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THE WHITBY *LIFE* OF GREGORY THE GREAT: EXEGESIS AND HAGIOGRAPHY

by

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ABSTRACT

The eight-century Whitby *Vita Gregorii* is one of the earliest examples of Anglo-Saxon hagiography, and is the earliest surviving life of Gregory the Great (590-604). The work has proved itself an anomaly in subject matter, style and approach, not least because of the writer's apparently arbitrary insertion of an account of the retrieval of the relics of the Anglo-Saxon King Edwin (d.633). There has, however, been relatively little research on the document to date, the most recent concentrating on elements in the Gregorian material in the work.

The present thesis adapts a methodology which identifies patristic exegetical themes and techniques in the *Vita*. That is not only in material originating from the pen of Gregory himself, which is freely quoted and cited by the writer, but also in the narrative episodes concerning the Pope. It also identifies related exegetical themes underlying the narrative of the Anglo-Saxon material in the document, and this suggests that the work is of much greater coherence then has previously been thought. In the course of the thesis some of the *Vita Gregorii's* major patristic themes are compared with Bede and other insular writers in the presentation of topics that have been of considerable interest to insular historians in recent years. That is themes including: the conversion and salvation of the English people; the ideal pastor; monastic influence on formation of Episcopal spiritual authority; relations between king and bishop. The thesis also includes a re-evaluation of the possible historical context and purpose of the work, and demonstrates the value of a proper understanding of the *Vita's* spiritual nature in order to achieve this. Finally the research is supported by a new structural analysis of the entire *Vita Gregorii* as an artefact formed within literary traditions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	*Ancient Christian Writers*
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
BOH	*Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford 1896 repr 1969)
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*
HE	Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, ed. C. Plummer in *BOH* 1 (1896) 5-363; ed. and tr. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1969; repr. with corrections 1991)
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 1 and 2
PG	*Patrologia graeca*
PL	*Patrologia latina*
RB	*Rule of Saint Benedict*, ed. and tr. T. Fry (Collegeville 1981)
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
TTH	*Translated Texts for Historians*
VA	*Vita Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo*, ed. and tr. B. Colgrave in *Two Lives of St Cuthbert* (Cambridge 1940) 59-139 and notes 310-40
VC	Adomnán, *Vita Columbae* ed. and tr. A.O. and M.O. Anderson (London and Edinburgh 1961; 2nd edn. Oxford 1991)
VG	*Vita Gregorii*, ed. and tr. B. Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an anonymous monk of Whitby* (Kansas 1968)
VP	Bede, *Vita Cuthberti Prosaica*, ed. and tr. B. Colgrave (Cambridge 1940) 141-307 and notes 341-59
VW	Stephanus, *Vita Wilfridi*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge 1927)

All Scriptural quotations, unless otherwise specified, are from the New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.

INTRODUCTION

The Whitby *Vita Gregorii* has periodically attracted the interest of historians since the time of its identification by Paul Ewald in 1886.[1] The first complete edition of the *Vita* was produced by Cardinal Gasquet in 1904, but received general criticism for its rushed style and inaccuracies.[2] However, Bertram Colgrave's critical edition (1968), complete with translation, made the work easily accessible and it is upon this edition that the following research is based.[3]

Ewald concluded that the *Vita* was produced at Whitby in the first decade of the eighth century and, although Jones tried to date its production to a generation earlier, most now agree that it was produced sometime between 704 and 714.[4] The only extant copy of the *Vita* now lies in the monastery of St Gall.[5] The problems of grammar and style noted by Colgrave and others may in part be explained by the fact that the text was copied on the continent about one hundred years after the *Vita's* production at Whitby, transcribed with difficulty by three separate scribes and later corrected by possibly eight others who were most likely ignorant of the circumstances of its production.[6]

What does seem clear, however, is that the work was produced within a learned milieu which had been responsible for the education of many clergy in seventh-century Northumbria. Because Whitby was a double monastery, with evidence of learning among both men and women, the writer of the *Vita Gregorii*

[1] Ewald (1886). Published in a book of essays this article comprised an introduction followed by edited extracts from the *Vita Gregorii*; articles, some containing Ewald's extracts from the *Vita*, published in response to Ewald's work, include Bishop (1886); Seeley (1888); Plummer (1896) 389-91. Recent studies and articles relating to the *Vita* include Thacker (1976) 38-79; Goffart (1988) 261-7; Thacker (1998); Rambridge (2001).
[2] Gasquet (1904). Charles Jones offers a translation of Gasquet's text as an appendix to his book *Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England* (1968) 97-124.
[3] Colgrave (1968); there is also an unpublished thesis including the Latin text with translation, notes and a good introduction: Mosford (1988).
[4] Colgrave (1968) 47-8; Colgrave (1963) 132-3; Thacker (1976) 38; Mosford (1988) xi, xii. See also Jones (1968) 65 for further discussion on these dates.
[5] Colgrave (1968) 55; Mosford (1988) lvii.
[6] Mosford (1988) lvi-lxiii.

could possibly have been female. Bede recounts how Abbess Hild in her earlier foundation at Kaelcacaestir had 'quickly set herself to establish a regular observance, following the instructions of learned men' and at Whitby had promoted the thorough study of the Scriptures and the performance of good works 'that there might be no difficulty in finding many there who were fitted for holy orders' (*HE* 4.23). In addition to the monk Tatfrith, who was appointed as bishop of the Hwicce but died before his consecration, Bede notes that Whitby produced five future bishops in a single generation, 'all of them men of singular merit and holiness': Bosa of York, Aetla of Dorchester, John of Hexham, Wilfrid II of York and Oftfor, bishop of the Hwicce who, 'having devoted himself to reading and applying the Scriptures in both Hild's monasteries', had also travelled to Kent to study under Theodore (*HE* 4.23).[7] All this was at a period when most bishops consecrated to serve the newly converted Anglo-Saxon race had been trained outside Britain.[8] Bede is unambiguous in his praise of Whitby as a centre of learning and credits the monastery with an important role in Theodore of Canterbury's diocesan reforms. The *Vita Gregorii*, however, looks back to an earlier period, combining the earliest surviving *Life* of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) with the earliest account of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, including the only extant evidence of a cult of King Edwin of Northumbria (d.633).

Hagiographers and their objectives

Latin hagiography was firmly established in Western Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries and played a large role in the promotion of many Gaulish cults during the Merovingian period. These cults and their associated texts were influenced by changes and developments in local social and political affairs.[9]

[7] Trumwine, the holy but displaced bishop of the Picts, was to live in the monastery of Whitby for many years 'to the benefit of many others beside himself' (*HE* 4.26).
[8] On the high standard of education at Whitby see Hunter Blair (1985), Fell (1981) and Cramp (1993); Thacker (1976) 48 states that Whitby's ecclesiastical contribution to Northumbria has been underestimated.
[9] Ian Wood (2002) notes that even though Merovingian Gaul had a widespread devotion to local saints, each local area was responding to its own circumstances and influences and therefore provided its own blend of cults from the myriad of local saints at its disposal. Wood (2001a) notes that at times, however, hagiographical productions occurred in clusters and cannot be viewed in isolation as circumstances ensured that they were often influenced by or responding to

The holiness of a saint was a power capable of being harnessed in a particular place and controlled by a particular bishop, monastery or political dynasty.[10] Alan Thacker has noted the influence of Gaulish cults and the saint-making process on the first Anglo-Saxon local saints' cults, but points out that whereas in Gaul it was usual for a bishop to initiate and gain control of a cult, in Anglo-Saxon England it was far more usual that these cults were controlled by monastic communities. Cults did however remain within ecclesiastical hands.[11] Within this context a proper investigation of the initiation and production of a hagiographical work needs also to consider the important implications of the literary genre adopted by the writer. Recent research on the holy man in Late Antiquity has shifted the focus from the subject of the hagiography towards discussion of the hagiographer's exploitation of the text. Such an approach helps identify a writer's use of literary discourse to support authorities favourable to particular elements within society and the Church.[12]

The majority of Anglo-Saxon cults were destined to remain local and informal unless they were adopted by a force both capable and willing to take the cult to a higher level.[13] If resources allowed, the most serious attempt to promote a cult included the production of a *vita*.[14] Because hagiographies and their associated cults were within ecclesiastical control, and because all major monastic institutions both required and enjoyed royal patronage, the loyalties of the guardians of these cults were usually both dynastic and spiritual. Resulting hagiographies were therefore likely to be multiform in their objectives. The

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one another; Walter Goffart (1985) goes so far as to base Bede's production of the entire *Historia Ecclesiastica* on this premise.

[10] Van Dam (1993) 11-83; Wood (2001b); De Jong and Theuws (2001); on the use of the hagiographical genre to address present concerns, see also Hayward (1999).

[11] Thacker (1976) and (2002b), especially 69-70; John Blair also notes that in Anglo-Saxon England monasteries, rather then bishops, appear to have been to the foreground in the promotion of their own patrons as saints: Blair (2002) 462. For the growth and development of local saints' cults and the role of their relics in Western Europe, particularly in Gaul and Anglo-Saxon England, see Thacker (2002a) 25-31, 38-43.

[12] Cameron (1999) esp. 41-2 and Rousseau (1999a). On the role of literary discourse in late antique hagiography in the playing out of authority struggles between the episcopal and the ascetic see esp. Rousseau, 53-9. On the important role of a recognised hagiographical discourse in the production of early medieval western hagiography see Hayward (1999) esp. 128-9.

[13] Blair (2002) 459. It is suggested that hundreds of local saints' cults existed in Anglo-Saxon England, but that it is only those promoted by dynastic interests that were not to be forgotten. Thacker (1995) argues the crucial role of Wilfrid and later Bede in ensuring that Oswald's cult achieved the prominence it did.

[14] On the importance of text in the promotion of a saint, see Cubitt (2002) 439-43.

hagiographical genre contains many facets, not least of which is the spiritual and theological nature of a work.[15] A work of hagiography needs, therefore, to be viewed in its various contexts: the political and social circumstances that may have helped inspire or determine the course of a *vita* cannot be entirely separated from the spiritual content of the work. This spiritual content, moreover, drew on a complex literary tradition developed and adapted by early Christian writers to help shape the world in which they lived. Christian literary forms could help interpret past events in a way which gave them both the ability and authority to shape the present and the future.

An Exegetical Discourse

Hagiography is a genre which freely alludes to or quotes Scripture and the *Vita Gregorii* contains at least one hundred scriptural references. These are strategically placed in the text and not only lend it an authority available from no other source, but are often accompanied by interpretations drawn from the tradition of patristic scriptural exegesis, either explicitly or allusively, through the narrative.

Early Christian communities based their faith upon the authority of the apostles who, as guardians of the faith received from Christ, passed it on to their successors.[16] It was important to the new Church that the sacred texts of the Old Testament be viewed in terms of their reflection of and fulfilment in Christ.[17] The expression of the apostolic rule of faith within this context is evident in the texts that were to become the New Testament.[18] Early Christian apologists stressed the essential unity of the scriptures and the emergence of the scriptural canon within this interpretive context provided a solid exegetical base for Christian theologians and scriptural scholars.

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[15] Wood (1999a) 101-2, 109 describes Bede's *HE* as a history of mission and argues its influence on later continental hagiographies produced in missionary circumstances. However, he emphasises the danger of a single interpretation of what mission is, as many local social and political variables bear upon each individual situation, and hence upon the missionary nature of a particular hagiography. For examples from continental hagiography, see Wood (2001a).
[16] Eno (1984) 30-50.
[17] On the importance of exegesis in the development of the early Christian church, see Hanson (1970).
[18] Young (1997) 9-48.

St. Paul's epistles, the earliest works of the New Testament, ask for a spiritual rather than an intellectual approach to the faith, but Paul was prepared to adapt classical rhetoric to assist him in the interpretation of salvation history in Judeo-Christian terms.[19] During the early centuries of the formation of Christian doctrine theologians formed in the Roman world both challenged and adapted aspects of pagan classical culture in their interpretation of Scripture.[20] Exegesis was to play an important role in establishing orthodoxy.[21] The scriptural discourse resulting from this process dominated European culture for centuries to follow.[22] Although the early ascetic monks were to question features of the contemporary Church, including the perceived spiritual materialism of the acquisition of learning and books, constant rumination on the sacred word, which had been expressed through a literary text, remained central to their spiritual way of life.[23] When Cassian came to share the spiritual tradition of the desert fathers with the West the role of scripture and its spiritual interpretation was crucial to the programme of holiness he laid down for his monks, providing a moral authority without equal.[24]

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[19] Example 1 Cor 1: 18-31.

[20] Cameron (1999) esp. 15-47.

[21] On the importance of scriptural exegesis in debate determining the establishment of orthodox doctrine see Young (1997) 49-118; McClure (1979) xviii-xix notes the often polemical environment in which exegesis developed.

[22] Though the adaptation of a classical rhetoric could be difficult for a Christian to accept, scriptural exegesis itself could be used to argue its use in the service of God. For an examination of Augustine's and Jerome's difficulties in accepting the use of classical rhetoric for Christian use and for an example of the use of exegesis in addressing this, see Rousseau (1999b).

[23] Burton-Christie (1993) 107-34 points out the importance of Scripture to the early Egyptian fathers and that the very call to a life of ascetic humility was a direct response to a scriptural text; a reluctance to use books did not mean a reluctance to use the Bible. On the importance of memory and rumination of the word in the example of Antony, see Burton-Christie (1993) 60. For a detailed discussion of memory techniques and their role in the moral character of a medieval monk, see Carruthers (1990). Though dealing with a later period, some of the concepts discussed in this work may be equally relevant to earlier times. Carruthers describes how memory skills were used to demonstrate the spiritual character of a saint, as in Antony's ability to memorise scripture, 12. On the internalisation and rumination of the written word, see 156-88. The use of memory to demonstrate moral character is also employed in the Anonymous *Vita Cuthberti* 1.1 and *Vita Wilfridi* 3.

[24] On the importance of scriptural meditation to Cassian's portrayal of the desert monks see Burton-Christie (1993); Stewart (1993); Stewart (1998) 47-55 describes the importance of unceasing contemplation of the word in Cassian's portrayal of the monk's spiritual journey. On the role of a literary discourse in developments resulting in the movement of Lérinian monks into the bloodstream of the episcopacy, and on the influence of Cassian's writings, see Leyser (1999); also, Markus (1990) 157-211; on the importance of the communal in Cassian's concept of deep contemplation, see Rousseau (1975). Stewart (1990) describes the early desert tradition of not depending upon oneself in the quest for holiness, but the necessity of opening up the soul to another; on the use of hagiographical discourse to assert an ascetic authority in the late antique period see Rousseau (1999a) 53-9 esp. 57.

Augustine addressed the task of scriptural interpretation in his influential manual, *De Doctrina Christiana*.[25] He argues that God's gift of human knowledge needs to be actively employed in order for the reader to enter into full co-operation with the Holy Spirit in interpreting the divine signs and symbols of the allegories and tropes that support the literal text of Scripture.[26] Amongst the areas of human knowledge – including science, history, rhetoric, etymology – to be used in the task of discerning God's truth which is to be found throughout Scripture in even its most obscure passages and in unfamiliar or ambiguous signs, Augustine repeatedly insists on the importance of the study of number. The laws of numbers were not instituted by human beings but were discovered by them.[27] He warns that an unfamiliarity with numbers 'makes unintelligible many things that are said figuratively and mystically in Scripture' and that 'there are in the sacred books certain abstruse analogies which are inaccessible to readers without a knowledge of number'.[28] Augustine argues that an intelligent intellect cannot fail, for example, 'to be intrigued by the meaning of the fact that Moses and Elijah and the Lord himself fasted forty days. The knotty problem of the figurative significance of this event cannot be solved except by understanding and considering the number, which comprises four times ten and signifies the knowledge of all things woven into the temporal order.' The number ten, which signifies the knowledge of the Creator and creation, is made up of seven and three, and Augustine emphasises that the Trinity is the number of the Creator and that its three elements call to mind the precept that 'God must be loved with the whole heart, the whole soul, and the whole mind'; three is also associated with the three eras (before the law, under the law and under grace). The number 50, associated with the holy season of Pentecost fifty days after Easter, when multiplied by three 'and with the conspicuous addition of the Trinity, refers to the mystery of the fully purified Church, matching the 153 fishes that were caught in the nets . . . after the Lord's resurrection (Jn 21:6-11)'.[29] The Whitby

[25] *On Christian Doctrine*: Green (1995), *NPNF* 1st series, 2, 519-97.
[26] On the importance of signs and typology in expounding the mysteries of faith within a Christian discourse, see Young (1997) 119-217.
[27] *De doctrina Christiana* 2.137: Green (1995) 120-121.
[28] *On Christian Doctrine*, 2, 16, 25 (2.62-65): *NPNF* 1st series, 2, 543-44, Green (1995) 84-87. For the role of numerology in Christian thought see MacQueen (1985) especially 1-25, Butler (1970) 22-47 and Van Dallen (1993).
[29] *De doctrina Christiana* 2.65: Green (1995) 86-87.

writer's apparently arcane interest in numerology, and especially in the spiritual significance of the number three, stems from a long exegetical tradition.

The Fathers presented Scripture as written with rustic simplicity but interpreted it with a formidable array of God-given human knowledge and learning; in this Christianity created a paradox which left it ideally poised to take over a classical literary tradition in danger of being lost to the West. Highly educated individuals employed this discourse to produce narratives recounting the lives of simple men, by creating works heavily weighted with many layers of scriptural interpretation.[30] Hagiographies present the reader with an exemplar of Christ, and appropriately, the language of scripture is used to present these models. Allusions to and quotations from scripture within hagiographical works were enhanced by the traditional exegetical interpretation of these passages as they had developed in Christian tradition.[31] Though hagiographies cannot be described as history, neither can they be described as fiction, because of their relationship to God's truth. The *Lives* are far from bare records but are full of meaning conveyed through signs by which Christians taught one another how to interpret the present and the past and how to live the future.[32] The great influence Antony's translated *Life* was to have upon Latin hagiography was therefore not due solely to the holiness of this ascetic figure, but to the literary skill of his hagiographer, especially his ability to use a complex language drawn from scriptural tradition. The employment of an ascetic literary genre based on Scripture carried the values of ascetic authority further into society than the deeds of any local holy man.[33]

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[30] On the scriptural and inter-textual nature of early Christian hagiography see Young (1997) 217-48 especially 235-40. The importance of scriptural typology and exegetical cross-reference between narrative, homily and liturgy is pointed out. Young also shows that, like visual art, early Christian discourse provided its audience with a series of memorable images, 259.

[31] Cameron argues the importance to the Church of accepted exegetical tradition in revealing spiritual mysteries that cannot be revealed in rational language. Cameron (1999) 155-88. On the use of a complex scriptural discourse within story and narrative, and on the role of signs and symbols, see also 2-3.

[32] Cameron (1999) 146.

[33] Rousseau (1999a). The importance of the function of a literary genre is highlighted over the function of the individuals portrayed in the texts. See 53-9 where the importance of such a genre in the competition for authority between the ascetic tradition and that of the episcopacy is noted; see also Cameron (1999).

Robert Markus and others have recently emphasised that Gregory lived in different times from Augustine. Augustine wrote when a pagan and Christian literary culture still lived side by side, while for Gregory Christianity had become the sole guardian of a literary culture.[34] As a result, Augustine drew on a literary discourse that helped define doctrine and establish firmly what it was to be a Christian, while Gregory adapted the same discourse to create a moral theology that could be addressed to the already baptised who required inner conversion. Gregory could therefore be more liberal than Augustine in exegetical expression, for he did not need to consider the presence of an active pagan literary tradition.[35] Pastoral reform was Gregory's focus, and this was driven by a desire to bring about the moral conversion of the Church in his own day. Influenced by Augustine's exegesis, and supported by an ascetic moral authority found in Cassian, Gregory's scriptural expositions show great freedom in the employment of a deep exegetical tradition with a strong moral focus.[36] Gregory drew on signs and symbols to articulate his message to his reader and asks for a similar moral approach to his *Dialogues*. Within an established hagiographical genre, the *Dialogues* contain simple narrative passages laden with a moral wisdom based upon Scripture.[37]

Bede and exegetical tradition

The scriptures were central to the life of Bede (*HE* 5.24) and the nature and achievement of his work within an exegetical literary tradition have attracted a good deal of scholarly interest in recent years. Kendall claims that for Bede no distinction could be made between verbal metaphors and physical signs: he perceived physical signs as the metaphors by which God communicates with man.[38]

[34] Markus (1990) esp. 212-28.
[35] On the difference between Augustine's and Gregory's worlds, and on their consequent attitude to exegesis, see Markus (1995); also Markus (1997) 34-50.
[36] On Augustine's and Cassian's influence on Gregory's concept of moral authority, see Leyser (2000) especially 131-88.
[37] On the importance of scripture and its interpretation in understanding the *Dialogues*, see Markus (1997) 51-66, especially 64-5; also Bolton (1959); on Gregory's use of established images and tropes in his *Life of Benedict*, see Cusack (1976); on the importance of exegesis in serving narrative, and on the importance of story in didactic expression in the *Dialogues*, see Kardong (1985), especially 46, 62-3; on Gregory's use of narrative in teachings on human relationships see McCann (1998).
[38] Kendall (1978).

Words are things, therefore words, including numbers, become signs. This puts the concepts of physical signs and verbal metaphors into one category. For Bede, therefore, everything can be seen as part of God's plan.

Roger Ray, like Kendall, stresses that Bede's basic literary model was Scripture and its interpretation by the early Church fathers who were familiar with Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions.[39] This patristic tradition was concerned with discerning the continuing and underlying spiritual significance of the literal text of scripture. Ray illustrates some of the classical rhetorical techniques used in this task, with particular reference to Augustine's masterly work, *De consensu evangeliarum*, in explaining apparent discrepancies in the Gospels. Ray suggests that this exegetical method of approaching the text of the Bible influenced Bede in the writing of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and in his very structuring of events which, though appearing to have been read in a piecemeal fashion, follow the pattern of Scripture reading within the monastery. This would mean that individual stories could be read in their own right while also contributing to a broader theme. Judith McClure provides another example, demonstrating the way in which the history of Old Testament kingship influenced Bede's portrayal of early Anglo-Saxon kingship.[40] These understandings of Bede's techniques in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* also have implications for reading the *Vita Cuthberti*.

Bede was steeped in patristic exegesis, particularly the work of Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory, whom he was the first to describe as the four principal doctors of the church. Bede not only paraphrased their works but adapted and used them in his writing to shape his own people into a people of God. Jan Davidse notes what he defines as the double effect of time in Bede's exegesis, namely that although the historian is distanced in time from the events he is narrating, he may discern in those events subject matter of vital immediate concern.[41] Though writers of the past remain part of the past, what they have to say becomes part of the present. Though exegesis is the spiritual interpretation of the literal text of Scripture, Davidse brings out the importance of being able to discern a

[39] Ray (1976).
[40] McClure (1983).
[41] Davidse (1982).

continuing spiritual significance, not simply the way in which the literal text of the Old Testament was fulfilled in the people and events of the New Testament, but with a continuing relevance of that fulfilment in the life of the present reader of scripture. Events in the present therefore and indeed events to come, the afterlife itself, are all part of this spiritual interpretation. Arthur Holder illustrates the way in which Bede used patristic exegetical techniques and images in writing for the Church teachers of his day, whom he saw as the successors of the apostles.[42] As already noted for the late antique period, an appreciation of the sheer richness and range of the exegetical method transforms how one looks at Insular hagiography.

Bede was familiar with four different levels of scriptural interpretation, the literal or historical interpretation, the allegorical or figurative interpretation and the tropological or moral interpretation. The fourth is the anagogical interpretation, which represents images associated with the heavenly life. The fourfold interpretation of scripture is most clearly demonstrated in Bede's exegesis of the image of the Temple which can signify the incarnate body of Christ, the individual Christian, the Church on earth, and the eternal church in heaven. In expounding the Temple in accordance with its historical, allegorical, tropological and anagogical associations in his work *Concerning figures and tropes*, Bede noted, 'My discussion of the Church [in accordance with the allegorical interpretation] has followed the example of that most scholarly commentator, Gregory, who in his *Moralia*, while he did not apply the specific name of allegory to those deeds or words about Christ or the Church, nevertheless interpreted them figuratively.'[43] Arthur Holder, who has written extensively on Bede's treatment of the Temple image in his biblical commentaries and homilies, has emphasised that Bede himself uses the exegetical tradition in an extremely flexible fashion, and does not cite all four or even two levels of interpretation on every occasion.[44]

[42] Holder (1990); Ray (1982).

[43] Tannenhaus (1973) 121, *CCSL* 123A, 169. See O'Reilly (1995) xxviii-xxix; Ray (1982).
[44] Holder (1990) 407; for Gregory's similar adaptation of whatever level or levels suited the purpose in question, see Markus (1997) 42-50.

Other commentators have also stressed that Bede's priority is the spiritual understanding of the text he wishes to convey to the reader.[45] Though knowledge of Bede's exegesis has been shown to be important in reading his hagiography and the *Historia Ecclesiastica,* we must not expect a laborious articulation of all four levels of scripture, for he does not do this in his biblical commentaries either. One must therefore be alert to his creative use of exegetical themes and techniques in his historical or hagiographical works.

The *Vita Cuthberti* is a classic example of Bede's didactic expression in hagiographical form. Alan Thacker has demonstrated a strong Gregorian influence on Bede's presentation of his model ascetic bishop as the ideal pastoral figure, depicting in the *Life* of the saint the reforming message contained in his letter to Bishop Egbert.[46] Bede also draws on a broader exegetical tradition. Walter Berschin, for example, convincingly demonstrated that Bede's organisation of the prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* is best explained as a concealed allusion to the importance in exegesis of the number 46.[47] He cites several extended examples of exegesis on the number 46 in works of St Augustine known to Bede and several occasions when Bede used the trope in his own exegesis.[48] Central to this interpretation is John 2:19-22, where Christ himself explicitly uses the Temple in Jerusalem, whose rebuilding took 46 years, as a figure of his own resurrected incarnate body. In exegetical and homiletic writings the Church and individual Christians within it are frequently urged to become like Christ, that is, to become the new Temple, the place of God's presence. Arguably, Bede's account in 46 chapters of Cuthbert's life of prayer, vigils, fastings and mortification, shows the way in which his life is built up into a perfect Temple for God, an unblemished dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.[49] Bede's description of Cuthbert's death and his

[45] Ray (1982) 13,14; O'Reilly (1995) xxix.

[46] Thacker (1983).

[47] Berschin (1989). O'Reilly (1995) liii-liv and (2001) 30-34 on the number 46 concealed in the diagram of the tabernacle-temple in the Codex Amiatinus, which was produced at Bede's own monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow, and Bede's exposition of the number in his commentary, *In Ezram et Neemian.*

[48] Berschin (1989) 99-101.

[49] The depiction of the temple theme, reflecting Bede's text, in the illustrations of a twelfth-century manuscript of the *Vita Cuthberti* has recently been discussed: Magdalena Carrasco, 'The

final days of suffering as a meticulous purification of the earthly temple of his body, prior to his departure to the heavenly city, is part of Bede's presentation of Cuthbert's life of sanctity, his imitation of Christ. Many other examples of exegetical themes and methodology have been identified in the narrative passages of the *Vita*.[50] Nor is the use of exegesis in hagiography unique to Bede among Insular writers. Jennifer O'Reilly, for example, has shown Adomnán's skilled use of exegetical themes and images in the *Vita Columbae*[51] and Mark Laynesmith has discussed Stephen of Ripon's use of scriptural exegesis within the *Vita Wilfridi.*[52]

The Whitby *Vita Gregorii*

Though the Whitby *Vita Gregorii* is not alone, therefore, in using patristic exegesis, it is unique among contemporary Insular hagiographies both in content and design, and is patently unusual in character. It does not appear to follow standard Antonian and Martinian influences as do the other Insular hagiographies.[53] The fact that the subject is not of Insular origin is unusual in itself, but the awkward insertion of a local military hero amidst the writer's accounts of Pope Gregory's virtues and miracles is also distasteful to the modern reader accustomed to the eloquence of Bede. As already mentioned, the Whitby *Life* has also been criticised for the modesty of its Latin.

It should be remembered, however, that Patrick's letters had been criticised for their poor Latin and simple style before the more recent recognition of their complex character and structure within an ecclesiastical rather than classical idiom.[54] Moreover, Kate Rambridge has recently demonstrated the Whitby writer's knowledge of and ability to employ authoritative sources, especially Gregory's writings.[55] Though Colgrave describes the Whitby writer as

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constructions of sanctity: pictorial hagiography and monastic reform in the first illustrated *Life of St Cuthbert* (Oxford MS 165)' in *Studies in Iconography* 21 (2000) 57-58.

[50] My own M.Phil. thesis is a study on this topic: Butler (1997); see also Ward (1989).

[51] O'Reilly (1997); O'Reilly (1999).

[52] Laynesmith (2000).

[53] Colgrave (1968) 48-9. For the influence of the *Lives* of Antony and Martin on seventh-century Insular hagiography see, for example, Picard (1985) and Stancliffe (1989) 36-40. For a more detailed discussion on the structure of the *Vita Gregorii* see below, 'In Conclusion'.

[54] Conneely (1993) and Howlett (1993).

[55] Rambridge (2001).

being comfortable with simple narrative passages and as tiresome and awkward with theoretical theological exposition, it is within these more discursive passages that Rambridge sees the writer's skill in employing Gregorian material.[56] It will be further argued here that it is specifically the Pope's wisdom in interpreting Scripture that is claimed by the Whitby writer as the key to Gregory's holiness, and hence his ability miraculously to spread God's word to others in his writings.[57] For the writer to have understood the authoritative sources employed, it would be necessary to understand the exegetical discourse in which these authoritative works were produced.[58] An investigation of the Whitby writer's use of traditional exegesis may therefore play an important role in understanding the true nature of the *Vita Gregorii*.

The Whitby writer places the work squarely within a hagiographical tradition. This is illustrated by his informative statement of the hagiographical method when asking the reader not to be disturbed by the fact that the same miracles may be performed by more then one of the saints, as all are members of the one body (*VG* 30).[59] In the light of recent studies inspired by Peter Brown's work on the holy man of Late Antiquity, and the resulting shift of focus to the use of the text, it is important that a study of a work influenced by the hagiographical tradition should be conscious of the writer's use of a universal literary discourse. This is not merely the taking up of universal images and tropes, but the adaptation of these images within a scriptural discourse with the ability and authority to mould and shape the mind of a particular audience in a specific time and place.[60] The use of this universal discourse to help establish an ascetic and pastoral authority with reference to their local area was surely an attractive challenge to the Whitby community in the production of their *Vita.*

[56] Colgrave (1968) 56.
[57] *VG* 24-26 in particular point to Gregory's gift of wisdom as it is expressed in his exposition of scripture.
[58] Mosford argues that the writer of the *Vita* appears to assume a reader well versed in the scriptures: Mosford (1988) lix.
[59] Thacker (1976) 34; Rambridge (2001) 6, also highlights the writer's sense of shared participation in the hagiographical tradition.
[60] See Cameron (1999) esp. 39-43, Rousseau (1999a) esp. 49-54, Hayward (1999) esp. 124-30, and Howard-Johnston (1999) esp. 7-9. On the importance of universal Christian symbolism to the identity of the many and varied early medieval kingdoms of Europe see Brown (2003) 355-79.

Rambridge demonstrates the Whitby writer's use of Gregorian material throughout the non-Anglo-Saxon sections of the work but, because her study is based on the writer's use of Gregorian material only, by definition it ignores quite a large portion of the *Vita*. Apart from Alan Thacker's suggestion that the *Vita Gregorii* provided the promoters of Edwin's cult with a respectable forum in which to place a dedication to a Deiran military hero for whom little hagiographical material existed, the Anglo-Saxon material has continued to remain isolated from the remainder of the work in modern studies.[61]

Aims of the thesis

While noting possible evidence of Germanic folk influence on the Edwin material in the *Vita*, Thacker plays down such influences, suggesting that many of the stories were most probably formed and developed within an ecclesiastical milieu.[62] Furthermore, he convincingly argues the likelihood of a written source for the Gregorian scenes in Rome, even if these scenes from Gregory's life reached the Whitby writer via oral means.[63] He suggests that the source was most likely one close to the Pope and one that, for political reasons in Rome, never became a complete hagiographical text. It is also argued that the Roman material may have arrived in Britain via Canterbury at a time when Theodore promoted a cult to Gregory as apostle of the English in an effort to support a unified English church under a single metropolitan.

This thesis will show how the *Vita Gregorii* presents scenes from Gregory's life within an exegetical discourse and employs scriptural imagery to convey a particular message to the reader. Though these Roman scenes and possibly the exegesis within them are likely to have originated from a Roman literary source, and may indeed have been further developed at Canterbury, it will be argued here that the exegetical images and themes are clearly understood by the Whitby writer. The point is that this Roman material was chosen, and

[61] Thacker (1976) 54.
[62] Thacker (1976) 56.
[63] Thacker (1998) 63-71; also Thacker (1976) 60-76. Thacker also notes the importance of memory in preserving literary material in a world where books may have been difficult to come

perhaps also manipulated, to suit the Whitby writer's own objectives. Furthermore it will be suggested that this same literary discourse is continued by the writer throughout the entire *Vita Gregorii*, and that the writer knew exactly how to employ and integrate the Roman scenes into an account of his own people's spiritual history. Whether the material is discursive or narrative, or whether it focuses on local or Roman issues, the discourse will be shown to be the same.

It will be seen that the Whitby writer was familiar not just with the extracts from Gregory's biblical commentaries and the *Dialogues* cited or quoted, but with the techniques of the exegetical method employed by Gregory, and was therefore able to adapt this same discourse to suit circumstances in Northumbria.[64] The purpose of the thesis is not primarily to demonstrate the Whitby writer's knowledge of, or access to, any other specific patristic texts. It is rather to explore the writer's ability to understand and employ themes and techniques descended from and developed through the exegetical tradition represented by the work of Origen, Augustine, Jerome, Cassian, Cassiodorus and Gregory. The extensiveness of Bede's library is noted by Laistner, but also the fact that Bede rarely acknowledges his sources.[65] Mosford argues that neither should the number of works available to the Whitby writer be underestimated. She points to the writer's firm grasp of the Bible and knowledge of ideas expressed by the fathers. However, a work of the size and scope of the *Vita Gregorii* is unlikely to reveal the total amount of material available in the Whitby library.[66]

It cannot be ignored that as one of the earliest examples of Anglo-Saxon hagiographic literature, the Whitby *Vita Gregorii* has raised more questions for the historian then it has answered. It is the only evidence of a cult of Edwin at

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by, 74; on the complex spiritual and moral approach to memory and memorizing skills in a medieval literary culture see Carruthers (1990).

[64] Thacker has noted the closeness between the Gregorian material in the *Vita Gregorii* and the thought-world of the *Dialogues*. Thacker (1998) 70-1; also Thacker (1976) 66-70; Colgrave claims that if one could claim the Whitby writer to have modelled the work on any previous hagiography, the nearest would be Gregory's *Dialogues*, see Colgrave (1968) 49.

[65] Laistner (1935).

[66] Mosford (1988) xlvii.

Whitby, and it needs to be asked to what extent the cult flourished in its time and, if so, why did it suffer such a sudden and final collapse? What was the relationship of the cult to the *Vita Gregorii* itself, and why was the retrieval of Edwin's body inserted apparently so awkwardly into its centre? Whitby appears to have been a great Deiran mausoleum, yet kings from the Bernician dynasty were also buried at Whitby. Even the royal abbesses Eanflaed and Aelfflaed, who were daughter and granddaughter to the Deiran king Edwin, were also, respectively, the wife and the daughter of Oswiu, a Bernician Bretwalda. Another mystery is that the *Vita Gregorii*, though produced in Whitby in the early eighth century, notably omits all reference to Edwin's great niece, Hild (d.680), under whose abbacy Aefflaed had been a novice (*HE* 3.24). The writer remains silent on Whitby's illustrious history under Hild, including its royal patronage by Oswiu and reputation as a centre of learning and of very significant pastoral activity. Then there is, of course, the question of whether Bede had access to the Whitby *Vita* when writing the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and how one accounts for the differences between the two works in their treatment of shared material.

No study of the *Vita Gregorii* would be complete without at least attempting to address these questions but they will be considered later, in Part Three. Though the main objective of the thesis is to study the *Vita Gregorii* as a whole and to examine its use of exegetical themes and techniques in detail, the identification of the writer's use of scripture within the patristic tradition of its spiritual interpretation and within the context of local political and social circumstances, not only provides a broader view of the text but may shed further light on political and social evidence already available to the historian. As noted earlier, the relationship of such factors has become an important issue in recent research on hagiographical texts from Late Antiquity. Averil Cameron, for example, has asked, 'In what way should we now approach the issue of the holy man? As religious history, as social anthropology, or as a literary project? Are they incompatible? But if not, can they be separated, and should they be?'[67]

[67] Cameron (1999) 43.

Outline of thesis structure

The thesis is in three parts, each of two chapters. Part One will begin by discussing the importance of the contemplative spirit in the active life of the good pastor, both in patristic tradition and as portrayed in the Whitby writer's depiction of Gregory (Chapter I). The importance of the monastic life in pastoral strategy, presented in the introduction to the Anglo-Saxon section of the *Vita Gregorii*, will be discussed in the context of patristic teaching (Chapter 2).

Part Two will begin by discussing the Whitby writer's depiction of Gregory's miracles in Rome and will ask whether any unified exegetical theme concerning the authority of the preacher in the conversion of a pagan people may be discerned (Chapter 3). The portrayal of Bishop Paulinus will be examined in the light of patristic tradition on the authority of the preacher in the conversion of a Gentile people (Chapter 4).

Part Three concentrates on the writer's portrayal of King Edwin. It first considers the political and social context in which a cult to Edwin was promoted at Whitby and the likely context in which the *Vita Gregorii* was produced and may briefly have had political relevance (Chapter V). Secondly, the exegetical images the Whitby writer applied to King Edwin will be examined and it will be suggested that they reinforce social and political arguments made in Chapter V and closely complement the Whitby writer's depiction of Gregory and Paulinus (Chapter VI).

The thesis argues that the work's combination of diverse Roman and Anglo-Saxon materials forms a more coherent literary project than might at first appear. It demonstrates that the author was not only familiar with particular patristic works, but also understood the techniques of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture and knew how to adapt exegetical themes to a different medium and to post-biblical subject-matter. This argument is taken a stage further in the section 'In conclusion' which offers a new analysis of the actual structure of the work according to the exegetical themes identified here.

PART ONE

CHAPTER I – THE ACTIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

CHAPTER II – A MONASTIC PASTORATE

CHAPTER I

THE ACTIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

Gregory's character as contemplative and teacher is evidenced throughout his writings and their influence on Bede is well known. Gregorian pastoral and ascetic ideals feature in Bede's historical, hagiographical and expository works.[1] For Gregory and Bede, the humble and ascetic nature of the devout pastor helped to provide a figure of spiritual authority competent to impart proper instruction to those in his care. The present chapter will first review the importance of ascetic authority for Gregory's pastoral ideals, which has received considerable discussion in recent years from Robert Markus, Conrad Leyser and others. After illustrating the exegetical expression of this tradition in both Gregory's and Bede's biblical commentaries and works of hagiography, this chapter examines the relevance of the tradition to the *Vita Gregorii*.

Like Aldhelm (d.709/710) and Bede, the Whitby writer praises Gregory both for his role in the conversion and baptism of the English and for his role as teacher. Colgrave's edition of the *Vita Gregorii* documents citations of Gregory's own works in its depiction of him as both contemplative and pastor and some aspects of the Whitby writer's use of this expository material have recently been discussed by Kate Rambridge.[2] The objective of the present chapter is, having briefly set the historical background to the exegetical tradition on the active and contemplative life and demonstrated the use of the tradition in the work of Gregory and Bede, to examine the use of traditional exegesis within the *narrative* as well as the expository material of the *Vita Gregorii*. In particular, it will examine the use of scriptural exegesis on the theme within the episode describing Gregory's failed attempt to escape the pontificate (*VG* 7).

[1] Meyvaert (1964); Thacker (1983); DeGregorio (1999).
[2] Rambridge (2001).

Ascetic authority in Gregorian thought

Asceticism had a significant role in Augustine's life but, as an anti-Pelagian, he was a particularly strong defender of the importance of God's grace in the beginning and continuing of good works. Nor could he accept the ascetic monastic life as having a monopoly on the way of perfection, but saw it rather as an image or pre-figuration of the heavenly New Jerusalem in which perfection would be brought to completion. The monastery represented a life of communal charity and humility in which the New Jerusalem was reflected in part here on earth. Augustine frowned on ascetic elitism and did not accept ascetic achievement as the source of authority in the Church. The coenobitic monastic life was viewed in terms of its role as a positive spiritual force in the overall Christian community, but Augustine saw ultimate pastoral authority as based on the apostolic role of the episcopacy.[3]

Unlike Augustine, but similar to Jerome, John Cassian viewed Christianity as having declined from apostolic perfection to a state of corruption due to wealth and respectability. Fearing that the Church had drifted from its calling, Cassian used the lives of the desert monks as a mirror in which the western Church could see its image painfully reflected.[4] Cassian's primary focus was not on a theme of communal concordance, but one in which a strict programme of ascetic practice led to a moral authority. Similar to Augustine however, Cassian did address a more urban audience, for his monk did not need to travel to the physical desert in order to achieve this ascetic practice, but rather into the desert of the heart. This was a slow and arduous programme for the individual, but it conferred an ascetic authority that could not be challenged.[5] For both Augustine and Cassian humble obedience were critical to the monastic life, but for two separate reasons. Augustine viewed this humility as part of an aspiration to communal accord, whereas Cassian viewed total humility as a personal expression and hence the individual's first step on the ladder of

[3] For discussion of these ideas, see Leyser (2000) 3-32; Straw (1988) 138-39.
[4] Markus (1990) 166-7.
[5] On Cassian and ascetic authority see Leyser (2000) 33-64.

contemplative wisdom.[6] Although Cassian's ascetic approach to monasticism appears to be contrary to Augustine's more inclusive attitude, the development of Cassian's thoughts on the communal life have been studied more closely by historians in recent years. Though it is true that Cassian promotes the ascetic virtues, his attitude towards the coenobitic life becomes more positive as the *Conferences* continue. Cassian concludes them by leaving the communal life as the only legitimate option, barring exceptional or rare cases.[7] Ascetic authority remains central, but the emphasis upon literacy implies a redefinition of the ascetic life, a life now more suited to the urban environment of his sophisticated western readers, and one in which the extreme physical encounters of the desert give way in Cassian's texts to a programme of prayerful reading and memorisation of scripture.[8]

The spiritual understanding of the inspired word of scripture was a concept important to Cassian and he was particularly responsible for spreading this patristic tradition to western monasticism.[9] Commentators had always stressed the importance not only of understanding the divine word, but also of obeying it: the study of scripture not only requires human learning but also the moral and spiritual conversion of the reader.[10] The spiritual interpretation of scripture therefore becomes the monk's primary objective in the quest for holiness and the fulfilment of such understanding is reflected in the life of the monk.[11] For Cassian, the understanding of scripture returns upon itself in a life of action: an active Christian life of purity is required when approaching scripture, but understanding of the divine Word results in even further action by the soul involved. The aim appears to be that of teaching the monk that he might teach others and, although Cassian's exact intentions for the movement of monks to

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[6] Markus (1990) 164.
[7] Markus (1990) 183; Rousseau (1975) 113-126.
[8] Leyser (1995) 46; on the role of scripture in the development of spiritual authority as portrayed in the writings of Cassian, see also Leyser (2000) 51-63. Leyser's ideas on a spiritual rather than a literal reading of scripture, and on steeping the mind in a scriptural-based wisdom and being willing and able to interact with every daily event, are akin to concepts of memory discussed by Carruthers (1990).
[9] On the importance of the scriptures to Cassianic monasticism, see Stewart (1993) 457- 61; Stewart (1998) 85-113.
[10] O'Reilly (1999) 163-4; on Cassian's influence on the *Rule of Benedict* and the monastic importance of humility and love, see Kardong (1992) 233 - 52.
[11] Burton Christie (1993) 339-45.

bishoprics remain debatable, he clearly argued that spiritual wisdom developed here on earth should not remain barren.[12] Cassian thought the active and the contemplative life brought a life of meditation within range of the ordinary cleric, for contemplation was equivalent to spiritual knowledge and this was none other than the understanding of scripture.[13] However, it was important to Cassian that the Word was approached in complete humility, for to take on the task with the hope of gaining praise from others was futile and would not result in progress in learning the spiritual alphabet.[14] Cassian appears to have expected that some of his monks when properly trained could end up as bishops and he seemed to envisage a leakage from the monastery into the world outside.[15] In fact his fourteenth Conference appears to have been written with the duties of bishops in mind. The charisma of the holy man had come to focus upon the holy community and towards the end of the *Conferences*, as Abbot Abraham finishes and speaks to his monks, Cassian uses Christ's image of likening his disciples as *lux mundi* which, like a city set on a hill, cannot be hidden (Mtt 5:14):[16]

> But you, if you are inflamed with true and perfect love of our Lord, and follow God, who indeed is love, with entire fervour of spirit, are sure to be resorted to by men, to whatever inaccessible spot you may flee, and, in proportion as the ardour of divine love brings you nearer to God, so will a larger concourse of saintly brethren flock to you. For, as the Lord says, 'A city set on a hill cannot be hid' (Mtt 5:14), because 'they that love me,' says the Lord, 'I will honour, and they that despise me shall be condemned'.[17]

Such images were popular within the Lérins circle and, as bishops were drawn from the monastic life, teaching came to be seen as central to the link between the monastery and the outside world, with monastic contemplation being the process of acquiring what was to be imparted to others. Lérins was to be the foremost source of the great teachers in southern Gaul and the biographers

[12] Markus (1990) 188; see also Leyser (2000) 54-8.
[13] Markus (1990) 189.
[14] O'Reilly (1999) 176.
[15] Markus (1990) 191-92.
[16] Markus (1990) 192-4. The related image of a lamp not hidden but set upon the lamp-stand so that it can give light to all in the house, from the following verse, Mtt 5: 15, is used in the *Vita Gregorii* 7, discussed below.
[17] *Conferences of John Cassian* 3, 24, 19: *NPNF* 2nd series, 11, 539-40, *SC* 64, 190-191.

of such bishops always show the monastery as the preparation for the pastoral life.[18]

Augustine's and Gregory's exegesis can appear so similar at times that it has been said that when you scratch Gregory the blood you get is Augustinian.[19] In particular, Augustine's concept of the monastic city and the placing of monasticism within the context of the entire Church was of great benefit to Gregory as a monk raised to the papal office, especially when he faced political tensions from clerical factions in Rome. Gregory, though a great advocate of the ascetic life, was a man of action and diligently and effectively carried out both spiritual and secular duties amidst the opposition of a faction of secular clergy. Gregory strongly believed that the spiritual welfare of his flock depended on the pastoral care of a suitably trained pastorate; monastic influence was a large part of this plan and needed to be seen as having an active role in the Church.[20] The pastoral figure, however, needed authority and it was the writings of Cassian that were to provide the pope with the key to the true moral authority he sought to promote. This aided Gregory in the development of a discourse of authority witnessed in his teaching and powerfully exercised throughout his pontificate.[21]

Though Gregory could not be seen to support ascetic elitism, Cassian did provide for him a strong moral authority of expertise, while Augustine provided an image of inclusiveness for his monastic pastorate. Cassian had developed a socially acceptable version of asceticism and this could be carried out in a communal setting, thus providing a coenobitic model where ascetic training could take place and provide teachers for the general community.[22] From the

[18] Leyser (1999) highlights the rhetoric adapted by those who left the island to become Gaulish bishops, and how vital Cassian's writings were to securing an active and contemplative mentality.
[19] On the similarities between Augustine's and Gregory's exegesis, see Markus (1995).
[20] On the role of the *Dialogues* as a reflection of Gregory's exegetical teaching and as being addressed to a potential pastorate, see Kardong (1985) and Bolton (1959).
[21] On Gregory's discourse of authority see Leyser (2000) 160-88.
[22] On the importance of Cassian's influence on Gregory's pastoral vision, see Leyser (1995) 44-50. Leyser (2000) 132-87 discusses Gregory's assimilation of Augustine's and Cassian's ideas and shows how Cassian helped Gregory develop a discourse of moral authority in his writings and how Gregory's eschatological ideas in a world he deemed was coming to an end led him to abandon authority based upon charism or institution for a single moral and ascetic authority. Leyser goes so far as to argue that Gregory lost interest in the technicalities of the monastic tradition, extracting from it the ascetic spirit to be adapted by all those in any position of teaching

time of Cassian many ascetics came to believe that they could now act in the common good by taking positions in society, and at a time when the Church held the skills of public administration and was the guardian of literacy in the west, society was only too pleased to benefit from such skills. This was the world in which Gregory found himself placed and, with the aid of Cassian, Gregory promoted an ascetic pastorate that would carry a genuine contemplative influence into the bloodstream of the church. Gregory recognised the spiritual progress of the contemplative not as a linear journey upwards, but as a journey which involved a return to a life of active charity as an inherent part of spiritual progress. Gregory did not see the espousal of Leah merely as a means of gaining Rachel, but viewed both the active and contemplative lives as necessary to create a healthy balance in the soul.[23]

This could be provided only by a pastorate whose members had not merely learned invaluable skills by means of the book, but had raised themselves to the contemplative life by means of a spiritual approach to the scriptures, as provided in Cassian's scriptural programme for the contemplative life. A humble approach to scripture resulted in the valuable skills of spiritual interpretation and, more importantly, the wisdom to share this spiritual treasure with all levels of society.[24] Learning alone is fruitless and the ascetic experience of the teacher who takes on the religious life in a spirit of humble charity is what provides the key for Gregory. Gregory in his approach goes further than Cassian and, rather than be impatient with the spiritually weak, he promotes a pastorate with the

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or authority in the church. This results, not in a church of clergy, monastics and lay people, but rather a church in which there is one community made up of teachers and listeners.

[23] Straw (1988). This book is an excellent exposition on the balance that exists in Gregory's thought, and on the Pope's complex use of paradox in achieving such a subtle balance. The relationship between the active and contemplative is central to this balance; see especially 90-146, and 20-22 for Gregory's exegetical use of Jacob's relationship with Leah and Rachel as an image of the active and contemplative life: *Gregory on Ezekiel* 2, 2, 10: Gray (1990) 175-76, *CCSL* 142, 231-232. This homily is a classic example of Gregory's view of the relationship between active and contemplative and the inevitable role of both virtues in God's call to a pastoral life administered in charity. On the active and contemplative life in Gregorian thought, see also Leyser (2000) 180-8 and Markus (1997) 17-33.

[24] On Gregory and scriptural wisdom see Markus (1997) 34-50; also Leyser (2000) 145-80. On the role of Christology in Gregory's exegesis, see Zimdars-Swartz (1986): Gregory's use of images demonstrating both Christ's divinity and humanity emphasise Christ's reaching down to earth in his humanity so that humanity can reach up to God in contemplation. Gregory's images and symbols are multi-dimensional and have a unity of thought which draws together the Christological, the ecclesiological and the eschatological.

wisdom and skill to administer to all of the flock, from the weakest to the strongest.[25] The ascetic experience of the preacher is built into Gregory's writings and is spelled out clearly in his *Pastoral Rule*, offering not the glory of the miracle worker as the measure of the expert preacher, but rather the virtues of humility and love.[26] The most dangerous trap and the indication of a bad preacher, is the craving for authority not for the benefit of others, but for the glory of oneself. As a pastor who constantly yearned for the contemplative life, Gregory had struggled with his decision to abandon such solace for a life of pastoral distractions. The logic for his decision lay in the virtue of humility, for it was in such a spirit that the contemplative was called to sacrifice a permanent contemplative bliss for the benefit of others.[27] Though for practical purposes Gregory was a strong advocate of hierarchal authority, he believed that such authority needed to be administered in humility, a humility made evident in charitable obedience to God.[28]

Alan Thacker has demonstrated that Gregory influenced not only Bede's biblical commentaries but his hagiographical work as well, notably his depiction of St Cuthbert.[29] Though the use of Antonian ascetic imagery and the Martinian

[25] Leyser (1995) 51; also Leyser (2000) 57-65, 163-5. Leyser claims that Cassian had difficulty in bringing together his ideas on individual asceticism with his final thoughts on the importance of the coenobitic life, but credits Gregory with resolving the problem by combining Cassian's ascetic expertise and Augustine's ideas on communal charity towards each individual's position on the spiritual journey.

[26] On the crucial role of humility in an effective pastorate, see Leyser (1995) 52-6; also Leyser (2000) 160-70. Leyser discusses the paradox of humility and authority in Gregorian thought and its centrality to the pastoral life of the church. For a clear account of the inherent use of paradox in the theology of Gregory, see Straw (1988), especially 164-65, 175-78, 191-92.

[27] Markus (1997) 17-33 points out that along with the influences of Augustine and Cassian, Gregory's own personal background brought him to his position on the role of the preacher as both contemplative and teacher. He points to humility as the key to Gregory's way of justifying a turning away from a life of total contemplation. See also Straw (1999), in which Gregory's ideas of spiritual martyrdom are described in terms of a humble giving up of the ego in order that one may turn to others in charity and build up the spiritual body of the church. Gregory's devotion to the eucharistic church is described in terms of the physical and spiritual martyrdom of the church in union with the sacrifice of Christ on the altar.

[28] On Gregory's views on the importance of humility within relationships, and on his didactic promotion of this virtue in the narratives of the *Dialogues*, see McCann (1998).

[29] Thacker (1983) 130 –53. Mary Clayton highlights the influence of continental developments in asceticism on Insular ideals of holiness, but points in particular to Gregory's influence on Bede as the only Insular writer who is willing to sacrifice the contemplative ideal for an active life of pastoral charity, see Clayton (1996) 147-56; also see Stancliffe (1989). Scott DeGregorio (1999) also acknowledges Gregory as the primary influence on Bede's understanding of the active and contemplative life, but argues that while both Bede's exegetical works and hagiography give primary attention to a life of active contemplation, Gregory can spend far more time dwelling

image of the ascetic bishop are acknowledged, Thacker argues that Bede, in his presentation of Cuthbert, uses this imagery as it had been adapted in Gregory's writings. The *Anonymous Life of Cuthbert* also adapts the Antonian and Martinian imagery, but the writer appears to concentrate mainly on miracles, while Bede's objective has more of a didactic focus, this focus concentrating upon Gregorian teachings on the active and contemplative life.[30] Cuthbert is depicted by Bede as a worthy ascetic, but equally important to Bede is his portrayal of Cuthbert as a great pastoral figure. Both prior to and after his being raised to episcopal office, Cuthbert is pictured travelling the hills of Northumbria employed in the duties of bringing the gospel to the people and this is a concrete example of what Bede calls for in his letter to Bishop Egbert of York.

Thacker notes the fact that Bede is influenced not only by Gregory's exegetical works but by similar themes as they appear in the *Dialogues*. This is a work which highlights the role of the monastic establishment in the pastoral life and Thacker cites Abbot Equitius of Valeria as an example of a monk, not in holy orders, who preached widely in the area surrounding his monastery.[31] He claimed a personal vocation as his authority for his preaching and when he was condemned as an unlicensed preacher his activities were miraculously vindicated. This story is one of the longest in the *Dialogues* and reveals Gregory's attitude towards the monk's personal role as humble preacher, providing a foretaste of what is to follow in the second book of the *Dialogues*, devoted to the *Life of Benedict*, where Gregory celebrates his ideal preacher, ascetic and monastic reformer.[32] Gregory presents Benedict as the model to be imitated and in *Dialogues* 2, 36 portrays the monastic rule produced by Benedict as an account of his practice, 'for the holy man cannot have taught otherwise than as he lived'. This was the model to have the most influence upon Bede in his portrayal of the active and contemplative life in his prose *Vita Cuthberti*. Thacker examines and compares the parallels that exist between both saints and goes on to discuss in detail Gregory's influence on Bede's aspirations for a

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upon the spiritual intricacies of the contemplative experience. For important earlier work on Gregory's influence on Bede, see Laistner (1935) 248-9 and Meyvaert (1964) 14.

[30] Thacker (1983) 137-40.

[31] Thacker (1983) 135.

[32] See Kardong (1985), in which Gregory's didactic aims to promote the ascetic preacher are discussed.

monastic pastorate.[33] Bede was very much in tune with the relationship between Gregory's exegesis and his hagiography, and appears to have made this the model for his own writing.[34]

The influence of monastic traditions of the active and contemplative lives and their dependence on a spiritual knowledge of Scripture, promoted in the west by Cassian, have also been identified in other Insular works. Jennifer O'Reilly has discussed the Cassianic tradition in which Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* presents Columba's holiness, partly through the image of the scribe and the virtues of humility and purity of heart involved in the study and copying out of scripture and obeying its divine commands.[35] Columba's experiences of exalted states of contemplation are shown to be dependant not on human knowledge or literary skill but on divine enlightenment. The spiritual skills necessary to receive spiritual wisdom are passed on by Columba to his successors. It is argued that in portraying this spiritual process through narrative episodes, Abbot Adomnán teaches the concept of the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom for his own readers. Such fear is an attitude of total humility and awe in acknowledging God's power and holiness. As one ascends in the spiritual journey, this fundamental attitude brings about continual conversion and active growth until the final state is not the initial carnal fear of punishment, but the far more spiritual fear of being found lacking in love; it is associated with a yearning to see the face of God. These concepts, merely highlighted here, are examined in a manner which reveals deep insights into the mindset of a monastic federation responsible for important missionary activity in Pictland and Northumbria.

[33] See Thacker (1992) 152. Thacker points out that Gregory's mission to England was made up of monks, and he discusses how Bede's ideal preacher was modelled on Gregorian concepts of a monastic pastorate.
[34] On Gregory's use of exegesis in the *Dialogues* see Bolton (1959); Kardong (1985); on Bede's use of exegesis in other writings, see Ray (1935); for Bede's use of exegesis within the narrative of his prose *Vita Cuthberti*, see Butler (1997); on the role of scriptural exegesis in the *Vita Wilfridi*, see Laynesmith (2000).
[35] O'Reilly (1999).

The *Vita Gregorii*

The apostolic authority of Gregory is clearly portrayed in the text of the *Vita Gregorii* itself, especially chapters 4-7.[36] Whitby's well-known role in producing bishops for the Anglo-Saxon Church indicates that the apostolic authority of the episcopacy was an important concept at Whitby but that, as in Gregory's thinking, the monastic community was the environment in which the pastoral virtues of bishops were developed. It is likely, therefore, that the ascetic or moral authority of the contemplative played a significant part in establishing the monastery's role as an effective pastoral administrator in Northumbria and as a major training ground for priests and bishops. The remainder of this chapter will examine the importance of the relationship of the active and contemplative life in the Whitby *Vita Gregorii*, particularly as revealed in the account of Gregory's reluctant acceptance of the pontificate. The narrative will be examined in the context of patristic exegetical tradition on the subject, especially in Gregory's own work, and also in the light of contemporary hagiographical and exegetical material.

Chapters 6-8 of the *Vita Gregorii* promote the contemplative virtue of humility, and this suitably arises from chapters 3-5, which emphasise the importance of humility in the pastoral performance of miracles. It is in the context of this sustained theme that chapter 7 describes Gregory's efforts to avoid the supreme position of Roman Pontiff:

> So when Gregory was elected by the people of God to the pastoral office and the apostolic dignity already mentioned, he fled from it with great humility and very anxiously sought a place to hide in. But he was watched with such care that even the entrance gates of the city were surrounded by guards on every side; so he is said to have persuaded some merchants to take him out, hidden in a cask. He then immediately sought out a hiding-place in the depths of the woods, thrusting himself into the leafiest shades of the bushes, where he lay hidden. But after he had been there for three days and nights, the watchmen at the heavenly gates forthwith declared his whereabouts. For the people of God did not elect someone else, as he had hoped, but gave themselves up to fasting and supplication day and night, praying earnestly that God would show them where he was. Then for three whole nights there appeared to them a very bright column of light, which

[36] On the development of apostolic authority in the early Church see Eno (1984).

> penetrated the forest so that its top reached up to the sky. It appeared in the form of a ladder to a certain holy man who was an anchorite, or so we have heard, with angels descending and ascending on it, as we read of the blessed Jacob at Luz, the place which, from this incident, came to be called Bethel, that is, the house of God (Gen 28:11-12). Jacob immediately said of it that 'this is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven' (Gen 28:17). So the same St. Gregory, though he 'made darkness his secret place round about him' (Ps 18: 11), nevertheless, when once he had been placed in the tabernacle of the house of God, shone forth like a lamp upon its stand to all who were in the house (Mtt 5:15). When his hiding-place was revealed, he was found and led to the sacred office. (*VG* 7) [37]

This is a distinctive variant of the hagiographical *topos* of humbly seeking to avoid high office.[38] The narrative is followed by an unidentified quotation from Jerome, reiterating the message that the greater one practices humility, the worthier one is to acquire spiritual responsibilities in God's kingdom. The Whitby writer advances the theme further by pointing out that Christ in humility refused to allow the crowds to make him king, but instead escaped into the mountains (Jn 6:15) and demonstrated the greatest of all acts of humility by accepting the gibbet of the cross (Phil 2:8). Humility is central to Gregory's concept of the active and contemplative life, and an important theme in his *Pastoral Rule*. He warns his reader that those truly destined to govern will in humility do all in their power to avoid such a position purely to escape the occasion of pride that might accompany it. The Whitby writer uses the same scriptural images from St John and St Paul as they had already been used by Gregory:[39]

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[37] Nam cum ad curam pastoralem prefatam apostolice dignitatis a populo Dei electus est, tam eam humiliter aufugit, ut ubi se potuisset abscondere satis anxie querebat. Qui cum fuisset tanta servatus cura ut iam porte urbis qua inerat passim custodibus cingebantur, dictur a negotiatoribus se obtinuisse ut in cratere occultatus educeretur. Sicque statim silve avias querendo latebras, interseruit se frondissimis fruticum opacis occultandum. Ubi cum fuisset tribus diebus et noctibus, eum etiam portarum vigiles celestium, confestim quo erat declamabant. Cum populus Dei non alterum pro eo ut dilexit elegit, sed ut ille monstraretur ab eo, ieiuniis et orationibus illis diebus ac noctibus serviens, diligentur precatus est. Nam visa est omnibus per totas tres noctes columna lucidissima silvam intrasse, porrecto cacumine usque ad celum. Que cuidam sancto viro quem anachoretam fuisse audivimus visa est scala, et descendentes per eam et ascendentes angeli sicut de beato Iacob in Luza legimus, que ex inde Bethel, hoc est domus Dei vocata est. De qua celeriter, 'on est hic' ait, 'aliud nisi domus Dei et porta celi.' Sanctus igitur de quo loquimur Gregorius, cum posuit tenebras latibulum suum, in circuitu eius, tamen etiam in tabernaculum domus Dei posita, confestim super candelabrum lucerna omnibus in ea lucebat. Cum declaratus ubi latebat inventus, ductus est ad sacerdotium.

[38] A good insular example is Bede's portrayal of Cuthbert's attempt to avoid the episcopacy (*VP* 14; *HE* 4.28).

[39] Mosford points out that because the Whitby writer had access to Gregory's writings he therefore had a special insight into the spirituality of his subject, see Mosford (1988) xiii.

> Hence the Mediator between God and man himself, he who, transcending the knowledge and understanding even of supernal spirits, reigns in heaven from eternity, on earth fled from receiving a kingdom. For it is written, 'When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into the mountain himself alone' (Jn 6:15). For who could so blamelessly have had principality over men as he who would in fact have reigned over those whom he had himself created? But, because he had come in the flesh to this end, that he might not only redeem us by his passion but also teach us by his conversation, offering himself as an example to his followers, he would not be made a king; but he went of his own accord to the gibbet of the cross. He fled from the offered glory of pre-eminence, but desired the pain of an ignominious death; so that his members might learn to fly from the favours of the world, to be afraid of no terrors, to love adversity for the truth's sake, and to shrink in fear from prosperity.[40]

Apart from the dramatic impact of the narrative itself, the Whitby writer continues to support the account by repeated scriptural allusions, presenting Gregory's attempt to avoid the papacy as a distinct imitation of Christ's humility.[41] However, the scriptural imagery employed within the narrative itself needs also to be viewed within an interpretive context.[42] The remainder of this chapter will highlight three such scriptural images to demonstrate the exegetical mode in which the writer is working, and hence establish the finer points of the message to the reader.

1. Jacob's ladder (Gen 28: 11-12)

> He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Gen 28: 11-12)

Exegetes from the time of Origen had consistently viewed this story of Jacob's ladder as a symbol of the contemplative life, accepting this nocturnal experience of Jacob as an image of the ascent to the heavenly realms by the spiritually advanced who still live in the flesh. Gregory treats this story of Jacob

[40] *Pastoral Rule* 1, 3: *NPNF* 2nd series, 12, 3, *PL* 77, 16.
[41] Rambridge (2001), 13 notes how the writer uses the narrative to complement the discursive material on the virtue of humility.
[42] On the fundamental importance of the saint as one who imitates Christ and who subsequently acts as exemplar to others, see Brown (1983) 1-25.

in some detail in his *Moralia in Iob*.[43] The image of sleep is viewed in the light of Gen 3:5-7 and the opening of Adam and Eve's eyes on tasting the forbidden fruit is interpreted as the loss of innocence, and therefore the opening of the eyes to the sins of the flesh.[44] When Jacob sleeps with his head upon a stone, the stone representing Christ, he sleeps to the life of the flesh and in his vision views the ladder of contemplation, thereby elevating his mind to spiritual heights. To sleep and close one's eyes to the pleasures of this world therefore causes one's mind to become awake and alert to what is spiritual.[45] He who tires from the fussing and fretting of this world does not, however, sleep upon a stone and does not taste the contemplative experience, for he sleeps upon the earth. To experience Jacob's ladder spiritually therefore represents the ascent to spiritual heights of contemplation, but Gregory is quick to point out that one can only glimpse the heavenly bliss when still in the body for it is far too bright for earthly eyes to comprehend in its entirety. Such brightness causes the soul instantly to realise the extent of her personal corruption and therefore become weighed down by the life of the flesh, causing her to fall back upon herself in trembling fear and humility. This saving experience, however, also spurs the soul on to make every effort to aspire higher on the spiritual ladder.[46]

The use of the ladder as an image portraying spiritual ascent, or indeed descent, became a conventional image associated with monasticism in the early Middle Ages. Chapter 7 of the *Rule of St Benedict*, a chapter on humility, adapts the image of Jacob's ladder in teaching its readers the virtues required to advance in the spiritual life and the ascent and descent of the angels on Jacob's ladder are interpreted as signifying ascent or descent on the spiritual journey of this present life, the ascent being acquired in humility and the descent by the practice of pride or exaltation : 'By our ascending actions we must set up that ladder on which

[43] *Moralia* 5, 54-62: Bliss, 1 (1844-50), 282-289, *CCSL* 143, 255-262.
[44] McGinn (1995) 149 highlights Gregory's use of sleep, Jacob's ladder and Moses' ascent on the mountain as images of the contemplative ascent. McGinn also points out Gregory's view that it is impossible to access a complete vision of God while in this life, for one is beaten back again as soon as one comes near to such illuminated splendour.
[45] In an examination of Gregory's use of sound and silence when expounding the contemplative life, Grover A. Zinn discusses Gregory's use of the image of sleep, both interior and exterior sleep; he argues that auditory images are as important to Gregory as visual ones: Zinn (1986) 367-72.
[46] McGinn (1995) 150-3.

Jacob in a dream saw angels descending and ascending (Gen 28:12)'. The first step of humility on this twelve-runged ladder of spiritual ascent is that a man keep the fear of the Lord always before his eyes (cf. Ps 35:2). He should recall that his actions and thoughts are everywhere in God's sight and are reported by angels at every hour and he should seek always to do God's will and not his own.[47]

The appearance of an illuminated column joining the earthly and heavenly realms and the vision of angels bearing the soul of a saint heavenwards are hagiographical *topoi* also influenced by the Genesis story of Jacob's ladder. In the *Dialogues*, Gregory explains to his monk, Peter, the extraordinary contemplative powers of St Benedict and describes how during a night of prayerful vigil his mind was lifted above the world to witness realities not normally accessible to the human mind. Gregory's use of this visionary narrative illustrates something of the same teaching on *contemplatio* to be found in his scriptural commentaries:[48]

> Long before the night office began, the man of God was standing at his window, where he watched and prayed while the rest were still asleep. In the dead of night he suddenly beheld a flood of light shining down from above more brilliant than the sun, and with it every trace of darkness cleared away. Another remarkable sight followed. According to his own description, the whole world was gathered up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light. As he gazed at all this dazzling display, he saw the soul of Germanus, the Bishop of Capua, being carried by angels up to heaven in a ball of fire.[49]

Within this experience of contemplation Benedict has a vision of the death of his friend, Bishop Germanus, and the bishop's angelic bearers are reminiscent of Jacob's vision at Bethel.[50]

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[47] Timothy Fry (ed), *The Rule of St Benedict* (Collegeville 1981) 192-95.
[48] Bernard McGinn (1995) 156-60. Gregory's use of exegesis within the narratives of the *Dialogues* was familiar to the Whitby writer.
[49] *Dialogues*, 2, 35: Zimmerman (1959) 105, *SC* 260, 236-238. For further literature on Benedict's vision, see McGinn (1995) 164-65, note 50.
[50] Conrad Leyser (2000) 83-4 suggests that Gregory portrays Benedict's vision from a tower to evoke the image of the watch tower. Leyser notes that this scene appears in the *Dialogues* just prior to where Gregory promotes the *Rule of Benedict*. In exegesis the watch tower/*specula* (Isa 21:8) and the watchman/*speculator* (Ezek 3:17, 33:7) are figures of the contemplative who rules diligently over those in his care: see Damian Bracken (2002) 186-209. For Gregory on the image of the watchman, see his *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1,11: Gray (1990) 129-41, *CCSL* 142, 169-184.

The last chapter of Adamnán's *Vita Columbae* also alludes to the story of Jacob and presents Columba sleeping on a stone pillow.[51] A witness' description of a vision beheld soon after at the time of the saint's death recalls the story of Benedict's vision in Gregory's *Dialogues*, appropriately drawing on the imagery of Genesis 28:12:

> In the middle of this last night Saint Columba, the pillar of many churches, has passed to the Lord. And in the hour of his blessed departure I saw in the Spirit the whole island of Io (where I have never come in the body) lit up with the brightness of angels; and all the spaces of the air, as far as the ethereal skies, illumined by the shining of those angels, who, sent from heaven, had come down without number, to bear aloft his holy soul. Also I heard, sounding on high, the songs, tuneful and very sweet, of the angelic hosts, at the very moment when his holy soul went forth among the ascending companies of angels. (*VC* 3: 23)

These events surrounding the saint's journey to heaven are the culmination of numerous profound spiritual experiences already enjoyed by Columba, some of which are witnessed or glimpsed by his fellow monks. On three particular occasions (*VC* 3,19-21), the saint's moments of intense contemplation are associated with such illumination that young monks who had either deliberately spied upon Columba, or accidentally come upon him, are forced to withdraw their gaze at the risk of losing their sight altogether. It has been suggested that the spiritual state of each monk is disclosed in their different individual reactions to the intense light surrounding Columba. The key message arising from each story is the importance of the fear of God as the first step towards spiritual wisdom; in the *Rule of Benedict*, this fear of the Lord is the first rung of the ladder of humility.[52] Columba experiences the light of heaven in contemplation and, although he needs to wait for some time, almost suspended as it were on the top rung of the ladder, he is finally taken by God's angels to his heavenly reward.

In the anonymous *Vita Cuthberti*, a work contemporary with the *Vita Columbae*, the image of Jacob's ladder is quite explicitly cited:

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[51] Anderson and Anderson (1991) 224, note that Adamnán's use of the phrase *titulus monumenti* in describing the later use of the stone as a monument to Columba is a reference to Jacob in Gen 28:18.
[52] O'Reilly (1999) 199-210.

> On another occasion, also in his youth, while he was still leading a secular life, and was feeding the flocks of his master on the hills near the river which is called the Leader, in the company of other shepherds, he was spending the night in vigils according to his custom offering abundant prayers with pure faith and with a faithful heart, when he saw a vision which the Lord revealed to him. For through the opened heavens, not by a parting asunder of the natural elements but by the sight of his spiritual eyes, like blessed Jacob the patriarch in Luz which was called Bethel, he had seen angels ascending and descending and in their hands was borne to heaven a holy soul, as if in a globe of fire. Then immediately awaking the shepherds, he described the wonderful vision just as he had seen it, prophesying further to them that it was the soul of a most holy bishop or of some other great person. (*VA* 1:5)

Also adapting the Gregorian imagery used in the *Life of Benedict*, this story uses the image of Jacob's ladder to describe Cuthbert's vision of the ascent of Bishop Aidan's soul to heaven and Bede uses similar imagery in his account of the same vision. A stream of light breaks in on the darkness of the night, the choir of the angelic host descend to earth, returning to their heavenly home: 'The gate of heaven was opened and the spirit of a certain saint was conducted thither with an angelic retinue'(*VP* 4). All of these stories relate to holy men who have climbed the spiritual ladder by living the contemplative life and are now rewarded by finally entering Jacob's Bethel, the name given by Jacob to the site of his vision because it means *porta caeli*, 'the gate of heaven' (Gen 28:17). Humility is however a key factor in ascending this ladder, and pride the means of descent, and the Whitby writer effectively includes the image in a narrative portraying the humility of Gregory.

A common patristic image of contemplative ascent, used by Gregory and Bede, is Moses' ascent of the mountain to receive the Law from the mouth of God.[53] Moses' provision of God's Word to the Hebrew people is interpreted as the true preacher's ability to raise his mind in contemplation and afterwards impart this spiritual knowledge to others. Similarly, the use of Jacob's ladder as an image of contemplation could include the idea of the imparting of spiritual knowledge to the people, the contemplative concerned acting as a channel for God's Word. On several occasions Augustine, when identifying the ascending

[53] McGinn (1995) 149, highlights Gregory's use of images of contemplative ascent, including Moses' ascent on the holy mountain; see Bede's use of this image in *De tabernaculo* 1.1,2, discussed below.

and descending angels with Christian teachers (cf. Jn 2:51), is careful to combine the image of the active pastoral life with that of the contemplative:

> This Jacob saw, who in the blessing was called Israel ['seeing God'], when he had the stone for a pillow, and had the vision of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, on which the angels of God were ascending and descending. The angels denote the evangelists, or preachers of Christ. They ascend when they rise above the created universe to describe the supreme majesty of the divine nature of Christ as being in the beginning God with God, by whom all things were made. They descend to tell of his being made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law. Christ is the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, or from the carnal to the spiritual: for by his assistance the carnal ascend to spirituality; and the spiritual may be said to descend to nourish the carnal with milk when they cannot speak to them as to spiritual, but as to carnal (cf.1 Cor 3:1).
> There is thus both an ascent and a descent upon the Son of man. For the Son of man is above as our head, being himself the Saviour; and he is below in his body, the Church. He is the ladder, for he says, 'I am the way'. We ascend to him to see him in heavenly places; we descend to him for the nourishment of his weak members. And the ascent and descent are by him as well as to him. Following his example, those who preach him not only rise to behold him exalted, but let themselves down to give a plain announcement of the truth.[54]

Following Augustine's interpretation, Bede too adapts Jacob's vision of the ladder, which Christ himself had interpreted figuratively when he prophesied that Nathaniel would see 'the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man' (Jn 1:51):

> The ladder which he saw is the Church, which has its birth from earth but its way of life in heaven, and by it angels ascend and descend, when evangelists announce at one time to perfect hearers the preeminent hidden mysteries of Christ's divinity, and at another time announce to those still untaught the weaknesses of his humanity. Or they ascend when they pass to heavenly things to be contemplated by the mind, and they descend when they educate their listeners as to how they ought to live on earth.[55]

The Whitby writer in *VG* 7 does not present Gregory experiencing a night vision, nor is his soul taken off to heaven by angels, but he is identified with the vision of the ladder and angels seen by a holy anchorite. Like Bishop Germanus, Columba and Aidan, Gregory is a pastoral figure. He is viewed placing himself, in effect, on the first rung of this ladder as he begins his pastoral role as pope by

[54] *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean* 12,26: *NPNF* 1st series, 4, 192, *PL* 42, 268.
[55] *Homilies on the Gospels* 1,17: Martin and Hurst (1991) 176, *CCSL* 122, 126-127.

hiding from the supreme pastoral office in fear and humility.[56] The inclusion of the image of the ladder as traditionally interpreted in exegesis strongly enhances the narrative's portrayal of contemplation and pastoral activity, but other scriptural images in the account also require attention.

2. Darkness and obscurity (Ps 18:11)

Within the narrative of Gregory's escape, Ps 18: 11 is quoted to describe Gregory's secret hiding place in the depths of the forest:

> He made darkness his covering around him,
> His canopy thick clouds dark with water. (Ps 18: 11)

Cassiodorus offers an exposition of this verse in his commentary:

> *And he made darkness his covert, his pavilion round about him: dark waters in the clouds of the air* (Ps 18:11). Darkness alludes to the mystery of his incarnation, whereby the most devoted Redeemer who could not be visible in the nature of his divinity appeared before human eyes under the covering of the flesh which he assumed. So the blessed John, bishop of Constantinople, made this wonderful and orthodox observation: 'If he had come in divinity unclothed, sky, earth, seas and no creature could have borne him; yet the unravished womb of a virgin bore him.'

Cassiodorus opens his exposition on this verse by meditating upon the symbolic significance of the weakness of human nature. However, the exposition continues by highlighting a spiritual paradox embedded within the image:

> Remember also to take darkness in the good sense, as in the following passage from Solomon's Proverbs: *He understands also a parable and dark sayings* (Pr 1:6). All the divine things of which we are unaware are dark to us, in other words, deep and obscure, even though they enjoy undying light. His *covert* is the hidden seat of his majesty, which he reveals to the just when they are allowed to gaze face to face on the glory of his divinity. *His pavilion round about him*: here is expounded the splendid dignity of the blessed, whereby those who faithfully continue in his Church dwell close to him. *Round about him* signifies proximity, for he goes round and enters all things, and is not encompassed by anything, for he cannot be confined in any place. The phrase, *in circuitu eius*, can also be understood as designating not locality but the defence and the protection of the

[56] Mosford (1988) 87 notes how appropriate the ladder image is for depicting a preacher who, in aspiring to a contemplative life, is also concerned with the practical needs of his people.

> pavilion. *Waters* denotes the Lord's utterance, which is dark in the clouds of the air, in other words, in the prophets who preach the Word; for though a person thinks that he understands their sayings, he cannot attain full comprehension of their force in his present condition. As Paul says, 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face' (1 Cor 13: 12). Once he sees the object of his belief, he is seen to gaze on the object of his hope.[57]

Though Cassiodorus first portrays darkness as the weakness of human nature, he goes on to depict it as representing the obscurity of God's Word, as the splendid brightness of this Word is hidden from the human mind. Water is also used to signify God's word, but this word is hidden within the dark clouds of obscurity. Augustine takes a similar approach by viewing the use of darkness in Ps 18:11 as the obscurities that lay hidden, as we hold our belief in faith, and he also views the covert or pavilion as the Church and the water and the clouds as the obscurities of Scripture.[58] Even more interesting, however, is Gregory's use of Ps 18:11 as he introduces one of his homilies on Ezekiel. Like Cassiodorus, Gregory relates the verse to the hidden secrets of Scripture, but goes further and uses Mtt 10: 27 to relate the contemplative revelations of Scripture to the active life of the preacher:

> *Dark waters in the clouds of the air* (Ps 18:11*)*, because knowledge is hidden in prophecies. But we learnt from the witnessing voice of Solomon: 'It is the glory of kings to conceal the word and the glory of God to search out the matter, because it is the honor of men to hide their secrets and the glory of God to open the mysteries of his speech' (Pr 25:2). But Truth says of himself to his disciples: 'What I tell you in darkness, you shall speak in the light' (Mtt. 10:27); that is, 'Explain clearly all that you hear in the darkness of allegories.' The very obscurity of divine speech is of great benefit, because it drills perception to extend itself in weariness, and so exercises it to capture what it could not seize if idle. And it has something still greater because the understanding of Holy Writ, which would become worthless if it were open to all, when found in certain obscure places refreshes with the greater sweetness, the more the search for it wearies the soul.[59]

As already seen, Moses' ascent of the mountain to receive the Law and reveal it to the people is a common exegetical image of the imparting of spiritual wisdom to God's people by those already advanced in the spiritual life. Bede

[57] Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmarum* Ps 17 (18): Walsh (1990) 181, *CCSL* 117, 156.
[58] *Enarrationes in psalmos* Ps 18: *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 50-54, *CCSL* 38, 94-102.
[59] *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1, 6, 1: Gray (1990) 54, *CCSL* 142, 67.

opens his exposition of the Tabernacle by addressing the allegorical interpretation of the details of Moses receiving of the Law. He notes the parallel between Moses' receiving of the Law on the mountain for the Hebrew people, and Christ's commissioning of his apostles to go and spread the gospel to all peoples, as he departed from them on a mountain (Mtt 28:16-20). Within this exegetical context, Bede makes a similar use of the image of darkness when expounding Moses' ascent to receive the Law, and also draws upon the cloud of darkness out of which the Lord called to Moses:

> For on account of the good works that he had received from the Lord's favour he doubtless merited to be further enlightened by him, and to be sheltered from all assaults of the evil ones, and so he attained to the higher gifts of seeing and talking with [God]. For surely the midst of the darkness, from which he is said to have been called, does not signify that there are any shadows in God, but rather that he dwells in light inaccessible. As the Apostle also says, No human being has seen him, or ever can see him. For that darkness is the obscurity of the heavenly mysteries. It is indeed inaccessible to earthly hearts, but when disclosed by divine grace it can be penetrated by Moses and the rest of the blessed who are pure in heart, to whom it is said in the psalm, 'Come to him and be illuminated.' For his light is indeed inaccessible to our human strength; nevertheless, by his munificence one can draw near to it.[60]

Bede determines that others improve their lives by remaining close to the mountain and by endeavouring to imitate those who have climbed nearer the summit. Those who do imitate Moses in holiness, however, he describes as preachers and as those, therefore, who are responsible for sharing their wisdom with others:

> The preachers of the divine law, among whom Moses himself was preeminent, are invited and led by the Lord to penetrate the heights in order to contemplate the ambiguities and secrets of divine wisdom.[61]

If we are to apply these findings to the use of Ps 18:11 in *VG* 7, Gregory's covering himself in the darkness of the forest may signify his being steeped in the depths of Scripture, in order to draw close to the summit by reaching the heights of meditative contemplation. In the context of Gregory's new pastoral office, his being surrounded by a covert or pavilion begins to

[60] *De tabernaculo* 1.2: Holder (1994) 6, *CCSL* 119A, 9.
[61] *De tabernaculo*, 1.2; Holder, 7, *CCSL* 119A, 10.

represent his being surrounded by the tabernacle of the Church, and in the light of Cassiodorus' interpretation may also represent Gregory's protection and care of the Church as pontiff. The exegetical interpretation of the covering or pavilion as representing the tabernacle of the Church warrants a second look at the actual words used by the Whitby writer:

> So the same St. Gregory, though he 'made darkness his secret place round about him,' nevertheless, when once he had been placed in the tabernacle of the house of God, shone forth like a lamp upon its stand to all who were in the house (cf. Mtt 5:15). When his hiding-place was revealed, he was found and led to the sacred office. (*VG* 7) [62]

The very fact that it is within a forest that Gregory decides to cover himself in darkness may also be significant to the writer's objectives, for Gregory opens another homily on Ezekiel relevant to the theme by drawing on precisely this image:

> How wondrous is the depth of God's words. It is permitted to turn our minds to it, to penetrate its secrets, with grace as our guide. Whenever we study it by our understanding, what is this but to enter the shade of the forest, in order that we may be hidden in its coolness from the heat of this age? There we pluck, by reading, the greenest herbs of thoughts; and, by examining them, ponder them.[63]

The Whitby writer's use of the forest image in conjunction with that of the lamp may well have been influenced by this homily of Gregory's. The Pope's homily is introduced by comparing the mysteries of scripture to a forest, but continues by expounding Ezekiel's description of the living creatures as being likened to coals and lamps (Ezek 1:13): the coals represent those who in their sanctity draw those close to them deeper into holiness, but the lamps represent the pious who shine the light of Christ to those both near and far in

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[62] Sanctus igitur de quo loquimur Gregorius, cum posuit tenebras latibulum suum, in circuitu eius, tamen etiam in tabernaculum domus Dei posita, confestim super candelabrum lucerna omnibus in ea lucebat. Cum declaratus ubi latebat inventus, ductus est ad sacerdotium.

[63] *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1, 5, 1: Gray (1990) 46-7, *CCSL* 142, 57. Markus uses this passage from Gregory's homilies on Ezekiel to highlight the freedom and ease with which Gregory adapted and used signs and symbols when interpreting scripture, and how this interpretation was a springboard to the contemplative life, see Markus (1995) 6. See also McGinn (1995) 149, for Gregory's concept of contemplation as a tomb, or sepulchre of the mind. This is relevant when we consider that Gregory spent three days in the darkness of the forest before he came and placed his light within the tabernacle of the church. The Whitby author appears to be employing numerous Gregorian images of the contemplative life in a carefully constructed narrative.

their pastoral gifts of prophecy, preaching and miracles.[64] It is to the Whitby writer's use of this lamp image within the narrative that we will now turn.

3. The lamp upon the stand (Mtt 5: 15)

Jesus Christ as the light of the world (Jn 9:5) is an image central to Christian theology, and the relationship of this light to the follower of Christ is identified by John in the opening chapter of his gospel:

> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. (Jn 1: 6-9)

Like John the Baptist, the individual Christian is not the light, but becomes a witness to the light. In his *Tractate* on the opening of John's gospel Augustine explains that one who holds the light of Christ is not the light, but has become enlightened by the light.[65] It is in being enlightened by the light of Christ that the Christian becomes a lamp and reflects the light of God's word into the lives of others. In the Sermon on the Mount, however, Christ stresses that a light needs to be placed upon a lampstand if it is to shine 'to all that are in the house' (Mtt 5:15).

Bede interpreted the lampstand which stood in the Tabernacle as a figure of the universal Church. He recalled Christ's words that a lamp is placed on a lampstand 'that it might give light to all who are in the house' and noted that Christ provided the mystical meaning of the image by immediately adding,

> "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works" (Mtt 5:16). Consequently, the lamp shining in the house of God is the good works of the righteous; by their examples, they illuminate the minds of those who observe them.[66]

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[64] *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1, 5, 6-7: Gray (1990) 48-9, *CCSL* 142, 59-60.
[65] *Tractates on John* 1, 5-7: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 8-9, *CCSL* 36, 2-4.
[66] *De tabernaculo* 1.8; 3.1: Holder (1994) 31, 106, CCSL 119A, 30, 93.

Gregory had himself quoted the text in his *Pastoral Rule* 1.5 when warning that those who have been endowed with great spiritual gifts yet decline to undertake supreme rule when invited to do so, 'deprive themselves, for the most part, of the gifts which they have received not for their own sakes only, but for the sake of others also'. Gregory here quotes Christ's words : 'A city set on a mountain cannot be hid, neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house' (Mtt 5:14, 15). Moreover, the text is directly linked to Christ's instructions to Peter : 'If you love me, feed my sheep' (Jn 21:17); if such feeding is a testimony of love, Gregory argues, then 'he who, abounding in virtues, refuses to feed the flock of God, is convicted of having no love for the supreme Shepherd'. It is particularly appropriate, therefore, that the Whitby writer uses Mtt 5:15 to describe Gregory's own elevated position on the lampstand, a position from which he has shone the light of Christ to the whole Church.[67]

This exalted position is, however, shown to be a result of the saint's imitation of Christ's descent into humility; the Whitby writer notes that those who have humbly undertaken high office when called to do so are following the example of Christ, who was both priest and sacrifice and 'who humbled himself unto death in obedience to his Father, even the death of the cross' (Phil 2:8). Augustine aptly describes Christ's humility in the taking up of the cross in these terms:[68]

> For to Paul, who was yet to say, 'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal 6:14), he was commending that same cross of his by carrying it on his own shoulders and bearing the candelabrum of that light that was yet to burn and not to be placed under a bushel (Mtt 5: 15).[69]

For Augustine the cross carried on Christ's shoulders becomes the lamp elevated upon the lampstand. Likewise, the Whitby writer opens the story of

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[67] Rambridge (2001) 14, notes the writer's use of Mtt 5: 15 as an image of Gregory's wisdom shining forth to the Church, but views this as an introduction to the writer's attributing the gift of prophecy to his saint, as outlined in chapter 8 and demonstrated in the story of the Deiran boys in chapter 9.
[68] I am grateful to Dr. O'Reilly for bringing this to my notice; see also Mosford (1988), 89.
[69] *Tractate* 117, 3: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 429, *CCSL* 36, 652-653.

Gregory's attempted escape from papal authority by enjoining the reader to learn from Christ's humility, here drawing on the text in which Christ exhorts his true followers to take on his yoke (Mtt 11:29), identified by exegetes with the humility of the cross.[70] The Whitby story concludes with the account of Gregory's light being placed on the lampstand (Mtt 5:15). The humble approach adopted by the true contemplative is what causes the follower of Christ to spread Christ's light to others by placing his lamp up on the stand. Similar to the image of Jacob's ladder, this is an image of the humility which results in states of elevated contemplation, of benefit not just to the individual but to the entire Church.

Other Insular hagiographers use Mtt 5:15 to portray a saint's reflection of the true light of Christ as it shines out to the whole Church to the spiritual benefit of all. Stephen of Ripon opens the *Vita Wilfridi* by adapting this text in a prophetic image of flames at Wilfrid's birth:

> This light the Lord has commanded to be set, not under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and through our blessed bishop it has shone openly upon almost all the churches of Britain, even as the omens foretold. (*VW* 1)

Though Stephen portrays Wilfrid in the mould of the politically powerful and urban Gaulish-style bishop, Wilfrid's beginnings are clearly contemplative. The saint is described as one knowledgeable in Scripture and eager in ascetic practice (*VW* 2, 3, 21). William Trent Foley notes the important role humility plays in the writer's creation of Wilfrid as a figure who takes on the authority of a spiritual father. A contemplative life of monastic adherence is therefore central to Stephen's portrayal of Wilfrid as a figure of pastoral authority.[71]

The image of the light set on the lampstand might also aptly describe the spiritual significance of the literal elevation of a saint's body at its liturgical Translation and the writing of the *Vita* as a means of making known the saint's

[70] The importance of Mtt 11:28-29 to the concept of a monastic pastorate, and the Whitby writer's use of Mtt 11:29 here in *VG* 7 and of Mtt 11:28 in *VG* 13, will be treated in detail in the next chapter. See chapter II, 73-80.
[71] Trent Foley (1994) 21-70.

imitatio Christi. Later in the *Vita Gregorii*, the image of Mtt 5:15 is again applied to Gregory:

> 'I shall recognize in the limbs,' says St. Jerome, 'the qualities which are attributed to the head: I shall understand from the servants what is manifested in the Lord; because the glory of the Lord should be the glory of his servants; and this I will declare of the true light that, wherever a suitable place is found for it, it is distributed to those whom Christ has granted to be a light too.' Christ was speaking of this light when he said, 'You are the light of the world' (Mtt 5:14) and he afterwards explains that it ought to shine for 'all who are in the house' (Mtt 5;15,16). (*VG* 24)[72]

This use arises in the context of the writer's laudatory comments on Gregory's spiritual wisdom, the fruits of which are claimed to be enjoyed throughout the Church in the form of Gregory's literary and expository works. Just as Gregory's lamp is a reflection of the light of Christ, so does Gregory, as a member of Christ's body the Church, imitate Christ its head. The writer's use of the verse in this context becomes in effect a fulfilment of its prophetic use in the description of Gregory's exceptional humility and subsequent rise to apostolic power in *VG* 7. Gregory's wisdom, disseminated through his writings, plays a central part in the book's description of the Pope's role as one who reflects the light of Christ throughout the world. This is a wisdom which illuminates Scripture itself, and is a result of the Pope's humble and contemplative attitude to the sacred word. The Whitby writer's portrayal of Gregory in these terms is in close accordance with the Pope's own exegesis, as Gregory distinguishes between the holy who share Christ's light in their immediate surroundings and those who spread the light afar to others, showing them the way through the darkness by means of their teaching, good works and ardent love of heavenly things:

> 'And as for the likeness of the living creatures: their appearance was like that of burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps' (Ezek 1:13). The appearance of the living creatures is compared with burning coals of fire and lamps. For whoever touches a coal is burned because he who cleaves to a holy man, from his constancy of vision, his use of speech, the

[72] 'Interpretabor,' ait sanctus Hieronimus, 'in menbris quod fertur ad caput': intellegam de servis quod impleatur in domino, quia gloria domini Gloria famulorum sit. Et ubicumque oportunitas loci se obtulerit, sic de vero lumine disputabo ut dirivetur ad eos quibus Christus donavait ut lumen sint. De quo cum dixit, 'Vos estis lux mundi', et postea omnibus lucere in domo debere ostendit. Necnon et ait, 'Luceat lux vestra coram hominibus' et reliqua.

> example of his deeds, he accepts to be kindled with love for the truth, to flee the darkness of his sins, to be inflamed with the desire for the light and already burns with true love, who before lay as dead in iniquity as he was cold.
> Truly lamps shed their light afar and when they are in the one place are shining in another. For he who is strong in the spirit of prophecy, in the word of teaching, in the grace of miracles, his repute shines far and wide like a lamp; and those who hear of his good works, because they thereby rise to love of heavenly things, insofar as they show themselves through good works, they shine as if with the light of lamps. Therefore, because holy men, as if by touching, kindle some who are nearby with love of the Heavenly Kingdom, they are coals. And because they are a light for some who are far away, they become lamps for their journey, lest they rush headlong into the darkness of their sins. This truly is the difference between coals and lamps, that coals indeed burn but do not expel the darkness from the place in which they lie, but lamps, because they shine with the great light of flames, put to flight the encompassing gloom.[73]

The possible influence of this particular homily on the Whitby writer's portrayal of Gregory's contemplative seclusion within the depths of a forest, and in conjunction with the image of the lamp from Mtt 5:15, has been suggested above. The *Vita's* second application of Mtt 5:15 now portrays Gregory as one who through his writings has shone the light of Christ as far away from Rome as Anglo-Saxon Britain.

There is one other use of lamp imagery adapted by the Whitby writer. This occurs in chapter 28 which describes Gregory's punishment of a predecessor, Pope Siricius, in order to avenge Jerome. We are merely given a synopsis, which on its own does not make great sense. Presumably the story was familiar to the audience for which it was intended, but modern readers have read it with the help of a legend surviving in a twelfth-century manuscript described by Colgrave.[74] This tells of how Jerome, poorly clad in skins, was turned away from the pope when he arrived at Rome with his 'Vulgate' translation of the Bible. The following day Jerome arrived in splendid apparel and received a seat of honour next to Siricius, but when he mocked the value system he had found in Rome, he was again driven from the city. The story describes how Gregory accordingly shattered the lamp that burned over the tomb of Siricius. Alluding to Jerome's role in revealing God's word, the *Vita Gregorii* specifically describes

[73] *Gregory on Ezekiel* 1, 5, 6: Gray (1990) 48-9, *CCSL* 142, 59.
[74] Colgrave (1968) 159-60, note 120.

him as a light upon the lampstand in Rome, not only for Rome but the whole world, 'for Rome is the chief of cities and mistress of the world'. Pope Siricius is condemned for having tried to extinguish this lamp which God had lit and Pope Gregory is commended for putting out Siricius' own light, 'because the light of divine judgment which burned in Gregory made it crystal clear it was his duty to do so' (*VG* 28). Appropriately, the *Vita Gregorii* shows that the lamp of this false pastor was extinguished by one who has already been portrayed as a true reflection of the light of Christ.

Gregory uses the image of the lamp several times throughout the *Dialogues* and in doing so provides further insights into the essential role of humility in successfully placing one's lamp upon the lamp stand. The *Life of Benedict* recounts the story of a monk who holds a lamp over the table while the saint eats a meal, and tells how Benedict suddenly orders the man to give the lamp to another, because he discerns that the monk in question was not holding the lamp in humility.[75] A humble spirit is essential if a soul is to reflect the light of Christ from a height appropriate to the spreading of its rays. In another story from the *Dialogues*, Gregory vigorously promotes the virtue of humility, and the images adapted in the narrative are worth noting:

> The renown of Constantius' holiness spread for miles around and many people were eagerly looking for an opportunity to see him. One day a farmer came a great distance for this very purpose. It happened that at the time the holy man was standing on a kind of ladder, busily trimming the lamps in the church. He was short of stature, frail and slight in appearance. The farmer kept asking for someone to show him the saint. So those who knew Constantius pointed him out. But, as dull minds measure the quality of a man by his physical appearance, the farmer could not make himself believe that this small and lowly figure was the great Constantius of whom he had heard so much. In his unlettered mind he could not reconcile what he had heard with what he now saw. He felt that a person of such renown could not possibly be so small in appearance. Therefore, when the others insisted that this man really was the saint, the farmer laughed in derision and said, 'I expected to see a man, but this fellow has nothing manly about him.'
>
> Constantius, overhearing these words, left the lamps as they were, hurried down the ladder and threw his arms most affectionately around the farmer and with a friendly kiss thanked him for having expressed his opinion so openly. 'You are the only one', he said, 'who has looked at me with open eyes'.

[75] *Dialogues* 2, 20 Zimmerman (1959) 87, *SC* 260, 196, 198.

> The degree of humility Constantius had acquired must be judged from this act, since it shows the great love he had for one who despised him.[76]

The objective of this narrative is to promote humility, but it is interesting that the story opens with Gregory's claim that, as with Gregory's interpretation of a true lamp, knowledge of the saint's holiness had spread far and wide and had begun to affect the lives of others. It is even more interesting that the lamps are in an elevated position and that Constantius is trimming them, so that they will burn more brightly.[77] The saint is standing on a ladder; it has been noted that the ascent of the spiritual ladder requires the virtue of humility and Constantius demonstrates this in his humble descent to one who does not understand. The narrative thus employs exegetical images familiar to Gregory and used freely by him elsewhere, and their use within this story both enriches the text and reinforces the exegetical theme.[78]

Chapters 24 to 26 of the *Vita Gregorii* concentrate on the wisdom of Gregory and on the imparting of this wisdom to others by means of his writings.[79] In chapter 24 the writer claims that it is plain to see that Christ speaks through Gregory in his homilies and because of Gregory's great skill and eloquence he attributes to the pope the title of 'the golden-mouthed', a title normally assigned to John Chrysostom. Earlier, c.632, the Irish writer Cummian had also used this epithet of Gregory and described turning to his exegesis for guidance: 'I turned to the words of Pope Gregory, bishop of the city of Rome, accepted by all of us and given the name 'Golden Mouth,' for although he wrote after everyone, nevertheless he is deservedly to be preferred to all'.[80]

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[76] *Dialogues* 1, 5: Zimmerman (1959) 26-7, *SC* 260, 60,62.
[77] Bede uses a patristic image in describing the process of snuffing and trimming the wicks of the lamps in the Tabernacle so that they might give a better light as a figure of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, which supplies holy Church 'with the light of saving doctrine more sublimely': *De Tabernaculo* 1.9; Holder (1994) 40, *CCSL* 119A, 37-38.
[78] On other evidence supporting Gregory's use of exegesis in the *Dialogues,* see Bolton (1959).
[79] Rambridge (2001) 13-20 notes Gregory's apostolic and saintly status is presented as inseparable from his identity as a teacher of divine wisdom and discusses this as being represented especially in the writer's sustained treatment of Gregory's writings in *VG* 24-7, 31.
[80] *De controversia paschali*, lines 190-94: Walsh and O Croinin (1988) 82,83. In note 190 the editors note the parallel of the description of Gregory, *oris aurei appellatione*, with that of the *Vita Gregorii*, adding that the Whitby writer was 'writing doubtless under Irish influence'.

After much acclamation of Gregory's gifts of wisdom and divinely inspired eloquence and their legacy in his writings, as we have seen, the Whitby writer concludes chapter 24 by turning once again to the image of the lamp in Mtt 5:15. Chapter 25 continues to promote Gregory's wisdom, but concentrates upon Gregory's insight into the nature of angels. Chapter 26, the third of this trilogy of chapters on Gregory's wisdom, discusses specifically the wisdom bestowed upon Gregory when writing his homilies on Ezekiel. The writer refers in particular to Gregory's comments on one referring to the four living creatures described by Ezekiel:

> And there came a voice from above the dome over their heads; when they stopped, they let down their wings. (Ezek 1:25).

When commenting on this short verse in his *Homiliae in Ezechielem,* Gregory develops a complex interpretation of the material, beginning by claiming that these sacred creatures stand because they stand in contemplation, the laying down of their wings being a symbol of their humility. Gregory then discusses the voice above the dome or firmament and in order to help his reader understand what such a voice is, he begins to describe the different voices to which we can listen, and in doing so adapts the image of steps in a stairs or ladder:

> We must therefore inquire what was the voice, which spoke from above the firmament. But we understand this same voice better if, going from the depths to the heights, we climb certain steps, as it were.[81]

Gregory proceeds to explain that we can listen to the voice of the flesh, the voice of the soul, the voice of the firmament, or finally the voice above the firmament. The voice of the flesh is the mind's reaction to earthly promptings and images, but the voice of the soul arises from God's gift of the intellect and provides an intellectual spirituality. This is however beneath the firmament. The voice from the firmament is when the soul transcends itself to meditate upon the angelic realms and their infinite joy as they continually praise God, where they experience both desire and sufficiency; never losing their desire for God, and

[81] *Homiliae in Ezechielem* 1, 8, 12: Gray (1990) 83, *CCSL* 142, 108.

continually being satisfied. Finally, the voice above the firmament is when the spirit transcends all created things and reaches the Creator himself:

> Let it fix its eyes of faith on the single light of its Creator, because the one God who created all things brings to life, because he is everywhere present and is everywhere whole, because he can be perceived yet not seen, uncircumscribed and incomprehensible, because he is nowhere absent and yet far from the cogitations of the wicked, because he is neither absent there whence he is far away, because where he is absent by grace he is present as a defence, because he touches all things yet does not touch them all equally. For the things which he touches that they may exist, yet not that they may live and feel, all these are senseless. Those things which he touches that they may exist, live and feel, yet not that they may discern, these are brute creatures. But those which he touches that they may exist, live, feel and discern, such is human and angelic nature. And though he is never unlike himself yet he touches different things differently. Because he is everywhere present and can barely be found, because we follow him who stands still and we do not avail to grasp him. Therefore let us place before the eyes of our minds what is that nature which holds all things, fills all things, encompasses all things, surpasses all things, sustains all things. Nor does it sustain from one part and surpass from another, nor fill from one part and encompass from another, but in encompassing it fills, and in filling encompasses, in sustaining it surpasses and in surpassing it sustains. When the spirit intent on these things ponders the power of this nature the voice comes from above the firmament, because the spirit receives an understanding thereof which in its incomprehensibility transcends even the perception of the Angels.
>
> When therefore the voice comes from above the firmament, the living creatures stand and let down their wings because, when the minds of the saints in intent contemplation consider the power of their Creator the virtues which they possess become worthless to their spirits, and the more humble they become the greater is that height in them which resounds above the Angels.[82]

This material on Ezek 1:25 points to three levels of spiritual contemplation, that of the intellect, that of the firmament and that above the firmament. The three chapters on Gregory's wisdom in the *Vita Gregorii* portray Gregory as being gifted with all three, being skillful and wise in writing his homilies, having special insights into the angelic realms and finally being as the living creatures in Ezekiel who stood and laid down their wings. It is within the context of describing this eighth homily on Ezekiel that the Whitby writer tells the story of how one of Gregory's household saw a white dove resting on him while he was engaged in writing his homilies on Ezekiel (*VG* 26). The Whitby writer notes that the heavens were thus opened to 'our Pope' in the same way in

[82] *Homiliae in Ezechielem* 1, 8, 16-17: Gray (1990) 84-5, *CCSL* 142, 109.

which the Lord revealed Christ through heavenly grace at his baptism when John the Baptist saw 'the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him' (Mtt 3:16).

Finally, following the three chapters on wisdom (*VG* 24-26), the *Vita Gregorii* has a trilogy of chapters on a theme of binding and loosing, but the writer introduces the material by continuing a meditation on Ezekiel:

> When the heavens were opened, the chariot of the Lord appeared to Ezekiel, and the cherubim, signifying the true fullness of knowledge, were seen by the son of man. By a kind of beautiful pre-figuration, Ezekiel is also often called 'the son of man'. So who will doubt that the heavens were opened to this Pope of ours? He, together with Peter, had the power of opening the locks of these heavens, especially since he was also mindful of those beings who served it as holy guardians of Jacob's ladder of which we spoke some time ago. (*VG* 27)

The writer has returned the reader's mind to Jacob's ladder and, what is more, has deliberately reminded the reader of its earlier use.[83] The wisdom material on Gregory presented in these later chapters of the *Vita Gregorii* draw the experienced reader of Scripture to images of the contemplative life expressed earlier in the work, at the threshold of Gregory's pastoral life. The writer achieves this by drawing again on the image of the ladder of contemplation, the essential virtue of humility, and the placing of the lamp upon the stand. The importance attributed by the writer to Gregory's homilies on the prophet Ezekiel helps to illuminate the use of much of this imagery for the reader familiar with Gregory's writings.

The episode portraying Gregory's attempted escape from, and subsequent acceptance of, his position as pope, is more then a narrative supporting discursive material provided by the writer. The narrative itself draws on an established exegetical tradition. This tradition enriches a message encouraging a pastoral policy with deep contemplative roots. Even when we consider the likelihood that the Whitby writer may have been using a Roman literary source when presenting the narrative material discussed in this chapter, the writer certainly understood

[83] Mosford argues that the Whitby writer expects the reader to be familiar with scriptural quotations in order to make proper sense of their use, see Mosford, ix.

the exegesis involved, and was capable of relating it carefully to material elsewhere in the *Vita Gregorii*.

CHAPTER II

A MONASTIC PASTORATE

In what was mainly a rural society, almost all ordained clergy were attached to some monastic base; they were essential to the conversion process and made efforts to perform the sacraments for local communities. There was also a great pastoral need for preachers and teachers, as well as care for the poor and the sick.[1] The monastic institution thus played a significant role in the church's pastoral life of the early Anglo-Saxon Church.[2] Bede's evidence in particular has been duly acknowledged and evaluated by historians in an extended debate on pastoral care.[3]

Bede describes the two-fold origins of the English mission in the work of Augustine and his monks at Canterbury and of Aidan and his monastic community at Lindisfarne. Bede compares the foundation of these monasteries with the life of the first disciples in the Acts of the Apostles (*HE* 1.26, 4.27; Acts 2: 44-5), which not only provides scriptural authority for a monastic pastorate,

[1] On the missionaries' view that, for the sake of saving the barbarians' souls, it was sometimes necessary to baptise first and provide instruction later, see Foot (1992a) 176; see also Sullivan (1953) 718-9, who points to a similar situation during the Carolingian missions to the Saxons; on a flexible approach to the conversion process in early Anglo-Saxon England, see Hill (1994).

[2] Foot (1992b) 224; also Hunter Blair (1990) 211 highlights the importance of monasteries like Whitby and Wearmouth-Jarrow as centres of learning and producers of reliable abbots, bishops and preachers; see also Thacker (1992) 145, where evidence of Theodore promoting a monastic pastorate is discussed.

[3] The non-distinctive nature of the terms *mynster* and *monasterium* is highlighted by Sarah Foot (1992b). Though noting a great diversity in individual institutions, she argues that no one institution could practice the pastoral life to the neglect of the contemplative and that likewise, no institution could shut itself away from the outside world and concentrate solely upon a life of prayer. She asserts that before the Benedictine reform all monastic institutions had some pastoral responsibility, and that to focus pastoral attention upon the term *mynster* alone is a mistake. See also Blair (1992) 266, where it is claimed that minsters were integrally involved with the laity, and inevitably involved in the pastoral life. Thacker (1983) discusses Bede's drive for a monastic pastorate and Gregory's influence on such thinking; for Gregory's influence on Bede's portrayal of the active and contemplative life see also DeGregorio (1999), who highlights how Bede draws primarily on contemplative material prompting a moral and active response, and not on Gregorian material which focuses on the nature of contemplation itself. Thacker (1992) 152-4 argues that it is unlikely that the majority of smaller monasteries lived up to Bede's high standards, but none the less they were responsible for the spreading and survival of Christianity on the ground. On the pastoral responsibility of double monasteries in early Anglo-Saxon England, see Godfrey (1976). For the questioning of the evidence of a minster-based church, see Cambridge and Rollason (1995); Blair (1995) addresses their arguments.

but also presents these monastic foundations as cradles of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England.[4] Thacker highlights how Bede sets both models, from their different Roman and Columban cultural backgrounds, within a Gregorian context. He also points out how Bede, when describing the monastic system at Lindisfarne, glides over the details of an Irish system which normally placed a bishop under the overall authority of the abbot.[5] Bede skilfully unites the pastoral and communal virtues of each institution and draws on the potent image of the *ecclesia primitiva* underlying both.

Though monasteries were often royal institutions, bishops also moved within royal circles and wielded both a pastoral and secular authority that could not be ignored too easily.[6] Whitby was not the seat of a bishop, and as it lay within the jurisdiction of the Deiran capital of York, its relationship with this see was bound to be an important factor in determining its status and development. Eric John notes that in a non-urbanised society, the monastery was the financial base of any diocese, and asserts that peace between Wilfrid and his enemies was achieved only on the return of Hexham and Ripon to the bishop.[7] However, being Bishop of York must have seemed attractive in itself, especially when, after the synod of Whitby, York appears to have usurped the authority of Lindisfarne; its prestige and possible control over other monastic establishments would have been well worth fighting for. York presented Wilfrid with the opportunity to acquire the power of a Gaulish-style bishop, while also providing opportunities to increase further his growing monastic *familia*.

Whitby developed its own pastoral and political strategies. It became a training ground for Northumbrian clergy of both minor and major orders. Whitby's rulers were female and could not themselves be bishops, but the royal monastery at Whitby established itself as a trainer of bishops, thereby placing

[4] On Bede's views that it was 'the continent' who established the primitive Christian community in Jerusalem along monastic lines, see Olsen (1982) 527-9.
[5] Thacker (1983) 144-6; also see Stancliffe (1989) 40.
[6] For a relatively recent review on the important role of the bishop in the early Anglo-Saxon church, see Coates (1996).
[7] John (1970) 58 notes that, although towns and cities did exist, they were not developed to a level which would support a large diocese, and it was therefore the Celtic and Gaulish style monasteries established by the early Church that provided a secure financial base for a bishop.

itself in a position of influence over much of the northern episcopacy. Abbess Aelfflaed, in co-operation with Theodore of Canterbury and her brother Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria, ensured that the monastery exercised authority far beyond its own estate and determined as far as possible that Whitby-trained bishops were installed at York. Politics at Whitby will be dealt with later in this thesis (Chapter V). The present chapter will discuss Whitby's view of itself as a promoter of both contemplative and pastoral tradition, and the background to this view.

Pastoral history

When Theodore arrived in Britain in 669 episcopal structures were not fully established in the English church and Whitby was one of the most important centres of learning in all of Britain.[8] Hild had withdrawn from the plan of joining her sister in the monastic life in Gaul after Bishop Aidan called her back to Northumbria, from the kingdom of the East Angles, and offered her a hide of land to set up her own monastery. After proving herself to be a wise and able administrator, she was later provided with the responsibility of setting up the royal monastery at Whitby (*HE* 4.23). Though Hild had been converted to the faith in company with her Deiran kinsman King Edwin through the teaching of Paulinus, she had developed her monastic skills under the authority of Aidan and remained faithful to the Columban tradition at both Hartlepool and Whitby until after the synod of 664. Whitby, founded within the Columban tradition, underwent its literary development in this context and no doubt played a crucial role as one of Lindisfarne's main representatives in Deira.[9] However, after the synod of 664, in union with Oswiu and his Bernician dynasty, Whitby turned its spiritual loyalties towards Roman orthodoxy on Easter. The close relationship it was to develop with Canterbury involved bishops being trained under both

[8] Wormald (1982) 72 noted that when Theodore arrived in 669 'there were only seven dioceses, of which only four were occupied, and only two of these by canonically unobjectionable bishops'; the ninth canon of the Council of Hertford (672) stated the need for more bishops to be created as the number of faithful increased. On the importance of Whitby as a centre of learning and a provider of pastoral care, see Hunter Blair (1990) 147-151; see also Hunter Blair (1985); Fell (1981); Lawrence (1984) 53.

[9] Higham (1997) 251-3 goes so far as to suggest that after the battle of the Winwaed in 655 and the establishment of Whitby in 657, Oswiu began to develop this new monastery in Deira as his own and as a major centre of learning, to the disadvantage of his brother's monastic base in Lindisfarne.

schools of learning and this suggests the role Theodore envisaged for Whitby as an important northern agent in his successful drive to consolidate the Christian church in Anglo-Saxon England. As a centre of pastoral activity Whitby was the motherhouse of numerous subsidiary monasteries with pastoral responsibilities[10] and even before Theodore's arrival, Hild had already developed the monastery into an important centre of learning in which much time was given to the study of scripture. Though not a bishopric itself, Whitby was well aware of the importance of the episcopal role in pastoral activity and, with the exception of Wilfrid, always maintained a good relationship with bishops outside its own school. Bishop Trumwine after being forced from his diocese at Abercorn following Ecgfrith's defeat by the Picts, chose to retire to Whitby where he lived, together with some members of his displaced community, 'to the benefit of many besides himself' and practiced his pastoral duties for several years under the authority of the monastery. Bede comments: 'that devout teacher Aelfflaed found him a very great help in the government of the monastery' (*HE* 4. 26).[11] Abbess Aelfflaed also used to meet with Cuthbert of Lindisfarne to discuss spiritual matters (*VP* 24). Two Whitby bishops were based outside the Northumbrian kingdom: Aetla was based at Dorchester for the West Saxons and Oftfor worked among the small West Midlands kingdom of the Hwicce. This demonstrates that the authorities at Whitby, in cooperation with Theodore, were extending their episcopal influence outside the northern area.[12] Because of Whitby's overall pastoral activity and the fact that it was chosen as the site of the Easter synod in 664, Alan Thacker observes that one could not be blamed for thinking that Whitby rather then York was the mother church of the Deiran see and he also points out that Wilfrid's replacement bishops are described by Stephen of Ripon as being from a different diocese, indicating that Whitby and its jurisdiction were not viewed as lying within the influence or control of the see of York.[13]

The meeting that has become known as 'the synod of Whitby' was held at Abbess Hild's monastery which, according to Bede, was called *Streanaeshalch*, a name he interpreted as meaning *sinus fari*, 'the bay of the lighthouse' (*HE*

[10] Thacker (1992) 143-4.
[11] See Thacker (1992) 147.
[12] Hunter Blair (1985) 29.
[13] Thacker (1992) 147-50.

3.25).[14] In his account of Hild's life he uses the name again when he describes how she had undertaken to found or to set in order a monastery at a place called *Streanaeshalch* (*HE* 4.23). Hunter Blair speculates on the possible symbolic significance of the reported meaning of the name, drawing attention to the prophetic dream Hild's mother had had during her pregnancy. She found a most precious necklace under her garment 'which seemed to spread such a blaze of light that it filled all Britain with its gracious splendour. This dream was truly fulfilled in her daughter Hild; for her life was an example of the works of light, blessed not only to her self but to many who desired to live uprightly' (*HE* 4.23). The chapter attests to the pastoral role of Whitby in spreading the light of Christ.[15]

It may be further noted that Hild provided an example of holy life not only to all in the monastery but, by her reputation, to many who lived far away. At her death her soul was seen in a vision of heavenly light, attended and borne to heaven by angels. The exegetical image of the lamp which gives light to all, alluding to Mtt 5:14-16 and Jn 1:7-8 and commonly used to portray the virtues of a pastor successful in spreading the light of holy scripture, has already been discussed in Chapter 1. The image of light applied to Hild is broadly similar to that earlier employed by Stephen of Ripon in the opening of the *Vita Wilfridi*. As Wilfrid's mother gave birth to the future bishop, flames of fire were seen leaping from the house and rising to the heavens, and this is associated with the fire of the Holy Spirit. The writer alludes to Mtt 5:15 and the flames are seen to represent Wilfrid's placing his light upon the lampstand to spread Christ's light to almost all the churches of Britain. It has already been seen that the Whitby writer adapted the same scriptural imagery when describing Gregory's taking up of the papal office as supreme pastor of the church (*VG* 7).[16]

Hunter Blair discusses methods by which the illiterate might have been taught at Whitby and views Bede's story of Caedmon teaching the gospel message through vernacular verse as alluding to Whitby's adaptation of

[14] For the identification of *Streanaeshalch* as Whitby see John Blair's entry on Whitby in Lapidge (1999) 472, see also Wood (1995) 22 fn.42.
[15] Hunter Blair (1985) 9-12.
[16] See Chapter 1.

traditional oral poetry (*HE* 4.24).[17] The exegetical background to the account of Caedmon, however, opens up deeper insights into Bede's portrayal of the pastoral activity of Whitby, including that within the community. Caedmon 'stored up in his memory all that he had learned' and 'turned it into such melodious verse that he turned his instructors into auditors'; in this Bede specifically likens him to one of the clean animals who chews the cud, a common image of the meditative, ruminating process of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture. The cloven foot of the clean animal was seen to hold the truth of the two testaments, and the chewing of the cud as symbolic of anyone who carries the divine precepts in his mouth. Bede provides a list of the scriptural material treated by Caedmon, which is drawn from both testaments and spans the whole of salvation history, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation, as well as additional material on Judgment, Hell and Heaven. We are also told that the purpose of Caedmon's words was to inspire a spirit of compunction and conversion in the hearts of his listeners, to turn them from wickedness to love and to do good. Hild and her community at Whitby are thus portrayed as those who hold the wisdom of God's word and teach its precepts to others. The material is a powerful testament to Bede's portrayal of Whitby as an active evangelising and pastoral foundation with a Gregorian concern for adapting its teaching to the needs of its audience. It is Hild's discernment that recognises the value of Caedmon's gift, and it is under her instruction that the development and use of this gift unfolds and he enters the community. She orders him to repeat his verses 'to many learned men' who, agreeing on the divine inspiration of the work, proceed to instruct him in scriptural history and doctrine which he then turns into verse.[18] Bede's whole account of Caedmon's gift and the transmission of the word of God from its sacred language to the vernacular bears witness to Whitby's orthodoxy and authority in the scriptures.[19] The narrative illustrates that the authorities at Whitby were both orthodox in their interpretation of Scripture and innovative in their efforts to bring conversion to the Anglo-Saxon people. These are presumably the same authorities who commissioned the *Vita*

[17] Hunter Blair (1990) 148-9; also Hunter Blair (1985) 24-5.
[18] Fell argues that Hilda's initiative in adapting vernacular verse in order to teach the precepts of scripture is in itself a greater feat then Caedmon's gift itself. See Fell (1981) which highlights the high intellectual standard that existed at Whitby.
[19] On the Caedmon material used here see Wieland (1984); see also West (1976); O'Reilly (1987/88) 72-3.

Gregorii itself, though the Whitby writer is silent on all the material on Hild and Caedmon which Bede was to recount.

Bede used the analogy of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles to describe the virtues and achievements of Hild and her monastic *familia*:

> She established the same Rule of life as in the other monastery, teaching them to observe strictly the virtues of justice, devotion, and chastity, and other virtues too, but above all things to continue in peace and charity. After the example of the primitive church, no one was rich, no one was in need, for they had all things in common and none had any private property (cf. Acts 4:34-35). So great was her prudence that not only ordinary people but also kings and princes sometimes sought and received her counsel when in difficulties. She compelled those under her direction to devote so much time to the study of the holy Scripture, and so much time to the performance of good works, that there might be no difficulty in finding many there who were fitted for holy orders, that is, for the service of the altar. We have in fact seen five from this monastery who afterwards became bishops, all of them men of singular merit and holiness; their names are Bosa, Aetla, Oftfor, John, and Wilfrid. (*HE* 4.23)

Bede is emphatic in his description of Whitby as a missionary stronghold and charity is highlighted as paramount in the litany of virtues acknowledged, a virtue essential in reaching out to the people as a provider of missionaries and bishops. The honour of the epithet *ecclesia primitiva*, here awarded to Whitby, is one Bede had up to now reserved for the two episcopal and monastic foundations of Canterbury and Lindisfarne (*HE* 1.26, 27; 4.27). Though Whitby is not an episcopal monastery, its role as a source of priests and bishops places Whitby also within a Gregorian context, as a centre of both contemplative and pastoral skills.

We are indebted to Bede for most of our evidence on the nature and status of the monastery at Whitby. The contrast with the Anglo-Saxon section of the *Vita Gregorii* is stark; the Whitby writer offers little in terms of historical detail. We receive none of the insights into day-to-day pastoral activity observed in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* or, indeed, in the *Vita Cuthberti* or the *Vita Wilfridi*. In approaching the Anglo-Saxon section of the *Vita Gregorii*, historians have largely focused on the evidence of a cult of Edwin or have discussed the parts of the material common to the *Vita Gregorii* and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

There has been no identification or discussion of evidence concerning Whitby's interpretation of its own role in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people. The present chapter will discuss some of this Anglo-Saxon material and, by identifying the writer's use of scriptural exegesis within the text, will argue that the highlighted images and themes are carefully coordinated with those established in the Gregorian material of the *Vita* already discussed in the last chapter. The remainder of this chapter will begin the investigation by asking what evidence does the *Vita Gregorii* provide concerning Whitby's vision of the Anglo-Saxon conversion and, indeed, does the writer in any way reveal the role Whitby viewed for itself as a monastery involved in this process?

The Whitby view of the past

The Whitby writer claims the pagan past for Christ and identifies the Anglo-Saxon race as a chosen people called to stand before the throne of God. The story of their conversion is preserved as part of a continuing providential history in which the figure of the pastor plays an important role, calling God's people to himself. In this view, particular figures and incidents from the historic past continue to have meaning for the present and future as the exegetical techniques of numerology and etymology reveal them to be significant signs.

Chapter 9 of the *Vita* provides the story of the Anglo-Saxon youths and Gregory's prophecy of the Anglo-Saxon conversion. The story contains a three-fold response to Gregory's questions, describing the Anglo-Saxon people as angels and prophesying their cry of *Alleluia* and their turning away from the wrath of God. The following chapter presents Pope Benedict granting Gregory permission to journey to Britain, but the people of Rome divide into three groups and by calling out three times cause the Pope to change his mind. Gregory travels three days on his journey before being forced to turn back to Rome. Chapter 11 is a short chapter and presents Gregory sending three missionaries, Augustine, Mellitus and Laurentius, to convert the Anglo-Saxon people. Though these three preachers were significant missionaries, Gregory's correspondence with the

mission reveals that the three did not actually travel at the same time.[20] These three chapters (9-11), which are a prelude to the Edwin and Anglo-Saxon material, place the number three, the symbol of the Trinity and therefore of baptism, as a cornerstone for what follows.

The next three chapters (12-14) describe the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people. Faithful to the symbolism associated with the number three, chapter 12 highlights the names of three Anglo-Saxon Kings, Aethelberht, Aelli, and Edwin. Aethelbert is mentioned as the first to be baptized, while through Aelli all the Northumbrian people and their subsequent conversion are recognized as the fulfilment of Pope Gregory's prophecy concerning the Anglo-Saxon boys. The highlight of this little chapter, however, is the introduction of Edwin, who is praised not merely for his power as a great king, but as the wisest of all Anglo-Saxon kings born to date. The baptismal image of the Trinity, combined with the fulfilment of Gregory's promise of conversion, and the gift of natural wisdom, are all used in the introduction of Edwin as a saintly king.

After this introduction to the conversion the writer moves into a complex chain of exegesis in chapter 13 of the work:

> How beautifully and, at the same time, how appropriately do all these matters fit in with one another. Thus the name of the *Angli*, with the addition of the single letter *e*, means angels, as those beings are called whose property is always to praise Almighty God in heaven and that without ceasing, because they never tire in their praises. St. John in the Apocalypse bears witness that he both saw and heard them, having the voice of a celestial army, 'as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying *Alleluia*' (Rev 19:6). And all the saints must know that this holy ministry is changeless and endless; just as they themselves have likewise been moved to cry 'alleluia,' in the contemplation of the Deity, so his praise shall never cease in the congregation of the saints (Ps 89:5). The meaning of 'alleluia' can be put into two words – God's praise. And *Aelli* is made up of two syllables: if in the first syllable we take away the *e* and in the second replace *i* by *e*, it becomes *alle*, which in our language means absolutely all. And this is just what our Lord says, 'Come

[20] The Whitby writer does not appear to be familiar with Gregory's correspondence which reveals that there were two missions, the first in 597, which included Augustine and Laurentius, and a second in 601 when Mellitus arrived accompanied by Laurentius, who had in the meantime returned to report progress. Paulinus also arrived in this second expedition (*HE* 1.29). See Colgrave's notes, 147. Though Colgrave looks for reasons for the Whitby writer's error, perhaps there is a more symbolic reason for the grouping of the three missionaries.

> unto me, *all* you that labour and are heavy laden' (Mt 11: 28), and so on. Though it is the name of a king, *alle* also signifies the Father, *lu* the Son, and *ia* the Holy Spirit. (*VG* 13)[21]

This chapter is brief but highly allusive in pointing to the fulfilment of the first and second parts of Gregory's prophecy of conversion for the English people.[22] The writer achieves this by drawing on Scripture but, in order to understand the possible significance of the allusions, it is necessary to examine the larger scriptural contexts and traditional exegesis of the chosen images.

To stand before the Lamb

Let us first look at the Whitby writer's compressed allusion to the visions of the Lamb in the Apocalypse or Book of Revelation. John's visions of the heavenly multitude 'which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and the Lamb' (Rev 7:9), and of those 'who follow the Lamb wherever he goes' (Rev 14:3-4; cf.19:5-9), draw on the image of the Lamb established in both the Old Testament and the New. John in his other role as evangelist, for example, uses the image of the Lamb in the opening chapter of his gospel in the words of John the Baptist:

> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' . . . and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. (Jn 1:29, 36-37)

The Paschal sacrifice of the lamb is a key image in Jewish salvation history and for the Christian is fulfilled in the sacrificial passion of Jesus Christ

[21] O quam pulchre quamque hec omnia decenter simul sibi convenient prefata. Ergo nomen Angulorum, si una e littera addetur, angelorum sonat; pro certo vocabulum quorum proprium est semper omnipotentem Deum in celis laudare, et non deficere, quia non lassescuntin laude. Qous beatusIohannes, in Apocalipsin testatur voce exercitus celestis videsse at audisse, tamquam vocem aquarum multarum at tamquam vocem validorum tonitruorum dicentium alleluia. Cuius sacramenti sanctitas inmutabilis esse, in perpetuum omnibus sanctis sciendum est, sicut et illi in contemplatione deitatis effecti sunt, quorum perillud indeficiens est laudatio eius in ecclesia sanctorum. Cuius expositio duorum habet interpretationem verborum, hoc est laus Dei. Et Aelli duabus compositum est sillabis quarum in priori cum e littera adsumitur et in sequenti pro I ponitur e, all vocatur,quod in nostra lingua omnes absolute indicat. Et hoc est quod ait Dominus noster, 'Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis,' et reliqua. Si regem quoque significant *alle* Patrem, *lu* Filium, *ia* Spiritum Sanctum.

[22] In fulfillment of Gregory's prophecy the writer describes the converted English people as angels and elaborates on their cry of *Alleluia*, discussed further below, in Chapter 6.

(1 Cor 5:7) who takes away the sins of the world, the Son of God humbling himself before his persecutors as a lamb before its shearers (Is 53:7). Patristic commentators showed that this is the Lamb the Christian is asked to follow and that John in the above gospel quotation portrays the first disciples following Jesus in this context. The multi-layered image received considerable patristic exegesis.[23]

Augustine expounds the details of the above verses from John's gospel, discussing the two disciples of John who now follow Jesus the Lamb of God. Jesus is followed so that the one responsible for the Law can explain this Law (the Decalogue) to the two men and it is for this reason it is at the *tenth* hour that they follow the Lord and listen to his words on the commandments. Augustine describes Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb whose blood outweighs all the sin of the world, presenting the model to be followed as one of sacrifice. Andrew calls his brother Simon and Jesus confers upon him the name of Peter, which means rock. Augustine claims that Jesus knows all the names of his saints for they are predestined from the beginning of time and after this episode with Andrew and Simon, Jesus proceeds to call the remaining disciples to follow him. But the Bishop of Hippo warns that to 'follow the Lamb' is to live a life of sacrifice and humility and resignation to the grace of God.[24]

In describing the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people the Whitby writer turns to the apocalyptic description of those called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:5-9). The writer's use of Rev 19:6 suggests the salvation of the Anglo-Saxon people as a fulfilment of John's prophecy, presenting them as among the great multitude who will praise God for all eternity. Equally important, however, is the fact that the image of the Lamb, though not directly quoted, is evoked along with all its spiritual connotations. Rev 19:6 echoes Rev

[23] Jennifer O'Reilly notes, for example, that 'Jerome succinctly and influentially observed that the Agnus Dei acclaimed by John the Baptist in the Gospel (Jn 1:29) is the Paschal Lamb of Christ's sacrifice, prefigured in the slain lamb of the Exodus Passover and foretold by Isaiah and Jeremiah in their Messianic image of the lamb sent to the slaughter'; the image 'was given Christological interpretation by the apostle Philip (Acts 8:32-35) and finally revealed in glory as the apocalyptic Lamb': Okasha and O'Reilly (1984) 40-1, citing Jerome, *In Esaiam*, 14, 53: *CCSL* 73A, 591-92.

[24] Augustine, *Tractates on John* 7, 10-14: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 51-53, *CCSL* 36, 72-75.

14:2 in its description of the multitude praising God 'as the voice of many waters and as the voice of great thunders saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."'[25] In the earlier use of the image in Revelation, however, the sound from heaven 'as the voice of many waters and as the voice of great thunder' is identified as the voice of the 144,000 virgins who have the sign of the Lamb on their foreheads and sing a new song before the Lamb on Zion and 'who follow the Lamb wherever he goes' (Rev 14:1-5).

Origen, whose writings were formative for subsequent biblical commentators, developed an exegesis linking Rev 14:1-5 and Rev 7:2-5 in his exposition of John's gospel. The context is his comment on the words of St Paul in Rom 2:29 concerning physical and spiritual circumcision and the extension of God's covenant to the Gentile peoples. Origen here describes the 144,000 virgins who stand before the Lamb in Rev 7:14 as representatives of the Gentile peoples who are heirs to God's promise by virtue of their faith. All who 'stand before the Lamb' receive the seal of salvation from God's holy angel and the 144,000 are described as 'first fruits for God', for they are virgins (Rev 14: 4). Being without blemish they sing a song impossible for any but virgins to learn (Rev 14:3); their voice is 'like the voice of many waters and the sound of mighty thunder' (Rev 14:2).[26]

The Anglo-Saxon people are for the Whitby writer a fulfilment of this vision: they are the spiritual sons and daughters of the promise. Those who are virgins are seen as the first fruits of the conversion of these peoples and the use of Rev 19:6 in *VG* 13 therefore may hold a special significance for those who live the monastic life, as the first fruits of a converted people. The words of the apostolic preacher are perhaps particularly evoked in the Whitby writer's use of the phrase 'as the voice of many waters and as the voice of many thunderings, saying *Alleluia*'. The words *water* and *thunder* are frequently used by Augustine and other fathers as symbols of the apostolic preaching of God's Word. The Whitby writer has already spoken of those who,

[25] *Et audivi quasi vocem turbae magnae, et sicut vocem aquarum multarum, et sicut vocem tonitruorum magnorum, dicentium : Alleluia: quoniam regnavit Dominus Deus noster omnipotens* (Rev 19:6-7).
[26] *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 1, 2: *ANF* 10, 297-298, *PG* 14, 23.

> through the Holy Spirit, were so conspicuous by their teaching that innumerable people throughout the world have been revived by the refreshing showers of their words and "bring forth fruit with patience," becoming imitators of him who "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God" . . . Among these we number Gregory, this apostolic saint of ours, and would that we might be numbered with him' (*VG* 5).

Water in particular is a common image of preaching, taken from scripture and developed throughout patristic literature as a symbol of the fruitful preaching of the Word. This weighty verse may signify not only the conversion of the people but the apostolic means by which this needs to take place.

The Whitby writer addresses the fulfilment of the first element of Gregory's prophecy by describing the Angles as angels, as these are the ones 'whose property is to praise almighty God in heaven and that without ceasing, because they never tire in their praises'. The writer's use of this image in co-operation with the virgin imagery from Revelation is important. Patristic sources often described the nature of virginity as similar to that of angels, who are neither male nor female. The fall of man was viewed in sexual terms and as Christ had stated that sexual difference did not exist in the world to come and that man would have a nature similar to angels (Mtt 22:30), it was believed that virgins shared in a sort of pre-Fall perfection similar to that of the angels.[27] After highlighting the duties of marriage, Augustine begins to discuss virginity in these terms:

> All these, however, are offices of human duty: but virginal chastity and freedom through pious continence from all sexual intercourse is the portion of Angels, and a practice, in corruptible flesh, of perpetual incorruption. To this let all fruitfulness of the flesh yield, all chastity of married life; the one is not in (man's) power, the other is not in eternity; free choice hath not fruitfulness of the flesh, heaven hath not chastity of married life. Assuredly

[27] Sinéad O'Sullivan highlights Aldhelm's use of this imagery, and also explains how the fallen division of man's nature into male and female was often seen as reflecting the carnal and spiritual in mankind. The spiritual virtues were often portrayed in masculine terms while carnal vices were viewed as feminine, see O'Sullivan (1998) 274-9. Scully (2000) 173-4 notes that although classical sources describe the fair hair and white skin of the men of the north in fierce and negative terms, Bede adopts the story of Gregory and the Anglo-Saxon boys to turn the image around, and describes the fair hair and white skin of the converted English in angelic terms. See Chapter 5 below for a comparison of Bede's use of this material with that of the Whitby writer.

> they will have something great beyond others in that common immortality, who have something already not of the flesh in the flesh.[28]

The description of the Angles as angels, in conjunction with the use of the virgin imagery from Revelations, enhances the writer's portrayal of those who live the monastic life as the first fruits of the Anglo-Saxon conversion. Accompanying this imagery the writer addresses the second element of Gregory's prophecy by alluding to Psalm 88 (89):

> And all the saints must know that this holy ministry is changeless and endless; just as they themselves have likewise been moved to cry 'alleluia,' in the contemplation of the Deity, so his praise shall never cease in the congregation of the saints (cf. Ps 89: 5). (*VG* 13)

This passage presents the reader with the fulfilment of the second element of Gregory's prophecy. The perpetual cry of *alleluia* unites the praise of God's people here on earth with that of the saints and angels in heaven, and this cry is the cry of those who stand before the Lamb (Rev 19:6). Augustine had developed an interesting exegesis on Psalm 89.[29] The Gentile peoples are described by Augustine as pre-chosen by God and the angels are described as watching over them until their appointed time of conversion. This is extremely relevant to Gregory's description of the English boys as angelic and the Whitby writer reminds the reader of this description before he quotes from this psalm. If, as seems likely, the writer is drawing on Augustine, the message is one which portrays those who live the monastic life as angels in the flesh, now taking up the spiritual care of the Anglo-Saxon people. It seems increasingly likely that those who sound 'as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunder,' particularly represent the apostolic preaching of the monastic missionaries, the first fruits of the conversion. The idea of God's angels watching over a chosen people also stirs up images from Revelation. Like Origen, Augustine also turns to St Paul's letter to the Romans to emphasize God's inclusion of the Gentiles in the promise and describes Christ as a minister of the circumcision (Rom 15:8). This reference from Romans is part of a scriptural song of praise composed by Paul on

[28] Augustine, *Of Holy Virginity* 12: *NPNF* 1st series, 3, 420, *PL* 40, 401-402; for a similar view by Gregory of Nyssa see *On Virginity* 12-13: *NPNF* 2nd series, 5, 357-360, *PG* 46, 370-382.
[29] *On the Psalms* 89 (88): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 429-441, *CCSL* 39, 1220-1244.

behalf of the Gentile peoples, which is exactly what the Whitby writer is doing for the Anglo-Saxons:

> For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name'; and again he says, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people'; and again, 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him' and again Isaiah says, 'The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.' (Rom 15: 8-12)

Augustine proceeds to describe the Gentile peoples as the second wall attached to the cornerstone of Jesus Christ. The Jews represent the first wall which is the truth, while this second wall represents the mercy of God, emphasizing that mankind is not saved on merit but by God's grace. This is a common expression of Pauline theology in Augustine's writings. When explaining Ps 89:5, the actual verse quoted by the Whitby writer, Augustine interprets the words as depicting the difference between before and after conversion, highlighting the powerful effects of God's Word. The following verse, however, which describes the indispensable role of the clouds in the heavens, is interpreted as referring to God's preachers and apostles, and the rain that falls from these clouds as the Word of God as it goes out to all the earth. Verses three and four of Psalm 89 concern the promise to the seed of David and is also taken up by Augustine. As Jesus is descended from Abraham and David, the Gentile people are also included in God's promise, represented in the spiritual body of which Christ is the head.

Cassiodorus's commentary on this psalm appears to adapt Augustine's thoughts on the importance of God's grace in the role of conversion and he points out that the purpose of the psalm is to recount the praises and promises of the Lord. The Lord in his mercy is seen to reach out to both Jew and Gentile and this mercy is delivered via 'the heavens', symbolising the apostles. Verse 4 depicts God's promise to David and to his descendants for ever. Jesus is described as the fulfilment of such a promise and the descendants are the just and

the faithful in whose hearts the Lord is enthroned, hearts in which the Holy Spirit lives.[30]

If the Whitby writer adapts scriptural exegesis to emphasize a special position for the virgin, but is also highlighting the process of the conversion, should there be a distinction between virgins involved in missionary work and those who are not? When writing on virginity Augustine draws on the image of the Lamb, as portrayed in Revelation and uses the image no less then nineteen times.[31] He makes the point that all of the chosen are called to follow or imitate the Lamb, but the virgin, or those who live the monastic life, are called in a special way. It is for this reason that John adds to the description of those who 'follow the Lamb' the words 'wherever he goes' (Rev 14:4). It is only the virgin who is capable of following the Lamb in every aspect; only those who are virgin in both spirit and flesh can follow the Lamb *wherever he goes*. When the time comes for the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-7) to the holy church, the virgins will sing at this feast their own song of praise, for there are different levels of joy for the elect in the kingdom of God. It is not, however, easy to follow the Lamb wherever he goes for as the Lamb suffered, those who choose a difficult road in order to receive a greater reward can expect to suffer also.

Bede's commentary *De tabernaculo* uses this text from Revelation in its exposition of the account of the golden table to describe the elect in the kingdom of God. The table itself is described as the Holy Scriptures while its details explain the various levels within the kingdom. As the table is one and a half cubits high, the first cubit signifies the Church, but the half cubit signifies those who live the contemplative life and who in contemplation witness fleeting glimpses of the heavenly experience. A golden lip surrounding the edge of the table represents the words of faithful preachers who are responsible for bringing God's people to the reward of the kingdom, a kingdom represented by a golden crown upon the lip. The crown is, however, not the same for all:

[30] *Explanation of the Psalms*, 89(88): Walsh (1991) 2, 351-70 at 351-3, *CCSL* 98, 802-820 at 802-804.
[31] *Of Holy Virginity*: *NPNF* 1st series, 3, 417-438, *PL* 40, 397-428.

> Now that same crown is properly commanded to be made embossed, doubtless because the reward of the eternal kingdom is not given indiscriminately to everyone but is distributed to one and all in accordance with the character of the recipients, as distinguished by divine examination. For surely the golden crown on the Lord's table would be unadorned and not embossed if the brightness of the future reward of the righteous were revealed equally to all, after the fashion of the sun in this present world, whose splendor God makes to rise indiscriminately upon the good and the bad (Matt 5:45); but just as star differs from star in brightness, so will it be in the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:41-2).
>
> A crown was set upon the Lord's table, adorned with various carvings that were diverse but decorously arranged; for surely the future life has been promised to all the righteous but the glory in it is multiform, according to the diversity of individual merits. Wherefore after one crown has been described first, there is added: 'And over the same, another little golden crown.' This can be rightly understood as the reward of those who surpass the general commandments of Holy Scripture by willingly choosing the more perfect life, and can therefore expect a special reward beyond that of the rest of the faithful in return for their voluntary offering … Over that crown is set another little golden crown, because farther on there is added: 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' (Mtt 19:21). To this crown pertains that new song which the virgins are reported to sing so much before the Lamb those 'who have been purchased from among humankind as the first fruits for God and the Lamb'; to this it pertains that they 'follow the Lamb wherever he goes' (Rev 14:3-4).[32]

Further on Bede describes the lampstand of the tabernacle and provides an even more interesting exegesis on the image of those who follow the Lamb. First he describes the shaft of the stand as representing Christ as he exists in his body, the Church, and the branches extending from the shaft are the members of his body, the bowls and cups hanging thereon being the minds of the faithful filled with the words and wisdom of God's holy preachers:

> In the company of the elect, the merit of those who preach is more sublime than that of those who are zealous to devote themselves to continence only, and not to the work of teaching as well; likewise, the life of the continent is more sublime than that of the married. Rightly, then, do the highest branches that were proceeding from the shaft on one side and on the other designate those in both testaments who have, among other virtues, applied themselves to the pursuit of teaching; rightly do the lower branches, which likewise come forth from both sides of the shaft, represent the continents' life devoted to God; rightly do the lowest branches, which are themselves sprung from the same stem of the one lamp-stand, show forth by means of a type the life that virtuous married persons in the time of both testaments faithfully devoted to one and the same Lord.[33]

[32] *De tabernaculo*, 1, 6: Holder (1994) 24-5, *CCSL* 119A, 23-24.
[33] *De tabernaculo* 1, 8: Holder (1994) 34, *CCSL* 119A, 32.

Bede goes on to emphasize that all rejoice in the one kingdom, but alludes to Revelation to emphasize that 'the virgin who follows the Lamb sings that special song of praise'. The passage quoted above, however, points out clearly that he views the virgin involved actively in the pastoral life as having a greater role in the kingdom than virgins who are not.

In the *Pastoral Rule* Gregory himself cites Rev 14:3-4 and writes on the pitfalls encompassing the life of the virgin. Though he acknowledges for the virgin the privileged role of those 'who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes' and who sing the song that none but the one hundred and fourty-four thousand can utter, he warns them strongly against any complacency.[34] Gregory has a strong awareness that those who come to virtue by means of the penance of charitable works are in a far safer position then those who feel they have no need for repentance and instead become proud in their virginity. Those who are free from the sins of the flesh are therefore called to be constantly on guard against this vice of the devil and to press on to continuous works of active charity. In this pastoral text the recommended type of action is of a pastoral nature and Gregory's own thinking on the active life steers in this direction.[35]

Jerome, in the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, uses the image of the Lamb in the context of Antony's expressed desire to accompany Paul to the heavenly kingdom:

> On hearing this Antony with tears and groans began to pray that he would not desert him, but would take him for a companion on that journey. His friend replied: 'You ought not to seek your own, but another man's good. It is expedient for you to lay aside the burden of the flesh and to follow the Lamb; but it is expedient for the rest of the brethren to be trained by your example'.[36]

Though Paul is referring to Antony's help and example to the other monks, he none the less associates the active life with the virgin's reward of singing before the Lamb. Sulpicius Severus praises both the heroic monastic asceticism and the pastoral charity of St Martin when he pictures him as being

[34] *Pastoral Rule* 3, 28: *NPNF* 2nd series, 12, 58-60, *PL* 77, 104-107.
[35] See chapter I.
[36] *The Life of Paul the First Hermit* 12: *NPNF* 2nd series 6, 301, *PL* 23, 26.

joined at his death with those who washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, following the Lamb unstained (cf. Rev 7:14; 24:4).[37] This passage resonates at the close of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*:

> This was the end of our memorable patron's life; these were the beginnings of his rewards. Being, in the language of the scriptures, added to the fathers as a sharer in eternal triumphs, united to apostles and prophets, and joined to the number of the thousands of white-robed saints who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, he attends the Lamb his leader; a virgin unstained, free from every flaw, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. (*VC* 3. 23)[38]

Columba is praised for his virginity in both body and spirit but this is united with his gifts of apostleship and prophecy, gifts associated directly with the pastoral life. Columba is presented throughout Adomnán's work as a saintly monk, but equally he is presented as a prophet, teacher and evangelist, the founding father of a great missionary tradition. This was a well-established tradition when Adomnán wrote the above words in a work roughly contemporary with the Whitby *Life of Gregory*. The Whitby writer's allusion to the image of the Lamb from Revelation not only signifies God's choosing of the Anglo-Saxon people as his own and the first fruits of their monasteries, but seems also to be highlighting the essential role of the monastery within the pastoral process itself. The crucial role of the apostolic preacher in the conversion of a people is emphasized in Augustine's and Cassiodorus's commentaries on Psalm 89, the Psalm quoted by the Whitby writer side by side with the quotation from Revelation in *VG* 13. Furthermore, the words chosen from John's description of the sound of the celestial army (Rev19:6), *tamquam vocem aquarum multarum et tamquam vocem validorum tonitruorum dicentium alleluia* ('as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying *Alleluia*'), are highly pertinent to images of apostolic preaching.

[37] Letters of Sulpicius Severus, Ep 2.8: *NPNF* 2nd series 11, 20, *PL* 20, 179.
[38] The similarity of Adomnán's words and those of Sulpicius Severus about St Martin has long been noted: see Anderson (1991) 232, n.260.

Come unto me (Mtt 11:28)

After quoting from Rev 19:6 and Ps 89, the Whitby *Life* reinforces the fulfilment of Gregory's prophecy by pointing out that the meaning of *Alleluia* can be put into two words, 'God's praise,' and the name *Aelli* is made up of two syllables. The king's name is also compared with the Anglo-Saxon version of the word *all*. The meaning of *alle* (*omnia*), leads the writer to cite Christ's words, *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis* (Mtt 11:28). The addition of the phrase *et reliqua* indicates that the writer has in mind the whole of this familiar text, which he adapts to the conversion of a pagan people predestined to be saved:

> 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' (Mtt 11: 28-30)

It has been argued here that the use of Rev 19:6 and Ps 89:5 in *VG* 13 promots both a monastic and pastoral theme; it may be further suggested that the writer is continuing to establish the dual theme by accompanying these verses with Mtt 11:28.

The text of Mtt 11:28-30 is commonly cited in the context of patristic teaching on humility. Generally speaking, the reader is encouraged to give up the burden of sinfulness and take on the yoke of Christ's humility. Augustine points out that the Lord asks his followers to be like him, not in greatness but in humility, that it is, in becoming low with him they will also rise with him. The virtue of this humility in its deepest form is lived under the discipline of monasticism. Augustine, while expounding Mtt 11:28-30, claims that humility is the foundation of the spiritual building and that the higher the building the deeper the foundation required, and the raising of this building is the soul's ascent to God in the spiritual life.[39] Those who attempt to reach such spiritual heights work under monastic discipline and the text of Mtt 11:28-30 is, not surprisingly, used

[39] *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*, 19 (69), 2-3: *NPNF* 1st series, 6, 315-316, *PL* 38, 441-442.

to optimum effect in Augustine's *De Virginitate*.[40] It is worth pointing out that, just as the Whitby writer uses these verses in conjunction with an allusion to the image of the Lamb from Revelation, so also had Augustine used them and in the same sequence:

> Wherefore this do, you virgins of God, this do: follow the Lamb, whithersoever he shall have gone. But first come unto him, whom you are to follow, and learn, in that he is meek and lowly of heart. Come in lowly wise unto the Lowly, if you love: and depart not from him, lest you fall. For whoso fears to depart from him asks and says, 'Let there not come to me foot of pride.'[41]

The treatise provides charity as part of this spiritual equation, for charity is the remedy to avoid pride: those who become swollen in pride will not manage the straight ways of the Lamb.

Like Augustine, the *Rule of St Benedict* adopts Mtt 11:29 as a symbol of the monastic life (*RB* 58) and Gregory also uses the verse as an image of this life when describing Benedict's drawing of others to place their necks under the gentle yoke of monasticism.[42] The anonymous *Vita Cuthberti* adapts the same imagery when describing Cuthbert's decision to enter the monastery at Ripon (*VA* 2.2) and Bede explains that the saint 'submitted his neck from early youth to the yoke of monastic discipline' in the opening chapter of his prose *Vita Cuthberti* (*VP* 1).

In a homily Bede uses Mtt 11:28-9 as he encourages his brothers to renounce earthly lusts:

> But all those who have been breathed upon by the Holy Spirit, and have taken upon themselves the very pleasant yoke of the Lord's love, and following his example, learned to be gentle and humble of heart, enjoy even in the present some image of the future tranquility. Separated with their whole mind from the turmoil of worldly men, they rejoice always in remembering their Maker's countenance, and thirst after reaching perfect contemplation of him.[43]

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[40] *On Holy Virginity*: *NPNF* 1st series, 3, 417-438, *PL* 40, 397-428.
[41] *On Holy Virginity* 53: *NPNF* 1st series, 3, 436, *PL* 40, 426-427.
[42] *Dialogues* 2, 8: Zimmerman (1959) 70, *SC* 260, 160.
[43] *Homilies on the Gospels* 2, 17: Martin and Hurst (1991) 176, *CCSL* 122, 310.

The scriptural verses are however not meant to deceive the reader into taking on the monastic life as an easy option to provide an easy life of contemplative bliss. Bede accompanies the above passage with words encouraging the reader to rejoice in insults and to glory in persecution, a message familiar to one who is willing to follow the Lamb in a life of sacrifice. Augustine in a sermon on Mtt 11:28-30 makes efforts to explain how a burden of hard work and effort can be described as light by Christ and resolves the matter by viewing it in an overall context, for in the light of eternal bliss the burden is indeed light.[44]

Gregory refers to the 'yoke of faith' upon the neck of the gentiles and in doing so develops an exegesis of Christ's calling of the fishermen.[45] As Peter, Andrew, James and John follow Christ and are called to the apostolic life, it is not the little material wealth they have left behind that is significant, but their desire for earthly wealth. Giving up all is therefore not enough if one is not willing also to let go the desire for greatness or wealth. Likewise if anyone outwardly behaves humbly and acts in a forgiving way towards his neighbour but inwardly holds resentment, he is on a futile mission. It is the state of the heart which is important and all humility must be founded in love.[46] From this Gregory develops further the Lord's description of his burden as light. It is in living a life of charity that we take on the yoke of Christ and it is in living this love that we no longer find the persecutions of this life difficult. Such pain and tribulations now become easy to bear, the narrow door appears wide and easy to move through and rough ways become smooth. Robert Markus describes the inseparability of humility and charity in the thought of Gregory. The desertion of a life of total contemplation for a life of pastoral activity could only be reconciled in the knowledge that it was taken on as an act of pure humility, an act of humble service to God and one's fellow Christians.[47]

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[44] *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament* 20, 3: *NPNF* 6, 317-318, *PL* 38, 444.
[45] *Forty Gospel Homilies* 2: Hurst (1990) 10-11, *PL* 76 (homily 5), 1093-1094.
[46] Inner purity is an important concept in patristic writings on virginity. The focus is regularly placed upon spiritual virginity, in which the virgin whose heart contains lust, greed, jealousy, or pride, is no true virgin. The image of adornment is adapted in Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* to deal with inner spirituality. By adapting Cyprian's criticism of outer adornment, Aldhelm uses an image of spiritual adornment in highlighting the spiritual embellishment of the soul. See O'Sullivan (2001); also, O'Sullivan (1998) 288-91.
[47] See Markus (1997) 17-33.

In accordance with Augustine's use of Mtt 11:28-30 in *De Virginitate,* he also promotes the strong links between charity and humility when expounding this scriptural passage in *De Doctrina Christiana*.[48] This is achieved by using hyssop as an analogy. Though this herb is a humble plant, it nevertheless has deep and firm roots, which are described by Augustine as the roots of charity. He notes that as the Psalmist is purged by hyssop (Ps 51:7), similarly, it is through love that we are purged of pride and become a humble people.[49]

Unlike Augustine's *De Virginitate*, neither Jerome's Letter to Eustochium,[50] nor Ambrose's *De Virginibus*,[51] draws on Mtt 11:28-30. Both these works were directed towards female audiences living contemplative lives and concentrate upon virtues of purity.[52] Though humility is promoted in the course of the exercise, neither writer appears to have deemed Mtt 11:28-30 a suitable image for the purpose in question. Augustine, who draws heavily upon the Gospel image of the yoke, promotes a humility based upon active charity and it is this train of thought that Gregory consistently promotes as the crucial combination in the ideal preacher or teacher.

Though the yoke of humility was often used to depict the monastic life, by incorporating the inherent role of charity hagiographers were able to adapt this monastic symbol to the role of the episcopate. This helped to suggest the combination of the active and the contemplative in the monastic and ascetic bishop. The *Vita Martini* depicts a humble monk having to be tricked from his monastery as the people plead with him to take up the episcopate (*VM* 9). The anonymous *Vita Cuthberti* likewise depicts Cuthbert as being drawn weeping from his island hermitage, and emphasizes his continued humility:

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[48] *On Christian Doctrine* 2, 41, 62 (2.148-150): *NPNF* 1st series, 2, 555, Green (1995) 126-129.
[49] *On the Psalms* 51(50), 12: *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 193-194, *CCSL* 38, 608.
[50] *The Letters of St Jerome* 22: *NPNF* 2nd series, 6, 22-44, Labourt 1, 110-160.
[51] *On Virginity*: Callam (1996), *PL* 16, 279-316.
[52] Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* follows closely patristic tradition. Though Lapidge claims it to be modelled on Ambrose, he also notes Aldhelm's own individual doctrinal position, see Lapidge (1979) 56-7; Sinead O'Sullivan, however, highlights Augustine's strong influence in Aldhelm's approach to marriage. Though acclaiming the superior spiritual nature of the true virgin, Aldhelm is writing for nuns in a society in which many widowed aristocrats entered the monastic life. Augustine's writing helped to achieve a less critical view of marriage without detracting from the primary objective of the exercise. Patristic tradition is crucial to Aldhelm's task, but not without consideration of the Anglo-Saxon context in which he was required to work: see O'Sullivan (1998).

> For he continued with the utmost constancy to be what he had been before; he showed the same humility of heart, the same poverty of dress, and, being full of authority and grace, he maintained the dignity of a bishop without abandoning the ideal of the monk or the virtue of the hermit. (*VA* 4:1)

Bede also recounts the story of Cuthbert's humility in the face of episcopal honors, describing king and bishops pleading with Cuthbert to accept the council's decision. It is revealing that as Bede uses the image of the yoke used in Mtt 11:28-30 to portray Cuthbert's commitment to the monastic life at the opening of the book, he also uses the image in Cuthbert's acceptance of the episcopacy. This provides a clear insular example of the application of the yoke to the responsibility of episcopal duty:

> They all knelt down and adjured him in the name of the Lord, with tears and prayers, until at last they drew him, also shedding many tears, from his sweet retirement and led him to the synod. When he had come, in spite of his reluctance he was overcome by the unanimous will of them all and compelled to submit his neck to the yoke of the bishopric. (*VP* 14)[53]

Though the Whitby writer quotes only from Mtt 11:28 in chapter 13, it is interesting to see that he has already quoted from Mtt 11:29 in the opening lines of chapter 7 of the *Vita*, and this provides the key to the context in which the author is writing:

> When Christ said, 'Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart' (Mtt 11:29), the blessed Gregory explained to us that we were not to learn to walk over the waves after Peter or raise the dead. Again, when he says, 'Possess your souls in patience,' St. Gregory taught us to recognize that this virtue is greater than signs or miracles. So that power which can only produce amazement inspired by what is seen and heard is of a baser kind than that which avails itself of the meek and lowly Christ and the love which Christ himself ever has. Therefore we place first as a sign of the sanctity of this man the fact that he followed the example of him who is the beginning of all things. So when we imitate a man of such great humility, we at once accept him as our teacher in these precepts – nay, in all the precepts of Christ; for it was Christ himself who, when his Apostles asked him who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, answered that it was the meek. (*VG* 7)[54]

[53] On the importance of the monk-bishop to Bede, and its relation to Bede's exegetical interpretation of the Church on earth, see Coates (1996); also Thacker (1983).

[54] Nam cum dixit, "Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde", quod nos discere beatus docuit Gregorius, non post Petrum per maria ambulare vel mortuos suscitare. Et cum iterum ait, "In pacientia vestras possidebitis animas vestras" cuius nos virtutem signis et miraculis maiorem esse cognoscere, samctus docuit agnoscendo Gregorius. Vilior itaque vis est que stuporem semper

This chapter is the middle chapter of three dealing with the theme of humility; it applies the theme to the role of the teacher and the apostle and describes Gregory's extreme humility in trying to avoid the supreme title of Bishop of Rome.[55] We see, however, that *VG* 7 opens with Mtt 11:29.[56] The Whitby writer in this same chapter quotes Jerome from an unidentified source, stating that the humbler one is in responding to the prospect of high position in the church, the worthier one is to receive the office. The following chapter continues this theme: Gregory, because of his great humility, is also filled with love and subsequently endowed with the gift of prophecy. The next three chapters (9-11) portray Gregory's prophecy and plans for the English mission, and prepare the reader for the three conversion chapters, including chapter 13, where the key text from Mtt 11:28-30 is strategically re-introduced. Read in the light of the patristic tradition of its interpretation, and in the context of the earlier allusion to the text in the Whitby writer's own account of Gregory's initiation to the pastoral life in chapter 7, the use of the text in chapter 13 does not duplicate but extends the teaching of the earlier chapter. The writer has already presented Gregory as a saintly model of apostolic perfection to be imitated, but now turns to the response of the Anglo-Saxon people. The *Vita Gregorii* itself may be seen as part of the response of the newly founded monasteries to provide for both the contemplative and pastoral needs of the recently converted Anglo-Saxons.

In the *Historia Ecclesiastica* Bede includes a letter of encouragement from Pope Honorius to Honorius, archbishop-elect of Canterbury (*HE* 2.18), which includes Mtt 11:28 as a message of pastoral encouragement, together with the Lucan image of the faithful steward (Lk 12:42). This again demonstrates the role of the verse as an image to promote the pastoral life. Bede also adopts Mtt 11:28,29 in his account of Augustine of Canterbury's efforts to include the

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visu et auditu solet incutere cognitum, quam quod mitem Christum et humilem simul et caritatem que ipse est habet in perpetuum Huius igitur exemplum qui est principium rerum omnium, primum ponimus de hoc viro signum sanctitatis. Ad hec ubi illum imitando quante humilitatis horum immo omnes eius pre- ceptorum / fuerit doctor noster statim agnoscitur, per quam maior esse in regno celorum ipse Christus apostolis suis interrogantibus quis ibi sit maior, respondit humilem.

[55] See also Cuthbert's extreme reluctance to become a bishop (*HE* 4.28). The example of Cuthbert is also cited above in Chapter 1, which argues that the exegesis underlying the narrative of Gregory's call to the papacy concerns themes of both ascetic contemplation and pastoral action.

[56] See chapter III, 84.

Britons in the evangelization of the Anglo-Saxons. Bede's use of the scriptural text within this context warrants a closer look (*HE* 2.2). The British bishops consult a holy man to seek advice in discerning whether Augustine is a man of God and a man whose message they should follow. The hermit advises that if Augustine rises on the approach of the British bishops then he carries the yoke of Christ and is meek and humble in heart and therefore should be listened to. When Augustine does not rise, the Britons, in fear of their customs being despised by an arrogant man, become stubborn in their attitude and refuse all of Bishop Augustine's requests. Augustine is willing to accept all their customs if the British are willing to accept three demands: the Roman Easter calendar, the Roman baptismal rite, and that the British be willing to join in the missionary work towards the Angles and Saxons. But it is the third and final request that Bede dwells upon in this story and Augustine's prophecy of destruction derives from this selfish attitude of the British towards the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons.

Augustine has seemed self-righteous and proud to modern readers, while the British who are punished appear to have been justified in their resistance.[57] Some conclude that Bede's loathing of the Britons accounts for his interpretation of the event,[58] while others would argue that an interpretation of the British as humble and willing and Augustine as proud and arrogant is anachronistic and inconsistent with Bede's respect for Augustine and his office.[59] Clare Stancliffe is perhaps closer to the truth when she points to Bede's highlighting of charity and unity as the major issues in his general criticism of the British church. She argues that for Bede it is this lack of charity that distinguishes the British from the Irish, the Irish being the ones to share their faith with the pagan Anglo-Saxons.[60] Jennifer O'Reilly has further argued that, if read in the light of patristic

[57] This punishment concerns the British defeat by Aethelfrith at the battle of Chester, and the massacre of twelve hundred British monks. Nora Chadwick argues that Bede's source for this material is a written British source produced near the Welsh border in Mercia. She also states that the defeat may not have been a major event in British-Anglo-Saxon relations, see Chadwick (1963c).
[58] See Hunter Blair (1990) 80-84.
[59] Gameson (1999) 35-7.
[60] Stancliffe (1999) 108-10, 130. See also Stancliffe (2003), the role of Christian charity as inherent in Bede's thought is highlighted by Stancliffe as it exists in his exegesis, see esp. 23, 27-8. On the seriousness of Bede's reaction to the Britons' refusal to preach to the Anglo-Saxons,

exegesis on Mtt 11:28-29, *HE* 2.2 shows that the British bishops cannot discern true humility while Augustine reaches out in charity to both the British and the Anglo-Saxons.[61] However, he has to warn the Britons:

> If they refused to accept peace from their brethren they would have to accept war from their enemies and if they would not preach the way of life to the English nation they would one day suffer the vengeance of death at their hands. (*HE* 2.2)

Augustine is portrayed as one who fosters humility rooted in love and this is evident in his pastoral mission. The language used to describe the advice given by the British hermit is good advice, but the Britons were not far-sighted enough to see that Augustine's humility was evident in his request to preach to the Anglo-Saxons and not based on whether he remained sitting or standing. The Whitby writer in the use of these verses from Matthew's gospel also employs both monastic themes of humility and pastoral themes of charity and similarly highlights the inseparability of their role in the conversion process.

Bede's description of the Whitby community, quoted earlier, lists the monastery's virtues, culminating in 'peace and charity' (*HE* 4.23). It is in this context that Bede records that kings, princes and ordinary folk alike valued the wisdom of Hild and that he names the five bishops produced at the monastery. The bishops are a testament not only to the value the Whitby authorities placed upon a monastic pastorate, but also to the importance placed on the production of bishops from within the Whitby community itself. This is a value powerfully reflected in the Whitby writer's skillful manipulation of traditional exegetical imagery. Identifying specific uses of such imagery helps to provide an insight into Whitby's own vision of itself within the conversion process.

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see Scully (2000) 219-20; for material dealing with Bede's approach to Anglo-Saxon relations with the Irish and British, see Thacker (1996), Brooks (1999), Brooks (2000), Charles-Edwards (2000) 417-38.

[61] I am indebted to Dr O'Reilly for discussion of patristic exegesis of Mtt 11:28-30 and the use of the image by Bede in *HE* 2.2 and elsewhere.

PART TWO

CHAPTER III – INTERPRETING MIRACLE STORIES

CHAPTER IV – PAULINUS: THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP

CHAPTER III

INTERPRETING MIRACLE STORIES

The subject matter and technique of the Whitby *Vita Gregorii* are unique among surviving examples of Insular hagiography. In the early chapters 3-8, for example, discursive material on saints and miracles drawn from Pope Gregory's own writings is used as a means of presenting his virtues; by contrast, in the *Vitae* of Cuthbert and Wilfrid, accounts of their miracles play a large part in the chronological narrative of the saint's early life. Kate Rambridge has noted that the emphasis in the Whitby *Life* on Gregory's writings is a means of showing his influence on the establishment of Christianity among the English; she regards the miracle stories concerning Gregory as serving chiefly to support the idea of his holiness and the authority of his spiritual teaching and to show, notably in chapters 20-23, that the saint taught through his life as well as through his writings.[1] It will be argued here, however, that the discursive sections of the Whitby *Life* constructed from Gregory's own writings and the narrative chapters on the miracle stories are much more closely and skilfully inter-related and that both derive from patristic exegetical traditions used elsewhere in Insular writings.

Patristic Background

Two Gospel texts were frequently quoted in whole or in part by patristic writers commenting on the working of miracles:

> Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers'. (Mtt 7:21-23)

[1] Rambridge (2000) 9-12, 16.

> The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven'. (Lk 10: 17-20)

Augustine uses both texts in his anti-heretical writings when dealing with the apparent dilemma that heretical teachers as well as the orthodox and holy can perform miracles.[2] More commonly, the two Gospel texts are used not simply of literal miracles but as a warning to the Christian pastor to avoid vainglory and to practice the virtue he is seeking to promote, thereby seeking glory only for Christ as he reaches out to the Church in a spirit of humble charity.

In addressing Christ's invitation, 'take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble in heart' (Mtt 11:29), Augustine asks in what way are we called to come and imitate the Lord.[3] He quotes Lk 10:17-20 in full to argue that not all are called to heal the sick and raise the dead, but individual Christians hold separate gifts to make up the many different parts of Christ's mystical body.[4] Though not each member is a miracle worker, each is part of his body and may be blessed with other gifts. It is in the humble use of these gifts that Christ's body is served in love; the names of all the faithful, therefore, 'are written in heaven'. The argument goes on to incorporate Mtt 7:21 and culminates in the Christian's call to a life defined by love:

> What does it profit a man if he does miracles, and is proud, is not meek and lowly in heart? Will he not be reckoned in the number of those who shall come at the last day, and say, 'Have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name have done many mighty works?' (Mtt 7:22) But what shall they hear? 'I know you not. Depart from me, all you that work iniquity' (Mtt 7:23). What then does it profit us to learn? 'That I am meek,' he says, 'and lowly in heart'. He engrafts charity, and that most genuine charity, without confusion, without inflation, without elation, without deceit; he engrafts charity who says, 'Learn of me, that I am meek and lowly in heart' (Mtt 11:29).[5]

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[2] *Tollite iugum meum super vos, et discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde* (Mtt 11:29). See, for example, Augustine, *In answer to the letters of Petilian the Donatist, Bishop of Sirta*, 2,55,126: *NPNF* 1st series, 4, 562, *PL* 43, 302.
[3] *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*, 92, 7: *NPNF*, 1st series, 6, 534, *PL* 38, 782.
[4] The Pauline image of the body of Christ is discussed below in Chapter VI.
[5] *Selected Lessons on the New Testament* 92, 7-8: *NPNF* 1st series, 6, 535, *PL* 38, 785.

Traditional exegesis on Mtt 11:28-30 and the importance of this scriptural passage to themes of humility and charity within both the monastic and pastoral life have already been discussed in Chapter II of this thesis. Here, however, Augustine draws upon the text in conjunction with Mtt 7:21-23 and Lk 10:17-20, and he is not unique in using this exegetical combination. Cassian also links Mtt 11:28-30 with Mtt 7:21-23 and Lk 10:17-20 to encourage humility in the performance of miracles. He then turns to John 13:35 to emphasise the important role of charity in this spiritual equation:

> Still when they say at the end: 'Lord, Lord, have we not in your name prophesied, and in your name cast out devils, and in your name done many mighty works?' He testifies that then he will answer: 'I never knew you: depart from me, you workers of iniquity' (Mtt 7: 22, 23). And therefore he actually warns those, to whom he himself has given this glory of miracles and mighty works because of their holiness, that they be not puffed up by them, saying: 'Rejoice not because the devils are subject to you, but rejoice rather because your names are written in heaven' (Lk 10:20).
>
> Finally, the Author himself of all miracles and mighty works, when he called his disciples to learn his teaching, clearly showed what those true and specially chosen followers ought chiefly to learn from him, saying: 'Come and learn of me,' not chiefly to cast out devils by the power of heaven, not to cleanse the lepers, not to give sight to the blind, not to raise the dead … But he says, 'learn this of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart' (Mtt 11:28, 29) . . . For when he was returning to the Father, he prepared, so to speak, his will and left this to his disciples: 'A new commandment,' he said, ' I give unto you that you love one another; as I have loved you, so do you also love one another'. And at once he subjoined: 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another' (Jn 13:34, 35.) He does not say: 'if you do signs and miracles in the same way', but 'if you love one another'; and this it is certain that none but the meek and humble can keep.[6]

In accordance with both Augustine's and Cassian's use of this exegesis, Gregory the Great also adapts Mtt 7:21-23 to promote charity rather than miraculous power as the true evidence of the preacher who is a follower of Christ. As with Cassian, Gregory turns to Jn 13:35 to promote the crowning virtue of charity:

> Hence Truth says through the Gospel: 'Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name and cast out devils in your name and done many miracles in your name? And then will I profess

[6] *The Second Conference of Abbot Nesteros* 6, 6-7: *NPNF* 2nd series, 11, 448, *SC* 54, 216-218.

> to them: I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (Mtt 7:22-23). Truly the one sign of election is firmness of charity, as it is written: 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another' (Jn.13:35). Therefore when the elect work these miracles they do so far differently from the wicked, because what the elect do from charity the wicked seek to do through pride.[7]

In a letter responding to the report of Augustine of Canterbury's literal miracles on the mission field among the Anglo-Saxons, Gregory also quotes Mtt 7:21 and Lk 10:17, 20 to argue the true purpose of miracles. To achieve this he highlights the real risk of the deadly sin of pride for those through whom God performs such miracles and he warns Augustine to remain focused on the spiritual care and welfare of the newly established Christian community for whom the miracles are performed.[8] Bede quotes part of Gregory's letter in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (1.31) and then cites the text of Mtt 11:29 in the story of the Britons' attempt to find out if Augustine was meek and lowly of heart and bore the yoke of Christ (*HE* 2.1), an episode already discussed.[9] Read in the light of the exegetical tradition on this text, Augustine's wish to convert the Anglo-Saxons might be interpreted as evidence of his willingness to carry Christ's yoke of humility and love.[10]

One of Gregory's most widely known expositions on miracles arises in his homily on the Gospel reading Mk 16:14-20. For those seeking physical miracles in his own day, the pope encourages a more spiritual approach. The homily outlines in detail the means by which physical miracles can be represented in a spiritual way in the present pastoral life of the Church and physical miracles themselves are consigned to earlier times when they were required for apologetic purposes. In concluding this detailed discourse, Mtt 7:22-23 is employed to enhance the argument:

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[7] *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2, 5, 22: Gray (1990) 216, *CCSL* 142, 292.
[8] On Gregory's emphasis on pastoral charity in the performing of physical miracles see Straw (1988) 93-4. Ian Wood highlights the importance of miracles within a missionary context, and goes so far as to suggest that the number of miracles reported from the missionary fields relates to the Church's need at a particular point in time. He suggests that Augustine saw miracles at Kent simply because Gregory led him to expect them: Wood (2001) 261.
[9] See Chapter 2.
[10] I am indebted to Dr O'Reilly for discussion of this chain of texts in patristic exegetical tradition and for its use by Insular writers, notably Columbanus and Bede.

> Those external signs cannot produce life, but it can come from those who do them. Material miracles sometimes demonstrate holiness but they do not create it, whereas the spiritual actions performed in the soul do not make the power of life evident to the senses but create it. Even the wicked perform the former; none but the good can perform the latter. Hence Truth said of some people: 'Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, do many mighty deeds in your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I do not know you; depart from me you workers of iniquity"' (Mtt 7:22-23). Dearly beloved, do not love signs, which the wicked too can perform; love those miracles of love and devotion, which I have just now spoken of.[11]

Gregory encouraged an attitude of humble charity in the performance of physical miracles, and when physical miracles were not available, a miraculous interpretation of spiritual success in the pastoral work of the preacher. Whether a physical miracle was performed to serve the charitable efforts of a zealous missionary, or whether pastoral success was metaphorically described in terms of physical miracles, the focus always remained upon charity and this was based upon the authority of scripture.

Chapter 6 and 7 of the *Vita Gregorii* provide evidence that the Whitby writer was familiar with traditional exegesis on miracles. In portraying the crucial role of Gregory in the conversion of the English people, the importance of spiritual miracles over physical is highlighted and the pope's writings are given more weight then the miracles of even the great apostles, Peter and Paul. While promoting Gregory's virtues, the writer uses Mtt 7:21-23 and Mtt 11:29 to highlight that it is a humble charity that identifies the true follower of Christ and not physical miracles. This clearly places the Whitby writer within an established exegetical tradition and one particularly used by Gregory himself:

> These, too, are his words against those who boast of their wonderful works here and who there are going to hear from him, 'Depart from me all you workers of iniquity' (Mtt 7:23). Therefore Christ avails us more as he speaks through St. Gregory than when he made the Apostle Peter walk on the waves; or when through Peter's fellow-Apostle Paul he struck the evil magician with blindness.
>
> When Christ said, 'Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart' (Mtt 11:29), the blessed Gregory explained to us that we were not to learn to walk over the waves after Peter or raise the dead. Again, when he says, 'Possess your souls in patience', St. Gregory taught us to recognize that this virtue is greater than signs or miracles. So that power which can only

[11] *Homilies on the Gospels* 29: Hurst (1990) 229-30, *PL* 76, 1216.

> produce amazement inspired by what is seen and heard is of a baser kind than that which avails itself of the meek and lowly Christ and the love which Christ himself ever has. (*VG* 6, 7)

Exegesis and miracle stories

The *Dialogues* reveal that, far more than Augustine, Gregory was open to the reality of miracles in his own day, and if we are to understand this, the pope's view of miracles needs to be viewed within the context of his overall view of the world in which he lived. This was a different world from that of Augustine, particularly in the sense that Augustine did not see the next world as so close and in such an interactive way as did Gregory.[12] Augustine viewed this world as largely separate from the next and was far more cautious in bringing both worlds together within a realm of interaction than was Gregory. Though it is true that Augustine did not discount physical miracles altogether and leaned more in this direction towards the latter end of his life, Gregory goes much further, and modifies the paradoxes of the mature Augustine.[13] In this modification the supernatural becomes intermingled with the world of ordinary experience and the visible and invisible, natural and supernatural, human and divine, carnal and spiritual are all often directly and causally connected. For Gregory the spiritual and carnal exist side by side and affect one another.[14]

However, Gregory viewed his world in scriptural terms and this encouraged a view in which God's Word spoke in the many signs and symbols of every day occurrences and events. Markus compares Gregory's liberal attitude to interpreting the signs of scripture with that of Augustine. While Augustine insists on understanding the signs before they can be interpreted, Gregory engages in what Markus describes as exegetical freewheeling. Markus argues that this approach spilled over into Gregory's attitude to miracles and nature, causing

[12] For the changing landscape of Christian culture between Augustine and Gregory, see Markus (1990). For an explanation of why Gregory appears less confined in expressing exegesis then is Augustine, see Markus (1995). He argues that within a Roman classical culture, Augustine faced the challenge of carefully defining exactly what was a Christian. Gregory on the other hand lived and wrote for a world in which Christianity had become a hegemony, and Roman civilisation had collapsed. This was a world which needed to address the question of how a Christian should live.
[13] See especially *The City of God* 22, 8, 9: *NPNF* 1st series, 2, 484-491, *CCSL* 48, 815-828.
[14] Straw (1988) 8-9.

Gregory to view natural and miraculous phenomena as signs of a deeper spiritual significance.[15] Because of this many of the exegetical images he discusses in his biblical commentaries also appear in his use of scriptural quotations and allusions within more hagiographical texts.[16] Moral teaching was Gregory's primary objective and Markus argues that the interpretation of miracles in the *Dialogues* was to be approached in a scriptural sense and this is an aim supported by moral or doctrinal reflection in the work. Gregory presents these miracles as an external sign of hidden realities, for miraculous events have a meaning and the *Dialogues* were to be as didactic in their aim as were Gregory's expositions of scripture.[17] Though McCready claims that Gregory viewed the natural world in scriptural terms and argues that the pope accepted his own world as an expansion of Scripture itself, he does not accept Gregory's wish for a spiritual or moral interpretation of the *Dialogues* miracles unless Gregory provides it himself.[18]

It may be argued that a spiritual or moral interpretation of a miracle story is not simply a tropological interpretation of the event, but needs to take into account the writer's use of scripture within the material provided. Considering Gregory's openness to and promotion of scriptural exegesis, his reader needs to be open to the possible relevance of Gregory's quotation of or allusion to scripture within his work. A miracle story also needs to be viewed in the context of the holy man's life and in the interpretive context supplied by the hagiographical narrative. To achieve this one needs to be aware of the scriptural signs presented to the reader and of the significance of what they point to. This is

[15] Markus (1995).
[16] Benedicta Ward discusses Gregory's use of scriptural imagery in the miracles of Benedict, see Ward (1981). W.F. Bolton (1959) claims that the *Dialogues* can only be properly understood when one examines the role of scriptural exegesis within the work. Leyser argues that the *Dialogues* do not represent a fundamental change from Gregory's other writings and that the same moral instruction exists within the miracle narratives, Leyser (2000) 135-6. On Bede's use of scripture within his hagiography see Ward (1989). For a demonstration of the use of scriptural exegesis within the miracle stories in the *Vita Wilfridi*, see Laynesmith (2000) 179-83. Philip Rousseau argues that it is within the textual preservation of saintly virtues or actions that events were provided with a depth of understanding that could only be achieved in a literary genre. He highlights the textual preservation of miracles as an example, see Rousseau (1999) esp. 52-3. For an account which argues Gregory's responsibility for the way in which both the Whitby writer and Bede accept an apologetic role for miracles, yet have a conservative approach to the recording of such, see Wood (1994) 14-17.
[17] On this material see Markus (1997) 63-5.
[18] McCready (1989) 241-60.

necessary if one is to enter into the spiritual sense of the narrative concerned.[19] Bede, influenced by Gregory, adapts this approach to scripture and employs similar tools in his didactic encouragement of a pastorate in the Anglo-Saxon church.[20]

Gregory's own writings play a large role in the Whitby writer's portrayal of the pope and the writer was able and willing to adapt traditional exegesis used by Gregory as part of this procedure. As demonstrated above, the Whitby writer used such exegesis to promote Gregory as a model pastor, not because of his ability to perform physical miracles, but because of his desire to convert the Anglo-Saxon people in a spirit of humble charity.

However, apart from its discursive style and particular use of the miracle debate in the opening chapters, the *Vita Gregorii* also provides many miracle narratives for the reader. For example, in the account of Gregory's humility in seeking to avoid high office, we witness the miracle of the great light from heaven shining on the saint and revealing his hiding place (*VG* 7). The saint's miraculous gift of prophecy is also witnessed when he meets the Angles in Rome (*VG* 9) and there is the miracle of the white dove resting on Gregory while he was writing his homilies on Ezekiel (*VG* 26). Further miraculous events surround the writer's material on Gregory's ability to loose and bind (*VG* 27, 28, 29). Miracles are not the primary focus in these stories, but arise as miraculous events during the writer's exposition of other virtues attributed to the saint.

There is one section in the work where six consecutive chapters are specifically dedicated to miracle stories and in this instance the writer apparently bases the inclusion of these stories solely on their merit as miracles. Two of these

[19] Markus (1997) 65-6.
[20] Thacker (1983). Colgrave (1935) 228-29 sees Bede's attitude towards miracle material as directly influenced by Gregory, and believes that both writers wrote their works of scriptural commentary and hagiography with separate mentalities, that is, that they wrote either as theologian or hagiographer and, in Bede's case, also as historian. However, this approach does not take into account each writer's use of scriptural exegesis within hagiographical or historical texts. McCready (1994) 124-76 claims that Bede is not as subtle as Gregory in his use of miracle material and uses miracles simply as evidence of sanctity without any moral or didactic purpose. This argument does not consider Bede's didactic use of exegesis within his miracle stories, for which see Ward (1989) and also Butler (1997).

are attributed to Edwin and concern the retrieval of his bones and their burial at Whitby (*VG* 18, 19), while the other four recount miracles attributed to Gregory at Rome. These four miracles consist of the miracle of the host and the unbelieving matron (*VG* 20), the miracle of the relic rags (*VG* 21), Gregory's striking blind of two pagan magicians (*VG* 22) and Gregory's appeasing of the Lombard king (*VG* 23). They are introduced after the Edwin material in the following words:

> Having brought these stories to an end, we will follow them up with some, which rightly concern us, among whom St. Gregory is famous on account of his holy miracles and through whom Christ also speaks. (*VG* 20)[21]

The introduction to the miracle stories confirms Gregory's role as the mouthpiece of Christ, already claimed in the early chapters of the *Vita*, but it needs to be asked in exactly what way does Christ speak through these miracles of Gregory? Also, what relevance, if any, does the use of exegesis in the miracle discourse in *VG* 7 have to these Gregorian miracle narratives in *VG* 20-23: does the writer adapt similar methods in depicting the miracle stories themselves?

Having established the scriptural discourse in which the Whitby writer is working, and being alert to Gregory's use of exegesis in the *Dialogues,* we need to take special note of the use of Scripture within the miracle narratives and the possible implications for themes expressed elsewhere in the *Vita Gregorii*. The miracles associated with the retrieval of Edwin's relics (*VG* 18, 19) and the miracle of the unbelieving Roman matron (*VG* 20) will be considered later, in Chapter VI. The rest of the present chapter will now turn to the remaining three miracle stories which will be taken in reverse order, that is, Gregory's appeasing of the Lombard King (*VG* 23), his striking blind of two pagan magicians (*VG* 22), and the miracle of the relic rags (*VG* 21). By examining the use of exegetical imagery within these narratives centred in Rome, their importance within the overall structure of the work will be identified. A far more complex relationship

[21] His igitur peractis relationibus, que proprie ad nos pertineat, adhuc ea sequamur quibus, Christo in se quoque loquente vir beatissimus Gregorius signorum est sanctitate famatus nobiscum.

between discourse and narrative will be seen to exist, and the relevance of the miracle stories to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people will be revealed.

1. Gregory heals the Lombard king (*VG* 23)

The writer introduces the chapter on the Lombard king by asserting that Gregory was not only a healer of souls but also a healer of the body. The story is introduced as a miracle of physical healing and is told in an apparently historical context, but we cannot ignore the vagueness of its basic details, for the writer is even unsure as to the name and race of the barbarian king concerned.[22] The conclusion of the story actually suggests that even if the literal detail of the story is not entirely accurate, what is important is the spiritual message it contains:

> In some of these stories we give the sense only, lest, as he himself says, concerning the acts of the saints in the book which he wrote, by quoting their rustic speech we might fail to utter spiritual truths. (*VG* 23)[23]

The Whitby writer is less concerned with the historicity of the stories than he is with the spiritual message for his reader and views these narratives as channels of spiritual truth. This is an echo of Gregory's prologue to Book One of the *Dialogues*, in which Gregory points out that he does not always use the exact words in which he receives a story but, in retaining the spiritual content, he adapts them to his own language to suit his style. Rambridge argues that if this is the case, then the writer excuses any use of dubious sources by pointing to Gregory's authority to confirm his own approach.[24]

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[22] Colgrave (1968) 154, notes that the story most likely refers to an incident in 593 when Agilulf, king of the Lombards, marched upon the gates of Rome, which Gregory refers to in the Preface to the second book of his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, but it may also recall the story of Gregory's papal predecessor and mentor, Leo the Great, persuading Attila the Hun to lead his army away from Rome in 452.

[23] Hec igitur sensu in quibusdam proferimus, ne ut ipse de sanctorum ait actibus que scripsit, rustice dicentes nil spiritale dicamus.

[24] Colgrave (1968) 155, note 96. Rambridge (2001) 17, acknowledges that the two concepts are not the same, but views Gregory's words as influencing the Whitby writer's comments regarding literal truth being subordinate to spiritual content. Charles Jones describes the hagiographer's use of other saints' lives as the substitution of the universal for the particular, and suggests that accepting miracles as literally true is tantamount to accepting the book of Genesis as fact. Jones discusses the Whitby writer's statement in arguing that hagiographical miracles should not be approached in a spirit which questions literal truth: Jones (1968) 59-63. On the convention of using literary models and types in hagiographical narratives, see Thacker (1976) 25-30, 34. The Whitby writer is far more explicit in describing this convention than other hagiographers, and

The author of the *Vita Gregorii* feels it is acceptable to attribute physical miracles to Gregory inaccurately if their use is motivated by love, and calls on Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* to argue that what one part of the body does can represent itself as one of the other parts, as all saints have everything in common through the love of Christ (*VG* 30).[25]

Though the writer turns to Gregory's *Dialogues* to support his use of non-historical evidence for spiritual purposes, this does not appear to be the attitude of Gregory himself. For both Gregory and Bede, the literal truth appears to have been of paramount significance before any tropological or allegorical interpretation could be attempted, and the justifiable lie does not appear to have been acceptable to either of these men.[26] It is significant that they are persistent in citing legitimate witnesses to the miraculous events in their works, and this appears to hold the key to their use of such miracle narratives. Their acceptance of truth was not dependant upon scientific criteria, but rather upon the moral character of the witness or witnesses involved. Once such moral credentials were established the reality of the events could be welcomed in a spirit of Christian faith. For this reason Gregory is careful to cite witnesses for his miracle stories and, likewise, Bede provides witnesses for far more of his miracles then he does for political events.[27] Though the Whitby writer does not follow Gregory and Bede in this regard, however, the approach to literal truth in the *Vita Gregorii* is

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perhaps this is due to the fact that he is the earliest of his kind among Anglo-Saxon Christians and feels the need to justify his use of this convention to the newly established English church.

[25] *Pastoral Rule* 3,10: *NPNF* 2nd series, 12, 32-33, *PL* 77, 62-64.

[26] On Gregory's adherence to factual truth see McCready (1989) 111-75. Though he accepts that Gregory is open to all scriptural exegetical imagery provided it promotes love of God and love of neighbour, he does not accept that this affected Gregory's fidelity to what he perceived as the literal truth of the *Dialogues* miracles: see McCready (1989) 195-6. Ward claims that Bede was also willing to accept the truth of a story once the witnesses were of moral character. She also points out that Bede's approach to a miracle was far different from that of the modern mind and that when interpreting the world around him, he was more likely to ask why rather then how. Bede usually describes miracles as *signa* and it was the spiritual interpretation of such heavenly signs that was important: Ward (1976) 70-6. Mayr-Harting (1972) 48-9 also claims that Bede would have looked towards a spiritual interpretation of miracles. Colgrave (1935) 225 states that for Bede not to accept the truth of a miracle witnessed by saintly figures would be tantamount to heresy. McCready acknowledges the importance of factual truth to Bede, but claims that he was not as strict as Gregory because he was more influenced in this matter by Cassian and Jerome, to whom the justifiable lie was acceptable, while Gregory followed the Augustinian approach, in which a lie was not permissible under any circumstances: McCready (1994) 176-229. For a criticism of McCready's thesis that Gregory wrote the stories of the *Dialogues* as actual events and not as literary creations, see the review by Meyvaert (1991).

[27] McCready (1989) 176-206.

well within traditional practice; there is no reason for thinking that the writer's didactic ambitions may be far from Gregory's or Bede's moral train of thought.[28] In the chapter on the healing of the Lombard king (*VG* 23) we are reminded by its opening words to find the spiritual truth contained within the events described: 'Among these anecdotes we must not fail to tell this sign [*signum*] of the wisdom and grace of God, even though, as in the rest of these stories, we do not know the full details'.

In this didactic context the story of Gregory prescribing a milk diet for a wild barbarian king may call to mind St Paul's famous image of feeding milk to those in the infancy of the faith (1 Cor 3:2), but this possibility and its implications need to be examined more closely. The influential image of milk and meat as applied to feeding on the Word occurs in three separate places in the New Testament (1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12,13; 1 Pet 2:2) and is used in varying contexts.

The letter to the Hebrews notes its subject matter will be difficult for the recipients of the letter to understand:

> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil. (Heb 5:12-14)

The image is used as a method of pointing out to those already converted that they have slipped back in their faith at a time when they should have reached a more advanced spiritual level.

When Peter uses the image in his letter, he is writing to the Christians of Asia Minor and is believed to have been writing to the newly baptised. The converts are here encouraged by Peter to grow in the faith and put aside all malice and guile:

[28] McCready (1998) 167-8 sees the Whitby writer as operating within what appears to have been a common hagiographical genre.

> Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation. (1 Pet 2:2)

Finally, Paul's reference to the image of milk and meat in his letter to the Corinthians is a letter from the Apostle of the Gentiles and his words refer to the conversion of a pagan people:

> And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready. (1 Cor 3:1-2)

God's Word is to be given to the newly converted gentiles in the form of milk in order that one day it may also be digested in a more substantial diet of meat; Paul elsewhere describes himself as a mother nursing her children, also adapting the infant-related imagery in this, the earliest of his epistles (1 Thess 2:7).

The latter two of the three examples quoted here refer to the newly baptised and to those who are yet babes in the spiritual life. Though the image of milk and meat is relevant to the settled Christian community, Paul's letter to the Corinthians reveals its special relevance to the missionary, and hence to a newly converted gentile people. The verses are therefore likely to be of particular significance to a missionary faced with the challenge of establishing the faith in a land of pagan tradition.

The scriptural images of milk and meat are commonly taken up by the early Church fathers and developed in varied ways for numerous purposes. Augustine makes regular use of the image, and when discussing Jn 16:12, develops an exegesis on the topic. In this instance Augustine turns to 1 Cor 3:2, but does not use it in a missionary context. He turns more to a discussion on the ways in which the settled Christian community hear and perceive God's Word and this is achieved by relating closely the verses of Corinthians to those of Hebrews. In explaining this he emphasises that there are not two Words, one for the spiritually advanced and one for

the less advanced, but rather there is one doctrine and one Word. Though this may be perceived at different levels, there cannot be areas of doctrine exclusive to some and not to others. If this occurs there is a great danger of pride and, worse still, heresy.

Augustine points out the Creed and Lord's Prayer as the milk of faith, and any deeper understanding is built upon this, for the foundation cannot be removed. The milk is also described as coming from the meat, for it is through the mother's eating of solid food that milk is produced for the baby. Though Augustine remains convinced that one person's capacity for the Word will be greater then another's, in his fear of heresy he warns of the difference between adding to one's faith and transgressing from it.[29]

Growth in the faith is what matters and not exclusivity. In his exposition of Psalm 131 Augustine again uses the image of milk and meat as a means of warning against pride and the dangers of heresy. He warns that the one who leaves the milk and pushes himself to spiritual heights too quickly is in danger of his soul, for the baby who is weaned from his mother too early is in danger of dying. What can be healthy at a time when one is prepared for it can be detrimental when one is not yet strong enough.[30]

Though the examples pointed out here demonstrate Augustine's use of 1 Cor 2:2 in an anti-heretical context, many other examples from his writings can be viewed from a missionary perspective. Two examples are given here, the first from his *Tractates on John* and the second from his *Expositions on the Psalms*. Interestingly, in both cases Augustine combines the image of spiritual milk with the image of the angels on Jacob's ladder, which has already been highlighted in this thesis as an important figure of the combined life of contemplation and active pastoral charity:

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[29] *Tractates on the Gospel of St John* 98: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 376-380, *CCSL* 36, 576-581.
[30] *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 131, 6 (130,13): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 615-616, *CCSL* 40, 1908-1909.

> But what did he see on the ladder? Ascending and descending angels. So it is the Church, brethren: the angels of God are good preachers, preaching Christ; this is the meaning of, 'they ascend and descend upon the Son of man.' How do they ascend, and how do they descend? In one case we have an example; listen to the Apostle Paul. What we find in him, let us believe regarding the other preachers of the truth. Behold Paul ascending: 'I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago was caught up into the third heaven (whether in the body, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows), and that he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter' (2 Cor 12:2-4).
>
> You have heard him ascending, hear him descending: 'I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal; as babes in Christ I have fed you with milk, not with meat' (1 Cor 3:1, 2). Behold he descended who had ascended. Ask whether he ascended to the third heaven. Ask whether he descended to give milk to babes. Hear that he descended: 'I became a babe in the midst of you, even as a nurse cherishes her children' (1 Thess 2:7). For we see both nurses and mothers descend to babes, and although they are able to speak Latin, they shorten the words, shape their tongues in a certain manner, in order to frame childish endearments from a methodical language; because if they speak according to rule, the infant does not understand nor profit. And if there be a father well skilled in speaking, and such an orator that the forum resounds with his eloquence, and the judgement-seats shake, if he have a little son, on his return home he puts aside the forensic eloquence to which he had ascended, and in child's language descends to his little one.[31]
>
> Degrees are either of ascent or of descent. But degrees, as they are used in this Psalm, are of ascending …There are therefore both those who ascend and those who descend on that ladder. Who are they that ascend? They who progress towards the understanding of things spiritual. Who are they that descend? They who, although, as far as men may, they enjoy the comprehension of things spiritual: nevertheless, descend unto the infants, to say to them such things as they can receive, so that, after being nourished with milk, they may become fitted and strong enough to take spiritual meat …[32]

By expounding the image of Jacob's ladder and combining it with the Pauline image of milk and meat, in both of the above examples Augustine sets Paul's words in a pastoral or missionary context.

In a letter to Bishop Felix, Gregory uses the Pauline image in defence of his instructions to Augustine of Canterbury. This related to the not uncommon problems associated with pagan rules of marriage among the Germanic tribal peoples. Offence had been taken because of Gregory's leniency to suit the newly

[31] *Tractates on the Gospel of St John* 7, 23: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 56, *CCSL* 36, 80-81.
[32] *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 120,1 (119,1-2): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 589, *CCSL* 40, 1776-1779.

converted Anglo-Saxons, but Gregory emphasises that this allowance is a response to particular circumstances and cannot be taken as a general rule by others. He points out that this can only be a temporary measure, and when the Anglo-Saxon people take a firm root in the faith they will then need to conform to the same standards as the remainder of the universal church:

> For according to the Apostle who says, 'I have fed you with milk, not with meat' (1 Cor 3:2), we have allowed these indulgences for them only, and not (as has been said above) for future times, lest the good which had been planted so far with a weak root should be rooted up, but that what had been begun should rather be made firm, and guarded till it reach perfection.[33]

Gregory continues by stating that he has no desire to destroy the pastoral work of others but wishes to enhance the building up of the church.

Bede provides an insight into Gregory's instructions to Augustine and confirms the promotion of a less stern approach when dealing with a newly converted people (*HE* 1:30), and later adapts the Corinthians image himself when dealing with the commissioning of Aidan's mission in Northumbria. Though the *HE* presents Aidan as the first successful Irish missionary, Bede tells of an earlier but failed attempt, and how Aidan's wise words win him his position as the new bishop and missionary to King Oswald's people:

> It seems to me, brother, that you have been unreasonably harsh upon your ignorant hearers: you did not first offer them the milk of simpler teaching, as the apostle recommends, until little by little, as they grew strong on the food of God's word, they were capable of receiving more elaborate instruction and of carrying out the more transcendent commandments of God. (*HE* 3.5)

The introduction of Aidan as missionary to the English is an excellent example of the importance of this spiritual theme to Bede.[34] The need for patience and understanding in missionary work is clearly highlighted in Bede's use of the milk and meat imagery. Aidan, however, is presented not only as one who is familiar with the intricacies of spiritual development and as one who is aware of traditional exegesis of this scriptural image, but as one who understands the exegesis enough to know exactly how to use it in a practical sense.

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[33] Gregory, *Epistle* 14, 17: *NPNF* 2nd series, 13, 109-110, *PL* 77, 1323-1324.
[34] O'Reilly (1995) xliv-xlv.

With this in mind let us look at the details of the narrative in the *Vita Gregorii* 23. Though this chapter describes the saving of the entire city of Rome from a barbarian attack, the writer introduces and focuses the theme of the story on the healing of the barbarian king's stomach disorder. Surely this cannot be due to the writer's inability to prioritise the importance of events, but rather encourages the audience to question the nature of the illness concerned.

After describing Gregory's protection of the city of Rome from devastation, the writer continues with the story of the barbarian king's serious digestive disorder. He is encouraged by Gregory to return to the milky foods of his infancy and is miraculously returned to health as a result of the pope's instructions. The Pauline image of milk cannot but spring to mind when one imagines what this story may have meant in a spiritual sense to a contemporary clerical audience: by being fed on milky food the barbarian king was being prepared for conversion and the solid food of the gospel.[35] But does the story also contain a message for the Christian teacher or bishop who weans the barbarian convert in the Christian faith?

Apart from Gregory's adaptation of the milk and meat image in his letter to Augustine of Canterbury, within the *Pastoral Rule* this image is adapted in a similar context also:

> But the preacher should know how to avoid drawing the mind of his hearer beyond its strength, lest, so to speak, the string of the soul, when stretched more than it can bear, should be broken. For all deep things should be covered up before a multitude of hearers, and scarcely opened to a few. For hence the Truth in person says: Who is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord has appointed over his household, to give them their measure of wheat in due season? (Lk 12:42). Now by a measure of wheat is expressed a portion of the Word, lest, when anything is given to a narrow heart beyond its capacity, it be spilled. Hence Paul says, 'I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. As it were to babes in Christ, I have given you milk to drink, and not meat' (1 Cor 3:1, 2).[36]

[35] Mosford (1988), 115.
[36] *Pastoral Rule* 3, 39: *NPNF* 2nd series, 12, 70-71, *PL* 77, 124.

The Whitby writer is heavily influenced by Gregory's *Pastoral Rule* and in a later chapter the *Vita Gregorii* concentrates specifically upon it, giving special emphasis to the precepts contained in the above passage:

> Therefore a teacher's discourse ought to be constructed according to the nature of his audience. For often things which are profitable to some will be hurtful to others. So, by describing the various vices and virtues of the human race and by enumerating almost all classes of mankind, he showed in a wonderful piece of exposition what should be said, to whom, at what length, and in what manner. (*VG* 31)[37]

The writer continues in chapter 32, the closing chapter of the book, to describe Gregory as 'that faithful and wise steward, set over [Christ's] household, who in due season gave all people throughout the world such abundant measure of wheat by his meditations on the divine mysteries' (cf. Lk 12:42). The images of milk and meat are combined with this Lucan feeding image in the above passage from Gregory's *Pastoral Rule*, and though the Whitby author uses them in separate chapters of his work, he nonetheless applies both of them to Gregory's missionary skills. These are two powerful feeding images and their connection may bring Gregory's dietary suggestions to the barbarian king into a deeper spiritual context.

Though these observations are interesting, on their own they cannot provide concrete evidence to support this assumption. However, the first half of chapter 23 sheds more light on the writer's spiritual objectives.

This section of the chapter describes Gregory appeasing the barbarian leader as he is about to lay waste the city of Rome:

> St Gregory . . . by his unique eloquence and holy instruction, so mollified the king's frenzied spirit that he promised so long as Gregory was Pope in that city and he was king, his nation would never lead an army against them. So, through the agency of the man of God, 'The streams of the river made glad the city of God' and in it 'He sanctified his tabernacle'. God did indeed 'help her with his countenance' so that though 'the heathen raged'

[37] Pro qualitate igitur audientium formari debet sermo doctorum. Sepe namque aliis officiunt que aliis prosunt. Hinc etiam diversa humani generis vitia virtutesque publicando, pene omnium hominum enumerando genra, quid, cui, quando, quamdiu vel quomodo esset dicendum, mira extortatione admonuit.

> against the city that was once mistress of the world, yet through this one man of God 'the kingdoms were moved'. And not without reason, for 'the most High uttered his voice and the earth trembled'. (*VG* 23)

In portraying the event the writer has turned to three verses from Psalm 46:

> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the most High has sanctified his tabernacle.
> God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
> God will help it when the morning dawns.
> The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved;
> he uttered his voice, the earth trembled. (Ps 46 (45): 4-6)[38]

Augustine's commentary on these verses give us an indication of how they may have been interpreted by the Whitby writer, and consequently sheds light on the writer's possible reasons for quoting from them. In this commentary Augustine deals with the entire psalm as an expression of the power of God's Word against the heathen, concentrating particularly upon the conversion of the gentiles. After describing the conflict between the Christian and the pagan as the shaking of mountains and the roaring of waters, he uses verse 4 to emphasise how the Lord will not desert his people, but sends streams of living water, which are his Spirit. According to Augustine, these streams are portrayed in John's Gospel (Jn 7:38-39) and are interpreted by him as the words of the apostles and their descendants, preaching the Gospel to the gentiles.[39] Being the basis of all physical nourishment water is, of course, a life-giving image and is here, as often in patristic exegesis, identified with the words of the Gospel as preached by the spiritual leaders of the church. The water carries resonances of baptism, and the dwelling of the Lord or the tabernacle represents for Augustine God's people who are sanctified by the streams of the Holy Spirit. The streams of the river

[38] Verses from this psalm are used as versicles associated with curing. Although there are no verbal echoes of these verses in the text, the concept is appropriate to the story of Gregory's curing of the Lombard king: Mosford (1988) 114.

[39] In another psalm Augustine again uses Jn 7:38-9 to portray the distribution of God's Spirit through the fruitful rivers of his many preachers, and describes how the early church 'began to preach the truth, and from the river of God that was filled with water, was the whole earth watered' (Augustine on Ps 65,13 (64,14): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 272, *CCSL* 39, 835). Likewise, Gregory also drew on Jn 7:38-9 and described the flowing of God's rivers into the desert of the Gentile lands, which themselves 'later flowed with brooks of teaching' (*Forty Gospel Homilies*, 6 (20.13): Hurst, 44-5, *PL* 76, 1166). In the *Vita Gregorii*, when discussing Gregory's wisdom in his knowledge of the angels, the Whitby writer also calls on Jn 7:38-9 to claim that rivers of wisdom flowed from the words of Gregory even more than from Augustine (*VG* 25). On the image of streams as representing the words of preachers and sound doctrine, see Bracken (2002) 174-80.

'which make glad the city of God' are also to be understood of the Holy Spirit, 'by whom is sanctified every godly soul believing in Christ, that it may be made a citizen of the City of God.' God's presence in the city is seen as his presence in the hearts of the faithful: if God is in the city it cannot be moved and his mighty works will indicate his presence. Verse six represents the futile strength of the godless against the power of God and Augustine describes their clamour as that of mere frogs against the thunder of the Lord. These kingdoms are therefore forced to bow down before the voice of the Lord, represented in the words of his apostles, and the apostles are described as 'mountains' for their firmness and strength and as 'clouds' for their rain and fruitfulness. The fact that it has been part of God's plan to send such rain to the gentiles is further developed by Augustine in his exposition.[40] The Whitby writer has already used the image of the tabernacle in referring to the Church in his account of Gregory's avoidance of and subsequent submission to the position of supreme and apostolic pastor, and in doing so promotes the importance of the theme of the active and contemplative life in the pastoral care of God's tabernacle here on earth.

Augustine's exposition of these three verses of Psalm 46 is particularly illuminating in trying to understand their function in the *Vita Gregorii* 23. By quoting the verses the Whitby writer views Rome as symbolizing the city of Jerusalem and this has significant implications for the interpretation of the story of Pope Gregory and the Lombard king.[41] In a literal or historical sense Gregory is shown protecting the earthly lives and physical livelihood of the members of his Church by defending them from this barbarian king, while symbolically the protection of Rome may represent the spiritual protection of all God's people, thereby emphasising the role of the bishop as the spiritual protector of the Church. His role is to guard the city from evil influence and to provide streams of living water to the souls within, ensuring that the Lord dwells within its walls.[42]

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[40] *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 46, 7-9 (45, 8-10): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 157-158, *CCSL* 38, 523-525.

[41] For discussion of how 'Petrine Rome, founded from Jerusalem, came to share symbolically in some of Jerusalem's associations of centrality', see O'Reilly (2003) 148-150.

[42] Though discussing a separate verse of scripture, Gregory, like Augustine, identifies the image of the river with the words of the apostles and their successors. He developes the image by

A more individual interpretation of the story may also exist, if we look at the personal relationship between Gregory and the king. On a literal level we see a bishop bringing a barbarian king to the point where he is willing to receive the bishop as his mentor. But the image of the streams of God's Holy Spirit also suggest personal conversion and baptism. In exegesis the city of Jerusalem could refer not only to the Church on earth and to the heavenly city but to the individual soul, and in the *Pastoral Rule* Gregory expounds the image of the prophet drawing a plan of the city of Jerusalem in Ezek 4:1, portrays the role of the holy teacher as a protector of the soul in precisely these terms. Holy teachers undertake to teach the earthly heart of their hearers; they guard it with great devotion, they reveal to it the violent attack of opposing vices and 'reveal to mundane hearts the vision of supernal peace' (the etymology of Jerusalem here evoking the heavenly life).[43] Therefore, when dealing with a gentile or barbarian people, the bishop not only has a duty to supply spiritual protection for the converted, but to act as a missionary in converting and nurturing the soul of the pagan gentile.

If there seems to be a strong possibility that the Whitby writer was familiar with Augustine's exposition on Psalm 46, and had it in mind when citing from the psalm in the account of this Gregorian miracle, it is worth viewing Augustine's thoughts on Psalm 46 in their entirety. This gives us an opportunity to look at the relevant verses in a larger context. Augustine opens by stating that no personal trouble is greater then the awareness of one's own sin, but he also offers reassurance that the Lord is our refuge (v.1). He adds that, as a carpenter, the Lord can see through the rotten outer layers of a tree and spot the potential for good timber deeper within, and is therefore willing to see the inner person. Augustine continues by stating that Christ will bring peace and tranquility and then discusses how the words of the Lord will be brought to the gentiles. Turmoil will exist and the mountains of the gentiles will roar as they come face to face with the mountain of the Lord, but the power of the Lord will overcome; through faithful preaching, God 'will be glorified among the gentiles' (verses 2-3). The

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emphasising the importance of the contemplative life to the pastor. See *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1, 5, 16: Gray (1990) 53, *CCSL* 142, 65-66.

[43] *Pastoral Rule*, 2, 10: *NPNF* 2nd Series, 20- 23, *PL* 77, 44-48.

interpretation of the three verses already discussed here (Ps 46:4-6) is now introduced and the powerful 'streams of that river' are expounded as the words of the apostles and bishops. The people are filled with God's presence and the kingdoms of the heathen bow before the Lord. The image of rain and its fruitfulness is used and we are encouraged to nourish our conscience with spiritual bread. Moreover, Augustine adds that although all other physicians may become sick themselves, the Lord is the great physician. He takes us up like a mother, where we are nursed in security and not exposed. The Lord is described as being everywhere and as the mountain which will crush the godless: 'He makes wars to cease . . . he breaks the bow and shatters the spear' (v.9). Augustine comments that it is in giving up the old arms of the godless and in taking up the arms of faith, hope and charity that we are taken up by the Lord. We are made weak so that we can be made strong; it is the Lord who has made us, so it is he who will make us anew. Augustine now returns to his comments made earlier in the Psalm and speaks of how God is exalted among the heathen and how kingdoms bow down before him, and states that when this is complete, the Jewish kingdom which has rejected Christ up to now will also be saved.[44]

It is hard to believe that the author of the *Vita Gregorii* was not using Augustine's commentary on this Psalm when putting together the narrative on the barbarian king. In union with Augustine's opening comments on Ps 46, the king appears to have experienced a personal conversion by taking Gregory as his mentor; like the tree which looks rotten on the outside he is shown to be sound within. The power of the Lord expressed through the words of his apostles against the fierceness of the heathen can be aptly applied to Gregory's words ('his unique eloquence and holy instruction') by which he pacified the fierce barbarian leader. It is at this point that the *Vita Gregorii* quotes the three verses (Ps 46:6-8) which represent the power, protection and presence of the Lord. The psalm's images of fruitfulness and bread accord with the feeding imagery central to this chapter. Significantly, the images of the physician and the mother are not in the psalm itself but are only introduced in Augustine's commentary. Augustine even describes the physician in terms of a mother taking up her little infant and

[44] *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 46(45): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 155-60, *CCSL* 38, 517-529.

nursing it securely. Read in the light of this psalm commentary, the image of the barbarian king returning to milky foods on Gregory's instruction and being healed may be seen to have considerable symbolic significance. As the king once lived on the milky foods of the Alps in his infancy, he now lives on spiritual milk in his spiritual infancy. Augustine's commentary also specifically speaks of laying down our old arms and taking up the spiritual arms of the Christian, and he refers to the Lord creating us anew. All is symbolically relevant to the conversion of a military leader.

In an article on miracle stories in Irish saints' *Lives*, Clare Stancliffe approaches miracle narratives by grouping them not by theme, but by function. This results in miracles being viewed as either vertical or horizontal. Vertical miracles are miracles normally performed by contemplatives and display God's power against the strength of paganism, while horizontal miracles are normally performed by bishops or pastoral figures and consist of miracles focused more upon a saint's relationship with others. The second group is divided again into two: miracles of punishment and of helping. Stancliffe notes that the *Life of Benedict* has a high proportion of vertical miracles.[45] The Whitby story of Gregory and the Lombard king in some ways evokes a scene from the *Dialogues* in which Benedict challenges the power of Totila the fearsome Goth and reduces the king to his knees. But although King Totila is over-awed by Benedict's gifts of prophecy, and we are told he was less cruel in the future, there is no sign of conversion and Benedict accurately predicts the king's death within the next ten years.[46] The major contrast between the two stories is that Benedict's miraculous powers of prophecy appear to be what Clare Stancliffe might call a vertical miracle, in which a contemplative monk challenges and defeats the power of a persecutor of the church, while Gregory's encounter with the Lombard king can be viewed as both a vertical and horizontal miracle. Gregory not only conquers the threat of the pagan king to the city of Rome, but he also reaches out in a spirit of Christian friendship and conversion. The writer presents Gregory performing a miracle characteristic of both the contemplative and the bishop.

[45] Stancliffe (1992) 94-7.
[46] On parallels to some elements in this story in the *Dialogues*, see Cusack (1975) 87-90.

This chapter of the *Vita Gregorii* is resonant with spiritual symbolism and, like Augustine's comments on Psalm 46, appears to be taking a two-pronged approach. The first and most straightforward is the power of God's word as a protection against the pagan kingdoms of the world and this is provided through the apostles of the Church. It is, however, essential that this be accompanied by a conversion of the heathen, a job that requires both eloquence and skill, namely the eloquence of the true preacher and the skill of the physician.

Relevant here is the slow diplomatic process of King Edwin's conversion described by Bede, a conversion finally brought about by Paulinus' use of a vision previously received by the king,

> Paulinus saw how difficult it was for the king's proud mind to turn humbly to the way of salvation and accept the mystery of the life-giving cross; yet he continued to labor for the salvation of the king and also the people he ruled, uttering words of exhortation to men as well as words of prayer to the merciful Lord. At length, as seems most probable, he was shown in spirit the nature of the vision which God had once revealed to the king. Nor did he lose any time in warning the king to fulfil the vows which, when he saw the vision, he had undertaken to perform if he should be delivered from the trouble he was then in and should ascend the royal throne. (*HE* 2.12)

The king trembled and prepared to fall at the bishop's feet; he confessed 'it was his will as well as his duty to accept the faith that Paulinus taught'.[47] Such an image must have been of great importance to an Anglo-Saxon bishop in the early period of the conversion.

Like Bede, the Whitby writer describes Edwin's conversion at the hands of Bishop Paulinus and, like Bede, also reveals the difficulties of wooing a pagan people to Christianity. The story of the crow and the arrow portray this clearly (*VG* 15) and illustrate the difficulties attached to giving up pagan ways. The role of the milk of God's word in achieving this process is, however, also highlighted in the story when Paulinus uses a basic missionary scriptural text to his recent converts (Gen 1: 27-28), thereby applying the Pauline precept of first feeding the

[47] *HE* 2.12,13.

people on the simpler concepts of God's Word.[48] For both Bede and the Whitby writer, the ultimate result of feeding spiritual milk is a compliant Christian king who is willing to listen to his bishop's advice. Throughout the *Historia Ecclesiastica* one is constantly reminded of the importance of a bishop's relationship with his king in building up the developing Anglo-Saxon church; the slow progress of Paulinus as missionary until the conversion of Edwin is a prime example of this.[49]

The *Vita Gregorii* was written at a time when there is evidence of apostasy and a holding on to pagan traditions, and therefore at a time when the role of the bishop as protector and missionary was a crucial one. Recognition of the missionary and pastoral significance of the account of Bishop Paulinus and his confrontation with turbulent elements among recent converts in King Edwin's royal company (*VG* 15) makes the relevance to an Anglo-Saxon audience of the story of Pope Gregory healing a barbarian king in Rome (*VG* 23) more readily apparent. The Whitby writer in compiling chapter 23 deals with the importance of this theme and the need for an appropriate and skillful approach by the pastoral teacher. By drawing on the Pauline image of milk and meat and uniting it with carefully selected scriptural quotations from a psalm whose exegesis directly links it with teaching the Word, the writer achieves this goal to full effect within the narrative.

2. Gregory and the two pagan magicians (*VG* 22)

The narrative of this story opens with a further reference to the Trinity and a quotation from Acts of the Apostles:

> Still further there is a third instance of his renown, in which Gregory followed him, the One in Three, who is 'no respecter of persons but in

[48] The Genesis image is also used by Pope Boniface in his missionary letter to Edwin, quoted by Bede in *HE* 2.10.
[49] See Chapter IV of this thesis for discussion on the relationship between bishop and king.

> every nation he that fears him and works righteousness is accepted with him' (Acts 10: 34-5). (*VG* 22)[50]

The story describes a man of wealth and influence who falls from grace, and afterwards rejects the corrective admonitions of Gregory. The verse from Acts is employed to emphasize the Pope's disregard for social status, as he excommunicates the unrepentant sinner from the universal church. However, the verse may have greater relevance in a work honouring the man responsible for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people. The verse is drawn from the account of the first Gentile converts at Caesarea, in which Peter has a vision of a great sheet descending from heaven, filled with all sorts of creatures, both those considered clean and unclean, and Peter is given the command to kill and eat. At this same time Cornelius, a Roman centurion, is visited by an angel and commanded to send to Joppa for Peter. Peter's vision is interpreted as God's command to open up the new church to Gentile as well as Jew, and when Peter enters the house of Cornelius, to the surprise of the Jewish Christians, the Holy Spirit descends upon the centurion and his family. It is within this context that Peter announces the entry of the Gentile peoples into the Church of Christ:

> Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him' (Acts 10:34-5).

Gregory and Bede single out Peter's baptism of Cornelius as a critical event in salvation history, and it is seen to mark the beginning of the worldwide conversion of the Gentile peoples.[51] Bede's exegesis on the passage highlights the importance of the Trinity, and the mystery of the Trinity is central to his

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[50] Tertia ad hec sequitur eius opinio celebritatis, in qua illum sectus est, qui unus in trina deitate non est personarum acceptor Deus. Sed in omni gente qui timet eum et operatur iustitiam, acceptus est illi.

[51] Diarmuid Scully points out that Bede viewed Peter's call to convert the Gentiles as ultimately bringing about the establishment of the papacy in Rome. This took place during the reign of Claudius and the fact that Britain entered the Roman Empire during this reign is viewed by Bede as a foreshadowing of the Anglo-Saxon conversion by means of Peter's successor. Such images were important for both Bede and Gildas in creating a predestined role for Britain as part of God's universal Church and helped connect Britain to the first Gentile conversions in the Acts of the Apostles: Scully (2000) 168,198. On the importance of cults of the apostles during the early period of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, see Thacker (2000).

interpretation of this scriptural portrayal of the Gentile conversion.[52] Similarly, after quoting from this passage, the Whitby writer shows Gregory defeating two pagan magicians by adapting the image of the Trinity in the sign of the cross, and it is this that results in the conversion and baptism of the two men. The Holy Spirit, as the third Person of the Trinity, is highlighted as the one who strikes the magicians with blindness and it is this same Spirit that they receive in baptism as they begin their new life as Christians. It is also worth noting that, although the Christian mission as portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles is largely an account of St Paul's missionary travels to the Gentiles, the writer's choice at the opening of this miracle narrative focuses attention here on Peter, whom Gregory represents as Bishop of Rome, and that it is Gregory, Peter's successor, who is responsible for the inclusion of the Anglo-Saxon race into the Church.

Blindness is an image prominent in Scripture and all four evangelists proclaim Christ's healing of the blind, the lame, and the deaf. The image is an appropriate one for the preacher, as it is one of the easiest images to apply to matters of faith and spirituality. Hence biblical commentators consistently interpret gospel narratives portraying Christ's healing of the blind as also representing the opening of the inner eye to the faith of Christ. However, rather then portraying Gregory as one healing the blind, the Whitby writer describes a story of Gregory striking two pagan magicians with the curse of physical blindness. Though different from its usual gospel application, the writer's employment of such a potent image should not be passed over too easily. One needs also to be aware of the use of the salutary role of the image in the conversion of St Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9: 1-18) and Paul's subsequent striking blind of Bar-Jesus, as part of his own missionary strategy (Acts 13:6-12).[53] Earlier in the *Vita Gregorii*, in ch.6, while encouraging a spiritual approach to miracles, the writer has already told us that Gregory's teachings were of more value then St Paul's striking blind of Bar-Jesus, the Jewish magician who tried to curtail Paul's missionary conversion of some Roman Gentiles. However, the Whitby story has an unusual conclusion. Though

[52] Bede provides a detailed exegesis on the Cornelius material and its symbolic relevance to the inclusion of the Gentiles into the universal Church in his *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*: Martin (1989) 95-104, *CCSL* 121, 48-55.
[53] For Old Testament examples of blindness as punishment, see Gen 19:11 and 2 Kings 6:18, 23.

both men are converted and baptised, they are permanently blinded and are given no hope of ever having their sight restored. The following will investigate the role which different scriptural and patristic concepts of blindness may have played in the Whitby writer's portrayal of events.

St Augustine expounds Matthew's account of Christ's healing of two blind men who asked that their eyes be opened and who, touched by Christ, 'immediately saw and followed him' (Mtt 20:30-4). In accordance with other expositions on the healing of the blind, Augustine concentrates on the theme of spiritual blindness. As is characteristic of Augustine's attitude to miracles, he opens the work by emphasising to the reader the reality of spiritual miracles in daily Christian living:

> These things then the Lord did to invite us to the faith. This faith reigns now in the Church, which is spread throughout the whole world. And now he works greater cures, on account of which he did not disdain then to exhibit those lesser ones. For as the soul is better than the body, so is the saving health of the soul better than the health of the body. The blind body doth not now open its eyes by a miracle of the Lord, but the blinded heart opens its eyes to the word of the Lord. The mortal corpse does not now rise again, but the soul rises again which lay dead in a living body. The deaf ears of the body are not now opened; but how many have the ears of their heart closed, which yet fly open at the penetrating word of God, so that they believe who did not believe, and they live well, who did live evilly, and they obey, who did not obey; and we say, 'Such a man is become a believer;' and we wonder when we hear of them whom once we had known as hardened.[54]

Though no explicit link is made between the two blind magicians in *VG* 22 and the two blind men in Mtt 20:30-34, it is interesting that Augustine describes the two men in the Gospel story as representing the entire Church, that is the Church of the Jews and the Gentiles, and this is quite pertinent to the Whitby writer's quotation from Acts.

Augustine continues his discourse on the two blind men with an interesting concept on spiritual recognition:

[54] *Sermons on selected Lessons of the New Testament* 38, 3: *NPNF* 1st series, 6, 379, *PL* 38, 540.

> Again, what eyes did he look for when he spoke to those who saw indeed, but who saw only with the eyes of the flesh? For when Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us;' he understood indeed that if the Father were shown him, it might well suffice him; but how would the Father suffice him whom he that was equal to the Father sufficed not? And why did he not suffice? Because he was not seen. And why was he not seen? Because the eye whereby he might be seen was not yet whole. For this, namely, that the Lord was seen in the flesh with the outward eyes, not only the disciples who honoured him saw, but also the Jews who crucified him. He then, who wished to be seen in another way, sought for other eyes. And therefore it was that to him who said, 'Show us the Father, and it suffices us;' he answered, 'Have I been so long time with you and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who hath seen me, has seen the Father also'. And that he might in the meanwhile heal the eyes of faith, he has first of all instructions given him regarding faith, that so he might attain to sight. And lest Philip should think that he was to conceive of God under the same form in which he then saw the Lord Jesus Christ in the body, he immediately subjoined; 'Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" He had already said, 'He who has seen me, hath seen the Father also.' But Philip's eye was not yet sound enough to see the Father, nor consequently to see the Son who is himself co-equal with the Father.[55]

The ability to recognise Christ's identity is an important theme in this passage and concepts of the eyes of the flesh and the eyes of the heart are clearly laid out. It is impossible for one to recognise Jesus by means of the eyes of the flesh and hagiographers followed this theme in their presentation of the sinner's inability to recognise the holy. Gregory uses this *topos* in several places in the *Dialogues*, repeatedly presenting circumstances in which those who did not have the eyes of faith were unable to recognise saintly figures. When Benedict's cave is first discovered by shepherds, they think it is some wild beast they see, but are converted from their own bestial habits by coming to know the saint for who he really is.[56] Neither is Totila the Gothic king able to recognise the holiness of the saintly Bishop Cassius.[57] A more remarkable story concerns an attack of some soldiers upon a monastery and their inability to see the holy Libertinus whom they sought:

> So, breaking into the chapel, they began angrily to shout his name, not knowing that he was lying prostrate in prayer on the chapel floor. The remarkable thing is that in their mad search they kept stumbling against

[55] *Sermons on selected Lessons of the New Testament* 38, 4: *NPNF* 1st series, 6, 379-380, *PL* 38, 541.
[56] *Dialogues* 2.1: Zimmerman (1959) 59, *SC* 260, 136.
[57] *Dialogues* 3.6: Zimmerman (1959) 120, *SC* 260, 276-278.

> him without being able to see him. Frustrated in their blindness, they left the monastery empty-handed.[58]

Another story from the *Dialogues*, displaying a similar theme, is that of the holy Constantius. This story is witness to a visitor's inability to recognise a man of humble appearance as a great saintly figure.[59]

On returning to the *Vita Gregorii*, we see also that the two magicians who plan their evil tricks upon St Gregory are unable to identify the Pope and need to have him pointed out. This is in spite of the fact that Gregory travelled on horseback separately from the main body of the clergy and was probably the most recognisable public figure in all of Rome. Even if we consider that these magicians were brought in from outside and had not seen the saint before, the question must be asked, why would the writer point out this otherwise irrelevant fact to the reader at all? The striking blind of the two men in *VG* 22 would therefore seem to highlight their spiritual blindness. The story culminates in the conversion and baptism of the two pagan magicians and their being filled with God's Holy Spirit. As with St Paul on the road to Damascus, the striking blind of these would-be Christian persecutors has precipitated the opening of the eyes of their hearts in a spirit of conversion. Similarly, St Paul's striking blind of Bar-Jesus the magician (Elymas), who was 'full of all guile, full of all deceit, child of the devil, enemy of all justice', brought about the conversion of the Roman proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:6-12) and, indeed, John Chrysostom claimed it brought about the conversion of Bar-Jesus himself.[60]

By the time of Gregory pagan practice was not the norm in Roman society, for Christianity had established a strong hegemony, but the practice of pagan magicians may have had far more relevance for the Whitby writer's Anglo-Saxon audience. Bede presents the difficulties of coping with Christians who reverted to pagan ways after famine or plague.[61]

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[58] *Dialogues* 1.2: Zimmerman (1959) 10, *SC* 260, 26.
[59] *Dialogues* 1.5: Zimmerman (1959) 26-7, *SC* 260, 60-62.
[60] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, 28: *NPNF* 1st series, 11, 178-81, *PG* 60, 209-214.
[61] See, for example, *HE* 3. 30; *VP* 9; also *HE* 2.5,15 for examples of kings who along with their peoples reverted to paganism. On continued paganism up to the time of Bede, see McCready

The image of blindness was frequently adapted by the Christian missionary in the face of paganism and this has firm scriptural roots in the description of idols:

> The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
> the work of human hands.
> They have mouths, but they do not speak;
> they have eyes, but they do not see;
> they have ears, but they do not hear,
> and there is no breath in their mouths.
> Those who make them
> and all who trust them
> shall become like them. (Ps 135:15-18)

These verses are part of a scriptural chain employing similar imagery and are directed towards the condemnation of paganism and the worship of idols. Ps 115 adapts this imagery and Isaiah 44:9-25 does likewise. In his depiction of Edwin's conversion, Bede presents a classic portrayal of the clash between paganism and Christianity, and this traditional use of imagery is called into play. The material is used by Bede as he enhances his complex use of imagery by quoting a letter from Pope Boniface to the King:

> So we have undertaken in this letter to exhort your Majesty with all affection and deepest love, to hate idols and idol worship, to spurn their foolish shrines and the deceitful flatteries of their soothsaying? And to believe in God the Father Almighty and in his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, so that you may be freed from the devil's fetters and, by the power of the holy and undivided Trinity, become a partaker of eternal life. The great guilt of those who cling to the pernicious superstitions of idolatrous worship is seen in the damnable form of their gods. Of these the psalmist says, 'All the gods of the nations are devils; but the Lord made the heavens' (Ps 95:5). And again, 'Eyes have they but they see not; they have ears but they hear not; noses have they but they smell not; they have hands but they handle not; feet have they but they walk not; and those who put their trust in them therefore become like them ...' (Ps 113:5-8; Ps 134:15-18).

(1994) 117. The Whitby writer describes the two pagan magicians as taking up their place on a high level in order to perform their magic, and this is exactly the way in which Eddius presents the pagan magician in his *Vita Wilfridi* (*VW* 13). For both Eddius and the Whitby writer, the image of the pagan magician is used as a symbol of the victory of Christianity over paganism, except that in the case of the Whitby writer the pagans are ultimately baptized into the church of Christ. As with Eddius, the Whitby writer appears to associate the high position with the administering of a pagan curse, as taken from Balak's attempt to have Balaam curse the people of God in the Old Testament (Num 22, 23, 24 and Deut 23:4-5); on the magicians' use of an elevated position, see also Mosford (1988).

> So you should take upon you the sign of the holy cross, by which the human race has been redeemed, and cast out of your hearts the accursed wiles and cunning of the devil, who is the jealous foe of the works of God's goodness ...
>
> So come to the knowledge of him who created you and breathed into you the breath of life, who sent his only-begotten Son for your redemption and to save you from original sin, so that he might deliver you from the power of the devil's perversity and wickedness, and bestow heavenly rewards upon you. Accept the teaching of the preachers and the gospel of God which they proclaim to you, so that, as we have often said, you may believe in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ his Son and in the Holy Spirit, the indivisible Trinity. Then when you have put to flight devilish thoughts and driven from you the temptations of the venomous and deceitful foe, having been born again by water and the Holy Spirit, may you through his bountiful aid dwell with him in whom you have believed, in the splendour of eternal glory. (*HE* 2.10)

As with the Whitby writer in *VG* 22, Pope Boniface condemns pagan practice and magic, and in both cases a clash between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the devils is portrayed. The role of magicians or soothsayers is common to both texts, along with the evil which accompanies them. Boniface's use of Ps 134 (135) describes the images as having eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear, and likewise describes their worshipers as being akin to them in their spiritual blindness and deafness. In both cases also, it is the sign of the cross that is put forward as that which casts out the devils and their powers, thus placing great significance on this potent expression of Christ's power.[62] This also highlights the role of the Trinity, which is an important image for the theme of conversion. Finally, both texts culminate in baptism, via the preacher, and the acceptance of the pagan into the Church of Christ. It is important to note that the Pope's letter witnesses the use of this imagery both by Boniface in his correspondence with Edwin and by Bede as he addresses the Anglo-Saxon Church a century later.[63] The Whitby writer's account of this Gregorian miracle within a Roman setting may, therefore, in accordance with other miracle material in the work, contain a message of conversion for the Anglo-Saxon people.

[62] Examples of this *topos* are Martin's use of the sign of the cross in his battle against pagan practice when destroying a pagan holy tree (*VM* 13), St Columba's expulsion of a demon from a milk churn (*VC* 2, 7), and Gregory goes so far as to describe a scene in which even a Jew protects himself with the sign of the holy cross as he sleeps among demons in an old pagan temple, *Dialogues* 3, 7: Zimmerman (1959) 121-2, *SC* 260, 280-282.
[63] O'Reilly (1995) xlvi-xlvii.

However, there is one twist to this story that cannot be ignored and this is that, unlike the salutary but temporary blinding of Paul and Bar-Jesus (Acts 9:1-14; 13:9-12), both of the magicians in the Whitby story are permanently blinded. Though their spiritual eyes are open to the faith, the writer highlights Gregory specifically pointing out that physically the men are to remain permanently blinded to ensure that they do not revert to their old and sinful ways. Perhaps the writer is merely reasserting the value of the spiritual over the physical at a time when the demand for physical miracles was not being satisfactorily met, and the Christian psyche was of course quite familiar with an attitude of enduring physical suffering for the greater good of the soul. One of Jerome's letters is a letter of consolation to Castrutius, a blind man who had unsuccessfully endeavored to visit the saint by taking an arduous journey across the Adriatic. The man is encouraged by the saint's use of Scripture, highlighting that the Lord only punishes and reprimands those whom he loves, and by Jerome's describing a story in which Antony points out to a blind man that he should not lament the loss of a faculty shared with gnats and flies, when he holds something so spiritually precious.[64]

The *Dialogues* also describe a story in which the saintly Abbot Spes is not healed of physical blindness until after a lapse of forty years, and this account succinctly portrays a spiritually positive attitude to physical blindness.[65] There may, however, be a deeper spiritual significance to the permanent blinding of Gregory's two new converts in the *Vita Gregorii*.

St John's gospel describes Christ's healing of a man born blind and a subsequent encounter with the Pharisees results in Christ making the following statement:

> Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' (Jn 9: 39)

Augustine provides an entire tractate on this miracle, and supplies an interesting exposition on this particular statement:

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[64] *The Letters of St Jerome* 68: *NPNF* 2nd series, 6, 140-41, Labourt, 3, 188-190.
[65] *Dialogues*, 4,11: Zimmerman (1959) 202, *SC* 265, 46.

> By these words, then, were some of the Pharisees' disturbed, and said unto him, 'Are we blind also?' Hear now what it is that moved them, 'And they who see may be made blind'. Jesus said unto them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin'; while blindness itself is sin. 'If you were blind' that is, if you considered yourselves blind, if you called yourselves blind, you also would have recourse to the physician: if, then in this way 'you were blind, you would have no sin', for 'I am come to take away sin'. But now you say, we see; [therefore] your sin remains. Wherefore? Because by saying, 'We see', you seek not the physician, you remain in your blindness. This, then, is that which a little above we did not understand, when he said, 'I am come, that they who see not may see'; for what does this mean, 'that they who see not may see'? They who acknowledge that they do not see, and seek the physician, that they may receive sight. 'And they who see may be made blind': what does this mean, 'they who see may be made blind'? That they who think they see, and seek not the physician, may abide in their blindness.[66]

The Christian is therefore required to continually seek help by humbly acknowledging the spiritual blindness that accompanies human nature. Perhaps Augustine's approach to this scriptural paradox provides the key to the Whitby writer's use of the image of permanent blindness.

In a homily in which Leah represents the active life and Rachel the contemplative, Gregory acknowledges that, for the greater need of others, the contemplative life will need to be sacrificed for the active. Both lives are viewed as totally dependant upon one another, but the humble sacrifice made by the contemplative, to ensure a life of pastoral action, is described in a context of blindness:

> Then blessed Jacob had indeed desired Rachel but in the night accepted Leah because all who are turned to the Lord have desired the contemplative life and seek the quiet of the Eternal Kingdom, but must first in the night of this present life perform the works which they can, sweat with effort, i.e. accept Leah in order that they afterward rest in the arms of Rachel, in order to see the beginning. Then Rachel was a seer, and sterile, Leah truly purblind, but fertile, Rachel beautiful and barren, because the contemplative life is splendid in the spirit but, whereas it seeks to rest in silence, it does not produce sons from preaching. It sees and does not bring forth, because in zeal for its quiet it is less kindled in the collection of others, and does not suffice to reveal to others by preaching how much it inwardly perceives. Leah truly is purblind and fertile because the active life, while it is engaged in labour, sees less but when, now by word now by example, it kindles its neighbors to follow suit, it produces many sons in

[66] *Tractates on the Gospel of St John* 44, 17: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 249, *CCSL* 36, 388.

> the good work. And if it does not avail to stretch its mind in contemplation yet it is able to beget followers from that which it does outwardly.[67]

The active and contemplative life was viewed by Gregory in cyclical terms and it is the humility of acknowledging one's spiritual blindness within the struggle of the active life that leads one again to the bliss of the contemplative. In another homily on Ezekiel, Gregory points out that some of the obscurities in Scripture can never be understood in this life, for we can only understand such things when we enter the heavenly kingdom. He explains that this is necessary, so that in 'recognizing the weakness of our blindness, we may advance to humility rather than to intelligence'.[68]

The Whitby writer may therefore be adapting the image of permanent blindness to portray the need for the Christian to remain humbly aware of the constant struggle to attain holiness in a world in which one can never reach perfection. According to Gregory such blindness is an inevitable consequence of the sacrifice made in the Christian's life of missionary action, and this sacrifice is an answer to Christ's call to reach out to others. The very words used by the Whitby writer, when relating to permanent blindness, reinforce this message:

> He said, 'You must remain blind forever because, if you had your sight, you would desire to return to your evil arts and practice them as before, with the help of the devils.' For this reason it is said that they were finally converted to God and buried with Christ in baptism. St. Gregory, the man of God, so long as they lived, entrusted them with the church funds for caring for the poor, so that they became righteous healers of souls for the Lord. (*VG* 22)[69]

Though John the Deacon found these closing words of the chapter difficult and wondered did the writer mean that the two men were beneficiaries of the church funds rather then distributors, Colgrave asserts that any translation

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[67] *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2, 2,10: Gray (1990) 175-6, *CCSL* 142, 231-232.
[68] *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2, 5, 4: Gray (1990) 206, *CCSL* 142, 277.
[69] Quibus ipse ait, 'Ceci esse debetis in perpetuum, quia si lumen oculorum vestrorum habebitis, iterum reverti volueritis ad artem vestram pessimam eamque per demones ut prius excolere.' Hac igitur ex causa postremo dicuntur ad Deum conversi, Christi baptimiste consepulti. Eosque tales vir Domini sanctus Gregorius ecclesiastica stipe quamdiu viverent, mandavit, alendos pauperes, perfectos pro Domino medicos animarum (*VG* 22). Mosford (1988) 113, points out that there appears to be a comparison between the state of the magicians who practice devilish arts, when they could see, and their fate when they were blind. When blind they did good works by feeding the poor, and so became acceptable to Christ who was a healer of souls.

other than the above must be incorrect and Mosford supports Colgrave in this translation.[70] It is understandable, though, that one would wonder how two blind men might be given such financial responsibility in the sixth century. The men are however described as 'righteous healers of souls for the Lord', an image adapted by Gregory himself to represent the good pastor. Indeed, in ch. 6, as already mentioned, where spiritual instruction is given precedence over Paul's miraculous blinding of Bar-Jesus, the Whitby writer states that miracles are to 'be recognized not only in the healing of the body or the raising from the dead, but, as our own St Gregory has explained, still more in the healing of souls' (*VG* 6).

Within this context, and within the context of the exegesis discussed above, the writer's closing message appears to be pointing to a theme which highlights an active life of missionary service.[71] Such a spiritual interpretation eliminates any practical difficulties one might have with the future careers of two blind men in the late sixth or early seventh century. The narrative of this Gregorian miracle opens with a quotation from St Peter on Gentile conversion and continues with Gregory's converting of two pagan magicians who now in turn, in a spirit of humility, appear to be commissioned to go and do the same for others.

3. The relic rags (*VG* 21)

The story of the relic rags is a detailed account of some visitors to Rome on a mission to bring back some substantial relics to their master.[72] Similar to the

[70] Colgrave (1968) 154; Mosford (1988) 42.
[71] Mosford (1988), xvii, xviii highlights the theme of conversion in Gregory's miracles in the *VG* and the images of spiritual feeding.
[72] Mosford (1988) xliv, 108, suggests that this material, along with other stories, may have originated from the spiritual writings of John Moschos; see also Thacker (1998). On the importance of rags for the creating of secondary or contact relics in the early medieval period, see Thacker (2000) 252. This article emphasises the contrast between the cults of the martyrs in Rome, which focused more on the lives and sufferings of their subjects, and the Gaulish cults which focused more upon the miracles connected to a saint's shrine. This explains why the *Dialogues* does not include any miracles associated with cult shrines, as do the writings of Gregory of Tours, but the *Dialogues* focuses more on the didactic accounts of living characters of its author's own times. Thacker argues that until the promotion of Cuthbert's cult in the late seventh century, the Anglo-Saxon church had followed the Roman model, but as they began to

miracle story preceding it, it is a eucharistic miracle, and like the story in which the matron's faith is increased by the host being transformed into a bleeding little finger (*VG* 20), on this occasion the eucharistic celebration causes the blood of the martyrs to enter the rags of the saints concerned. This is witnessed to be true when Gregory cuts the rags with a knife and blood miraculously flows from the relics. Like the previous story, Gregory depends on the prayers of the faithful congregation to ensure the miraculous results, and the consequence is an increase in faith in those who had hitherto been weak.[73] A strong theme of church communion is therefore prevalent within both these eucharistic contexts, and faith is essential in being part of this communion.

The Whitby writer concludes the miracle story by adapting three scriptural quotations:

> They were greatly perturbed and amazed at what they had seen and heard and so were all the onlookers. Whereupon, as in the previous story, he said that they must seek God in prayer so that their faith might be strengthened. When this was done they returned home and told their master all these things. When he heard their story he was moved by what Gregory had said and also by holy faith, of which it is written that 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin' (Rom 14:23). He accepted with a pure heart what he had heard concerning all these relics, believing him who is said to 'purify their hearts by faith' (Acts 15:9). And so even greater miracles are said to have shone forth more frequently from their new resting-place than in the Church of St. Peter itself. 'O how marvellous is God in his saints; the God of Israel is he who shall give strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God' (Ps 68:35). (*VG* 21)[74]

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promote their own native saints they took up the Gaulish model and reaped the social and political advantages of such cults. This may explain why the Whitby writer does not present Edwin's shrine as a focus of posthumous miracles to the same degree that other Anglo-Saxon hagiographers do.

[73] On the importance of the eucharist and the communion of Christ's mystical body in order to understand Gregory's views on relics, see Straw (1999) 266. Straw (1988) 103-7 emphasises that, for Gregory, the eucharist was a means by which the faithful emptied themselves in humble obedience to God and offered themselves in union with Christ in order that they might reach out to others in charity. This is the place in which both worlds come together in an extraordinary way, to symbolise the union of all division caused by the Fall. Both a vertical and horizontal axis of power contained in the eucharist ensures that the Christian's relationship with God and his neighbour are interdependant, and it is therefore not surprising that several impressive miracles in the *Dialogues* focus on the power of the eucharist. Out of four miracle stories attributed here to Gregory, the Whitby writer chooses two eucharistic miracles, a testament to the writer's awareness of the importance of this theme to the pastoral message conveyed in the scriptural exegesis included in the narrative.

[74] Qui cum hec viderunt et audierunt, satis consternati, cum omnibus admirabantur que viderunt et audierunt. Ubi statim ut supra per orationem Deum dixit orandum ut fides esset adfirmanda. Quo scilicet effecto reversi, domino suo nuntiabant hec universa. Que ipse audiens tam sancti viri

The first of these scriptural quotations, Rom 14:23, speaks for itself in its emphasis on faith, but a similar quotation from Acts 15:9 has even deeper significance. This arises in the context of Peter's speech at the council of Jerusalem, heralding the inclusion of the Gentile people as members of God's chosen people by means of faith:

> The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us.' (Acts 15:6-9)

A message proclaiming the inclusion of the Gentile peoples into the church of Christ is crucial to a view of the English conversion within God's plan.[75]

The story of the relic rags is one for which a definite source can be found.[76] In 594 Constantina, wife of the Emperor Mauricius Tiberius, sent to Gregory asking for St Paul's head or some part of his body for a new church which she was having built. The pope answered politely that it was not the custom to do such a thing but only to send associated objects. Gregory then went on to tell how in the time of Leo I, when some Greeks asked for relics, they were given cloths and that when the Greeks cut the cloths blood ran from them, thus proving their authenticity.[77] However, what is interesting in this instance, is the fact that the Whitby writer changes the subject and beneficiary of the miracle, thus addressing the miracle towards a western barbarian rather then an eastern Greek: 'some men came to Rome from western parts, having been sent by their

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auditis oraculis quam fide divina de qua scriptum est, ' Omne quod non est ex fide peccatum est,' eam mundo corde adcommodavit omnibus de his que audivit, credens ei de quo dicitur, 'Mundans fide corda eorum.' Unde etaim maiora quam in sancti Petri eclesia inibi dicuntur sepe efulsisse miracula. O mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis: Deus Israel ipse dabit virtutem et fortitudinem plebi sue. Benedictus Deus!

[75] Commenting on this passage, Bede highlights faith as the key to Gentile conversion: Martin (1989) 130, *CCSL* 121, 66. O'Reilly (1995) xliv, xlv relates the meeting at which Aidan uses the Pauline image of milk (*HE* 3.5) to the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and its associated exegesis.

[76] Colgrave (1968) 153; see also McCready (1989) 23, in which Gregory's account of this story of Pope Leo is discussed in the context of Gregory's attitude to relics.

[77] There is evidence other then Gregory's letter to Constantina which shows that in the early period, popes did prefer to send cloths as relics rather than the body parts of a saint: see Mosford (1988) 108-11.

master to bring him some relics of the saints from that city'. The Germanic peoples are the most recent of the Gentiles to enter Christ's Church and it is significant that, in accordance with the quotation from Peter's discourse at the council of Jerusalem, the missionary figure in this story is Gregory, Peter's successor, as he celebrates Mass at St Peter's in Rome.

The chapter closes with its final scriptural quotation, the conclusion of Ps 68, an exclamation of praise for the God of Israel. Augustine's commentary on verses 34-5 of this Psalm, through the words of St Paul, places its adaptation by the Whitby writer directly into the context already established:

> 'Give glory to God, whose magnificence is over Israel'. Of whom the Apostle says, 'Upon the Israel of God' (Gal 6:16). For 'not all that are out of Israel, are Israelites' (Rom 9:6), for there is also an Israel after the flesh. Whence he says, 'See ye Israel after the flesh' (1 Cor 10:18). 'For they that are sons of the flesh, are not sons of God, but sons of promise are counted for a seed' (Rom 9:8).[78]

Augustine elaborates on this message, referring also to the resurrection of the saints and their praise of God on the day of resurrection: 'There shall be fulfilled the name Israel itself, which is "one seeing God", for we shall see him as he is'. Cassiodorus interprets the psalmist's use of the word *Israel* in the same way, viewing its use as signifying the universal Church, in which God is truly beheld when we experience him with upright faith.[79]

The miracle stories discussed in this chapter are all centred in Rome and may well have been sourced there, but the Whitby writer injects a whole new emphasis by creating a subtle but effective web of scriptural exegesis. The images adapted in each of the miracle stories hold their own treasure of pastoral wisdom and provide material for meditation for the clerical reader, but they are all well grounded within the general theme of Gentile conversion. Though the writer is not as fastidious with regard to sources as are Bede and Gregory, a closer look at the use of Scripture within the Roman miracle stories has

[78] *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 68,39 (67,43): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 299, *CCSL* 39, 900.
[79] Cassiodorus, *Explanations of the Psalms* Ps 67(68), 35: Walsh (1991) 2, 139, *CCSL* 97, 602.

established a clear didactic objective. Similarly, it may be demonstrated that long-established exegetical images concerning the conversion of gentiles are adapted in the Whitby account of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people in particular.

CHAPTER IV

PAULINUS: THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP

Early Anglo-Saxon hagiographers appear at times almost to be in competition to depict their subjects as advocates of Roman orthodoxy. Stephen of Ripon presents Wilfrid as bringing to Northumbria the prowess of a Roman bishop responsible for the introduction of much Roman tradition in the north.[1] He presents a bishop who goes so far as to challenge Anglo-Saxon kings with the authority of Rome. Bede's depiction of Cuthbert's different episcopal style also portrays a saint loyal to Rome and ensures that the saint's last words include a command that no communion should be had with those who do not accept the correct celebration of Easter (*VP* 39).[2] However, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* testifies that the pastoral policies of Archbishop Theodore were of paramount importance in completing the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people in the second half of the seventh century, setting up an impressive school of learning at Canterbury (*HE* 4.2) and creating a church zealous enough to send missionaries abroad.[3]

This era began when Oswiu's Bernician dynasty decided to turn its ecclesiastical loyalties towards Rome (*HE* 3.25). Theodore received Oswiu's support as sole metropolitan and Oswiu's dynasty received the archbishop's support as over- kings of Britain (*HE* 3.29). The royal monastery at Whitby was

[1] Laynesmith (2000) 163-75 discusses Stephen of Ripon's use of exegesis to depict Wilfrid as one responsible for the restoration of the church in Northumbria. This is presented as the peak of Wilfrid's career, and the highpoint of the *Vita*. See also Trent Foley (1994) 53-70, for Stephen's presentation of Wilfrid as father figure and even as father of the English church itself. Goffart argues that a large part of the *HE* is a reaction to Eddius's portrait of Wilfrid as the main source of catholic orthodoxy in the north. He claims that Bede creates an alternative view, and this is why the Easter controversy plays such a central role in the work. This, however, does not tally with Bede's glowing account of Wilfrid's career (*HE* 5.19). Similarly, Goffart also views the Whitby *Vita Gregorii* as a reaction to Stephen of Ripon's portrayal of Wilfrid: Goffart (1985) 235-328.

[2] Thacker (1983) highlights Bede's portrayal of Cuthbert as a personification of Gregorian ideals in the active and contemplative life. Though the presentations of Wilfrid and Cuthbert appear to have little in common, Coates (1996) observes the shared theme of episcopal authority and loyalty to Rome. For further comparison of both these saints and their hagiographers, see Goffart (1985) 235-328 and Trent Foley (1994) 107-132.

[3] Bischoff and Lapidge (1994); see also Ward (1991) and Brock (1995).

where Oswiu decided to make this major decision and it was also the house entered by his daughter Aelfflaed and by his widow Eanflaed, and where Oswiu himself, along with other kings of the Bernician dynasty, was laid to rest (*HE* 3.24). Though Oswiu was a convert to Roman orthodoxy, Eanflaed, the daughter of King Edwin, came from the Roman Christian tradition and had gone into exile to Kent with her mother Aethelburh and Bishop Paulinus at the time of her father's death (*HE* 2.20). Even after her return to Northumbria and marriage to King Oswiu, Eanflaed continued in the Roman tradition (*HE* 3.25) and encouraged and supported Wilfrid in his first journey to Rome (*VW* 3). Later, as joint abbess at Whitby at a time of great Roman influence, Eanflaed's presence must have strengthened further any ties which existed between Whitby and Canterbury and, as already noted, the monastery produced five bishops for Theodore's episcopal reforms.[4]

Though it has sometimes been assumed that the Whitby writer's Roman material derived from oral tradition, Alan Thacker has argued that it may well have derived from a Roman literary source.[5] He further argues that this source may have arrived via Theodore's school at Canterbury and that the material may have been used for the promotion of a cult to Gregory. The cult is viewed as Theodore's creation of a national saint to bring about ecclesiastical unity under Canterbury.[6] Thacker sees the Whitby *Vita* arising from the monastery's co-operation with Canterbury in promoting Gregory as a symbol of unity under a single metropolitan. Wilfrid's biographer claims a metropolitan see at York for his saint (*VW* 16) and provides plenty of evidence of the friction that existed between Wilfrid and Theodore. Thacker argues that it was almost certainly divisions within the ecclesiastical and political establishment of Northumbria which permitted Theodore to undermine the Gregorian plan for a northern metropolitan and helped retain a spirit of unity under Canterbury, in spite of Wilfrid's stance at York and his troublesome appeals to the apostolic see.[7]

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[4] On Eanflaed's connections with Canterbury see Gransden (1974) 72-3.
[5] It is suggested that the source was a series of writings recorded by Gregory's disciples in Rome and that part of this material is also recorded in the writings of John Moschos. See Thacker (1976) 38 -79 and Thacker (1998) 63-7; also Mosford (1988) 44.
[6] Thacker (1998); see also Thacker (1999).
[7] Thacker (1999) 381. Thacker argues that a cult of Augustine of Canterbury was ignored by Theodore in his efforts to promote a saint whose cult could encompass both the northern and

Bishop Paulinus was the first Christian bishop to preach to the Northumbrian people and his first Christian convert was the infant princess, Eanflaed (*HE* 2.9).[8] Hild, the daughter of Edwin's nephew, had also been baptised as a child by Paulinus (*HE* 4.23).[9] Paulinus is given a unique role by the Whitby writer as a powerful symbol of Roman Christianity in Northumbria. The role is, however, not in accordance with that provided for the bishop in the *Historia Ecclesiastica.* As one who promoted a second metropolitan at York in his own day, Bede presents Paulinus as the first archbishop of a second metropolitan see at York. He cites Gregory's authority for this (*HE* 1.29), describes Paulinus advising Edwin to build a noble basilica in stone at York, later completed by Oswald (*HE* 2.14), and even presents Paulinus consecrating Honorius as archbishop of Canterbury (*HE* 2.17-18). If, on the other hand, Whitby supported Theodore in his plan to retain a single metropolitan at Canterbury and, indeed, provided the bishops to replace Wilfrid after his exile, the monastery and its patrons would not wish to promote an image of Paulinus that might undermine this. Therefore, although the Whitby writer presents Paulinus as the agent of Edwin's conversion and afterwards as the king's adviser and godfather, York does not even receive a mention.[10] None can deny that Paulinus is of central importance to the Anglo-Saxon material in the Whitby *Vita Gregorii*: he is presented as a missionary bishop to Edwin and his men and even described as Gregory's personal representative (*VG* 17). He is not, however, given honour as archbishop of a second metropolitan at York.[11]

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southern territories. For an interesting view on Stephen of Ripon's claims of metropolitan status for Wilfrid and Wilfrid's declaration at Rome on behalf of all the northern part of Britain and of Ireland and of all the surrounding islands (*VW* 53), see Charles-Edwards (2000) 417-36. This is discussed within the context of possible Northumbrian aspirations for control over Northern Ireland.

[8] On Paulinus' conversion of Edwin and his people, see Mayr-Harting (1967). Peter Hunter Blair suggests that, bar the two papal letters, Whitby was most likely Bede's source for his Edwin material. He notes that Bede was fourteen years old when Eanflaed, the first of all the Northumbrians to be baptised, was still alive as joint abbess at Whitby. See Hunter Blair (1990) 92.

[9] On the high intellectual standard promoted and maintained by Hild at Whitby, see Fell (1981).

[10] Daniell (1993) discusses the location details of the story of Paulinus and the shooting of the crow (*VG* 15). Though the Whitby writer provides great detail in stories such as the retrieval of Edwin's bones (*VG* 18, 19), it is suggested that the vagueness of the writer in this instance may be a deliberate attempt not to draw attention to York as the location of the event. On the relevance of the godfather relationship, see Campbell (1986) 75.

[11] On tensions between Whitby and York, and Hild's support for Theodore in the Wilfrid controversy, see Mosford (1988) xxii.

It can of course be said that Bede makes no further emphasis of York as a second metropolitan during the time following Paulinus' departure from Northumbria. This is true, and the comings and goings of bishops at York appear to be viewed simply in the light of Theodore's efforts to administer effective pastoral administration. However, as already stated, Theodore is presented in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* as one responsible for such successful administration and during this time a highlighting of York as metropolitan, or even would-be metropolitan, would not have been in accordance with this portrayal of Theodore's achievements.[12] This is especially so in the light of the problems existing between Wilfrid and Theodore, and of Stephen of Ripon's description of Wilfrid as metropolitan of York. On the other hand, Bede's portrayal of Paulinus' position as bishop of a second metropolitan is unambiguous and as first bishop of York lays down an important precedent for Bede's own times.[13]

The Whitby *Life* must have been crucial to the promotion of Gregory's cult among clerics in Northumbria and the fact that Bishop Paulinus, as Gregory's personal representative, laid the first stone of the conversion, required special attention by the writer. The Whitby writer therefore places him in a leading pastoral role and as a paradigm to be followed. However, as the representative of a national saint promoted to generate unity under Canterbury, it is hardly surprising that Paulinus is not presented as the founder of a second metropolitan at York and in a position to consecrate the bishop of Canterbury (*HE* 2.17-18). If Thacker's assessment of the Gregory cult is correct, Paulinus as the Pope's representative became a symbol of church unity under Rome at a time when the influence of Theodore's episcopal reforms and his drive for proper doctrinal instruction still loomed large. His role as bishop therefore remains of paramount importance to the Whitby writer and the relationship between a bishop and his king is subtly but distinctly portrayed in the text.

[12] On a discussion of Bede's careful portrayal of Theodore as both efficient administrator and guardian of doctrine, see Ward (1991).
[13] Goffart (1985) 298, observes that the publication of the *HE* virtually coincided with the papal grant of the archiepiscopacy and the pallium to York, which was the completion of Gregory's plans for the English people.

Apart from the Whitby writer's attitude towards York, the presentation of Paulinus as model bishop is in accordance with Bede's frequent portraits of episcopal heroes in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Bede belonged to a world which was newly evangelised and where episcopal authority had still to be clearly defined. In exploring the activities of monk-bishops Bede presented the life of each holy man as a debate about the way in which he exercised his spiritual gifts and he related personal sanctity to the needs of the church as a whole.[14] Similarly, Mosford argues that the Whitby *Vita's* portrayal of Gregory as ideal bishop was produced in an atmosphere where the nature and function of the bishop was being established. She further asserts that it could have served as a manifesto of a pastoral party whose brief was to produce adequate pastoral support at a time when there was a need to increase the number of dioceses and bishops.[15] It is to the Whitby writer's portrayal of Paulinus within this context that the remainder of this chapter will now turn.

The incident of the arrow and the crow (VG 15)

Paulinus is introduced to the reader by means of an interesting little saga depicting some of the first Christian conversions in Northumbria:

> Now Edwin's godfather at his baptism was the reverend Bishop Paulinus, one of those whom, as we have said, Gregory sent us. He is said, on a certain Sunday I believe it was, to have given very promptly a sign of his God-given wisdom. King Edwin was hurrying to the church to receive instruction, surrounded by a crowd of those who were still bound not only to heathenism but also to unlawful wives; they had left the hall where they had been exhorted to put both these matters right when a crow set up a hoarse croaking from an unpropitious quarter of the sky. Thereupon the whole of the royal company, who were still in the public square, heard the bird and turned towards it, halting in amazement as if they believed that the 'new song' in the Church was not to be 'praise unto our God' (Ps 40:3), but something false and useless. Then, while God looked down from his heaven and guided everything, the reverend bishop said to one of his youths, 'Shoot the bird down quickly with an arrow.' This was speedily done and then the bishop told him that the arrow from the bird was to be kept until the instruction of the catechumens was finished and then brought into the hall.

[14] Coates (1996) 619 observes that though Bede's portrayal of the model bishop in the *HE* and *Vita Cuthberti* may adapt different models of holiness from that of Wilfrid, the importance of personal sanctity and episcopal authority is common to all early Anglo-Saxon hagiography.
[15] Mosford (1988) xxiii, xxiv.

> Then when they were all gathered together there, he gave the people of God who were recent converts and still uninstructed, a very good reason for this event; he assured them that they ought to learn from so clear a sign that that ancient evil called idolatry was in all respects useless; 'for', he said, 'if that senseless bird was unable to avoid death, still less could it foretell the future to men who have been reborn and baptized into the image of God, who "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing upon earth"(Gen 1:28). Yet these foretellers boast that they understand the ways of birds by their own native cunning and so deceive the foolish, as God's permissive will allows.' (*VG* 15)[16]

This illustration depicts a group of tense and uncertain converts, doubtful about their Christian faith. After much exhortation Paulinus persuades them to the point of further instruction and hastens to move the process forward. But the croak of a crow threatens the mission by its ominous significance to a pagan mind. It is the quick thinking of Paulinus and the swift use of an arrow that saves the day for the bishop and turns the near catastrophe into an opportunity for further instruction.

The context of the verse from Ps 40 (39) briefly quoted by the Whitby writer in this story helps clarify its significance in this story:

> I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.
> He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. Happy are those who make the Lord their trust, who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods. (Ps 40:1-4)

This piece of scripture is a potent depiction of God's saving help and contains what were seen as powerful images of conversion. Augustine's commentary on

[16] Cum stipatus ad eclesiam rex prefatus ad caticuminum eorum qui adhuc erant gentilitati non solum, sed etiam et non licitis stricti coniugiis, cum illo festinavit ab aula ubi prius adhuc utrumque emendandum hortati sunt ab illis, dum quedam stridula cornix ad plagam voce peiorem cantavit. Tunc omnis multitudo regia que adhuc erat in platea populi, audiens avem, stupore ad eam conversa subsistit, quasi illud canticum novum carmen Deo nostro non esset vero futurum in ecclesia, sed falso ad nihil utile. Tunc venerandus episcopus puero suo cuidam, Deo omnia ex arce sua speculante providenteque. 'Dirige', inquit,'sagittam in avem otius.' Quo festinanter effecto, avis sagittam servari precepit usque dum, peracto catacuminio eorum qui erant catezizandi, asportatur in aulam. Omnibusque illuc congregatis recenti rudoque adhuc populo Dei bene satis eo causam donante, confirmavit antiquum scelus nomen idolatrie, tam evidenti signo esse pro nihilo in omnibus discendum, dicens etiam sibi ipsi avis illa insensata mortem cavere cum nescisset, immo renatis ad imaginem Dei baptizatis omnino hominibus, qui dominantur piscibus maris et volatilibus celi atque universis animantibus terre, nihil profuturum prenuntiet, quas illi ex sua subtili natura ad deceptionem stultorum se scire, Deo iuste permittente, iactitant.

the psalm further suggests how significant these few words may have been to the Whitby writer. Encouraging a new way of life, Augustine urges the importance of putting one's trust in God's mercy and promises, rather than in mere mortals. This advice is similar to that of Paulinus; moreover, Augustine describes the miry pit from which God delivers his people as the lusts of the flesh, the same pastoral problem faced by Paulinus at the outset of the story, where those surrounding the king are described as 'bound not only to heathenism but also to unlawful wives'. Augustine describes 'the song of praise' (Ps 40:3) as that which sets one free; once set free and placed upon the rock of Christ, 'the new man' is called to press on. It is necessary to press forward if the convert is to achieve the crown of righteousness. This alludes to St Paul's call to give up the lusts of the flesh and 'put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness' (Eph 4:22-24), to put on the new nature 'which is being created in knowledge after the image of its creator' (Col 3:10).[17] Interestingly, the Whitby writer has Paulinus refer to Gen 1:27-28 to explain to recent converts, still uncomprehending about the faith and in the thrall of their former lives and idolatry, the true significance of their conversion: 'men have been reborn and baptized into the image of God' (*VG* 15). Cassiodorus in commenting on Ps 40 also depicts the miry pit as the sinfulness of man and the rock is described as the path of virtue. The song of praise is God's movement of the Gentile peoples from the mud to the stability of the rock.[18] Let us now turn again to the story in *VG* 15 and examine in more detail the possible influence of these scriptural images and their exegesis on the Whitby narrative.

1. Fornication (1 Cor 5:1)

Paulinus as bishop is agent of the conversion and the opening of the chapter points to the crux of the problem being faced by this pastor. It concerns the problem of fornication, more explicitly the problem of those who will not give up what the Church perceives as unlawful wives. This was held as being of grave importance within the Church and had proved of tremendous difficulty to

[17] *Expositions on the Psalms* 40(39), 1-10: *NPNF*, 1st Series, 8, 119-123, *CCSL* 38, 422-433.

[18] *Explanations of the Book of Psalms* 39(40): Walsh (1990) 1, 397-407, *CCSL* 97, 362-372.

the early Anglo-Saxon missionaries. Diplomatic marriage was important to Anglo-Saxon political manoeuvering and the second, and usually younger, wife of a king could be taken in marriage by her stepson after the king's death.[19] Bede condemns Ethelberht's son and successor Eadbald in the words of St Paul (1 Cor 5:1): 'Not only had he refused to receive the faith of Christ but he was polluted with such fornication as the apostle declares to have been not so much as named among the Gentiles, in that he took his father's wife' (*HE* 2:6). Because the Church considers two bodies to become one in marriage, such an action is regarded as incest and this is explicitly treated in St Paul's reproach of the Corinthians:

> It is actually reported that there is fornication among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans (*gentes*); for a man is living with his father's wife. (1 Cor 5:1)

For Paul it is not enough to condemn such sinfulness in others, but the responsibility of the Christian community to avoid even associating with such people is also strongly emphasized by the apostle. The urgency of the problem is stressed by Paul's insisting that this excommunication take immediate effect and not await his own return to Corinth:

> And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?
> For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (1 Cor 5:2-5)

Until excommunication takes place those who associate with the guilty party share in the guilt, and it is the apostle's duty to point this out. Adamnán's *Vita Columbae* contains a chapter in which a man guilty of sleeping with his mother visits the island of Iona and the saint, who had prophetically known of his sin, orders that he should not be allowed to land on the holy island. Though Baithene argues that they should receive the sinner as a penitent, Columba

[19] See Mayr-Harting (1972) 250.

discerns he is not truly repentant, condemns his sin and prophesies that the man will be lost (*VC* 1.22).

It has been suggested that the Pauline teaching of 1 Cor 5:1 underlies Adomnán's story and also Bede's account of the death of King Sigeberht of the East Saxons (*HE* 3.22).[20] Sigeberht was murdered by his kinsmen because they felt he was too ready to pardon his enemies. Bede emphasizes that though this man was a good king and received his heavenly reward, the real cause of his violent death was the fact that he had ignored the command of his bishop Cedd by visiting the house of a man excommunicated due to the persistent sin of unlawful marriage. Bede emphasizes both the authority of the bishop's position and the seriousness of the king's actions by providing a picture of the king trembling at the bishop's feet (*HE* 3.22). These Insular examples of Pauline teaching in narrative form may be of relevance in understanding the episode in *VG* 15.[21] The Whitby writer depicts King Edwin 'hurrying to the church to receive instruction' but surrounded by those who were 'still bound not only to heathenism but also to unlawful wives' and had left the hall (*aula*) where they had been exhorted to put these matters right. The whole of the royal company was halted in the public square by the croaking of the crow which seemed to challenge the 'new song' of the Church. Paulinus speedily seized the initiative in teaching 'the people of God who were recent converts and still uninstructed.' A sense of haste is injected into the story. This is the haste adopted by Paul in dealing with unlawful marriage in his letter to the Corinthians. By implication the story lays a responsibility upon Edwin as having an important role in the bishop's instruction of the newly baptized. Though the Whitby writer quotes only the beginning of Ps 40:3, to promote a theme of conversion, the second half of the psalm verse now also appears exceptionally relevant to his purpose:

> He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. (Ps 40:3)

[20] O'Reilly (1999) 193.
[21] I am grateful to Dr O'Reilly for discussion of these examples and *HE* 1.27 and for suggesting their relevance, together with exegetical traditions concerning haste, trembling and 'the fear of the Lord,' for an understanding of *VG* 15.

The closing words of the verse reiterate to the reader that it is fear of the Lord that leads one to place trust in him. This fear of divine power is a salutary fear and is pointed out by the responsible bishop. It is such fear that led Sigeberht to tremble at the bishop's feet in order to receive forgiveness (*HE* 3.22).

This may appear to conflict with the apparently more lenient approach to unlawful marriage found in Gregory's response to Augustine's fifth question in the *Libellus responsionum*, but a closer reading shows that the Pope, though pragmatic in receiving new converts involved in unlawful marriage, had also been resolute on the need to instruct converts of the sinfulness of such marriages:

> Now because there are many of the English race who, while they were unbelievers, are said to have contracted these unlawful marriages, when they accept the faith, they should be warned that they must abstain, because such marriages are a grave sin. Let them fear the heavy judgement of God, lest, for the gratification of their carnal desires, they incur the pains of eternal punishment. Nevertheless they are not to be deprived of the communion of the sacred Body and Blood of the Lord for this cause, lest they seem to be punished for sins which they committed through ignorance, before they received the washing of baptism. For in these days the holy Church corrects some things with zeal and tolerates some things with gentleness, while in her wisdom she connives at other things and so by forbearance and connivance often succeeds in checking the evil which she resists. (*HE* 1.27)

Circumstances are what appear to determine the approach of the Church. The failure of the mission of Bishop Aidan's predecessor in Northumbria demonstrates the consequences of a heavy-handed approach during the early stages of conversion (*HE* 3.5). The most successful approach to conversion incorporated a double strategy, the first being to get the convert to the baptismal font, the second and more difficult being the prolonged task of instilling further religious instruction. This is the approach taken by the Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the continent and is the approach recommended by Gregory to Augustine.[22] Once a king agreed to receive baptism and instruction his subjects were likely to follow: after continued failure by Paulinus in his mission, Edwin's conversion was followed by thirty-six days of baptisms in the river Glen (*HE* 2.14). For this reason the story in *VG* 15 opens by describing Edwin's company as being

[22] Sullivan (1956) demonstrates the long-term need for religious instruction and organised episcopal structures in missionary circumstances.

heathen and practising unlawful marriage, but also depicts Paulinus explaining to them that they need have no fear of the superstitions of the old ways now that they are baptized. The only authentic and justifiable fear recognized by the bishop is the fear of the Lord and this can only be achieved by means of further instruction.

The administering of religious instruction is therefore essential if the faith is to be more than token and Bede demonstrates on several occasions the dangers of apostasy unless experienced pastors instill a deep-rooted faith. These are problems which still existed towards the end of the seventh century and it was proper diocesan structures and uniformity of doctrine prescribed by Archbishop Theodore that finally began to address such problems strategically. By the time the Whitby writer and Bede composed their works, unlawful marriage must have become far more curtailed and both felt confident enough to condemn it openly and push to eliminate it all together.[23] In doing so, both writers demonstrate the role of the pastor as being crucial in securing proper religious instruction, and this is the urgent role provided for Paulinus by the Whitby writer.

Bede and the Whitby writer both recount the moment of Edwin's conversion but these accounts are dissimilar in content. Bede is a far more skilled storyteller, but the most noticeable difference at first glance is perhaps the length of his narrative. Bede gives a graphic and detailed version of events and describes two separate scenes. The first scene portrays Edwin's period in exile and his encounter with a vision at the court of King Redwald, while the second describes the fulfilment of the vision's prophecy in the person of Bishop Paulinus. Within the context of the other chapters in the *Vita Gregorii*, a lengthy version of events would be entirely inappropriate and therefore only the first scene in the story is portrayed. Nevertheless, the Whitby writer provides Paulinus with a key position in the conversion by claiming Edwin's original vision to have been of the bishop. In fact, the most unifying point between the two versions of

[23] Though in his answer to Augustine's fifth question (*HE* I.27) Gregory instructed the early mission to approach this problem with leniency until the faith was established securely, he did not provide a period of time at which the enforcement of this law should take place.

events is the influential role of Bishop Paulinus as the king's new advisor, an advisor who claims to be the mouthpiece of God himself.

Though Bede presents Paulinus' mission in Northumbria as initially unsuccessful, Edwin's conversion catapults the bishop to a position of superiority and, as in the story of Sigeberht of the East Saxons, we witness a king beginning to tremble at the feet of a prelate:

> King Edwin hesitated to accept the word of God which Paulinus preached but, as we have said, used to sit alone for hours at a time, earnestly debating within himself what he ought to do and what religion he should follow. One day Paulinus came to him and, placing his right hand on the king's head, asked him if he recognized this sign. The king began to tremble and would have thrown himself at the bishop's feet but Paulinus raised him up and said in a voice that seemed familiar, 'First you have escaped with God's help from the hands of the foes you feared; secondly you have acquired by his gift the kingdom you desired; now, in the third place, remember your own promise; do not delay in fulfilling it but receive the faith and keep the commandments of him who rescued you from your earthly foes and raised you to the honor of an earthly kingdom. If from henceforth you are willing to allow his will which is made known to you through me, he will also rescue you from the everlasting torments of the wicked and make you a partaker with him of his eternal kingdom in heaven.' (*HE* 2.12)[24]

Though the Whitby writer does not go so far as to portray the king trembling, his depiction of Paulinus as the mouthpiece of God is similar to Bede's:

> On one occasion during this period, when he was in fear of his life, it is said that a certain man, lovely to look upon, appeared to him crowned with the cross of Christ and began to comfort him, promising him a happy life and the restoration of his kingdom if he would obey him. Edwin assured him that he would be ready to do so if he could prove to him that what he promised was true. The man answered, 'You will prove it to be true and you must obey him who first appears to you in this form and with this sign. He will teach you to submit to him the one living and true God who created all things; it is he who will give you what I promise and will show you through that man all that you ought to do.' It is said to have been Bishop Paulinus who first appeared to him in that form. (*VG* 16)[25]

[24] For a comparison between Bede's portrayal of Edwin's conversion with that of Gregory of Tours depiction of Clovis' conversion, see Goffart (1985) 304.

[25] Ea tempestate dicunt ei de sua vita consternato quadam die quidam pulchre visionis, cum cruce Christi coronatus apparens eum consolari coepisse, promittens ei felicem vitam regnumque gentis sue futurum, si ei obedire voluisset. Eoque promittente voluisse, si verum probaret sibi quod promisit respondit, 'Probabis hoc verum et qui tibi primo cum hac specie et signo apparebit, illi debes oboedire. Qui te uni Deo qui creavit omnia, vivo et vero docebit obedire, quique Deus

The role of the bishop is therefore paramount and his words are crucial to the proper instruction of a people under the patronage of a good and Christian king. Chapter 15 is used by the Whitby writer as a demonstration of the wisdom of Paulinus and the opening sentence describes him as King Edwin's godfather. This also portrays the bishop's wisdom as superior and indeed places the king's wisdom as dependant upon that of his spiritual director. The imagery used in the story which follows demonstrates the important pastoral objectives of the writer as he portrays Paulinus as an episcopal model.

2. The Arrow

Images of weapons and armour are commonplace in the Old Testament, and the military language of the Psalms in particular describes the Lord's protection of his people from evil. St Paul adapts this military image to its full potential in advising the Ephesians on spiritual warfare:

> Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
> For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
> Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.
> Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness.
> As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.
> With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
> Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
> Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.
> (Eph 6: 11-18)

The patristic sources reveal a detailed exegesis on the image of the arrow, and throughout Augustine's *Expositions on the Psalms* the image occurs repeatedly, for example, in Psalm 127 (126):

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daturus est tibi ea que promitto et omnia que tibi agenda sunt per illum demonstrabit.' Sub hac igitur specie dicunt illi Paulinum prefatum episcopum primo apparuisse.

> *Like as the arrows in the hand of the mighty one, even so are the sons of those that are shot out* (Ps 127:4). From whence has sprung this heritage, brethren? Whence has sprung so numerous a heritage? Some have been shot out from the Lord's hand, as arrows, and have gone far, and have filled the whole earth, whence the Saints spring. For this is the heritage whereof it is said, 'Desire of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession' (Ps 2:8). And how does this possession extend and increase unto the world's uttermost parts? Because, 'like as the arrows in the hand of the mighty one,' etc. arrows are shot forth from the bow, and the stronger the arm which has sent it forth, the farther flies the arrow. But what is stronger than the darting of the Lord? From his bow he sends forth his Apostles: there could not be a spot left where an arrow shot by so strong an arm would not reach; it hath reached 'unto the uttermost parts of the earth'. The reason it went no farther was, that there were no more of the human race beyond. For he has such strength, that even if there were a spot beyond, whither the arrow could fly, he would dart the arrow thither. Such are the children of those who are shot forth as they that are shot forth.[26]

Augustine thus notes that the apostolic arrows shot by God reach even the ends of the earth. Cassiodorus in similarly expounding the imagery of Ps 127 emphasises the speed of the arrow:

> An arrow is a weapon which quickly reaches its target, and flies on the straightest course. When it leaves the hand of the mighty, it is fired with great speed, and strikes the target. The one who takes aim is not mighty if the arrow goes astray; so the addition: 'From the hand of the mighty' (Ps 127:4), is made to ensure that you have no doubt of the outcome, or scepticism about the arrow's speed. The apostles are well compared to these arrows, for they were directed from the hand of the mighty, the Lord Saviour, were quickly guided to their target, and fulfilled his commands faithfully.[27]

The apostles and their successors become the arrows of the Lord and the receptacles of their words of conversion are both predestined and confirmed by the hand of God. Just as the exegetes point out the guiding hand of the Lord, so also does the Whitby writer emphasize that 'the Lord looked down from his heaven and guided everything'.

Patristic exegetes have however applied the image of the arrow to the word itself, not merely restricting it to the agents of its transmission. In the

[26] *Expositions on the Psalms* 127, 6 (126, 9): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 608, *CCSL* 40, 1863-1864.

[27] *Explanations of the Psalms* 126(127), 4: Walsh (1991) 3, 299, *CCSL* 98, 1175.

second century Tertullian aligned the image of the arrow as the word with that of 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God', from Eph 6:17. While discussing verse Ps 45:3, which uses the image of the sword, and Ps 45:5, which uses the image of the arrow, Tertullian relates these images to the military language used in Ephesians 6 and its effectiveness in portraying the spiritual battle:

> 'Gird on your sword,' says David, 'upon your thigh' (Ps 45: 3). ... Now the Apostle John, in the Apocalypse, describes a sword which proceeded from the mouth of God as 'a doubly sharp, two-edged one' (Rev 1:16). This may be understood to be the Divine Word, who is doubly edged with the two testaments of the law and the gospel — sharpened with wisdom, hostile to the devil, arming us against the spiritual enemies of all wickedness and concupiscence, and cutting us off from the dearest objects for the sake of God's holy name. If, however, you will not acknowledge John, you have our common master Paul, who 'girds our loins about with truth, and puts on us the breastplate of righteousness, and shoes us with the preparation of the gospel of peace, not of war; who bids us take the shield of faith, wherewith we may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which (he says) is the word of God' (Eph 6:14-17). This sword the Lord himself came to send on earth, and not peace (Mtt 10:34). If he is your Christ, then even he is a warrior. If he is not a warrior, and the sword he brandishes is an allegorical one, then the Creator's Christ in the psalm too may have been girded with the figurative sword of the Word, without any martial gear. ... 'Your arrows are sharp' (Ps 45:5); everywhere your precepts fly about, your threatenings also, and convictions of heart, pricking and piercing each conscience. 'The people shall fall under you' (Ps: 45:5), that is, in adoration. Thus is the Creator's Christ mighty in war, and a bearer of arms; thus also does he now take the spoils, not of Samaria alone, but of all nations. Acknowledge, then, that his spoils are figurative, since you have learned that his arms are allegorical.[28]

It should be noted that in adapting the military image of the arrow to the Word, the conscience is pricked and pierced and causes the soul to submit in adoration. In commenting on Ps 45:5 Augustine also depicts the use of the arrow as God's word, and to similar effect describes how Paul himself was stricken by this arrow and fell before the Lord to rise to become an apostle.[29] Cassiodorus expounds Ps 45 similarly and, like Tertullian, combines the image of the sword in verse 3 with that of the arrow in verse 5 as symbolising the word. Taking the

[28] *The five books against Marcion* 3,14: *ANF*, 3, 332-333, *CCSL* 1, 526-527.
[29] *Expositions on the Psalms* 45,14 (44,16): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 149, *CCSL* 38, 504.

lead from Augustine, Cassiodorus uses the theme of conversion but provides even more explicit imagery:

> *Thy arrows are sharp, most powerful: under thee shall people fall, in the hearts of the king's enemies*. The sharp arrows are the words of the Lord Saviour piercing the hearts of men for their salvation. They wound to heal, they strive to free, they lay low to raise up. But let us note the likeness by which this weapon is compared to God's word. The wood of an arrow is armed with iron, and its extremity is feathered; likewise the word of God emerges from the wood of the cross, and has both the power to penetrate and the speed required to reach its goal. Earlier he mentioned the sword that wounds at close quarters, but here the arrows aimed from a distance, in order to point out by this simile his inconceivable power. *Sharp* has reference to speed of penetration; *most powerful*, because no substance however hard is known to resist them, since it is their nature to attain the outcome of their will. *People shall fall* indicates the conversion of men, when believers who previously remained upright through the vice of presumption happily tumble into humility. This happened to the apostle Paul who was pierced by the arrow of God's voice. As persecutor he fell on his face, but the Lord's right hand immediately raised him to be an apostle.[30]

Cassiodorus depicts the sharpness and speed of God's Word as it lays low only to rise up again. St Paul is the prime example of one who has risen to become a great apostle after being struck by this Word; the wood of the arrow is seen as symbolising the wood of the cross. Like Cassiodorus, the Whitby writer also emphasizes the importance of speed and swiftness of action. Fear plays a central role in this little episode from the Whitby *Vita*, for it is fear that jeopardises the fledgling faith of the catechumens and it is the fear or awe of God that turns them back to Christ. The question is whether to remain attached to the superstition of the old ways, or to turn to the Christian God, the Creator through whom mankind has been given dominion over all living things (Gen 1:28)? On presenting the arrow to the people Paulinus uses this verse from Genesis to make his audience aware of God's omnipotence and to secure the fear of the Lord among his listeners. This is the fear that leads to salvation.

On several Anglo-Saxon stone crosses an archer is depicted aiming at a bird and Barbara Raw has related this to the patristic *topos* of the preacher

[30] *Explanations of the Psalms* 44(45), 6: Walsh (1990) 1, 444, *CCSL* 97, 406-407.

aiming the words of scripture like a drawn bow at his listeners.[31] She applies this notably to the Ruthwell Cross, though others question whether, at Ruthwell, the archer is actually aiming at the bird, which is not depicted in the same panel as the archer but at the very top of the Cross. The important point made by the patristic authorities Barbara Raw cites, is that the action of drawing the bow induces life-saving fear which saves the listeners from the death-dealing wounds of sin.

Éamonn Ó Carragáin also interprets the archer on the Ruthwell Cross in redemptive terms and develops the argument further by adding to Raw's patristic examples.[32] He points out Gregory the Great's own use of the image when commenting on Job 29:20. Gregory here notes, with examples, that the image can have a range of meanings, depending on context:

> Now by the name of a *bow* in Holy Scripture sometimes the plots of evil men, sometimes the day of judgment, while sometimes the actual sacred oracles themselves are denoted.[33]

Gregory views the image of the archer as one which leads to eternal life. Ó Carragáin, noting Bede's familiarity with the *Moralia*, cites Bede's use of Gregory in commentary on the canticle of Habakkuk:

> You brandished your naked bow, sated were the arrows at your command. Selah. You split the earth with rivers. (Habakkuk 3:9)

Bede, when commenting on this verse, also sees the drawn bow as a salvific warning of eternal punishment. Christ's apostles by means of the scriptures draw the bow and point the arrows, thus warning the people of eternal damnation if they refuse to obey God's commands. The result is a salutary fear which leads to repentance. Ó Carragáin goes on to suggest that the object hanging by a strap from the archer's neck on the Ruthwell Cross is not shaped like a quiver, but

[31] Raw (1967) discusses the image of the archer on an Anglo-Saxon pectoral cross, which was most likely worn by a bishop; on the archer see also Spitz (1972). For pointing out the relevance of these pictorial examples and for the secondary references to them, I am grateful to Dr J. O'Reilly.
[32] Ó Carragáin (1987/88) 41-2.
[33] *Moralia* 19, 54: Bliss, 2 (1844/50) 442, *CCSL* 143A, 999.

rather is given the shape of a book satchel. This confirms the image of the arrow as representing the Word, and Ó Carragáin accepts this as confirming the warnings of eternal damnation inherent in the image.[34]

In the Whitby story we notice that Paulinus orders the arrow to be retrieved from the body of the crow and to be kept until a certain point in the instruction. The arrow is reintroduced to the new converts as Paulinus quotes from Gen 1:28 and explains the senselessness of superstition before the God who is the Creator of all things.[35] This message of God's omnipotence is commonly used as part of the initial phase of missionary strategy, and it seems extremely relevant that this primary missionary quotation from the Old Testament is quoted in conjunction with the reintroduction of the arrow to the people by Paulinus.[36] The exegetical tradition of using the arrow as an image of the word and aligning it with the image of the spiritual sword of the word from Eph 6:17 strengthens this interpretation.

Gregory also combines these images in depicting the role of the *word* in the spiritual battle, but even more importantly, this arises in the context of his criticism of the spiritual leader for failing to practice what he preaches. The personal role of the bishop or pastor is therefore crucial to the effective administration of the weapons of the Word:

> They bend the bow and shoot arrows who present the sayings of Holy Writ and strike the vices of the hearers with righteous words, but they turn back on the day of battle because they turn round in the temptation of vices, refuse to offer their chests because they do not resist in the struggle with temptations. Hence it is again said: 'You have turned away the help of his sword and have not assisted him in battle' (Ps 88:44). Surely the sword of the teacher is the word of God. Hence it is said through Paul: 'And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph 6:17). Therefore Almighty God, when he perceives that the teacher is unwilling to practice

[34] Ó Carragáin (1987/88) 41-2. Paul Meyvaert also discusses Augustine's and Cassiodorus's use of Psalm 44 in presenting the archer from the Ruthwell Cross as a symbol of the saving fear of the Lord. In pointing out Cassiodorus' comparison between the wood of the arrow and the wood of the cross, he highlights the appropriateness of the archer on the Ruthwell Cross. Meyvaert (1992) 140-45.

[35] This passage from Genesis is used in the letter from Pope Boniface to Edwin and quoted by Bede (*HE* 2.10).

[36] To undermine confidence in pagan gods and attitudes was a common missionary strategy in the early Middle Ages, see Sullivan (1956) 275-6.

> what he preaches, turns away the help of his sword on the day of battle because in the struggle with temptations he does not permit the words of doctrine which he gave to be of help to him. So he has a sword but it does not assist him in battle because when the adversity of temptation breaks forth he forgets the word which he taught.[37]

The application of the military image to God's word is not unique to the Whitby writer in insular hagiography. Adomnán uses the imagery from Ephesians 6 in a depiction of Columba's encounter with a host of demons endeavouring to bring sickness upon his community (*VC* 3.8). Bede also uses this imagery to demonstrate Cuthbert's strategy in bringing about a triumphant conclusion to his battle of the spirit over the flesh, and in doing so places Cuthbert's spiritual warfare on the higher plane of the anchorite :

> when the soldier of Christ entered, armed with the 'helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, all the fiery darts of the wicked one' (Eph 6:16-17) were quenched, and the wicked foe himself was driven far away together with the whole crowd of his satellites. (*VP* 17)

Though this is the beginning of a contemplative period in Cuthbert's life, we must realize that this is also a period in which Bede presents the saint as being prepared for his life as a model bishop.

In order to realize fully what the Whitby writer is conveying in the story by selecting the image of the arrow we need to examine its target, which is of course the crow.

3. The Raven

Though the croaking of the crow may well have been of ominous significance to a pagan mind, the image of the crow or raven, which is a member of the crow family, was a potent scriptural image used and developed throughout early scriptural exegesis.[38] This traditionally relates to the sending out of both the dove and the raven by Noah (Gen 8:7-8). Peter originally referred to the ark as a prefiguring of the Church, portraying the Deluge as a symbol of baptism (I Pet

[37] *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2, 9, 15: Gray (1990) 267-68, *CCSL* 142, 369.
[38] Woden was a Germanic war god who used ravens as his messengers and for whom ravens were sacred. See Stancliffe (1995) 2.

3:20). Patristic writers developed this image from the New Testament and saw the raven as the baptized who either revert to old ways or adopt heretical beliefs, and the dove was interpreted as the faithful within the Church. Augustine develops this *topos* in his *Letter to Faustus*:

> That the raven sent out after forty days did not return, being either prevented by the water or attracted by some floating carcass; as men defiled by impure desire, and therefore eager for things outside in the world, are either baptised, or are led astray into the company of those to whom, as they are outside the ark, that is, outside the Church, baptism is destructive. That the dove when sent forth found no rest, and returned; as in the New Testament rest is not promised to the saints in this world.[39]

The raven becomes an image of fleshly desires and the dove represents the life of the spirit. These images are used by Augustine on numerous occasions and are effectively expounded in *Tractate* 6 on John 1:32-33. This discusses the baptism of the Lord and describes specifically why the Holy Spirit was manifested in the form of a dove. Augustine develops an exegesis on the contrast between the gentle moan of the dove and the hoarse cry of the raven. The groaning of the dove represents the intercession of the Spirit when we do not know what to pray ourselves (Rom 8:26) and also the Christian's sighing for his native land as he travels his pilgrim journey upon this earth. On the other hand, he who rejoices in the carnal pleasures of this world has the hoarse cry of the raven:

> He with whom it is well in this world, or rather he who thinks it is well with him, who exults in the joy of carnal things, in the abundance of things temporal, in an empty felicity, has the cry of the raven; for the raven's cry is full of clamour, not of groaning. But he who knows that he is in the pressure of this mortal life, a pilgrim 'absent from the Lord,' (2 Cor 5:6) that he does not yet possess that perpetual blessedness which is promised to us, but that he has it in hope, and will have it in reality when the Lord shall come openly in glory who came before in humility concealed; he, I say, who knows this does groan. And so long as it is for this he groans, he does well to groan; it was the Spirit that taught him to groan, he learnt it from the dove.[40]

[39] *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean* 12, 20: *NPNF* 1st series, 4, 189-190, *PL* 42, 264-265.
[40] *Tractates on the Gospel of St John* 6, 2: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 39, *CCSL* 36, 53-54.

Augustine gives special attention to the dove as a symbol of baptism, and views Christ's baptism in the Jordan as a place in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are manifest together. The dove as a symbol of such unity is pointed out and the call to baptize in the name of the Trinity is highlighted. Though the importance of baptism is portrayed, its fruitlessness without the Christian life is discussed in great detail. Not alone is this seen as of no spiritual benefit, but St Paul is quoted to emphasize the condemnation brought upon such fruitless baptism:

> For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against them. (1 Cor 11:29)

Augustine claims that along with baptism one requires what is necessary to make this baptism profitable. Simon Magus is put forward as an example of one who received baptism but remained as a raven because he tried to buy the Spirit for money (Acts 8:5-23). For Augustine it is charity that proves one is a true dove.

Though Augustine's words are directed to slothful Christians and more especially to circumstances of heresy in the late antique period, the images he associated with Noah's raven appear extremely appropriate to the target identified by Bishop Paulinus, a target subsequently struck by the arrow of the Word as administered by the bishop. It is the hoarse croak of a crow, tempting the crowd not to give up the sins of their past way of life, that threatened to prevent the newly baptised at Whitby from receiving further instruction and taking up the fullness of the Christian life. The converts portrayed by the Whitby writer are described as being already baptised, but still practising heathenism and unlawful marriage and therefore in urgent need of further instruction. Though the contrary image of the dove is not explicitly included, the fact that the chapter centres upon the newly baptised and the fact that the croak of the crow is of central importance to the story, inherently leads the experienced reader to the image of the groaning dove. This image subsequently reinforces the missionary images of baptism and the Trinity, images emphatically used by the Whitby writer in the introductory chapters of the conversion material. Augustine stresses fear of great punishment for those not living up to their baptismal commitment,

and this threat is conveyed also in the Whitby account of the bishop's swift arrow, an arrow guided by the one true God who creates all things.

Bede uses similar imagery on several occasions and adapts Augustine when condemning Simon the magician for his efforts to buy the Holy Spirit, also claiming that Simon did not take care to rid himself of his raven-like mind.[41] Elsewhere, in a homily which discusses the virtues of the dove as a spiritual image, Bede points to those who do not take their faith seriously and continue to live as ravens:

> When the Lord cleansed wicked deeds at the origin of the world with the waters of the flood, as a figure of the baptism to come, Noah wanted to know how things stood on the face of the earth when the inundation had come to an end, and he sent forth a raven, which scorned to return to the ark (Gen 8:6-7), signifying those who, although they have been cleansed by the waters of baptism, nevertheless neglect putting off the very black dress of their old selves by living more faultlessly; and lest they deserve to be renewed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, they at once fall away from the inmost unity of catholic peace and rest by following exterior things, that is, the desires of the world.[42]

The Whitby writer may therefore be presenting the reader with an image of the slaying of old and pagan attitudes by the arrow of the word. The sword is for obvious reasons not a suitable image for the slaying of a crow, but the arrow is equally as effective an image of the word, as has been demonstrated in the traditional exegesis quoted above. This symbol of the word, after being retrieved from the crow's body, is presented to the new converts by Paulinus in conjunction with Gen 1:28, a verse which provides one of the keystones to their new faith, that is the omnipotence of God. Though it would perhaps be unfitting for a bishop literally to shoot an arrow himself, it is significant that a youth fires it under the bishop's instruction, perhaps also signifying the continuity of the Christian mission for the generations to follow.

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[41] *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* 8: Martin (1989) 81, *CCSL* 121, 40. There is clear evidence of Bede's use of Arator's poem on the Acts of the Apostles, which also employs this exegesis on the raven: see Martin (1989) 7 n.3. However, Arator in turn appears to have drawn on Augustine for most of this material. See Arator, *On the Acts of the Apostles, a Baptismal Commentary*: Hillier (1993) 73-91. I am grateful to Dr J. O'Reilly for valuable discussion of the exegesis surrounding baptism, the dove and the raven.

[42] *Homilies on the Gospels* 1,12: Martin and Hurst (1991) 122, *CCSL* 122, 86-87.

The symbols of the arrow and the crow may be further connected within a baptismal context if we recall Cassiodorus' description of the arrow of God's Word. The wood which makes up the shaft of the arrow is associated by Cassiodorus with the wood of the cross, thus causing Paul Mayvaert to claim this as the reason for the presence of the archer on the Ruthwell Cross.[43] It is with the sign of the cross that the catechumen is baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, dying with Christ in baptism in order to rise with him in glory. When writing on baptism Ambrose also uses the wood of the cross in connection with the story of Noah:

> God, willing to restore what was lacking, sent the flood and bade just Noah go up into the ark. And he, after having, as the flood was passing off, sent forth first a raven, which did not return, sent forth a dove which is said to have returned with an olive twig (Gen 8:6-11). You see the water, you see the wood [of the ark], you see the dove, and do you hesitate as to the mystery?
>
> The water, then, is that in which the flesh is dipped, that all carnal sin may be washed away. All wickedness is there buried. The wood is that on which the Lord Jesus was fastened when he suffered for us. The dove is that in the form of which the Holy Spirit descended, as you have read in the New Testament, who inspires in you peace of soul and tranquillity of mind. The raven is the figure of sin, which goes forth and does not return, if, in you, too, inwardly and outwardly righteousness were preserved.[44]

Augustine employs the imagery in a similar fashion in his letter to Faustus, reinforcing the connections made between the wood of the cross and a baptismal interpretation of the Noah story (1 Peter 3:20-21):

> That Noah, with his family is saved by water and wood, as the family of Christ is saved by baptism, as representing the suffering of the cross.[45]

Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* provides an interesting story concerning ravens, and this may illuminate further Insular use of this image. The story is a fascinating account of the chastisement and repentance of two ravens, 'in which human pride and contumacy are openly condemned by the obedience and humility of birds' (*VP* 20). Two ravens are depicted as tearing and damaging one of Cuthbert's buildings on the island of Farne, and are subsequently ordered to

[43] Meyvaert (1992) 145.
[44] *The Book Concerning the Mysteries* 3, 10-11: *NPNF* 2nd series, 10, 318, *PL* 16, 409.
[45] *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean* 12, 14: *NPNF* 1st series, 4, 188, *PL* 42, 262.

leave in the name of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, exegetes have often described the raven as one who is in the practice of tearing:

> To speak of nothing else, if I mention the rapacious alone, members of the hawk they may be, not members of the dove. Kites seize and plunder, so do hawks, so do ravens; doves do not plunder nor tear, consequently they who snatch and rob are not members of the dove.[46]

Bede in a homily also adapts this exegesis when emphasizing the importance of true conversion:

> And John gave testimony, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven, and it rested on him'. It is good that the Spirit descended upon the Lord in the form of a dove, so that the faithful may learn that they cannot be filled with his Spirit unless they are simple, unless they possess true peace with their brothers, which is signified by the kiss of doves. Ravens also have kisses, but they tear flesh (which a dove does not do at all), signifying those 'who speak peace with their neighbor, but wicked things are in their hearts' (Ps 28(27):3). A dove, which by nature is innocent of the tearing of flesh, most suitably fits those innocents who pursue peace and sanctity with everyone, solicitous to keep 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph 4:3).[47]

Cuthbert's ravens may therefore be presented within this exegetical context, and are rejected by the saint and forced to leave his holy place. The story is one of conversion, however, and the ravens return, even presenting the saint with a gift. Let us now look at how the transformed ravens are described by Bede:

> Now when three days had passed, one of a pair returned and found the servant of Christ digging. With its feathers sadly ruffled and its head drooping to its feet, and with humble cries it prayed for pardon, using such signs as it could; and the venerable father, understanding what it meant, gave it permission to return. And having got leave to come back, it soon went off in order to bring back its mate. (*VP* 20)

After three days, an appropriate symbol of baptism and resurrection, the raven returns, but we now see it displaying the characteristics of the dove.

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[46] *Tractates on the Gospel of St John* 6, 12: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 43, *CCSL* 36, 59.

[47] *Homilies on the Gospels* 1,15: Martin and Hurst (1991) 151, *CCSL* 122, 107. For the use of patristic exegesis on the dove by Columbanus, Adomnán and Bede, see O'Reilly (1994) 347-352.

Instead of the characteristic hoarse cry it exclaims a humble cry of repentance. It has been seen from Augustine's exegesis on the dove that it is a bird of mournful cries and indeed Bede also adapts this characteristic of the dove in detail in another of his homilies.[48] The fact that the ravens were sent from the island and returned is in itself symbolic, for the raven sent out by Noah did not return; it is the dove that returned. Cuthbert is for Bede a model bishop who is willing to travel into the hills and mountains and provide religious instruction to apostates and others, who in the light of traditional exegesis could easily be described as ravens. This story takes place at a time when Cuthbert was being prepared for the active life of the bishop and within this context may be providing a figurative reflection on the future, thereby providing a connection between the contemplative and active life of the saint. Though portraying two completely different stories, both Bede and the Whitby writer adapt the image of the raven and both appear to be using it as part of a strategy to promote the importance of religious instruction within a church of baptized Christians. Both writers view the instruction to be the ultimate responsibility of the faithful bishop.

Paulinus is presented as a paradigm. This episode in the Whitby writer's story of conversion creatively adapts traditional imagery to emphasize the importance of a bishop's position and the responsibility that accompanies it, while also outlining a subtle teaching on the relationship between a bishop and his king. It also succinctly and dramatically expounds the nature of conversion.

[48] *Homilies on the Gospels* 1,18: Martin and Hurst (1991) 182, *CCSL* 122, 130. In this homily on the Presentation Bede explains that two turtledoves are used for the sacrifice because the mournful cries of the dove symbolise the longing of the saints for their true homeland in heaven.

PART THREE

The final section of the thesis returns to questions raised at the outset. Chapter V reviews the political context in which the *Vita Gregorii* was produced in the early eighth century and the possible reasons for promoting the cult of Edwin at this time. The Whitby writer's portrayal of King Edwin and the account of the translation of his relics to Whitby (*VG* 18,19) will then be examined against this political background and in the context of the *Vita Gregorii* as a whole. Chapter VI asks whether the depiction of Edwin in any way accords with the didactic purposes and exegetical themes which, it has been argued here, characterize the rest of the work. In conclusion, the role of Edwin in the Whitby writer's promotion of the theme of unity and the concept of a single *gens Anglorum* will be discussed and some comparison made with Bede's distinctive use of shared material.

CHAPTER V – POLITICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER VI – EXEGESIS AND EDWIN

CHAPTER V

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Oswiu and Whitby

In Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, King Edwin's final public acceptance of the gospel which Paulinus preached only occurs when the pagan high priest Coifi himself declares for 'the true God' and dramatically initiates the destruction of idols and their altars. Bede notes the site of this symbolically significant event: 'the place where the idols once stood is still shown, not far from York, to the east' (*HE* 2.13) and goes on to describe how Edwin 'with all the nobles of his race and a vast number of the common people' received baptism. Time and place are stressed. The king was baptized at York on Easter Day, 12 April in 627, in the church of St Peter the Apostle, which he had hastily built of wood while he was a catechumen. Edwin supported Paulinus' mission among the Northumbrians for the final six years of his reign and established the see of his teacher and bishop in the city of York; under the instructions of Paulinus he began to build there a greater and more magnificent church of stone (*HE* 2.14). Two children from Edwin's marriage to Ethelberga were buried in the church at York; possibly it was intended to become the family burial place.

The further importance of York to king and bishop and to the establishment of the Church in the area is made clear by papal correspondence. Bede quotes Pope Honorius' letter to Edwin in which he announced that he was conceding 'willingly and without delay those rights which you hoped we should grant your bishops' by sending a pallium for each of the two metropolitans, that is, for Honorius of Canterbury and Paulinus, 'so that when either of them is summoned from the world . . . the other may put a bishop in his place by this our authority' (*HE* 2.17). Bede records that after the death of Archbishop Justus, Honorius 'came to Paulinus to be consecrated, meeting him at Lincoln, and there was consecrated bishop of the church at Canterbury.' He summarises part of the pope's letter to Honorius of Canterbury 'in which he prescribes what he had

already previously laid down in the letter sent to King Edwin' concerning the matter; Bede further quotes part of the papal letter to Honorius, repeating the terms of the concession made 'in accordance with your request and that of the kings our sons', meaning the kings of Northumbria and Kent (*HE* 2.18). The papal granting of the pallium to York was also in accordance with the declared wishes of Pope Gregory (*HE* 1.29), whom Pope Honorius described to Edwin as 'your evangelist and my lord' (*HE* 2.17).

Although at the defeat of Edwin the church at York was left unfinished and Paulinus was forced to return to Kent, taking the pallium with him (*HE* 2.14, 20), the establishment of a second metropolitan at York must have remained an aspiration for the Deiran nobility for generations to follow. Higham goes so far as to suggest that seeking this might have been a more suitable strategy for Oswine, had he been in a position to receive support from Canterbury in his encounter with Oswiu.[1]

Oswald, as the first Bernician Christian king, established his bishop in Lindisfarne and his brother and successor Oswiu followed suit, but after the battle of the Winwaed in 655 a large part of Oswiu's attention appears to have focused on Whitby in Deira.[2] Whitby is likely to have been one of the six monasteries set up in the province of Deira, together with six in Bernicia, on estates offered by Oswiu in thanksgiving for the victory (*HE* 3:24). Hild, abbess of Hartlepool, became abbess of Whitby. She had received the faith in company with Edwin through the teaching of the Roman missionary Paulinus but was ordained to the religious life by Aidan of Lindisfarne (*HE* 4.23). Bede notes her nobility of birth as well as life. Though a great niece of King Edwin, Hild was also related to Oswiu on the maternal side: she was a great granddaughter of King Aelli and Oswiu was his grandson. Whitby was further distinguished when Oswiu's daughter Aefflaed, who had been consecrated to God as an infant at the time of the Winwaed victory, entered Whitby and remained there for life, eventually presiding over it with her mother after Hild's death in 680 (*HE* 3.24;

[1] Higham (1999) 98.
[2] Higham (1997) 251-2; see also Hunter Blair (1985), who discusses the major ecclesiastical force Whitby must have been in Britain in the seventh century.

4.26). Like Hild, Aefflaed was buried at Whitby, 'together with her father Oswiu, her mother Eanflaed, her grandfather Edwin, and many other nobles' (*HE* 3.24).

Whitby had soon become the foremost training centre for clergy. Bede describes Hild's promotion of the study of Scripture and the performance of good works 'that there might be no difficulty in finding many there who were fitted for holy orders' (*HE* 4.23). As discussed earlier, in addition to Tatfrith, who was appointed as bishop of the Hwicce but died before his consecration, Whitby produced five future bishops in a single generation, 'all of them men of singular merit and holiness': Bosa of York, Aetla of Dorchester, Oftfor, bishop of the Hwicce, John of Hexham and Wilfrid II of York (*HE* 4.23).[3]

Oswiu may have transferred some of the most learned of his clergy along with other resources from Lindisfarne to this new monastery.[4] Higham observes that, at the very least, Oswiu's investment in Whitby represents a significant statement about his own regime, its reorientation geographically, its emphasis on his own immediate family, and the rehabilitation of the Deiran royal house into which he had married.[5]

Oswiu's choice of Whitby as the venue for the synod of 664 suggests he intended full control over the outcome. Bede notes that Oswiu had been educated and baptized by the Irish, was well-versed in their language 'and considered that nothing was better than what they had taught' (*HE* 3.25), but the fact that bishop Colman with his Irish clergy had to travel from Lindisfarne to Whitby may indicate that Oswiu had already decided what the outcome was to be.[6] Most scholars have accepted Henry Mayr-Harting's argument that this move by Oswiu

[3] See Intro., 5. The saintly Trumwine, the displaced bishop of the Picts, was also to live in the monastery of Whitby for many years 'to the benefit of many others beside himself' (*HE* 4.26).
[4] Hunter Blair (1985) 26. The importance of Whitby as a producer of bishops is highlighted and the writer claims, that in the light of such an achievement, one can only guess at the number of priests that must have been trained. On the high standard of learning at Whitby see also Cramp (1993).
[5] Higham (1997) 252. On methods employed to create centres of power, see De Jong and Theuws (2001).
[6] Higham (1997) 258.

was a tactic to out-manoeuvre his son, Alhfrith (Alchfrid).[7] Alhfrith had been given control over the Deiran kingdom by his father after the battle of the Winwaed, but the arrival of his younger brother Ecgfrith, son of the reigning queen, on the political stage appears to have been perceived by Alhfrith as a threat to his future. Ecgfrith was the grandson of Edwin and must have appeared as the ideal successor to Oswiu and his Deiran queen, being also a legitimate successor to Edwin in the eyes of the Deiran thegnage.[8]

Alhfrith's embracing of the Roman tradition may have been at least in part an effort to tie himself more closely to the Deiran nobility, whose conversion had originally taken place thirty years earlier through Paulinus; the move would, perhaps, also isolate his father from the kingdoms of Kent and Wessex.[9] Wilfrid, a staunch supporter of the Roman tradition, was part of Alhfrith's plans to establish a relationship with Peter's city and, after the synod at Whitby, Alhfrith appears to have been able to convince his father to appoint Wilfrid as Bishop of York (*HE* 3:28). At this time Oswiu had chosen Tuda as bishop of Northumbria (*HE* 3:26), but perhaps intended to allow Alhfrith to continue as ruler of the sub-kingdom of Deira, assuming Wilfrid would sit at York as its bishop.[10] Whitby would continue as Oswiu's ecclesiastical presence in Deira and as a training ground which moulded the minds of bishops; it never felt the need to become a bishopric itself. Soon after this however, although the exact circumstances are not clear, Alhfrith disappears from history, apparently as a result of a final rebellious encounter with his father.[11] Higham suggests that the last straw in the relationship may have been Oswiu's being made aware of Pope Gregory's plans for a second metropolitan at York and his discovery that Alhfrith and Wilfrid had

[7] Mayr-Harting, (1972) 108. A number of scholars, most recently Stancliffe (2003) 10, 25-26 have emphasised that Oswiu did not, thereby, necessarily adopt 'the whole agenda of Wilfrid' and that Oswiu's appointments of Tuda, Chad and Eata after Whitby 'affirmed continuity with the Irish roots of Northumbrian Christianity'. In focusing on the reign of Edwin, the *Vita Gregorii* avoids all mention of these Irish roots.
[8] See Kirby (1991) 103; Abels (1983) 7-11; Higham (1997) 259.
[9] Abels (1983) 8.
[10] Higham (1997) 260.
[11] Bede names those who attacked Oswiu during his reign, including 'his own son Alhfrith' (*HE* 3.14).

been planning to implement such a plan as a strategy against Oswiu and Ecgfrith.[12]

It is extremely unlikely that Alhfrith and Wilfrid would not be aware of York's potential as a second metropolitan, given their apparently close relationship with James the Deacon. This course of events would explain Wilfrid's long delay in Gaul and his quiet retirement to Ripon upon his return. Oswiu now established a firm relationship with Rome and was in a position, along with the king of Kent and 'with the choice and consent of the holy Church of the English people', to send Wigheard to Rome to be consecrated 'so that, when he had received the rank of archbishop, he could himself consecrate catholic bishops for the English churches throughout the whole of Britain' (*HE* 3:29). Oswiu's appointment of Chad to York was later found to be uncanonical, though this might not have been such a problem if Wigheard had not died of plague and been replaced by Theodore.[13]

Pope Vitalian in his contacts with Britain, however, dealt with Oswiu, not Egbert of Kent, as over-king. The pope was well aware of how dependant he was on the king of Northumbria in ensuring a successful ministry for his new archbishop of Canterbury, a fact highlighted in his correspondence with Oswiu (*HE* 3:29).[14] Theodore on his arrival in Britain soon made his way north and established good relations with the king of Northumbria in his efforts to reorganise the church. Though Chad was to be deposed from York, he was to be reconsecrated to another see, and Theodore also ensured that Wilfrid as the new bishop of York was not to have metropolitan status, Theodore himself being firmly established as the sole leader of the still fragile English church.[15] In fact, in the light of the ninth canon of the synod of Hertford in 672, which reveals Theodore's future policy on the division of large dioceses (*HE* 4.5), Oswiu may have been assured by Theodore at this earlier time that Wilfrid's position as sole bishop of Northumbria was not a permanent arrangement but a practical solution

[12] Higham (1997) 264.
[13] Higham (1997) 264.
[14] For discussion of Vitalian's letter and papal and royal policy, see Charles-Edwards (2000) 433-34.
[15] Higham (1997) 266.

to difficult circumstances in which canonical bishops were thin on the ground. Ecclesiastical control would therefore lie with Canterbury and a good relationship between Oswiu and Theodore would ensure an influential position for this over-king, not just in Kent or Northumbria, but throughout the English church. Whitby was therefore to continue in its development as Oswiu's ecclesiastical stronghold in the north and circumstances ensured it acquired and maintained a close relationship with Theodore's and Hadrian's school of learning at Canterbury, thereby producing suitable episcopal material for Northumbria.[16]

All of these circumstances support Thacker's argument that Theodore, though not implementing Pope Gregory's plan for a second metropolitan at York, promoted the cult of Gregory as a symbol of unity in the English church and that Whitby was an important part of this plan. The Whitby writer however, makes no mention of Oswiu or Theodore.

Wilfrid

Alan Thacker has suggested that a certain 'equivocation' in Bede's attempts to present a degree of continuity between the Ionan community at Lindisfarne and the hierarchy established after the synod of Whitby was probably motivated by 'a desire to glide over the brutal fact that the mother church of Bede's own province of Bernicia was completely superseded by York, the Deiran episcopal centre, in 664.'[17] Though it might be thought that Bede would approve of the move to York, which was in accordance with Pope Gregory's plans whose implementation Bede himself was to advocate in his letter to Egbert of York in 734, Thacker argues that Bede countenanced Oswiu's and Theodore's 'subversion of the Gregorian plan by establishing a single archbishopric of the English people' because of Wilfrid's clash with the Northumbrian kings and the

[16] Bede informs us that Bishop Oftfor from Whitby had gone on to study under Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury and this is evidence of the close contacts that must have existed between the two monasteries (*HE* 4:23). Colgrave discusses the possibility that it may have been normal procedure for Whitby monks to study at Canterbury, Colgrave (1968) 37. On the links between Whitby and Canterbury see Hunter Blair (1990) 150.
[17] Thacker (1996) 46-48.

dangers of the concentration of episcopal power in the hands of such a Deiran bishop.[18]

T.M. Charles-Edwards has recently discussed Wilfrid's aspirations for metropolitan status in the context of Wilfrid's profession of faith in Rome on behalf of all the peoples of both the northern part of Britain and Ireland (*VW* 53; *HE* 5.19), and describes it as being 'in accord with the earlier ambitions of Oswiu and the terms of Vitalian's letter'. Charles-Edwards also views this development in the context of Northumbrian aspirations to invade Ireland, as witnessed by Ecgfrith's attack which, it is argued, played a large part in Armagh's claim of archiepiscopal status under Rome towards the end of the seventh century.[19] But Bede, at least, described Ecgfrith's defeat by the Picts as a divine punishment for unwarranted aggression towards the Irish by a king who ignored priestly advice; he notes it was a defeat from which the Northumbrian kingdom never fully recovered (*HE* 4.26). Moreover, there are some difficulties in envisaging a concerted anti-Irish mentality among Oswiu and his dynasty, considering that after the synod of Whitby, those trained in the Irish tradition continued to receive positions as abbots and bishops. Furthermore, there is no surviving evidence that York was promoted by Oswiu's dynasty as a metropolitan see with power over both northern Britain and Ireland. The argument put forward in the present chapter of this thesis suggests that Whitby, and not York, was the ecclesiastical focal point of Oswiu's dynasty.

Wilfrid's plans for York may of course have been different. While bishop of Northumbria, Wilfrid was also the beneficiary of much monastic wealth and must have become quite a powerful figure during his years at York. Even though the see had not gained metropolitan status at the time of Stephen of Ripon's writing the *Vita Wilfridi*, his biography twice describes the bishopric of York as *metropolitanus* (*VW* 10, 16).[20] Thacker has suggested that Wilfrid sought

[18] Thacker (1996) 54-55
[19] Charles-Edwards (2000) 429-38.
[20] As noted by Thacker (1996) 47, n.57. On issues concerning the roles of metropolitan and archbishop see Charles-Edwards (2000) 417-40.

metropolitan status from 664 and that in making such a claim, it could be that 'he had in mind the bishops of Armagh as much as the Gregorian plan for York.'[21]

The reasons given by Stephen of Ripon for Wilfrid's falling out with King Ecgfrith, Oswiu's son, are that the king's wife, Iurminburg, incited the king to jealousy of Wilfrid's riches, armed followers and other temporal glories (*VW* 24). After his expulsion by Ecgfrith, Wilfrid's determination to turn to Rome was because of Theodore's decision to divide up his diocese, appointing three bishops in his stead, two of whom were from Whitby (*HE* 4:12). Ecgfrith was therefore reassured that the see was to be administered by bishops from his own monastery and Theodore was sure that he had bishops he knew were loyal to Canterbury. Theodore appears to have had plans to divide up large dioceses from the time of his arrival in Britain, but the paltry supply of canonical bishops did not make this possible in 669, forcing him to appreciate every canonical bishop he had on hand.[22] Theodore's plans for the division of bishoprics is expressed in the ninth canon of the synod of Hertford (*HE* 4:5), but an ideal time to force the issue in Northumbria was when Ecgfrith and Wilfrid came to odds.

Whitby cannot be separated from these events: two bishops trained at Whitby replaced Wilfrid and, as revealed by Stephen of Ripon, Hild of Whitby was co-accuser with Theodore in the charges brought against Wilfrid in his first case at Rome (*VW* 54). Mayr-Harting claims that the ninth canon at Hertford was a major question at the time and that it concerned two separate approaches to the episcopate and the pastoral life.[23] He sees these as the Gaulish approach, involving a bishop with the power of a secular lord in a position to enforce the law of Christ by his power and prestige, and the Gregorian model which, though acknowledging the dignity of the bishop, promotes the division of bishoprics and the assurance that a bishop can visit, preach to and care for his flock in a practical sense. Mayr-Harting sees Wilfrid, not surprisingly, as a model of the Gaulish approach, while he sees Theodore as more a promoter of the Gregorian

[21] Thacker (1996) 54-55
[22] Patrick Wormald (1982) 72 notes that when Theodore arrived in 669 'there were only seven dioceses, of which only four were occupied, and only two of these by canonically unobjectionable bishops.' See also Hunter Blair (1985) 15-6, also drawing attention to the effects of the plague in 664.
[23] Mayr-Harting (1972) 132-8.

model in filling the pastoral needs of the newly Christianised Anglo-Saxons. This would also explain further Theodore's promotion of Gregory as an image of unity and the attractiveness of its application for Whitby.

Why therefore, did Theodore make amends with Wilfrid and encourage the new king, Aldfrith (685-705), to reinstate Wilfrid at York in 686? Wilfrid initially shared the Northumbrian diocese with two other bishops, but Theodore none the less deposed Bosa from his see at York in preference for Wilfrid and within time Wilfrid was indeed allowed to regain the whole of Northumbria.

Kirby points out that Aldfrith's accession to the kingdom took place at a time when Caedwalla of the West Saxons made a sudden and dramatic rise to power, and Stephen of Ripon reveals Wilfrid's close relationship with Caedwalla, claiming that in a solemn vow Wilfrid adopted the king as his son and the king made Wilfrid his supreme counsellor (*VW* 42).[24] The southern kingdoms had succumbed to the hegemony of Caedwalla and Theodore was in a very vulnerable position at Canterbury. Likewise, Aldfrith had just returned from Ireland and needed to move quickly to ensure his position as king in Northumbria under difficult circumstances. Aldfrith, though a prudent and capable king, took over a kingdom whose frontiers had been pushed back by Picts, Irish and Britons (*HE* 4.26) and he needed to establish himself. As Bernician princess and abbess of Whitby, Aelfflaed must have played a significant role as political adviser to her half-brother when he arrived as a virtual stranger from abroad to take the kingship of Northumbria.[25] Stephen informs us that as Theodore had created enmity between Wilfrid and Aelfflaed in the past, he now created peace (*VW* 43). Under these circumstances it is not difficult to see how Aldfrith, Aelfflaed and Theodore might have agreed to Wilfrid's reinstatement at York at the expense of Bosa. However, when Aldfrith felt more secure, like his predecessors he also turned against Wilfrid and, with the agreement of Canterbury, Bosa the bishop from Whitby was reinstated at York.

[24] See Kirby (1991) 119-21.
[25] Kirby (1991) 144. Kirby emphasizes what a major achievement it must have been for Oswiu's family to ensure Aldfrith's accession to power after the sudden death of Ecgfrith.

The reasons for Aldfrith's and Wilfrid's falling out, as provided by Stephen, concern Wilfrid's wealth and revenue, the creation of new bishoprics and Wilfrid's refusal to follow the decrees of Theodore (*VW* 45). This now familiar clash triggered Wilfrid's final appeal to Rome, and representatives of Berhtwald, Theodore's successor, were sent by Canterbury to combat the challenge. After much deliberation, Rome as good as decreed that they sort out an amicable conclusion themselves, and this finally took place on their return, which incidentally occurred at the time of Aldfrith's death. Aldfrith's eight-year-old son Osred succeeded his father, but this was not without difficulty. Eadwulf gained power for a period of two months and Wilfrid made overtures to the new king, hoping to have more success with a new dynasty (*VW* 59). Wilfrid's overtures were however rejected and he decided instead to support Aldfrith's son, the child king Osred, even adopting him as his own son (*VW* 59). Osred's aunt, Abbess Aelfflaed, also supported the child and it was under these circumstances that Wilfrid and his enemies in Northumbria came to make a lasting peace.[26] Wilfrid did not make any great gains but did receive back his monasteries of Ripon and Hexham, along with their revenues.

The unity of Northumbria

As Oswiu's and Ecgfrith's royal and ecclesiastical stronghold in Deira, Whitby was to play a major role in the unity of the two kingdoms for this Bernician dynasty, being ruled by a Bernician queen and princess, and becoming established as the resting place for the Bernician nobility. Any power assumed by York must have appeared as a potential threat to the unity of Deira and Bernicia. Significantly, Bosa and his successors, John of Beverly and Wilfrid II, who consecutively held the see after Wilfrid's second and final deposition, were all from the monastery of Whitby (*HE* 4:23).[27] Stephen of Ripon, as well as informing us that Hild in conjunction with Theodore had opposed Wilfrid on his first referral to Rome, makes clear that her successor Aelfflaed, in conjunction with Theodore, had also been Wilfrid's enemy (*VW* 43). York was in a good position to promote a cult to Edwin, as this was his royal city and the church he

[26] On Osred's accession of power see Kirby (1991) 146-7.
[27] Hunter Blair (1985) 27 discusses these three Whitby bishops.

had founded there had received the relic of Edwin's head (*HE* 2:20). The potential of such a cult must have presented a threat to upset the members of Oswiu's dynasty, along with Whitby's efforts to placate any Deiran thoughts of independence. The retrieval of Edwin's bones to Whitby may, therefore, have been a very strategic move by Oswiu's queen Eanflaed and their daughter Aelfflaed to claim Edwin's cult as their own; as Edwin's daughter and granddaughter respectively, they were well placed to do so. Whitby was a monastery with close ties with both Bernician and Deiran lines and Aelfflaed appears to have used this fact to optimum benefit, making stringent efforts to ensure her father's dynasty remained in control in Northumbria.

Abbess Aelfflaed is said to have met regularly with Cuthbert of Lindisfarne to discuss spiritual matters and Bede describes her grief when Cuthbert prophesied the death of her brother, Ecgfrith.[28] There was, however, comfort in Cuthbert's oblique prophecy that her half-brother Aldfrith would return from Ireland and continue Oswiu's line as the new king (*VP* 24). The succession could not have been taken for granted, for Aelfflaed herself observed that Ecgfrith 'lacked sons and brothers'. Bede further reports that Aldfrith 'was said to be the son of Ecgfrith's father' and that Ecgfrith 'was succeeded in his kingdom by his bastard brother Aldfrith, who for some considerable time before this had been pursuing his studies in the regions of the Irish, suffering a self-imposed exile to gratify his love of wisdom' (*VP* 24). Ecgfrith's death in 685 was so sudden that it must have required considerable political manoeuvring to install an outsider like Aldfrith as king, and it is highly likely that his half-sister at Whitby had an important role in this achievement. This perhaps is implicit in Bede's elaborate account of how, one year earlier, Aelfflaed had formally sought out the prophetic pronouncement of 'the man of God' concerning the succession and that Cuthbert had foretold that her brother Ecgfrith would have a successor whom she would embrace 'with as much sisterly affection as if he were Ecgfrith himself' (*VP* 24).

[28] Kirby (1991) 106.

Kirby emphasizes what a tremendous achievement Aldfrith's installment as king must have been. His position must initially have been quite shaky and this has already been suggested here as the reason for Wilfrid's re-installment at York in 686. Trouble again arose for Abbess Aelfflaed when Aldfrith died in 704 leaving only an eight-year-old son to take the throne, and Wilfrid quickly moved in to support a new dynasty under the kingship of Eadwulf. On the rejection of his offer by Eadwulf, however, Wilfrid, presumably being only too aware of the influence of Aelfflaed, decided to support the boy king, even adopting him as his son. Wilfrid and Aelfflaed made amends henceforth. Aelfflaed attested to Aldfrith's dying wish that he or his heir, his son, should fulfil all the decrees of the apostolic see concerning Wilfrid (*VW* 60). This is probably the reason why Stephen of Ripon speaks favourably of Abbess Aelfflaed and in all his criticisms of Wilfrid's enemies is restrained in referring to Whitby, even describing abbess Hild as of pious memory. Neither does he ever name Wilfrid's replacement bishops at York; when Aldfrith drove them out, Stephen does not mention Whitby and refers to them simply as *alieni*: *expulsis de ea alienis episcopis* (*VW* 44).[29]

Osred's memory has been recounted by contemporaries in both a negative and positive light and this may be an indication of political instability at the time.[30] But Osred did reign for eleven years, until his own nobles murdered him in 716, and it is interesting that the death did not take place until two years after the death of his influential aunt Aelfflaed in 714. The new king, Coenred, reigned for two years and was replaced in 718 by Osric, a member of Oswiu's line, but with the succession of Coenred's brother Ceolwulf (729-37), Oswui's dynasty disappeared forever (*HE* 5:23). Only then was York able to gain its metropolitan status and develop into the major Northumbrian centre of learning for which it became renowned.

The evidence of Bede shows the importance of the monks at Hexham in the liturgical commemoration of Oswald (*HE* 3.2) and its extension to Wilfrid's

[29] For discussion of the term *alienus* and the contexts in which it was used by Stephen of Ripon and by Wilfrid, see Stancliffe (2003) 19-20.
[30] Kirby (1991) 147.

monastery at Selsey. He records that the Apostles Peter and Paul appeared there in a vision to announce the anniversary of the Northumbrian king's death in battle at the hands of the heathen, 'when he was taken up to the joys of the souls in heaven and enrolled among the company of saints' and became an intercessor for his people (*HE* 4.14). Bede's own account of Oswald's life and death, constituting a *vita* within the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, was obviously crucial in ensuring the further development of the cult. Although Oswald's cult may have had popular origins, it had depended on the support of the Church, and particularly on Wilfrid, for its promotion; Thacker argues that it was during the later years of Wilfrid's life that he energised the cult of Oswald.[31] This appears to have taken place after 704 when Wilfrid had adopted Osred as his spiritual son and, under difficult circumstances and in conjunction with Aelfflaed, promoted Osred as a boy king. Thacker also points out that the battle which Stephen of Ripon claimed was to determine the new king's succession, took place at Bamborough, which was the site of Oswald's reliquary shrine. The victory followed the vow of the army, reported by Berhtferth that, 'if God granted our royal boy his father's kingdom, we would fulfil the apostolic commands concerning Bishop Wilfrid', highlighting a connection between Wilfrid, the cult of Oswald, and the promotion of the new king (*VW* 60).

Edwin's cult was developed and promoted at Whitby, but it is difficult to establish the date at which his translation took place and, indeed, at what date the *Vita Gregorii* was produced. The Whitby writer does inform us that Eanflaed was abbess at Whitby at the time of the retrieval of Edwin's bones (*VG* 18) and this at least gives us an earliest date of 680 for the event, as this is the year that Hild died (*HE* 4:23). We are also told that the translation took place in the days when Ethelred was king of Mercia (*VG* 18) and this gives the latest date as 704, the date at which Ethelred retired to the monastery at Bardney (*HE* 5:24). This statement also suggests that the *Vita Gregorii* was produced after the reign of this king, indicating 704 as the earliest date at which the work was written. The *Vita* also informs us that Aelfflaed was abbess at the time of the production of the

[31] Thacker (1995); also Cubitt (2002) 429, 451; Goffart (1985) 261-2, 267 also argues that Wilfrid was the promoter of Oswald's cult, but that Edwin's cult at Whitby was an attempt by the monastery to undermine a monopoly on Roman culture held by Wilfrid.

work and this gives us *circa* 714 as the latest date of its production, as this is the year of Aelfflaed's death, indicated by Bede when he tells us that she lived for about sixty years (*HE* 3:24).[32] Therefore, present evidence does not allow us to pinpoint an actual year either for the retrieval of Edwin's bones or the date at which the *Vita Gregorii* was produced, but Aelfflaed's role in the political events of the time may help us to be at least more informed in our speculation.

While ceremonial translation of relics usually depended on the initiative of a powerful ecclesiastical institution, guardianship of a saint's cult was a powerful aid in a monastery's effort to consolidate itself as a place of power, thus helping to retain and increase a position of influence and control for the patrons of the monastery involved.[33] The provision of a cult such as Edwin's could have been an important means of securing Whitby's status and its position of influence in Northumbria. There must be a strong possibility that the establishment and promotion of Edwin's cult was prompted by some circumstance or event at the time. At the death of Ecgfrith in 685, a king of both Bernician and Deiran blood, perhaps the retrieval of Edwin's bones and the promotion of the cult of a Deiran hero was part of Aelfflaed's efforts to gain support from the Deiran thegnage to secure her half-brother Aldfrith as the new king. This date clearly falls within the time frame indicated within the *Vita Gregorii*. This action would surely have bolstered unity within Northumbria at a time when the kingdom was weak and perhaps threatened by feelings of Deiran patriotism at York. Edwin's relics were welcomed by his daughter and granddaughter and laid to rest in the same location as Oswiu and his family.[34] This action helped the authorities at Whitby to harness Deiran patriotism within the context of a united Northumbrian kingdom and increased Whitby's own position of influence, as guardian of a

[32] Jones (1968) 65 argued that the *Vita Gregorii* was written a generation earlier, before a proper hagiographical form had been established in England, but most scholars are agreed that the retrieval of Edwin's bones took place between 680 and 704 and that the *Vita Gregorii* was produced between 704 and 716: Colgrave (1968) 47-8; Colgrave (1963) 132-3; Mosford (1988) xi, xii; see also Thacker (1976) 38.

[33] Thacker (2002b) 72, who also suggests that less formal cults were of saints who had never been the focus of power struggles or the vehicles of political ambition. On the possibility of many minor local Anglo-Saxon saints' cults see Blair (2002) and on the elite nature of a cult endowed with a hagiography, see Cubitt (2002) 429.

[34] Yorke (2002) argues that the promotion of saintly kings was influenced by a pagan past that valued the pagan tradition of royal sacrality, and that under ecclesiastical pressure this was to give way to a saintly veneration of deceased royal abbesses, abbots, and bishops.

saint's relics. Deiran patriots may have employed a cult of Edwin in order to gain support, and there was no more effective method of challenging the threat of a cult than to take control of it.[35]

If this is the case, it is an early date for the translation of saint's relics in Anglo-Saxon England. Relic devotion in early Anglo-Saxon Christianity did not include the translation and elevation of local saints but had centred on a devotion to Roman saints and martyrs. Relics were normally secondary or contact relics only and were usually deposited in altars. Practice was not the same in Gaul where there was a strong devotion to local saints whose relics were translated and elevated as part of a rite of sanctification. This Gaulish influence does not appear to have impacted upon Anglo-Saxon practice until the translation and elevation of Aethelthryth at Ely in 695 and Cuthbert at Lindisfarne in 698.[36]

The story of Edwin's relics does not fit this Gaulish mould, as there is no description of the washing of the relics and their elevation within the monastery. Neither are the relics translated from another place of burial, but are retrieved from a battlefield.[37] The event does however go some way towards the Gaulish model and is perhaps an example of Whitby's innovative spirit in a willingness to take the lead in honouring a local saint and venerating his relics. In a way it appears to be a sort of half-way house, as it venerates both a Roman and local saint in one work. Bede describes early Anglo-Saxon contacts with the Gaulish houses of Brie, Chelles and Anelys (*HE* 3.8, 4.23) and Thacker has suggested East Anglia's contacts with Faremoutier-en-Brie as possibly influential for the translation and elevation of Aethelthryth at Ely. Whitby had established contacts with Gaulish monasteries since the days of Hild (whose sister was a nun at Chelles), and perhaps was also influenced by Gaulish practice in the promotion of Edwin's cult.[38] This opened up new opportunities to venerate past heroes and helped create new temporal powers based upon heavenly connections.

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[35] On a similar strategy practiced by Gregory of Tours, see Van Dam (1993) 72.
[36] Thacker (2002b); also Thacker (2000).
[37] Though Oswald's relics were also retrieved from a battlefield, Bede's account of the translation provides more detail resembling a Gaulish rite of sanctification. The saint's bones are washed, the water's disposal providing a source of secondary relics, and the king's standard is placed over his tomb, *HE* 3.11. See Thacker (2002b) 64, 69.
[38] On the influence of Frankish monasteries on Whitby see Mosford (1988) xlvi.

The commissioning of a *vita* is likely to have accompanied the translation of a saint's relics, but this does not appear to have been the case with the *Vita Gregorii*.[39] The writer tells us that Edwin's relics were retrieved at a time when Eanflaed was still alive and when Ethelred was king of Mercia, thus indicating that this was some time in the past. The earlier years of Osred's reign are a likely time for the production of the *Vita Gregorii*, as instability returned for Aelfflaed and her family at the death of her half-brother Aldfrith. The installation of a boy king was contrary to Anglo-Saxon practice and the promotion of a cult of Edwin by Aelfflaed would play a part in efforts to establish all the Deiran support she could for her nephew king. This was another time of great instability within Northumbria and therefore may have played a role in prompting a hagiographical work by the monastic authorities.[40] Aelfflaed's promotion of a cult of Edwin took place during the promotion of her Bernician nephew as king, and the evidence indicates that it was part of her efforts to ensure Deiran loyalty to this king and secure the unity of the kingdom.

Such efforts would also continue to secure Whitby's ecclesiastical prominence over York. It is striking that in the *Vita Gregorii's* promotion of both Edwin and Paulinus, York is not mentioned even once throughout the work.[41] This is despite the fact that Edwin had established York as his royal city and constituted it as the cathedral city for the see of his bishop, Paulinus. To promote Edwin as king and saint and Paulinus as model bishop without mentioning this king's royal city or the fact that this model bishop had, as metropolitan bishop of York, consecrated a bishop of Canterbury, was some feat indeed. Nor is there any mention of the fact, recorded by Bede, that the head of King Edwin had been carried to York and subsequently placed in the church of St Peter in York, 'in the porch dedicated to the holy Pope Gregory, from whose disciples he had received the word of life' (*HE* 2.20).[42] This is extraordinary given the fact that the Whitby

[39] Goffart (1985) 259 claims that, like the translation of Cuthbert and the accompanying production of the saint's *vita*, the *Vita Gregorii* must also have accompanied the translation of Edwin's relics to Whitby.
[40] On the influence of social and political circumstances on the production of hagiography and counter hagiography see Goffart (1985), 235-328; Gransden (1974), 68; Wood (2001a) esp. 25-55; Wood (2001b)**;** Wood (1999); De Jong and Theuws (2001); Van Dam (1993), 50-81.
[41] On the Whitby writer's deliberate attempt to ignore York, see Daniel (1993) 197-9.
[42] The Whitby writer leaves the unsuspecting reader to assume that the head was included among the remains brought back to Whitby.

Vita is a work dedicated to Gregory and devotes almost one third of its contents to Edwin.

The Whitby writer describes instead how the bones of Edwin were brought from the site of his death at Hatfield Chase to Whitby: 'And now the holy bones are honourably buried in the Church of St Peter, the chief of the Apostles, together with other of our kings, on the south side of the altar which is dedicated in the name of the blessed Apostle Peter and east of the altar dedicated to St Gregory, which is in the same church' (*VG* 19). Some scholars have claimed Edwin's cult to be a stance taken for Deiran independence, believing the cults of Edwin and Oswald to have been rivals of one another.[43] Alan Thacker has revised his opinion on this matter and has now argued that both cults were promoted by the same Bernician family, Edwin's by Aelfflaed at Whitby and Oswald's by her sister, Osthryth, at Bardney.[44] The retrieval of Oswald's bones by his niece Osthryth was possibly viewed as an act of Northumbrian patriotism and subsequently may have resulted in the assassination of this Mercian queen, but up to now it has been a little more difficult to envisage Aelfflaed's promotion of Edwin as the action of a Bernician patriot.[45]

The key to Northumbrian success was always the unity of the two kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira and diplomacy was necessary for success from the beginning. It was this unity that enabled Aethelfrith to achieve success as the first great Northumbrian king[46] and when his annexation of Deira was not readily

[43] Rollason (1989) 121 argues that they were rival cults and that Edwin's cult was an effort to assert Deiran independence. He argues that the establishment of Oswald's cult in Mercian-controlled Lindsey may have been an effort by Bernicia and Mercia to upset any feelings of affiliation that may have existed between the two central kingdoms of Deira and Lindsey; Thacker (1976) 40-59, his earlier view, saw the promotion of Edwin's cult as a stance for Deiran patriotism; Mosford (1988) xxiv claims that to view the Whitby *Life* as a reaction to Oswald's cult is a distortion of emphasis.

[44] Thacker (1995) 106 claims, 'In their promotion of kingly warriors to sainthood, and in the associated rites and ceremonies, Oswiu, Eanflad, and their daughters were breaking new ground.' In this context he suggests that the promotion of both cults are possibly two aspects of a single initiative.

[45] Thacker (1995) 106.

[46] Stancliffe (1995) 75-76 suggests that if Penda had been able to succeed in keeping the two kingdoms separate for even a period of one decade, he may have been able to draw the southern kingdom into Mercia and prevent Northumbria's rise to power.

accepted, he took a Deiran queen as his second wife (*HE* 3:6).[47] Likewise, his son Oswiu married Eanflaed, a Deiran princess who later diplomatically prevented a great blood feud between the two kingdoms by brokering peace for her husband after his murder of the Deiran king, Oswine (*HE* 3:14). It is interesting also that Oswiu's eldest son, Alhfrith, had begun to challenge his father's power because he realised that Oswiu had come to favour his younger son, Ecgfrith, and this favour may be partly due to the fact that Ecgfrith had a Deiran mother.[48] Nora Chadwick noted the continuous threat of the Britons during this period and how the unity of Northumbria was crucial to its survival in the light of such a threat.[49] Bernician kings were obviously anxious to remain in favour with the Deiran nobility and ensure the strength of the kingdom and the promotion of a cult to Edwin was therefore a recognition of the Deiran house and its role in the history and growth of Northumbrian power.

Oswald's completion of the church begun by Edwin at York and the placing of Edwin's head there seems also to have been an effort to secure Deiran support for this new Bernician king as he established his authority in a united Northumbria (*HE* 2:20).[50] Bede comments that it was by the efforts of Oswald that Deira and Bernicia, formerly at strife with one another, 'were peacefully united and became one people. Now Oswald was the nephew of Edwin through his sister Acha, and it was fitting that so great a predecessor should have so worthy a kinsman to inherit both his religion and his kingdom' (*HE* 3.6). Furthermore, this statement is immediately preceded by an account of the enshrinement of Oswald's severed hand and arm, and this associates a theme of unity with Oswald's own relics. In a similar way the retrieval of Oswald's bones to the monastery of Bardney provides a dramatic account of reconciliation. The account describes a series of miraculous events which result in the monks'

[47] This lady, Acha, was mother of Oswald and sister to Edwin. Colgrave (1969) 231 notes that Acha was the daughter of Aelle and second wife to Aethelfrith, which meant that Oswald was connected with the royal houses of both Bernicia and Deira.
[48] Ian Wood (1998) 5 suggests that Ecgfrith's endowment of land for the monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow was part of his efforts to strengthen unity between the two kingdoms and a further example of this dynasty using a royal monastery as a diplomatic tool to ensure unity within Northumbria.
[49] Chadwick (1963c) and Chadwick (1963d) 323-4.
[50] Rollason (1989) 122 suggests that the cult of Oswine at Gilling may have been an effort by Bernicia to placate any hostile feelings amidst the Deiran nobility.

conversion from a deep hatred of an enemy conqueror to an attitude of love and service towards this king's cult.

The retrieval of both kings' relics and their resulting cults may have been initiated and promoted to encourage a spirit of unity and reconciliation within the Northumbrian kingdom. It is true that the accounts of both retrievals are quite different, and that Edwin lacks Bede's detailed account of the washing and preparation of Oswald's bones and the placing of the king's standard over his tomb, not to mention the miracles attributed to their retrieval and veneration. However, Bede wrote at a later time, when the important ceremony attached to the establishment of a saint's cult had spread from Gaul to Anglo-Saxon monastic institutions promoting local saints. Bede also had an agenda to promote Oswald as the ideal Christian king, while Edwin receives his status in the *HE* as a worthy predecessor. However, it may indeed be the case that the promotion of both Edwin's and Oswald's cults were rooted in a single initiative in support of Osred, Edwin's cult by Aelfflaed at Whitby and Oswald's by Wilfrid at Hexham. Aelfflaed and Wilfrid ended their days promoting the same political interest and, despite troubled times, succeeded in retaining support for Osred which lasted until after they both had died. Eric Cambridge has pointed to archaeological evidence of a devotion to Oswald at Lythe, a subsidiary monastery of Whitby, which would again suggest there was no necessary animosity between Edwin's and Oswald's cults and that they were both supported by one family.[51]

Chapter VI, the final chapter of the thesis, identifies images of unity used in the portrayal of Edwin in the *Vita Gregorii* which might support this general argument, but also attempts to elucidate the significance of those images in terms of the exegetical themes and techniques which have already been identified in the rest of the work.

[51] Cambridge (1995) 140-1. Rollason (1989) 125 points out that it is easy to see why families were eager to promote the sanctity of family members when this increased the status of the entire family.

CHAPTER VI

EXEGESIS AND EDWIN

A vessel of mercy

In the Whitby *Vita* Gregory makes three punning prophecies in his famous encounter with pagan Angles in Rome. Their name *Anguli* conceals their destiny as *angeli Dei*, the name of their king, Aelli, points to the fact that God's praise (*Alleluia*) must be heard in their land and the name of their tribe, Deire, prompts him to foretell they will flee *de ira Dei* and come to the faith (*VG* 9). After the sending of the mission to the English (*VG* 11) there is the baptism of Ethelbert of Kent and the introduction of King Edwin, son of Aelli. He is described as 'a man of this race of ours which is called *Humbrenses*' who, 'from the time when the *gens Angulorum* came to this island, held pre-eminence as much for his wisdom as for the extent of his royal and single-handed sway' (*VG* 12). The heavenly fulfilment of Gregory's first two prophecies is then depicted in chapter 13 in the evocation of the transformed Angles, in union with the angels, singing God's praise in the unceasing *Alleluia* (cf. Rev.19:16). The following short chapter 14, which appropriately closes the three introductory chapters of the Anglo-Saxon material, shows that the figure of King Edwin is a key to a fuller understanding of the fulfilment of Gregory's prophecy made before his pontificate:

> Further, when the prophecy was made, Edwin, predestined to be a vessel of mercy for God, was perhaps still in the loins of his father, Aelli. Edwin's name, consisting of three syllables, truly signifies the mystery of the Holy Trinity which he taught, inviting all to come to him and be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (*VG* 14)[1]

[1] Porro cum in lumbis fortasse cum hoc fuit vaticinatum adhuc patris sui Aelli fuit predestinatum vas misericordie Deo Eduinus, cuius nomen tribus sillabis constans, recte sibi designat sancte misterium trinitatis, quod ille docebat qui omnes ad se invitat baptizatos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti. Huius namque Eduini pater in baptismo venerandus fuit Paulinus antistes, unus illorum quos inter nos direxit, ut diximus, Gregorius: qui tam facile signum Dei sui sapientie quadam ut reor dominica dicitur dedisse.

The inclusion of Edwin, who is not mentioned in Gregory's prophecy as it is reported by either the Whitby writer or Bede, is here justified by the notion that he was perhaps already 'in the loins of his father', Aelli, when Gregory's prophecy concerning Aelli was made. The phrase echoes the biblical description of Levi as being *in lumbris patris*, meaning he was symbolically present when his forefather Abraham met Melchisidech (Heb 7:10).

The Whitby writer describes Edwin as 'predestined to be a vessel of mercy', here alluding to St Paul's contrast of *vasa irae* and *vasa misericordiae*: vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, and vessels of mercy, prepared for glory (Rom 9:22-23). The image continues the idea of the English, symbolised by Aelli and the Deiran dynasty, as a chosen people predestined to enter the Church through the mercy of God. In the previous chapter, the two syllables of Aelli's name are shown to point to the word 'Alleluia' and thus to contain a cryptic sign of the Trinity: 'Though it is the name of a king, *alle* also signifies the Father, *lu* the Son and *ia* the Holy Spirit' (*VG* 13). Now, in chapter 14, Edwin too is strongly associated with the prophecy: 'Edwin's name consisting of three syllables (i.e. Eadwine), truly signifies the mystery of the holy Trinity'. But the idea is developed further to show the sacramental means by which this chosen people will enter the universal Church. Christ invites 'all to come to him and be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'. The threefold liturgical baptismal formula *in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti* was sanctified by its inclusion in Christ's final command to his disciples to evangelize all peoples: *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes: baptizantes eos in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti* (Matt 28:19).

The description of Edwin as *vas misericordie Deo* is from St Paul's extended discussion of the new people of God who are called through divine mercy alone:

> What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath that are made for destruction; and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory? (Rom 9:22-23)

As will be seen, St Augustine repeatedly used this passage from Romans in teaching that God's grace is what is essential in salvation, and that his people are children of the promise and not of the flesh. The third and final part of Gregory's prophecy (*VG* 9), that those of the tribe *Deire* 'shall flee from the wrath of God to the faith (*de ira Dei confugientes ad fidem*)', is now made clear. The fair-skinned Angles, described by Gregory as 'lovely vessels' (*VG* 10), are not doomed to destruction. Edwin, here typifying the *Angli*, is 'predestined to be a vessel of mercy for God' (*VG* 14). Though sinful humanity merits God's wrath, Edwin and his people receive God's mercy: through divine grace they are brought to the faith and are baptized in the name of the Trinity.

The Whitby writer continues to use the figure of Edwin in this way, symbolically portraying the salvation of the English people in the account of Edwin's conversion:

> On one occasion during this period, when he was in fear of his life, it is said that a certain man, lovely to look upon, appeared to him crowned with the cross of Christ and began to comfort him, promising him a happy life and the restoration of his kingdom if he would obey him. Edwin assured him that he would be ready to do so if he could prove to him that what he promised was true. The man answered, 'You will prove it to be true and you must obey him who first appears to you in this form and with this sign. He will teach you to submit to him the one living and true God (1 Thess 1:10) who created all things; it is he who will give you what I promise and will show you through that man all that you ought to do.' It is said to have been Bishop Paulinus who first appeared to him in that form. (*VG* 16)[2]

At the moment of Edwin's conversion the Whitby writer depicts Paulinus demanding that Edwin from now on leave his idols and turn to worship the 'living and true God' (1 Thess 1:9). The rest of the passage from Thessalonians and its context help explain the connection of the quoted phrase with the fulfilment of Gregory's prophecy in Edwin's conversion from idolatry:

[2] Ea tempestate dicunt ei de sua vita consternato quadam die quidam pulchre visionis, cum cruce Christi coronatus apparens eum consolari coepisse, promittens ei felicem vitam regnumque gentis sue futurum, si ei obedire voluisset. Eoque promittente voluisse, si verum probaret sibi quod promisit respondit, 'Probabis hoc verum et qui tibi primo cum hac specie et signo apparebit, illi debes oboedire. Qui te uni Deo qui creavit omnia, vivo et vero docebit obedire, quique Deus daturus est tibi ea que promitto et omnia que tibi agenda sunt per illum demonstrabit.' Sub hac igitur specie dicunt illi Paulinum prefatum episcopum primo apparuisse.

> For the people of those regions they report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath to come (I Thess 1:9-10).

To anyone familiar with 1 Thess 1:9, quoted by the Whitby writer, the completion of the scriptural passage points out that it is Christ who has rescued us from the wrath to come (*qui eripuit nos ab ira ventura*) (1 Thess 1:10); Edwin therefore continues to represent the conversion of the entire Anglo-Saxon people and their deliverance from the wrath of God, as prophesied by Gregory.

Likewise, the scriptural context of the image of the vessel of mercy (Rom 9:23) is also highly appropriate to the theme of predestination in chapters 12 and 13 of the *Vita Gregorii*:

> And what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea, 'Those who were not my people I will call "my people," and her who was not beloved I will call "beloved". And in the very place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," there they shall be called children of the living God' (Rom 9:23-26).[3]

The image of the vessel for describing individual members of the church was popular in exegesis. As already mentioned, Augustine regularly used Romans 9:23 in emphasizing the role of God's grace in the salvation of the Church. 2 Tim 2:20 is a similar verse, adapted in a similar way, portraying the Church as the great house filled with vessels of both gold and silver and wood and clay, and describing these vessels as representing those who are to be chosen and those to be thrown out. Jerome took this particular use of the vessel image further and combined it with other scriptural passages in treating the subject of continence, thereby depicting the different vessels as three degrees of holiness within the Church:

> What then? Do I condemn second marriages? Not at all; but I commend first ones. Do I expel twice-married persons from the church? Far from it; but I

[3] Similarly, St Paul's quotation of Hosea had been applied by St Patrick to his own mission to the Irish: *Confessio* 40, Conneely (1993) 71.

> urge those who have been once married to lives of continence. The Ark of Noah contained unclean animals as well as clean. It contained both creeping things and human beings. In a great house there are vessels of different kinds, some to honour and some to dishonour (2 Tim 2:20). In the gospel parable the seed sown in the good ground brings forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold (Matt 13:8). The hundredfold, which comes first, betokens the crown of virginity; the sixtyfold, which comes next, refers to the work of widows; while the thirtyfold – indicated by joining together the points of the thumb and forefinger denotes the marriage-tie.[4]

Bede uses the image in his exposition of the tabernacle in the wilderness as a figure of God's Church and its journey on earth. The sacred vessels of the tabernacle are described in *De tabernaculo* as the members of the Church and these are 'diverse in merit and in rank'.[5] In the closing words of *De Templo* Bede expounds the scriptural description of the various vessels stored within the treasury chambers of Solomon's Temple as an image of the diversity and unity of the elect brought by Christ into the heavenly temple of the New Jerusalem:

> This silver, this gold, these consecrated vessels Solomon brings into the temple, when, after the universal judgment is over, our Lord brings into the joy of his heavenly kingdom all the elect, i.e. the company both of teachers and the rest of the faithful, and he lays up the various kinds of vessels, silver or gold, in the treasuries of the Lord's house when he hides in the covert of his countenance away from the bustle of human beings those who have merited to enjoy the abundance of his sweetness.
> It is fitting that the treasuries in which the vessels of election should be hidden are many, whereas the house of the Lord in which these treasuries were is one; for on the one hand, the Church in which all the elect are contained is one, however much they may differ in merits, and on the other hand, the heavenly homeland promised to all the elect is one and not of different kinds, even though, just as star differs from star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead (1Cor 15:41-42). Both of these things the Lord, the very judge and distributor of rewards, has shown in one sentence when he says, 'In my Father's house there are many mansions' (Jn 14:2). The reason why Solomon made one house of the Lord but furnished it with many treasuries to accommodate the vessels of various kinds, though it was sanctified with only one blessing, was that there is one house of the Father not made with hands that will last eternally in heaven, but many mansions in it to receive all who fear him, and the Lord blesses those that love him, both little ones and great.[6]

[4] *Letters of Jerome* 123, 9(8): *NPNF* 2nd series, 6, 233, Labourt, 7, 82-83.
[5] Bede, *On the Tabernacle* 2, 13: Holder (1994) 104, *CCSL* 119A, 91.
[6] Bede, *On the Temple* 2, 25: Connolly (1995) 117, *CCSL* 119A, 233-234.

Gregory had also distinguished between the ranks of the faithful by using the image of the vessel in his commentary on Ezekiel and, like Jerome and Bede, he indicates the superiority of the monastic life:

> But here it must not be carelessly considered that the whole-burnt offering and the sacrifice are said to be slain in these same vessels. For, as we also said above, the whole-burnt offering is a sacrifice but a sacrifice is nevertheless not always an whole-burnt offering, because when something is given in part it is indeed a sacrifice but it is not an whole-burnt offering. Truly there are in the great multitude of the faithful some who forsake everything which belongs to the world, they give away all they possess, they hold back nothing, they inwardly strive toward the eternal Kingdom and offer themselves in tears with their whole heart. These are manifestly the vessels upon the table in which the whole-burnt offering is slain. And there are others who take care of their own households, they think about their sons and preserve their inheritance for them, who nevertheless, mindful of the eternal judgment, give alms to the poor and bestow clothing and food on them according to the portion on which they have decided. These surely are the vessels upon the table in which the sacrifice but not the whole-burnt offering is slain.[7]

Gregory, however, takes the image further and applies it to the duties of the pastor, highlighting the importance of the virtuous life for the one who preaches the Word:

> Hence the Prophet admonishes pastors and teachers saying: 'Be clean, you who carry the vessels of the Lord' (Isa 52:11). And so these, like tables, carry the vessels of the Lord who sustain the lives of the faithful by teaching so that sometimes they lead them to the whole-burnt offering and sacrifice to the Lord.[8]

Gregory also uses the image of the vessel in this context in the *Life of Benedict* as he emphasizes the need for the preacher to be of mature age, symbolising spiritual maturity:

> That is why Moses commanded the Levites to begin their service when they were twenty-five years old or more and to become guardians of the sacred vessels only at the age of fifty.[9]

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is Gregory's use of the image as he directly addresses the responsibility of the pastor in his *Pastoral Rule*:

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[7] Gregory, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2, 9, 12: Gray (1990) 265-6, *CCSL* 142, 336.
[8] Gregory, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2, 9, 12: Gray (1990) 265, *CCSL* 142, 366.
[9] Gregory, *Dialogues* 2, 2: Zimmerman (1959) 60, *SC* 260, 138.

> The ruler should always be pure in thought, in as much as no impurity ought to pollute him who has undertaken the office of wiping away the stains of pollution in the hearts of others also; for the hand that would cleanse from dirt must needs be clean, lest, being itself sordid with clinging mire, it soil whatever it touches all the more. For on this account it is said through the prophet, 'Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord' (Isa 52:11). For they bear the vessels of the Lord who undertake, on the surety of their own conversation, to conduct the souls of their neighbours to the eternal sanctuary. Let them therefore perceive within themselves how purified they ought to be who carry in the bosom of their own personal responsibility living vessels to the temple of eternity.[10]

As seen in other examples discussed above, the fuller significance of the image of the vessel becomes apparent when it is considered in its various scriptural contexts and in the light of patristic exegesis, especially that of Gregory, a recognised influence on the Whitby writer.[11] The image of the vessel could evoke not only themes of predestined conversion for the gentile vessels of mercy, but also the differing spiritual capacity of individual vessels within the church. The image also highlights the special place of vessels who are willing to live the monastic life and, even more importantly, the pastor's accountability for all the vessels in his care.

The Whitby writer uses the Pauline image of the vessel not only in *VG* 14 but also in narrating the story following Gregory's prophecy. Gregory urged Pope Benedict 'to give him permission to set out for our land' in person to convert the Angles:

> 'It would be a wretched thing,' cried Gregory, 'for hell to be filled with such lovely vessels.' (*VG* 10)

This use of the image helps underline the significance of Edwin's conversion as representing the conversion of the English people. One further use of the image of the vessel, and one which provides us with an even clearer context in which the writer applies it to Edwin, is in chapter 6, where Gregory is first introduced as directly responsible for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people:

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[10] *Pastoral Rule* 2, 2: *NPNF* 2nd series, 12, 9, *PL* 77, 27.
[11] See above, Chapter 2, which discusses exegesis depicting this theme in *VG* 12 and 13.

> According to Gregory's opinion, when all the Apostles bring their own peoples with them and each individual teacher brings his own race to present them to the Lord in the Day of Judgment, he will bring us – that is, the English people – instructed by him through God's grace; and we believe this to be all the more wonderful because, though absent in the body yet present in the spirit (1 Cor 5:3), through his divinely given apostolic powers he bravely entered the house of the strong man whom Christ had bound (Matt 12:29), taking as spoil those goods (*vasa*), that is, ourselves, who were 'sometimes darkness but now are light in the Lord' (Eph 5:8). (*VG* 6)

The writer continues this passage by quoting from 1 Cor 12:8,9,11. In this passage, St Paul shows the diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed by God's grace upon individuals within the Church and also adapts the image of Christ's mystical body to depict both the differences between the various members or parts of this body and their unity in constituting the one body of Christ. It has been seen that the image of the vessel could also be used to make this same point. Chapter 6 in the Whitby *Vita Gregorii*, describing the salvation of the Anglo-Saxon people by Gregory, provides a strong pastoral context for the vessel image and prepares the reader for further uses of the image.[12]

Jerome also combines this image of the body from 1 Cor 12 with the image of the vessel from Rom 9:21 and 2 Tim 2:20 and even with Mtt 13:8:

> In the body also with its different members, the eye has one function, the hand another, the foot another. Whence the Apostle says, 'The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? have all gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts. But all these work the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will' (1 Cor 12:21,29,11). And here mark carefully that he does not say, as each member desires, but as the Spirit himself will. For the vessel cannot say to him that makes it, 'Why do you make me thus or thus? Has not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?' (Rom 9:21). And so in close sequence he added, 'Desire earnestly the greater gifts', so that, by the exercise of faith and diligence, we may win something in addition to other gifts, and may be superior to those who, compared with us, are in the second or third class. In a great house there are different vessels, some of gold, some of silver, brass, iron, wood (2 Tim 2:20). And yet while in its

[12] In the opening of the above quotation the Whitby writer is referring to a passage from Gregory's own writings, in which each apostle or individual pastor becomes responsible for bringing those in his care to the Lord on the Day of Judgment. The message is one which places the onus upon the Anglo-Saxon pastor to bring the vessels in his care to the Lord. *Forty Gospel homilies*, 19(17): Hurst (1990), 147-8, *CCSL* 141, 131-132.

> kind a vessel of brass is perfect, in comparison with one of silver it is called imperfect, and again one of silver, compared with one of gold, is inferior. And thus, when compared with one another, all things are imperfect and perfect. In a field of good soil, and from one sowing, there springs a crop thirty-fold, sixty-fold and a hundred-fold (cf. Mtt 13:8).[13]

Even more interestingly, though Augustine does not normally use the image of the vessel as a symbol of diversity within the church, he does so in his commentary on Psalm 68 and, furthermore, combines the image of the vessels in the strong man's house from Mtt 12:29 with that of the body in 1 Cor 12:11. This is the same combination used by the Whitby writer in *VG* 6 and is used in the same sequence:

> 'No one goes into the house of a strong man to spoil his vessels, unless first he shall have bound the strong man' (Mtt 12:29). Christ therefore has bound the devil with spiritual bonds, by overcoming death, and by ascending from hell above the heavens: he has bound him by the sacrament of his Incarnation, because though finding nothing in him deserving of death, yet he was permitted to kill: and from him so bound he took away his vessels as though they were spoils. For he was working in the sons of disobedience, of whose unbelief he made use to work his own will. These vessels the Lord cleansing by the remission of sins, sanctifying these spoils wrested from the foe laid prostrate and bound, these he has divided to the beauty of his house; making some apostles, some prophets, some pastors and doctors (Eph 4:11), for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. For as the body is one, and has many members, and though all the members of the body are many, the body is one: so also is Christ. 'Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all powers? Have all the gift of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?' (1 Cor 12:12, 29). 'But all these things worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one his own gifts, as he wills' (1 Cor 12:11).[14]

In applying the image of the vessel to Edwin, the Whitby writer presents this king's conversion as representing that of the entire Anglo-Saxon people, thereby fulfilling Gregory's third prophecy concerning the rescuing of a chosen people from God's wrath. The writer skilfully adapts the image of the vessel and combines it with that of the body (1Cor 12) to suggest diversity within a

[13] Jerome, *Against the Pelagians* 1, 16: *NPNF* 2nd series 6, 457, *CCSL* 80, 22-23.
[14] Augustine, *On the Psalms* 68,13 (67,16): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 290, *CCSL* 39, 879. Later in the same psalm Augustine uses the king as an image of his people and incorporates the already cited Eph 4:11 and 1 Cor 12:29-31 in a statement addressing the importance of a Christian king's position within the church, a position ordained 'for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the Body of Christ ... that they yield not their members instruments of iniquity unto sin, but yield themselves to God, as though from the dead living, and their members instruments of righteousness to God'. Augustine on Psalm 68,18 (67,21): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 292, *CCSL* 39, 884.

unified church (*VG* 6). The use of these scriptural chains in patristic exegesis supports such an interpretation of the Whitby text and also shows how such combinations of images could point to the importance of the pastor whose duty it is to care for the vessels of the Temple.

The Body

The remainder of the Edwin material in the *Vita Gregorii* consists of chapters 18 and 19 which describe the miraculous finding of Edwin's bones at Hatfield Chase and their removal to Whitby. It needs to be asked if there is any evidence that the Whitby writer continues already established exegetical themes through his narrative of this event.

As already seen, the use of the Pauline image of the body plays an important role in the New Testament to describe both the unity of the Church and the role of the individual within this unity. Individual members all have their spiritual gifts to be used for the good of the entire body (Rom 12: 4-8) and, though some roles may appear more important than others, even the smallest role is important to the functioning and completeness of the entire body (1 Cor 12:14-20).

The image of the body took on an added dimension for Cassiodorus when he expounded St Paul's use of Adam and Eve's union as not merely the union of Adam with bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, but also as a prefiguring of Christ's union with his body, the Church:

> Who can see a man's bones when the flesh clothes them, and the skin is drawn over them and hides them? But if we seek to interpret this in the spiritual sense instead, the words more readily yield their meaning to us. When at the world's creation Eve was fashioned from Adam's rib, her husband said: 'This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh' (Gen 2:23). When Paul speaks to married people, he explains the point of this mystery with the words: 'This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church' (Eph 5:32). So it is clear that here bone must be understood as the Lord's Church.[15]

[15] Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* 138(139), 15: Walsh (1991) 3, 379, *CCSL* 98, 1249.

Exegetes long before Cassiodorus had interpreted bone in various scriptural contexts as alluding to Christ's body the Church.[16] Origen in his commentary on John's Gospel develops in detail Christ's application of the image of the Temple to his own body (Jn 2:21) to explain the unification of the entire Church, both its members here on earth and in the heavenly kingdom. Origen draws on scriptural uses of the temple image, but makes equal use of the image of the body, including the bones of Christ's incarnate body:

> Now, both of these two things, the temple and the body of Jesus, appear to me, in one interpretation at least, to be types of the Church, and to signify that 'it is built of living stones, a spiritual house for a holy priesthood' (1 Pet 2:5), 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the head corner stone' (Eph 2:20); and it is, therefore, called a temple. Now, from the text, 'You are the body of Christ, and members each in his part' (1 Cor 12:27), we see that even though the harmonious fitting of the stones of the temple appear to be dissolved and scattered, as it is written in the twenty-second Psalm (Ps 22:14) that all the bones of Christ are, by the plots made against it in persecutions and afflictions, on the part of those who war against the unity of the temple in persecutions, yet the temple will be raised again, and the body will rise again on the third day after the day of evil which threatens it (2 Peter 3:3,10,13) and the day of consummation which follows. For the third day will rise on the new heaven and the new earth, when these bones, the whole house of Israel will rise in the great Lord's day, death having been overcome (Ezek 37:11). And thus the resurrection of the Saviour from the passion of the cross contains the mystery of the resurrection of the whole body of Christ.[17]

Origen acknowledges that the resurrection is a great mystery and difficult to comprehend, but that it is spoken of in many scriptural passages 'and is especially announced in the following passage from Ezekiel'. He quotes from Ezek 37:1-14, where the prophet is set down in a plain full of dry bones; the bones are identified as the house of Israel (Ezek 37:11) which Origen in turn identifies as 'the body of Christ, of which the Lord says, "All my bones are

[16] Along with relating the image of bone to that of the body of Christ's Church, exegetes have also adapted it to represent fundamental Christian virtues within that mystical body, 'for strength and fortitude are understood to be in the bones', Augustine on Psalm 139,15 (138,20): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 639, *CCSL* 40, 2004. He interpreted 'The Lord keeps all their bones:not one of them shall be broken' (Ps 34:20) as referring both to the body of Christ whose bones were unbroken at the Crucifixion (Ex 12:46; Jn 19:33) and to the faithful; even though the bones of some saints were literally broken or mangled at death, the psalm verse, spiritually interpreted, refers to the strong supporting 'bones' of their faith, which could not be broken : Augustine on Psalm 34,23 (33,23): *NPNF* 1st series, 8, 78, *CCSL* 38, 297.

[17] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 10, 20: *ANF*, 10, 400-401, *PG* 14, 370-371.

scattered" (Ps 22:13)'. Though Origen notes that the bones of the incarnate Christ were not literally scattered, he shows that,

> when the resurrection takes place of the true and more perfect body of Christ, then those who are now the members of Christ, (for they will then be dry bones), will be brought together, bone to bone . . . to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the body of Christ. And then the many members will be the one body.[18]

He continues the Pauline metaphor of the body (1 Cor 12:12-31) to stress that God alone makes the distinction between the various members – foot, hand and eye, hearing and smelling – and will temper the body so that there is no schism between its members. The gathering and joining together of the dry bones and their coming to life (Ezek 37:1-14) is thus interpreted as a figure of the resurrection of Christ's body, the Church, and the theme of unity is expressed as Christ rewards each individual part of the body to the betterment of the entire temple of the Lord.

Gregory the Great in his homilies on Ezekiel (which address only chapters 1-4:3 and 40) had expounded Ezekiel's vision of the Temple (Ezek 40) and, as a further figure of the resurrection, had cited Ezekiel's earlier vision of the dry bones and the Lord's promise to send his spirit into the bones that they might live (Ezek 37:4-6).[19] It was, indeed, an established exegetical tradition to adapt this image of the dry bones when dealing with the theme of Christ's body as the Church, especially when a message of resurrection was being expressed.

In view of the Whitby writer's allusions to the Pauline image of the body in his account of Edwin's conversion as an image of the salvation of his people, the patristic interpretation of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones should perhaps be considered in appraising the account of the retrieval of Edwin's bones from Hatfield Chase, the field of battle which was the site of the defeat and death of the king and his army. In Ezekiel's vision the Spirit blew from the four winds on the hopeless slain of the house of Israel so that their dry bones lived again and 'they stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army' (Ezek 37:9-10). The

[18] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 10, 20: *ANF*, 10, 401, *PG* 14, 374.
[19] Gregory, *Homilies on the Prophet Ezekiel* 2, 8, 6: Gray (1990) 248-249, *CCSL* 142, 339-341.

Whitby writer recounts that the priest who found Edwin's relics on the battle field later frequently saw 'the spirits of four of the slain, who were undoubtedly baptized people, coming in splendid array to visit their own bodies' at the Hatfield site. The priest said that, 'if he could have done so, he would have liked to build a monastery there' (*VG* 19) but it is divinely ordained that it is through the honourable burial of Edwin's relics, 'the royal man's bones', at the well-known monastery of his granddaughter Aelfflaed that the light of Christ is particularly to shine. The account suggests the baptized, represented by Edwin, awaiting the general resurrection.

It has been noted here that it was not unusual for exegetes to combine the images of the body and the vessel when teaching on diversity within unity in the Church. Following scriptural and patristic tradition, the Whitby writer, like Bede and other contemporary writers, adapts Paul's image of the body (1 Cor 12) and uses it in conjunction with the image of the vessel (*VG* 6). Later, the Whitby writer cites Jerome's use of the body image in order to suggest that Christ spoke through Gregory 'the golden-mouthed':

> That which was said of Christ, 'Grace is poured into thy lips' applies to the wise man, since the saying is fulfilled not only through the Son of Man himself but also through the members of his body. 'I shall recognize in the limbs,' says St. Jerome, 'the qualities which are attributed to the head: I shall understand from the servants what is manifested in the Lord; because the glory of the Lord should be the glory of his servants.' (*VG* 24)[20]

Again, towards the close of the work, the Whitby writer uses the body image and 1 Cor 12:12-22 to defend his attribution to Gregory of miracles that may have related to another saint:

> So let no one be disturbed even if these miracles were performed by any other of the saints, since the holy Apostle, through the mystery of the limbs of a single body, which he compares to the living experience of the saints, concludes that we are all 'members one of another'. For instance, the work of the eyes and ears becomes profitable to the hands and the feet as if they

[20] Id quod de Christo legitur dictum, 'Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis,' quod non solum per illum hominis filium, sed per eius quoque menbra completur. Quod per hunc virum Domini voce velut viva usque hodie suavitate resonate nobis melliflua. 'Interpretabor,' ait sanctus Hieronimus, 'in membris quod fertur ad caput': intellegam de servis quod impleatur in domini, quia gloria domini gloria famulorum sit. See Jerome, *Epistle* 46,3: *NPNF* 2nd series, 6, 61, Labourt, 2, 103.

> were for common use, and so all things are profitable to all even though they 'have not the same office' (1 Cor 12:12-22). Hence we know too that all saints have everything in common through the love of Christ of whose body they are members. (*VG* 30)

Edwin, as a vessel of God's mercy (Rom 9:23), has been seen to represent the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons (*VG* 14) and in the light of this evidence, and of the body and bone exegesis discussed above, it seems likely that the retrieval of King Edwin's bones from Hatfield Chase represents the communion of the entire Anglo-Saxon Church and alludes to the resurrection of this body.

The Whitby story emphasises that the finder of Edwin's bones, an English monastic priest named Trimma, did not initiate the search for them or decide on their final resting-place. The account of a thrice-repeated dream in which Trimma is instructed to secure the retrieval of the king's bones and their deposit at Streoneshealh (Whitby) and is chastised into obeying may provide another clue within the narrative, strengthening the interpretation suggested here that the story points to the image of the body and resurrection. Mosford believes this episode draws on the opening of the *Vision of Paul*,[21] which Thacker had already noted was quite popular in early Anglo-Saxon England.[22] The work opens with an account of a noble man living in the house of St Paul receiving a vision from an angel, instructing him to dig in the foundations of the house and to publish what he might find. As with Trimma, the man regards his vision as merely a dream until after a third vision, accompanied by a scourging, he decides to obey the request to go and dig.[23] The *Vision of Paul* is a work suited to the pastoral objectives of the Whitby writer, providing detailed teaching on both the virtuous and the wicked and their subsequent reward and punishment after the resurrection, the resurrection being an appropriate theme to the story of Edwin's bones. However, the strongest evidence for interpreting the Whitby

[21] Mosford, (1988) xlii.
[22] Thacker (1976) 305.
[23] The *Vision of Paul*, 2: *ANF* 10, 151; similar stories of visionaries being scourged by angels occur in Eusebius Pamphilus, *History of the Church* 5, 28, 12: *NPNF* 2nd series, 1, 247-248, *PG* 20, 514-515. Jerome, *Epistle* 22, 30: *NPNF* 2nd series, 6, 35-36, Labourt, 1, 144-146. An Insular use of this *topos* is Bede's account of St Peter's chastisement of Bishop Laurence, following the bishop's decision to abandon the mission, *HE* 2.6.

story as concerning the Anglo-Saxon Church, with special emphasis on the resurrection, may lie in the chapter following the Edwin material.

The Eucharist

The concluding section of this thesis will suggest that the entire *Vita Gregorii* is divided into a series of themes, each containing three little sections or chapters. All but one of these thematically grouped sections can be explained without too much difficulty, but the one section difficult to interpret is that which contains chapters 18, 19 and 20. Strangely enough the retrieval of King Edwin's bones is divided into two chapters, 18 and 19 but, even more strangely, chapter 20 describes Gregory's performance of a eucharistic miracle in Rome. The apparently disjointed structure of the *Vita Gregorii* has proved difficult for historians to interpret and the sudden leap from the retrieval of Edwin's bones to Gregory's performing a miracle at Rome can be hard for the reader to make: it has seemed especially difficult to argue that these particular chapters are part of a thematic unit. Colgrave suggested that to a Whitby audience these chapters may not have appeared so uncomfortably positioned, for chapter 19 concludes by informing the reader that Edwin's body is placed close to an altar dedicated to Gregory, an altar used by the Whitby community, and the following chapter presents Gregory offering the holy sacrifice at an altar in Rome. A closer look at chapter 20 in a scriptural context may, however, suggest a clearer interpretation of these three chapters.

St John's Gospel offers an extended discourse on the sacramental body of Christ, from which an excerpt will provide an example of the richness of its imagery:

> So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.' (Jn 6:53-57)

St Paul also expounds the holy sacrifice of the eucharist in terms of the unity of the body of Christ:

> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Cor 10:16-17)

Following Jn 6:54, Irenaeus explains the importance of the connection between Christ's body and blood in the eucharist and the resurrection of the body and then cites a Pauline text and a Gospel text which both actually specifiy the bones of Christ in describing his body:

> When, therefore, the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God, and the eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made, from which things the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they affirm that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal, which [flesh] is nourished from the body and blood of the Lord, and is a member of him? Even as the blessed Paul declares in his Epistle to the Ephesians, 'we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones' (Eph 5:30). He does not speak these words of some spiritual and invisible man, for a spirit has not bones nor flesh (Luke 24:39), but [he refers to] that dispensation [by which the Lord became] an actual man, consisting of flesh, and nerves, and bones — that [flesh] which is nourished by the cup which is his blood, and receives increase from the bread which is his body. And just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as a grain of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed, rises with manifold increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things, and then, through the wisdom of God, serves for the use of men, and having received the Word of God, becomes the eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ; so also our bodies, being nourished by it, and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God.[24]

Augustine in his tractate on John 6 deals elaborately with the theme of Eucharist and body, emphasising John's reference to the resurrection:

> For both he that does not take it has no life, and he that does take it has life, and that indeed eternal life. And thus he would have this meat and drink to be understood as meaning the fellowship of his own body and members, which is the holy Church in his predestined, and called, and justified, and glorified saints and believers. Of these, the first is already effected, namely, predestination; the second and third, that is, the vocation

[24] Irenaeus, *Against heresies* 5, 2: *ANF* 1, 258.

> and justification, have taken place, are taking place, and will take place; but the fourth, namely, the glorifying, is at present in hope; but a thing future in realization. The sacrament of this thing, namely, of the unity of the body and blood of Christ, is prepared on the Lord's table in some places daily, in some places at certain intervals of days, and from the Lord's table it is taken, by some to life, by some to destruction: but the thing itself, of which it is the sacrament, is for every man to life, for no man to destruction, whosoever shall have been a partaker thereof..
>
> But lest they should suppose that eternal life was promised in this meat and drink in such manner that they who should take it should not even now die in the body, he condescended to meet this thought; for when he had said, 'He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life,' he forthwith subjoined, 'and I will raise him up on the last day'. That meanwhile, according to the Spirit, he may have eternal life in that rest into which the spirits of the saints are received; but as to the body, he shall not be defrauded of its eternal life, but, on the contrary, he shall have it in the resurrection of the dead at the last day.[25]

Augustine proceeds to discuss the importance of unity to the eucharist and states that if one is not a faithful member of the body of Christ then partaking of the sacrament is meaningless and brings only the judgment of God.

The Whitby writer twice quotes from John 6 when narrating Gregory's eucharistic miracle:

> Then the saint said, 'Now look with bodily eyes on what you were before too blind to see with your spiritual eyes and learn to believe on him who said, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn 6:53)'. He again urged those who were in church to pray that he who deigned to show them the mercy they had asked for, would also deign to change the sacred body back into its natural form; this they ventured to pray for and also for the lack of faith of the incredulous matron. When they had done as he bade them, he made her communicate, now that she believed him who said that 'he that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him' (Jn 6:56). (*VG* 20)

The quotations are from the same Gospel passage (Jn 6:53-56) expounded by Augustine in the excerpt cited above, where he points to the theme of unity and resurrection within the body of Christ's Church. The eucharistic miracle in the Whitby *Vita* is not credited to Gregory alone but requires the prayers of Christ's body as represented by the congregation. The prayers of the eucharistic community restore the faith of a weaker member.

[25] Augustine, *Tractates on John* 26, 15-16: *NPNF* 1st series, 7, 173, *CCSL* 36, 267-268.

Towards the close of the *Vita Gregorii*, when recording the death and burial of Gregory, the writer appropriately highlights again the relationship between eucharist and resurrection:

> By his death on 12 March, 'most precious in his sight', he awaits in felicity the fullfillment of the promise of his blessed Lord in the Church of St. Peter, where he had his episcopal seat for fourteen years, six months, and ten days. He is buried before the papal vestry, and he sleeps in peace in the body from which he will rise again to the glory of him who initiated for us the sacramental mysteries of his body and blood; who, setting aside all earthly sacrifices, was alone offered up to bear the sins of all; and with them all he shall reign in the unity of the Godhead, for ever and ever. Amen. (*VG* 32)

In describing the relationship between the eucharist and the resurrection, Bede highlights the liturgical enactment of the eucharist as a meeting point between this world and the next:

> We are not permitted to doubt that where the mysteries of the Lord's body and blood are being enacted, a gathering of the citizens from on high is present – those who were keeping such careful watch at the tomb where [Christ's] venerable body had been placed, and from which he had departed by rising. Hence we must strive meticulously my brothers, when we come into the church to pay the due service of divine praise or to perform the solemnity of the mass, to be always mindful of the angelic presence, and to fulfil our heavenly duty with fear and fitting veneration, following the example of the women devoted to God who were afraid when the angels appeared to them at the tomb, and who, we are told, bowed their faces to the earth.[26]

Gregory's miracle during the holy sacrifice, as portrayed by the Whitby writer, is made even more interesting by the fact that the host is not just described as taking on the form of human flesh, but is described as a little finger. This may shed further light upon the Whitby writer's use of this eucharistic miracle. It should be borne in mind that as the host is the trans-substantiated body of Christ, the finger on the altar is the finger of God. This is an image common to the Old Testament. For example, the Ten Commandments are 'written by the finger of God' (Ex 31:18) and exegetes generally accept this as signifying God's Holy Spirit. Augustine points out that just as there is a fifty-day gap between the sacrifice of the Passover lamb and the receiving of the Ten

[26] Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels* 2,10: Martin and Hurst (1990) 92, *CCSL* 122, 249.

Commandments 'from the finger of God', likewise there is a fifty-day gap between the death and resurrection of Christ at Easter and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.[27] This draws together the image of Christ's eucharistic body and the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, Ambrose when writing on the Holy Spirit also takes up the image of the finger but is emphatic in stating that the Trinity cannot be divided into separate members but is one in unity. He therefore insists that the finger or hand must also be seen as representing the Trinity as a whole:

> But what wonder is it if he who himself needs no sanctification, but abounds therewith, sanctifies each man; since, as I said, we have been taught that his Majesty is so great, that the Holy Spirit seems to be as inseparable from God the Father as the finger is from the body? But if any one thinks that this should be referred not to the oneness of power, but to its lessening, he indeed will fall into such madness as to appear to fashion the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as it were into one bodily form, and to picture to himself certain distinctions of its members.
>
> But let them learn, as I have often said, that not inequality but unity of power is signified by this testimony; inasmuch as things which are the works of God are also the works of hands, and we read that the same are the works of fingers.[28]

A further detail of the Whitby writer's portrayal of Edwin, discussed earlier, may also be of relevance to the present argument that the retrieval of Edwin's bones is thematically reflected in the account of Gregory's eucharistic miracle. Chapter 14 of the *Vita Gregorii*, consisting of a mere few lines, not only uses Edwin as a symbolic highlighting of the fulfilment of Gregory's prophecy, but introduces his very name as containing a figure of unity in the Holy Trinity. Edwin is a prophetic symbol of a people predestined to be saved. His personal conversion and baptism represents the salvation of his people and the retrieval of his bones alludes to the resurrection of Christ's body in which this chosen people is to share.

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[27] Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 28 (16): *NPNF* 1st series, 5, 95, *PL* 44, 218.
[28] Ambrose, *Three Books on the Holy Spirit* 3, 5 (29-31): *NPNF* 2nd series, 10, 139, *PL* 16, 815-816.

An Anglian Identity

Patrick Wormald examined the concept of an Anglian identity and pointed to Canterbury's perception of the converted Angles and Saxons as a *gens Anglorum* as its origin. Gregory addressed Aethelberht as *rex Anglorum* and Wormald argued that though Gregory's use of this phrase may have originated in ignorance of Anglo-Saxon politics, Canterbury's promotion of this powerful little phrase was the root cause of writers, notably the author of the *Vita Gregorii* and Bede, internalising the concept among the Anglo-Saxon people. Wormald states that there was no better way of imparting a sense of unity among diverse peoples then convincing them that they were viewed in heaven as one people and represented by a single set of English saints, thereby reinforcing Canterbury's power as the head of one united church.[29]

Michael Richter highlights Bede's role in adapting the concept of a *gens Anglorum*.[30] He cites Bede as responsible for its subsequent promotion and general acceptance in England and on the continent. Like Wormald, he believes that the concept was created by Pope Gregory in his ignorance of political circumstances in Britain. However, he further claims that this arose from Gregory's meeting with the *Angli* in Rome and his decision to convert what he subsequently believed to be a *gens Anglorum*. He believes that Gregory himself was the source of the story, that this is the reason for his persistence in promoting the concept in other correspondence and explains why both Bede and the Whitby writer adapted the concept of a *gens Anglorum* and the accompanying story. Richter's evidence includes the account in the *Liber pontificalis* of Gregory's mission 'ad gentem Angulorum' and the use of the term *gens Anglorum* in the Register of Gregory's own correspondence and in his epitaph ('Ad Christum Anglos convertit pietate magistra'). He demonstrates Gregory's promotion of the term *gens Anglorum* and draws attention to similarities between details in the story of the Anglian boys and other Gregorian material, though falls short of actually proving this particular story originated with Gregory at Rome.

[29] Wormald (1983) esp. 124-7.
[30] Richter (1984).

The importance of *Romanitas* in establishing an English identity is emphasised by Nicholas Brooks.[31] Like Richter, Brooks agrees that the source of the concept of a *gens Anglorum* is due to the deliberate efforts of Gregory at Rome. He does not view this as an effort to support a prophetic story surrounding the Pope's meeting with some Anglian boys at Rome and as a comment made in ignorance of Anglo-Saxon politics, but rather as a deliberate attempt to promote an ethnic identity beneficial to the success of his mission. He argues that, as conquerors of a British Christian people, it would not have been acceptable for an Anglo-Saxon king to receive a fundamental change in religious beliefs from the hands of a defeated but still persistent enemy. The benefits that accompanied Christianity could however be enjoyed by turning to the continent and by identifying its Christian culture with a Roman Church. Brooks suggests that it is for this reason that Gregory made no effort to base the conversion on an existing British church, but focused instead on a single Anglo-Saxon Christian people, deliberately addressing Ethelberht as *rex Anglorum* from the beginning. For this reason Brooks argues that Rome colluded with Anglo-Saxon over-kings to create the perception of a single Anglo-Saxon people under one God and one king. This would work towards the conversion of the entire island of Britain and encouraged Anglo-Saxon over-kings to adapt a Roman Christian culture to help secure their own positions of supremacy. To achieve this it was necessary for the new church to challenge the older British culture, and create a Christian identity which saw its birth with the arrival of Gregory's mission in 597.[32] The only terms under which a British church could be accepted was by its submitting to the authority of Rome under Augustine of Canterbury.

However, Brooks does not see Canterbury and Gregory's letters as the origin of Bede's decision to view his people as a *gens Anglorum*.[33] He points to the fact that many of Bede's contemporaries described themselves as Saxons.[34] He feels that Bede's acquisition of Gregorian material via Canterbury only

[31] Brooks (2000) and Brooks (2002). On the importance of Roman culture for the first century of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, see also Thacker (2000a).
[32] For the view that the decision to establish an English church rather then a British church was not decided from the setting up of the mission but was a reaction to circumstances after the mission arrived, see Stancliffe (1999).
[33] Brooks (1999).
[34] This point is also highlighted by Richter (1984).

reaffirmed an idea which he had come to adopt in earlier years. He argues that the source of this influence was probably Whitby, and that even if Bede did not have access to the Whitby *Life*, he none the less had received the story of the Anglian youths from a Deiran source familiar to Whitby and, more importantly, he received a Deiran image of themselves as part of a unified English church.[35] Brooks maintains that the very content of the story of the Anglian boys indicates that it is clearly of Deiran origin. This presents Whitby as an active promoter of Christian unity within the context of a consolidated English church and is in accordance with Thacker's view that the promotion of Gregory by Canterbury was part of an effort to unify the English church under one metropolitan.

Let us look at the details of Bede and the Whitby writer's account of the Anglian boys meeting with Gregory at Rome. Though they are quite similar, there are also obvious differences. Bede describes the boys as having 'fair complexions, handsome faces, and lovely hair' (*HE* 2.1), and the Whitby writer describes them as 'beautiful boys' and 'curly haired handsome youths' (*VG* 9). Bede alone refers to the Anglian boys as being slaves, and the use of this term suggests the Anglo-Saxon people's slavery to the devil before their conversion to Christianity. Bede refers to the boys as being 'still entangled in the errors of heathenism', and in the grip of the author of darkness. Also, in Bede's version Gregory uses an interpreter whereas the Whitby writer presents Gregory speaking directly to the boys. Some have assumed this to be due to the Whitby writer's naivety, but perhaps it is Bede's desire to enhance the meaning of the story by showing that Gregory did not preach directly to the Anglo-Saxon people, but used the mouths of others.

The most obvious difference between the stories, however, is the order in which the three-fold anecdote is recounted. Both writers begin with Gregory's pun on the word *Angli*, as Gregory relates its significance to the fact that the English are a people who will praise God with the angels (*angeli*). This is important to Bede's adapting the term *Angli* to represent an English Christian

[35] Brooks (1999) esp. 19,20.

identity.[36] Secondly, Bede turns to the boys' statement that they are from the kingdom of *Deire*, and Gregory indicates that this signifies the English people's turning away from the wrath of God. The climax of Bede's account is the declaration that the name of the boys' king, *Aelli*, signifies that their land will echo the praise of God in the word *Alleluia*. In the same chapter he features the *Alleluia* in his quotation from the *Moralia* in tribute to Gregory:

> To his works of piety and justice this also belongs, that he snatched our race from the teeth of the ancient foe and made them partakers of everlasting freedom by sending us preachers. Rejoicing in their faith and commending them with worthy praise he says in his commentary on the blessed Job: 'Lo, the mouth of Britain, which once only knew how to gnash its barbarous teeth, has long since learned to sing the praises of God with the *alleluia* of the Hebrews'. (*HE* 2.1)

Michael Richter saw a connection between this passage and the story about Aelli-Alleluia told in the *Life of Gregory* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Diarmuid Scully has noted the further connection with the *Alleluia* sung by Augustine's mission as they approached Ethelbert for their first encounter with the English (*HE* 1.25).[37] The *Alleluia* is important to Bede as a symbol of the unity of God's people in their praise of the one true God and is used to demonstrate the inclusion of the Anglo-Saxons in this people.

It is interesting that, unlike the Whitby writer, Bede does not present the story as a prophecy of the conversion.[38] Instead he presents the story as an explanation of why Gregory was so solicitous 'for the salvation of our race' by showing how Gregory was prompted to send the mission. The Whitby writer unambiguously presents this 'story told by the faithful' as Gregory's inspired discernment, revealed in his prophesying and making provision for the English conversion, and continues to reveal the fulfilment of this prophecy in the text. Also, unlike Bede, the Whitby writer does not conclude Gregory's prophecy with the cry of *Alleluia*, but places Gregory's reference to *Alleluia* as the second

[36] Scully (2000) 173 notes that a physical appearance which had traditionally been viewed as a symbol of the hardness and cruelty of the north is now seen to resemble the white skin and fair hair of the angels.
[37] Richter (1984) 104; Scully (2000) 174; on the connection between Bede's quotation from the *Moralia* and the story of the Anglian boys, see also Meyvaert (1964) 113.
[38] Noted by Rambridge (2001) 14.

element in the prophecy. The story is brought to its conclusion with the word *Deire* signifying the salvation of God's chosen people as they turn away from the wrath of God (*de ira Dei*). The fulfilment of the first two elements of the Gregorian prophecy is shown in *VG* 13 where both *angeli* and *Alleluia* are used to envisage a single Anglian people singing God's praises before the Lamb. The writer, however, waits until the conversion of Edwin by Paulinus in chapter 14 to demonstrate the fulfilment of the third and final element of the Gregorian prophecy. It has been argued here that study of the exegetical traditions in which the writer worked suggests that not only Aelli but Edwin is used as an image of all Northumbrians and of the entire Anglo-Saxon people and that the moment of his conversion signifies, therefore, not only the conversion of Northumbria, but of the entire English race.

It has also already been mentioned that Aelli was the genealogical point of connection between Oswiu and Hild, who was Oswui's choice of abbess for the new monastery at Whitby. Hild was great grand-daughter of Aelli, as was Oswiu's own daughter the Bernician princess, Aelfflaed, placed in Hild's care from infancy. It is perhaps not surprising that Aelli, the common royal ancestor of both influential abbesses of Whitby, receives a prominent role within the Anglo-Saxon material treated in the *Vita Gregorii*. Aelli is an important part of Gregory's three-fold prophecy concerning the conversion of the English people, his name signifying the unified cry of praise, *Alleluia,* by this predestined people of God (*VG* 13). Aelli is also the link common to Edwin and to Oswiu's dynasty, on his mother's side. Although Edwin takes the star role, the inclusion of this Deiran king in Gregory's prophecy ensures the inclusion of all. The suggestion that the name of Aelli is used to refer to God's calling of all the English people to the heavenly kingdom is strengthened by the Whitby writer's deliberate adjustment of Aelli's name and explanation of the significance of the remaining letters *alle,* 'which in our language means *absolutely all.* And this is just what our Lord says, "Come unto me *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden" (Mtt 11:28)' (*VG* 13).[39] The Whitby writer further emphasizes Christ's invitation to all

[39] Et Aelli duabus compositum est sillabis quarum in priori cum *e* littera adsumitur et in sequenti pro *i* ponitur *e,* all vocatur, quod in nostra lingua *omnes absolute* indicat. Et hoc est quod ait

his people, '*Venite ad me omnes*', by going on to explain that the three syllables of the name of Edwin (Eadwine) signify 'the mystery of the holy Trinity which [Christ] taught, inviting all to come to him and be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' (*VG* 14).[40]

As noted earlier, the Whitby writer applies the same imagery to Aelli and Edwin, portraying both their names as signifying the unity of the Holy Trinity, and highlighting Edwin's presence 'in the loins of Aelli' at the time when the prophecy was made by Gregory.[41] The word *Alleluia* is itself also interpreted as representing the unity of the Trinity.[42] The effect of applying the same imagery to Edwin and Aelli is that both kings can not only signify the unity of Northumbria but represent a Christian Anglo-Saxon people. Though these themes of unity continue in exegetical imagery throughout the entire Anglo-Saxon section of the work, they are anchored in the story of Gregory and the Anglian boys at Rome.

Though Nicholas Brooks clearly asserts that the origin of the story of the Anglian youths is Deiran, he does not go so far as to claim the *Vita Gregorii* as this source. The story's relationship to the exegesis contained in the remainder of the Anglo-Saxon section of the work, however, must surely go a long way in establishing the origin of the material to be the *Vita Gregorii*. Though the Whitby writer does not refer to the *Angli* in Rome as slaves, it is possible that an account of Gregory's interest in purchasing Anglo-Saxon slaves as part of the background to the English mission reached Whitby via Eanflaed and Canterbury but, if so, its embellishment with prophetic material and themes of predestination was surely a creation of those responsible for the *Vita Gregorii*. Bede simply describes his account as a story about St Gregory 'which has come down to us as a tradition of our forefathers' and concludes with the statement that the story is based 'on the tradition which we have received from our ancestors' (*HE* 2:1). But

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Dominus noster, 'Venite ad me *omnes* qui laboratis et onerati estis', emphasis added. See above, Chapter 2.

[40] … quod ille docebat qui omnes ad se invitat baptizatos in nomine Patris et Filii at Spiritus sancti.

[41] Mosford (1988) 96 suggests, improbably, the relationship between Father and Son in the Trinity becomes symbolic of the relationship between Aelli and Edwin.

[42] See Mosford (1988) xlii, note 55 and the opening of the present chapter.

it is difficult to accept that he was not aware of a *Vita* dedicated to Gregory and produced at Whitby.

Perhaps by adapting the story from the *Vita Gregorii*, Bede focused on the writer's use of an image of an Anglian people and rearranged its order to highlight his own use of the *Alleluia*. This also helped Bede connect Gregory's claims of missionary success in the *Moralia* with the Pope's first plans for the conversion (*HE* 2.1). Though Bede is not concerned with portraying Edwin as an image of a united Northumbrian people, the image is of great importance to the Whitby writer, within the context of a united Anglo-Saxon people under God. The theme of Christian unity under Canterbury is promoted in the cult of Gregory and Edwin's role as saint and king is one which also provides a local image of unity for his own people.

Those who have argued Bede's ignorance of the Whitby *Vita* have placed the weight of their evidence on the fact that Bede takes only two stories from the work.[43] If Bede did have access to it, why did he not use other interesting material available in the *Vita Gregorii*? Did he simply find it unpalatable, as Goffart suggests?[44]

Brooks argues that Bede actively supported a second metropolitan at York and that he was to influence its emergence.[45] By the time of Ceolwulf's reign, political circumstances in Northumbria had changed considerably from the days of Aelfflaed and the influence of Oswiu's dynasty had now faded into history, taking with it the exclusivity once enjoyed by Whitby. Peter Hunter Blair suggests that Bede's journey to Bishop Egbert of York, and his plan to undertake a second journey, related to Bede's desire for a second metropolitan at York, a desire aired in his *Letter to Bishop Egbert*, citing the authority of Gregory's letter

[43] For example, see Colgrave (1963) 134-37; Colgrave (1968) 57-9; Levison (1935) 123. Thacker argued that Bede had access to at least an oral version of the Whitby *Vita*, and Richter believed that Bede did indeed have access to the *Vita*. See Thacker (1976) 76-9 and Richter (1984) 101-2.
[44] Goffart (1988) 265-6.
[45] Goffart also views Bede's promotion of the division of bishoprics in his *Letter to Egbert* within the context of the establishment of twelve dioceses under York as Metropolitan: see Goffart (1985) 255.

on the matter, quoted in *HE* 1.29.[46] Brooks points out that the establishment of York as a second metropolitan could not have taken place amicably without the consent of the archbishop of Canterbury, and the one to receive this position in 735 was none other than Nothhelm, who had supplied Bede with those important papal letters from Gregory the Great.[47] Walter Goffart also highlights the cooperation that took place between Northumbria and Canterbury at this time, and views the publication of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* in 735 as closely associated with a series of events leading to the establishment of York as a second metropolitan.[48] If it is the case that within the context of a consolidated English church Bede and Bishop Egbert of York supported a second metropolitan by 735, either with or without the consent of Whitby, perhaps the lack of this theme in the Whitby *Life* made its use as an image of unity redundant, and may explain its lack of circulation. Brooks argues that the establishment of a *gens Anglorum* was at the cost of the older British Christian heritage. This, he maintains, was as a result of a deliberate act of cultural amnesia, exercised by Bede and others. A similar mentality may have been applied towards the promotion of a work which did not award York the prominent position gained for it at this time.

Though the *Vita Gregorii* was attractive for its themes of ecclesiastical unity, and Bede indeed appears to have used it for this purpose, the Whitby vision of unity did not include a second metropolitan and its deliberate snub against York could not be encouraged by a Northumbrian church which now established its authority within this city. Bede does promote Gregory as the apostle of English salvation and includes the prophecy regarding the Deiran youths as part of this, but in advancing both Gregory and the concept of a consolidated English church, he also includes Gregory's own wish for a second metropolitan. He goes so far as to include three separate papal letters which lay down the metropolitan status of York.[49] Though the promotion of the new metropolitan may be the cause of the *Vita Gregorii* becoming outdated by 735,

[46] Hunter Blair (1990) 305.
[47] Brooks (1999) 21; see also Goffart (1988) 274.
[48] Goffart (1988) 297.
[49] Letter from Pope Gregory to Augustine (*HE* 1.29), letter from Pope Honorius to Edwin (*HE* 2.17), letter from Pope Honorius to Bishop Honorius (*HE* 2.18).

Whitby's promotion of an image of the Deiran people as part of a unified English church, as expressed in the *Vita Gregorii*, was to survive in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It appears extremely likely that the *Vita Gregorii* was Bede's source for this material, but Bede's desire not to acknowledge his source is more understandable if we realise that Bede would not wish to promote any work that might jeopardize his ambitions for York as a metropolitan see.

Catherine Cubitt highlights the elite status of a cult endowed with a hagiography. She also notes the important place given to universal or apostolic saints by the early Anglo-Saxon church and how associating these cults with a local saint could play an important role in spreading a local cult outside its immediate area of influence.[50] However, Whitby's promotion of Edwin's cult within a hagiographical work which was dedicated to St Gregory, and in which Gregory's conversion of the entire English people is represented in the figure of Edwin, did not ensure the survival of Edwin's cult. Changes in political circumstances resulted in a kingship which in cooperation with York and Canterbury now placed the focus of the northern church upon a new metropolitan at York. It was within this new context that Bede promoted a single *gens Anglorum*.

A mere generation earlier, the monastery at Whitby had the capacity to promote a different vision of unity: political unity within Northumbria ensuring the continued survival of Aelfflaed's own dynasty and ecclesiastical unity under Canterbury, ensuring Whitby's own position of ecclesiastical authority in the north. The Whitby writer's use of Edwin in the *Vita Gregorii* should perhaps therefore be viewed in terms of such ecclesiastical and secular unity.

By adapting Edwin as an image of the Anglo-Saxon people and his conversion as a representation of this people's conversion, the Whitby writer draws attention from Edwin as a Deiran military figurehead. Edwin is therefore not presented as a victorious warrior king, but as an image of ecclesiastical unity for a converted people. Bede portrays Edwin as a war-leader who fights to

[50] Cubitt (2002) 439-43, 447-450.

protect the new Christian kingdom, as Bede subsequently does for Oswald, his model Christian king. Kings are crucial to the conversion process for Bede and he describes many convert kings and the various stages of Edwin's conversion in detail, but he does not use any one particular king to stand as an image of conversion.

Aldfrith was not a king who expanded Northumbria by military force, but the respite from war in his reign (686-705) created a period in which culture flourished.[51] It was in the context of this atmosphere of peace that Whitby appears to have used its diplomatic skills to employ Edwin and his cult as an image of conversion for both Northumbria and the entire English race. This was in accord with Theodore's promotion of a cult of Gregory to help create ecclesiastical unity under Canterbury.[52] But in focusing on the figure of King Edwin as well as Pope Gregory to offer a vision of unity, the Whitby writer refers neither to Theodore (d.690) nor to Canterbury. The early date of Edwin's reign (d.633) also made it possible to omit the naming of later kings and all reference to the Columban contribution to the conversion of the Angli or to the Easter controversy and the subsequent dissensions concerning Wilfrid.

The story of the treasure (*thesaurus*) of Edwin's bones being brought 'to our monastery here' in the days of Eanfled is much more than the literary celebration of the royal mausoleum at Whitby at the time of Aelfflaed: 'And now the holy bones are honourably buried in the church of St Peter, the chief of the Apostles, together with other of our kings, on the south side of the altar which is dedicated in the name of the blessed Apostle Peter and east of the altar dedicated to St Gregory, which is in the same church' (*VG* 19). The account of Edwin's conversion links the local and the universal. The Whitby writer provides an identity for the *Angli* as members of the universal Church, and stresses both the original reception of the faith by the *Angli* from St Peter's successor, Gregory, and its continuing renewal through Gregory's writings and teaching presented in the Whitby *Vita Gregorii*.

[51] On Aldfrith's scholarly reputation in both Britain and Ireland, see Kirby (1991) 179-85; Charles-Edwards (2000) 266.
[52] Thacker (1998).

IN CONCLUSION

EXEGETICAL PATTERNS IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE *VITA GREGORII*

The *Vita Gregorii* does not follow traditional Antonian and Martinian hagiographical style. Perhaps the unusual circumstances in which Gregory's own writings are extensively employed in presenting his life and virtues help to account for this. Furthermore, the subject is not local. However, the Whitby writer's tone in the Prologue of the work strongly expresses what Rambridge has described as a 'sense of participation in a shared field of literary activity'.[1]

Jean-Michel Picard in examining structural patterns in early Irish hagiography pointed to the importance of a tripartite division within these works, for which the *Vita Martini* provides a precedent.[2] The three-fold presentation of a character's virtues, a practice which is classical in origin, supercedes the need for a chronological account of an individual's journey towards perfection, though for the most part Christian hagiography contains elements of chronology alongside this structural format. The chronological presentation of a saint's virtues was in time to become the continental standard, and this had reached Britain at least by 721 when Bede wrote his prose *Vita Cuthberti*.[3]

At first glance the *Vita Gregorii* appears also to be in three parts, as we are presented with a non-chronological account of Gregory's virtues divided by an account of the salvation of the English people and the Edwin stories. It may be noted, however, that the Edwin material does introduce an element of chronology to the *Vita Gregorii*, as the sequence of events follows a format which begins with Edwin in the loins of his father, continues by recounting details of his conversion, and concludes with the miraculous retrieval of his bones from the site of his death. Also, like some of the miracle accounts in the *Vita Columbae*,

[1] Rambridge (2001) 6.
[2] Picard (1985) esp. 69-72.
[3] Picard (1985) 79-80.

which is arranged in three books, the *Vita Gregorii* appears to have been strongly influenced by Gregory's *Dialogues*, even though the *Dialogues* are divided into four parts.[4] During the course of the *Vita Gregorii*, in an effort to make clear the structure of the work, the writer explains what might appear as a confused style and structure by appealing to scripture as a model:

> Therefore let no one be disturbed even though the arrangement of the stories is confused, because the radiant Holy Scriptures, though brighter than the sun, and the narratives of the various holy authors often reveal in their contents such rearrangement of the subject matter as is suitable. Indeed this method finds very strong authority in the Gospels. (*VG* 30)

Number symbolism was important to Old Testament writers and the exegetical use of these numbers influenced the writers of the New.[5] The numbers 40, 12, 10, 7, 4 and 3 all hold prominent positions in Scripture. The author of the Apocalypse, for example, makes particular use of number symbolism and dwells on the number 12 and its multiples of 4 and 3 in his description of the New Jerusalem, which is an image of the heavenly life.[6] Each of the 4 walls contains 3 separate gates displaying the names of each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and each wall is built upon 3 foundations on which are written the names of the 12 apostles (Rev 21:12-14). Earlier in the book John's vision of the 144 thousand virgins is described as being made up of 12 thousand from each of the 12 tribes of Israel who are gathered from the 4 corners of the earth, and whose names are later divided into four groups of 3 upon the 12 city gates (Rev 7:1-8).

Christian exegetes valued the scriptural use of numerology, and Christ's commissioning of the twelve to preach the baptism of the Trinity to the four corners of the earth was always an important missionary theme (Mtt 28:19). The Introduction of this thesis has already noted Augustine's insistence in *De doctrina christiana* on the need for a knowledge of the figurative and mystical meaning of numbers used in the sacred text.[7] He particularly emphasised that the

[4] Colgrave (1968) 49 and Jones (1968) 65 note the influence of Gregory's *Dialogues* on the writer. Thacker also notes the closeness between the *Vita Gregorii* and the thought world of the *Dialogues*. Thacker (1998) 70-1 and Thacker (1976) 66-70.
[5] On Old Testament use of numerology see MacQueen (1985) 1-12; on scriptural use of numerology also see Van Daalen (1993).
[6] On numerology in *Revelations* see MacQueen (1985) 12-17.
[7] *On Christian Doctrine*, 2, 16, 25 (2.62-65): *NPNF* 1st series, 2, 543-44, Green (1995) 84-87.

Trinity is the number of the Creator, that its three elements recall both the injunction to love God with the whole heart, soul and mind and the three eras of time, before the law, under the law and the age of grace.[8]

Cassiodorus' *Explanation of the Psalms*, a text known in its full form to Bede, draws attention to the mystical significance of the numbers of the psalms. The opening of his commentary on Ps 3 notes, 'clearly the character of the psalm is associated with its apt number, for it was right that the psalm which embraced the power of the Holy Trinity and the mysteries of the resurrection on the third day should hold third place.' He shows how the true order of heavenly wisdom is deployed in the first three psalms:

> Psalm 1 contains the Lord Christ's moral aspect; Psalm 2, his natural aspect, that is, his human and divine being; and Psalm 3, by speaking of his resurrection, his reflective aspect; the rationale of these runs through the whole of the divine Scriptures. So the patriarch Isaac dug three wells (Gen 26:20), thereby showing that the Lord's commands are contained in threefold teaching. Wisdom too warns us to describe them in our hearts in three ways (Prov 22:20) and so on. As you read subsequent psalms you will be able easily to recognise these three aspects, individual or combined.[9]

The fathers often made use of numerology in works other than biblical commentaries; Gregory, for example, used number symbolism to enhance a spiritual message within the actual structure of the *Dialogues*.[10] Insular writers appreciated the use of number symbolism as it had been employed in Scripture and patristic writings, and utilized numerology as an exegetical method in the presentation and structure of their own works. Number symbolism was an important method of imparting spiritual wisdom for Bede and his use of numerology in the actual structure of his prose *Vita Cuthberti* has already been pointed out.[11] Mark Laynesmith also emphasizes the importance of number symbolism to Stephen of Ripon in the *Vita Wilfridi*.[12] The *Navagatio Sancti*

[8] *De Doctrina Christiana*, 2.62-65 (2, 16, 25): Green (1995) 84-87.
[9] Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* 3: Walsh (1990) 72-73, *CCSL* 97, 55.
[10] Kardong (1985) and Cusack (1980).
[11] See Intro., 14; Berschin (1989); on the importance of number symbolism to Bede also see Wallis (1999) xxiii, MacQueen (1985) 17 and Kendal (1978).
[12] Laynesmith (2000) 168.

Brendani features many allegories based upon number symbolism and also adapts John's use of numbers concerning the new Jerusalem.[13]

It has been seen that the Whitby writer's use of the number three in addressing the theme of conversion and baptism in the Trinity is striking, particularly in connection with the Anglo-Saxon material. The symbolic use of triads was not however confined to expositions of the Trinity, and Augustine considers its importance when interpreting the numerical details of Noah's ark.[14] The Ark is said to have three stories which may represent the three virtues of faith, hope and charity (1Cor 13:13), or indeed the three harvests in the gospel, thirty-fold, sixty-fold and one hundred-fold (Mtt 13:8), representing the chaste married on the bottom floor of the Ark, the chaste widowed on the second floor, and the chaste virgins on the upper floor.[15] This thesis has already discussed the divisions of the faithful into three groups, as in Bede's exegesis on the lampstand and in the Whitby writer's similar exegesis on the division of the faithful into groups consisting of the married faithful, the virgin, and the virgin involved in active preaching.[16]

The number three punctuates the Whitby narrative too.[17] For example, Gregory remains in his hiding-place for three nights before submitting to the papal office and three groups protest along the way when Pope Benedict agrees to let him go on the mission; Gregory is turned back after three days and eventually sends three named missionaries (ch.7,10,11). Gregory's three-fold pun concerning the Angli is told and duly explained, partly with reference to the three syllables of their king's name (ch.9,13,14); the priest Trimma receives the vision concerning Edwin's bones three times (ch.18,19). Ch.22 opens with 'a third instance of his reknown, in which Gregory followed him, the One in Three'. It remains to be seen whether biblical style and the exegetical technique of

[13] MacQueen (1985) 18-25 esp. 22; Christopher Butler argues that it can be safely concluded that knowledge of number symbolism was the possession of every educated Christian in the late antique and early medieval period. Butler (1970) 30.
[14] On the Greek origins of the importance of the number three see Butler (1970) 39.
[15] *City of God*, 15, 26: *NPNF* 1st series, 2, 306, *CCSL* 48, 494; on Augustine's use of numerology in his exegesis including his work on Noah's ark, see Butler (1970) 27-8.
[16] *On the Tabernacle* 1, 8: Holder (1994) 34-35, *CCSL* 119A, 32-33; see chapter II, 70.
[17] See chapter II, 61-62.

numerology, especially concerning the number three, also influenced the actual structure of the *Vita Gregorii.*

David Howlett has argued the influence of biblical structural techniques on early Anglo-Saxon Latin literature, in accordance with similar structural practices adapted in the late antique period.[18] Howlett argues the creation of biblically-styled chiasms within the structuring of passages, sentences or clauses in early Anglo-Saxon texts and cites the Whitby *Vita Gregorii* as an example of this practice.[19] Initially pointing to the creation of a chiasm within the clauses of the prologue and conclusion, he continues by suggesting the existence of a great chiasmus spanning the entire text. This is based upon themes which Howlett divides up into paragraph-styled sections within the work. Noting that the *Vita* was not originally divided into chapters, Howlett for the large part discards Colgrave's chapter divisions in the creation of his chiasm. He argues twenty-nine parts to the chiasm with fourteen on each side of the crux, the crux being the prayer of thanksgiving for Paulinus, as located in Colgrave's chapter 17. He does however concede that there are problems with the chiasm, in particular with the material concerning the story of the unbelieving matron, the miracle of the relic rags, and the story of the two pagan magicians (Colgrave's chapters 20-22).

Howlett suggests that this imperfection is most likely because the Whitby writer had not properly assimilated the necessary skills to master structural techniques based upon the biblical method.[20] As discussed above in ch.2, however, Bede records that abbess Hild (d.680) had 'compelled those under her direction' to devote much time to the study of the holy scriptures and that under her instruction the monastic authorities had identified and developed Caedmon's gift of scriptural exposition in the form of vernacular verse (*HE* 4.23-4). In view of Bede's testimony to the Whitby monastery's early establishment of the study of scripture, and the evidence presented here that the Whitby writer was familiar with a sophisticated exegetical tradition, the assumption that the writer had an inadequate knowledge of a common biblical structuring technique may be

[18] Howlett (1997).
[19] Howlett (1997) 135-46.
[20] Howlett (1997) 145.

questioned. The present study strongly suggests that the *Vita Gregorii* does indeed constitute a thematic chiasm, but that it takes a different format from that proposed by Howlett. If the chiasm is read as being structured on the Whitby writer's adaptation of the themes which have been identified here, then the section concerning Gregory's miracles at Rome does not present a problem.

Though the only extant copy of the *Vita Gregorii* is not divided into chapters, Ewald divided the work into a prologue and thirty-two chapters based upon the scribe's presentation of the document. Colgrave has followed Ewald's divisions, with Mosford making only slight alterations.[21] As demonstrated below, Colgrave's chapters can actually be thematically divided into groups of three. Based on these divisions the work can be divided into eleven main themes and the crux of the thematic chiasm becomes not the prayer of thanksgiving for Paulinus in chapter 17, but Paulinus's conversion of Edwin in chapter 16. Though there are 11 themes, when one counts from each side of the chiasm to the crux, the crux can be counted twice and therefore makes up the number 12.[22]

A Prologue-2 Introductory material.

B 3-5 Discourse on miracles.

C 6-8 Virtue of humility.

D 9-11 prophecy and plans to convert the Anglo-Saxons.

E 12-14 Proclamation of a predestined conversion.

F 15-17 Paulinus's conversion of Edwin and the English people.

E' 18-19 Retrieval of Edwin's bones and Gregory's eucharistic miracle.

D' 21-23 Three miracles performed by Gregory at Rome.

C' 24-26 Gregory's gift of spiritual wisdom.

B' 27-29 Gregory's gift of loosing and binding.

A' 30-32 Conclusion material.

[21] Colgrave (1968) vi; Mosford (1988) lxxiii.
[22] It should be noted that some of these themes are presented in a way in which they overlap and flow into one another. Thematic divisions as described below are however quite distinctive within the text.

The three concluding chapters of the *Vita* create a balance to the three introductory chapters. This relationship may account for the writer placing material apologising for the inadequacies of the work in the closing chapters rather then in the opening chapters, which is the traditional Martinian format. Chapters 3-5 address the true purpose and nature of miracles as laid down by Gregory, and chapters 27-29 complement this by portraying the spiritual superiority of Gregory's miraculous powers, in which he holds authority either to save or condemn souls on either side of the grave. Chapters 6-8 present Gregory's virtue of humility. The spiritual consequence of this humility is Gregory's ability to reach the peak of the contemplative ladder and share the divine wisdom with others. This is represented in chapters 24-26 in which Gregory's revelation of the divine wisdom to others is manifest through his writings. Chapters 9-11 portray Gregory's prophecy and preparations to convert the English, and chapters 21-23 contain Gregory's three miracles at Rome, each depicting the skills of the preacher in a theme of Gentile conversion. Chapters 12-14 present a proclamation of the conversion of the English as a chosen people called to stand before the Lamb. Corresponding to this, chapters 18-21 depict the retrieval of Edwin's bones and Gregory's eucharistic miracle at Rome, thereby presenting an image of the Anglo-Saxon people as part of the universal and eucharistic body of Christ within a theme of resurrection.

Finally, the three centre chapters of the work, that is chapters 15-17, focus upon Bishop Paulinus. Paulinus is presented in chapter 15 with the authority of the preacher, as he strikes the raven-like minds of a pagan people with the arrow of the Word. Chapter 16 becomes the crux of the chiasm. It depicts the bishop's prophetic appearance to Edwin in exile and foretells the king's conversion, which becomes an image of the conversion of the entire Anglo-Saxon race. It places particular emphasis on the role of Paulinus as teacher and on the importance of obeying him. Chapter 17 is the third chapter on Paulinus and is a prayer of thanksgiving for Paulinus as Gregory's representative in Northumbria.

The chiasm may be viewed in a more contained form also:

A Prologue-2 Introductory material.

B 3-8 Discourse on humility and miracles.

C 9-14 Plans and mission to convert the English.

D 15-17 Paulinus's conversion of Edwin and the English people.

C' 18-23 Six miracles depicting English conversion.

B' 24-29 Gregory's wisdom and authority to loose and bind.

A' 30-32 Conclusion material.

In this chiasm the three introductory chapters, the three chapters of the crux, and the three concluding chapters are separated from the remainder of the material. This leaves 12 chapters on each side of the crux, each of which can be split into 0two distinct groups of six on each side. Section B contains only Gregorian material, and through the Pope's example and teachings emphasize the importance of humility and a proper attitude to miracles in the role of the pastor. Corresponding to this B' recounts the spiritual heights to which this humble way of life has brought the Pope, in a depiction of Gregory's great wisdom and his spiritual authority to loose and bind souls on both sides of the grave. C contains six chapters; it begins with Gregory's encounter with the English boys in Rome, continues by portraying the initiation of the mission, and concludes with a proclamation of the inclusion of the English people with the saints in heaven. C' contains the only six miracle stories portrayed by the Whitby writer.[23] These comprise two chapters accounting the retrieval of Edwin's bones from Hatfield Chase, and four chapters describing Gregory performing four miracles at Rome. This thesis has shown that the exegesis in these stories proclaims a clear message

[23] Though there are other miracles associated with Gregory described in the *Vita*, these are the only six chapters whose inclusion is based solely on their merit as miracle stories.

of conversion for a Gentile people, including their resurrection with all the saints, and the material therefore corresponds clearly to the Anglo-Saxon chapters in section C. The crux continues to represent Edwin's conversion as a symbol of the conversion of the entire English race.

The number symbolism within this chiasm is extremely effective. By separating the introductory material, the crux and the conclusion we are given the number 3. The two sections left on each side of the crux then provide the number 4. These are of course multiples of the number 12. Note also that the sum of the chapters on each side of the crux also adds up to the number 12. The importance of this number symbolism in the Apocalypse has been pointed out above, and the missionary theme of the apostles taking the message of the Trinity to the four corners of the earth has been highlighted. Notice also that there are seven lines in the chiasm in all, another important number in scriptural numerology and used frequently in the Apocalypse.

Exegetical themes therefore present a perfect balance within the work, as all themes converge in a presentation of the fulfilment of God's calling of a pagan people to himself. Essential to this are the spiritual virtues of the true pastor, and these are effectively expressed throughout the tapestry of images presented to the reader. The writer's presentation of Edwin as an image of the English people anchors the work within a local context, yet serves to direct the promotion of a Deiran king as saint from within a safe and controlled environment. Produced as a reaction to social, political and spiritual concerns, the work draws on an established literary genre to impress its own vision of reality upon the minds of its readers.

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