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THE WEARMOUTH ICON OF THE VIRGIN (A.D. 679): CHRISTOLOGICAL, LITURGICAL, AND ICONOGRAPHIC CONTEXTS

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In autumn 679, Benedict Biscop returned from Rome to Wearmouth, to the monastery which five years before in 673–74, he had founded and dedicated to St. Peter.¹ On the long journey from Rome, Benedict had been accompanied by Ceolfrid, who was to succeed him as abbot, and by a Roman abbot, John, also called *archicantator*, that is, ‘archcantor’. John was the precentor, responsible for the liturgy and its chant, at St. Peter’s on the Vatican.² In his *Historia abbatum*, Bede gives us an extensive list of the pictures Benedict Biscop brought back for his new monastery:

Quintum, *picturas* imaginum sanctarum quas ad ornandam aecclesiam beati Petri apostoli, quam construxerat, detulit; imaginem uidelicet beatae Dei genetricis semperque uirginis Mariae, simul et duodecim apostolorum, quibus mediam eiusdem aecclesiae testudinem, ducto a pariete ad parietem tabulato praecingeret; imagines euangelicae historiae quibus australem aecclesiae parietem decoraret; imagines uisionum apocalipsis beati Iohannis, quibus septentrionalem aequae parietem ornaret. quatinus intrantes aecclesiam omnes etiam litterarum ignari, quaquaversum intenderent, uel semper amabilem Christi sanctorumque eius, quamuis in imagine, contemplerentur aspectum; uel dominicae incarnationis gratiam uigilantiore mente recolerent; uel extremi discrimen examinis, quasi coram oculis habentes, districtius se ipsi examinare meminissent.³

(Fifthly, he brought back many holy pictures of the saints to adorn the church of St Peter he had built: a painting of the Mother of God, the

1. The standard work on the history and archaeology of monasticism at Wearmouth and Jarrow is now Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow*. The present paper, which argues that the Wearmouth iconographic program of 679 is best understood in relation to the achievements of two monks from the Latin West (Benedict Biscop and John the Archcantor) and two from the Greek East (Maximus the Confessor and Theodore of Tarsus and Canterbury) is offered in celebration of Helen Danico, whose scholarly and administrative achievements have united the best qualities of the Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) traditions.

2. On the visit of John the Archcantor to Northumbria, see the recent discussion in Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 81–93, 223–28.

3. Bede, *Historia abbatum*, ch. 6, in *Venerabilis Baedae operum historica*, ed. Plummer, 1: 369–70.

Blessed Mary Ever-Virgin, and one of each of the twelve apostles which he fixed round the central arch on a wooden entablature reaching from wall to wall; pictures of incidents in the gospels with which he decorated the south wall, and scenes from St John's vision of the apocalypse for the north wall. Thus all who entered the church, even those who could not read, were able, whichever way they looked, to put themselves more firmly in mind of the Lord's Incarnation and, as they saw the decisive moment of the Last Judgement before their very eyes be brought to examine their conscience with all due severity.)⁴

In this account, Bede naturally gives pride of place to the pictures nearest the altar. When they entered St. Peter's church at Wearmouth visitors might well have turned to left or right to admire the narrative images on the south or north walls; but, as they advanced towards the altar, the iconic image of the Mother of God, flanked by (smaller?) icons of the twelve apostles, would have been directly before their eyes.⁵ This essay examines the question of why, from autumn 679, these particular icons were given such prominence in the chancel at Wearmouth.

In recent times, there has been excellent discussion of the way in which the icons of the Virgin and the apostles may have been arranged.⁶ Paul Meyvaert demonstrated that the icons were panel paintings, and that Bede used the word *tabulatum* to refer to wood- or plank-work, whether horizontal or vertical.⁷ Meyvaert argued that the *tabulatum* consisted simply of the paintings themselves, rather than of a wooden arch or frame to which they might have been attached. He also argued that all thirteen icons were arranged in a single horizontal row, stretching across the chancel or sanctuary arch, even though he himself had emphasized that *tabulatum* could refer to vertical as well as to horizontal rows.⁸ Meyvaert also demonstrated that the panels must have been placed on, or close to, the chancel arch. Rosemary Cramp has shown that the altar was probably forward of this arch, which opened on to "the *porticus* of the Blessed Peter, to the east of the altar" ("in porticu beati Petri, ad orientem altaris") in which Benedict would later be buried. To this eastern *porticus* the bones of abbots Eoster-

4. Trans. in *Age of Bede*, ed. Farmer, pp. 190–91.

5. Kitzinger, "Interlace and Icons," pp. 6–7.

6. See, for example, George Henderson, *Bede and the Visual Arts*, pp. 5 and 13–18; and Meyvaert, "Bede and the Church Paintings."

7. Meyvaert, "Bede and the Church Paintings," pp. 70, 73.

8. Meyvaert, "Bede and the Church Paintings," pp. 72–73: "Bede is thinking of a straight line of panelling. . . . the word *tabulatum* itself does not tell us whether it was in a vertical or a horizontal position."

wine and Sigfrid would also be translated, to join those of Benedict Biscop, in 716, or soon after.⁹ Meyvaert saw that if all the icons were arranged in a single horizontal row across the arch from wall to wall they must have been rather small: as the church was some nineteen feet wide, each panel must have been, on average, only about seventeen inches wide.¹⁰ Richard Gem reassessed Meyvaert's argument and concluded that "the *tabulatum* could have been a transverse wall of planks screening the sanctuary, while the *testudo* could be the entrance arch through the screen or, more probably, an altar canopy immediately beyond the screen. In this alternative arrangement the panel paintings would have been hung upon the screen structure—possibly in imitation of a Roman *cancellus* screen with a columnar superstructure on which icons were hung."¹¹

Both in the arrangement suggested by Meyvaert (a horizontal row of icons spanning the chancel arch), and even more clearly in either of the two arrangements suggested by Gem (either along the vertical sides and horizontal top of a wooden frame for the chancel arch or on the columns and across the top of an altar canopy or ciborium), it is clear that the icon of the Virgin must have been the central feature of the sequence. The most probable arrangement has been succinctly described by Rosemary Cramp: "Another interpretation of the passage could be that the figures on their individual boards were placed on the wall dividing the nave and chancel and that Mary was in the high central position over the central opening, flanked on either side by the apostles."¹² In the arrangements proposed by Gem, the icon of the Virgin might have been flanked on each side by one or more icons of the apostles. It is likely that the horizontal row, just under the top of the chancel arch, would have included the most senior among them: St. Peter and his brother Andrew. The remaining apostle-icons might have been arranged in two vertical sequences, mounted either on each side of the wooden screen at the chancel arch, flanking the entrance to the altar area, or on an altar canopy or ciborium: presumably on its two

9. Bede, *Historia abbatum*, ch. 18, in *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica*, ed. Plummer, 1:394. On this layout of the area around the altar of St. Peter's basilica at Wearmouth, see Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 1:66–71; on the eastern *porticus* see Ó Carragáin, "Term *Porticus*," pp. 32–34; Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 1:70.

10. Meyvaert, "Bede and the Church Paintings," pp. 74–76; see also Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 1:33.

11. Gem, "Documentary References to Anglo-Saxon Painted Architecture," pp. 2–3; but, as we have seen above, Cramp proposes that the altar was before the chancel arch, and so in front of the icons.

12. Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 1:32.

columns nearest the nave. For example, if the Virgin was flanked only by Peter and Andrew on the horizontal row (either on the wooden *tabulatum* directly over the chancel entrance or at the top of an altar canopy), each of the two vertical sequences of icons would have comprised five icons. If a greater number of apostle-icons was placed on the horizontal row, each vertical sequence might have had only four or even three icons.

Whether the icons were arranged as argued by Meyvaert, by Gem, or by Cramp, it is clear that the icon of the Mother of God would have been at the center of the sequence. Henceforth, any group of clerics proceeding up the nave at St. Peter's towards the altar in front of the chancel area, or any congregation standing or kneeling in the nave, is likely to have seen the altar visually surmounted by an icon that celebrated Christ's Incarnation within the Virgin's womb. Benedict Biscop ensured that, from the autumn of 679, during each Mass a congregation at St. Peter's would have closely associated the altar, at which the Passion of Christ was made present in liturgical action, with an icon of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

The Mass provided a particularly suitable context, both for the icon of the Virgin and for those of the flanking apostle-icons. At each Roman Mass, before the consecration, the *Communicantes* prayer was recited.¹³ This included a list of saints that began with the Virgin Mary and proceeded with a list of twenty-four other saints: the twelve apostles (including Paul as one of the apostles) and twelve other saints, including five of the earliest successors of St. Peter as bishops of Rome:¹⁴

Communicantes, et memoriam venerantes, in primis gloriosae semper Virginis Mariae, Genetricis Dei et Domini nostri Iesu Christi, sed et beatorum apostolorum ac martyrum tuorum, Petri et Pauli, Andreae, Jacobi, Joannis, Thomae, Jacobi, Philippi, Bartholomaei, Matthaei, Simonis et Thaddaei: Lini, Cleti, Clementis, Xysti, Cornelii, Cypriani, Laurentii, Chrysogoni, Joannis et Pauli, Cosmae et Damiani: et omnium Sanctorum tuorum; quorum meritis precibusque concedas, ut in omnibus protectionis tuae muniamur auxilio. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

13. This prayer occurs both in the Old Gelasian sacramentary (the manuscript which survives, which was written in France about 750, supplements the list with a further nine, mainly Gallican, saints) and in the Gregorian sacramentaries: see *Liber Sacramentorum*, ed. Mohlberg, Siffrin, and Eisenhöfer, p. 184, par. 1246; *Sacramentaire grégorien*, ed. Deshusses, 1:88, par. 7. The text of the prayer given here corresponds to the Gregorian version.

14. On the structure and history of the prayer, see Kennedy, *Saints of the Canon of the Mass*, pp. 97–148.

(In union with the whole church, we honor Mary, the ever-virgin mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God, the apostles and martyrs Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon and Jude; we honor Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, and all the saints. May their merits and prayers gain us your constant help and protection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)

One wonders whether the Wearmouth set of apostle-icons might not possibly, like the *Communicantes* prayer, have been headed, not only by St. Peter, but also by St. Paul, "the least of the Apostles" (I Corinthians 15:9). Most of the ancient Roman apse-mosaics paired Peter with Paul, in the context of the altar, and therefore a set that included St. Paul would be normal for Rome.¹⁵ To include Paul as "companion" to St. Peter would have anticipated Benedict's founding (from 681/2), of Wearmouth's twin monastery, St. Paul's at Jarrow (formally dedicated on April 23, 685).¹⁶

To associate an icon of the Mother of God with apostle-icons was also to recall the creeds, and so the faith of the Church. All the credal formulae recited or taught at Wearmouth would have stated that Christ was "born of the Virgin Mary."¹⁷ By their very nature, confessional creeds were understood to encapsulate the pure faith of the apostles, and neither to add nor to subtract from that faith.¹⁸ The Creed was not yet sung at Mass, but credal formulae were central to the ceremonies of the catechumenate and baptism.¹⁹ At the end of his life, in 734, Bede would urge Bishop Egbert of York to ensure that each Northumbrian Christian should be taught the Creed and the Our Father: he himself had by then given vernacular trans-

15. For the iconography of the early Roman apse mosaics, see Ihm, *Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei*.

16. On the early history and architecture of St. Paul's see Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 1:139–295.

17. See Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 102 (Old Roman Creed: "qui natus est de Spiritu sancto et Maria virgine": for discussion of this clause, see pp. 146–49); p. 297 (the Constantinopolitan Creed accepted at the Council of Chalcedon, often known, inaccurately, as "the Nicene Creed": "and was incarnate from the Virgin Mary and became man"); p. 402 (the late seventh-century Creed in the Antiphony of Bangor: "conceptum de Spiritu sancto, natum de Maria virgine"); this, an elaboration of the Old Roman Creed, is similar to the slightly later Creed known as the Apostles' Creed, p. 369 ("qui conceptus est de Spiritu sancto, natus ex Maria virgine").

18. As the title "Apostles' Creed" implies (Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 1–6, 52–61).

19. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 30–61; de Puniel, "Trois homélies catéchétiques": trans., *Documents*, ed. Whitaker, pp. 174–77 (Old Gelasian), p. 201 (*Ordo Romanus XI*).

lations of the Latin texts to priests ignorant of Latin.²⁰ Since the fourth century, the Our Father had come to be recited at each Mass.²¹ The liturgy of Lent was centered on the rites of initiation, of which an important element was the "handing on" to the catechumens of the Our Father, the Creed, and the four gospels. During the lenten catechumenate, the Church was seen as a Virgin mother, eagerly looking forward to bringing her catechumens to new birth from the womb of the font. The catechumenate, a time of spiritual growth in the womb of the Church, was seen to reenact the growth of Christ in the womb of the Virgin. But when in baptism the neophytes came forth to new life from the womb of the font, during the Easter Vigil, they were immediately brought to the altar to receive Communion. Thus, the true climax of the rites of initiation was seen to be eucharistic participation in the Body of Christ.²² As the Virgin Mary and the apostles were united at each Mass in the *Communicantes* prayer, and as the catechumenate (understood as a new birth in the virginal womb of the Church) involved the "handing on" of the Creed and culminated in the reception of the Eucharist, it made good symbolic sense visually to associate the altar area with icons of the Virgin and the apostles.

Benedict Biscop made his icon of the Mother of God the visual climax not only of the sequence on or near the chancel arch but of the whole iconographic program for his new church. From the earliest Christian traditions, celebration of the Eucharist was understood to have important eschatological implications: it was seen as a pledge which Christ had left to his body the Church that he, the head of that body, would reveal himself in glory at the Parousia: as St. Paul had put it, "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Corinthians 11:26).²³ Benedict's program included paintings of episodes from the gospels on the south wall of the church, and as we have seen the catechumenate included a ceremony in which the gospels were symbolically "handed on" to the catechumens. Opposite these scenes, there was a set of eschatological scenes on the north wall. Within Benedict's lifetime, Roman

20. Bede, *Letter to Egbert*, section 5, in *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica*, ed. Plummer, 1:408–9 (text), 2:380–81 (notes); trans. in *EHD*, ed. Whitelock, pp. 737–38.

21. Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, 2:277–93.

22. *Documents*, ed. Whitaker, p. 204, par. 103 (translating *Ordo XI*). This document makes it clear that even infants were given Communion directly after being baptized: see the discussion of the catechumenate and infant baptism in Ó Carragáin, "Between Annunciation and Visitation," pp. 158–59 and n. 69; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 120–79.

23. See Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*.

liturgical developments had begun to connect Christ's nativity still more intimately to his imminent return in glory. In the second half of the seventh century, the liturgists of the papal *schola cantorum* at the Lateran gradually gave definitive shape to the Roman version of the season of Advent. They elaborated that season as a carefully structured penitential season before Christmas, the midwinter feast of Christ's Incarnation.²⁴ The Roman Mass-readings for Advent had been systematized by the mid-seventh century. They made it clear that in Advent the Church prepared to celebrate, not only Christ's incarnation at Bethlehem, but also his return in glory at the end of human history.²⁵ Eschatological themes were particularly important on the second Sunday of Advent, when the pope went in procession from the Lateran to celebrate solemn Mass at the basilica known as Hierusalem. That basilica provided an appropriate setting for celebrating the eschatological dimension of Advent: images of the heavenly Jerusalem, and of the signs of approaching Judgment, dominated its Mass-chants and readings.²⁶ The gospel was taken from St. Luke (21:25–33): "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among the nations."²⁷ The sentence in which Bede summed up the devotional impression which the Wearmouth iconographic program made on himself and his community encapsulates the themes of the Roman Advent: the icons encouraged all who entered the monastic church to "put themselves more firmly in mind of the Lord's Incarnation and, as they saw the decisive moment of the Last Judgement before their very eyes be brought to examine their conscience with all due severity."²⁸ Bede clearly understood the icon of the Virgin to be central to the whole iconographic program in the church.

Benedict Biscop's decision to place his new icon of the Mother of God in a significant relationship to the altar of St. Peter's had particular relevance to the situation of the English Church in autumn 679. For a genera-

24. McKinnon, *Advent Project*, pp. 125–53.

25. McKinnon, *Advent Project*, pp. 146–53. McKinnon argued convincingly that the Lateran *schola cantorum* did not complete its task of composing elaborate chants for Advent until the reign of Pope Sergius (686–701). However, he makes it clear that their work was based on earlier, less formal, Roman traditions of Advent, reflected for example in the earliest gospel-capitulary, now preserved in Würzburg: McKinnon, *Advent Project*, pp. 147–49 and table 8 on p. 148.

26. McKinnon, *Advent Project*, tables on pp. 130 and 138.

27. Lenker, *Westsächsische Evangelienversion*, p. 342, no. 259.

28. Bede, *Historia abbatum*, ch. 6, quoted in n. 3 above.

tion, the question of whether Christ had a human will had led to schism between Constantinople and Rome: in 679 it had become possible for the young English Church to play an active part in resolving the schism. Ten years before, in 669, Benedict Biscop had accompanied Theodore of Tarsus from Rome for his installation as archbishop of Canterbury, after which Biscop had worked for two years with Theodore as abbot of the monastery of St. Peter's at Canterbury.²⁹ Theodore's appointment to Canterbury ensured that, under his leadership, the English Church would quickly attain a new awareness of its place within the universal Christian Church. On his return to England, Benedict Biscop on September 17, 679, attended a Church synod at Hatfield.³⁰ The synod was important: Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, considered to be the greatest living expert on the Monothelite controversy, presided. Pope Agatho had sent Abbot John the Archcantor as his special representative. On September 17, 679, the Council of Hatfield solemnly stated the faith of the English Church that Christ, as well as participating fully in the divine will that he shared with the Father and the Holy Spirit, had a separate, fully human will distinct from though coherently united with the divine will; it rejected the heresy of Monothelitism, which had denied that Christ had a will of his own.

In the 630s, Monothelitism had been espoused, primarily for political reasons, by the imperial administration at Constantinople. The emperor Constans II had issued a formal command (*Typos*: 'edict' or 'order') forbidding any further discussion of Christ's human will. The pope, Theodore (642–49), refused to accept the *Typos*; it seems likely that before his death he had already planned a Roman synod which would formally state the theological reasons why the *Typos* was heretical. It was left to his successor, Pope Martin I, a native of Todi in Umbria, to execute and be executed for Theodore's defiant policy. Martin, who was consecrated on July 5, 649, without waiting for the customary permission of the emperor, immediately convoked the planned synod at his episcopal basilica, the Lateran (October 6–31, 649). The Lateran Synod duly rejected Monothelitism and proclaimed the reality of Christ's human will. Rudolf Riedinger has shown that the formal acts of the Lateran Council were drafted in Greek, probably in advance of the council and possibly before the death of Pope Theodore, under the direction of the great Greek theologian, Maximus

29. Lapidge, "Career of Archbishop Theodore," pp. 26–27.

30. Chadwick, "Theodore"; Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 20–21, 27; *Councils*, ed. Haddan and Stubbs, 3:141–60; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Road*, pp. 79–83, 225–28.

the Confessor.³¹ It has been argued that Theodore of Tarsus was one of the team of Greek-speaking monks who helped Maximus to draft the acts; it is possible that, in addition, Theodore attended the Lateran Council and signed its acts.³² By 679 Theodore was considered to be the greatest expert in the West on the theological issues raised by the monothelite heresy: in 680 Pope Agatho was to write to the emperor Constantine IV that the only person in the Latin West who had a full understanding of the complex issues relating to the monothelite controversy was Theodore, "the philosopher and archbishop of Great Britain."³³ The acts of the Lateran Council, taken as a whole, provided a definitive synthesis of the theology of Christ's human will and courage, which Maximus the Confessor had developed: to that theology it gave the authority of a synod presided over by the pope who by 679 had come to be accepted by the Church in East and West as a martyr for the faith.

The emperor Constans knew that doctrinal dissent could easily become a focus for political dissent, thus Roman defiance must quickly be quashed. The way in which Constans's first plan to do this misfired demonstrates how real was the danger to the unity of the Empire, which had in the previous decade lost so many Christian provinces to Islamic aggression. Constans gave the task of asserting his authority to Olympius, his exarch at Ravenna, who arrived at Rome when the Lateran Council was still in session: but when Olympius saw how strong the opposition to Monothelitism was, even among the Greek community and the army at Rome, he refused to carry out the imperial orders and set himself up as the independent ruler of Italy. Beat Brenk has argued that much of the seventh-century decoration of Santa Maria Antiqua must have been carried out in the pontificates of Theodore and Martin, and especially in the brief period (October 649 to summer 653) when Olympius ruled Rome as an independent city confident in its public opposition to Monothelitism.³⁴ Within Rome, Santa Maria was of clear political as well as ecclesiastical importance: it stood in the shadow of the imperial palace on the Palatine and near the

31. *Concilium Lateranense*, ed. Riedinger, pp. xxvii–xxviii.

32. Lapidge, "Career of Archbishop Theodore," pp. 21–23.

33. Lapidge, "Career of Archbishop Theodore," p. 23.

34. Brenk, "Kultgeschichte versus Stilgeschichte"; Brenk, "Papal Patronage." The present account of the monothelite crisis complements and corrects that in Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Road*, p. 227, written when, not yet having read the recent studies by Brenk. I did not understand the importance of the exarch Olympius for understanding the seventh-century frescoes in Santa Maria Antiqua.

Greek quarter (*schola Graeca*), and provided a basilica in the Forum Romanum for the Greek community of Rome. The separation from the Empire of an independent Italy only ceased when in summer 652 Olympius, on campaign to expel Arab invaders from Sicily, died of fever. A new exarch, Theodore Calliopas, was quickly sent to reassert imperial authority in Italy; he entered Rome on June 15, 653. In vain did Pope Martin, seriously ill, claim refuge by placing his portable bed or stretcher before the altar in the Lateran: on the morning of Monday, June 17, Theodore arrested him there in the basilica.³⁵ Maximus the Confessor was also arrested; both were taken separately as prisoners to Constantinople, tried, and finally martyred: Pope Martin on September 16, 655, the last pope to suffer martyrdom; Maximus the Confessor on August 13, 662. By the late 670s, however, Constans II's son and successor, Constantine IV, had decided to reject Monotheletism, and in this way to restore theological unity to the Church in East and West. Pope Agatho (678–81) welcomed the imperial offer of reconciliation, and requested the Churches of the West to discuss the matter and to send their conclusions to Rome. The responses were to form part of a considered Western reply, to be reported at the Sixth Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 681, which would put an end to the monothelete schism. The synod of Hatfield was, thus, of considerable ecumenical significance. Benedict Biscop and John the Archcantor brought to Wearmouth a copy of the Latin acts of the Lateran Council of 649. The acts were deposited in the library of Benedict's new monastery, and the synod of Hatfield solemnly declared that the English Church accepted the teaching of the Lateran Council. That council had declared that Christ "willed and effected our salvation at once divinely and humanly" ("utpote volentem et operantem Divine et humane nostram salutem").³⁶ Its tenth canon declared that in Christ two wills, divine and human, were *cohaerenter unitas* 'coherently united'; the eleventh canon in addition affirmed that in Christ two principles of action, divine and human, were also *cohaerenter unitas*.³⁷

The coherent unity between Christ's divine will and his human will was a crucial issue: monothelete theologians had objected that, if Christ

35. For the political importance of Roman opposition to Monotheletism, see Bertolini, *Roma*, pp. 329–50.

36. Prologue to the Acts, *Councils*, ed. Haddan and Stubbs, 3:146; *Concilium Lateranense*, ed. Riedinger, p. 367.

37. *Councils*, ed. Haddan and Stubbs, 3:148; *Concilium Lateranense*, ed. Riedinger, p. 375.

had a human will, it must at times have been in conflict with the divine will in which he shared.³⁸ The opponents of Monotheletism stressed that Christ, uniquely among humans, never acted in conflict with the divine will. In a new dogmatic formula, the third canon of the Lateran Council proclaimed that Christ was uniquely incorruptible because he had been born without corruption from the Virgin Mary: "If anyone refuses to confess in accordance with the holy Fathers that the holy ever-virgin immaculate Mary is literally and truly Mother of God, inasmuch as in this last age she conceived without seed, of the Holy Spirit, and brought forth without corruption [*in corruptibiliter genuisse*] the very one who is literally and truly God the Word born of God the Father before all ages, her virginity remaining inviolate after this birth as well—let him be condemned."³⁹

Because it was essential to the anti-monothelete position to stress that Christ's courage was incorruptible, even to the death on the Cross, precisely because he had been conceived and born without corruption, a new devotion to Christ's Incarnation, and so to his Virgin mother, was central to Roman opposition to Monotheletism: Per Jonas Nordhagen and Beat Brenk have shown how central this new devotion was to the seventh-century frescoes in Santa Maria Antiqua.⁴⁰ This provides one context, among several, within which to understand why, in the two generations (between the 630s and the 680s) during which Monotheletism was a living issue, Roman basilicas gradually introduced four new feasts of the Virgin and commissioned a notable amount of Marian iconography (in particular images of the Annunciation).⁴¹ Henceforth, Rome would celebrate Christ's virginal birth, not only at the Nativity (December 25) but on February 2, the feast of the Christ's presentation in the Temple (celebrated from the 630s); on

38. Hurley, "Born Incorruptibly," p. 230, points out that this is the first objection that the patriarch Pyrrhus raised against Maximus the Confessor in his debate with Maximus at Constantinople in 641 (PG 91:291A).

39. Trans. Hurley, "Born Incorruptibly," p. 216; for the Latin text of the canon, see *Councils*, ed. Haddan and Stubbs, 3:146; for the Greek and Latin texts, *Concilium Lateranense*, ed. Riedinger, pp. 370–71.

40. Nordhagen, "Earliest Decorations in Santa Maria Antiqua"; Brenk, "Kultgeschichte versus Stilgeschichte"; Brenk, "Papal Patronage," relates the several new paintings of the Annunciation in Santa Maria Antiqua in this period to the defense of orthodoxy against Monotheletism, because "the Annunciation is the scene *Par excellence* that focuses on the human and the divine will of Christ" (p. 77).

41. I do not wish to argue that the new feasts should be understood simply as a reaction to Monotheletism, simply that the new feasts, introduced primarily for liturgical and devotional reasons, were nevertheless also consistent with the Christological and political concerns of the Roman Church in these two generations.

August 15, the feast of the Virgin's death (Dormition; later, Assumption) (from the 650s); on March 25, the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord (from the 660s); and finally, on September 8, the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (from the 670s).⁴² All four feasts, including a number of the readings assigned to them, were imported from Constantinople. Educated Roman clerics must have seen it as ironic that these recent liturgical innovations at Constantinople strengthened devotion to Christ's human birth from the Virgin Mother of God and thus reinforced the orthodox, and Roman, theological position: that Christ's incorruptible will stemmed from his human birth, in which his divine nature, begotten from the Father before all ages, became indissolubly united "as two [natures] in one flesh" (cf. "dua in carne una" [Genesis 2:24]) to his human body and his human nature, in and of the *thalamus* (bridal chamber) of Mary's womb.⁴³ By 679, Benedict Biscop and John the Archcantor would have been familiar with at least three of the new feasts: the Purification (February 2), the Annunciation (March 25), and the great *sollemnitatis Sanctae Mariae* (her death, *Natale* into heaven, or Dormition: August 15).⁴⁴

The acts of the Lateran Council begin with a memorable affirmation that Christ's unique Incarnation from the Virgin was central to the defense of Christian orthodoxy against Monotheletism. The acts record that, in his opening address to the council, Pope Martin explicitly associated the members of the council, the pastors of the Church, with the shepherds to whom on Christmas night the angels proclaimed the Incarnation of Christ. Pope Martin used the formula that would appear in the third canon of the council: "conceived without [male] seed, he went forth from the Virgin without corruption" ("sine semine conceptus incorrupte de uirgine processit"). In his speech, Pope Martin expanded on Gregory the Great's use of the etymology of the place-name Bethlehem: *domus panis* 'house of bread'. Gregory had made a close connection between Bethle-

42. For a table showing the approximate dates on which each of the four feasts was introduced into the papal and presbyteral rites at Rome, see Frénaud, "Culte de Notre-Dame," p. 184.

43. On Christ's divine and human births, reaffirmed by the fourth canon of the Lateran Council, see Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 61 and 82; on Mary's womb as *thalamus* in which divinity was wedded to humanity (Psalm 18/19:6) see *ibid.*, pp. 322–23.

44. Mary Clayton has demonstrated that there was considerable confusion and error about the new feasts in England: significantly, the only insular writer who seems to have known all four accurately in the early eighth century, and whose account has come down to us, was Bede: Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin*, pp. 30–40.

hem, the "living bread" of the Eucharist, and Christ filling the minds of the faithful with spiritual food:

Qui bene etiam in Bethleem nascitur; Bethleem quidem domus panis interpretatur. Ipse namque est qui ait: Ego sum panis uiuus qui de caelo descendi. Locus ergo in quo Dominus nasceretur, domus panis ante uocatus est, quia futurum profecto erat, ut ille ibi per materiam carnis appareret, qui electorum mentes interna satietate reficeret.

([Christ] is fittingly born in Bethlehem; for Bethlehem is interpreted as meaning "house of bread." For it is he who says "I am the living bread who has come down from heaven." Therefore, the place in which the Lord would be born was earlier called "house of bread," because it was to come about that he would there appear in the materiality of flesh, who would replenish the minds of the chosen ones with an inner fullness.)⁴⁵

In the acts of the Lateran Council, Pope Martin establishes a similar chain of associations. The council gathers at the Lateran within a "spiritual Bethlehem"; the Catholic Church, in which the spiritual shepherds preserve their flock by teaching true doctrine about Christ's Incarnation from the Virgin and his eucharistic presence as Agnus Dei (Lamb of God):

Euangelicus et omnibus hominibus salutaris (Titus 2:11) sermo. qui secundum uirtutem suae diuinae praedicationis orbis terrarum fines (cf. Romans 10:18, Psalm 18:5) complexus est, uolens manifeare ministros et praedicatores sollicitos esse nos dumtaxat, qui Christiani populi pastoris suscipere meruimus officium et sacerdotii diuinae incarnationis summaeque dispensationis, per quam nostram adsumens mirificae renouauit naturam. demonstrauit, sicut nostis, reuerentissimi fratres, pastores uigilantes et conseruantes custodias noctis (Luke 2:8), tunc uidelicet quando sine semine conceptus incorrupte de uirgine processit ipse qui propter nos incarnatus est deus. quibus et testatur euangelista dicens: et festinantes uenerunt et uidentes cognouerunt de uerbo quod quod dictum est eis. et omnes qui audierunt mirati sunt de his quae dicta sunt a pastoribus. quos et gloria domini e caelo refulsit et multitudo militiae caelestis laudantium dominum et dicentium: gloria in altissimis deo et in terra pax hominibus bone uoluntatis (Luke 2:16–18). Cum quibus oportet et nos praecipue, propter quos haec eadem scripta sunt, conseruantes cum summa uigilantia et sollicitudine custodias (Luke 2:8) de ouile nobis commisso, id est creditis nobis a domino populis in huius saeculi nocte, conuenientes in unum intellectum eundemque sensum (I Cor. 1:10), sicut dicit beatus Paulus apostolus, ac si in aliquam spiritalem Bethleem (Luke 2:8), quae est catholica dei et apostolica ecclesia. in qua

45. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, p. 54. Homily VIII, lines 8–13. Translation mine.

ipse panis uitae (cf. John 6:35) firmitus conlocatur, quatenus cognoscere et intendere in eo *sermonem* immaculatae fidei debeamus, quem firmitus roborantibus nobis per traditas apostolicas paternasque promulgationes *ipsa domini gloria cum militia caeleste* (Luke 2:9) et laudibus *enilescat* atque *mirentur* et in nobis deum miraculorum *omnes qui audiunt* de pio nostro studio sinceram in domino plenitudinem (cf. Luke 2:13).

(The gospel teaching, saving for all men, through the power of its divine preaching has encompassed the ends of the earth: it wishes to produce caring ministers and preachers. We have deserved to assume the office of the shepherd of the Christian people, and to exercise the office of priesthood of the divine Incarnation. The highest dispensation, who in taking on our nature wonderfully renewed it, showed forth, as you know, most reverend fathers, shepherds waking and keeping the watches of the night. This happened at the time when he, who was conceived without [male] seed came forth without corruption from the Virgin: God, who for our sake became incarnate. The evangelist bears witness to these events, saying *and they came in haste and, seeing, understood what had been said to them, and all who heard wondered at what the shepherds had said. For the glory of the Lord shone round about them from heaven, and a multitude of the heavenly host, praising the Lord and saying: Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of goodwill.* It particularly behoves us, for whom these things were written, to *keep guard* with great vigilance and care over the flock entrusted to us, that is, over the peoples whom the Lord has committed to our care, during the night of the present age. It behoves us to gather *together in one spirit and understanding*, as the blessed apostle Paul says, as though into a spiritual *Bethlehem*, which is the catholic and apostolic Church, in which he, *the bread of life*, is safely placed: this means that, in that Church, we should know, understand and express the true faith. *The glory of the same Lord* is strengthened and shines forth in us, together with *the heavenly host* and its praises, through the declarations of the Apostles and of the Fathers; and all those who hear of the fullness of the Lord through our zeal are amazed at the God of miracles.)⁴⁶

To associate the icon of the Mother of God with the altar at St. Peter's Wearmouth was to provide the monastery with a visual reminder of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, a doctrine to which the third canon of the Lateran Council had recently given a new and authoritative formulation. To place the icon of the Virgin at the center of a set of icons of the apostles made it clear that the Virgin Birth corresponded, in the words of Pope Martin, to what the apostles had handed down and the Fathers proclaimed ("traditas apostolicas paternasque promulgationes"). The icon of the Virgin, and the flanking icons of the apostles, together attested to Wearmouth's (and

46. *Concilium Lateranense*, ed. Riedinger, p. 11, lines 11–28.

Northumbria's) commitment to orthodoxy in the central Christological debate of the later seventh century.

Placing the icon of the Mother of God in the visual perspective of the altar at Wearmouth established a striking visual relationship between an image of the Incarnation and the altar at which, at every Mass, Christ's Passion was made present. Such a link between Incarnation and Passion was consonant with the liturgical thought of John the Archcantor, who in the winter of 679–80 taught the monks of Wearmouth the liturgical traditions of the Vatican.⁴⁷ In the 670s, the Vatican liturgists had composed their own special Mass for the new feast of the Annunciation. The Annunciation nearly always fell during Lent or Holy Week, and this posed a serious liturgical problem: how could the joy of Christ's Incarnation be celebrated properly in the season that prepared for his Passion? Of all the basilicas of the Western Church, only St. Peter's on the Vatican worked out an explicit theology to justify celebrating the Annunciation during Lent. Their Mass was entitled *Adnuntiatio Domini et Passio Eiusdem*; its Offertory prayer stated that the Mass was offered "on account of the Incarnation and likewise the Passion of our Redeemer Jesus Christ"; and its Collect, a masterpiece of liturgical thought, explicitly related the Incarnation to the Passion:

Gratiam tuam quaesumus domine mentibus nostris infunde, ut qui angelo nuntiante Christi filii tui Incarnationem cognouimus, per passionem eius et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur: qui tecum.⁴⁸

(We beseech thee, Lorde, powre thy grace into our heartes: that, as we haue knowen Christ, thy sonnes incarnation, by the message of an Angell: so by hys crosse and passion, we maye be brought into the glory of his resurrection; Through the same Christ our Lorde.)⁴⁹

The strikingly original liturgical thought of the Vatican Mass drew on the ancient traditions of St. Martin's basilica at Tours. Since the late

47. See Ó Carragáin, "Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem," pp. 20–21; Ó Carragáin, *City of Rome*, pp. 16–20; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 85–93.

48. *Liber Sacramentorum*, ed. Mohlberg, Siffrin, and Eisenhöfer, p. 29, no. 385. That the prayer *Gratiam tuam* might, seeing that it comes from the Vatican in the 670s, possibly have been composed by John the Archcantor himself, was first argued by Ó Carragáin, "Rome, Ruthwell, Vercelli."

49. I give the translation by Thomas Crammer, who assigned the prayer as Collect for the Annunciation (Lady Day, 25 March), in the first prayer book of Edward VI: see Church of England, *First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, p. 185. The history of this English prayer is discussed in Ó Carragáin, "Annunciation of the Lord," pp. 349–50, 364–78; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 359–62.

fifth century, the monks at Tours had celebrated an annual vigil on March 27, to commemorate the anniversary of Easter. In addition to this commemoration of the anniversary of Easter, they also celebrated Easter in the normal way, as a moveable feast: but that Paschal Vigil was celebrated at the cathedral within the city, while the anniversary, on March 27, was celebrated in the basilica where St. Martin's body lay, outside the town walls. The idea that March 27 was the anniversary of Easter was calculated from the ancient Christian tradition, recorded from the second century (Tertullian, Hippolytus), that Christ had died on March 25, the spring equinox in the Julian calendar.⁵⁰ Thus, to justify celebrating the Annunciation during Lent, the Vatican liturgists turned to an ancient Christian tradition that had been given liturgical expression at Tours for almost two centuries. It was natural at that period for the Vatican to seek inspiration in Tours: the liturgy at St. Peter's was in the care of the monks of the monastery of St. Martin, which stood on the slope of the Vatican Hill, just outside the apse of the basilica. John the Archcantor, precentor of St. Peter's, was also abbot of St. Martin's. To celebrate March 25 as the anniversary of both the Annunciation of the Lord and his Passion was an idea which monks of St. Martin's would think of, and which would particularly appeal to John, their abbot. It is possible that, in the 670s, a short period before he set off with Benedict Biscop for Wearmouth and Hatfield, John himself as archcantor or precentor may have composed the Mass "Gratiam tuam." John, Benedict Biscop, and Ceolfrid visited Tours on the way to England, because John naturally had a particular devotion to St. Martin, patron of his own monastery on the Vatican.⁵¹ John the Archcantor would certainly have appreciated the way in which Benedict visually associated the altar at Wearmouth with an icon commemorating the Incarnation.

What did Wearmouth's image of the Mother of God look like? It is impossible to be sure: at Rome itself, where at least six major early icons have survived, the chief characteristic of the group is its variety, both in size and in iconographic detail.⁵² Ernst Kitzinger argued that the icons of the

50. Roll, *Towards the Origins of Christmas*, pp. 63–66, 79–106; Talley, *Origins of the Liturgical Year*, pp. 91–99.

51. Bede, *Historia abbatum*, ch. 6 (see n. 3 above); the present paragraph summarizes the argument of Ó Carragáin, "Rome, Ruthwell, Vercelli," pp. 62–73, where documentation of his hypothesis will be found.

52. Five of the early icons are reproduced and discussed in Amato, *Vera Effigie Mariae*. The variety of the early Roman icons has been emphasized by Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 63–73.

Mother of God and apostles on the Cuthbert Coffin, and the related icon of the Mother of God in the Book of Kells, may both have been inspired by the Wearmouth icons; his brilliant hypothesis may provide the best clue to the appearance of the Wearmouth icons.⁵³ Perhaps more useful are the three visual analogues that Rome provides for the way in which Benedict placed his Marian icon at Wearmouth in the visual perspective of the altar. Two of these analogues come from Santa Maria Maggiore on the Esquiline; the third from the Greek church, Santa Maria Antiqua in the Forum Romanum. The basilica of Sancta Maria on the Esquiline (later to be known as Santa Maria Maggiore), built in the second quarter of the fifth century, was the oldest basilica dedicated to the Mother of God in the Latin West. It was always particularly associated with Bethlehem: the Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve had been celebrated there since the mid-fifth century (while the Day Mass of Christmas had already been celebrated at St. Peter's since the mid-fourth century, when the feast first began to be celebrated in Rome). In the symbolic topography of the stationary system, in which the pope celebrated Mass at particular basilicas on set days throughout the year, Sancta Maria was Rome's symbolic "Bethlehem."⁵⁴ In the period of the monothelite controversy, which was also the period of the Arab conquest of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, this association was strengthened. By the 640s, a chapel adjoined to the north or right side of the basilica (as one faced the altar) was believed to contain relics of the crib at Bethlehem. Because of this chapel and its cult of the crib, by the mid-seventh century the whole basilica had become known as Sancta Maria ad Praesepe (Saint Mary's at the Crib). Though Bethlehem had recently fallen to the forces of Islam, the most important feature of Bethlehem, the relics of Christ's crib, were understood to be safely in Rome, where they could always receive the cult that was their due.

The apse of Santa Maria Maggiore, above and behind the altar, was destroyed and rebuilt between 1288 and 1292. The mosaic of the thirteenth-century apse shows Christ crowning Mary Queen of Heaven. We do not know what the iconography of the original apse mosaic was like: it is most likely to have had an image of Christ in Glory at its center, but it is not impossible that the apse may have contained an image of the glori-

53. Kitzinger, "Coffin-Reliquary," pp. 263–65.

54. Baldovin, *Urban Character of Christian Worship*, pp. 148, 157; de Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor*, 1:57–66; Saxer, *Sainte-Marie-Majeure*, pp. 109–79.

fied Virgin Mary as *Theotokos* (mother of God).⁵⁵ The great chancel arch viewed from the nave provides a visual frame for the altar and a transition between the apse and the nave, and still preserves its fifth-century mosaics: these provide the most important and extended fifth-century narrative iconography of Christ's incarnation, Epiphany, and flight into Egypt.⁵⁶ Possibly the fifth-century apse, but more probably the mosaic Incarnation-cycle on the fifth-century arch over and behind the altar, may have inspired Benedict Biscop to place his icons as a visual frame for the altar at St. Peter's, Wearmouth. It seems possible that Benedict brought his icons to Wearmouth so that, from autumn 679, the altar area of his new St. Peter's should visually "cite" or recall that of the first and greatest Marian basilica of the Western Church.

At Wearmouth, of course, there never was an apse: it seems likely the icons hung, not only above the altar and behind it, but over and around the arch that led to the "porticus Sancti Petri": in effect, to a separate chapel. If so, Santa Maria Maggiore possibly provided a second analogue for Benedict's liturgical thought. Santa Maria Maggiore possessed, and still possesses, a revered icon of the Mother of God. Although the icon has been much "restored," repainted, and revarnished over the centuries, it is possible that the original may date from the sixth century.⁵⁷ Until the end of the thirteenth century, an icon (which may not have been the present one) hung over the "Porta Reginae" (the 'Queen's Door'), which led from the aisle to the fifth-century baptistery which adjoined the south or left wall of the basilica.⁵⁸ The surviving sources that describe the icon as placed over the

55. For the hypothesis that the apse mosaic portrayed Christ in Glory see de Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor*, 1:355–56; Saxer, *Sainte-Marie-Majeure*, pp. 50–51 (both studies have bibliographies of earlier discussions); for the hypothesis that the apse portrayed the glorified Virgin Mary, see Andaloro and Romano, "L'immagine nell'abside," pp. 100–102 (with bibliography). Andaloro and Romano provide a good plate of the present apse showing clearly its relation to the chancel arch (p. 99, fig. 76).

56. For a good synthesis of the iconography of the fifth-century mosaics in Santa Maria Maggiore see Gandolfo, "La Basilica Sistina," and color plate pp. 110–11.

57. On the dating of the original icon, and its relation to the icon at present venerated in the basilica, see Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, pp. 26–28; followed by Saxer, *Sainte-Marie-Majeure*, pp. 201–2.

58. The "Porta Reginae" was opposite the space between the seventh and eighth pillars from the entrance-door: see Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, pp. 103–5, who is followed by de Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor*, 1:408, and 2: fig. 18, at C: "battistero e palazzo." In the Middle Ages there was more than one icon in Santa Maria Maggiore: for discussion of the icons see Saxer, *Sainte-Marie-Majeure*, pp. 94–95; Brenk, "Kultgeschichte versus Stilgeschichte," pp. 988–93. Howe, "Antoninazzo Romano," argued that the icon over the "Porta Reginae" was a different one from that at present preserved in the basilica. Howe is followed by Andaloro, "L'Icona della Vergine," p. 124.

threshold (limen) of the baptistery date from the thirteenth century.⁵⁹ But to place a Marian icon over the entrance to a baptistery implies early theology, given classic expression by Pope St. Leo I. In a sermon preached at St. Peter's on Christmas Day 452, Leo closely associated the womb of the Virgin, in which humanity and divinity were united forever in the person of Christ, with the baptismal font, in which Christians became members of the body of Christ, and so were henceforth forever united to God: "He placed in the font of Baptism that very origin which he had assumed in the Virgin's womb. He gave to the water what he had given to his Mother. For, the same power of the Most High and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) that caused Mary to bear the Saviour makes the water regenerate the believer."⁶⁰

To place an icon of the Virgin over the archway that led to the baptistery was to provide a striking visual equivalent of this idea.⁶¹ To approach the archway and cross the threshold of the baptistery, as the clergy and neophytes did for baptisms at Sancta Maria ad Praesepe during the Easter Vigil, was symbolically to proceed from the Virgin to the font: the spatial progression implied that the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, which caused Mary to bear the Savior, now brings the neophytes to new birth from the font. If, as seems likely, an icon had already been hung over the threshold of the baptistery before the seventh century, we can be sure that educated English priest-monks like Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop would have seen the theological significance of where it was placed.⁶²

59. Bartholomeus Tridentinus, *Liber epilogramum* (1244): "imago Virginis est in dextra parte ad fontes, quae dicitur 'Regina Coeli'" (the image of the Virgin is on the right side at the baptistery, which is called "Queen of Heaven") as printed in Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, p. 329 no. 18; Durandus, *Rationale divinarum officiorum* (written 1291–95), vol. 6, 89 (*De septem diebus post Pascha*): see Guillelmi Duranti, ed. Davril and Thibodeau, CCCM 140A, p. 463, lines 58–60: "Premissa ymago in ecclesia Beate Marie maioris in Vrbe super limen baptisterii servatur, quam Romani Reginam uocant." (The aforesaid image in the church of Blessed Mary Major in Rome is kept over the threshold of the baptistery, which the Romans call the Queen.)

60. Leo the Great, Sermon 25, Section 5 in *Sermons*, trans. Freeland and Conway, p. 103, from *Sancti Leonis Magni*, ed. Chavasse, CCSL 138, p. 123: "Originem quam sumpsit in utero Virginis, posuit in fonte baptismalis, dedit aquae quod dedit matri: uirtus enim Altissimi et obumbratio Spiritus sancti, quae fecit ut Maria pareret Saluatorem, eadem facit ut regeneret unda credentem." This theme recurs throughout Leo's Christmas sermons: see the references in Ó Carragáin, "Between Annunciation and Visitation," p. 170, n. 90.

61. Slightly to the left, as one faces the high altar: see de Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor*, 2: fig. 18, at 11 ("Altare dell'icona della Vergine"). The baptistery was torn down in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries to provide accommodation for the canons of the basilica: *ibid.*, 1:408, 413.

62. The cult of the icon of Sancta Maria was closely connected with Easter and with the Old Roman antiphon *Regina Coeli lactare*, alleluia, sung during Easter Week: Durandus, *Rationale divinarum officiorum*, vol. 6, 89, 3: CCCM 140A, pp. 462–63; Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, pp. 107–14.

From autumn 679, in the words of Pope Martin at the Lateran Council (according to the acta which Benedict Biscop had just placed in the library), St. Peter's became an image of the "spiritual Bethlehem, which is the Catholic and Apostolic Church, in which he, the bread of life, is safely placed: this means that, in that Church, we should know, understand and express the true faith." The central tenets of that faith were expressed, not only by painted images, but by architectural space. At Wearmouth, Benedict Biscop placed his new icon of the Incarnation over the entrance to the eastern funerary chapel in which he presumably planned that he, the founder-abbot, should be buried. Christians believed that "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"; and that, "for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ" (I Corinthians 15:22-23). Thus the Eucharist, celebrated at the eastern altar towards which the congregation faced, was a pledge of the resurrection of the body, "for as the lightening comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there will the eagles gather" (Matthew 24:27-28).⁶³ By placing the icon in a close visual relationship to the archway leading to the eastern funerary *porticus*, Benedict may have been thinking in similar terms to Leo the Great, that "the same power of the Most High and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit that caused Mary to bear the Saviour makes the water regenerate the believer." All educated Christians knew that "we have been buried with [Christ] by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The placing of the Marian icon at or near the transition between the altar and eastern *porticus* provided a visual and spatial equivalent for the synthesis of Christian experience that the Vatican collect for the new feast of the Annunciation had also recently encapsulated: "that, as we have known Christ, thy sonnes incarnation, by the message of an Angell; so by hys crosse and passion, we maye be brought into the glory of his resurreccion; Through the same Christ our Lorde."⁶⁴ The eastern funerary *porticus*, beyond the altar, used

63. On the eucharistic significance of Matthew 24:28, "ubi fuerit corpus illuc congregabuntur aquilae," see Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 145-46.

64. The first prayer book of Edward VI, Collect for March 25, quoted above. I do not of course wish to argue that Benedict Biscop was thinking of this prayer when planning the layout of St. Peter's; rather that St. Peter's and the Vatican *Gratum tuam* prayer each

space to symbolize the hope that participation in Christ's risen and glorified body, central to the Eucharist, was a pledge which would be redeemed in the Resurrection of the body and life everlasting.⁶⁵

Rome provides a third visual analogue for Benedict's decisive act. It seems likely that, by the 640s, the apse mosaic of the Greek basilica of Santa Maria Antiqua in the Roman Forum, represented the Mother of God.⁶⁶ Beat Brenk has argued that the apse and its decoration may have formed part of Pope Theodore's campaign against Monotheletism (642-49). Probably in the brief period in which, in alliance with Pope Martin, the exarch Olympius ruled an independent anti-monothelete Rome (October 649 to summer 653), the pope had the sixth- and early seventh-century frescoes on the wall on either side of the apse, behind the altar, painted over with a new series of portraits of Fathers of the Church. Traces of some of these portraits remain: to the left of the apse as one faces the altar and the absidal wall, Pope Saint Leo the Great and the Eastern saint Gregory Nazianzen; to the right, the Eastern saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom. These figures were about life-size, and as the four saints were placed above a painted imitation-marble dado about one meter high, they overlooked the *presbyterium*: they were clearly intended to be impossible to miss.⁶⁷ Each of the four Fathers of the Church, flanking the apse and overlooking the *presbyterium*, held a scroll on which a Greek text supporting Dyothelitism was inscribed: these were chosen from among the proof-texts

independently provides a classic late seventh-century synthesis of the idea that the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ together formed a unified sacrament or mystery: a pattern of religious experience in which Christians hoped to share. On seventh-century understanding of the concepts of *sacramentum* and *mysterium* see Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 120-26.

65. On the rationale for Benedict's decision to be buried east of the altar, see also Ó Carragáin, "Term *Porticus*," pp. 31-33.

66. The apse was given a new fresco, representing Christ in Majesty, under Pope Paul I (757-67), and practically no trace remains of the original absidal fresco: but the greatest student of the Santa Maria Antiqua paintings, Per Jonas Nordhagen, accepted that "the decoration of 650 probably included the apse as well" ("Earliest Decorations in Santa Maria Antiqua," p. 61); and later fully accepted "the suggestion presented by earlier authors that it had as its centre a figure of the Virgin, although Gruncisen's reconstruction of this figure as a 'Maria Regina' is not substantiated by any visible remains" ("S. Maria Antiqua," p. 93). For a clear recent summary of the phases of decoration in the apse area of Santa Maria Antiqua, see Osborne, "Images of the Mother of God," pp. 138-40.

67. Nordhagen, "S. Maria Antiqua," pp. 97-100: height of the figures to the right of the apse, including frames, ca. 190 cm. Distance from the floor to the height of the eyes of the two saints: 283 cm. (ibid., p. 97); Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 229 and pls. 13(a)-(b).

for Christ's human will read out at the Lateran Council of 649. This allows us to date the new program precisely to 649–53, and to be confident that it was intended to proclaim the opposition of the Roman Church to Monothelism.⁶⁸ Soon after Pope Martin had been deposed and the monothelite crisis was still at its height, Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid, two intelligent and zealous young English monk-clerics, first visited Rome (Benedict was already ordained; Wilfrid would be ordained on his return to England). They are not likely to have missed the prominent frescoes, in the altar area of one of the most important churches in or near the Roman Forum, by which Pope Martin had recently publicized his rejection of Monothelism. Though neither would have been able to read the Greek inscriptions for themselves, their bilingual Roman clerical friends could have informed them what the portraits, and inscriptions, implied: that in the political crisis then raging the emperor Constans was attacking ancient Christian traditions to which Rome held true.⁶⁹

At Wearmouth, Benedict flanked his icon of the Mother of God with icons, not of the Fathers of the Church, but of the apostles. The theological statement implied by these apostle-icons was, however, consistent with, and possibly inspired by, Pope Martin's Fathers of the Church: as we have seen, the creeds, considered to encapsulate the faith of the apostles, stated that Christ had been born of the Virgin Mary. Credal formulae were of particular interest at Hatfield, the first synod to add to the Creed the "Filioque" clause, which stated that the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Son as well as from God the Father.⁷⁰ It is possible that Pope Martin's program of frescoes in the *presbyterium* or altar area of Santa Maria Antiqua had a wider influence on Benedict's choice of icons for the Wearmouth program.

68. Transcriptions and discussion of sources in Gordon Rushforth, "Church of S. Maria Antiqua," pp. 68–72. All these texts are in Greek, even that taken from the Latin Tome of Leo the Great who is also labeled in Greek "the Pope of Rome."

69. The frescoes at Santa Maria Antiqua have survived because the basilica was abandoned and filled in with earth when ruined by an earthquake in the ninth century; it was excavated early in the last century.

70. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 363, comments on how odd it is that the *Filioque* should first be proclaimed at a synod presided over by an Eastern theologian, Theodore of Tarsus and Canterbury. Chadwick, "Theodore," pp. 88, 93–95, explained the Hatfield statement in the context of the monothelite controversy: Maximus the Confessor, martyred hero of the struggle against Monothelism, had accepted the phrase. Chadwick also suggests that the acceptance of the *Filioque* at Hatfield may stem from tensions between Theodore and Wilfrid of York: Hatfield may have enabled Theodore to rebut accusations by Wilfrid that Theodore, as a Greek-speaking theologian, did not fully go along with the Western theological traditions which had first justified the *Filioque*.

As we have seen, the icons on the southern wall of St. Peter's, Wearmouth, provided "imagines euangelicae historiae," images of events in the gospels. Pope Martin's program of decoration on the side walls of the *presbyterium* at Santa Maria Antiqua also included scenes from the life and Passion of Christ: for example, traces survive of a "Carrying of the Cross to Calvary."⁷¹ In placing narrative scenes of the events of scripture along the nave walls of his new church, Benedict was making it more like the great basilicas of Rome: not only Santa Maria Antiqua but Sancta Maria ad Praesepe (where the greater part of the fifth-century mosaic panels still survive along the walls of the nave), St. Peter's, and St. Paul's.⁷² The iconographic campaigns of Benedict Biscop were innovative, impressive, and, as far as we can judge, influential. As we have seen, Ernst Kitzinger argued that they influenced the apotropaic iconography of the coffin provided in 698 for the body of St. Cuthbert by the allied monastery of St. Peter's, Lindisfarne; while the present writer has argued that later (perhaps 710–50) they inspired, directly or indirectly, the rich iconographic program of the Ruthwell Cross.⁷³

To conclude: Benedict Biscop's decision in 679, to visually frame the altar area of St. Peter's with icons of the Mother of God flanked by the apostles, was both a clear example of *imitatio Romae* and a relevant response to the major Christological issue which that year faced the Catholic Church in East and West. In particular, it was consistent with the canons of the Lateran Council of 649, as reiterated in September 679 by the synod of Hatfield. Bede's descriptions of the monastic churches at Wearmouth make it clear that, from autumn 679, that monastery was the chief center in England of liturgical devotion to the Mother of God: far more advanced, in this regard, than any other English establishment of which we have evidence. We can safely conclude that, at Wearmouth and later at Jarrow, Benedict's concern with *decor* went hand in hand with that concern with *cultus* that had led him to persuade Pope Agatho to allow John the Archcantor to be the papal representative at Hatfield.⁷⁴ Benedict was determined that the man

71. Nordhagen, "S. Maria Antiqua," pp. 100–103.

72. See de Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor*, 1:348–49 (on Santa Maria Maggiore); 2:461–63 (on St. Peter's). For recent discussion of this Roman phenomenon, see Tronzo, "Shape of Narrative," (on St. Paul's, pp. 466–87).

73. Kitzinger, "Coffin-Reliquary," pp. 263–65; Kitzinger, "Interlace and Icons," p. 7; Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Road*, pp. 92–93, 246–47, 297–98.

74. This sentence alludes to the title of de Blaauw's great work, *Cultus et Decor*. On Benedict persuading Pope Agatho to let him have Abbot John because of his liturgical and musical expertise, see Bede, *Historia abbatum*, ch. 6, in *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica*, ed. Plummer, 1:369.

responsible for the liturgy sung in the presence of St. Peter's body at Rome would teach the monks at Wearmouth *viva voce* during the winter of 679–80, in order to ensure that Wearmouth would celebrate the most authentic liturgy which a monastery dedicated to St. Peter could possibly have. It is reasonable to assume that Benedict Biscop and his successors, Ceolfrid and Hwaetberht, continued to keep up to date with new liturgical ways to celebrate the mystery of Christ's incarnation: for example, with the later decision of Pope Sergius I (686–701) to organize the four Marian feasts, which between the 630s and the 680s had come into the Roman liturgy at different forms and with a variety of formularies, into a unified set of feasts within the papal stationary liturgy, each marked by solemn processions from the Roman Forum to Sancta Maria ad Praesepe.⁷⁵ Before he next set off for Rome in 682, Benedict had constructed at Wearmouth a separate chapel dedicated to the Mother of God. On his final return to Wearmouth, in 686 or 687, Benedict brought icons for this Marian chapel: "He brought back paintings of the life of Our Lord for the chapel of the Holy Mother of God which he had built within the main monastery [i.e., Wearmouth], setting them, as its crowning glory, all the way round the walls."⁷⁶ Once more at Wearmouth, as in the monastic church of St. Peter, the cult of the Virgin was associated with the life of her Son. As Bede understood and reported them, Biscop's commissions consistently placed the cult of Mary in the context of the whole faith of the Church, as proclaimed by the evangelists and the apostles. No doubt his Roman experiences since the monothelete crisis of the early 650s made Benedict sensitive to the importance of keeping his community in touch with the best in recent Christological thought, as expressed in the acts of the Lateran Council which he had just acquired for the monastic library. His close friendship with a first-rate liturgist like John the Archcantor and a first-rate theologian like Theodore of Canter-

75. Sergius's processions were known to Bede, who in *De temporum ratione* gave a coherent and historically convincing account of the development of the new Marian feasts at Rome: see Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin*, pp. 36–37.

76. Bede, *Historia abbatum*, ch. 9: "Nam et tunc dominicae historiae picturas, quibus totam beatae Dei genitricis, quam in monasterio maiore fecerat, aecclesiam in gyro coronaret, adtulit." Trans. *Age of Bede*, ed. Farmer, p. 194; see *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica*, ed. Plummer, 1:373 (text) and 2:362 (notes). Rosemary Cramp points out that Bede's phrase "in gyro" "could mean that this church was centrally planned, although the passage need not necessarily have this meaning, but it does seem to indicate that St. Mary's was treated as an individual building and so was probably a free-standing structure" (*Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 1:33; thus she "would no longer suggest that the Wearmouth eastern annexe was the chapel dedicated to St. Mary." This chapel remains so far unlocated (1:71).

bury, one-time colleague of Maximus the Confessor, evidently encouraged Benedict to make Wearmouth a leading English center for the fast-developing liturgical cult of the Virgin Mary who "brought forth without corruption the very one who is literally and truly God the Word born of God the Father before all the ages." But Benedict probably developed that cult for good pastoral reasons also: to articulate in visual terms the Church's understanding of the faith of the apostles, so that even the illiterate could "recall with a more wide-awake mind the grace of the Lord's Incarnation" ("dominicae incarnationis gratiam uigilantiore mente recolerent"), and could by using their eyes and their sense of symbolic space become more aware of the everyday sacramental means by which each monastic or secular member of the Wearmouth community, who had come to know the Incarnation of Christ the son of God by the message of an angel, might, by his Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of the Resurrection.