies* 9 (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 179-206, at pp. 182-5 and pp. 196-200, where St. Cuthbert is the example discussed.

<sup>502</sup> See *LDE*, bk II, ch. 11, p. 114; ch. 12, p. 116; ch. 16, p. 132; ch. 19, p. 140; bk III, ch. 1, p. 144; ch. 5, p. 156; ch. 15, p. 186; ch. 20, p. 196. See also Rollason’s note at *Ibid.*, p. 114, n. 66. See also above, pp. 75-81.

<sup>503</sup> See, for example, *De Admirandis*, ch. 90, p. 194.

<sup>504</sup> Aird, *St. Cuthbert and the Normans*, p. 5. See also Wilson, ‘Introduction’, p. 25.

<sup>505</sup> Angenedt, ‘Relics’, p. 24.

<sup>506</sup> See *Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, pp. 76 and 133 for examples of the former phrase, and pp. 20, 29 and 120 for examples of the latter.

<sup>507</sup> *The Book of Sainte Foy*, translated with an introduction and notes by P. Sheingorn (Philadelphia 1995), p. 14.

show the reach of the saints extended far beyond the walls of the church that housed their relics or was dedicated to them. The local town, surrounding territory, and land the church owned, were conceived of as belonging to the saint, and the people who lived on this land therefore had the saint as a patron. As well as Conques, under St. Foy, this pattern emerged at Monte Cassino and Fleury under St. Benedict of Nursia, and in various other locations across Christendom.<sup>508</sup>

Another way in which a saint could emerge as a patron for a local community was through the dedication of the local church.<sup>509</sup> As we shall see, there are difficulties involved with identifying dedications accurately and using them to analyse the ideas of local people. However, when used carefully, they can offer useful insights into saints' cults and the way they operated within local and regional collectives.<sup>510</sup> Thomas Clancy has noted that it is easy to regard dedications as names imposed by ecclesiastical or political powers on local churches and communities that had little say in the matter. Yet he calls for care from historians tempted to do this, and seeks to remind us that genuine devotion, built on a belief that the saint was an effective and helpful patron, underlay many such dedications.<sup>511</sup> Several recent studies have demonstrated the usefulness of using church dedications to explore the dimensions and meaning of a cult.<sup>512</sup> However, before examining the evidence for dedications to the saints considered in this study, and how this relates to the wider topic of local communities, the potential difficulties involved with working on dedications have to be understood.

First, there are a number of problems associated with accurately identifying dedications for this period. Principle among these is a lack of evidence. Most scholars

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<sup>508</sup> For more on St. Foy see Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 36-42; for St. Benedict see *Ibid.*, pp. 42-56 and Rollason, 'Miracles of St. Benedict', p. 88; for similar patterns in Burgundy and Aquitaine see Töpfer, 'Relics and Pilgrimage', p. 54.

<sup>509</sup> On small churches dedicated to St. Cuthbert see Tudor, 'The Cult of St. Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century', p. 464.

<sup>510</sup> See T. O. Clancy, 'The Big Man, the Footsteps, and the Fissile Saint: Paradigms and Problems in Studies of Insular Saints' Cults' in S. Boardman and E. Williamson (eds), *The Cult of Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland* (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 1-20, at pp. 3-4, for a positive assessment of what the study of dedication can offer to understandings of a saint's posthumous cult.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>512</sup> See, for example, B. E. Crawford, 'The Saint Clement Dedications at Clementhorpe and Pontefract Castle: Anglo-Scandinavian or Norman?' in J. Barrow and A. Wareham (eds), *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 189-210, and G. Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded: Religious Dedications in England, Wales, and Catalunya' in Idem (ed.), *Saints of Europe: Studies Towards a Survey of Cults and Culture* (Donington, 2003), pp. 210-60.



of medieval church dedications focus heavily on the later middle ages, because wills, which are the most reliable and widely available source material for this area, only appear in abundance at this time. When examining dedications in Derbyshire, Richard Clark found that beyond a few chance references in cartularies, the best sources are fifteenth- and sixteenth-century wills.<sup>513</sup> Graham Jones and Janet Cooper also list wills as the most important source of information, although episcopal registers, chantry certificates, title deeds, parliamentary documents, taxation lists, guild records, charters, patent rolls and court rolls are also mentioned.<sup>514</sup> All share the characteristic of being far more common in later centuries. As will be shown shortly, there is considerable danger in assuming that a fifteenth-century dedication can be mapped on to an earlier period. Other, less precise, evidence is even more questionable. Jones believes that if used cautiously, the dates of local fairs and feasts, local folklore and memory, and place-names can all be used to investigate a dedication. Yet he admits these are fraught with danger.<sup>515</sup> As early as the 1870s James Raine questioned the accuracy of relying on village feasts and fairs, the dates of which had varied too much, or even been forgotten altogether, to be reliable.<sup>516</sup> More recently, Janet Cooper has demonstrated the problems of such evidence. In her survey of Essex, over half of the parish fairs did not fall on the day of the saint to whom the parish church was dedicated; the dates of many local church festivals changed in the early modern period; and the idea that churches were orientated to line up with sunrise on their saints' feast day was entirely unsubstantiated.<sup>517</sup> Meanwhile, on the use of place-names, Lawrence Butler, working on Anglo-Saxon records, declared that historians must accept that place-names alone are not enough evidence for a dedication. They are too easily misinterpreted, or vary too readily, and can therefore only ever act as corroborating evidence for an already strong case.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> R. Clark, 'The Dedications of Medieval Churches in Derbyshire: Their Survival and Change from the Reformation to the Present Day' *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 112 (1992), pp. 48-61, at p. 48.

<sup>514</sup> J. Cooper, *The Church Dedications and Saints' Cults of Medieval Essex* (Lancaster, 2011), pp. 5-6; Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded', pp. 216-25.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-25, esp. p. 225.

<sup>516</sup> J. Raine, 'The Dedications of the Yorkshire Churches' *Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal* 2 (1871-2), pp. 180-192, at p. 183.

<sup>517</sup> Cooper, *Church Dedications*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>518</sup> L. Butler, 'Church Dedications and the Cults of Anglo-Saxon Saints in England' in L. Butler and R. K. Morris (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on History, Architecture, and Archaeology in Honour of Dr. H. M. Taylor*, (CBA Research Report no. 60, 1986), pp. 44-50, at p. 48.

This was perhaps one of the reasons why Butler, from a position of initial optimism, declared that 'the overall conclusion must be that it is still difficult to chart a clear course to reach the genuine Anglo-Saxon stratum of dedication patterns by stripping away the instances of rededications and mistaken identities'.<sup>519</sup> In short, the later evidence actually went some way to obscuring the Anglo-Saxon picture.

What, then, of the eleventh and twelfth centuries? In theory, royal and episcopal registers, as well as occasional references in other charter sources, can provide information on dedications. However, very many of the churches named in this material are identified by place and not given a dedicatory name. To give just one example, a charter purporting to be from c. 1121-1128 exists that confirms Durham Priory in the possession of the following churches: Howden; Welton; Walkington; Brantingham; Holy Trinity, York; St. Peter the Little, York; All Saints, York; Holtby; Hemingbrough; Skipworth; Bormpton; Allerton; and (Kirby) Sigston.<sup>520</sup> In a list of thirteen churches, only three are labelled with a dedication. These were all from the same place. The use of the patron saint's name therefore seems to have been a way of distinguishing between churches when a particular location had more than one. This can be seen in the case of a grant of the churches of St. Oswald and St. Aiden to Nostell Priory.<sup>521</sup> Both these churches were in Bamburgh, so as in the case of York a dedicatory name needed to be recorded in order to describe which church was meant.

Cooper found a similar situation in Essex, where patron saints were only named if a place had more than one church. Otherwise, the identifying formula used was usually 'the church of such-and-such a parish'.<sup>522</sup> When the place in question had only one church there was no ambiguity concerning which building was meant, and consequently no need to refer to the dedication. This is a pattern repeated throughout many of the extant charters of this period. It must also be acknowledged that many records of dedications must have been lost over time.<sup>523</sup>

Even in records that one would expect to provide the dedicatory name regardless of the number of churches in the location, it can be left out. Sometime between October 1119 and January 1140 the church of Ganton was dedicated and

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<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-9.

<sup>520</sup> *English Episcopal Acta V: York 1070-1154*, ed. J. Burton (Oxford, 1988), no. 43.

<sup>521</sup> *English Episcopal Acta XXIV: Durham, 1153-1195*, ed. M. G. Snape (Oxford, 2002), no. 113.

<sup>522</sup> Cooper, *Church Dedications*, p. 5.

<sup>523</sup> Raine, 'Dedications of the Yorkshire Churches', p. 183.

made subject to the church of St. Peter, Willerby. The record of Ganton's dedication has survived, and yet it does not include the name of any patron saint to which the church was given.<sup>524</sup> This opens up a second explanation for the absence of dedicatory names in contemporary records. If the report of a church being dedicated does not contain the name of any heavenly patron, then it may be that it did not have one. Despite ecclesiastical rules suggesting that every church should have a dedicated patron, the lack of evidence means we cannot say for certain that this was put into practice. This is the conclusion drawn by J. V. Gregory, who wrote that the records of County Durham and Northumberland in particular suggest that several parish churches were not given a dedication in the middle ages.<sup>525</sup> In light of the limited evidence, conclusions like this have to be made tentatively, but this does not change the fact that dedications of churches were not always recorded.

Whatever the explanation for the lack of dedications being recorded, it places limitations on any examination of twelfth-century patrons. Conclusions will necessarily have to be tentative. From the point of view of the current work, it also raises more profound questions. If dedications were, at best, used mainly to differentiate between multiple churches in one town, or at worst, not regularly applied to smaller ecclesiastical establishments, then how much did a patron's name actually mean to people? This is a question to which we will return in due course, but it is an important one to bear in mind through what follows.

Given the relative paucity of accurate medieval data, many nineteenth and early-twentieth century studies of church dedications have been accused of making too many assumptions about continuity and the accuracy of folk memory. Richard Clark put this down to a common view that the village or parish church is an unchanging entity at the heart of the local community. This shaped scholarship on the subject of patron saints.<sup>526</sup> Clark's survey clearly demonstrates that dedications do change, and the idea that local folk memory retains a sense of older ties is a red herring.<sup>527</sup> More recently, Graham Jones has emphasised the necessity of paying

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<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 46.

<sup>525</sup> J. V. Gregory, 'Dedication Names of Ancient Churches in the Counties of Durham and Northumberland' *The Archaeological Journal* 42 (1885), pp. 370-83, at p. 370. See also p. 381 for a list of churches in the counties where no dedication can be ascribed.

<sup>526</sup> Clark, 'Medieval Churches in Derbyshire', p. 48.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49. For an extended critique of reliance on folk memory and the mistakes this led to former antiquarians making, see pp. 49-54.

greater attention to the temporal context of church dedications. Although he is less critical of antiquarian studies, and sees the changes of the early modern era as an important part of local history, he states that any modern study must take account of changes over time and avoid assumptions of continuity.<sup>528</sup>

Clark and Jones, and others like them, have principally aimed these criticisms at assumptions of continuity from the middle ages into the present day. Yet for the current study, an equal problem is that, as we have seen, many studies of medieval dedications rely on evidence from several centuries after the twelfth. Was there more continuity between the earlier and later middle ages than the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries that makes such evidence applicable to the medieval period as a whole? To an extent this could be argued, since the principle cause of the loss and subsequent alteration of dedication names in the latter period was their lack of popularity following the Reformation.<sup>529</sup> Yet Jones' work makes it clear that even this theory is open to question – noting, for example, the high rate of change in dedicatory patrons between the Anglo-Saxon period and the fifteenth century.<sup>530</sup> As a result, while later medieval evidence can provide a rough guide to dedication patterns, individual cases must be questioned, and only those churches with clear twelfth-century records can be considered absolutely reliable. Taking care in this way necessarily limits the survey somewhat, and is undoubtedly more challenging than simply recognising modern dedications, but it is possible, and ultimately rewarding.<sup>531</sup>

Let us now turn to the evidence available for the saints examined in this study. I shall begin by considering the saints who were buried at Hexham, then turn to John of Beverley, and finally consider the case of St. Cuthbert. The significant difference in number and range of the dedications to Cuthbert over the other saints means considerably more space must be given to his case. Even so, the examination of saints with fewer dedications is still productive, if only to demonstrate their relative lack of importance outside the immediate vicinity of their cult centres.

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<sup>528</sup> Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded', pp. 230-6. W. Levison 'Medieval Church Dedications in England: Some Problems' *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland* vol X part I (1946), pp. 57-79, also insists the necessity of recognising the temporal context of church dedications.

<sup>529</sup> N. Orme, *English Church Dedications: With a Survey of Cornwall and Devon* (Exeter, 1996) pp. 42-51.

<sup>530</sup> Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded', p. 244.

<sup>531</sup> For this argument see Butler, 'Church Dedications', p. 44.

There is not a single record of a church being dedicated to the Hexham saints Acca, Alchmund, Frithburt and Tilbert. Aycliffe in County Durham was once believed to have had a medieval church dedicated to Acca, however this was based largely on the assumption that the name of the village referred to Acca's cliff. Gregory asserted that it was much more likely that the name derived from 'oak' and 'cliff', and it is with some conviction that we can now say that the church is likely to have had St. Andrew as its patron saint.<sup>532</sup> The only saint buried at Hexham with a definite medieval dedication is Eata. The church of Atcham in Shropshire was named for the saint from at least the tenth century and maybe earlier.<sup>533</sup> This is a strange location, being a considerable distance from Hexham and not even falling within the bounds of the former kingdom of Northumbria, where Eata was a bishop. Not enough is known about either the church or the saint to make any convincing argument for why the church may have taken his name.

Overall, one confirmed dedication is a pretty meagre return for the saints whose relics lay at Hexham. This suggests they had limited devotional popularity beyond the immediate locality of the church where they rested. This goes some way to explaining several elements in Aelred's *De Sanctis*. The first is a story of two pilgrims from Hexham, who while travelling on the continent prayed to Acca and were openly mocked by another member of their party for having rustic manners and believing in a saint who did not exist.<sup>534</sup> Inevitably the doubting individual was punished, and in this way Aelred's tale conforms to the hagiographical trope of a mocked saint taking revenge and thus proving his or her power. Yet the apparently limited appeal of these saints outside of Hexham suggests there was a genuine need to buttress the cult in the face of external ambivalence, and this probably accounts for Aelred's inclusion of the story. The second element of Aelred's tract that is explained by the limited appeal of the saints of Hexham is his focus on saints Wilfrid and Cuthbert. For a text purporting to celebrate the saints of Hexham, on the day of the translation of their relics, it is strange that so much space is given to miracles performed by saints who were not buried there. Marsha Dutton suggests this shows Aelred was working with personal and familial memories, stories told by local people, rather than writing a piece solely

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<sup>532</sup> Gregory, 'Dedication Names', p. 374; Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol I, p. 401.

<sup>533</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, vol I, p. 401; H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1978), p. 116.

<sup>534</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 10, p. 189. See above, p. 81.

for the benefit and aggrandisement of the Priory and its relics.<sup>535</sup> This is probably a correct assessment. Yet perhaps this focus was to the benefit of the Priory as well – associating it with saints who were better known and had a greater potential reach than those who were buried within its walls.

In terms of number of dedications, John of Beverley was slightly more popular than the saints who were buried at Hexham, but not by much. Arnold-Foster declared surprise at the lack of churches given his name – she found six in total – since he was, as a bishop of the early Anglo-Saxon church, in a similar mould to Wilfrid, who had many more dedications.<sup>536</sup> His case also requires considerable care, as he provides a good example of where dedication names have changed since the twelfth century.

As in the case of the saints of Hexham, the church that housed John's relics and claimed his special patronage was not dedicated to him. Indeed, not a single church in Beverley appears to have taken his name.<sup>537</sup> Three places in Yorkshire were dedicated to John – Salton, Wressle and Harpham – while a further two churches appear in Nottinghamshire – Whatton and Aslackton (also known as Scarrington).<sup>538</sup> Wressle and Aslackton both provide cases where the church was no longer dedicated to John by the nineteenth century, though Arnold-Foster had evidence that they had been before the Reformation.<sup>539</sup> It is, however, difficult to go much further back than this. Harpham also provides an interesting case, as it was traditionally believed to have been the place where John was born. Lawrence Butler believes that the dedication must have been an early and convenient means of commemorating this heavenly association.<sup>540</sup> Butler notes that using dedications in this way has parallels elsewhere, for example the attachment of Æthelthryth's name to a church in West Halton.

Of particular interest is the final church that bore John of Beverley's name by the nineteenth century. The name had been shortened to St. John Lee and the church stood just outside of Hexham, on the opposite side of the Tyne. What makes it interesting is that during John's lifetime this church was dedicated to St. Michael the

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<sup>535</sup> Dutton, 'Mirror', p. 16.

<sup>536</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol I, pp. 391-2.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 391-2.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>540</sup> Butler, 'Church Dedications', p. 47. Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol I, p. 392, also notes the connection with Harpham being John of Beverley's supposed birthplace.

Archangel.<sup>541</sup> Indeed, we can go further than this, and say that in the twelfth century it still carried Michael's name rather than John's, since Richard and John of Hexham both give it this name.<sup>542</sup> This is somewhat fortunate, because John of Beverley was heavily associated with the church in posthumous accounts of his life. He was believed to have performed miraculous healings at this location.<sup>543</sup> Without evidence to the contrary, such as that provided by Richard and Aelred, it would be tempting to put together the long-standing eleventh-century association of saint and church, and the post-Reformation dedication, and assume that the latter pre-dated the period of this study. This reveals the precarious nature of making assumptions of continuity, even when circumstantial evidence supports such a move.

John of Beverley, then, had a severely limited number of churches in his name. This calls into question Lawrence Butler's decision to group John alongside Guthlac and Mildred as 'saints with a wide geographical spread of dedications and a famous shrine'.<sup>544</sup> Butler based this conclusion on an assumption that seven churches had John as a named patron, but this was not true in the nineteenth century, let alone an earlier period. However, if we ask what connection people in certain churches felt to the saint, then Butler's theory holds up. The church of St. Michael that stood on the Tyne may not have been dedicated to the saint, but there was a significant association with him and people there had experienced his miraculous intercession. It will be argued later that stories of miracles help to flesh out the raw data provided by dedication lists, since they imply a genuine connection to the saint, rather than simply being a name to differentiate the church from others in the locality.<sup>545</sup> In this sense, narratives that connected a saint such as John to a particular place – whether it was a church where he had once cured local people, or the village where he was believed to have been born – were arguably as important as any official dedication to the saint.

We come now to the case of St. Cuthbert.<sup>546</sup> In terms of number and range of dedications he was undoubtedly the most popular of the northern saints. Arnold-

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<sup>541</sup> Gregory, 'Dedication Names', p. 380; Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol I, p. 392.

<sup>542</sup> RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, p. 154; RH, *History*, bk I, ch. 4, p. 17; JH, *Historia*, s.a. 1138, p. 290.

<sup>543</sup> *Vita Sancti Johannis, Episcopi Eboracensis, Auctore Folcardo*, ch. 4, pp. 246-7.

<sup>544</sup> Butler, 'Church Dedications', p. 46.

<sup>545</sup> See below, pp. 118-23.

<sup>546</sup> For a graphic representation of some of the conclusions drawn in this section, please refer to the tables and maps in the appendices, below, at pp. 221-5.

Foster listed around 70 churches as holding ‘ancient’ dedications to the saint, while David Farmer found 66 in England and 17 in Scotland.<sup>547</sup> This can be compared to two other Anglo-Saxon saints with regional significance and well-developed cults. St. Edmund had 50-60 dedications, while St. Æthelthryth was left with a mere 12.<sup>548</sup> All these figures require care. Arnold-Foster’s definition of ‘ancient’ was very wide-ranging, covering any dedication that could be proven to pre-date the nineteenth century. She was sceptical about how far her list for St. Edmund genuinely mapped on to the medieval situation, and proved that a number of churches no longer dedicated to Æthelthryth had once borne her name.<sup>549</sup> Given this, it is worth considering the figures for Cuthbert in more detail, and highlighting those examples that can be definitively ascribed to the twelfth-century or earlier (see figure 2 and figure 3).

St. Cuthbert had a greater range of dedications than his fellow northern saints. Yet there was still a strong concentration of churches in the north of England and south of Scotland. A number of scholars have commented on this strong bias to the saint’s home region. Arnold-Foster found it somewhat surprising given Cuthbert’s widespread fame.<sup>550</sup> However, Butler demonstrates that it is keeping with other Anglo-Saxon saints with a high number of dedications, including St. Edmund, who tended to have a regional association and ‘the most prominent number of dedications in their ‘home’ territory’.<sup>551</sup>

In terms of outliers, perhaps the most interesting is Wells, which is a significant institution that is geographically far removed from Cuthbert’s home territory. It may be that Cuthbert was sufficiently well known and considered suitably powerful that the odd dedication in a remote location was inevitable. However, some historical factors might provide a more tangible link between the saint and his south-west parish. It must be remembered that from the tenth century onwards there was a determined effort to associate the rise of Alfred and the house of Wessex with Cuthbert’s

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<sup>547</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol II, p. 86; Farmer, *Dictionary*, p. 95.

<sup>548</sup> For Edmund see Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol II, pp. 327-35, and Farmer, *Dictionary*, p. 121. For Æthelthryth see Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol II, pp. 363-9, and Farmer, *Dictionary*, pp. 138-9.

<sup>549</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, vol II, pp. 335 and 368 respectively.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89;

<sup>551</sup> Butler, ‘Church Dedications’, p. 45.



intervention.<sup>552</sup> This link was promoted by the Wessex kings as well as the northern clerical community, and it was this that Arnold-Foster believed lay behind the dedication of Wells.<sup>553</sup> More recently, Michael Costen has preferred to emphasise the associations of a later king in Alfred's line, Æthelstan.<sup>554</sup> Yet Costen admitted more research had to be done, not least because the earliest reference to the dedication of the church that he could find was twelfth century.<sup>555</sup> This, according to Costen, must have commemorated a rebuilding of the church, with the original association going back further. This seems solid reasoning, but as we have seen tracing dedications back beyond records is a perilous business. At the very least Wells might be a situation similar to that of the church of St. John Lee and John of Beverley. A long-standing association with a powerful saint, in this case due to the Wessex connection, was formalised at some point in or before the twelfth century through dedicating the church to Cuthbert.

The majority of dedications to Cuthbert were north of the Humber and Trent. The first church to take his name appears to have been Crayke in North Yorkshire.<sup>556</sup> Carlisle and Norham were also significant churches with early dedications to the saint. Norham took him as patron in 840, although at first the official title was the church of St. Peter, St. Cuthbert and St. Ceolwulf.<sup>557</sup> By the time Reginald was writing in the mid-twelfth century the church was chiefly associated with Cuthbert.<sup>558</sup> Twelfth-century charters clearly demonstrate that Carlisle was dedicated to Cuthbert at this time.<sup>559</sup>

Several other churches can be positively identified as having dedications from the twelfth century or earlier. Carham is mentioned in a writ of Queen Maud as a church of St. Cuthbert, and appears as a possession of Durham in the *Historia de*

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<sup>552</sup> For the historical background to St. Cuthbert's relationship with the house of Wessex see G. Bonner, 'St. Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street' in Bonner, Rollason and Stancliffe, *St. Cuthbert*, pp. 387-95, esp. pp. 388-91; D. Rollason, 'St. Cuthbert and Wessex: The Evidence of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 183', in *Ibid.*, pp. 413-36. See also above, p. 75.

<sup>553</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol II, p. 90.

<sup>554</sup> M. Costen, 'Pit-falls and Problems: Sources for the Study of Saints' Cults in the Diocese of Bath and Wells', in G. Jones (ed.), *Saints of Europe: Studies Towards a Survey of Cults and Culture* (Donington, 2003), pp. 92-102, at pp. 92-3.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>556</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol II p. 86.

<sup>557</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 5; Gregory, 'Dedication Names', p. 373.

<sup>558</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 20, pp. 41-4 and ch. 57, p. 115.

<sup>559</sup> *English Episcopal Acta XXX: Carlisle, 1133-1292*, ed. D. M. Smith (Oxford, 2005), no. 3.

*Sancto Cuthberto*.<sup>560</sup> The church in Darlington belonged to Durham Priory and was dedicated to St. Cuthbert.<sup>561</sup> Several churches are named by Reginald of Durham as being St. Cuthbert's. These include Bellingham (Northumberland), Kirkcudbright (Galloway), Lixtune (Cheshire), Lytham (Lancashire), Plumbland (Cumberland) and Slitrig (Teviotdale).<sup>562</sup> One other church, which was on Arnold-Foster's list, has a considerable amount of early evidence that is indicative of a dedication, without one ever being explicitly stated. This is Billingham in County Durham. The church and town were given to St. Cuthbert and later reaffirmed as his possessions.<sup>563</sup> The manner in which the *Libellus de exordio* reports this reaffirmation suggests that the church was officially dedicated to the saint.<sup>564</sup> However, this has to be balanced against wording elsewhere that refers to the town as a possession of Cuthbert alone, with no mention of a dedication.<sup>565</sup> Given the latter example comes from an earlier text, it is tempting to believe that the town and church were originally granted to the saint, and by the twelfth century this had been given added weight by dedicating the church to him.

A number of churches on Arnold-Foster's list can be shown to have had clear associations with Durham or St. Cuthbert at this time. Association and later dedication alone are not enough to presume a twelfth-century dedication, but it is still worth differentiating these from those churches with no discernible link to the saint. The vill of Bedlington was a long-standing possession of Durham.<sup>566</sup> Symeon said it was a stopping point of the clerks when they fled Durham for Lindisfarne during William I's reign.<sup>567</sup> Writing later in the century, Reginald said it had been granted to the descendents of one of the coffin-bearers, the man nicknamed Tod.<sup>568</sup> All of this suggests very close connections between the church and the wider community of St. Cuthbert, which at some point must have formulated itself into an official dedication, though it is unclear when this happened.

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<sup>560</sup> *HSC*, ch. 7. For the writ see T. J. South, 'Commentary', in *HSC*, p. 82.

<sup>561</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 322, fn 106; J. A. Cunningham, 'Hugh of le Puiset and the Church of St Cuthbert, Darlington', in P. Draper and N. Coldstream (eds), *Medieval Art and Architecture at Durham Cathedral*, pp. 163-9.

<sup>562</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 108-10, pp. 242-7; ch. 84-5, pp. 177-9; ch. 68-72, pp. 138-48; ch. 132-5, pp. 280-4; ch. 129, pp. 275-8; and ch. 136-41, pp. 284-9 respectively.

<sup>563</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 5.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, bk III, ch. 20.

<sup>565</sup> *HSC*, ch. 9 and ch. 23.

<sup>566</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 16; *HSC*, ch. 21.

<sup>567</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 15.

<sup>568</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 16, p. 29.

Embleton in Cumberland appears on Arnold-Foster's list and was mentioned by Reginald in a miracle story. The mother of the owner of this vill went to Farne and was cured of her physical impairment there.<sup>569</sup> It is possible that the dedication of the local church was made as an offering of thanks. Alternatively, it may have been the local dedication that suggested the appeal to Cuthbert in the first place. However, Reginald does not mention either of these as happening, so they can only ever be suppositions. While the location can be considered to be associated with the saint, there is not enough evidence to assume a dedication related to this miracle.

Hebburn, which was listed by Arnold-Foster as being an ancient dedication, was given to Aldwin and his companions before they moved to Durham by Bishop Walcher.<sup>570</sup> This suggests a long-standing association. Sedgfield, which was not on Arnold-Foster's list, also had close ties to Durham. Hemming, one of the descendents of the coffin-bearers, was the priest of this church in 1085.<sup>571</sup> A woman from nearby was cured of blindness by Cuthbert, although in reporting the story Reginald of Durham did not mention whether or not the church bore the saint's name.<sup>572</sup> Reginald also discussed the case of Ardene, which has been identified as Shustoke in Warwickshire, a place with a modern dedication to Cuthbert.<sup>573</sup> According to Reginald at least one twelfth-century priest always celebrated the feast of St. Cuthbert with the neighbouring people.<sup>574</sup> Two miracles were also reported as happening there, which were reported by the priest on a visit to Durham.<sup>575</sup> Such obvious devotion to Cuthbert is suggestive of a dedication, but this is not confirmed. Whether there was one or not at this time, there was clearly strong local feeling towards the saint.<sup>576</sup>

Some churches that are known to have borne Cuthbert's name in the Middle Ages require great care when discussing the twelfth century. Milbourne, in Westmorland, for example, is a medieval dedication, but one that was not founded

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<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 62.

<sup>570</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 21.

<sup>571</sup> *Durham Episcopal Charters, 1071-1152*, ed. H. S. Offler (Surtees Society clxxix, 1968), no. 5.

<sup>572</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 123, p. 269.

<sup>573</sup> For the identification see Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', p. 266, following A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The MS List of Churches Dedicated to St. Cuthbert, Attributed to Prior Wessington' *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland* 1<sup>st</sup> series, 7 (1936), pp. 151-77.

<sup>574</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 64, pp. 126-30.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 65, pp. 130-4. See below, pp. 168, 175 and 209-11.

<sup>576</sup> For further discussion of this see below, pp. 118-23.

until 1355.<sup>577</sup> Other churches also tend to have late evidence linking them to Cuthbert. Brattleby, the only medieval dedication to St. Cuthbert in Lincolnshire, is first given this name in 1520.<sup>578</sup> Whether this is because the dedication does not pre-date the sixteenth century, or because no records of it have survived, is impossible to say.

The places with the closest ties to St. Cuthbert were Farne, Lindisfarne, Chester-le-Street and Durham, and this was reflected in twelfth-century dedications. Durham cathedral and the church at Chester-le-Street were both dedicated to St. Mary and St. Cuthbert.<sup>579</sup> Yet records suggest that the latter had the predominant association. Grants to the monks of Durham were sometimes addressed to the church of St. Mary and St. Cuthbert and its monks, but on other occasions were to the prior and convent of St. Cuthbert.<sup>580</sup> The formula could therefore change to give greater weight to Cuthbert. Meanwhile on Lindisfarne, when the Benedictine priory was refounded at the end of the eleventh century, it was named in honour of St. Cuthbert.<sup>581</sup> Farne also had a chapel to the saint in the twelfth century.<sup>582</sup>

There could be a number of reasons why a particular church was dedicated to St. Cuthbert in this period. Lindisfarne, Farne, Chester-le-Street and Durham were directly associated with Cuthbert during his life, after his death, or both. It has often been the saint's post-mortem itinerancy that has been used to explain the high number of dedications across the north of England and south of Scotland. It was long thought that many of the dedications to Cuthbert are at places where his body rested during the wandering. Even scholars who were dismissive of the more fanciful tales from the twelfth-century texts agreed with this idea. Arnold-Foster believed that as many as 40 churches could be explained in this way.<sup>583</sup> Gregory highlighted Elsdon and Bellingham, both in Northumberland, as being particular cases where this was true.<sup>584</sup>

However, strong evidence for linking church dedications with St. Cuthbert's posthumous wanderings is noticeably lacking for most places. The theory is largely

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<sup>577</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol II, p. 90.

<sup>578</sup> Kaye, 'Lincolnshire Church Dedications', p. 19.

<sup>579</sup> Gregory, 'Dedication Names', p. 379.

<sup>580</sup> *English Episcopal Acta XXIV: Durham, 1153-1195*, ed. M. G. Snape (Oxford, 2002), no. 25 and no. 27 respectively.

<sup>581</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 45, pp. 91-2; see Gregory, 'Dedication Names', p. 379.

<sup>582</sup> Gregory, 'Dedication Names', p. 379.

<sup>583</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol II, p. 86.

<sup>584</sup> Gregory, 'Dedication Names', pp. 379-80.

based on a fifteenth-century work by Prior Wessington, which listed churches dedicated to Cuthbert that he believed to have been resting places for the saint's body.<sup>585</sup> Arnold-Foster found the prior's thesis to be plausible.<sup>586</sup> William Levison and Hamilton Thompson, on the other hand, were scathing of this idea; Levison in particular emphasised that one cannot trace the peregrinations of a saint by looking at much later church dedications.<sup>587</sup> Butler preferred to view most of the dedications as the work of Durham clerks and monks keen to secure possession of the churches in question, a device used by other powerful institutions, such as Bury St. Edmunds and Lichfield.<sup>588</sup> Thomas Owen Clancy recognised this as a common explanation for specific dedications.<sup>589</sup> He also noted that political power could come into play – using the example of Kirkcudbright, in Galloway, as a place where dedication to Cuthbert was evidence of expanding Northumbrian power and influence.<sup>590</sup> As with other recent historians, Clancy is largely dismissive of using dedications to assert a direct association with a saint, except when we have supporting evidence available to us.<sup>591</sup>

There are parallels for posthumous itinerancy being claimed as the source of church dedications. In the eighth century St. Aldhelm's body was moved from Doultling to Malmesbury, with crosses erected at mile-long intervals on the course of the journey. Three churches dedicated to Aldhelm later claimed to be built on the sites of the crosses. Yet as Butler points out, two of these, Broadway and Bishopstrow, are unlikely to have both been genuine locations passed by the body, since this would have meant a very circuitous route from origin to destination.<sup>592</sup> In this case, at least one location that was not visited by the body has been redefined as a resting place by later generations.

The same thing seems to have happened in the case of Cuthbert. It was said in the last chapter that the events of the wandering happened at a significant enough distance that many people were able to claim a connection to the coffin-bearers and

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<sup>585</sup> Levison, 'Medieval Church Dedications', p. 72.

<sup>586</sup> Arnold-Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications* vol II, pp. 86-7.

<sup>587</sup> Levison, 'Medieval Church Dedications', p. 72; Hamilton Thompson, 'Churches Dedicated to St. Cuthbert', pp. 151-77

<sup>588</sup> Butler, 'Church Dedications', p. 47. See also the discussion of Crowland using dedications to St. Guthlac in this way in Kaye, 'Lincolnshire Church Dedications', p. 17.

<sup>589</sup> Clancy, 'Paradigms and Problems', pp. 13-14.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-20.

<sup>592</sup> Butler, 'Church Dedications', p. 47.

their associates.<sup>593</sup> The same is true of locations – with no solid evidence for most of the places stopped at, and a seven-year window within which to work, Prior Wessington's list and local tradition could claim as many associations as they desired. Nor should such ideas among the people of these places be dismissed as unimportant fantasy. While such beliefs tell us little about when certain dedications were founded, or where the body of St. Cuthbert actually rested, the fact that local tradition ascribed this meaning to these places is important. If a particular community thought that their church was patronised by Cuthbert because the saint himself had once been bodily present, it makes the connection they felt to the saint stronger. Such local traditions were the foundations on which a view of the saint as a patron and binding force within the community could be built.

The power of these local traditions goes some way to explaining the overall pattern of dedications shown in figure 2. Several definite dedications correspond with places directly associated with the saint. The largest concentration is provided by an arc from Farne and Lindisfarne down along the Tweed towards Melrose. This was the area in which Cuthbert spent most of his life. Those churches that had a definite twelfth-century association with the saint are also focused on the north-east, with four of the six tracing a line up the North Sea coast from near Durham to the coast adjacent to Lindisfarne. As a significant Anglo-Saxon saint it is not surprising to see outliers. In terms of definite dedications, Wells has already been discussed, while Holme-Lacy in Hertfordshire was the product of the Lacy family, whose chief baronial interests were in the north of England.

Those places where local tradition claimed the site was a resting place of the saint's body, but whose date of dedication is uncertain, also provide an interesting pattern. Obviously they had to be in locations where the wanderers might plausibly have stopped, hence the band across the north of England. There are also interesting groupings – in North Yorkshire, around Penrith, and in the south-west corner of Cumbria. It could be that local stories designating a site as a resting place of the saint spread to other villages in the area, and were applied to these new locations as well.

Mapping churches known to have been dedicated to saints such as Cuthbert in the twelfth century provides useful information on the spread and strength of a cult. It

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<sup>593</sup> See above, pp. 90-1.

identifies a network of ecclesiastical associations based on connections to the saint. It also raises a question of what these dedications meant to people. Having pieced together this network, is it possible to build on it and examine what meaning, if any, local people placed on the dedication of their church to a patron saint? Graham Jones saw this as a vital step for any dedication study, and it is especially relevant for the current study, which seeks to find ties of identification and community, as well as social networks.<sup>594</sup>

Not every church dedication is likely to have meant something to the local population. Lawrence Butler suggested that many were names imposed by powerful ecclesiastical institutions. He suggested that one means of differentiating between these dedications and those representing the traditions of the local community is to consider the power of the home institution of the saint.<sup>595</sup> In this case, dedications to Cuthbert, with the powerful church of Durham behind them, should be treated with great caution, since the opportunity to impose a name on a church, especially one owned by the monks, was very high. Yet this rough test of local devotion is based entirely on supposition and the premise that the saints of powerful churches did not have local communities in other areas devoted to them. This idea cannot be substantiated by evidence.

An alternative method is to look for other associations with the saint in the same place. For example, if the name of the location derives from the saint, it can suggest that the attachment to that saint was the most significant element of the local community's sense of itself.<sup>596</sup> However, this theory does not always hold up under scrutiny, especially in the case of saints with particular political associations. Kirkcudbright, for example, is named after St. Cuthbert, but at the time the name was chosen it owed more to Northumbrian political influence than local feeling.<sup>597</sup>

A subtler and more accurate means of considering what a dedication meant to the population living in the neighbourhood of a church can be gained by looking at stories that were told by them about the saint. By turning to local narratives and traditions, we are able to see ideas and understandings being applied to the network

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<sup>594</sup> Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded', p. 216. On the definition and differentiation of a community and a network, see above, pp. 11-15.

<sup>595</sup> Butler, 'Church Dedications', p. 47.

<sup>596</sup> Crawford, 'The Saint Clement Dedications', pp. 196-7.

<sup>597</sup> Clancy, 'Paradigms and Problems', p. 15.

of dedications. These allowed local people to identify with the saint and see him or her as a patron.<sup>598</sup> This is the aspect of dedications that Thomas Clancy meant when he called for greater appreciation of their dynamism and activity. As he said: ‘this is a different history of church dedications and saints’ cults: the production *by* such dedications of associations, convictions and relationships; the bonds of society and the solace of individuals.’<sup>599</sup> While I do not believe that such relationships were necessarily produced by a dedication – it is equally possible, and in some case more likely, that the dedication resulted from the relationships – the connection between dedications and the living cult is a vital step for the present study.

The problem with using narratives in this way, as with dedications themselves, is the limited survival of evidence. Only those stories that were written down had any chance of retention, and of these an unknown number may have been lost. Nevertheless, in terms of St. Cuthbert’s twelfth-century cult we are luckier than one might expect, for Reginald of Durham proved to be an assiduous collector of stories from churches across the north. However, this raises further issues, for only those stories that were reported to Reginald and deemed worthy enough by him to record were written down. It is unlikely that every miracle story told about St. Cuthbert, especially away from Durham, found its way to Reginald. The oral cult was always larger than the written record shows.<sup>600</sup> As a result, it is likely that more locations had narratives about the saint than we can see. Even so, the breadth of Reginald’s text means that it provides a reasonable starting point.

As for the question of worthiness, there must have been a degree of editorial control of the tales that were written down.<sup>601</sup> Sally Crumplin has suggested that Reginald was responding to local and universal pressures and writing in order to modernise the cult of St. Cuthbert. Locally, the new-found stability of Durham meant vengeance stories were no longer as useful as they had been. Meanwhile across Western Europe there was a growing preference for medical cures over other

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<sup>598</sup> On the importance of narratives to shaping meaning, understanding and ultimately allowing a process of identification to develop, see above, pp. 18-21. Graham Jones also emphasises the importance of understanding the stories of a saint and what they meant to local people. See Jones, ‘Comparative Research Rewarded’, p. 259.

<sup>599</sup> Clancy, ‘Paradigms and Problems’, p. 20.

<sup>600</sup> On miracle texts being unable to record the full extent of an oral cult see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp 14-15.

<sup>601</sup> See above, pp. 34-48.



miracles.<sup>602</sup> Stories that involved miracle cures rather than tales of revenge were therefore going to be more conducive to Reginald's purpose, and have a greater likelihood of being recorded. However, Koopmans has raised questions about these sorts of readings of Reginald's work. She says that 'it seems better to read the text as Reginald presents it – as an effort designed to get more stories of Cuthbert's miracles into a secure written form'.<sup>603</sup> This seems to fit the stories gathered from certain locations better than Crumplin's conclusion. The case of a labourer named Sproich, who will be discussed later in the chapter, is a good example. His family experienced a series of miracles in Bellingham that were later recorded by Reginald.<sup>604</sup> The first was indeed a miracle cure, but the remaining two revolved around the protection of the family's property and possessions.<sup>605</sup> This is of course just one example, but it demonstrates that Reginald was not solely focused on cures. Other tales of the protection of animals or the attachment of objects to people seem old-fashioned, folkloric inclusions for an author constructing a careful reframing of the cult.<sup>606</sup> In light of this, it is preferable to follow Koopmans' assessment. Doing so suggests that the high number of cure stories was as much a product of the supplicants' needs and ideas, as Reginald's editorial choices. One can, therefore, approach the text with a degree of confidence in the idea that it offers a snapshot of some of the smaller communities in the north that had a church dedicated to Cuthbert and told stories about the saint.

Several communities outside the traditional centres of Durham, Lindisfarne and Farne contributed such stories to Reginald's work. The process by which the narratives were brought to the monk tended to follow similar patterns. A miracle attributed to St. Cuthbert happened to a local person, usually either in the church bearing the saint's name or on the saint's feast day. The story of this miracle spread among the local population and was reported to the priest of the church (assuming, of course, that the priest had not witnessed the miracle himself, which was often the case). At a later date, the priest visited Durham and while there told the monks the story, which was then

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<sup>602</sup> S. Crumplin, 'Modernising St. Cuthbert: Reginald of Durham's Miracle Collection', in K. Cooper and J. Gregory (eds), *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 179-91.

<sup>603</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 122.

<sup>604</sup> See below, pp. 172 and 175.

<sup>605</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 108-10, pp. 242-7.

<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 26, pp. 57-60; ch. 86-8, pp. 180-8; ch. 111, pp. 247-8; ch. 133, pp. 281-2.

written down by Reginald.<sup>607</sup> If not the priest, the person who experienced the miracle might travel to Durham themselves in order to give thanks and report the miracle whilst there.<sup>608</sup> In some cases the story was reported by an individual with a connection to the monastery who happened to be present, for example a labourer who worked for Durham's almoner.<sup>609</sup> Finally, some stories were heard by friends of Reginald and reported back to the monk.<sup>610</sup> In these various ways, local narratives of Cuthbert's miracles and their impact on individuals and communities were spread, and ultimately found their way into Reginald's text. Rachel Koopmans' work on miracle tracts shows that this process was common in many other places where miracles were recorded.<sup>611</sup>

A reasonably high number of small communities with a church or chapel dedicated to St. Cuthbert told stories associated with the saint and his miracles. As noted above, Bellingham in Northumberland was the site of a paralysis cure and two punishment miracles for theft.<sup>612</sup> In Norham a devotee was released from imprisonment and an oath-breaker was punished in a duel.<sup>613</sup> Further afield, Lixtune in Cheshire, Lytham in Lancashire and Plumblund in Cumbria all experienced miracles that benefitted the local community or individuals within it.<sup>614</sup> In Scotland, Kirkcudbright in Galloway, Slitrig in Teviotdale, and an unnamed church in Lothian all had tales involving the saint.<sup>615</sup> Finally, Ardene also experienced Cuthbert's heavenly assistance.<sup>616</sup> These all appear to have been communal narratives – told and retold by the local population before they reached Reginald's ears. As well as these communal narratives, Reginald recorded the locations of various miracles experienced by individuals. He also noted where pilgrims to Durham had come from. The result of this information is a fairly detailed map of locations connected to St. Cuthbert through the experience of miracles (figure 4).

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<sup>607</sup> For examples of this process in action see *De Admirandis*, ch. 57, p. 115; ch. 64-65, pp. 126-34; and ch. 68-72, pp. 138-48.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 132-135, pp. 280-4.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 108-10, pp. 242-7.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 84-5, pp. 177-9.

<sup>611</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 9-27, esp. pp. 25-7.

<sup>612</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 108-110, pp. 242-7.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 20, pp. 41-4 and ch. 57, p. 115.

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 68-72, pp. 138-48; ch. 132-5, pp. 280-4; and ch. 129, pp. 275-8 respectively.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 84-5, pp. 177-9; ch. 136-9, pp. 284-9; and ch. 86-88, pp. 180-8 respectively.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 64-5, pp. 126-34.

The stories that were told in these places will be discussed in more depth shortly. First, it is worth reflecting on the geographical spread of these locations. Crumplin's assessment that these miracles demonstrate Cuthbert's strong presence in a network of cults across northern England and southern Scotland is clearly supported by the evidence.<sup>617</sup> The locations that sent stories to Reginald are fairly widely distributed, but they are dominated by places in northern England and southern Scotland. In this sense they match the overall pattern of dedications seen in figure 2. This adds weight to the idea that one can use dedications as a means to see the spread and strength of the cult, since the two sets of evidence support each other. The data allows us to say that Cuthbert had a wide distribution of saintly patronage, albeit focused on his home territory in former Northumbria.

Looking at the locations where stories of miracles were told allows for a clearer picture of where St. Cuthbert acted as a heavenly patron. The communal narratives in particular offer a window on an active cult within a set location, often one with a church dedicated to the saint. The communities telling these stories were imaginatively identifying with the saint of their church, and in doing so binding the individuals involved together as a community under the saint's patronage. The exact manner in which this could work, and the affect that saintly intervention could have on communal identification, is the subject of the rest of this chapter, which examines these stories and what they meant to people in greater detail.

## **PEACE, PROTECTION AND SANCTUARY**

The provision of peace and protection was a significant part of the relationship between a patron and their clients. The medieval concept of peace was complex, based on both classical and biblical inheritance.<sup>618</sup> According to T. B. Lambert, peace

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<sup>617</sup> Crumplin, 'Modernizing St. Cuthbert', p. 190.

<sup>618</sup> On the concept of peace in the Middle Ages see J. Firnhaber-Baker, 'From God's Peace to the King's Order: Late Medieval Limitations on Non-Royal Warfare', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 23 (2006), pp. 19-30; T. Head, 'Peace and Power in France Around the Year 1000' *Essays in Medieval Studies* 23 (2006), pp. 1-17; T. Head and R. Landes, 'Introduction', in *Idem, Peace of God*, pp. 1-20; T. B. Lambert and D. Rollason (eds), *Peace and Protection in the Middle Ages* (Toronto, 2009), esp. pp. 1-16; T. Renna, 'The Idea of Peace in the West, 500-1500', *Journal of Medieval History* 6:2 (1980), pp. 143-67. On peace among humans as an institution of Christ see H. Cowdrey, 'The Peace and Truce of God', *Past and Present* 46 (1970), pp. 42-67, at pp. 51-2.

and protection were not only more closely linked in the medieval worldview than they are today, but were to a certain extent interchangeable terms. Being under someone's peace meant being subject to their protective power, and that someone could just as easily be a saint as a living lord.<sup>619</sup> A worldly patron was expected to provide security and protection for his or her clients, and in return these clients were to maintain their lord's peace and uphold loyalty and devotion to him or her.<sup>620</sup> In many ways, the relationship of people to their local saint mirrored this. There was, however, the additional element that, as God's immediate representative in the locality, the saint also had access to the true and eternal peace, which was the exclusive provision of the Lord.<sup>621</sup>

Having previously lived within the community, and still being present through their relics or the dedication of the church, local saints were in a unique position to perform the role of linking earthly and heavenly protection. This provision of peace was highly significant, as without it there would have been no order or unity, two vital elements that allowed people to understand themselves as a single community. The importance of peace to building a sense of community was recognised by Michael Goodich, who described local saints as recognised peacemakers, and therefore symbols of social and communal unity.<sup>622</sup> Speaking more generally, Lambert suggested that in theory 'peace defined a group, a community, with a positive obligation to support and help one another'.<sup>623</sup> Peace and the cessation of any hostilities within a group were frequently based on the conception of bonds between the individuals involved. These imagined bonds, which provided a sense of identification and belonging together, are an essential feature if a group is to be described as a community.<sup>624</sup>

The provision of justice was an important part of peace and protection, and medieval systems of justice frequently rested on ideas of the holy. Oaths were the most important way of establishing the veracity of a plea, while ordeals involving

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<sup>619</sup> T. B. Lambert, 'Introduction: some approaches to peace and protection in the middle ages' in Lambert and Rollason, *Peace and Protection*, pp. 1-16.

<sup>620</sup> See Cowdrey, 'Peace and Truce of God', pp. 42-3.

<sup>621</sup> Callahan, 'The Peace of God', p. 175; Cowdrey, 'Peace and Truce of God', pp. 50-1.

<sup>622</sup> Goodich, 'Miracles and Disbelief', p. 32.

<sup>623</sup> Lambert, 'Introduction', p. 6.

<sup>624</sup> See the Introduction, above, pp. 11-18.

blessed fire, water, or combat served as a last resort in the search for the truth.<sup>625</sup> Both brought the supernatural firmly into the court of law, and both often relied on the local saint. The people of Norham believed their church, whose patron was St. Cuthbert, possessed the remains of a table at which the saint used to eat. The wood from this table had been shaped into a cross. Reginald of Durham wrote that ‘all the people from that province who were about to make an oath (*jusjurandum*) became accustomed to making those oaths (*sacramenta*) over that cross.’<sup>626</sup> These oaths were part of a system of local justice built on a mutual understanding of the power of the relic and the significance of swearing on it. This provided the people of Norham with common ground on which to build a communal sense of right and wrong, and ensure that this was followed. A shared value system such as this was vital if the community was going to function successfully as a united entity, and has already been established as one of the elements that aids a process of identification.<sup>627</sup>

The power to ensure justice, and therefore maintain the boundaries of right and wrong, was given over to the saint. When an oath was sworn, God was brought into the equation, and divine justice was sure to guarantee the success of the person in the right. Reginald recorded a story about a man who swore a false oath before he was due to prove his innocence in combat. As a punishment for this act of perjury, Cuthbert partially blinded the man and gave him a limp. The combat was short, and fatal for the transgressor. Reginald concluded: ‘having seen this happen, the people of that place dissolved with much fear, and, in order to translate how terrible in the vengeance of justice Blessed Cuthbert could be, they thoroughly informed enough people of the horrible miracle.’<sup>628</sup> In spreading the story of the miracle, the people of Norham constructed their own narrative of events, one which proved local justice was ensured by their saint. Reginald claimed to have heard the account from the priest of Norham, which fits the pattern of how stories from outside of Durham were acquired

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<sup>625</sup> R. Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford, 1986). See also Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 108-11, and Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 18-9.

<sup>626</sup> ‘omnis plebs eomprovincialis jusjurandum factura, supra illam facere sacramenta illa assuta est’, *De Admirandis*, ch. 57, p. 115.

<sup>627</sup> See the Introduction, above, pp. 15-18.

<sup>628</sup> ‘quod videntes quique comprovinciales plurimo timore dissoluti sunt, et quam terribilis in judicii reddenda ultione Beatus Cuthbertus fuisset, satis horrendo miraculo edocti sunt’, *Ibid.*, ch. 57, p. 115.

by him.<sup>629</sup> The high level of specific detail certainly reads like a story based on a particular experience.<sup>630</sup> The narrative also corresponds to the style highlighted by Koopmans as a feature of twelfth-century miracle tracts: local oral tales collected by an interested author, such as Reginald.<sup>631</sup> All of this suggests that the story was a product of a local oral culture in Norham. This, then, was a collective narrative that helped to construct communal belief in the justice of the saint.<sup>632</sup> The power of the oaths was thus reaffirmed, and this uniting principle of the local community was strengthened.

In underpinning systems of regular justice, the saints performed a vital role in the construction of social bonds. They might also intervene in irregular circumstances, and in doing so mend ties that had been broken.<sup>633</sup> The townspeople of Hexham could expect their saints to avenge wrong-doing by members of the community. In the third chapter of *De Sanctis*, Aelred told of a local noble, who had dragged a neighbouring maiden from her home and was going to rape her. When the maiden's brother tried to intervene, the noble murdered him. The saints reacted against these violent acts. The noble's arm suddenly stiffened, withered and contracted. He eventually went blind and deaf, and died wretchedly.<sup>634</sup> Aelred had no doubt that this was an example of the saints of Hexham maintaining peace and justice in the locality.

This narrative also suggests the saints could help mend splits in the community. The noble of the story was a named inhabitant of the town who 'was accustomed to frequent this holy church of Hexham on the days of greatest solemnity.'<sup>635</sup> The family who suffered at his hand were also local. In abusing his fellow townspeople the noble broke the neighbourly bond that tied himself and the family together as members of the community of Hexham. However, the saints punished the man for his transgression, did justice for the crime, and returned the community to a state of peace. It is also worth noting that in describing the man as a noble, the story suggests

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<sup>629</sup> See above, pp. 25-7, 45 and 121-2; see below, pp. 201-2. On the manner in which stories of miracles travelled from the initial recipient to the author of texts such as this see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 12-18, esp. pp. 16-17; Bull, *Miracles of Our Lady*, pp. 34-8; and Birkett, *Jocelin of Furness*, pp. 115-27.

<sup>630</sup> See the Introduction, pp. 40-7.

<sup>631</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 121-2.

<sup>632</sup> See the discussion on community, identification and narrativity, above, pp. 11-21.

<sup>633</sup> For the mending of broken communal bonds by a saint in Flanders see G. Koziol, 'Monks, Feuds, and the Making of Peace in Eleventh-Century Flanders', in Head and Landes, *Peace of God*, pp. 239-58, especially p. 250.

<sup>634</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 3, pp. 181-2.

<sup>635</sup> 'hic sanctam Haugustaldensem ecclesiam diebus maxime sollempnibus frequentare solebat', *Ibid.*, ch. 3, p. 181.

an imbalance of social standing between him and his victims. The authority of the saints thus appears to have cut across other social boundaries at moments such as this one. This was not only true of the event described, but also of the story told about it. The personal narrative of a young woman threatened by a neighbouring noble had been picked up and recorded by Aelred, son of the local priest and later monk of Rievaulx. In both deed and narration the saints' intervention was crossing social boundaries. This ability of miracle stories to permeate such boundaries was not unusual, as Koopmans has pointed out, and it should be considered an important aspect of a shared oral culture.<sup>636</sup>

The idea of a community being healed, its civic bonds mended, by resort to the local saint also occurred in the story of the youth facing execution mentioned in the previous chapter.<sup>637</sup> He was to be put to death for committing a crime because there was no surety for him. According to local custom, his crime would usually have been put before a group of his peers, who had come together to represent each other legally and provide indemnity for one another should an individual in the group commit a crime.<sup>638</sup> Nobody came forward to represent the youth, leaving him outside of the legal ties of the community. In this situation Aelred wrote that the young man turned 'to the common refuge', that is, Wilfrid and the other saints.<sup>639</sup> The aid the saints sent was a slight delay in the execution, followed by the appearance of two men offering the required surety.<sup>640</sup> This represented the restitution of proper civic bonds; the youth was brought back within the accepted legal boundaries of local society.

The saints helped this individual by giving him back a place in the community. In doing so they healed the community itself. Aelred presented the wider populace as initially baying for blood, and then laughing at the young man. Yet by the end of the story the youth's words had become a common saying among the local people, as the

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<sup>636</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 16.

<sup>637</sup> See above, p. 79.

<sup>638</sup> For the custom of surety in England see J. Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law: Law and Society in England from the Norman Conquest to Magna Carta* (Harlow, 1996), pp. 61-9, esp. pp. 63-6; B. Lyon, *A Constitutional and Legal History of Medieval England* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York and London, 1980), pp. 195-7.

<sup>639</sup> 'ad commune refugium', *De Sanctis*, ch. 1, p. 176.

<sup>640</sup> For an interesting parallel to this story see *The Book of Sainte Foy*, bk I, ch. 30, pp. 99-101, where every time a lord tried to hang an innocent man, the accused was miraculously set down again after praying to St. Foy.

wider populace were brought back to proper devotion to the saints.<sup>641</sup> This, along with the mention of Wilfrid as a 'common refuge', indicates the saints were consciously held as a focus of unity in the local community.<sup>642</sup>

A similar story of a criminal's rehabilitation was told in Beverley.<sup>643</sup> When the protagonist was caught everyone agreed, by lawful judgement, that he should be executed. The individual was beyond the bounds of civil society according to the just decision of the community. The author of the story juxtaposed this human justice with the justice of God, 'from whose mercy no one except unbelievers is excluded.'<sup>644</sup> The criminal turned to God, through his local representative, St. John. The saint removed the fetters restricting the criminal and he was able to escape, walking the twelve miles to Beverley minster, where he offered the fetters and told everyone his story. The author said that 'during the several days he stayed with the canons of the church, by the intervention of his beloved John, he was made peaceful from being a robber and a lamb from being a wolf.'<sup>645</sup> Through the intervention of the local saint this individual had received personal peace. In making the individual peaceful, the saint also secured peace for the community, which was now free from the individual's crimes. Thus the individual was rehabilitated and peace and unity returned to the local community.

Stories of criminals being freed in this way were not uncommon during this period; they appear in texts from across Western Europe.<sup>646</sup> Goodrich has observed that such narratives were often set during a period of unsettled political conditions or military conflict.<sup>647</sup> It is therefore unsurprising to find several of the most detailed accounts from the north of England occurring during the reign of King Stephen, a

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<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 1, pp. 176-7. See above, pp. 79.

<sup>642</sup> On local saints healing communal wounds and providing local unity see Goodich, 'Miracles and Disbelief', pp. 32-3. On the relationship of such social healing to earthly and heavenly justice see E. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability* (Ann Arbor, 2010), pp. 175-9.

<sup>643</sup> *MSJ*, pp. 276-8.

<sup>644</sup> 'a Cujus misericordia nemo nisi infidelis excluditur', *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>645</sup> 'Qui dum per aliquot dies cum canonicis ecclesiae moraretur, interventu dilecti sui Johannis, de raptore pacificus, et de lupo effectus est agnus', *Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>646</sup> See, for example, *LE*, bk III, ch. 33, pp. 320-5; *The Book of Sainte Foy*, bk I, ch. 31, pp. 102-3, bk I, ch. 32, pp. 103-4, and bk II, ch. 6, pp. 128-9.

<sup>647</sup> Goodich, 'Miraculous Military Escapes', p. 6.



period perceived, and frequently experienced, by religious authors as one of unrest and even turmoil.<sup>648</sup>

Megan Cassidy-Welch's study of escape stories suggests that the criminal was depicted as showing genuine repentance for his or her actions by turning to the saint. It was their faith in the saint that removed the taint of their sin, and thus freed them from their chains.<sup>649</sup> Physical confinement therefore emerges in these stories as a metaphor for spiritual captivity, with the release representing the spiritual freedom of those who turn to God.<sup>650</sup> Yet there was also a more immediate earthly connotation for the individuals who appeared in these tales. Cassidy-Welch shows that great importance was laid on the act of travelling to the shrine of the saint responsible for the release and telling one's story while there. This act bound the individual in question to the saint, and thus created a bond between that person and the other members of the saint's community.<sup>651</sup> The narrating of a story added personal meaning to the ties that bound the saint's collective together. That collective was therefore not simply a network of people sharing the same saint, but a community who felt close, personal connections through their relationship to the same heavenly being. The individual from Beverley was therefore far from unique. He was just one example of a person who, through the act of narrating a personal story of saintly redemption and freedom, became integrated into a particular community.

Not everyone freed from prison by the saints was described as being in a morally ambiguous state. The most common supplicants in our sources were those who had been falsely imprisoned. Cassidy-Welch notes that most people released were described as innocent, good, honest, or by a similar adjective. While those who were actual criminals were freed due to their contrition and repentance, the innocent were freed because they demonstrated unshakeable faith in the saint.<sup>652</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> See, for example, *De Admirandis*, ch. 90, pp. 193-7. For the experience of northern churches during this period as one of considerable difficulty see J. Burton, 'Citadels of God: Monasteries, Violence, and the Struggle for Power in Northern England, 1135-1154' *ANS* 31 (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 17-30.

<sup>649</sup> M. Cassidy-Welch, *Imprisonment in the Medieval Religious Imagination, c. 1150-1400* (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 53.

<sup>650</sup> For the close association in religious texts between physical and spiritual confinement see *Ibid.*, pp. 1-14.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56. On the importance of narrating a miracle story to communal bonds see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 21-3 and 26. See above, p. 95.

<sup>652</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Imprisonment*, pp. 53-4.

St. John was known to have freed people who had appealed to his aid while unjustly incarcerated.<sup>653</sup> St. Cuthbert was equally diligent at helping his people. Sometimes the imprisonment was due to an error of judgement by the local lay authorities.<sup>654</sup> On other occasions, malice or extortion was to blame.<sup>655</sup> Reginald told the story of a man named William Sergeant, a member of the *Haliwerfolc* whose lands were attacked by a neighbour, Roger Pavie. William made for the refuge of the local churchyard, a site considered a place of peace and protection by local people.

Unfortunately for William, he did not make it to the cemetery before being captured. He therefore turned to St. Cuthbert for help, and the saint obliged, striking Roger Pavie down with a grievous illness, and sending a messenger demanding the prisoner's release. When this was unsuccessful, Cuthbert miraculously released William and led him to safety.<sup>656</sup> The message of the tale was clear: as long as the people of St. Cuthbert were suitably devoted to him, and put faith in his power, he could offer them justice and peace.<sup>657</sup> Once again, the stories of such events helped to establish expectations of how a saint might act, while at the same time providing those helped with a common connection to other people under the patronage of the same saint.

The idea of a local saint or church offering protection to those who found themselves on the wrong side of human justice was formalised in sanctuary rights. Sanctuary was a long-standing tradition. In theory all public churches had the right to offer a form of general sanctuary, though in practice this depended on local and national circumstances. There were also heavy restrictions on who could access it, both in terms of the social position of the supplicant and the crime of which they were accused.<sup>658</sup> Nevertheless, general sanctuary had become an important part of the overall system of justice in medieval England.

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<sup>653</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 302-307.

<sup>654</sup> For miracles involving this type of false imprisonment see *De Admirandis*, ch. 46, pp. 92-4, ch. 49, pp. 101-4, ch. 50, pp. 104-6, ch. 93, pp. 205-8, and ch. 95, pp. 210-12.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 20, pp. 41-4.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 90, pp. 193-7.

<sup>657</sup> For further discussion of escape narratives in eleventh-, twelfth- and thirteenth-century hagiography see M. Goodich, 'The Miraculous Military Escape in Canonization Documents' in *Idem, Lives and Miracles*, pp. 1-16.

<sup>658</sup> W. Jordan, 'A Fresh Look at Medieval Sanctuary', in R. M. Karras, J. Kaye and E. A. Matter (eds), *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, (Philadelphia 2008), pp. 17-32, at pp. 18-27.

Recent discussions by historians working in this field have shown how sanctuary fitted within the wider justice system. It was not, as was often formerly believed, an example of ecclesiastical privilege working against central state power. Rather, the concept of sanctuary developed hand-in-hand with royal control over the law. Both were part of a single process by which private feud was replaced by central justice. David Hall has said this is why it was royal power that ratified sanctuary and dealt with sanctuary seekers.<sup>659</sup> It also explains why the fines for breaking church peace were equal to those for breaking the king's peace.<sup>660</sup> William Jordan and Karl Shoemaker have therefore concluded that sanctuary was not an imposition of the church, but an important part of an integrated system of justice that was founded on a combination of royal and divine power.<sup>661</sup> It was compatible with contemporary understandings of justice and, as pointed out by Trisha Olson, conformed to medieval ideas of dispute resolution, in particular that the proper gesture given in the right manner could redeem a wrong that had been done.<sup>662</sup>

As well as the general protection offered by all public churches, some ecclesiastical buildings had exceptional sanctuary rights that had been granted to them by royal charter. Historians have come to know such institutions as chartered sanctuaries. The number of churches with these privileges was limited. William Jordan lists only Westminster, St. Martin-le-Grand (London), Durham, Beverley, Holyrood and a handful of Cistercian abbeys whose claims can be contested.<sup>663</sup> However, the numbers are not as simple as this. Hexham, Ripon, St. Peter's York and Tynemouth all had traditions of chartered sanctuary at some point in their history.<sup>664</sup> And such claims were not restricted to the north of England. Battle Abbey, for example, had similar rights.<sup>665</sup> In general, three things made these chartered sanctuaries special places of

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<sup>659</sup> D. Hall, 'The Sanctuary of St Cuthbert' in Bonner, Rollason and Stancliffe, *St. Cuthbert*, pp. 425-36, at p. 425.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 428-9.

<sup>661</sup> Jordan, 'Medieval Sanctuary', pp. 29-32; K. Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime in the Middle Ages, 400-1500* (New York, 2011), pp. ix-xiv, 1-6 and 112-26.

<sup>662</sup> T. Olson, 'Sanctuary and Penitential Rebirth in the Central Middle Ages', in A. Musson (ed.), *Boundaries of the Law: Geography, Gender and Jurisdiction in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 38-52, at pp. 38-9.

<sup>663</sup> Jordan, 'Medieval Sanctuary', p. 18.

<sup>664</sup> For Tynemouth see J. C. Cox, *The Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers of Medieval England* (London, 1911), pp. 166-74; in addition to these examples, see the discussion of the priory of Wetherhall in *Ibid.*, pp. 174-6.

<sup>665</sup> *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. E. Searle (Oxford, 1980), pp. 68-70.

refuge. They could protect a wider range of people and crimes than general sanctuaries. They covered a larger area. And in some cases, the supplicants could stay there indefinitely, while with general sanctuaries they had to leave after thirty seven to forty days.<sup>666</sup>

Before considering the effects of sanctuary, both general and chartered, on the formation of communities, it is necessary to examine the rights of the northern churches in greater depth. Shoemaker notes that the evidence for the post-Conquest period comes from chronicle accounts that sought to prove the rights of their church while also putting pressure on current kings by describing (or perhaps inventing) the actions of former rulers.<sup>667</sup> As will be shown, this is certainly true in the case of Durham. However, it is important to recognise that these narratives formed a body of tradition in which people in the region, if not beyond, believed. These narratives of the past shaped the accepted norms of the present, and as such tell us a great deal about how sanctuary was understood by the people of Durham in the twelfth century.

The monks of Durham traced their church's sanctuary rights back to a decree of Guthred, a Danish king of York. This tradition first appeared in the *Historia Sancto Cuthberto*, a source with which Symeon and the other monks were familiar.<sup>668</sup> In the *Historia* version of the story St. Cuthbert appeared to the head of the wanderers from Lindisfarne, Eadred, and told him to go to the Danes and appoint Guthred king. When this had been done, Eadred was to tell the new monarch that he was to give Cuthbert all the land between the Tyne and the Wear, and to grant that anyone fleeing to the saint 'whether on account of homicide or for any other necessity, may have peace for thirty-seven days and nights'.<sup>669</sup> This was duly done, Guthred became king and St. Cuthbert received the required lands and rights.

Several later narrative accounts repeated this story, although the exact details varied in each rendition. The *Chronicon Monasterii Dunelmensis* said that on being left without a king, the Danes and Angles of Northumbria turned as one to Eadred, who received a vision from St. Cuthbert in which Guthred was nominated as the ruler. Because the saint had freed him and raised him to the kingship, he was told to institute

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<sup>666</sup> Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 145-51.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-108.

<sup>668</sup> See above, pp. 22-4 and 73-5.

<sup>669</sup> 'uel pro homicidio uel pro aliqua necessitate, habeat pacem per triginta septem dies et noctes', *HSC*, ch. 13.

a peace that would offer merciful refuge to those who fled to the saint's body. Anyone who infringed this peace was to be fined 1,200 *oris*. Cuthbert was also given the land between the Tyne and Wear, and the church of Hexham. Finally, the chronicle states that Alfred, king of the Southern Angles, confirmed all these grants, including the sanctuary rights.<sup>670</sup>

Ted Johnson Smith suggested that the inclusion of Alfred in the *CMD* version was probably a later interpolation. However, Smith does think that certain other details are 'more specific than the usual embellishments'.<sup>671</sup> These include the fine, and the fact that specific places are mentioned in the text. Smith therefore suggests that the *CMD* and *Historia* may have been based on a shared earlier source which described the deeds of Guthred, with the former utilising it in greater detail.<sup>672</sup>

The story of the granting of sanctuary by Guthred and Alfred was told again in Symeon's *Libellus*. The details again change slightly. In Symeon's version, the elevation of Guthred was a separate incident to the granting of lands and rights. Guthred was made king following a vision of St. Cuthbert, but it was after he was already on the throne that the saint appeared again, this time to order him to make the church a place of refuge for fugitives, with thirty-seven days of peace granted to whoever fled to Cuthbert's body.<sup>673</sup> As in the account in the *CMD*, Alfred was also said to have ratified this arrangement: 'not only King Guthred himself but also the most powerful King Alfred (who has already been mentioned) made these things known by declaration to the people'.<sup>674</sup> The author also recorded the punishment for those who violated the sanctuary. It was a fine equal to that owed to the king of England when the royal peace was breached, that is, at least 96 pounds, to be paid to the church.<sup>675</sup>

This fine differs from that given in the *CMD*, although Rollason points out the amounts were about the same since 1,200 *oris* was probably equal to 80 to 100 pounds.<sup>676</sup> It is possible, then, that the amount being described was consistent, with the currency differing in each source. Symeon was in agreement with the *CMD* with

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<sup>670</sup> *CMD*, lines 24-44.

<sup>671</sup> Smith, 'Commentary', p. 88.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>673</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 13, pp. 124-6.

<sup>674</sup> 'tam ipse rex Guthredus quam etiam rex potentissimus (cuius superius mentio facta est) Aelfredus declaranda populis propalarunt', *Ibid*, bk II, ch. 13, p. 124.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 13, p. 126.

<sup>676</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 126, fn 82.

regard to the involvement of Alfred, and with the *Historia* on the length of time a fugitive was granted peace. Symeon therefore seems to be reporting earlier traditions, which he had read in Durham's collections, repeating them in a way that would help to ensure their continued observance.

This is not to suggest that those traditions had no kernel of truth to them. David Hall has put forward a strong case for accepting some influence from Alfred in the establishment of Durham's sanctuary rights. He notes that 37 days was the period of peace given to sanctuary-bound fugitives in Alfred's law codes, which were the first to deal with the subject at length.<sup>677</sup> This at least demonstrates the influence of Anglo-Saxon royal law at Durham, and Hall believes there is a strong possibility that this was directly due to Alfred. Hall also points to the level of fine imposed at Durham. Levelling a fine equal to that for breaking the king's peace also matches Anglo-Saxon law codes. In the case of eleventh- and twelfth-century Durham, the fee of 96 pounds mirrors the portion owed to the crown when the royal peace was broken.<sup>678</sup>

Guthred's involvement in the episode is more difficult to establish. Only one independent source, the *Chronicon Aethelwardi*, mentions this king of York, although historians such as Ted Johnson Smith believe it is likely that he genuinely existed and was supported by the see of St. Cuthbert.<sup>679</sup> Beyond this it is difficult to say much more, although a later statement in the *Libellus* offers further evidence for the existence of a shared earlier source detailing his deeds. Symeon wrote that at his death Guthred:

left in perpetuity to all future kings, bishops, and peoples the privileges of the church of father Cuthbert, concerning its freedom from claims, its liberty, the peace of those fleeing to Cuthbert's tomb (which no-one should ever violate), and other statutes for the protection of the church itself, all of which are still preserved today.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> Hall, 'Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert', pp. 430-1; see also Rollason, *LDE*, p. 126, fn 82.

<sup>678</sup> Hall, 'Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert', pp. 426-30.

<sup>679</sup> Smith, 'Commentary', pp. 87-8.

<sup>680</sup> 'priuilegia ecclesie patris Cuthberti de quiete, de libertate ipsius, de pace confugientium ad sepulchrum eius a nullo unquam irritanda, alia quoque in ecclesie ipsius munimentum statute, omnibus post regibus episcopis et populis in eternum conseruanda reliquit, que etiam usque hodie seruantur', *LDE*, bk II, ch. 14, pp. 126-8.

In editing and translating the text, David Rollason simply notes that no trace of such documents has survived.<sup>681</sup> However, following Smith's hypothesis, the fact both *CMD* and the *Libellus* are confident in their details suggests some written record must have been available to the authors. There is no reason why Symeon should have lied about the existence of documents believed to be from Guthred – although the texts to which he was referring need not have been genuine. It is therefore likely that material related to Guthred's deeds was present at Durham, and was believed by the monks to be a reflection of rights bestowed on the church. Having said this, it is worth remembering that by the time Symeon was writing, the actions of Alfred, ancestor of the later rulers of England, would have been considered more significant than those of an obscure Danish king of York. This explains why the ratification of Alfred was noted in all three of the sources studied here.

While the establishment of chartered sanctuary rights by Guthred and Alfred was the most important tradition relating to Durham's sanctuary, two other episodes had taken on great significance by the time Symeon wrote. These were the deathbed prophecy of Cuthbert that sanctuary seekers would come to his body, and the acceptance of Guthred's and Alfred's proclamations by William I. The first of these events had been recorded by Bede in his *Vita Cuthberti*.<sup>682</sup> The account was copied almost verbatim by Symeon in the *Libellus*.<sup>683</sup> In it, Cuthbert warned his fellow monks not to take his body back to Lindisfarne, because reports of his holy nature would draw fugitive criminals and force the monks to intercede on their behalf with worldly powers. Clearly even in Bede's day, shortly after Cuthbert's death, there was an expectation of refuge at the tomb of a saint. By including this report, Symeon demonstrated that such expectations pre-dated any formal royal grants; indeed, they had been acknowledged by the saint himself while he still lived. This point was strengthened by the presence of stories of those who had sought sanctuary before the reigns of Guthred or Alfred. For example, both the *Libellus* and *Historia Regum* have accounts of a Northumbrian royal named Offa who claimed refuge at Cuthbert's church in the mid-eighth century.<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>681</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 128, fn 87.

<sup>682</sup> *Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Beda*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), ch. 37.

<sup>683</sup> *LDE*, bk I, ch. 10, pp. 50-2.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid*, bk II, ch. 2, pp. 78-80; *H. Reg.*, s.a. 750.

Symeon rejoiced that Cuthbert had relented and allowed his body to be returned to the church. The author also called on his fellow monks to regard the labour of defending fugitives as pleasing and light work.<sup>685</sup> David Rollason recognised the significance of this statement for demonstrating the existence of sanctuary rights and seekers at St. Cuthbert's tomb in the early twelfth century.<sup>686</sup> It is also important to see that Symeon and those around him linked this sanctuary back to St. Cuthbert himself. The rights observed by Durham were therefore seen not only as pertaining to decrees of former kings, but also to premonitions of their saint.

The confirmation of Durham's lands and rights by William I was also an important moment in the history of the church's sanctuary. In the *Libellus*, Symeon stated that after hearing of St. Cuthbert's miracles William restored and extended all grants to the church. The writer goes on: 'He also confirmed by his consent and authority the laws and customs of the saint, just as they had been established by the authority of ancient kings, and he ordered that they were to be preserved undiminished by all people'.<sup>687</sup> Rollason presumed the laws and customs to which this refers were those of Guthred and Alfred, and there seems to be no reason to question this assumption.<sup>688</sup> Nor is there any reason to doubt Symeon's claim that the chartered sanctuary was acknowledged by William. This version of events was accepted by royal authority later in the twelfth century, and it fits with the wider policies of the post-Conquest kings. As Shoemaker has said, they wanted to depict themselves as successors of the late-Anglo-Saxon rulers, and as such sought continuity in laws, including those regarding sanctuary.<sup>689</sup> The statement also tallies with similar ones made elsewhere – for example at Beverley.<sup>690</sup> Finally, it fits the character of a king who granted substantial sanctuary privileges to his own foundations, most notably that of Battle Abbey.<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> 'laboremque defendendi confugientes ad illius sepulchrum, dulcedine amoris eius gratum ac leuem ducamus', *LDE*, bk I, ch. 10, p. 52.

<sup>686</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 53, fn 67.

<sup>687</sup> 'Leges quoque et consuetudines ipsius sancti sicut antiqua regum auctoritas stabilierat, ipse quoque suo consensu et auctoritate confirmavit, et illibatas ab omnibus seruari imperavit', *LDE*, Bk III, ch. 20, pp. 198-200.

<sup>688</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 200, fn 74.

<sup>689</sup> Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 95-9.

<sup>690</sup> See below, p. 140.

<sup>691</sup> *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 68-70.



This, then, was the body of tradition relating to sanctuary at Durham in the early-twelfth century. In a practical sense it meant that people fleeing prosecution could find respite in the church or churchyard at Durham. The rights were not so unusual as to be surprising. David Hall has said that ‘the evidence, therefore, places the Cuthbertine sanctuary firmly in the Anglo-Saxon legal context, probably influenced by West Saxon royal pronouncements and protected by fines associated with the Danelaw.’<sup>692</sup> If by the later Middle Ages Durham’s rights seem exceptional, this is probably due more to their lengthy survival and the continuing popularity of their use, rather than anything unusual in their creation. In the twelfth century the chartered sanctuary functioned like any other, with one notable exception. At other chartered sanctuaries, the area within which the fugitive was granted peace corresponded to the area over which the church had jurisdictional liberty from the crown. This area was called a *banleuca*. Durham did not possess a *banleuca*, because its jurisdictional liberty was exceptionally large, covering the whole of County Durham. Its sanctuary rights, however, were limited to the church and churchyard. This meant that it was unique for a chartered sanctuary, because the area of its sanctuary did not correspond to its jurisdictional liberty.<sup>693</sup>

This is in contrast to the other chartered sanctuaries of the north. Thomas Lambert described a *banleuca* with a mile-radius as ‘the key feature’ of the Northumbrian model of sanctuary. Beverley, Ripon, Hexham, Wetheral and Tynemouth all claimed to have rights based on such areas.<sup>694</sup> However, this was not a characteristic exclusive to the region. David Hall points to several other churches in England, including Bury St. Edmunds, that had distinguishable *banleuca*.<sup>695</sup> A pattern of graduated fines described by sources from Beverley and Hexham was also found in other churches in England, Wales, Ireland and on the continent. As a result, Hall concluded that the example from northern England did not ‘stand outside the general pattern for western Europe’.<sup>696</sup>

The *banleuca* sanctuaries differed from Durham in other ways. There was a system of graduated fines for those who violated the sanctuary, with the penalty

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<sup>692</sup> Hall, ‘Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert’, p. 433.

<sup>693</sup> For this whole discussion see *Ibid.*, p. 435.

<sup>694</sup> T. B. Lambert, ‘Spiritual Protection and Secular Power: the Evolution of Sanctuary and Legal Privilege in Ripon and Beverley, 900-1300’, in Lambert and Rollason, *Peace and Protection*, pp. 121-40, at p. 123.

<sup>695</sup> For more on this see *Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, pp. xxiv-xxvi.

<sup>696</sup> Hall, ‘Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert’, pp. 433-4; quote p. 434.

becoming more severe the closer one got to the altar of the church. Moreover, while the church of St. Cuthbert looked to Guthred and Alfred for the creation of its chartered privileges, many of the institutions with *banleuca*e traced the origin of their legislation to Æthelstan. Beverley was the most notable institution to do so. Two texts from Beverley claimed that the Peace of St. John had been created by Æthelstan.<sup>697</sup> Shoemaker mentions the popularity of naming Anglo-Saxon rulers, especially Æthelstan, as founders of chartered sanctuaries, giving Westminster Abbey as an example.<sup>698</sup> A chartered sanctuary was observed at Ripon that was very similar to that of Beverley, and here too Æthelstan was believed to have been the original creator.<sup>699</sup> There is no direct evidence supporting the claims of Beverley or Ripon that Æthelstan created their sanctuary rights, yet these stories of origins remained popular from the twelfth century onwards.<sup>700</sup> For the purposes of this study, this popularity demonstrates the importance of such explanatory narratives for contemporary systems of peace and justice.

Potentially the most interesting comparison for Beverley comes from Cornwall. By the eleventh century three Cornish churches claimed to have special rights of sanctuary – St. Buryan's, Padstow and St. Probus'.<sup>701</sup> J. Charles Cox said that at St. Buryan's and Padstow a tradition developed during the Middle Ages that Æthelstan had created these privileges.<sup>702</sup> The similarities with the story from Beverley are striking. In all three cases Æthelstan was said to be on his way to war, pushing back the boundaries of his kingdom, but turned aside to promise favours to notable local saints. Following the success of his ventures, he returned and granted gifts to the churches, including the creation of chartered sanctuaries. Unfortunately the evidence from Cornwall is even scantier than that from Beverley, and there is little to substantiate the idea that this tradition existed, let alone that it was based on some sort of truth. Tempting as it is to believe that Æthelstan had a consistent policy of gaining support from local churches on the borders of his kingdom by granting sanctuary privileges, the evidence is not strong enough to support such a hypothesis.

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<sup>697</sup> *MSJ*, pp. 263-4, and *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 297-8.

<sup>698</sup> Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 108-11.

<sup>699</sup> Cox, *Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*, pp. 162-5.

<sup>700</sup> S. Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven and London, 2011), pp. 243-5.

<sup>701</sup> N. Orme, *The Saints of Cornwall* (Oxford, 2000), p. 10.

<sup>702</sup> Cox, *Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*, pp. 214-26, esp. pp. 222-3.

The first *Alia Miracula* text from Beverley also gave details of the graduated fine system put in place for those who broke the Peace. A fine of eight pounds of silver was imposed on anyone breaking the Peace within a mile of the church. A smaller circumference within this area, marked by three stone crosses, carried a fine of twenty-four pounds of silver. Infringement within the cemetery of the church meant paying seventy-two pounds, while violence in the church itself invoked a penalty of three times that amount. Having given this summary, the author of the tract concluded by saying:

Whoever, with malicious daring, violates the peace of the most holy confessor below the arches placed above the entrance of the chancel, must be judged beyond the removal of earthly property or wealth (as one who dares to commit such a sin and so great a profanation in the presence of the relics of such a venerated confessor), and ought to be put before, and judged by, the mercy and judgement of God alone.<sup>703</sup>

The same system was described as being in place at Hexham. Richard of Hexham said that his church's sanctuary extended for a mile around the church. As at Beverley, this area was marked by crosses. Graduated fines were in place from this outer boundary into the church's altar, where, as at Beverley, anyone breaking the Peace was beyond human redemption.<sup>704</sup> David Hall said that Richard's testimony is questionable, but it is corroborated by a charter from Henry I's reign, which may have been forged, and one from Stephen, which is certainly genuine.<sup>705</sup> Graduated fines also seem to have existed at St. Peter's, York, and St. Wilfrid's, Ripon.<sup>706</sup>

We have seen that although their stories focused on different kings, twelfth-century Durham and Beverley were united in linking the foundation of their chartered sanctuaries to the Anglo-Saxon royal line. Beverley was also similar in claiming that William I had confirmed its rights. According to William Ketell, only those 'who fled to

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<sup>703</sup> 'qui infra arcus supra introitum cancelli positos maligno ausu sanctissimi confessoris pacem violaverit, absque emendatione terrenae possessionis vel pecuniae esset judicatus (ut qui tale nefas, tamque profanum in praesentia reliquiarum tam venerandi Confessoris ausus sit committere), soliusque Dei miserationi atque iudicio committendus, sit iudicandus', *Alia Miracula I*, ch. 1, p. 180.

<sup>704</sup> RH, *History*, bk I, ch. 5, pp. 19-21.

<sup>705</sup> Hall, 'Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert', pp. 426-8; see his further discussion of these graded areas on pp. 433-4, where, as noted above, he points out that this conformed to sanctuaries found in Ireland, Wales and on the continent.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 426-8.

the church of St. John of Beverley for asylum' were spared from the Conqueror's assaults on Yorkshire.<sup>707</sup> While local people considered Beverley, and especially its church, to be a place of safety under the peace of St. John, not all of the Normans shared this conception. One soldier charged after a man who was running for the church, while those who were already gathered there desperately called out for help from their saint: 'suddenly the crowd of trembling people arose with cries, unanimously imploring the help of St. John in his concern for his people.'<sup>708</sup> The saint acted on this invocation, and instant vengeance fell upon 'the violator of the peace', as he fell from his horse paralysed.<sup>709</sup> The moral of the story was not lost on King William, who met with the elders of the church, confirmed the lands and the peace of the saint, and moved his army elsewhere.<sup>710</sup>

How far one can trust this tale of William's confirmation is debateable. However, if the king was seeking to continue pre-Conquest policies, and ensure the support of powerful northern churches, then it is every bit as believable as the similar claims from Durham. A further piece of evidence comes from Battle Abbey. This foundation of William was granted a *banleuca*, which extended for a league around the church, and within which those accused of any crime could find sanctuary.<sup>711</sup> William granted these rights in the early 1070s, after his time in the north. It is therefore possible that the king was following the Peace in place at Beverley when he came to establish his own creation. This is, of course, only speculation, but it does at least suggest that the king was familiar with this form of sanctuary, and accepted it as appropriate. Regardless of the truth of the Beverley author's claims regarding William I, there can be no doubt that seeking the confirmation of post-Conquest kings was important for those places that claimed chartered sanctuary. By the mid-twelfth century Beverley did have a charter from Stephen that ratified its privilege.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> 'qui ad ecclesiam Beati Joannis, Beverlacum, quasi ad azylum, confugerant', *MSJ*, p. 266.

<sup>708</sup> 'Fit subito trepidantis populi concursus, cum clamore, Beati Joannis solliciti pectoris sui subsidia unanimiter implorantis', *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>709</sup> 'pacis violatorem', *Ibid.*, p. 267. For a similar story of vengeance see the miracle of Sainte Foy in *The Book of Sainte Foy*, bk I, ch. 5, pp. 58-60.

<sup>710</sup> *MSJ*, pp. 267-9.

<sup>711</sup> Cox, *Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*, pp. 195-7; *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, pp. 68-70; Olson, 'Sanctuary and Penitential Rebirth', p. 44. On Battle Abbey see E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (Toronto, 1974).

<sup>712</sup> Hall, 'Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert', pp. 426-8.

Turning now to Hexham, one finds close similarities to Durham and Beverley, as well as some unique details. It has already been established that Hexham had a *banleuca* within which a graduated fine system, similar to Beverley's, operated. It also shared characteristics with Durham – for example, the fine for violating sanctuary within the church was the same amount.<sup>713</sup> Hexham only differs in the traditions regarding those who established the sanctuary rights. Richard of Hexham claimed that it was bishop Wilfrid who received the privilege from contemporary rulers when he founded the church.<sup>714</sup> If so, it would have been the oldest chartered sanctuary in the diocese of York, but there seems to be no earlier source that can corroborate Richard's claim.<sup>715</sup> Even so, it is interesting that the canons of Hexham chose to remember the creation of their rights through the founding bishop, rather than a specific ruler. The fact that the bishop was by then considered a saint, and that the rights appeared suitably ancient, no doubt helped make this story of their foundation an attractive one.

As for confirmations, Hexham boasted charters from Henry I and Stephen.<sup>716</sup> Richard of Hexham also claimed that David I of Scotland recognised the sanctuary rights of the church.<sup>717</sup> This is corroborated in one of Aelred's narratives, where the author claims the king 'declared that whosoever was able to flee and to transfer anything of theirs to that place was to enjoy his peace.'<sup>718</sup> Aelred later revealed that some of 'our men', who were fighting for the king, felt it expedient to send captives to Hexham to protect them from the ravages of the Scottish army.<sup>719</sup> Given Hexham's location, the acknowledgement of its sanctuary rights by the king of Scotland was as important to it as acceptance by the king of England.

Having considered the sanctuary rights enjoyed by specific churches, and the traditions regarding the creation of these privileges, the question now arises of the

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<sup>713</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 426; for the fine see RH, *History*, bk I, ch. 5, pp. 19-21 and bk II, ch. 14, pp. 61-2.

<sup>714</sup> RH, *History*, bk I, ch. V, pp. 19-21 and bk II, ch. 13, pp. 60-1.

<sup>715</sup> On this, and Hexham's sanctuary claims more generally, see Cox, *Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*, pp. 153-62.

<sup>716</sup> Hall, 'Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert', pp. 426-8; Cox, *Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*, pp. 154-6.

<sup>717</sup> RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, pp. 154-5.

<sup>718</sup> 'sed et quotquot illuc confugere et suorum aliquid transferre potuissent, sua decerneret pace gaudere', *De Sanctis*, ch. 5, p. 183. For Hexham as a place of refuge during Scottish incursions see below, pp. 152-5.

<sup>719</sup> 'nostrates, qui erant cum rege, pietate commoti, plures de eorum ereptos manibus ad Hagustaldunum, quasi ad certum suae salutis auxilium transposuerunt', *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 183.

effect these had on identification and the construction of community. First, there were practical considerations that impacted on local neighbourhoods. From Anglo-Saxon times onwards it was the duty of local villagers or townspeople to ensure a sanctuary claimant remained confined in the church until royal officials arrived.<sup>720</sup> This brought neighbours together as a network of people performing an important duty. Yet in ensuring that the correct legal custom, as they mutually understood it, was being followed, these guards were also demonstrating a set of implicitly shared values that created a sense of belonging within that network. In this sense they were acting as a community, even if these ideas were only occurring at a subconscious level.<sup>721</sup> Moreover, at a conscious level, such duty reflected a mutual feeling of responsibility or obligation towards the local saint or church. Yet as will be shown below, this duty was not without controversy, as the nature of the sanctuary seeker or those acting as guards, and their relationship to one another and the wider community, could create intra-communal tension even as it worked to reinforce the group's social norms.<sup>722</sup>

Chartered sanctuary offered further ways in which identification could develop. First, on top of sharing the custom of sanctuary, the community shared a set of traditions regarding how it had obtained its privileges. While these were important for establishing the rights of the church following the Norman Conquest, the previous chapter showed that shared stories of the past were also significant for collective identification within a given community. More difficult to ascertain is whether the stories of gaining such privilege were widely known outside of the clerical collective. There is nothing in the texts themselves that indicates these stories were particularly popular or well-known. They were chiefly important to churches looking to assert their rights. If the wider population knew anything of them, it was likely to be murmurings rather than the full clerical tale. The crosses that marked the *banleuca* at Beverley, for example, seem to have been associated with Æthelstan linguistically, but how much people living nearby would have known beyond the name and the existence of a special peace is a matter of pure speculation.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 134-5.

<sup>721</sup> For the concept that identifying with one another through a sense of belonging or sharing a set of values or morals turns a network into a community see above, pp. 11-15.

<sup>722</sup> See below, pp. 146-51.

<sup>723</sup> On the labelling of crosses with terminology derived from the name Æthelstan see Cox, *Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*, pp. 128-130.

More significant for townspeople and villagers living near or in the *banleuca* was the additional and unique fact that a certain portion of the local population was made up of former sanctuary seekers. Unlike at general sanctuaries, there was not absolute pressure to leave after a given number of days. Those who stayed indefinitely became servants of the church and members of the local population.<sup>724</sup> In this sense, sanctuary helped build groups and networks, as well as communities, by introducing new people to the local neighbourhood. Cox made specific mention of Beverley on this subject, commenting that court records demonstrate a remarkable facility for the town to absorb permanent sanctuary dwellers into its life.<sup>725</sup> Such people were known as ‘grithmen’ or ‘frithmen’, and at least by the later Middle Ages were able to choose where they wanted to live in the town and to set up a trade there.<sup>726</sup> Cox compared this situation to that in Cornwall, where St. Buryan’s and Padstow both seem to have had permanent grithmen.<sup>727</sup> Records for the twelfth century are not as plentiful. However, stories of miracle healings at Beverley where the cured individual remained living and working in the town were relatively common, so staying there after an interaction with the saint was known and accepted.<sup>728</sup> How welcome former fugitives might have been is less clear, even though cases clearly happened in the later Middle Ages. At least some of the twelfth-century prisoners who fled to St. John’s sanctuary after being released by the saint stayed for a considerable time, though no mention was made of whether or not this was perpetual.<sup>729</sup> When this evidence is put together, the balance of probability favours an urban community that had at least a small share of former sanctuary seekers.

Previous historians have noted how sanctuary, both general and chartered, was important for the protection it offered to small communities. Most people lived in small neighbourhood groups, and while this encouraged multiple associations, and therefore a dense network of personal ties on which a sense of community could be built, it also increased the possibility of dramatic breaks in those ties. An act of perceived wrong-doing had the potential to shatter the bonds in the community, breaking it into factions or isolating individuals or their families. This could happen not

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<sup>724</sup> See, for example, Cox, *Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*, p. 135.

<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-9.

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 214-26.

<sup>728</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 299-300. See below, pp. 163-4.

<sup>729</sup> *MSJ*, ch. 6, p. 278.

only through the original act, but also through retribution sought by the aggrieved party. Sanctuary offered a way in which wrong-doers could be separated out from the legal community.<sup>730</sup> It also provided a standard structure within which the wrongs could be corrected. This was given extra importance by the fact that this correction did not require the community to kill one of their members – the threat of permanent divisions in the group were minimised by limiting the chances of death either by feud or execution.<sup>731</sup>

Following this line of inquiry further takes one right to the heart of the question of what made a group of people a community. It was stated in the introduction that finding a network is not enough; one must ask what those ties meant to people, and how they were imaginatively constructed in a way that allowed for a process mutual identification.<sup>732</sup> Shared understandings of sanctuary provide a window on this, because they demonstrate one way in which inter-personal ties operated. Trisha Olson shows that the very idea of sanctuary was built on the concept that bonds between people were founded on a sense of faithfulness to one another, and that being perceived to be unfaithful in some way broke those ties.<sup>733</sup> In cases where the sanctuary seeker was guilty of a crime, the wrong-doing was seen as an act of faithlessness, and the appeal to sanctuary an acknowledgement of this. In appealing to God, the saints, and the church to mend the bonds that had been broken, sanctuary was a way in which an individual could demonstrate that they remained faithful, despite their lapse, and desired to restore what they had broken. This understanding of sanctuary not only demonstrates the importance of faithfulness to personal ties, but also a shared concept of how a wrong could be set right. As Olson says, underpinning the sense of justice that gave birth to sanctuary was the idea that the correct action, performed in the right setting and at the right time, was what was required to make something right.<sup>734</sup> The acceptance, application and use of sanctuary rights therefore tell us a great deal about the way personal ties were understood, how inter-personal bonds could be broken and healed, and the shared customs and values that allowed this to happen.

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<sup>730</sup> Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 112-26.

<sup>731</sup> See Jordan, 'Medieval Sanctuary', pp. 29-32.

<sup>732</sup> See above, pp. 11-18.

<sup>733</sup> Olson, 'Sanctuary and Penitential Rebirth', pp. 42-6.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.



An example of this concept of sanctuary appears in a chapter from the miracles of St. John which was cited earlier, in which a criminal was freed and made peaceful by the saint.<sup>735</sup> The author made it clear that the protagonist was a sinner guilty of many crimes. He was described as being in the service of the devil, and forgetful of God. His faithlessness to God was mirrored by his faithlessness to other people, and so it was that he was justly condemned to death.<sup>736</sup> The author said that while the individual was in prison 'the eyes of his blindness were opened for a while'.<sup>737</sup> He revoked the devil, begged forgiveness, and through the merits of St. John was freed. This was not the end of the tale though. Importantly, the man made his way to Beverley and entered sanctuary there, something that prevented his enemies from capturing him, and gave the clerks a chance to reform him. This whole story is couched in terms of faithfulness – the man who was unfaithful to God and his fellow people being transformed at the last moment, begging forgiveness and receiving it through release and sanctuary.

This at least was the theory of sanctuary, and how it could potentially operate to build or heal communal ties. How much the story says about genuine practice is more difficult to tell. Does the story of the criminal from Beverley offer a genuine glimpse of communal relations through the prism of sanctuary, or is this a case of a normative text offering an idealised example? The question is difficult to answer, not least because of the nature of the evidence. Although the later Middle Ages produced evidence of how sanctuary operated through legal documents, twelfth-century study is often limited to narrative accounts with an obvious didactic purpose. This particular story is a very neat tale of redemption, with a clear message for those who heard it: even the most terrible sinner can repent, and if they do so honestly, God and the saints will listen. It is noticeable that the criminal at the heart of the story is not named. Nor is the tale set at a particular time. The lack of such details helped to make this narrative a moral story applicable to any time or place. It is therefore more normative than some of the other tales examined here and should be treated more as an authorial expression of how sanctuary should work, than a reflection of how it operated in practice.

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<sup>735</sup> See above, p. 128.

<sup>736</sup> *MSJ*, ch. 6, pp. 276-8.

<sup>737</sup> 'caecitatis illius aliquantisper aperti sunt oculi', *Ibid.*, ch. 6, p. 277.

Narratives with clear moral agendas can, however, still be useful for observing wider perceptions and practical applications of sanctuary, especially if they were rooted in what were assumed to be real events. In *De Miraculis* the author wrote about the breaking of Durham's sanctuary in the eleventh century.<sup>738</sup> In the time of earl Tostig, a man named Aldan-hamal committed many terrible crimes in Northumbria. As a result, when the earl caught him, he was severely bound and placed in prison. The earl would listen to no offers of ransom, and Aldan-hamal found no way of breaking free. As with the tale from Beverley, there was no denial of the crimes; it was instead the criminal's sudden repentance that brought him salvation. St. Cuthbert released the man, who was being held in Durham, and he escaped to the church.

Tostig was suitably angry, as was one of his men, a person named Barcwith. He called out to his associates, saying 'Who delays? Why do we not break down the doors? For the peace of this man cannot be supported by God or else if thieves, robbers and murderers should flee to safety here, they will be insulting to us because they will escape unpunished.'<sup>739</sup> Having uttered these words, Barcwith was almost immediately struck down. After spending three days in considerable agony he finally died. The lesson was not lost on the earl, or his other men, who repented their desire to drag the fugitive from the church, and gave many gifts to the saint. These were used to procure a magnificent cross and a copy of the gospels, which the author said were still in the church.

Once again, one is presented with a normative story recorded with a clear purpose. A moral is being told – that no matter who it is claiming sanctuary from the saint, the peace of Cuthbert's church is on no account to be broken. Yet this tale is not quite as neat as the one from Beverley, and it does say something about wider perceptions. To start with, the author links the actions to real people and a set time in history. The text was not written very long after the events it purports to record. If the intention was to provide a moral tale, using an antagonist who was well remembered gave it added strength. Barcwith may therefore have been a genuine character. Moreover, the author linked the memory to objects within the church, and said the story was told by one of Barcwith's associates. Such elements have been shown to be

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<sup>738</sup> *De Miraculis*, ch. 5, pp. 243-5.

<sup>739</sup> "'Quid," inquit, "moramur? Quare januas non infringimus? Neque enim hujus hominis mortui pax a Deo est tenenda, ut fures, raptores, et homicidae, huc si confugerint, nobis insultent quod impuniti evaserint', *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 244.

indicative of narratives circulating in wider oral culture.<sup>740</sup> Regardless of the accuracy of the events described, if the people involved and the outline of the tale were recalled in Durham, then the understandings of sanctuary it developed can be considered reasonably reflective of at least some outside the monastery.

Those understandings were not as one-dimensional as one might expect in a didactic story. Barcwith himself was not evil. The author says 'he [Barcwith] had produced an intensity of fury, so that he did not know what he was saying'.<sup>741</sup> This was not an outright rejection of sanctuary, but instead a heat of the moment reaction against the safety of one individual. This concurs with William Jordan's ideas on those who broke sanctuary usually doing so in a moment of passion. Violations of communal norms in such circumstances could be carried out by people who agreed with the system in principle.<sup>742</sup> The historian cannot observe the person's views outside of the moment captured by the text. All that can be said, therefore, is that in one moment of fury this individual was believed to have reacted against communally accepted concepts of justice.

In any community that upheld sanctuary rights, one would expect individual cases to be disputed by some members of the group, especially those who felt wronged by the person in question. The story in *De Miraculis* is a message against breaking the holy peace, but it highlights the possibility of questioning its justice. Barcwith's speech, while undoubtedly an invention of the author, offers an indication of the fears that someone might have when a criminal claimed sanctuary. Karl Shoemaker has suggested that such misgivings often came from local officials, who were acting on fears that churchmen were fortifying their buildings in defence of criminals.<sup>743</sup> Doubts did exist though, especially near famous sanctuaries like Durham and Beverley, where Jordan believes anxiety about the possibility of receiving lots of felons existed, due in part to society's fear of strangers.<sup>744</sup>

Stories such as Barcwith's were written down because they demonstrated the saint's power and offered a moral lesson to anyone who read or heard them. But the need for such lessons shows that some of the ideas and feelings encapsulated in the

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<sup>740</sup> See above, pp. 40-7.

<sup>741</sup> 'furoris enim magnitudo effecerat, ut quid loqueretur ipse ignoraret', *De Miraculis*, ch. 5, p. 244.

<sup>742</sup> Jordan, 'Medieval Sanctuary', pp. 27-9.

<sup>743</sup> Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, p. 108.

<sup>744</sup> Jordan, 'Medieval Sanctuary', pp. 27-9.

story were considered real issues at the time of writing. A story told by Reginald of Durham further emphasises this point, while also demonstrating that while sanctuary helped to limit intra-communal tension and violence in theory, in practice it could be the subject of such conflict.

Reginald's tale has the high level of detail that is a feature of his work. It begins, as with the last two stories, with a guilty criminal, in this case a murderer. He fled to the church of St. Cuthbert to claim sanctuary, pursued by people the author describes as 'friends and associates' of his victim.<sup>745</sup> The whole event took place within the vicinity of Durham, so it is reasonable to believe that the various people involved were members of the same local community. Murder had torn whatever bonds might have been felt between the criminal and the victim's friends apart. And yet complex, mutual understandings of the custom of sanctuary remained. The murderer knew his only chance for survival was a flight to the church. Despite being incensed by his actions, the people who chased him were disinclined to break the sanctuary rules. The antagonism between the two parties was therefore played out through a customary system that both clearly understood.

To begin with, Reginald leaves the reader in no doubt that the aim of the victim's friends was to catch the murderer before he made the church. This was something the latter understood, hence his haste. Once safely inside, the friends turned their attention to waiting in case he tried to escape. Earlier it was suggested that the duty of guarding the church was a practical way in which members of the community worked together to ensure local customs were followed. But in this case the associates of a murder victim put that duty to a different use. They set traps and ambushes for the murderer, hoping that he would try to escape, and thus offer them a legitimate opportunity to exact revenge. As an escape attempt became increasingly unlikely, they tried to cut off his supply of food, in order to force him from the church.

This suggests an intriguing attitude towards the individual's right to sanctuary. His enemies, even in the heat of the moment, were not prepared to cross the threshold of the church. But they saw nothing wrong with doing everything in their power to capture their quarry. Reginald himself clearly saw the act of trying to starve out one's enemy, or set traps around the church, as morally reprehensible, and his account of how the monks helped the murderer obtain food indicates he was not

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<sup>745</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 60, pp. 119-21.

alone.<sup>746</sup> However he did not suggest that such actions would invoke the ire of the saint. They were within the laws of the peace, even if they were frowned upon ethically. All parties were therefore playing to the letter of the law; a law that they all understood in considerable detail. Even if one takes a very sceptical approach to the exact details of Reginald's story, he must have believed that some people who lived in the vicinity of the church understood the concept of sanctuary to a reasonably high degree. David Hall has demonstrated that stories of breaking sanctuary at least show that the form of the law was understood.<sup>747</sup> Following this line of thinking, Reginald's tale suggests neighbouring lay people understood the finer details of local sanctuary rights.

In this case, those rules seem to have favoured the sanctuary seeker, because the guards were unable to force him out of the church. As a result, they resorted to forcing their way in. When sanctuary was broken in this story, it was not so much a heat of the moment event, as the result of growing tension and grumblings among the guards. Reginald says that a new friend joined them and suggested they should break into the church to either take the felon by force, or, if this was not possible, kill him there and then.<sup>748</sup> Again, one must be careful of reading too much into such a description, but it is reasonable to believe that a group of friends who had seen their associate murdered and tried every legitimate means possible to take what they perceived to be fair revenge would start discussing the justice of the situation. How many communities with a member accused of a great crime in their midst would hold their nerve while guarding the church? Great tension existed in such situations, and while the inclusion of a specific, in Reginald's words 'dull-witted', character to make the final insidious suggestion may be a narrative tool, the idea that conversations among the associates could eventually lead to the tension reaching breaking point is reasonable. So it was that six of the friends decided to enter the church. Once inside, two of them brutally attacked the murderer. According to Reginald, he only survived thanks to the merits of St. Cuthbert.<sup>749</sup>

This, though, was not the end of the story. It is important to make clear that this was not a simple case of one faction against another. The wider community may

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<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 60, p. 119.

<sup>747</sup> Hall, 'Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert', p. 432.

<sup>748</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 60, p. 119.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 60, p. 121.

not have been mentioned up until now, but in the following chapter Reginald made it clear that fear and anger was now directed towards those who had violated the sanctuary. The friends themselves seemed to anticipate this, for they immediately attempted to flee the city. At this point Cuthbert made his first appearance as avenger, although his actions were somewhat limited, as he slowed the perpetrators' escape by debilitating their horses and sending them running in circles. It was not the saint who punished the men, but other people in their own community. Local people pursued one of those who had dealt blows to the sanctuary seeker and, on capturing him, bound him heavily in iron and placed him in a deep prison until he would succumb to a painful death.<sup>750</sup>

Again one may question how reliable the author is, but if Reginald wanted to tell a simple moral tale, it is strange that the saint himself did not strike down all six companions. In fact, the author is silent on the fates of the others, and in the one case he does record, it is neighbouring people who have to seek revenge. The conclusion to the tale thus lacks the neat ending one would expect from a monastic moral lesson.

Reginald's tale indicates something of the feelings towards sanctuary and sanctuary seekers within the neighbouring community. The idea of the church as a place protected by saintly peace was widely shared in theory, although in practice individual cases could provide grounds for dispute. This sometimes meant an individual like Barcwith violating the sanctuary in the heat of the moment. But it could also be the result of discussion and arguments between individuals, even those guarding the church, as to the justice of the seeker's case. These intra-communal disputes do not mean the people who participated in them were not a community. The very fact of this internal division shows that the people who lived around churches like Durham had a shared custom that was important enough to debate, argue, uphold or reject. In these cases, sanctuary can be seen as a communal norm that local people, witnesses to various narratives that played out around the custom, considered significant enough to be worth fighting over. Moreover, even those who disagreed with the validity of individual cases could still find themselves arguing within a framework dictated by local sanctuary customs. This is what happened, at least to begin with, in the case told by Reginald.

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<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 61, pp. 121-2.

What these examples also show is that this complex communal custom was principally constructed through narratives. Stories of contrite wrong-doers, rescued innocents and punished sanctuary-breakers helped to construct and reaffirm the norm amongst the local population. Stories of these events were moulded into these normative structures by the religious authors who wrote them down. The emphasis on the sanctuary seeker's level of guilt and contrition added extra moral force to such tales. The considerable ambiguity in the moral position of some of those who resorted to sanctuary was balanced by emphasising that it was not how an individual had acted, but how much faith they had in God or the church's saint, which determined their right to sanctuary.<sup>751</sup> If the saint was a patron, then the key to obtaining their help was being a devoted client. The supplicant may have done wrong, but in turning to the saint, they were reaffirming their veneration of their heavenly benefactor, and thus their devotion to God. As in the story of the prisoner from Beverley, the assumption was that once this relationship with the divine had been re-established, the individual would be reformed by God's love, and previous sins could be forgiven.<sup>752</sup>

As well as aiding unity through involvement in communal systems of justice, stories of the saints could help construct perceptions of a community by offering special protection when outsiders threatened their people. In the years following the Norman Conquest, there was considerable disobedience in the north towards the new rulers.<sup>753</sup> We have already seen how St. John was believed to have protected the people of Beverley from William's punitive response by paralysing a knight who was riding towards the church.<sup>754</sup> Meanwhile, when soldiers were sent to enact vengeance after an uprising in Durham, they became lost in dense fog created by St. Cuthbert. Having noted their confusion, Symeon described what happened next:

Being astounded as to why this was, and discussing in turns what they should do, a certain person arrived and said that those men had in their town a certain saint, who was always their protector in adversity, and that with him

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<sup>751</sup> Olson, 'Sanctuary and Penitential Rebirth', pp. 40-2. For a similar response to such problems see the difficulty that clerics at Conques had fitting popular local stories of sanctuary into moral frameworks that suited Christian teaching, in Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 36-42.

<sup>752</sup> For the prisoner's story see above, pp. 128 and 145.

<sup>753</sup> See Dalton, *Yorkshire*, pp. 19-78; Kapelle, *Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 86-146.

<sup>754</sup> See above, pp.139-40.

avenging them, no one was ever able to harm them with impunity. Hearing this, they soon returned to their own homes.<sup>755</sup>

The *Libellus* is the only source to record this event, and Rollason has suggested that the whole thing may have been an invention.<sup>756</sup> If so, then it is a very useful invention for observing the conception of the saint's role. Cuthbert was presented as the protector and avenger of Durham; not just the church and the monks, but the town and its people. Through having recourse to the same heavenly guardian, the people of the town and the neighbouring region could easily have understood themselves as a united social entity. Stories such as this one, or the tale of the Norman knight struck down from his horse in Beverley, also worked to strengthen local belief in the power of their saint to protect them.

The most frequent enemies of peace in the north of England during this period were not the Normans but the Scots. Invasions were irregular, but common enough to impact on the local imagination. The reaction of local people when incursions did occur can be discerned in the narrative with which this chapter began. With Malcolm threatening the people with destruction, Aelred described their reaction in the following way:

The anger of the king was not hidden from the people of Hexham. But what could be done? With no means of resistance, no protection through flight, no relief through the alliance of other people. The one and only hope of all was the frequently proven strength of the Saints. Therefore they came together to the church, young men and maidens, the old with the young, women with small children, either to be rescued by Divine power, or to be slain before the relics of the Saints.<sup>757</sup>

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<sup>755</sup> 'Stupentibus illis cur hoc esset, et conferentibus inuicem quidnam facerent, affuit quidam qui diceret homines illos quendam in sua urbe sanctum habere, qui eis semper in aduersis protector adesset, quos nemo impune illo uindicante ledere unquam ualeret. Quibus auditis, mox ad propria sunt reuersi', *LDE*, bk III, ch. 15, p. 184.

<sup>756</sup> Rollason, *LDE*, p. 185, n. 59.

<sup>757</sup> 'Nec latuit populum Haugustaldensem regis ira. Sed quid ageret? Nulla resistendi copia, nullum fugae praesidium, nullum in quorumlibet hominum societate solatium. Una et sola spes omnium virtus totiens experta Sanctorum. Conveniunt igitur ad ecclesiam iuvenes et virgines, senes cum junioribus, mulieres cum parvulis, aut Divina virtute eripiendi, aut certe ante Sanctorum reliquias ferendi', *De Sanctis*, ch. 2, p. 178.



Being isolated and without help from other people, the inhabitants were actually drawn together, united in making for the church, and clearly appearing as a single community under saintly patronage.

This also happened during a later Scottish invasion, when King David was the aggressor. Like Malcolm before him, he was described as having great respect for Hexham, and as a result he insisted the church, its town, and all its lands, be left unharmed. Furthermore, he ensured the protection of those who sought safety there, for, as was mentioned above, 'he declared that whosoever was able to flee and to transfer anything of theirs to that place was to enjoy his peace.'<sup>758</sup> This implies that some local people were already looking to the church for protection. Aelred's later comment about 'our men', who sent captives to Hexham to protect them from the Scottish army, suggests people on both sides considered Hexham to be a safe-haven for the helpless.<sup>759</sup>

We should not doubt that those with no other means of immediate protection turned to the church of Hexham in their moment of need. The church was a safe building for which to make, being one of the few in the area constructed of stone. This consideration was supplemented by the knowledge people had of the church's heavenly patrons. Stories of previous invasions clearly circulated in the area since Aelred used them in his tract. The tale of Malcolm III's invasion with which this chapter began is one example of this. Under the influence of narrators such as Aelred, these stories stressed the power of the local saints to protect their community. It is therefore highly likely that Aelred's story depicted a true reaction of the local people. Further evidence is provided by prior Richard, who also portrayed those living in the neighbourhood of Hexham fleeing to the church for safety.<sup>760</sup> The act of turning to the church and saints for protection created a sense of a single community under heavenly patrons. In the hands of Aelred and Richard the stories of these events became tales of communal unity under the saints and defiance in the face of a common enemy. This made them every bit as important for negotiating what it meant to be a member of the local collective as those narratives examined in the previous chapter.

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<sup>758</sup> 'sed et quotquot illuc confugere et suorum aliquid transferre potuissent, sua decerneret pace gaudere', *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 183. See above, p. 141.

<sup>759</sup> 'nostrates, qui erant cum rege, pietate commoti, plures de eorum ereptos manibus ad Hagustaldunum, quasi ad certum suae salutis auxilium transposuerunt', *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 183.

<sup>760</sup> RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, pp. 153-4.

This attitude was shared by people in smaller communities. The story of William Sergeant making for his local churchyard when his land was threatened has already been mentioned.<sup>761</sup> Meanwhile, in Arden some peasants locked themselves and their livestock in the local church when a band of robbers attacked. Although the thieves broke in and stole the animals, St. Cuthbert assisted the locals during a daring and successful counter-attack.<sup>762</sup> Moreover, a church in Plumbelund, Cumbria, which was dedicated to St. Cuthbert, acted as a safe-haven for people and possessions during another Scottish invasion of the region.<sup>763</sup>

At Durham, St. Cuthbert's protection against Scottish attacks was well known, with one story particularly prominent in the local imagination. The events it described were believed to have happened in the ninth century, but their lasting fame is testified by the inclusion of versions in texts from the eleventh, early-twelfth and late-twelfth centuries.<sup>764</sup> The story concerned a Scottish army that had invaded Northumbria and laid waste to Lindisfarne. King Guthred went to avenge this, but having a force much smaller than the Scots, he felt defeat was certain. However, the night before the battle, St. Cuthbert appeared to him and told him not to fear, for the saint was on his side. In the earliest version of the story Cuthbert told the king, 'when morning comes, rise swiftly and confidently rush upon them, because soon into the first clash the earth shall be opened, and the living shall be sent down into hell.'<sup>765</sup> Sure enough, when the battle was about to commence, the earth opened and devoured the opposing army.

The recurrence of this story throughout this period demonstrates its appeal and importance. In the late-twelfth century Reginald could still identify the hill on which the miracle happened, and give the Old English name of the place.<sup>766</sup> This knowledge of the landscape and vernacular nomenclature is indicative of local knowledge, and is frequently associated with the passing down of oral traditions.<sup>767</sup> Indeed, in reporting that the site of the battle was close to Norham, Reginald was providing a detail that does not appear in earlier written accounts of this event. As

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<sup>761</sup> See above, p. 130.

<sup>762</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 65, pp. 130-4. See above, p. 115, and below, pp. 168, 175 and 209-11.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 129, pp. 275-8.

<sup>764</sup> *HSC*, ch. 33; *LDE*, bk II, ch. 13, p. 126, and ch. 14, p. 128; *De Admirandis*, ch. 73, p. 149.

<sup>765</sup> "Facto mane, surge velociter, irruere in eos confidenter, quia mox in primo conflictu terra aperietur, et vivos in infernum demittet", *HSC*, ch. 33.

<sup>766</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 73, p. 149.

<sup>767</sup> Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', pp. 53-83; Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', pp. 455-94.

with the stories of the coffin-bearers, Reginald's work therefore testifies to the continuing passing down and editing of the narrative through word of mouth.<sup>768</sup> This suggests that this narrative held a significant place in the memory of all local people who had access to these oral traditions. As with so many of the stories from the community's past, it made it clear that St. Cuthbert was the protecting patron of his people. This role was a common one for saints in this period, especially in times of war. Æthelthryth rebuked and killed a man who abused 'the people whose patroness I am'.<sup>769</sup> St. Foy was equally diligent in destroying those who threatened her church and people.<sup>770</sup> In Symeon's version of the Cuthbert tale, the swallowing of the Scottish army was explicitly linked to their violation of the saint's peace.<sup>771</sup> The saint, then, could be guaranteed to keep the peace by punishing those who violated it.

Guthred's march against the Scots shows the people of the north did not have to wait passively for their saints to intervene. Those without sufficient military support might flee to their churches, but the noble and knightly classes could take the fight to the enemy and still expect help from heaven. In 1138 David of Scotland led his largest cross-border invasion, and completely overran everywhere north of the Tees.<sup>772</sup> He then turned into Yorkshire, where he met his first serious opposition. Richard and John of Hexham both wrote detailed descriptions of these events, as did Aelred, who dedicated a short tract to the Yorkshire response.<sup>773</sup>

Their accounts of the rallying of the English and defeat of the Scots united the venerated dead and living holy people of the region. The role of the latter will be considered in the following chapter. The role of the former is slightly different in each of the accounts. For Aelred, the barons who took part in the battle against the Scots fought 'to defend the Church of Christ against the barbarians'. The army travelled 'with

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<sup>768</sup> For discussion of this in relation to the coffin-bearers see above, pp. 84-92.

<sup>769</sup> *LE*, bk II, ch. 132, pp. 251-3, quote p. 252, translated by Janet Fairweather. For stories of enemies of St. Æthelthryth's people being picked off one-by-one by the saint in a series of grizzly revenge stories see *Ibid.*, bk III, chs 119-20, pp. 456-8, and ch. 138, pp. 476-8.

<sup>770</sup> See, for example, *The Book of Sainte Foy*, bk I, ch. 11, pp. 70-3, and 'Further Miracles', ch. 2, pp. 223-4.

<sup>771</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 14, p. 128.

<sup>772</sup> For the background to this invasion see Barrow, 'The Scots', pp. 231-44; E. King, *King Stephen* (New Haven and London, 2010), pp. 82-94, esp. pp. 90-4.

<sup>773</sup> JH, *Historia*, s.a. 1138, pp. 292-5; RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, pp. 159-65; *Relatio*, pp. 181-99.

cross and banners and relics of the saints'.<sup>774</sup> The explicitly religious tone, which framed the contest in the language of holy war, and depicted the saints of Yorkshire at the head of the army, was repeated throughout the tract.<sup>775</sup> The idea of the English army fighting for God was highlighted by Marsha Dutton as one of the key characteristics given to them by Aelred's narrative of the events.<sup>776</sup>

The presence of the saints' banners was characteristic of contemporary warfare. It was paralleled, for example, by the situation in East Anglia, where people were known to argue over who had the privilege of carrying St. Edmund's banner into battle.<sup>777</sup> Local tradition at Ely recorded that monks had carried relics to Ashingdon in support of Edmund Ironside; the author of the *Liber Eliensis* noted that this was 'in accordance with the custom of the Church'.<sup>778</sup> Richard of Hexham also mentioned the banners of the saints in the battle of 1138, including those of John of Beverley and Wilfrid of Ripon.<sup>779</sup> These two saints, patrons of their respective communities, the latter seen as equally important in Hexham, came together on this occasion as regional representatives of Yorkshire and the churches of the north. Nor were they the only saints involved. Richard drew attention to the fact the battle was fought on land in Yorkshire belonging to St. Cuthbert. This proved divine justice was at work, since God would not allow the attacks on St. Cuthbert's land north of the Tees to go unpunished.<sup>780</sup> The victory of the English was unequivocally attributed to God, through whom the men of Yorkshire were able to overcome a numerically superior enemy.

John of Hexham preferred to focus on the better armament and bravery of the English.<sup>781</sup> Yet he did mention the fact that the English fought under the banners of the Yorkshire saints, and on the land of St. Cuthbert.<sup>782</sup> The local saints clearly held a significant place in the minds of those who fought in this battle. Under the banners of the saints, their patrons, they were united into a single regional community fighting on behalf of their homes and churches. The saints operated as a symbol around which a

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<sup>774</sup> 'ecclesiam Christi contra barbaros defensuri'; 'cum cruce et vexillis reliquiisque sanctorum', *Relatio*, p. 182.

<sup>775</sup> See, for example, part of Walter Espec's speech, *Ibid.*, pp. 188-9.

<sup>776</sup> Dutton, 'Introduction', p. 28.

<sup>777</sup> *Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, p. 56.

<sup>778</sup> *LE*, bk II, ch. 79, p. 176. Translation by Janet Fairweather.

<sup>779</sup> RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, p. 163.

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*, s.a. 1138, p. 165.

<sup>781</sup> JH, *Historia*, s.a. 1138, pp. 294-5.

<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, s.a. 1138, p. 293.

social collective could coalesce twice, first in the event itself, then in the telling of the story of that event. In the last section it was shown how the saint could be considered a symbol of the community as a whole, but here we have a practical application of the saint as signifier. Here a shared symbol – like those advocated as the building blocks of a community by Anthony Cohen – was used to rally individuals and provide them with a sense of heavenly protection.<sup>783</sup> In the narrative of these events the roles of the saints as symbols and patrons overlapped to provide a focus for identification among the people of northern England. The resultant ties that bound the people together were embedded with cultural and religious meaning, which delineated the collective as a regional community existing under the patronage of the northern saints.<sup>784</sup>

### HEALING INDIVIDUALS, HEALING THE COMMUNITY

The saints had a degree of power over the natural elements that an earthly patron did not. This allowed them to offer supernatural assistance to their people, most notably through the cure of disease, physical impairment, and medical complaints.<sup>785</sup> The cure of physical impairment was the most common miracle recorded at medieval shrines. Irina Metzler has suggested that this was because the conditions being healed were impossible to cure in other ways; the miracle was thus genuinely miraculous.<sup>786</sup> This was especially relevant in the twelfth century, for it was a period in which definitions of natural and supernatural were becoming sharper. Authors of miracle tracts, especially those with a degree of medical knowledge, were therefore more aware of events that deviated from the expected natural course of things, and could thus be described as miraculous.<sup>787</sup> Reginald of Durham is a good example of an author who

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<sup>783</sup> Cohen, *Construction of Community*; see above, p. 12.

<sup>784</sup> For the importance of social or cultural meaning in defining a community and distinguishing it from a network, see above, pp. 11-15.

<sup>785</sup> See, for example, Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 113-18; Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, esp. p. 19; Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Shrine', pp. 193-206; Wilson, 'Introduction', pp. 16-22; Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 36-109 and 125-6.

<sup>786</sup> I. Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400* (London and New York, 2006), esp. pp. 126-185 for physical impairment's relationship with miracle cures.

<sup>787</sup> E. Wilson, 'Hagiographical Interpretations of Disability in the Twelfth-Century *Miracula* of St. Frideswide of Oxford', in W. J. Turner and T. V. Pearman (eds), *The Treatment of Disabled Persons in*

demonstrates some understanding of contemporary medical knowledge.<sup>788</sup> Conditions such as physical impairments fitted the necessary requirements perfectly, by being obviously present prior to the miracle, incurable as far as existing medical ideas were concerned, and demonstrably cured after the saint's intervention.

Impairments, and the manner in which they are dealt with, are important considerations for social history because the cultural interpretation of these conditions can vary. Someone is only 'disabled' if others perceive them as such.<sup>789</sup> Irina Metzler suggests that miracle stories are the medieval source where those with physical impairments were most obviously depicted as disabled.<sup>790</sup> Equally important for the current study is the assertion that the depiction of impairment in high medieval texts, including miracle narratives, owes as much to the specific conditions of the source's production as it does to any over-riding cultural conceptions of disability.<sup>791</sup> These ideas suggest that depictions of impairment as disabling, and miracle cures as enabling, can be specific to the narratives in which they are placed. Following this, we can examine the stories told by people living in the north of England for evidence of how they and their society interpreted impairment and cure, and the effect that had on identification and community.

As will be shown, these stories often tell a narrative of disconnection through impairment; as the saint cured the individual, they also brought that person back within the bounds of 'enabled' society, and back into the local community. This is somewhat at odds with certain ideas of Metzler and Edward Wheatley. The former argued that 'disability' as it is understood by modern academics did not truly exist in the Middle Ages.<sup>792</sup> However, as noted in the previous paragraph, Metzler did find the stories in hagiographical texts to be disabling. The evidence from our sources fits this caveat. Wheatley's contention is that there were communal and familial structures in

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*Medieval Europe: Examining Disability in the Historical, Legal, Literary, Medical, and Religious Discourses of the Middle Ages* (New York, Lampeter, Queenston, 2010), pp. 135-165, at pp. 149-52.

<sup>788</sup> Crumplin, 'Rewriting History', pp. 121-3; Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', p. 65.

<sup>789</sup> Metzler, *Disability*, pp. 1-37; T. V. Pearman, *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature* (New York, 2010), pp. 1-17, esp. pp. 2-4; J. Eyler, 'Introduction', in Idem (ed.), *Disability in the Middle Ages: Reconsiderations and Reverberations* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 4-8.

<sup>790</sup> Metzler, *Disability*, pp. 126-85.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-90. This conclusion has been questioned by a more recent study of impairment, which suggest that Metzler's strict adherence to modern definitions of disability force her into making a statement that is too definitive. See Eyler, 'Introduction', pp. 7-8.

place to care for the impaired, reducing a perception of difference and integrating impaired people into society.<sup>793</sup> However, this mode of integration still left the individual with their own distinct place, one that was defined by their impairment and the need of their family or neighbours to care for them. As will be shown through the case of a blind woman, a miracle allowed integration into society as a self-reliant member, rather than one who required help in order to fit in.<sup>794</sup>

This relationship between miracles and processes of communal integration has been noted in previous historiography.<sup>795</sup> Henry Mayr-Harting suggested that what really mattered in a miracle cure was the relationship between the supplicant and wider society, as mediated by the saint. The 'cure' was actually an acceptance by local people that something had happened, that a change had been produced.<sup>796</sup> By building on this idea, this section examines how acceptance of such a change in the narratives being studied altered the communal perception of certain individuals, and had a profound effect on their place in local society. This is an example of the power narrativity has on identification. The stories of miracle cures were not just reporting events; they were constructing social meaning by arranging those events in a particular way and placing a particular interpretation on them.<sup>797</sup> In the telling of these stories, a cure represented the restitution of true selfhood, with the individual miraculously made into a whole and functioning person.<sup>798</sup>

It was not just the recipient of the cure who was affected by this. Family and friends frequently played a role in seeking the cure, and felt the impact of its success.<sup>799</sup> There was also an effect on the wider community. Impairment disrupted what was perceived as the natural order of things, and therefore disrupted 'natural'

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<sup>793</sup> E. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability* (Ann Arbor, 2010), p. x.

<sup>794</sup> See below, pp. 162-3.

<sup>795</sup> See, for example, Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 111-12, where exorcism by the saints is discussed as a form of social reintegration.

<sup>796</sup> Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Shrine', pp. 205-6.

<sup>797</sup> See Spiegel, 'Social Logic', p. 61; see also above, p. 95, and the discussion in the Introduction, pp. 18-21 and 34-48.

<sup>798</sup> H. Skoda, 'Representations of Disability in the Thirteenth-Century *Miracles de Saint Louis*', in Eyler, *Disability in the Middle Ages*, pp. 53-66, at p. 57. See also her discussion of the internalisation of disabling labels on pp. 62-5.

<sup>799</sup> See Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, pp. 18-9, which includes a description of the typical procedure for obtaining a cure. See also Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 113-8, for the interpersonal relationships involved in miraculous healing.

social structures and relationships. In healing the individual, any cure also acted to restore those social relationships and make the community whole and healthy.<sup>800</sup> Despite attention to these details in recent historiography, the benefits a cure could bring to the wider community require consideration in the specific context of the stories in our texts.

Many miracle narratives written down in the twelfth-century north of England depicted the saint's interventions as helping his community as well as the individual healed. Chapter nine of *De Sanctis* recorded the cure of a craftsman who lived in the town of Hexham. This individual was particularly important because he was the only person in the neighbourhood who practiced his craft. He contracted a disease in his throat which stopped him from eating and was likely to kill him. According to Aelred, 'the town was endangered, while that man dreaded the loss of his health, those of that town feared the loss of the essential craft.'<sup>801</sup> Fortunately, the craftsman was cured through the power of some water that had been in contact with the bones of St. Acca. 'And so it was,' concluded Aelred, 'that by the same miracle health was restored to the man and an essential craft was restored to the town.'<sup>802</sup>

Such explicit benefits to the wider community were repeated in several miracle narratives. In a later story from Hexham, the church was saved from losing one of its most important labourers, while at Durham an employee of the monastery was cured by St. Cuthbert.<sup>803</sup> Implicit benefits, in which a threat to the community was nullified, or someone was brought back within normal social bounds, were even more common. Cures for psychological illness and cognitive impairment are an excellent example. One woman from Hemingbrough, described in the story as mad, was such a danger to those around her that she had to be tied up for the journey to St. John at Beverley.<sup>804</sup> Everyone in the local community was concerned for her welfare, and their own, and they thus prayed together for help, and were very thankful once she was cured.<sup>805</sup> This

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<sup>800</sup> Skoda, 'Representations of Disability', pp. 59-62.

<sup>801</sup> 'periclitabatur civitas, dum ille salutis, isti artis necessariae dispendium formidarent', *De Sanctis*, ch. 9, p. 188.

<sup>802</sup> 'Sicque factum est, ut eodem miraculo sanitas homini, ars necessaria restitueretur civitati' *Ibid.*, ch. 9, p. 188.

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 4, pp. 182-3; *De Admirandis*, ch. 104, pp. 232-4.

<sup>804</sup> On the additional complexity that perceptions of gender could add to cases of impairment see Pearman, *Women and Disability*, esp. pp. 7-11.

<sup>805</sup> *Alia Miracula II*, p. 322.



miracle not only removed the symptoms of psychological illness from the individual, it also relieved the distress of the community.

There were numerous other cases of such help at both Beverley and Durham, and in all these cases the individual was given back their place within the community.<sup>806</sup> By being considered mad by his or her peers, the individual was marked out in these stories as different, and therefore outside the local collective. In providing a cure, the saint removed this perception of difference, and thus brought the afflicted person back into the communal fold. Those who benefitted from this assistance often made regular visits back to the church where they were healed in order to reaffirm their thanks to the saint.<sup>807</sup> This shows recognition of the power of the saint to reintegrate members of the community who had fallen beyond normal social boundaries due to cognitive impairment.

In curing the individual, the saint also nullified a potential threat to the community. The woman of Hemingbrough had been considered dangerous enough to warrant physical restriction, something the cure resolved. This wider benefit was observed in many places with powerful saints. Æthelthryth, for example, appeared to a man who suffered a bout of insanity in the local market place. Having been disturbing everyone with his noise and actions, he was calmed by the heavenly vision and retired to the church to be cured.<sup>808</sup>

All manner of illnesses and afflictions could mark an individual out as different and beyond the regular community. William Ketell mentioned one person who was cured physically and mentally. As the miracle took effect, Ketell said: 'Unexpected strength followed, the straight limbs were made to conform to the body, and he became healthy from dying, sane from being irrational, valued from being worthless and, having been distained a little before, handsome after being monstrous.'<sup>809</sup> The cure of the man's impairment gave him value again, thus bringing him back within the bounds of local society. The language of the narrative helps to reaffirm the message it is providing. The saint changed the man's position in local society, resulting in him no

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<sup>806</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 314-5; *De Admirandis*, ch. 98, pp. 217-19 and ch. 114, pp. 255-9. This ability was of course not unique to the northern saints. See, for example, *LE*, bk II, ch. 129, pp. 245-8, and bk III, ch. 131, pp. 469-70.

<sup>807</sup> See, for example, *Alia Miracula I*, p. 315.

<sup>808</sup> *LE*, bk III, ch. 131, pp. 469-70.

<sup>809</sup> 'virtus inopinata succedit; directa corpori membra conformantur; fitque de moribundo sanus, de insensate sapiens, de vili et paulo ante despecto carus, de monstruoso formosus', *MSJ*, p. 275.

longer being viewed as worthless or distained. The narrative was thus structured in such a way as to emphasise saintly power and the re-integration of an individual into the social collective.

The idea of physical disability causing revulsion and the ostracizing of the individual affected appears in other miracle stories. Reginald of Durham wrote of one man so hideous to look at even his family could not bear the sight of him. This was a powerful statement by Reginald, for as Wheatley points out family relationships were the most important way in which impaired people remained integrated into local society.<sup>810</sup> This suggests Reginald was mentioning the reaction of the man's family in order to demonstrate the extreme nature of his condition. When the man visited his parish church, which was dedicated to St. Cuthbert, he received a cure for the disease that had caused his disfigurement.<sup>811</sup> The saint's power, and the truly miraculous nature of the event, was demonstrated by the reversal of such an extreme case. The narrative also carried the message that the saint was a means by which people ostracised by the local community due to uncontrollable physical or mental conditions could be reintegrated into the collective.

Two other impairments seem to have had an especially strong impact in excluding sufferers from local society. The inability to see and the inability to talk were both considered problematic. Edward Wheatley has shown that laws and prevailing social frameworks left blind people dependent on either family or those in power. They were also the subject of certain cultural stereotypes, including laziness, greed and sexual excess, and often suspected of faking their condition.<sup>812</sup> Inbuilt dependency and social stereotyping contributed to marking the blind out as different and disabled, although Wheatley concludes that this perception was much more marked in France than it was in England.<sup>813</sup> However, he also suggests that the Anglo-Norman period was an exception to this general rule. This was also a time when miracle cures for blindness became more popular in English hagiography.<sup>814</sup>

Certain stories of miracle cures from northern texts do contain a clear idea of the condition as disabling and the cure as providing a 'normal' place in local society. St.

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<sup>810</sup> Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*, p. x. See also Skoda, 'Representations of Disability', pp. 59-62.

<sup>811</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 69, pp. 141-2.

<sup>812</sup> Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*, pp. 63-89.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220-1.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-85.

John was said to have healed a woman who had been blind for some years. A pre-cure image of her being led everywhere by her daughter, to the great sorrow of her neighbours, was contrasted with a post-cure depiction which stated that 'she was living a long time after, exerting herself with her own work, and acquiring the necessities of life by herself.'<sup>815</sup> Having previously been reliant on her daughter, the woman was now able to make her own way in life, and become a functioning member of society.<sup>816</sup> This message was embedded in miracle stories from across England and France. When St. Æthelthryth cured one blind woman, one of the defining changes was that the woman went from being led places by a guide to being able to make her own way through the world.<sup>817</sup> Meanwhile, in a reversal of the familial roles in the John of Beverley narrative, St. Foy cured a blind daughter who had previously been reliant on her mother.<sup>818</sup> Metzler has shown that contrary to some modern beliefs, being perceived culturally as disabled due to an inability to work is not solely a modern phenomenon. Although people with physical impairments were rarely described as a burden, a sense that such conditions distinguished people and caused problems for them did exist.<sup>819</sup> By removing the woman's reliance on her daughter and making her fit for work, the saint changed the way she was perceived by society, and thus altered her place within it.

The inability to speak or hear also presented difficulties. St. John was equally proficient in his cures for these afflictions.<sup>820</sup> For example, on one occasion when the archbishop of York was visiting Beverley, he had with him a man who had been without hearing or speech from birth. During a church service this man suddenly began to speak. The conclusion to the story is particularly interesting. The author wrote that the man stayed in Beverley for the rest of his life, setting up business as a baker, and becoming well known among the local people.<sup>821</sup> In this instance the intervention of

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<sup>815</sup> 'longoque post tempore vivens, labore proprio desudans, sibique vitae necessaria acquirens', *Alia Miracula II*, p. 323.

<sup>816</sup> Once again Reginald of Durham included similar miracles in his tract. See, for example, *De Admirandis*, ch. 53, pp. 109-11; ch. 121, pp. 266-8; and ch. 123, p. 269.

<sup>817</sup> *LE*, bk III, ch. 57, p. 373.

<sup>818</sup> *The Book of Sainte Foy*, bk I, ch. 9, pp. 68-9.

<sup>819</sup> Metzler, *Disability*, pp. 126-185. For a rare example of an impaired woman being ignored, laughed at and described as useless see *The Book of Sainte Foy*, bk II, ch. 4, pp. 122-3.

<sup>820</sup> Enabling people to speak was another common miracle trope beyond the north; see, for example, *LE*, bk II, ch. 130, pp. 248-9.

<sup>821</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 299-300.

the saint not only cured an individual, but also brought them into the local community for the first time. This pattern was replicated in two other miracles in the same collection. On both these subsequent occasions a mute individual from elsewhere in the country was cured by the saint and subsequently stayed on as part of the local community.<sup>822</sup> This was not an unusual occurrence at shrines. Pilgrims cured at a particular church were known to stay at these sites, especially if they were particularly young, old or poor, and thus had no existing domestic ties.<sup>823</sup>

Many of these written accounts were clearly based on stories told by the inhabitants of the surrounding towns and villages. The author of one collection of miracles claimed to have heard about the cure of a disabled woman from his parents during an afternoon visit. They told him everyone in the town was talking about the miracle.<sup>824</sup> The same writer mentioned elsewhere that he had often heard miraculous stories from local people, many of whom had personal experience of the events.<sup>825</sup> Koopmans notes that all of the stories from this author appear to be drawn from oral sources; the whole work is rich with personal tales collected from people the writer knew.<sup>826</sup>

The fact that many of the tales mentioned in this section made reference to crafts, skills, and work which would have been vital to the community, adds further weight to the idea that these were narratives told by, believed in, and important to, local people. Metzler also noted the high level of incidental detail in the accounts of miracles recording the cure of impairment – a trait that, as suggested earlier, is indicative of oral stories circulating within local society.<sup>827</sup> The use of such material is unsurprising, since all shrines had to draw on the needs of neighbouring people.<sup>828</sup> As Koopmans has pointed out, not only was it their experiences and needs that helped shape a saint's actions, but ultimately it was their stories that built and disseminated the cult.<sup>829</sup>

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<sup>822</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 300-1, and 310-12.

<sup>823</sup> Bull, *Miracles of Our Lady*, p. 55.

<sup>824</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 307-8. See above, pp. 37-8.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>826</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>827</sup> Metzler, *Disability*, pp. 126-85. See above, pp. 42-43.

<sup>828</sup> Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>829</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 26-7; see also Bull, *Miracles of Our Lady*, p. 15.

It was not just the stories themselves that were drawn from local society. The ideas within them can also be plausibly attributed to a community that extended beyond the walls of the religious house. Wheatley noted that this was particularly true in the case of stories demonstrating narrative complexity, such as those examined in this section. These were amplified from a simple statement of a cure by including material that clearly intersected with conventional ideas on impairment found outside of hagiography.<sup>830</sup> As a result, Wheatley concluded that this material reproduced and reinforced systems of power built into society and its prevailing conceptions of disability.<sup>831</sup> Wilson adds further weight to this argument by suggesting that the impact of contemporary economic, social and political pressures on these narratives was unavoidable. Moreover, as was suggested in the Introduction, the written versions of these stories had to be considered authentic, plausible and appeal to the beliefs of both the writer and his audience.<sup>832</sup>

All of this suggests that neighbouring people were well aware of the impact their saint could have when it came to the way certain individuals fitted into the community. By telling stories of miraculous cures, people were acknowledging the ability of the saint to change someone's standing and situation. This made these narratives, and the beliefs they were based on, powerful tools for integration and identification.<sup>833</sup>

## THE HUMAN COMPANION

The last section explored how a saint could act as patron of his or her community. However, patron-client relationships were not the only way to imagine the connection between the venerated dead and their people. Stephen Wilson said that other common 'social idioms' were also available to contemporaries thinking about the relationship, including those of friendship, kinship, and community. This was particularly true in places where there were multiple saints, or for people who had

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<sup>830</sup> Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*, p. 179.

<sup>831</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>832</sup> Wilson, pp. 136-40. See above, pp. 35-40.

<sup>833</sup> For a discussion of the power of narrative to shape and impart meaning, and thus to play a vital role in identification, see above, pp. 15-21.

access to more than one, because a degree of choice was introduced, something which was rarely available in temporal patronage.<sup>834</sup> Hexham is an obvious example of such a place, but as we shall see, the idea of the saint as friend or companion, rather than patron, was available to many medieval people. Indeed, the ideas of the saint as patron and friend could occur in the same story – for example when a cure was affected by personal interaction with the saint.<sup>835</sup>

The availability of companionship from the saint was based on that saint being an active member of the living community.<sup>836</sup> The chief reason for this was the unique status of saints as supernatural beings who were also humans. Behind the miracles, the intercessory power, and the place next to God, was a real person. These notions of friendship were particularly strong in the case of local saints. Such blessed individuals had lived in the same places and experienced the same circumstances as those who venerated them, and were thus well placed to empathise with their living devotees.<sup>837</sup>

For most communities in the twelfth century, their saint had been dead for hundreds of years, so the human connection could easily have become lost. The clearest examples of their humanity appeared in narratives of visions.<sup>838</sup> Aelred reported visions in two of the stories in *De Sanctis*, the first of which opened this chapter. The priest of Hexham, asleep in his church and facing an attack from the Scots, dreamt he saw two bishops approaching on horseback. They spoke to him and he looked after their horses while they went into the church to pray. Nothing suggested they were any different to ordinary men; they looked like bishops, spoke in the manner of courteous strangers, and prayed in the church as any devout Christian would. Yet it was later revealed they were saints Wilfrid and Cuthbert.<sup>839</sup> Their humanity allowed the priest to interact with them on personal terms; he could understand and communicate with them in a familiar way. This process of understanding went two ways. Just as the humanity of the saints gave the priest an opportunity to interact with them, so it allowed the saints to empathise with the fear and suffering of the people in the church. When they came out after their prayers, they were upset by what they had seen.

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<sup>834</sup> Wilson, 'Introduction', p. 26.

<sup>835</sup> Wilson, 'Hagiographical Interpretations', pp. 162-3.

<sup>836</sup> Goodich, *Lives and Miracles*, p. ix.

<sup>837</sup> Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, p. 154.

<sup>838</sup> Wilson, 'Hagiographical Interpretations', pp. 162-3.

<sup>839</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 2, pp. 177-81.

Even after the saints revealed who they were, announced their supernatural protection for the community, and were transformed into mighty patrons, they simultaneously retained their status as human companions with personal connections. Wilfrid revealed they had been ‘coming at the same time to our brothers, who rest in this church, so that we might also protect this place and its people.’<sup>840</sup> The idea of the saintly collective viewing each other as brothers, coming to see each other, and acting in unity when their people were in need, reaffirmed the human nature of all these relationships.

Two other miracle narratives previously mentioned in this chapter also provide evidence for the way visions could be used to demonstrate a saint’s humanity. St. John was twice reported to have led falsely imprisoned people out of captivity and into the shelter of sanctuary.<sup>841</sup> In these stories the saint appeared as a fellow human and acted as guide for his devotees. He personally led them from danger to safety, accompanying them as a caring yet powerful individual. Medical cures attributed to John might also be accompanied by a vision of the saint.<sup>842</sup> On one occasion the recipient of the miracle felt physical contact with the saint, who pressed his hands against the devotee’s throat and mouth.<sup>843</sup> This is similar to a miracle conducted by St. Foy, demonstrating that belief in the possibility of such contact with a visionary saint was widespread. In the St. Foy story, the saint shoved her fingers in a severely wounded man’s mouth and against his throat, thereby putting his teeth and jaw back into place.<sup>844</sup> The visionary saint was evidently believed capable of having a physical impact on the world and personal contact with its inhabitants, interaction which could be the basis for a miraculous cure.

Visions of St. Cuthbert were also fairly common and were often accompanied by miracles. Like John, the visionary Cuthbert could have a physical impact upon the world. In one narrative the saint appeared on board a ship that had been struck by a storm. Dressed in the full regalia of a bishop, he used his pastoral staff as a rudder, guiding the boat through the waves, bringing the crew to safety.<sup>845</sup> The miracle was

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<sup>840</sup> ‘ut simul ad fratres nostros, qui in hac ecclesia requiescunt, venientes, servemus simul locum istum et gentum’, *Ibid.*, ch. 2, p. 179.

<sup>841</sup> *Alia Miracula I*, pp. 302-7. See above, p. 130.

<sup>842</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, pp. 311-2, and 318.

<sup>843</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311.

<sup>844</sup> *The Book of Sainte Foy*, bk II, ch. 7, pp. 129-32, at p. 131.

<sup>845</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 23, pp. 52-3.

thus conducted in a remarkably human way, not with the saint calming the storm, but instead steering the ship through it, as if he were its captain.

It is interesting that in being seen out in the North Sea, Cuthbert had appeared away from Durham and his relics. This does not seem to have been unusual. The saint was also known to appear before devotees at various churches dedicated to him, such as at Lixtune, Cheshire. The people of that place were accustomed to hold vigils in the church when they were suffering from accidents or diseases. On one occasion their saint appeared before them in a radiant vision to cure their ills.<sup>846</sup> It was the priest of Lixtune who revealed this and several other miracles to Reginald.<sup>847</sup> Other people from the village must have known about it, for when gathered together in a church seeking help, a story detailing the appearance of their saint would have spread quickly. Such stories reaffirmed local belief in Cuthbert's connection with the community. The narratives from Lixtune clearly demonstrate it was not only the larger, relic-housing, churches that formed the centre of their community under the patronage of a saint. Churches in smaller communities did the same, and the same narrative constructs were used as at cult centres like Durham.<sup>848</sup> Through tales of visions local people came to understand the humanity of the saint, and this in turn allowed the people of Lixtune to feel a personal relationship with Cuthbert, without recourse to contact with his relics.

Having said this, the ownership of relics does seem to have strengthened the connection a community had with its saint. The presence of relics, often in the form of all or part of the body, allowed the saint always to be present in person. This, in combination with their human nature, meant the saints could take part in the activities and rituals of the community, as if they were individual members. Aelred believed the saints of Hexham were present within the church. Indeed, he even said that Wilfrid, though not physically there because his relics were buried elsewhere, was present at Hexham in spirit.<sup>849</sup> Marsha Dutton has pointed out that Hexham's saints come across in *De Sanctis* as exhibiting a special love of the place and its people.<sup>850</sup> The author of

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<sup>846</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 68, pp. 138-41.

<sup>847</sup> See *Ibid.*, ch. 72, p. 148.

<sup>848</sup> For the Lixtune narratives see *Ibid.*, ch. 68-72, pp. 138-48. For similar cases see the narratives built around communities in the Ardene, ch. 64-5, pp. 126-34, Lytham, Lancashire, ch. 132-5, pp. 280-4, and Slittrith, Teviotdale, ch. 136-9, pp. 284-9.

<sup>849</sup> *De Sanctis*, 'prologus', p. 176.

<sup>850</sup> Dutton, 'Mirror', pp. 25-6.



the second *Alia Miracula* text was definitive in stating that ‘the spirits of the just frequently visit those places where their relics are kept.’<sup>851</sup> Proof of this assertion was provided by two visionary miracles, one in which St. John appeared with a lighted candle in hand, and one where an entire procession of heavenly clerks, priests and bishops had been seen in the minster.<sup>852</sup> Moreover, although St. Cuthbert appeared in other places, his most impressive manifestations were ghostly ceremonies conducted in the church of Durham itself.<sup>853</sup>

Contemplation of relics was an effective way of establishing the humanity of a saint. The bones or body provided proof they had once been a living person, and allowed those who had contact with them to connect with the divine in a tangible, human way. The above stories demonstrate how this could lead to belief in a close connection between the saint and the community that housed his or her relics. It could also lead to a very personal, individual relationship between a devotee and their saint. Aelred’s great-grandfather, Alfred, was remembered as having had just such a relationship with St. Cuthbert. As sacristan of Durham, his duties had involved taking care of Cuthbert’s body. A century later, Reginald of Durham believed this extended to trimming the saint’s nails and combing his hair.<sup>854</sup>

This intimate relationship with the body was mirrored by the connection Alfred was believed to have had with the saint himself. For example, in another text, Reginald included a story in which St. Cuthbert appeared to one of his followers and directed him to move the head of St. Oswald from Bamburgh to Durham. The man obediently set off and completed his task thanks to repeated appearances and help from the saint.<sup>855</sup> The story was told to Reginald by Aelred, and its protagonist has been convincingly identified as Alfred, so the tale seems to have been another of the family narratives which linked Aelred to the north’s sacred past.<sup>856</sup> Whether or not this is the correct reading of its origins, the story shows that an individual was believed to be capable of having an intimate relationship with a saint. Cuthbert was evidently

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<sup>851</sup> ‘justorum animas illa loca frequenter visere, ubi reliquiae eorum conservantur’, *Alia Miracula II*, p. 324.

<sup>852</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 324-5.

<sup>853</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 38, pp. 81-2, ch. 58, pp. 116-17, and ch. 59, pp. 117-19.

<sup>854</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 26, pp. 57-60.

<sup>855</sup> *Vita Oswaldi*, pp. 375-8.

<sup>856</sup> V. Tudor, ‘Reginald’s *Life of St. Oswald*’ in C. Stancliffe and E. Cambridge (eds), *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford, 1995), pp. 178-94, at p. 189. See above, pp. 76-8 and 92; on these stories see also below, pp. 181-2 and 205-6.

considered close to those devoted to him, connected to such people through relics, visions and miracles.

The people attached to the venerated dead in this manner were not necessarily clergy. Hearing and telling stories of the saints allowed devoted members of the laity to interact with them as well.<sup>857</sup> In doing so, they became linked to the community that fostered the cult of their saint, because ‘trading personal stories is one of the chief ways people forge bonds with each other’.<sup>858</sup> The perception of a personal relationship with a saint could therefore create a place for the individual within the devotional community.<sup>859</sup> In the seventh chapter of *De Sanctis* a man named Raven was depicted as having particular devotion for St. Acca. After Raven went blind he sought in vain for a medical cure, but finally came to his senses and declared ‘I will go to my Acca.’<sup>860</sup> This narrative structure is quite common, but both Metzler and Wilson argue that this was not intended to disparage doctors, but was recognition that blindness could not be cured in any human way, making it a true miracle.<sup>861</sup>

Raven’s personal connection with the saint was reaffirmed later in the story, when he declared that ‘St. Acca, the bishop, is my sole and special refuge.’<sup>862</sup> The use of the man’s name makes it highly plausible he was a genuine person who Aelred knew or had heard about. Aelred clearly had no problem believing that a pious layperson could conceive of themselves as having a close relationship with their favourite saint. The use of ‘my Acca’ made the connection seem special, even unique.<sup>863</sup> A saint such as Acca offered a much closer, more personal form of devotion than the universal tenets of Christianity. The human relationship offered by a saint was something many people could easily connect with. This was especially true of a local saint, who knew the local situation, and was always nearby to help his or her neighbours. Through contact with relics and the construction and dissemination of suitable narratives, these

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<sup>857</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 18-25.

<sup>858</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>859</sup> On the desire of laypeople to establish a personal relationship with a saint see Callahan, ‘Peace of God’, p. 178; for the possibility that such a relationship could affect social bonds on earth see Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, p. 170.

<sup>860</sup> ‘ibo ad Accam meum’, *De Sanctis*, ch. 7, p. 186.

<sup>861</sup> Metzler, *Disability*, pp. 126-85; Wilson, ‘Hagiographical Interpretations’, pp. 143-52. For examples of a saintly cure following unsuccessful attempts by physicians in other hagiographical texts see *LE*, bk III, ch. 36, pp. 332-5 and ch. 58, pp. 373-4.

<sup>862</sup> ‘unicum ac speciale refugium meum Sanctus Acca episcopus est’, *De Sanctis*, ch. 7, p. 186.

<sup>863</sup> A similar idea is explored in relation to a knight’s story of St. Dunstan in Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 23.

ideas had the potential to gain greater familiarity. Aelred's description of the man's thought-process therefore reflects an element of the consciousness of people who heard and understood these stories.

The connection an individual felt towards their saint could be extremely strong. At certain times of personal anxiety or trouble it was more natural to turn to the saint for comfort than living people. A schoolmaster from Beverley who found himself full of desire for a woman felt unable to reveal his inner turmoil to his fellow clerks, and could think of no cure for his condition. He could, however, confide in St. John, so late one night he stayed alone in the choir so that he might secretly reveal his mind to God, 'through his servant'.<sup>864</sup> The schoolmaster wanted to open his heart to God, but found it easier to do so through the mediation of the saint. This seems to suggest even the clergy sometimes found it easier to connect with the human saint than directly with God. The schoolmaster made a 'very intimate speech'; such openness was available from the saint.<sup>865</sup> A local saint provided a confidant, a point around which emotions, fears and troubles of the conscience could be articulated.<sup>866</sup> The saint provided reassurance, and offered help and hope. These personal connections drew individuals into a relationship of great intimacy with their saintly companion.

Devotion to a particular saint was often a family affair, with connections starting when family tales were heard as a child. Aelred provides an excellent example of this. Dutton described his childhood and youth as taking much of its meaning from his family's connections to St. Cuthbert, Durham, and Hexham.<sup>867</sup> The nature of many stories in *De Sanctis* strongly suggests the author heard them while growing up in Hexham.<sup>868</sup> However, it was not just in the construction and dissemination of narratives about the saints that the family was significant. One's relatives often had a vital role to play in seeking heavenly cures, being involved in getting to the shrine, making supplication, and witnessing the miracle.<sup>869</sup> In many ways, then, the personal connections someone had to a saint could be mediated and determined by their family.

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<sup>864</sup> 'per servum Suum', *MSJ*, p. 283.

<sup>865</sup> 'tanta fuit orationis intima', *Ibid.*, p. 283.

<sup>866</sup> For a similar role being performed by living holy people in their neighbourhoods see below, pp. 193-201.

<sup>867</sup> Dutton, 'Mirror', p. 3.

<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-20; see above, pp. 27-30.

<sup>869</sup> Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Shrine', pp. 203-4; Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, pp. 219-20. See above, pp. 159-63.

Several examples demonstrate this was as true of the laity as it was the religious. In Bellingham, a village on the river Tyne, a labourer named Sproich, his wife, and his daughter all had a special patron in St. Cuthbert. The local church, dedicated to the saint, was the site where the daughter's withered hands were cured by Cuthbert. The saint also protected the family from the exactions of their lord, returned a stolen cow to Sproich, and punished a burglar who broke into the family's house.<sup>870</sup> The three people were obviously aware of the special connection they had to St. Cuthbert, as in the last instance Sproich's wife immediately invoked the name of the saint on seeing the burglar, and commanded the criminal to leave or suffer the saint's retribution.<sup>871</sup>

The lord of Lytham in Lancashire, a knight named Richard fitz Roger, also felt a close connection to St. Cuthbert. The local church was dedicated to the saint, and had been rebuilt by Richard's grandfather. Both Richard and his young son were saved from deadly illnesses by their saint, thus four generations of the same family held Cuthbert to be their own special protector and friend. Even Richard's servants were connected to St. Cuthbert through the devotion of their master and the proximity of the church.<sup>872</sup>

These examples were recorded by Reginald of Durham, but it is unlikely they were works of his own imagination. The detailed information provided on two families means they must have existed. Nor was there any reason for Reginald to lie when he said he heard the stories from those involved. Both families had the opportunity to visit the site of St. Cuthbert's relics, with Sproich employed by the church and Richard a man with the means to make such a journey to demonstrate his gratitude. The narratives show that people from different social positions and of different genders created their own imaginative ties with a local saint. The labourer of Bellingham, his wife, his daughter, the knight of Lytham and his son all turned to the saint of their local church in times of need. In doing so, they were also turning to their family saint, the one to whom their ancestors had turned, and this personal devotion was passed on to their offspring.

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<sup>870</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 108-10, pp. 242-7.

<sup>871</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 110, p. 247. For Sproich and his family see also p. 121 and 175.

<sup>872</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 132-5, pp. 280-4.

Family ties, traditions and narratives were an important aspect of medieval society for all people.<sup>873</sup> Family life was usually played out in a local setting, and the ties and traditions that were passed down through the generations bound the family and its members to the wider community. These traditions were passed on in the form of narratives like those from Lytham and Bellingham. In the last chapter we saw another strong example, that of the family tales of the coffin-bearers.<sup>874</sup> Very often, the figure at the centre of these uniting traditions and narratives was the local saint. Like all narratives, these stories gave order and meaning to experience and therefore allowed individuals and families to understand connections with others, thereby negotiating a process of identification.<sup>875</sup>

Much of this chapter has been based on the idea of freedom and choice in the relationship between an individual and a saint. Few things are as simple or one-sided as this in any society, and even forces of profound integration can offer elements of extreme divisiveness. The freedom a person enjoyed only went so far, not least because the churchmen who possessed a shrine or relics were able to exercise a degree of control over the external connections of the saint. These connections were thus subject to interference from the beliefs and understandings of the guardians. In the case of Durham, consideration of such beliefs leads to a major caveat in the argument for integration, identification, and unity being provided by the local saint. The problem is that in the twelfth century, a strong gender divide was installed into the cult of St. Cuthbert.

Symeon was the first to report this. He claimed that while alive, Cuthbert had always been concerned about the spiritual well-being of the monks under his care. This had led him to ban women from entering the monastic precinct at Lindisfarne.<sup>876</sup> By the time Symeon wrote, and throughout the twelfth century, this had been interpreted at Durham as an injunction still to be followed. As a result, women were not permitted to enter the church or cemetery in Durham, nor on Farne or Lindisfarne, places

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<sup>873</sup> On the vital role of the family in the formation of social bonds see G. Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Medieval Europe*, trans. C. Carroll (Cambridge, 2004), esp. pp. 23-64; P. Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (Basingstoke, 2001), esp. pp. 76-9; B. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 65-104.

<sup>874</sup> See above, pp. 84-92.

<sup>875</sup> See the discussion on narrative, above, pp. 18-21.

<sup>876</sup> *LDE*, bk II, ch. 7, pp. 106-8.

controlled by the monks.<sup>877</sup> Proof this was the will of God and his saint came in the form of punitive miracles against those who transgressed. These were reported by various authors in various texts, at both Durham and Farne.<sup>878</sup> Thus in the narratives and regulations of all three of Cuthbert's major shrines, a barrier to participation was set up against half the population.

The response to this in modern historiography has been two-fold. Historians have sought to exonerate Cuthbert himself, by demonstrating that such anti-feminine prejudice was entirely absent from the man and his early cult.<sup>879</sup> This has led in turn to the search for explanations as to why the saint's twelfth-century guardians established such a custom. Victoria Tudor believed it was probably an attempt to discredit the married clerks who had preceded the monks as Cuthbert's carers.<sup>880</sup> In this light, it can be seen as another tool used to demonstrate a return to early purity by the religious community.<sup>881</sup>

We can go further, however, and say that Symeon seems to have been fully aware and supportive of notions of clerical abstinence.<sup>882</sup> These were an increasing feature of late-eleventh century religious discourse, although whether Symeon's views were a reaction to Gregorian reform, or were rooted in a more traditional monastic aversion to sexual relationships, is unclear. He included one particular story in the *Libellus*, which said little about the history of his church, but plenty about his attitude towards the sexual activity of the clergy. It told of a secular priest, who having spent a night of clandestine passion with his wife, came to church straight from the scene of his iniquity and prepared to say mass and receive communion. When he looked into the chalice, he found the wine had transformed into pitch, but being too terrified to admit his sin in front of the congregation, he drank it anyway. It rendered him ill for several days, although he survived to tell the tale.<sup>883</sup> This story demonstrates that

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<sup>877</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 7, p. 108.

<sup>878</sup> *Ibid.*, bk II, ch. 8-9, pp. 108-10; *V. Barth.*, ch. 16, p. 309; *De Admirandis*, ch. 74, pp. 151-4.

<sup>879</sup> Tudor, 'Cult of St. Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century', p. 456; Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', pp. 187-8.

<sup>880</sup> Tudor, 'Cult of St. Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century', p. 456.

<sup>881</sup> For other narrative constructs operating in a similar way, see above, pp. 56-73, and below, pp. 203-5.

<sup>882</sup> On clerical abstinence among the local clergy in this period see M. Brett, *The English Church Under Henry I* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 219-20; D. Elliott, 'The Priest's Wife: Female Erasure and the Gregorian Reform', in *Idem*, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp. 123-155; R. Lennard, *Rural England 1086-1135: A Study of Social and Agrarian Conditions* (Oxford, 1959), p. 332.

<sup>883</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 10, pp. 172-4. For a full discussion of this story, see below, pp. 203-5.

Symeon saw interaction with women as potentially dangerous for all the clergy. The ban on women instituted by the monks of Durham was not just a local issue, designed to emphasise their superiority over the clerks, but also demonstrated their place within a body of religious thought which saw women as a danger to one's soul.

While this may be the root of the gender divide at Cuthbert's shrine, it would be a mistake to leave the discussion here. The problem with focusing on the exoneration of Cuthbert is that in the twelfth century the 'real' Cuthbert was the one presented in popular narratives and at his shrines. Any attempt to establish the historical Cuthbert as gender-blind and female-friendly risks missing the substantial impact the alternative depiction would have had. For twelfth-century women, being made to wait outside, and being told of the horrors that would befall any woman who dared to disobey, created a very clear barrier between them and the saint, while also instituting an obvious divide in the community. The contrast with some other shrines is quite extreme. Henry Mayr-Harting has shown how the bond formed by women with St. Frideswide at Oxford offered a rare opportunity for freedom and choice in an otherwise highly restrictive society.<sup>884</sup> Such possibilities do not seem to have been open at Durham, Farne, or Lindisfarne.

Before discussing this further and considering the impact on communal identification, it is worth following up the diversity of practice and opportunity, which the comparison with Mayr-Harting highlights. Not every church dedicated to St. Cuthbert was as restrictive as the cult centres. Most of the evidence from smaller churches and communities displays no gender discrepancy.<sup>885</sup> The wife and daughter of Sproich were as close to St. Cuthbert as the labourer, and were known to have received the saint's support.<sup>886</sup> The church in Arden held an annual feast for its saint at which all the people of the area were fed together.<sup>887</sup> At Slitrih, young people of both genders gathered in the churchyard to dance and play games on their saint's feast-day, while older men and women sat and watched from the church.<sup>888</sup> John Crook has suggested other than the monks themselves, all people were severely restricted in the

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<sup>884</sup> Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Shrine', p. 203.

<sup>885</sup> Tudor concurs; see 'Cult of St. Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century', pp. 456-8.

<sup>886</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 108, pp. 242-5, and ch. 110, pp. 246-7. See above p. 172.

<sup>887</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 64, pp. 126-30. See above, pp. 115, 154 and 168, and below, pp. 209-11.

<sup>888</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 136-7, pp. 284-7.

access they had to Cuthbert's relics at Durham.<sup>889</sup> However the saint was able to work miracles, and thus connect with his people, at former resting places.<sup>890</sup> As noted in the discussion of church dedications, many places were able to claim the honour of housing the saint's body, opening up the availability of personal connections to many local communities away from Durham. Reginald seemed unconcerned by the presence of women in these places when he recorded the stories, so even the monks accepted it was not a problem. This is striking, considering the moral anxiety experienced by Symeon earlier in the century, and perhaps indicates that the presence of women *per se* was not so much the issue as the interaction they had with the clergy. It may also suggest the monks were increasingly concerned with their own purity, rather than worrying about that of the secular priests. Either way, in these non-monastic communities the saint appears to have been a significant force for unity and integration regardless of gender.

What, then, can be said about the situation at Durham? Tudor suggested there were signs of change in the late-twelfth century, as Durham attempted to attract more female pilgrims.<sup>891</sup> Ward pointed out that the saint still cured plenty of women away from his main shrine.<sup>892</sup> One might therefore suggest that a relationship with Cuthbert was still available to the women of Durham, but it was not as bound to the tomb as it was for men. This is important, because it suggests a degree of autonomy from clerical control in the connections people found with the saints. Popular stories and oral tradition existed independently of written narratives, and offered an alternative view of the saint.<sup>893</sup> Koopmans has pointed out that while religious authors and groups might control which stories were recorded in writing, the life-blood of a cult was the spoken narratives of devotees, and these could not be controlled in the same way.<sup>894</sup> Personal relationships and ideas of heavenly patronage may have been available to local women through these alternative narratives. In this light, the healing of women away from the shrine looks like evidence of people who had formed their own

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<sup>889</sup> Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West c. 300-1200* (Oxford, 2000), p. 204.

<sup>890</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167-9.

<sup>891</sup> Tudor, 'Cult of St. Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century', pp. 456-8.

<sup>892</sup> Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 56-66.

<sup>893</sup> Smith, 'Oral and Written', pp. 309-43.

<sup>894</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 25-7.



connection with a local saint, and experienced it in a similar way to other devotees.<sup>895</sup> It is important to recognise this possibility, in order to avoid stripping people considered as oppressed or subordinate, including women, of all agency. It is also worth noting that the cult of St. Cuthbert does not seem to have suffered any great loss of popularity, among either men or women, during this period, suggesting a degree of acceptance of the rules. In one especially notable story, a woman went to Farne despite the restrictions and, having stayed in the guesthouse next to the church, she was cured of her ailment.<sup>896</sup> Reginald told the story to demonstrate the help given by the saint to those who obeyed the rules, but it suggests some women observed the restrictions faithfully and still felt a connection to Cuthbert.

Having said this, it would be wrong to assume that the availability of alternative conceptions of, or connections to, the saint meant the explicit gender divide established by the monks had no impact on women or the community. The religious groups who housed the relics of the saints had a degree of control over the cult even when counter-narratives were constructed. Popular opinion held that a saint was resident in their tomb, and that their power was particularly focused there.<sup>897</sup> Control of the tomb necessarily gave the monks a certain amount of power over the cult. In terms of seeing the saint as a human companion, an inability to visit that companion changed the way one understood the relationship. It also affected the communal bond that people felt, as it created a division based on gender, and cut through the group identified as 'the people of the saint'.

One story suggests this was not only acknowledged by contemporaries, but seen, by some at least, as unfair. The events took place on the island of Farne, which, being a cell of the Durham monks, was under the same prohibition as Durham itself. A woman, who was among a group who had stopped on the island to pay their respects to St. Cuthbert, was disgusted to discover she was not allowed into the church. She complained bitterly that the men were treated with honour, while the women were forced to remain outside, closer to dogs than men.<sup>898</sup> The story indicates an

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<sup>895</sup> For the healing of women (often still in churches dedicated to St. Cuthbert, and sometimes even in the vicinity of Durham, but away from main shrine) see, among others, *De Admirandis*, ch. 53, pp. 109-11; ch. 99, pp. 219-21; ch. 108, pp. 242-5, ch. 115, pp. 260-1; ch. 121, pp. 266-8; ch. 123, p. 269; ch. 124, p. 270; and ch. 138, pp. 287-8.

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 62, pp. 122-3.

<sup>897</sup> Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 88-93; Wilson, 'Introduction', p. 11.

<sup>898</sup> *V. Barth.*, ch. 16, p. 309.

undercurrent of tension, which resulted from a sense of unfairness in the regulations. By comparing her treatment to that of a dog, the woman in the story demonstrated a feeling of being divided from her fellow humans, of not being an equal part of the devotional collective. The point of the story was to prove she was wrong, because having decided to ignore the rules and enter the church, she was struck dead by the saint. However, it shows not everyone accepted the legislation, and suggests the regulations undermined notions of equality within the community. Indeed, one could go further, and say it demonstrates outright resistance to any notion of access to the saint being restricted according to sex.

The gender divide at St. Cuthbert's major shrines shows any discussion of the way people understood themselves and their place in their community needs to be careful and nuanced. Beliefs that appear to be uniting and important for collective identification could also set up divisions, while divisive ideas might have had a counter-current running alongside them acting as a force for integration. The historian will rarely have a complete view of both. Instead, one must try to reconstruct this complex situation as well as possible given the evidence. Such complexities, and indeed division and hierarchy themselves, are not mutually exclusive to the idea of community.<sup>899</sup> The woman in the story did not see the prohibition on her entry into the church as something that left her outside of the community. She still considered herself to be one of St. Cuthbert's people; this belief underlay her objection. She was appealing against the imposition of a gendered hierarchy within her community, not exclusion from that community itself. In the next chapter, we will encounter more examples of difference, disagreement, and hierarchy within the communities of northern England. They serve as a reminder that not every process was unifying, but that a sense of community could still be built despite this, as alternative concepts were posited, or division was accepted into the framework of the social collective.

#### **THE SAINT, THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY**

Before moving on, it is worth tying together the major points raised in this chapter. Many churches in the twelfth-century north of England were dedicated to, or

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<sup>899</sup> See the discussion of debates over sanctuary above, pp. 146-51.

associated with, one or more saints. Many of these saints were of local or regional provenance. They were not only the saints of their church, but also of the village, town or surrounding countryside, and they came to play three broad roles in relation to the people who lived on this land.

As a symbol that represented their church, they embodied the social collective that formed around it. This was particularly true of places that held the relics of their saint. Hexham, Beverley, and especially Durham were frequently thought of through reference to the saints whose bodies they housed. The local saint was also a patron of his or her people. Through administering justice, protection and miraculous cures, the venerated dead ensured their people had peace. In doing so, they helped establish and heal communal bonds. Thus the saint was not only a protective shield for the community, they were also a significant force in its integration. Finally, the saint was a personal companion to many individuals within the group, and a human member of it in their own right. Their humanity allowed a level of interaction with individuals, which in turn aided mutual identification between people.

All these aspects worked independently to help bind the local community. The presence of these ideas in contemporary narratives drew people into a multifaceted relationship with the saint that provided ties of patronage, devotion and personal friendship. Yet what made each aspect particularly important for the process of identification was the way they overlapped with each other. The saint was at once a symbol of the community, a patron of the people, and a close friend of each individual. By simultaneously representing the community and allowing individuals to interact on a personal level, the saint acted as a key point of mediation between the individual and the group.

It is important to emphasise, once again, that this role was carried out equally by the saint in the largest cathedral, complete with bodily relics, and the saint of the smallest chapel, with no connection but a name. It seems almost every individual sought a heavenly companion, that every community needed a blessed patron. It was, of course, not as uniform as it seems. The portrayal of women at Cuthbert's major cult centres by certain authors should make us wary of generalisations about a complex society. There were people who did not interact with the venerated dead in the way suggested here. Those who appear in the sources are vilified, included as a warning to

others who might show similar disrespect.<sup>900</sup> They thus appear in many of these texts as fairly one-dimensional characters, to the extent of being narrative devices. Yet, as was shown in the discussion of communal perceptions of sanctuary, or women at St. Cuthbert's major shrines, these stories offer hints of an alternative conception of the saints and their role in local society.

Each person, regardless of vocation and social status, had differing levels of choice and independence when it came to interacting with the saints. It is likely that those who inhabited the small village communities of the north experienced greater flexibility in how they performed their relationships with the local church than those who lived in the shadow of the great monastic centres. Having said this, the religious guardians always had a degree of control over the saints, not least because they had possession of their relics. Yet difference and hierarchy could be built into a cult, and the saint still function in his or her various roles. People excluded from dominant textual narratives had access to their own stories. These might have mirrored those other narratives, run counter to them, existed independently, or been incorporated into them. The cult of the local saint was as much a process of negotiation between every person in the community as the community was itself. Through their stories and experiences of their saint, people like those discussed in this chapter were able to better understand themselves, their place in society, and the community of which they were members.

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<sup>900</sup> Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, pp. 220-22.

## CHAPTER 4: THE SERVANTS OF GOD: HERMITS, RECLUSES AND PRIESTS

The textual narratives of the eleventh and twelfth centuries contain descriptions of certain contemporary people who were noted for their holy way of life, their vocation and place in the church, or both. One such person was Aelred's great-grandfather, Alfred, who was described in *De Sanctis* as a priest of Durham endowed with many virtues.<sup>901</sup> Aelred said he 'was honoured in the place of a father by all the northern English, who were so astonished at his speeches that whatever they heard from him they accepted as if from divine prophecy.'<sup>902</sup> The author followed this up by explaining how Alfred was sometimes given the epithet 'Larwa', meaning teacher, because of his ability to teach and his gift of wisdom.<sup>903</sup> This short description was complemented by the next chapter of the tract. Alfred was once again spoken of as a father to the leaders and people of Northumbria. In the story which followed, a thegn in possession of the church of Hexham was instructed in a dream to seek out Alfred, who was to perform a translation of some of the relics there.<sup>904</sup>

Several interesting points are raised by this material. The use of the term *patris* stressed Alfred's position as a leader of the region, someone to whom neighbouring people looked up. The mention of his teaching marked him out as an individual others listened to and sought to learn from; this was given a sacred dimension by the perception that his words were divine utterances. Furthermore, these qualities, when combined with the wisdom Alfred was supposed to possess, clearly made him a man who was sought out for advice and guidance in all matters, but particularly those of religion. For these reasons, the thegn in the second story saw Alfred as the appropriate man to conduct a translation.

While Aelred was telling a story that presented his ancestor in an impressive light, the familial connection does not mean we should entirely discount his testimony.

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<sup>901</sup> 'presbiter quidam multis adornatus virtutibus', *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, p. 190. Given his prominent place in northern society, surprisingly little has been written by historians on this individual. Passing references appear in several of the essays in Rollason *et al* (eds), *Anglo-Norman Durham*, see especially pp. 57-8 and 63.

<sup>902</sup> 'qui ab omnibus aquilonalibus Anglis patris loco colebatur, qui ita sermonibus ejus inhiabant, ut quicquid audirent ab eo quasi Divinum oraculum suscepissent', *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, p. 190.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 11, p. 190.

<sup>904</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 12, pp. 195-9; for the second reference to Alfred as 'patris loco' see p. 195.

Symeon of Durham gave an equally impressive portrait of Alfred before Aelred was born, although it seems there was little connection between the two accounts. It is likely Aelred was working from family stories, while Symeon relied on the traditions of the community at Durham.<sup>905</sup> Even so, stories of living servants of God, including churchmen and hermits, were constructed with specific purposes, in much the same way as those of the past and the saints were. These narratives were shaped by wider discourse on the role and actions of the clergy, while also responding to local pressures and ideas. Yet at the same time, they also reveal something of the social function that these people either saw for themselves, or were expected to perform by others.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine certain hermits, recluses and secular clerics, and the stories that were told about them, with the aim of revealing this social function and how it helped the construction of communities. How they fitted into local social collectives is important for understanding the socio-religious framework in which they operated. Consideration can then be given to the roles such people performed within local society, and how they helped integrate others into communal groups, by providing a point of mutual identification. This will tell us much about the formation of communities, and how certain specific members interacted with the wider collective.

Hermits and recluses only became the object of widespread scholarly interest in the latter half of the twentieth century. Influential articles by Peter Brown and Henry Mayr-Harting changed the prevailing academic perception of hermits and recluses.<sup>906</sup> Both brought a new focus on the place and role of ascetic solitaries within the framework of wider medieval society. Although this was done with one eye on the religious beliefs and values of the hermits and those who interacted with them, a precedent was set for studies which took a socio-economic approach.<sup>907</sup>

Within this body of work, divergent interests were still able to emerge, with some historians examining the hermits and their motivations, some the interactions of hermits with wider society, and some attempting to do both.<sup>908</sup> All these scholars paid

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<sup>905</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 7, pp. 160-66.

<sup>906</sup> P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity' *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), pp. 80-101; H. Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse' *History* 60 (1975), pp. 337-52.

<sup>907</sup> On this see T. Licence, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 1-9.

<sup>908</sup> See respectively H. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000-1150* (London, 1984); S. Ridyard, 'Functions of a twelfth-century recluse revisited:

some attention to religious beliefs and impulses. Yet the extraordinary influence of Brown still holds sway over academic study. This is not in itself a bad thing, but the resultant literature has led historians like Tom Licence to question the emphasis on understanding a predominantly religious phenomenon in non-religious terms.<sup>909</sup> In light of this, it is worth reappraising certain aspects of the socio-religious function of such holy people to show how the role played by hermits in local society was based on intimately entwined religious beliefs and social functions. This chapter seeks to continue the work of recent scholarship in this area, building on it in order to offer a new angle on the role performed by two hermits in particular, Godric of Finchale and Bartholomew of Farne.

#### THE PLACE OF A HERMIT IN LOCAL SOCIETY

The historian of northern England is well-endowed with evidence for hermits. The greatest volume of contemporary writing was dedicated to Godric, a hermit of the mid-twelfth century whose *vita* was written by Reginald of Durham.<sup>910</sup> Bartholomew also had a life written about him by a monk at Durham.<sup>911</sup> Although considerably shorter than the text on Godric, it still provides a wealth of information on the place and role of hermits.<sup>912</sup>

Both these texts were produced by the monastic community at Durham and were principally structured by their respective authors. Their overall composition and over-arching narrative are thus the work of two individuals operating within the monastic community. However, within this framework the narratives of other people can also be detected. Reginald of Durham lived with Godric for several years, and his work was partially based on the holy man's personal memories.<sup>913</sup> The method of working seems to have altered over time. At first the author was reliant on stories told to him by the hermit's immediate neighbours, but as the two men got to know each

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the case of Godric of Finchale' in R. Gameson and H. Leyser (eds), *Belief and culture in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford, 2001), pp. 236-50; A. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley and London, 1985).

<sup>909</sup> Licence, *Hermits*, p. 8.

<sup>910</sup> *V. Godr.* See above, pp. 25-7.

<sup>911</sup> *V. Barth.*

<sup>912</sup> Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Recluse', pp. 337-8.

<sup>913</sup> On the relationship between Reginald and Godric, see Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', esp. pp. 58-78.

other Godric began to offer his own perspectives and recollections. These were later written down by the monk.<sup>914</sup> Reginald's creation therefore contains the vestiges of Godric's perception of himself.

This style of collaborative composition was replicated in other eremitical lives, most notably that of Christina of Markyate.<sup>915</sup> Reflecting on the case of Christina, Douglas Gray claims that such works do not allow the historian to split the voices of narrator and writer. Instead, the ideas are a collaboration between the two of them.<sup>916</sup> Rachel Koopmans is more sceptical regarding Christina's input. She demonstrates that many of the major ideas in the text correspond more closely to what one would expect from the religious author, rather than his subject.<sup>917</sup> However, even Koopmans believes that a close reading draws out valuable insights into wider perceptions of the holy person.<sup>918</sup>

Certain examples from the *Vita Godrici* are suggestive of a collaborative perspective that, while weighted towards the author's perceptions, still reveal ideas that appear to be the result of discussion and interaction between the monk and the hermit. For example, Reginald claimed that Godric said he was greatly inspired by the example of St. Cuthbert following a visit to Farne.<sup>919</sup> This fitted well with Reginald's agenda, as it associated a living holy person with the principle saint of the writer's church, and reflected positively on both of them.<sup>920</sup> However, it also provided Godric with a suitable narrative to explain his own life and chosen vocation. The hermit's personal memories of his life prior to moving to Finchale clearly display a long period of soul-searching. As a young man he had been a merchant, and even after deciding on a more religious existence, he repeatedly changed where he lived and lacked a clear direction for his spiritual energies.<sup>921</sup> Discussing this earlier portion of his life with Reginald offered the opportunity for Godric to turn it into a coherent story. The text

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<sup>914</sup> Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', p. 220; Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', esp. pp. 58-78.

<sup>915</sup> D. Gray, 'Christina of Markyate: The Literary Background', in S. Fanous and H. Leyser (eds), *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Holy Woman* (Abingdon, 2005), pp. 12-24, at pp. 16-17.

<sup>916</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>917</sup> R. Koopmans, 'Dining at Markyate with Lady Christina', in Fanous and Leyser, *Christina of Markyate*, pp. 143-59, esp. pp. 143-4.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154-7.

<sup>919</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 5, pp. 30-2.

<sup>920</sup> In a similar vein Christina of Markyate's biographer emphasised every connection between her and St. Alban's. See Koopmans, 'Dining at Markyate', pp. 148-54.

<sup>921</sup> *V. Godr.* ch. 3-19, pp. 26-65; Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', pp. 213-18.



presents this soul-searching as a journey towards Godric's final, inevitable eremitical existence. Jones has noted that the presentation of these early periods in a hermit's life as a journey with an inevitable conclusion reflects a Benedictine ideal of what an eremitical life entailed.<sup>922</sup> The view of Godric's life, coloured by hindsight, was a product of conversations that edited the tale in way suitable for both the hermit and his biographer. In this situation, the focus on Cuthbert helped explain the final destination of Godric's life.<sup>923</sup> The place of the saint in the story may have originally been suggested by one of the monks of Durham, or it may have been an idea of Godric's that was drawn out in conversation with them. We cannot tell from the available evidence. However, the way it was put forward in the final text was a product of telling and retelling the story between the hermit and the monks. It is worth noting in relation to this that Godric approved the early drafts of the *Vita*, so acquiesced to the image of these events that it presented.<sup>924</sup>

Bartholomew's biographer, Geoffrey, was more distant from his subject. The stories he collected were supplied by those who had lived with, interacted with, and observed the hermit.<sup>925</sup> Reginald also collected stories from a vast array of people who had come into contact with Godric. Many of these people were named, or given a place of origin, suggesting Reginald focused his efforts on gathering stories from genuine witnesses whom he considered reliable. The bishop of Galloway and the abbot of Durham told tales that show religious leaders sought out the hermit.<sup>926</sup> Many more stories were reported by monks of Durham Priory.<sup>927</sup> Godric's immediate neighbours were also an important source of information. Sometimes Reginald said that a tale was well-known by local people, suggesting it was a topic of conversation in the locality in much the same way as the story of an impaired woman's cure in Beverley circulated among the townspeople.<sup>928</sup> In such cases, the author might defer to one individual's

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<sup>922</sup> E. A. Jones, 'Christina of Markyate and the Hermits and Anchorites of England', in Fanous and Leyser, *Christina of Markyate*, pp. 229-38.

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229-38.

<sup>924</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 166, pp. 315-17.

<sup>925</sup> *V. Barth.*, pp. 309 and 316-7.

<sup>926</sup> See *V. Godr.*, ch. 134, pp. 260-1, told by the bishop of Galloway, and *Ibid.*, ch. 38, pp. 93-5, told by Prior Roger of Durham.

<sup>927</sup> See, for example, those told by monks who nursed Godric in his old age: *Ibid.*, ch. 85, pp. 186-8, ch. 93, pp. 202-3, ch. 123, pp. 246-7, and ch. 130, p. 255.

<sup>928</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 45, pp. 105-6. For the story that was well-known in Beverley, see above, pp. 37-8, 44 and 164.

version of the communal narrative. For example, in the story of a flood that was well-known in the area, it was the version of a knight named Wibert that Reginald used as the basis for his own rendition.<sup>929</sup> Elsewhere, an industrious man, his wife, their friends and a local knight were all deferred to.<sup>930</sup> The stories Reginald collected were therefore both personal narratives, built by individuals out of memories of previous interaction with the hermit, and communal tales, the product of conversations between those who lived near Finchale. They represented a vast range of people, from bishops to sculptors, and even included a story told by enemies of the hermit who had been prevented from harming him.<sup>931</sup>

Both sources suggest that oral stories of these hermits were common in the north of England. This meant people had contact with the tales told about the two hermits outside the writings of Reginald and Geoffrey. Unfortunately, the historian can only refer to such stories in their surviving incarnations. Everything we read has been collated, edited and structured by the authors. Yet the surviving material does contain the stories shared by others. When discussing the *Life* of Christina of Markyate, Henrietta Leyser concluded that a text such as this was simultaneously a carefully constructed hagiography *and* a record of stories told by those involved.<sup>932</sup> In his work on Godric of Finchale and Wulfric of Haselbury, Alexander stated that ‘a miracle story is not usually, in this period, the sole creation of a writer, rather it is a story that is created and remembered by a multiplicity of people’.<sup>933</sup> He concludes that ‘to some extent, a hagiographer can only record those miracles which are generally remembered’, that is, products of wider oral culture.<sup>934</sup> As a result, I believe the overall narrative purpose still occasionally gives way to the stories of individual participants. With careful analysis, we can see how different people presented Godric and Bartholomew, and how the narratives and events they reported helped manage the relationship between the hermits and those who came into contact with them.

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<sup>929</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 45, pp. 105-6.

<sup>930</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 104, pp. 218-19.

<sup>931</sup> For the sculptor see *Ibid.*, ch. 42, pp. 101-2; for the enemies, see ch. 43, pp. 102-3, told by *aliena* who attacked Godric.

<sup>932</sup> H. Leyser, ‘Christina of Markyate: The Introduction’, in Fanous and Leyser, *Christina of Markyate*, pp. 1-11.

<sup>933</sup> Alexander, ‘Hermits and Hairshirts’, pp. 205-226, at p. 220.

<sup>934</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

In addition to their main subject, each of these accounts also contains passing references to other hermits and recluses who lived in the region, thus furnishing the modern reader with further examples of the eremitic life. In this way they are similar to Reginald's work on the miracles of St. Cuthbert, or the *Life* of Christina of Markyate, with huge amounts of circumstantial detail and local realism.<sup>935</sup> Further evidence is provided by a letter that Aelred sent to his sister, who was living as a recluse.<sup>936</sup> As a piece of guidance on how to live an enclosed religious existence, it is a normative text. As such, its use requires some justification since texts of this kind have not proved particularly useful for this thesis. They tend to generalise, focus on ideals, and obscure the individuality of specific people. All these attributes make them less promising than narrative sources for the present study, given its intention to examine the way specific individuals and communities negotiated their social existence. However, in the case of Aelred's letter, I believe there are a few brief details worth noting. This is because the advice he gave was based on common criticisms or warnings that are indicative of the role performed by hermits and recluses. As a result, I will draw on this text when it offers a useful additional material for this study.

The texts that preserved the narratives of the lives of Godric and Bartholomew were produced at Durham, and the dominant idea implicit throughout each is a connection between the monastic community and the hermit. Both authors intentionally built their texts in this way.<sup>937</sup> Bartholomew was a monk of Durham, who became a hermit on Farne after spending some time in the monastery.<sup>938</sup> The move from Durham to Farne was not without its problems, but it was an acceptable process for one of the brethren. The Rule of St. Benedict considered an eremitical existence an appropriate final step for a monk considered suitable for such a way of life.<sup>939</sup> The island hermitage on Farne had been closely connected with the community based at

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<sup>935</sup> For this characterisation of *De Admirandis* see above, pp. 25-7. For Christina's *Life* see Gray, 'Christina of Markyate', pp. 12-13.

<sup>936</sup> *De Institutione Inclusarum*.

<sup>937</sup> See T. Licence, 'The Benedictines, the Cistercians and the Acquisition of a Hermitage in Twelfth-Century Durham' *Journal of Medieval History* 29 (2003), pp. 315-29.

<sup>938</sup> *V. Barth.*, pp. 298-9.

<sup>939</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. and trans. J. McCann (London, 1972), ch. 1, pp. 14-16.

Durham for many centuries, and it was a regular retreat for monks from the priory.<sup>940</sup> Bartholomew did not leave the monastic group, but became an external member, following a more solitary life. As a result, the manner in which the text portrays Bartholomew as a member of the community of Durham comes across as natural, fitting easily with the narrative of his life.

Godric's position was more ambiguous. He was not a monk when he took up life at Finchale, and even as events drew him into Durham's circle, his exact relationship with the monks is difficult for us to grasp.<sup>941</sup> This ambiguity also presented problems for Reginald. Licence has shown that the brethren of Durham wanted a closer relationship with the hermit in order to be associated with the perception of holiness that had enveloped Godric.<sup>942</sup> Reginald's account of Godric's life therefore sought to portray the hermit as an external member of the community, similar to Bartholomew, but the narrative he produced had to work hard in order to achieve this.<sup>943</sup> A visit to Durham was presented as a momentous point in his life, and St. Cuthbert's role in his choice of vocation and its location was emphasised.<sup>944</sup> Reginald's concern to present Godric in this way reflected strenuous efforts by the monks of Durham to draw him into their community as an associated hermit. This is in keeping with a wider effort in the twelfth century to place those following an eremitical life under the authority of a monastic or regular house.<sup>945</sup> The most important moment in the process of integration came when Godric submitted both himself and his land to the prior of Durham. He agreed to listen to the prior's instructions and seek that man's advice. Furthermore, from this moment on, the monks of Durham gained much greater control over who met Godric. This level of control helped normalise his position within the monastic community, but it had the potential to be detrimental to his connections with neighbouring laypeople who had previously had free access to him. However, those with long-held ties to the hermit probably retained the privileges

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<sup>940</sup> V. Tudor, 'Durham Priory and its Hermits in the Twelfth Century', in Rollason *et al*, *Anglo-Norman Durham*, pp. 67-78, especially pp. 67-73.

<sup>941</sup> Ridyard, 'Functions Revisited', p. 240; Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', pp. 285-7. On the link between Durham and Godric generally see *Ibid.*, pp. 279-89.

<sup>942</sup> Licence, 'Acquisition', pp. 328-9.

<sup>943</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325. For a similar situation with Christina of Markyate and St. Alban's see Koopmans, 'Dining at Markyate', pp. 143-4 and 148-54.

<sup>944</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 16, pp. 59-61.

<sup>945</sup> B. Golding, 'The Hermit and the Hunter', in J. Blair and B. Golding (eds), *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 95-117, at pp. 103-5.

of their relationship, as there is no indication in Reginald's writing that laypeople with old connections to Godric were prevented from seeing him.<sup>946</sup>

While presenting Godric as an external member of Durham's monastic community, Reginald's text also highlighted differences between the hermit and the monks. Incidental mention of the prior of Durham in one story shows that the hermit, as a layperson, needed help from the monks of Durham in looking after his spiritual affairs.<sup>947</sup> His reliance on them for spiritual provision put them in a position of power over him. Reginald also drew distinctions between the learning of the monks and the comparative ignorance of Godric. In one story a demon mocked Godric for being rustic and illiterate.<sup>948</sup> Elsewhere, Reginald himself described Godric as an 'ignorant and unlettered man'.<sup>949</sup> Moreover, the monks sometimes tried to speak to each other without the hermit understanding by using Latin.<sup>950</sup> These distinctions made plain the difference between the monks of Durham who lived with Godric at Finchale and the hermit himself, thereby positioning the latter as a person on the edge of the religious community. Tudor has suggested that they may also imply concern over Godric's suitability to live an eremitical life.<sup>951</sup> Questions over the appropriateness of people with no previous monastic training living an eremitical life, which was usually seen as a stage of religious existence that should come after cenobitism, were common at this time.<sup>952</sup> Monks looking after one of Godric's contemporaries, Wulfric of Haselbury, demonstrated a similar uneasiness to Reginald over what their exact relationship with the hermit should be.<sup>953</sup>

Durham's wide sphere of influence made it a significant community across the north. Yet Bartholomew and Godric were also part of smaller, more localised communities. Both lives followed a common hagiographical trope by claiming that their subjects' visitors came from distant as well as neighbouring parts.<sup>954</sup> Yet this construction cannot hide the fact that the hermits' most regular visitors, the people

<sup>946</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 58, pp. 135-7; see also ch. 88, p. 194.

<sup>947</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 38, pp. 93-5.

<sup>948</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 38, pp. 93-5.

<sup>949</sup> 'idiota et illiterato homine', *V. Godr.*, ch. 59, p. 138.

<sup>950</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 79, pp. 179-80.

<sup>951</sup> Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', pp. 73-5.

<sup>952</sup> Leyser, *Hermits*, pp. 7-15.

<sup>953</sup> Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Recluse', pp. 348-9.

<sup>954</sup> For example, *V. Barth.*, ch. 11, p. 304; *V. Godr.*, ch. 59, pp. 137-8.

with whom they formed the closest relationships, were those who lived near them.<sup>955</sup> Alexander's close analysis of the *Vita Godrici* shows that, despite Reginald's focus on monastic sources for his stories, Godric's most important, long-term relationships were with individuals from the peasantry who lived nearby.<sup>956</sup> This was far more pronounced than for some other contemporary hermits, such as Wulfric of Haselbury.<sup>957</sup>

Both Godric and Bartholomew were also explicitly linked to the place of their eremitical existence. Bartholomew was told where he was destined to live by St. Cuthbert; it was a place explicitly reserved for him.<sup>958</sup> This story of a place preordained by God and revealed by the local saint irrevocably bound the hermit both to the location and the saint who disclosed the information. Bartholomew himself is recorded telling a story of a former hermit called Edulf, and how he brought proper religious devotion back to the island of Farne. Bartholomew used this to explain why he wanted to be buried on the island – so it did not fall from grace again – but his narrative also positioned him within an ancient line of hermits, from Cuthbert and Edulf to the present day, therefore reaffirming his place on Farne and in its history.<sup>959</sup>

Godric and Bartholomew were thus firmly rooted in their locality. However, it does not automatically follow that they were a part of the local community. To understand their relationship with their neighbours, we have to look closely at the narratives of events in their lives and interactions with other people. In the early stages of their eremitical existence both hermits seem to have remained isolated, shunning human contact. This was the ideal situation for the solitary life, although it was not necessarily practised to the same extent by all hermits. For example, Wulfric of Haselbury seems to have fitted into local society much more easily than Bartholomew or Godric.<sup>960</sup> In the letter to his sister, Aelred wrote that separation was vital to her chosen way of life. It was necessary due to the manifest spiritual dangers even innocent human contact brought.<sup>961</sup> However, such separation was evidently

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<sup>955</sup> *V. Barth.*, ch. 17, pp. 309-10; *V. Godr.*, ch. 24, p. 72, ch. 25, p. 73, ch. 153, p. 291.

<sup>956</sup> Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', pp. 225-6.

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>958</sup> *V. Barth.*, ch. 7, pp. 299-300.

<sup>959</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 29, pp. 319-20.

<sup>960</sup> Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', p. 221.

<sup>961</sup> *De Institutione Inclusionum*, pp. 42-4.

more of an ideal than a sustainable reality, as Aelred went on to lament the lack of attention to this rule among contemporary recluses.<sup>962</sup>

Even in his idealised vision of the life, Aelred foresaw the need to deal with visitors, so he dwelt on methods of limiting and de-personalising any human contact. The recluse was to avoid seeing the same person too many times, avoid eye contact, and ensure her face was veiled when talking to men.<sup>963</sup> These directives disrupted social interaction and the formation of relationships. Of paramount importance to Aelred, however, was the preservation of silence.<sup>964</sup> In the last chapter we saw how being mute could distance an individual from the community, and how a saintly cure could correct this. The ideal solitary reversed this process; they were physically able to talk, but by refusing to do so they separated themselves from other people.

This practice was followed by Bartholomew, who was said to have done all he could to avoid conversation.<sup>965</sup> Indeed, his interaction with other people seems genuinely limited and rather awkward. His main human contact was with fellow hermits, but his relationship with them was remarkably strained. The first person with whom he shared Farne was Elwyn, but the two did not get on well, and Elwyn soon left the island.<sup>966</sup> Later Bartholomew lived with Thomas, but again the two had a difficult start to their shared existence. This time it was Bartholomew who left, only returning after an absence of one year. Although the two were said to have had a good relationship following this, Thomas died not long afterwards, so we cannot be sure how long they lived together successfully.<sup>967</sup> These stories indicate that Bartholomew had genuine difficulty forming social relationships. However, he does appear to have mellowed over time, becoming more sociable, both with other hermits and visitors to the island.<sup>968</sup>

Godric's life followed a similar pattern. His early years at Finchale were spent fearing human company, even running and hiding when he heard people

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<sup>962</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-6.

<sup>963</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>964</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-62.

<sup>965</sup> *V. Barth.*, ch. 32, p. 322.

<sup>966</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 8-9, pp. 300-1.

<sup>967</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 14, pp. 307-8.

<sup>968</sup> We know, for example, he had a successor with whom he lived happily: *Ibid.*, ch. 16, p. 309.

approaching.<sup>969</sup> Yet despite this attempt to exist beyond any temporal community, people living nearby still came to see him. In later chapters, the descriptions of Godric rarely have him separated from the laity and crowds of people reportedly flocked to see him.<sup>970</sup> Although this could be an authorial exaggeration, it is more likely that it recalls genuine popularity on the part of the hermit, since this would explain Durham's interest in him. Furthermore, it is known that Godric had to build a second church on the site of his hermitage in order to cope with the demands of the local laity for services and meetings there.<sup>971</sup> This growing contact with laypeople was mirrored by the increased presence of monks at the hermitage.<sup>972</sup>

Connections with the laity were generally made on a personal basis, with an individual interacting one-on-one with the hermit. This is apparent throughout the stories collected by Reginald, which suggest Godric had a close association with some people over a long period of time.<sup>973</sup> Such a personal, complex bond is shown in an account of a man who was described as a *familiaris* to Godric, who often came to the hermit 'having been bound in an alliance of common friendship.'<sup>974</sup> The story took place over a span of two years, during which time contact was retained by both hermit and *familiaris*. Accounts such as these have led Susan Ridyard to suggest that Godric's success and popularity lay in his ability to distinguish the particular needs of all those who came to see him, and thus to react meaningfully to each individual.<sup>975</sup> It was this complex of personal, lifetime relationships that formed the basis of Godric's interactions and created a social space for the hermit within local life.

This space was simultaneously embedded within a nexus of social relationships and on the edge of the local community. The hermit's location was thought of as being on the margins of inhabited land; Bartholomew was on a small island, Godric in a dense forest. Other solitaries are known to have lived in similar places.<sup>976</sup> Likewise,

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<sup>969</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 23, p. 71; Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', pp. 265-6; Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', p. 221.

<sup>970</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 60, pp. 139-40.

<sup>971</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 67, pp. 152-3.

<sup>972</sup> See, for example, *Ibid.*, ch. 74, pp. 168-70, ch. 77, pp. 175-7, ch. 84, pp. 185-6.

<sup>973</sup> See *Ibid.*, ch. 53, pp. 23-4, ch. 57, pp. 132-5, and ch. 126, pp. 250-1.

<sup>974</sup> 'communis amicitiae illi foedere copulates' *Ibid.*, ch. 147, p. 278.

<sup>975</sup> Ridyard, 'Functions Revisited', pp. 249-50.

<sup>976</sup> See, for example, the description of Aelric's hermitage, a cave within a dense forest, in *V. Godr.*, ch. 11, pp. 46-7. For an example from outside the north see *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac: Texts, Translations*



hermits were perceived as being on the margins of society.<sup>977</sup> However, this does not mean they were unconnected to the community as a whole.<sup>978</sup> Natural disasters, like the flooding of the Wear, brought Godric and his neighbours together. From the stories of these events, the historian can see local people were genuinely concerned for the hermit's welfare. Yet the narrative of one such flood ends with Godric and his home being left miraculously dry, while all those nearby suffered great personal loss. Thus at the moment when the community, including Godric, was brought together through mutual need, the hermit was confirmed as being different and unique.<sup>979</sup> What distinguished him was not just his miraculous safety, but also the underlying cause of that survival. He was divinely protected, suggesting a spiritual distinction between him and his neighbours. That his holy way of life differentiated him was evident before, in the way he dressed, ate and interacted with others.<sup>980</sup> Now there was a story of divine sanction for his manner of life to further substantiate the point.

#### THE ROLE OF A HERMIT IN LOCAL SOCIETY

As noted above, the role played by hermits has been the focus of a number of studies over the last few decades. These have examined issues such as the redistribution of gifts in the form of alms for the poor, looking after money and valuables, and providing medical care.<sup>981</sup> The idea of the holy person as someone who could mediate between the local community and outsiders has also been extensively

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*and Notes*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1985), ch. 24-5, pp. 86-8. On conceptions of wilderness and their relationship to eremitical life see D. Dyas, 'Wilderness is Anlich Lif of Ancre Wununge': The Wilderness and Medieval Anchoritic Spirituality', in D. Dyas, V. Edden and R. Ellis (eds), *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 19-34, and Jones, 'Christina of Markyate and the Hermits', pp. 229-38.

<sup>977</sup> For the way the geography of eremiticism was conceived see Leyser, *Hermits*, pp. 39-41; Warren, *Anchorites*, pp. 9-14 and 29-33; see also below, p. 194. On the idea of holy people inhabiting a liminal space on the outskirts of civilised society, see Brown, 'Function of the Holy Man', pp. 80-101, esp. pp. 82-4; Golding, 'The Hermit and the Hunter', p. 108; and Warren, *Anchorites*, pp. 95-7.

<sup>978</sup> See Warren, *Anchorites*, p. 282, who, despite seeing the anchorite in a liminal space at the edge of the community, still concluded that they were one of the community and quite ordinary and accepted in their vocation.

<sup>979</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 45, pp. 105-6; for further flooding, see ch. 48, pp. 111-4.

<sup>980</sup> Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', pp. 205-226, esp. p. 206.

<sup>981</sup> See Ridyard, 'Functions Revisited', pp. 244-5; Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', pp. 289-93; Warren, *Anchorites*, pp. 110-13. All of these studies built on Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Recluse'; see pp. 341-4.

discussed.<sup>982</sup> I believe the personal relationships hermits had with individual members of those communities were as significant as this connection with the community as a whole.

The role most often associated with Godric and Bartholomew was the act of talking to people and discussing their problems. Phrases such as ‘he came to talk to the man of God’ often appear at the start of chapters describing those who saw Godric.<sup>983</sup> Talking through one’s problems with someone considered a wise friend, but with a sense of detachment from immediate family or neighbours, was evidently attractive to people. Equally important was the notion that the confidant’s wisdom was not born of temporal intellect, but instead represented the unique insight of an individual blessed with divine guidance due to their holy way of life.

This was especially true of those labouring under severe anxieties. Many sought reassurance, comfort or consolation from the hermits. In one story a noble matron, whose husband had been away for a long time and was presumed dead, went to Godric for *consilium consolationis*, a ‘discussion of consolation’. She received this through ‘conversation’ with the hermit.<sup>984</sup> In this way Godric helped people deal with worries over a variety of matters. The noble matron was concerned about her beloved husband, but also land and inheritance, which she was unable to claim or defend without him. Illness, sin and debt also concerned people.<sup>985</sup>

A range of troubles were also placed before Bartholomew. For example, a group of sailors who had lost their small boat and ship’s boy came to the hermit, showing that those in trouble might quickly turn to such people for help. In this case the sailors were distressed and the sea was stormy. Bartholomew’s main task was to calm them down and reassure them. With the hermit on board and clearer heads, they had little problem finding the boat and their boy.<sup>986</sup>

When Aelred critiqued contemporary recluses, the chief vice he found was idle gossip. The chatterbox, who spent all day gossiping about village news, was far too

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<sup>982</sup> Brown, ‘Holy Man’; see also Mayr-Harting, ‘Functions of a Recluse’, p. 344 and Tudor, ‘Reginald and Godric’, pp. 298-93.

<sup>983</sup> For example, ‘venit...ad colloquia viri Dei’, *V. Godr.*, ch. 136, p. 263.

<sup>984</sup> ‘alloquii’, *Ibid.*, ch. 157, p. 299. For further examples of Godric offering *consolans* see *Ibid.*, ch. 139, p. 268 and ch. 143, p. 274.

<sup>985</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 80, pp. 180-1, ch. 134, pp. 260-1, ch. 147, pp. 278-9.

<sup>986</sup> *V. Barth.*, ch. 18, pp. 310-1.

common.<sup>987</sup> Mayr-Harting believed hermits acted as conduits of local gossip, and in doing so helped maintain the values and norms of the community.<sup>988</sup> The transactional nature of gossip means it is an essential component to group formation and identification.<sup>989</sup> This is not only because of the way it defines values and morals, but also because it is a way to pass on stories and memories. There is also a clear distinction between those who are included in the gossiping and those who are not.<sup>990</sup> The evidence of the *vitae* of Godric and Bartholomew adds another dimension to this. Being able to discuss one's minor grievances helped to relieve tension and reassure people living within the local community.

Part of the process of reassurance was providing insight on how loved ones were, or how important events might play out. As a result, the gift of prophecy was highly valued, and it was one with which Godric was said to be particularly well-endowed.<sup>991</sup> In the case of the noble matron, Godric consoled her by revealing how the problems she was facing would be resolved.<sup>992</sup> Given his reputation for successful prophecy, it is not surprising that the woman felt better as a result. Her story then became another that added to the communal conception of the hermit as one who could foretell future events and thus reassure those with anxieties. This was part of a wider perception of hermits as visionaries which prevailed at this time.<sup>993</sup>

Tudor has suggested Godric's natural intelligence, ability to read people and skills at predicting the weather – all from his days as an international tradesman – gave him a talent for foresight.<sup>994</sup> Of course, for the people who told stories about him, or for whom he made predictions, such prophetic powers were granted by God. The reassurance of sacred providence was therefore adjoined to the hermit's words.

Prophecy and talking to people was not just about reassurance, but also advice. This was most often spiritual, but a whole range of matters could be raised, including those, such as property, family and illness, already mentioned. Spiritual concerns

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<sup>987</sup> *De Institutione Inclusarum*, pp. 46-8.

<sup>988</sup> Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Recluse', p. 341.

<sup>989</sup> C. Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance Among the Medieval Peasantry' *Past and Present* 160 (1998), pp. 3-24, at p. 10.

<sup>990</sup> For all these ideas see *Ibid.*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>991</sup> Godric reassured people using prophecy: *V. Godr.*, ch. 80, pp. 180-1 and ch. 139, p. 268. For other uses of his prophecy see ch. 56, pp. 129-31, ch. 81, p. 182, ch. 102, pp. 216-7.

<sup>992</sup> *V. Godr.*, ch. 157, pp. 299-300.

<sup>993</sup> D. Gray, 'Christina of Markyate', pp. 21-2.

<sup>994</sup> Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', pp. 246-53.

dominated the questions of Bartholomew's supplicants. People came to him for *consilium salutis*, or 'discussion of salvation'.<sup>995</sup> Since *consilium* meant 'advice' as well as 'discussion', the fact it appears so often in relation to hermits is telling. In a single word it carries the dual meaning of discussion and advice, two vital roles that Bartholomew and Godric played in their relationships with local individuals.

Even fellow monks sought to hear words of wisdom and exhortation from Bartholomew.<sup>996</sup> The same was true of Godric. People came to take advantage of his wisdom and foresight, often in relation to their own salvation.<sup>997</sup> These supplicants included monks and bishops.<sup>998</sup> Advice was also sought from Aelred's sister, including about spiritual matters, most notably the way in which one could lead a religious life.<sup>999</sup> While reassurance was often focused on moments of crisis, advice and guidance were more constant, and thus became a mainstay of the close, personal, long-standing relationships that typified the hermit's existence.<sup>1000</sup>

So far the focus has been on the hermit's place and role within local society. Many of the elements discussed also aided the construction of imagined communities and helped the process of identification among those who interacted with the holy person. The role of the hermit as someone to talk to was significant, not least because it could resolve issues between individuals, soothing tensions within the community. Tudor thought Godric showed few signs of involving himself in conflict resolution.<sup>1001</sup> This may be true of explicit disagreements, although one notable case provides an exception. A pious but poor man had been working all day in the freezing cold of winter and returned home to lie down by the fire in order to warm up. His wife, taking exception to this apparent laziness, began berating him, and in a fit of rage he hit her, inflicting an injury. The following day the man was visiting Godric on some unspecified business, hinting at regular contact between the two. The hermit revealed that he

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<sup>995</sup> *V. Barth.*, ch. 11, pp. 304.

<sup>996</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 13, p. 306.

<sup>997</sup> See, for example, *V. Godr.*, ch. 59, pp. 137-8.

<sup>998</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 77, pp. 175-7; ch. 101, pp. 214-5; ch. 103, pp. 217-8; ch. 116, pp. 236-9; and ch. 155, pp. 293-7.

<sup>999</sup> *De Institutione Inclusarum*, pp. 56-8.

<sup>1000</sup> For further discussion see Ridyard, 'Functions Revisited', pp. 240-4.

<sup>1001</sup> Tudor, 'Reginald and Godric', pp. 289-93, who was specifically contrasting him with Wulfric of Haselbury, whom Mayr-Harting believed was significant in arbitrating in disputes; see Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Recluse', p. 341.

knew what had happened between the man and his wife. He reprimanded the man, who was terrified and begged in tears for forgiveness.<sup>1002</sup>

Reginald described this as a miracle because Godric displayed knowledge of a couple's private life that no ordinary person could have known. In the close-knit society of a twelfth-century village it seems rather unlikely that such knowledge was really beyond ordinary people. In fact, studies of domestic abuse in the middle ages suggest that people in the local community were not only aware of marital violence, but also entitled to intervene in other people's relationships. Neighbours and extended family were heavily invested in the success of a marriage, and took necessary steps to ensure it was not abusive.<sup>1003</sup> As the head of the household, the man was expected to be able to correct his wife, children and any servants he might have, but excessive beating was not allowed.<sup>1004</sup> A high degree of ambiguity existed within these conventions, as every individual had a different conception of what was acceptable.<sup>1005</sup> However, in principle, if neighbours thought excessive violence was being employed by someone against their marital partner, they were entitled to intervene.

This puts Godric's action in a different light. If the local community were concerned about the way the man had treated his wife, and they wanted to intervene, who better to talk to the man than a local hermit renowned for offering good advice and being able to maintain local peace? Even if Reginald was correct when he said no other neighbours were aware of the incident – and had not therefore solicited the hermit's involvement – Godric evidently still saw it as his duty to raise the issue and correct the man. The hermit, as someone on the fringes of the community, was able to involve himself in a personal relationship in order to restore peace to a marriage. Moreover, the man was more likely to accept Godric's admonishment because he believed the hermit was holy, and therefore speaking on the authority of God, who had given him his knowledge.

Even if this story is considered exceptional, Tudor's comment on Godric's lack of involvement in conflict resolution overlooks the subtler methods of talking through problems with people on a one-on-one basis, which helped prevent outright

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<sup>1002</sup> V. Godr., ch. 153, p. 291.

<sup>1003</sup> S. Butler, *The Language of Abuse: Marital Violence in Later Medieval England* (Boston, 2007), pp. 184-225

<sup>1004</sup> E. Salisbury, G. Donavin, and M. Llewelyn-Price, 'Introduction', in E. Salisbury *et al* (eds), *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts* (Gainesville, 2002), pp. 1-27, esp. pp. 1-9.

<sup>1005</sup> Butler, *Language of Abuse*, pp. 131-83.

arguments developing in the first place. Bartholomew certainly concerned himself with conflict resolution. People who came to the island of Farne were expected to maintain the peace of that place. The high value attached to this by the hermit meant he was at the forefront of attempts to prevent conflict and violence.<sup>1006</sup>

However, it was not just a hermit's active deeds that helped create a sense of community. They could also be focal points around which local social bonds were formed. For example, the act of bringing a gift to hermits and recluses was common among certain sections of the neighbouring laity.<sup>1007</sup> Giving gifts was a personal matter between an individual or family and the hermit. However, in providing the gift, the devotee was identifying themselves with a particular value system. They were associating themselves with the religious ideals the hermit represented. These values were shared by all those who gave to the hermit, helping to construct a sense of community among these people.<sup>1008</sup> People in the neighbourhood of the hermit had most contact with him or her, and thus the best opportunity of observing and identifying with this value-system. Such frameworks could therefore underpin a sense of local community.<sup>1009</sup>

Warren has pointed out that people from all social groups provided for their local hermit.<sup>1010</sup> Several stories from the life of Godric made reference to the range of people who sought him out. Reginald wrote at one point that: 'a frequent crowd of diverse orders and ranks of the earth flocked to him.'<sup>1011</sup> This phrase is representative of a common trope in texts detailing the lives of holy people. However, the individual stories included by Reginald do appear to back the statement. Lay nobles, knights, bishops, monks, townspeople and peasants were all known to have sought out Godric.<sup>1012</sup>

Giving gifts to the same holy person may have provided a sense of unity and belonging which cut across other social divisions. A diversity of admirers does not in itself imply a community existed, but the action of turning to the same person for the

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<sup>1006</sup> *V. Barth.*, ch. 18, pp. 310-1.

<sup>1007</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 17, pp. 309-10; *V. Godr.*, ch. 23, p. 71; ch. 24, p. 72; ch. 25, p. 73; ch. 26, pp. 74-5; ch. 117, pp. 239-40; and ch. 121 pp. 244-5. See Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', pp. 223-4.

<sup>1008</sup> See Warren, *Anchorites*, p. 151.

<sup>1009</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186 and 282.

<sup>1010</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-8.

<sup>1011</sup> 'terrarum diversi ordinis sive dignitatis ad ipsum frequens turba confluit', *V. Godr.*, ch. 84, p. 185.

<sup>1012</sup> See respectively, as just one example of each, *Ibid.*, ch. 149, pp. 281-4; ch. 104, p. 219; ch. 116, pp. 236-9; ch. 77, pp. 175-7; ch. 53, pp. 123-4; and ch. 153, p. 291. See above, pp. 185-6.

same reasons does suggest there was a set of shared understandings and meanings among local people. Such understandings and meanings are the basis of mutual identification and the construction of communal feelings.<sup>1013</sup> Warren suggests that every individual who gave to the hermit was provided with a sense of personal attachment to him or her.<sup>1014</sup> When multiple people turned to the same hermit an opportunity arose to perceive this attachment, and the values and meanings that underpinned it, as shared with others. For example, the collective reaction to Godric suggested a common idea of what constituted a holy way of life among the devotees. As noted in the Introduction, the perception that others share one's values and understandings can be enough to create a sense of unity and mutual identification.<sup>1015</sup>

For Reginald, the diversity of Godric's visitors was a hagiographic tool used to demonstrate the hermit's widespread reputation and success. However, in taking time to record the variety of stories that he did, the author unwittingly demonstrated that a feeling of community that cut across other social divisions in the local area could build up around the personal relationships of a man like Godric.<sup>1016</sup> In such a model, the hermit's connection with the community as a whole was less important than the individual bonds formed with local people. These, when combined with a perception of shared meanings, created a sense of community. As has been shown, it was these personal ties that dominated the social interactions of Godric and Bartholomew. Godric in particular had especially strong ties with people of lower social status who lived in his immediate neighbourhood.<sup>1017</sup> As with local saints, a personal relationship with a holy individual, perceived as representing something communal, helped create the idea of community itself.<sup>1018</sup>

As a result of this, the manner in which one treated the hermit could dictate where one was seen to stand in relation to the community as a whole. In a story from Godric's early years at Finchale, which was mentioned in the Introduction, the local

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<sup>1013</sup> See above, pp. 11-21.

<sup>1014</sup> See Warren, *Anchorites*, pp. 286-7.

<sup>1015</sup> See above, p. 14.

<sup>1016</sup> For a modern sociological theory which provides a similar model of community construction see Cohen, *Symbolic Construction*, especially pp. 15-21.

<sup>1017</sup> Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', p. 224-5.

<sup>1018</sup> See above, pp. 165-80, esp. pp. 178-80.

peasants were labelled in two ways: *rustici* or *pauperes*.<sup>1019</sup> The former were described negatively and were said to have been in opposition to the hermit; the latter were in his favour. It was the *rustici* who had destroyed Godric's crops and sought to drive him off the land he had settled.<sup>1020</sup>

Reginald's language may reflect a genuine split, in which two local groups identified themselves in relation to the eremitical newcomer.<sup>1021</sup> What set the *rustici* apart was their refusal to participate in the common perception that Godric's holy way of life validated his eremitical existence on what they saw as communal land. Brian Golding's work on Robert of Knaresborough has shown that tension over land use was a twelfth-century issue that could manifest itself as hostility towards individuals such as hermits. This is because these hermits prevented other uses of land by carving out a religious space for themselves. People who supported one hermit, or agreed with the religious ideal of their life in principle, might therefore set themselves against another who conflicted with their own interests.<sup>1022</sup> For the *rustici*, the most important feature that distinguished Godric was his breaking of local custom to farm common land. In reacting to this, they set themselves against both the hermit and the *pauperes* who sought to support his life at Finchale. Alexander argues that the final miracle provided a narrative that allowed both sides to come to an accommodation with one another.<sup>1023</sup> These divisions among the local peasantry subsequently disappeared from the text, suggesting greater unity ensued.

Instead, it was outsiders, *aliena*, who became antagonistic towards Godric. These people sometimes came from Scotland, sometimes from nearby regions of England.<sup>1024</sup> Once again, Reginald's linguistic choice marked these people out, in the text, as different. The presence of a group such as the *rustici* or *aliena*, opposed to the holy person, is common in this type of literature. However, the story of the *rustici* reads more like local communal memory than authorial invention. The concern with local custom and knowledge of what constituted appropriate land use are indicative of this. Alexander saw the narrative of the miracle as a story that allowed the hermit and

<sup>1019</sup> V. *Godr.* The distinction appears most clearly in ch. 26, pp. 74-5, but positive use of the term *pauper* is found throughout the text.

<sup>1020</sup> V. *Godr.*, ch. 26, pp. 74-5. For the earlier discussion of this story, see above, p. 47.

<sup>1021</sup> Alexander, 'Hermits and Hairshirts', p. 222.

<sup>1022</sup> Golding, 'The Hermit and the Hunter', pp. 110-17.

<sup>1023</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>1024</sup> For the former see V. *Godr.*, ch. 49, pp. 114-6; for the latter see ch. 43, pp. 102-3.



his persecutors to negotiate an agreement without either losing face.<sup>1025</sup> In the case of the *aliena*, it is perfectly plausible that hostile outsiders attacked hermitages, especially as it was often believed that these places were used by local people to store valuables.<sup>1026</sup> To contemporary eyes, the bad treatment of the hermit by the *aliena* distinguished them from neighbouring people, and therefore singled out the local populace as a specific community, distinct from these outsiders.

### THE SECULAR CLERGY

Study of the eleventh- and twelfth-century clergy has often been limited due to a supposed paucity of available evidence. Janet Burton has commented that ‘the obscurity of the parish clergy in the twelfth century leaves many questions unanswered’.<sup>1027</sup> The lack of evidence is exacerbated by the fact that so much of what we do have from the tenth century onwards was written by Benedictine reformers who tended to have an unfavourable view of the regular clergy.<sup>1028</sup> Even so, historians such as Francesca Tinti have pointed to the fact that the evidence available for the eleventh and twelfth centuries is more abundant than for earlier periods.<sup>1029</sup> Others, like Victoria Thompson, have demonstrated how a close reading of a carefully selected text can reveal valuable information on priests even when the overall amount of source material seems limited.<sup>1030</sup>

This is the aim of the final section of this chapter. It must be acknowledged from the outset that the narrative texts under examination only provide odd pieces of information, stories inserted here and there that offer a brief glimpse of their subjects. These stories, and the texts in which they appeared, were of course affected by the agendas of the authors, as well as wider thought and pressure on the role of the secular clergy. In collecting information for his work on St. Cuthbert, Reginald included

<sup>1025</sup> Alexander, ‘Hermits and Hairshirts’, p. 222.

<sup>1026</sup> V. Godr., ch. 49, p. 115. See also the storing of money in a local church in *De Admirandis*, ch. 129, pp. 275-8.

<sup>1027</sup> J. Burton, ‘Monasteries and Parish Churches in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Yorkshire’ *Northern History* 23 (1987), pp. 39-50, at p. 50.

<sup>1028</sup> J. Barrow, ‘The Clergy in English Dioceses c. 900-c. 1066’, in F. Tinti (ed.), *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 17-26, at pp. 17-19.

<sup>1029</sup> F. Tinti, ‘Introduction’, in Tinti, *Pastoral Care*, pp. 1-16, at p. 14

<sup>1030</sup> V. Thompson, ‘The Pastoral Contract in Late Anglo-Saxon England: Priest and Parishioner in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Miscellaneous 482’, in Tinti, *Pastoral Care*, pp. 106-20.

many stories told to him by priests whose churches were dedicated to the saint.<sup>1031</sup> These tales are only visible through the author's lens, but they were constructed through dialogue with the priests who told the original tale. Reginald's focus was St. Cuthbert, so the stories had to provide an appropriate presentation of the saint. As long as the actions of the priest did not impact negatively on the image Reginald sought to present, there was no need for the author to edit the details of those actions. As was noted in the Introduction, such incidental details provide a useful insight into the society behind the text.<sup>1032</sup> Since Reginald had set himself the task of saving stories from being forgotten, he was actively interested in recording as many details as he could.<sup>1033</sup> This is clearly shown in the length and detail of the resultant work.

Reginald's stories, then, provide an image of the social function of priests as it was shaped in conversation between the author and his informants, within the context of wider agendas that will be discussed shortly. One must be careful of assuming that this neatly reflected social reality; these were stories that were written in particular ways in order to create particular impressions. I intend to ask how these conversations were presenting the secular clergy, and what it can tell us about why they were depicted in this way. The same method will be applied to Aelred and the Hexham chroniclers, who also provided stories in which the local priest played an important role. Interestingly, these accounts corroborate many of the images that can be seen in Reginald's text. They also provide information on those members of the secular clergy who had risen higher in the Church. Obviously, a wider body of documentary evidence is available on the bishops, but it is interesting to see how the same narratives depicted secular clerics of different ranks.<sup>1034</sup> Once an idea of how these stories were constructed, and what they were trying to present, has been considered, it may be possible to ask to what extent they were responding to local realities, as well as narrative requirements.

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<sup>1031</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 64-5, pp. 126-34; ch. 69-72, pp. 141-8; ch. 136-40, pp. 284-90. See above, pp. 45, 121-2.

<sup>1032</sup> See above, pp. 40-7.

<sup>1033</sup> Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 122.

<sup>1034</sup> Some of the northern bishops of this period have been the subject of modern biographical studies. See D. Nicholl, *Thurstan: archbishop of York, 1114-1140* (York, 1964); W. Aird 'An Absent Friend: The Career of Bishop William of St. Calais' in Rollason et al (eds), *Anglo-Norman Durham*, pp. 283-97; J. Prestwich, 'The Career of Ranulf Flambard' in *Ibid.*, pp. 299-310.

The stories told about priests during this period were being constructed against a background of rapid ecclesiastical change. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries there was a sudden proliferation of local churches in England.<sup>1035</sup> John Blair and Francesca Tinti both link this to a wider process of localisation across England and Europe.<sup>1036</sup> The subsequent adoption of many of these churches by monasteries has been highlighted by Burton as a cause of deficiencies in pastoral care in smaller parishes.<sup>1037</sup> The rising number of churches led to growth in the numbers of local clergy and left many of the new clerics living within the communities they were serving, rather than at a distance in a large mother-church.<sup>1038</sup> This last observation is of great significance to the current study, because it means that local priests (or in many cases vicars) were becoming closer to their parishioners geographically and socially, even as the various reforming agendas of the twelfth century sought clearer differentiation between clergy and laity.<sup>1039</sup>

Against this background of localisation and desire for reform, the local clergy were frequently disparaged. The story Symeon told of the sexually active priest that was mentioned in the last chapter is a good example of a certain strain of critical monastic thought.<sup>1040</sup> The priest in question was called Feoccher, and the story claims he was asked to perform mass by various nobles and ordinary men. According to Symeon, Feoccher feared to do so, because he had slept with his wife that very night, and feared polluting the altar. After intense persuasion he gave in, but was immediately punished when the wine turned into burning pitch. Feoccher survived, and managed to get to the bishop of Durham to beg forgiveness and receive penance. Symeon concluded by saying that the priest remained chaste for the rest of his life.

Symeon said he heard this story from the priest's son, who was himself a priest, and from two chaplains of the bishop, who later became monks.<sup>1041</sup> They all professed to hearing it from Feoccher himself. The first question, then, is whose story is this? On

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<sup>1035</sup> See in particular J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 368-425; R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), pp. 140-67; Tinti, 'Introduction', pp. 3-4.

<sup>1036</sup> Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 371; Tinti, 'Introduction', pp. 3-4.

<sup>1037</sup> Burton, 'Monasteries and Parish Churches', p. 50.

<sup>1038</sup> Tinti, 'Introduction', p. 14.

<sup>1039</sup> In terms of social differentiation, marriage and celibacy quickly became the focus of reform. See D. Elliott, 'The Priest's Wife: Female Erasure and the Gregorian Reform', in C. Hoffman Berman (ed.), *Medieval Religion: New Approaches* (New York, 2005), pp. 123-155.

<sup>1040</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 10, pp. 172-4. See above, pp. 174-5.

<sup>1041</sup> *LDE*, bk III, ch. 10, p. 174.

the face of it, it was Feoccher's, passed on to his son, and from his son to Symeon, a known collector of priestly tales.<sup>1042</sup> However, a number of factors indicate that it had been fundamentally reshaped by Symeon. First, the priest was aware that he was doing wrong. Given that the story was set in the episcopate of Bishop Æthelwine, between 1056 and 1071, and there is no evidence that the married status of the clerks of Durham was seen as an issue at this time, it seems likely that this self-awareness was applied later, in line with shifting clerical agendas. This may have been done by Feoccher himself, or possibly his son. But the way Symeon framed the story suggests that he had shaped these details to provide a clearer example of why chastity was preferable to marriage. The author opens the account by describing it as 'a terrible example' of what happened to 'ministers of the altar if they presumed to approach the sacred mystery without chastity'.<sup>1043</sup> This, then, was a moral tale, shaping a past story in order to present a miracle that supported notions of clerical chastity. In telling this story, Symeon was meeting the needs of his monastic community – which considered itself to be, through chastity, a purer religious collective than the clerks it had replaced – and conforming to wider notions of clerical reform. This period was one in which the presentation of priest's wives became increasingly negative, as the clergy themselves, as well as monks, sought to re-write their pasts to conform to the present.<sup>1044</sup> Dyan Elliott notes that this re-narration was a subtler process than polemical works, since it did not declare its interest.<sup>1045</sup> Yet it remained an effective tool for stabilising a particular presentation of what the clergy should be and how they should act.<sup>1046</sup> These stories, then, were attempting to reshape the socio-religious position of the clergy.

The image of local priests that these tales presented tended to be quite negative. This was widespread, and continued long into the twelfth century. The *Liber Eliensis* depicted one priest as a gluttonous, unchaste and decadent fool whose consumption of alcohol resulted in frequent incontinence.<sup>1047</sup> However, this one-

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<sup>1042</sup> On Symeon being an appropriate contact for people in the north who had such stories to tell, see above, p. 23.

<sup>1043</sup> 'terribili exemplo ministris altaris ... si ad sacrosanctum mysterium sine castitate presumant accedere', *LDE*, bk III, ch. 10, p. 172.

<sup>1044</sup> Elliott, 'The Priest's Wife', pp. 123-55.

<sup>1045</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-7.

<sup>1046</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>1047</sup> *LE*, bk III, ch. 121, pp. 458-60.

dimensional view of the regular clergy was not entirely representative of the ideas of Symeon and his contemporaries. This is demonstrated by the ambivalent attitude towards the pre-monastic clerks of Durham. Individuals such as Alfred Westou were praised by Symeon, and moments of the clerical past, especially the wandering, were looked upon favourably.<sup>1048</sup> However the clerics as a whole were considered inadequate, even negligent, guardians of St. Cuthbert's body in comparison to the monks.<sup>1049</sup> The vigour of this negative opinion fluctuated throughout the twelfth century.<sup>1050</sup> It had a similar tone to that expressed in another Benedictine community that had replaced secular clerks, that of Ely. The *Liber Eliensis* included tales of priests at Ely who had doubted St. Æthelthryth, or treated her with a lack of devotion.<sup>1051</sup> Part of this depiction, therefore, seems to be about justifying a change from secular clergy to Benedictine communities in places like Durham and Ely.

As noted above, it is often difficult to get beyond these Benedictine narratives when examining stories of priests. It is of course possible that they had a degree of truth to them, even those with an obviously negative slant. Richard Morris believes that the proliferation of local churches caused serious staffing problems, which in turn led to standards among the clergy slipping. He listed ignorance, carelessness, lust, greed, illiteracy, drunkenness, interest in money and a tendency to marry and pass on church property to heirs as among the weaknesses of those who staffed the new parishes.<sup>1052</sup> However, individual cases were more complex than this blanket portrayal suggests. Aelred's feelings about his own father are an indication of this. Aelred described him as 'a sinner, who lived otherwise than he ought', a probable reference to Eilaf having a wife and family.<sup>1053</sup> Yet Aelred's overall portrait is of a conscientious priest – although it is worth noting that Richard of Hexham was less complimentary about Eilaf's credentials.<sup>1054</sup> Julia Barrow has demonstrated that in the eleventh and early-twelfth centuries, marriage and hereditary succession among the regular clergy was accepted as normal practice, with only Benedictine reformers making strenuous

<sup>1048</sup> M. Foster, 'Custodians of St. Cuthbert: The Durham Monks' Views of their Predecessors, 1083-c. 1200', in Rollason *et al*, *Anglo-Norman Durham*, pp. 53-65, at pp. 56-61. See *LDE*, bk III, ch. 7, pp. 160-6 for the depiction of Alfred.

<sup>1049</sup> *LDE*, bk IV, ch. 2, p. 224.

<sup>1050</sup> Foster, 'Custodians', pp. 59-65.

<sup>1051</sup> *LE*, bk I, ch. 43, pp. 77-8, and ch. 49, pp. 80-2.

<sup>1052</sup> Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>1053</sup> 'qui licet peccator secus quam oportuit vixerit', *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, p. 191.

<sup>1054</sup> RH, *History*, bk II, ch. 5, pp. 49-51, ch. 7, pp. 53-4, ch. 8, p. 54.

arguments against it.<sup>1055</sup> As a result, it was possible for a priest in Eilaf's position, criticised by reform-minded successors, to be acceptable to those parishioners he served in his church.

Aelred's story of his ancestors may, however, not be as different from Symeon's portrayal of Feoccher as it looks. After all, in both examples the narrative originated with an ancestor who was apparently seeking to present the past in a specific way. Moreover, Aelred's story looks very much like an attempt by a reform-minded son to reconcile his family's past with his own religious notions. He too was therefore re-writing the past according to contemporary notions of what was acceptable. The passage that really stands out in this regard concerns Eilaf's decision to hand the church over to Augustinian canons. Richard of Hexham claimed that the archbishop of York had to free the church from the unworthy priest.<sup>1056</sup> But Aelred's version turned Eilaf into a reformer, who, 'began to think on his own unworthiness' and 'burning with zeal for the house of God' went to the archbishop and requested the church be given to the canons.<sup>1057</sup> Aelred's narrative, then, is not a simple story of an unchaste but ultimately well-meaning priest. It is a conscious attempt to reconcile the author's family with the reform movement that had over-taken it.<sup>1058</sup>

Many of the depictions of priests discussed so far focus on their suitability as pastoral carers for their parish community. There are also a number of narratives in the northern texts that present their local social role, and these tend to be more positive in their representation. They also feel less polemical, as the roles they record were not as contested in contemporary discourse as the pastoral suitability of the secular clergy. These are often set in exceptional circumstances. In Aelred's account of King Malcolm of Scotland's invasion of England, the people of Hexham retreated, for protection, to their local church.<sup>1059</sup> Within this story a certain amount of information was included concerning the action of Hexham's priest. While it was the saints who were thought to protect the people, it was the priest who took charge of the situation. He sent clerics with a number of relics to Malcolm to beg for peace, but the pleas were

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<sup>1055</sup> Barrow article, pp. 19-20

<sup>1056</sup> RH, *History*, bk II, ch. 8, p. 54.

<sup>1057</sup> 'coepit intra se de sui indignitate...cogitare' and 'zelo domus Dei succensus', *De Sanctis*, ch. 11, p. 192.

<sup>1058</sup> For further discussion of these stories and Aelred's version of Hexham's past, see above, pp. 76-8, 92, and 181-2.

<sup>1059</sup> *De Sanctis*, ch. 2, pp. 177-81. See above, pp. 94-5 and 166-7.

unheeded. Following this failure, the priest was said to have received a vision while asleep, in which saints Wilfrid and Cuthbert reassured him. On waking, he turned to the frightened people. Aelred wrote that, 'getting up, he commanded silence, and gave a sermon of exhortation to the people. He ordered them to be calmer, knowing that the Lord had looked on their humble prayer and had not spurned their request.'<sup>1060</sup>

Due to the saints' intervention, the people were saved, yet it had been the priest who had taken command of the community. Those within the vicinity looked to him for help and direction, both as a mediator between the townspeople and the Scots, and during the speech that gave people hope. It is possible the optimism installed by this sermon, combined with the apparently miraculous avoidance of violence, encouraged talk of saintly intervention afterwards. However, it is notable that throughout the story, the priest was closely associated with the saints and, through them, with God. His ability to calm the people was due to his capacity to be a mouthpiece for the saints, as much as any personal qualities he may have possessed. It is therefore more likely that the view of the priest as a leader, raised above his neighbours, was the result of a perceived connection with God and the saints that was held by people at the time, and not simply applied retrospectively. In this story, the priest provided a living focal point for communal identification, which complemented that provided by the saints of the church. Beyond this, he roused and brought encouragement to the people, keeping them united and protected. Moreover, extra-communal roles, such as acting as a mediator and peace-maker with external groups, were also taken on by the priest.

The threat of military attack was faced by other communities in the twelfth century.<sup>1061</sup> However, as in the case highlighted by Aelred, this situation did not leave local clerics completely helpless. On the contrary, the circumstances often emphasised a position of leadership and a role in mediation that some of the secular clergy were expected to perform. In 1138 the Scots again invaded northern England, and having already enjoyed success north of the Tees, they threatened to cross into Yorkshire. In the texts, these events were set against a backdrop of civil war, with neighbours

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<sup>1060</sup> 'Qui surgens imperavit silentium, habuitque exhortatorium sermonem ad populum, jubetque eos animaequiores esse, scientes quoniam respexit Dominus in orationem humilium, et non sprexit precem eorum', *Ibid.*, ch. 2, p. 180.

<sup>1061</sup> John of Hexham wrote of the many injuries done to churchmen during Stephens's reign, JH, *Historia*, s.a. 1144, pp. 314-5, while his predecessor, Richard, mentioned specific attacks on several local churches and villages, RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, pp. 152 and 167.

fighting neighbours, which made united resistance from the people of Yorkshire difficult.<sup>1062</sup> Richard of Hexham said that 'they hesitated from mutual distrust of one another, and because they did not have a leader or conductor of war.'<sup>1063</sup>

It seemed little opposition would be made to the Scottish advance until Thurstan, the archbishop of York, began to encourage resistance. Both Richard and John of Hexham reported it was he who rallied the people of Yorkshire.<sup>1064</sup> He encouraged them by turning the events into a religious struggle, urging them to fight on behalf of God and the saints against an enemy who had committed many atrocities towards northern churches. This call to arms proved remarkably effective. No further distrust was mentioned in the sources, and the barons and knights of Yorkshire bound themselves with an oath and secured victory over the invaders.<sup>1065</sup>

Of course, one must approach such descriptions with caution. The Hexham authors' accounts of their own archbishop, a man recently deceased and evidently held in high esteem by the clerics of his diocese, are likely to have been carefully constructed with a particular presentation in mind. The positive role ascribed to Thurstan may, therefore, have been exaggerated by Richard and John. However, this does not mean it was complete invention. There is enough evidence in the source material to suggest the archbishop did intervene, although how far this intervention can be considered vital to the final result remains debateable.

It was not only those holding high church offices that played a part in the defence of Yorkshire. The lesser clergy were also important, as they supported those who went to fight at the decisive battle with prayers.<sup>1066</sup> Moreover, Richard of Hexham reported that the soldiers were accompanied by priests from their parish, something

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<sup>1062</sup> Texts can of course exaggerate. For a consideration of the realities of the situation in the north during this period see Burton, 'Citadels of God', pp. 17-30.

<sup>1063</sup> 'de sese mutuo diffidentes haesitarent, et cum principem et conductorem belli non haberent', RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, p. 160.

<sup>1064</sup> RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, pp. 160-1; JH, *Historia*, s.a. 1138, p. 292. On Thurstan's role see P. Dalton, 'Churchmen and the Promotion of Peace in King Stephen's Reign', *Viator* 31 (2000), pp. 79-119, at p. 86, and Nicholl, *Thurstan*, pp. 221-8.

<sup>1065</sup> For the oaths see RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, p. 162; for the victory see *Ibid.*, s.a. 1138, p. 164. On the Battle of the Standard see J. Beeler, *Warfare in England 1066-1189* (New York, 1966), p. 88; J. Bradbury, 'Battles in England and Normandy, 1066-1154', *ANS* 6 (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 1-12; M. Strickland, 'Securing the North: Invasion and the Strategy of defence in twelfth-century Anglo-Scottish Warfare', *ANS* 12 (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 177-98.

<sup>1066</sup> JH, *Historia*, s.a. 1138, p. 293.



which gave them increased courage and hope.<sup>1067</sup> This was corroborated in Aelred's account of the events. As the English army lined up, 'priests in white in sacred vestments walked around the army with crosses and relics of the saints, and most gracefully strengthened the people with word and prayer.'<sup>1068</sup>

Admittedly, this description sounds somewhat literary, but it shows how vivid the stories of this event were a decade or two after the battle. In those stories, the clergy and the venerated dead were together, exhorting the army in defence of their region and its faith. The priests present at the battle were said to have been drawn from the same localities as the soldiers, adding a local dimension to the regional event.<sup>1069</sup> Given the multiple reports, it is highly likely that some priests were present, if only to provide absolution to those about to fight. A tradition of local holy people accompanying soldiers to a battle with saintly relics was present in other communities in England, so the northern writers were not making unique claims.<sup>1070</sup> With local priests and the banners of the saints close by, those who took part in the battle could understand that they were fighting for their own church, their own saint, and their own priest. Meanwhile, in the stories told afterwards, the clergy, whatever their station, were marked out as leaders and supporters, roles that created a sense of regional unity, while also reaffirming local identification.

Arden also experienced difficulties during King Stephen's reign. Some of the stories from here have been referenced in earlier chapters.<sup>1071</sup> On one occasion, the village became the resting place of a band of robbers, who had been plundering the local area.<sup>1072</sup> The peasant villagers gathered in the church, with their livestock in the churchyard. Yet the robbers, not caring for the sanctuary granted by St. Cuthbert, attacked this church. The priest remonstrated with them on behalf of the locals, but to no avail. That night, as the robbers camped on a nearby island, the priest led his servants and some of the peasants in a surprise attack. The locals were heavily outnumbered, but with the help of St. Cuthbert the invaders were eradicated and the peasants took back their belongings. In this account the local priest was once again

<sup>1067</sup> RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, p. 162.

<sup>1068</sup> 'sacerdotes sacris vestibis candidate, cum crucibus et reliquiis Sanctorum, exercitum ambiebant, et sermone simul et oratione populum decentissime roborabant', *Relatio*, p. 192.

<sup>1069</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>1070</sup> See, for example, *LE*, bk II, ch. 79, p. 176.

<sup>1071</sup> See above, pp. 115, 168 and 175.

<sup>1072</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 65, pp. 130-4.

presented as a leader and representative of his community, first in negotiating with dangerous outsiders, then in taking charge of the defence of the people and their property.

After periods of trouble, it was often churchmen, including priests, who negotiated peace settlements and mediated on behalf of people who were seeking release from captivity or recompense for damage to their property. Paul Dalton has noted how important being a peacemaker was to the clergy's social role.<sup>1073</sup> While churchmen in higher ecclesiastical positions performed negotiations on behalf of kings, those lower in the hierarchy took the cases of their local churches and parishioners.<sup>1074</sup> Thus, in the aftermath of the 1138 invasion, the papal legate Alberic started peace talks with King David of Scotland and discussed the release of English prisoners, while Robert, the prior of Hexham, went to the Scots in order to obtain release and compensation for people from his town.<sup>1075</sup> Robert's priority was the church of Hexham and its possessions. But setting right injuries done to those living within the neighbouring area was also on his agenda. That the canons and laity of Hexham and its surroundings could look to the prior for help in this way suggests they understood themselves to be members of a collective under the guardianship of the prior. Even those who were not part of the canonical community perceived a connection with Robert, whom they considered the appropriate man for negotiating with outside forces on their behalf.

Local priests clearly acted as leaders and mediators on behalf of their community before, during and after periods of trouble. It is more difficult to establish whether their elevated place and specific role was maintained during periods of normality. Paul Dalton has suggested that it was their more permanent role as 'intermediaries of local communities' that made priests such effective middlemen during disputes.<sup>1076</sup> Bishops could receive praise for their protection of a church's rights, laws and privileges during peaceful as well as restless periods in their episcopates.<sup>1077</sup> However, these individuals, who held a particularly high place in the

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<sup>1073</sup> Dalton, 'Churchmen and the Promotion of Peace', pp. 79-119. See also J. Leedom, 'The English Settlement of 1153', *History* 65 (1980), pp. 347-64.

<sup>1074</sup> Dalton, 'Churchmen and the Promotion of Peace', pp. 84-6.

<sup>1075</sup> For Alberic, see JH, *Historia*, s.a. 1138, pp. 297-8; for Robert see *Ibid.*, s.a. 1138, p. 290 and RH, *De Gestis*, s.a. 1138, p. 171.

<sup>1076</sup> Dalton, 'Churchmen and the Promotion of Peace', p. 102.

<sup>1077</sup> *LDE*, bk IV, ch. 5, p. 236.

church, cannot be taken as examples for the local clergy. There is some evidence that certain priests were considered to be respected local leaders in times of peace as well as war. The best example comes from the priest of Arden.

The story itself was set in exceptional circumstances, as famine and robbery were ruining the land around the village.<sup>1078</sup> However, the basic framework of the tale was a contrast between this situation and the one usually faced; the reader is therefore given a picture of normality as well as the extraordinary conditions. On the festival of St. Cuthbert, the priest claimed he regularly held a feast to which everyone in the local community was invited. According to Reginald the priest claimed that on this occasion it was his habit to give alms to the poor, help the weak, clothe the naked and alleviate people's miseries. He also provided hospitality for respected guests, both clergy and laity.<sup>1079</sup> The priest thus used the festival of his local saint to bring the community together.

In this narrative, the festival of the saint gave a local priest an opportunity – and an obligation – to unite and look after his parishioners. Since the festival only happened once a year, such action was not an everyday occurrence. The story also raises wider questions about the presentation of the priest, both here and in the other social roles considered in this section. If stories of clerical marriage, chastity and impulses to reform were shaped by wider currents of religious thought, then it is possible that these tales of leadership, peacemaking and communal provision were as well. In this light, the careful description of the Arden priest's many good deeds comes across as something of a check-list for how he should have acted, or wanted to be perceived as acting. The story was created in dialogue with Reginald, who was the ultimate author of the narrative. The presentation is therefore almost certainly a product of combined views. How far the construction and inclusion of this story – beyond the recounting of historical events – was a product of a priest seeking to narrate a position for himself in society, and how far it was the work of a monastic author presenting an idealised image of how one of St. Cuthbert's servants should act, is impossible to tell.

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<sup>1078</sup> *De Admirandis*, ch. 64, pp. 126-30.

<sup>1079</sup> The full description reads as follows: 'Hoc enim ei semper erat consuetudinis, pauperes videlicet in die sollempnitatis Beati Cuthberti alimento reficere, inopum augustias subveniendo relevare, nudis operimentum pro viribus administrare, miserosque, quantum possibilitas permittebat, in fovendo relevare; honestiores vero personas, tam cleri quam populi, hospitio suscipere, et omne eis humanitatis obsequium sollicitius exhibere', *Ibid.*, ch. 64, p. 127.

Even harder to discern is what, if anything, the story says about the social reality in places like Arden. Reginald's willingness to record it suggests he considered the details to at least be a plausible reflection of a priest's actions. However, needing food for a good cause was a useful way to establish a tale of miraculous bounty provided by St. Cuthbert. Although the author was under no obligation to keep such a positive portrayal of the priest, the set-up was a useful narrative device. The accuracy of the specific story cannot be ascertained, but that Reginald, and indeed the priest, found it to be plausible enough to be worth telling, listening to, and recording is important. It indicates an acknowledgement that some members of the local clergy were believed capable of performing charitable duties that brought their neighbours closer together. Moreover, if these stories were a conscious reaction to wider pressures, then they demonstrate the ways in which that reaction played out in individual circumstances. What we have is a three-way dialogue between reforming agendas, local circumstances, and individual people trying to narrate a story that helped them to negotiate these pressures. The stories are, therefore, significant for the way in which the authors of our texts, and the priests who told them stories, sought to carve out a social space for the secular clergy within certain local communities.

All of the examples given here are of certain individuals in particular circumstances. The local clergy were a large and diverse group of men, all of whom had different backgrounds. As Martin Brett has noted, it is unhelpful to generalise about a group of people whose social statuses, economic situations, levels of literacy and education, and specific worldviews were so varied.<sup>1080</sup> Any attempt to extrapolate conclusions from the limited evidence examined and apply it to local priests *en masse* should be avoided. Equally problematic is the distance there is likely to have been between how clerics were presented, and the reality of their actions. As with any story, there was a need for it to read as both convincing and truthful. There was no point in a priest telling Reginald a tale that the monk or his audience would disregard as implausible, so the accounts put forward by local priests needed to be a close enough reflection of reality to be believed. Yet the final presentation, a product of the author of the text as much as the teller of the original story, was shaped by a range of wider concerns and ideas that were evolving during the twelfth century. The narratives of

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<sup>1080</sup> Brett, *English Church*, pp. 216-33.

the secular clergy may therefore say as much about the way authors and their informants were trying to reshape their communities and their pasts, as they do about social roles in the present.

This chapter has considered the way hermits and priests were presented in twelfth-century narratives. This presentation was not static, with changes in the eremitical and clerical life causing stories to be re-written and pasts to be reshaped. Much of our evidence was produced in dialogue between the tellers of these stories and the authors of our texts, but each party was also acting according to local pressures and wider agendas. Even so, the narratives they constructed offered an imaginative space within which a social position and role could be negotiated. As a result, vestiges of that position and role still remain embedded in the texts. That the hermits and their neighbours saw people like Godric and Bartholomew as offering valuable conversation, advice and mediation is evident in the stories that were told. These hermits therefore played an important part in connecting members of the community and healing communal rifts. On the occasions when the social role of the priests is presented to us, they are often displayed as local leaders, for example through negotiating with external forces on behalf of their community. Yet it has also become clear that these social positions and roles were particular to the individual and constantly evolving. The stories of hermits and priests were therefore always under revision, in order to meet changing needs and circumstances.

## CONCLUSION

In order to facilitate this study, it has been necessary to consider various strands of thought separately. However, one must always bear in mind that each element studied here was not a detached concept in the minds of the people examined. It was the interweaving of ideas about elements like the past, local saints, hermits and priests that gave contemporary imaginative processes their strength. Moreover, these ideas were rarely consciously held notions, debated by individuals or articulated in a clear, ordered fashion. Rather, so much of what has been examined existed as a body of unconscious notions, a mix of feelings, perceptions, and assumptions, implicit in the stories people told, but rarely met head-on.

As discussed in the Introduction, an examination of the processes that underlay people's conceptions of the social world has to acknowledge that for those people, such conceptions were often taken for granted, accepted as the way things were. The continuous process of identification that underpinned a sense of community remained in the background of quotidian experience and interaction. This is not to say that conscious efforts at personal or communal presentation were not attempted. Quite the opposite; several of the narrative texts to which we have access were just that. But very few individuals or collectives produced the sort of careful articulation of how they saw themselves that one finds with Symeon's *Libellus* or Aelred's *De Sanctis*, and even works such as these were built on implicit assumptions.

Within this blend of ideas, the elements studied in this thesis worked together, irrevocably entwined. The conception of the past, stories about the actions of saints and the roles of priests and hermits mutually reinforced each other, and combined to build a sense of community. When Symeon constructed a narrative of Durham's (and, indeed, Northumbria's) history, he did so around the symbol of St. Cuthbert. By the time Reginald was writing, the wanderings of the saint had taken on a place of fundamental importance in stories of the past that were being told across the north. The dynamic worked both ways; while a local saint might provide a reference point around which the past could be shaped, the stories of that saint's past interventions affected how people expected him or her to act in the present.

The roles narrated for priests and hermits were also constructed through reference to the past. Both the hermits themselves, and the authors who wrote about

them, drew connections with former holy people that positioned these men and women within a longer story of local religious history. Priests told stories, or had stories told for them, that emphasised the link provided by their office to the saint of their church. They also tied themselves to ancestors and antecedents, following local traditions and customs that dictated their role in the present community. Yet the history of a church could also weigh heavily on their shoulders. At Durham, and later at Hexham, the splendours of former religious communities were emphasised in narratives that justified the removal of one group of clergy and the installation of another.

Ideas related to the past, the saints, hermits and priests therefore overlapped, and together helped to create a process of identification that aided the construction of communal ties. There were, of course, other elements involved in shaping local identification. This has been a study of those that come across most clearly in the narrative texts examined. But it is important to remember that this is only part of a wider picture that included other associations – marriage ties, the workings of the local court, tenurial relationships, among others. In the space available, it has been preferable to focus on those elements for which the narrative sources studied offer the most plentiful information. As with any investigation of the process of identification or the construction of communities, there is always scope for further research.

Each chapter has shown some of the more specific elements that went into constructing a feeling of local community. The stories of the past examined in the second chapter helped people to see each other as a united group, differentiated from others by a shared history. While this could occur through personal stories of specific events, such as what one's ancestors did during the wandering, the authors of our texts often sought to structure these tales into a smooth narrative, which told a story according to their own needs and ideas. This narrative frequently comes to dominate the perception of the past that we are able to see, but alternative conceptions, or personal stories embedded within it, are still occasionally available, offering a view that, as I have argued, extends beyond that of the author.

The third chapter considered the role of the saints and stories of their interaction with the world. The venerated dead became symbols of the local collective, around which members of the community could identify with one another and

negotiate communal norms. Values, morals and a sense of justice were partly established by people debating, arguing and telling stories about saintly interventions. For example, judicial practices such as sanctuary claims and oaths were underpinned by a shared belief in the power of the local saint, and their propensity to intervene in the world. Moreover, dedication of the local church to a particular saint offered the opportunity to identify with a heavenly patron who could be expected to protect the community in times of strife, heal those who were sick and reintegrate those who had fallen outside the normal bounds of local society. Ultimately, by symbolising and patronising the collective, while simultaneously offering a personal connection to individuals within it, the saints acted as a point of mediation between the community and individual people.

Hermits also offered a symbol around which values and norms could be negotiated. How one interacted with a neighbouring hermit could say a lot about how far one accepted a certain conception of holiness. That this had a local dimension is demonstrated by the way people who supported a particular hermit in one location might persecute another living somewhere else. As people who were socially positioned on the edge of the local community, hermits also provided practical interventions that helped individuals and healed rifts within the collective. Priests, on the other hand, were more likely to be presented as local leaders, especially at certain times, such as the feast of the local saint, or when the village was under threat from outsiders. When they played this role, they too helped unite the local people.

To an extent these processes were responding to local and regional needs and pressures. Yet in the background wider currents also had an impact. These ensured that the stories that were told were never static; that the narratives were updated in order to keep them meaningful. Some of these currents have been considered in this study. The residual feeling of discontinuity and crisis that followed the Norman Conquest was a driving force in the production of historiography. This worked in conjunction with local factors, often themselves indirect consequences of the conquest, to subtly (and not so subtly) shape the narratives formed in any given place. Communities were therefore shaping their past according to the ebb and flow of present circumstances. Richard of Hexham and Symeon of Durham wrote a couple of decades after the installation of a new religious community into a much older church, while Abbot Philip's Byland history was developed due to the need to record memories



of origins that were beginning to fade. Underlying all of this was a pervasive fear of forgetting, or of having nothing more than a few hints 'scattered through documents', when a proper record, a full narrative, was evidently more desirable.

Stories of the saints also kept pace with changing patterns in local and national society. The significance attached to certain folktales changed over time. While the *Historia Sancto Cuthberto* chose to minimise the wandering and focus on St. Cuthbert's relationship with King Alfred, Symeon gave greater weight to the former, and by Reginald's day it had come to eclipse the story of the king's vision. This pattern coincided with the diminishing relevance of the house of Wessex after 1066, and the increasing stability of a church that was less reliant on a powerful, avenging saint. The same was true of other communities. When external foes threatened local residents, tales of the local saint's past interventions to protect the community came to the fore. In more peaceful circumstances, the medicinal qualities of the saint's interventions might be emphasised.

Wider patterns of religion and devotion obviously had a significant impact on how hermits and priests were depicted in narratives, and the way in which they were expected to act in the world. The days of Aelred's ancestors, when married priests with significant family interests could be the heroes of local stories, were fading. Aelred was forced to acknowledge criticism of his father, even as he sought to rehabilitate his memory at a reformed Hexham. Symeon told stories of married clergy that were embedded with a negativity replicated elsewhere in the country. Yet by Reginald's day positive tales still emerged, often told by the priests themselves. Whether this was because changes on the ground had taken place, or because the priests were trying to narrate a space for themselves in an increasingly hostile world, is difficult to say. As for hermits, the proliferation of stories related to them demonstrates the popularity they gained during this period, and the important role they played in local society. The texts these appear in are also indicative of increasing attempts by wider clerical and monastic interests to control individuals within this movement.

It is within these wider contexts that identification with a community of people occurred. This process happened at local and regional levels. The narratives of the past that helped a given group in a certain locality identify with each other could also have broader appeal. For example, the stories of the Christian people of Northumbria wandering the north were passed down and developed by successive generations until

they came to provide individuals and families from across the region with a sense of shared history. The spread of church dedications and miracle stories related to St. Cuthbert indicates that he drew together a diverse regional community as well as a strictly local one. The advantage to a study such as this one is that it provides a close reading of the source material, while still offering this wider perspective. These local and regional layers can therefore be seen co-existing in the society they helped shape.

Collective identification was a subtle and constantly shifting process. Communities were always under construction, while always overlapping and combining with one another. The people of Durham, Lixtune, Slitrih, Plumblund, Arden, and many more places, all considered themselves to be part of distinct, local social bodies. Yet many of the people living in these places were devoted to St. Cuthbert, while the association of the saint's wanderings with the whole region meant they shared, to an extent, an imagined past. This made those people part of a wider, regional collective, one that was consciously articulated through the label 'the people of the saint'. Individuals could identify with many different people and collectives. For example, Aelred's vivid perception of his family's role in the north of England's sacred past led to a keenly felt identification with the region as a whole, as well as smaller communities within it. Most notably, his stories about his ancestors helped him imaginatively construct a Hexham community that bound him and his family to the local townspeople and canons, in a collective built around the church and its saints.

As the process by which individuals came to perceive themselves as sharing characteristics with others, identification was vital to people seeing themselves as belonging together. Narrativity, the way in which people turn episodes from their lives or the lives of others into meaningful stories, underpinned this process. The particular stories which people constructed were specific to their own experience and social context. Aelred's stories of his family past made sense in a society that no longer accepted hereditary priests at a church as important as Hexham. Aelred, an individual drawn to reformed monasticism, but with one eye on the associations of his ancestors, told stories that rehabilitated the two. He was able to remain a member of the local community at Hexham, and integrate himself into a wider narrative of the north's religious past, while acknowledging that considerable changes in society had shifted the place his family held within it.

Similarly, the narrative of the past that Symeon constructed made sense in its specific temporal context. The story of rise, fall and renewal was designed to reconcile the past with developments in the present. Common stories of shared experiences, memories, and saints, helped identification to develop, but they did so in a way that was specific to the context within which they were told. As a result, those stories, or the actions that they recalled, were not static, but constantly changing, in order to meet the needs of contemporary narrators. When Reginald of Durham wrote about the coffin-bearers he was working with a subject that had been discussed in speech and text many times before. Yet what he produced was different to what had previously been said. The changes may have been subtle, at times nothing more than a shift in the emphasis of a story, but it was enough to show that the story had changed, that tradition had been updated. What all these narratives, and the activities they recalled, did was create a perception of shared meaning, values, and understanding of the world. These could be articulated around different, overlapping themes – the past, a local saint, a holy person – but they always impacted on identification. This identification was not only produced through shared stories, but also through finding commonality in personal narratives.

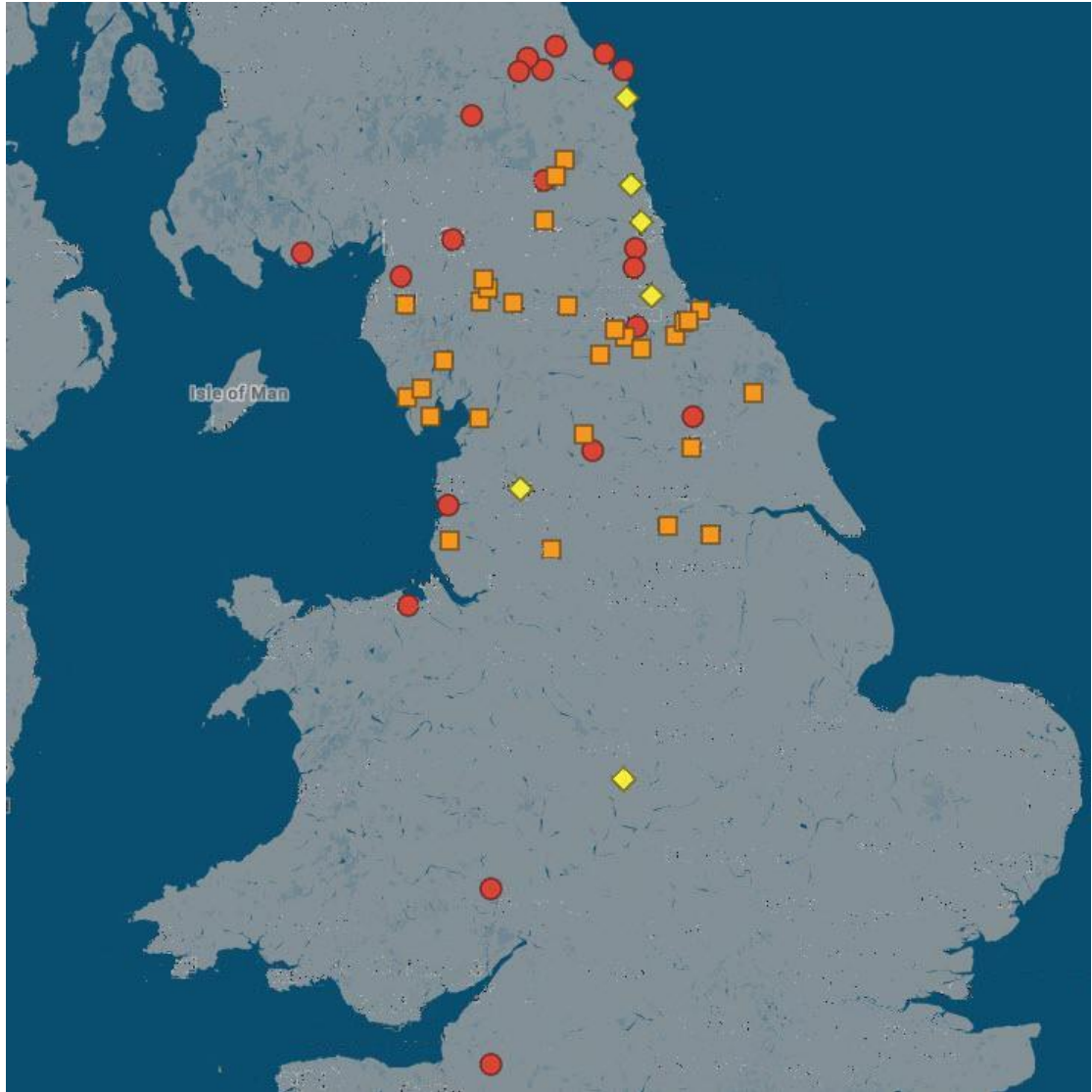
It is admittedly the authors and their immediate audience, usually fellow monks and canons, who provided the views that dominate the source material for this time and place. However, contemporary narrative texts also contain the stories of other individuals and groups, alternative interpretations of significant events, and vestiges of ideas that were a product of a shared oral culture. Tales told by the families of the former clerks of Durham were integrated into Symeon's conception of the past. The views of the *rustici* who objected to Godric's farm, or the woman who disliked being distanced from Cuthbert, can be detected in dominant narratives that sought to condemn them. The stories told by Reginald bear witness to the way in which an author spoke to his subjects and recorded a mutually agreed version of events. By building on work that considers the interface between author and subject, it has been possible to investigate the perceptions of religious authors, while simultaneously being aware of the myriad of imaginative social relationships with which such views co-existed.




In a local setting, the stories that helped the process of identification were shared between many different people. Dominant narratives were built on this wide

body of tradition and included material told to the authors by a diverse range of individuals. In part, this study has been a deconstruction of this material, an examination of the way dominant narratives were created and the purposes that they served. Yet it has also been shown that when contextualised and considered with attention to detail, narrative texts frequently reveal perceptions of society, relationships, and communities that extended beyond the ideas of the author. He or she may have reframed some of the stories, or drawn a different meaning from them, but aspects of the combined thought that produced them still remains.

## MAPS OF DEDICATIONS TO ST CUTHBERT

FIGURE 2 – DEDICATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS TO ST CUTHBERT



	Definite Dedications to St. Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century
	Definite Association with St. Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century and Later Dedication
	No Clear Evidence of a Twelfth Century Dedication, but has a Later Dedication Traditionally Believed to be a Result of the Place Being a Resting Place During the Wandering (Taken from Prior Wessington's and Arnold-Foster's Lists)

<b>DEFINITE DEDICATIONS TO ST. CUTHBERT IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY</b> ●		
Bellingham (Northumberland)	Bolton Priory (North Yorkshire)	Carham (Northumberland)
Carlisle (Cumberland)	Chester-le-Street (County Durham)	Crayke (North Yorkshire)
Darlington (County Durham)	Durham (County Durham)	Eccles (Berwickshire)
Farne (Northumberland)	Holme-Lacy (Herefordshire)	Kirkcudbright (Dumfries and Galloway)
Lindisfarne (Northumberland)	Lixtune (Cheshire)	Unnamed (Lothian)
Lytham (Lancashire)	Norham (Northumberland)	Plumbland (Cumberland)
Slitrig (Teviotdale)	Wells (Somerset)	

<b>DEFINITE ASSOCIATION WITH ST. CUTHBERT IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY AND LATER DEDICATION</b> ◆		
Bedlington (Northumberland)	Billingham (County Durham)	Embleton (Cumberland)
Hebburn (Northumberland)	Sedgefield (County Durham)	Shustoke (Warwickshire)

<b>NO CLEAR EVIDENCE OF A TWELFTH CENTURY DEDICATION, BUT HAS A LATER DEDICATION TRADITIONALLY BELIEVED TO BE A RESULT OF THE PLACE BEING A RESTING PLACE DURING THE WANDERING</b> ■		
Ackworth (West Yorkshire)	Aldingham (Lancashire)	Barton (North Yorkshire)
Burnsall-in-Craven (North Yorkshire)	Clifton (Westmorland)	Corsenside (Northumberland)
Cotharstone/Laithkirk (North Yorkshire)	Cowton (North Yorkshire)	Dufton (Westmorland)
Edenhall (Cumberland)	Elsdon (Northumberland)	Fishlake (West Yorkshire)
Forcett (North Yorkshire)	Great Salkeld (Cumberland)	Halsall (Lancashire)
Hawkshead (Cumberland)	Haydon-Bridge (Northumberland)	Kirkleatham (North Yorkshire)
Lorton (Cumberland)	Marske (North Yorkshire)	Marton-in-Cleveland (North Yorkshire)
Middleton (Cheshire)	Middleton-on-Leven (North Yorkshire)	Millom (Cumberland)
Ormesby (North Yorkshire)	Over Kellet (Lancashire)	Overton (North Yorkshire)
Wilton (North Yorkshire)		

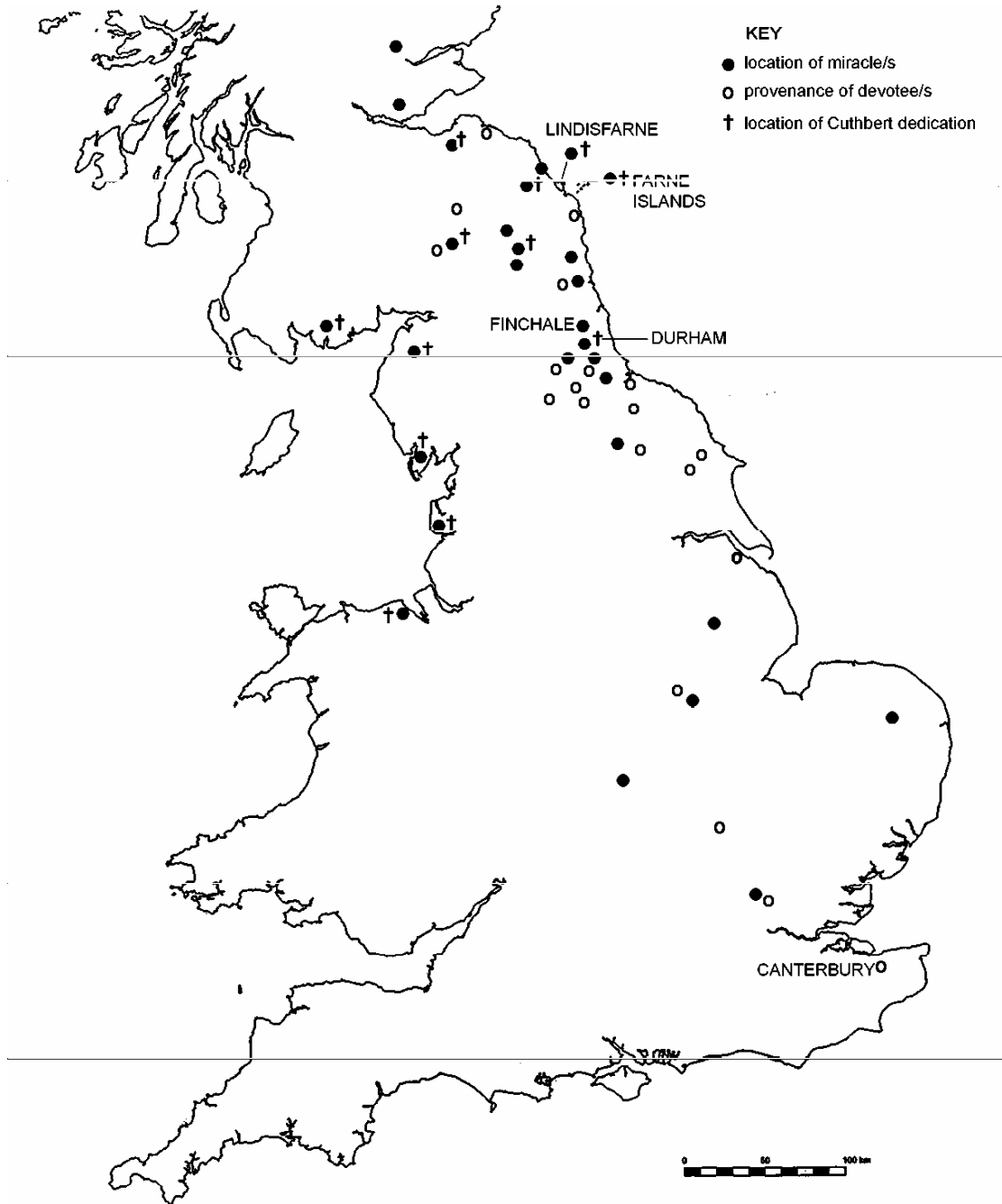
**FIGURE 3 - PRE-NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEDICATION TO ST CUTHBERT, BUT NO CLEAR EVIDENCE FOR THE TWELFTH CENTURY**



<b>PRE-NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEDICATION TO ST CUTHBERT, BUT NO CLEAR EVIDENCE FOR THE TWELFTH CENTURY DEDICATIONS</b>		
Allendale (Northumberland)	Bedford (Bedfordshire)	Beltingham (Northumberland)
Bewcastle (Cumberland)	Bilborough (Nottinghamshire)	Bilbrough (West Yorkshire)
Brattleby (Lincolnshire)	Burton-Fleming (East Yorkshire)	Cliburn (Westmorland)
Clungunford (Shropshire)	Cubert (Cornwall)	Donington (Shropshire)
Doveridge (Derbyshire)	Glen-Magna (Leicestershire)	Grantley (North Yorkshire)
Holme-Cultram (Cumberland)	Kentmere (Westmorland)	Kildale (North Yorkshire)
Kirklington (Cumberland)	Meols, North (Lancashire)	Milburn (Westmorland)
Nether Denton (Cumberland)	Osborne (Dorset)	Redmarshall (County Durham)
Satley (County Durham)	Sessay (North Yorkshire)	Thetford (Norfolk)
Widworthy (Devon)	Worksop (Nottinghamshire)	York (North Yorkshire)



**FIGURE 4 - LOCATIONS OF MIRACLES, PROVENANCE OF DEVOTEES AND LOCATION OF CUTHBERT DEDICATIONS IN REGINALD OF DURHAM'S LIBELLUS.** (Original map taken from , Crumplin, S., 'Rewriting History in the Cult of St. Cuthbert from the Ninth to the Twelfth Centuries', PhD Thesis (University of St. Andrews, 2004), p. 264.)



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