

SANCTITY AND AUTHORITY: DOCUMENTING MIRACLES IN THE
AGE OF BEDE

by

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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation investigates the writings of the Venerable Bede (673-735) in the context of miracles and the miraculous. It begins by exploring the patristic tradition through which he developed his own historical and hagiographical work, particularly the thought of Gregory the Great in the context of doubt and Augustine of Hippo regarding history and truth. It then suggests that Bede had a particular affinity for the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles as models for the writing of specifically ecclesiastical history. The use of sources to attest miracle narratives in six hagiographies known to Bede from Late Antiquity are explored before applying this knowledge to Bede and five of his early Insular contemporaries. The research is rounded off by a discussion of Bede's use of miracles in the context of reform, particularly his desire to provide adequate pastoral care through his understanding of the ideal bishop best exemplified by Cuthbert and John of Beverley. By examining Bede and the miraculous not only through the lens of his predecessors but also among his contemporaries, this thesis ultimately positions Bede as an innovative Anglo-Saxon scholar, though one clearly conscious of the traditions within which he was working.

Dedicated to the memory of my grandparents Mary Rochester and Christopher Mortimore, as well as my first supervisor Prof. Nicholas Brooks, each of whom saw the start of this thesis but not the end of it.

Soli Deo Gloria

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Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, 2017

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Abbreviations

(Full bibliographic details are provided in the text itself and in the Bibliography)

- CCSL – Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout)
CSEL – Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna)
DCD – Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*
DDC – Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*
DTR – Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*
HA – Bede, *Historia Abbatum*
HE – Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*
MGH – Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Berlin and Munich)
PL – Patrologia Latina (Paris)
QE – Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*
SC – Sources Chrétiennes (Paris)
V.Ambr – Possidius, *Vita Ambrosii*
V.Ant – Evagrius’ Latin translation of Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*
V.Aug – Paulinus, *Vita Augustini*
VC – Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*
VCA – *Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo*
VCB – Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*
V.Ceol – *Vita Ceolfridi*
VCM – Bede, *Vita Cuthberti Metrica*
VG – *Vita Gregorii*
V.Ger – Constantius, *Vita Germani*
V.Mart – Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*
VW – Stephen, *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi*

Introduction

The Venerable Bede (673-735) was one of the foremost intellectuals of the Anglo-Saxon age. The author of nearly forty works, Bede was a true polymath, his oeuvre covering such diverse topics as hagiography, biblical commentary, grammar, history and science. Earlier generations of Bedan scholarship have rightly highlighted his reliance upon tradition, particularly the legacy and influence of Gregory the Great and Augustine of Hippo. However, the past decade or two has seen somewhat of a renaissance in our interpretation of Bede, giving him far more credit as an innovator than had previously been admitted. Miracles have generated much discussion among historians and philosophers for centuries. For the religious believer they provide evidence of God's interaction with his creation; for the sceptic, they serve as one more inexplicable facet of our human existence, the product of an overactive imagination or worse, pious fraud. This dichotomy between truth and doubt is one of the major driving forces of this thesis. As a good historian, Bede always took care to understand history (and scripture) at the literal level; without that, one could not proceed to the higher meanings of the text. One of the key motivations for this thesis therefore has been to examine the place of miracles in historical or hagiographical texts, such as Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*,¹ or his *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*.² This thesis answers three important questions: how exactly does an eighth century Christian historian such as Bede write about such events, to what extent was he influenced by earlier precedents, and what was his distinctive contribution compared to his contemporaries? In the chapters that follow, I propose that, where able, early Insular authors highly desired to utilise living, named eyewitnesses to confirm the veracity of a given miracle account to a potentially sceptical audience. In this way, discussion of the miraculous can be seen as a live process between the author, their audience and their sources, even long after the relevant figures had died. Miracles of the past spoke to present concerns. As a result, this thesis also explores the use of miracles recorded in such texts as a vehicle through which spiritual instruction could be passed down to the laity, particularly

¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969). [Henceforth *HE*].

² Bede, *Prose Life of Cuthbert*, in B. Colgrave, (ed. and trans.), *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 141-307. [Henceforth *VCB*].

as seen in the context of Bede's noted concern for the reform of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Whilst Bede is the key focus of this thesis, space is devoted to examine him within the context of his peers. Some scholars have commented on the miracles recorded by his close contemporaries, but the results drawn have often been sporadic; this thesis uniquely seeks to provide a truly balanced and comparative approach between Bede and other writers of the early eighth century. The sources examined are by necessity mostly historical and hagiographical, though some attention is also given to Bede's exegesis. This is due to the fact that this thesis is principally interested in the 'real world' miracles of Bede's own period, broadly defined from the initial Anglo-Saxon conversion to those within living memory, rather than the miracles of scripture. The early eighth century produced multiple hagiographical texts, allowing the historian to compare like with like, whereas there is comparatively little contemporary exegesis to the same scale and breadth as that produced by Bede. The work that follows ultimately shows Bede to be a careful author, outstanding for his time, who was conscious of the needs of his audience when reading miracle accounts across a variety of genres, building upon earlier precedent to craft his own innovative texts.

Historiographical Context: Bede

Bede is widely considered as one of the most well-known figures of the Anglo-Saxon age. Two clear introductions to his life and writings can be found in the works of George Brown and Benedicta Ward.³ A new biography of Bede is in preparation by Sarah Foot. In his own words, Bede spent all his life in his monastery, the joint foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria,⁴ applying himself entirely to the study of the scriptures; it was his life's delight to learn or to teach or to write.⁵ Bede's importance cannot be overstated. His vast body of works, covering a wide

³ B. Ward, *The Venerable Bede* (London, 1998); G. H. Brown, *A Companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2010). An older though still somewhat useful introduction to the period is P. H. Blair, *The World of Bede* (Cambridge, Rev. ed., 1990).

⁴ For the history of Bede's monastery, see in particular R. Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites* (Swindon, 2 Volumes, 2005-2006), I. N. Wood, 'The Foundation of Bede's Wearmouth-Jarrow', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 84-96, and Idem., *The Origins of Jarrow: The Monastery, the Slake and Ecgfrith's Minster* (Jarrow, 2008).

⁵ *HE* V.24, p. 567.

array of topics, has generated much academic discussion, for they supply a unique snapshot into the intellectual, political and religious history of this period. He is often cited by scholars tracing the reception history of late antique and early medieval writers because the monastic library at Wearmouth-Jarrow was well supplied with such texts.⁶ His *HE* is one of our main sources for providing information concerning Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh and early-eighth centuries. In his own day, however, Bede was best remembered for his exegetical skill; at Wearmouth-Jarrow the scriptorium was kept busy copying his multiple biblical commentaries for dissemination not only to other parts of the island but also to the continent.⁷ His legacy influenced such diverse figures as Alfred the Great (849-899), the late-tenth century Anglo-Saxon abbot and scholar Ælfric, the twelfth century historian William of Malmesbury, and Paul the Deacon (d.799), who compiled a homiliary for the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne (742-814) containing many of Bede's sermons.⁸

Despite these accomplishments, previous generations of scholars have interpreted Bede as a mere copyist or compiler, heavily indebted to the Church Fathers for inspiration as well as borrowing large sections of their work. Epitomising this view, Charles Plummer, the famous early editor of Bede's *HE* stated that 'he has little care to claim originality for himself'.⁹ However recent historiography has moved in a different direction, seeing Bede as 'blazing - not following - trails'.¹⁰ The 'New Bede', as he has been dubbed, is now understood to be far more original in his contributions, carefully crafting his texts to fulfil

⁶ For example, C. Weidmann, 'Augustine's Works in Circulation', in M. Vessey (ed.), *A Companion to Augustine* (Oxford, 2015), p. 435. On the breadth of literary resources available to Bede, see M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), Appendix E, and R. Love, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede' in R. Gameson (ed.) *The History of the Book in Britain*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 606-632.

⁷ M. B. Parkes, *The Scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture, 1982), pp. 15-17.

⁸ On his legacy, see J. A. Westgard, 'Bede and the Continent in the Carolingian Age and Beyond', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 201-215 and S. Rowley, 'Bede in Later Anglo-Saxon England', *Ibid.*, pp. 216-228. On Paul the Deacon's use of Bede, see Z. M. Guiliano, 'The Composition, Dissemination, and use of the Homiliary of Paul the Deacon in Carolingian Europe from the late eighth to mid-tenth century' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Cambridge, 2016).

⁹ C. Plummer, *Baedae Opera Historica*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1896), p. xxiii.

¹⁰ R. D. Ray, 'Who did Bede think he was?', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006), p. 24.

his own socially-engaged agenda.¹¹ On this view he is no longer regarded as an isolated monk in his cloister, but actively seeking the spiritual reform of his kingdom. As Scott DeGregorio suggests, ‘deference to authority and tradition on Bede’s part did not always have to amount to a total drain of innovation or social engagement’.¹² The most influential statements of this paradigm shift appear in DeGregorio’s 2006 edited volume *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*. Here, DeGregorio’s Introduction and chapter ‘Footsteps of His Own: Bede’s Commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah’, together with Thacker’s chapter ‘Bede and the Ordering of Understanding’ and Roger Ray’s chapter ‘Who did Bede think he was?’, form the foundation of this modern understanding of Bede’s character, emphasising not only his originality but also the high esteem in which he held himself. By claiming to be ‘following in the footsteps of the fathers’,¹³ Bede was positioning himself as one of their own, not deferentially adhering to them as a previous generation of scholars once held, but confidently walking alongside them as an equal. A second result of this paradigm shift is the concerted effort to interpret Bede’s corpus in a much more holistic manner.¹⁴ This interconnected approach to studying Bede is more recently exemplified in the essays contained in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* and *Bede and the Future*, as well as the monographs by Peter Darby and Conor O’Brien.¹⁵

¹¹ S. DeGregorio, ‘Introduction: The New Bede’, in his *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006), pp. 1–10.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹³ For example, ‘*iuxta vestigia patrum*’, Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, ed. M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout, 1983), Preface, p. 3, ll. 9–10, ‘*vestigia patrum sequens*’, Bede, *In Regum Librum XXX Quaestiones*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119 (Turnhout, 1962), Prologue, p. 293, l. 23 and ‘*vestigia patrum sequentibus*’, Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 123B (Turnhout, 1977), p. 287, l. 86 [Henceforth *DTR*].

¹⁴ The first sustained argument on this point can be found in R. Ray, ‘Bede, the Exegete, as Historian’, in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), pp. 125–140, and noted by L. S. Creider, *Bede’s Understanding of the Miraculous* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Yale, 1979), p. 7.

¹⁵ S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2011); P. Darby and F. Wallis (eds.), *Bede and the Future* (Farnham, 2014); P. Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham, 2012); C. O’Brien, *Bede’s Temple: An Image and Its Interpretation* (Oxford, 2015). Note, whilst the essays in the *Cambridge Companion to Bede* are organised along thematic lines, the various authors reflect this more holistic approach

DeGregorio writes of these two monographs that they set ‘the agenda for the next stage in Bede studies, of reading across the many texts of the Bedan corpus and giving us a more expansive view of their interrelationships and agendas’.¹⁶ This thesis is written with the ‘New Bede’ firmly in mind, asking whether this recent academic perspective can reasonably be applied within the context of Bede and the miraculous. In particular, it regards Bede not simply as an exceptional individual but places him firmly within the context of his wider world, not only among his contemporaries but also his predecessors.

Much has already been written regarding Bede’s understanding of the miraculous. In light of these recent trends in the historiography, however, a fresh look at Bede and the miraculous is now due. The most recent major contribution to the topic occurred over twenty years ago with William McCready’s *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*.¹⁷ However, by the early nineties, the concept of the ‘New Bede’ had not been fully realised, and McCready’s work is essentially transitional between the two historiographical viewpoints. This thesis, however, will take advantage of much recent scholarship over the past two decades since McCready was writing, focussing on the creative departures of Bede from his predecessors under the fresh understanding of Bede’s innovation and originality. DeGregorio has already begun work reinterpreting the relationship between Bede and Gregory within this new paradigm,¹⁸ and my thesis will build on such work concerning the miraculous. For example, Chapter One offers a new perspective of the relationship between Augustine of Hippo’s conception of history and miracles compared to Bede’s historiography. In a similar manner, Chapter Two questions long-held assumptions regarding Bede and Eusebius as authors of specifically ecclesiastical history. Likewise, Chapters Three to Six pay closer attention to prosopographical concerns in the use of eyewitnesses and sources for miracle accounts, showing how the late antique and early medieval mind used them to deal with issues of doubt, whilst Chapter Seven shows how

in dealing with their respective topics. O’Brien, *Ibid.*, pp. 8-11 contains a broad overview of the developing historiography.

¹⁶ S. DeGregorio [Review], ‘C. O’Brien, *Bede’s Temple: An Image and Its Interpretation* (Oxford, 2015)’, *Anglia*, 134, no. 4 (Nov., 2016), p. 702.

¹⁷ W. D. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* (Toronto, ON, 1994).

¹⁸ S. DeGregorio, ‘The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: Exegetical Connections, Spiritual Departures’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 18, no. 1 (2010), pp. 43-60.

the very structure of Bede's text could be employed to progress his didactic aims. Overall, this thesis benefits from taking a truly comparative approach that is broad in scope, devoting equal space to Bede's early Insular contemporaries as well as his predecessors. In view of the current understanding of Bede as innovator the time is now right for a reappraisal of this fascinating topic.

Historiographical Context: Miracles

Simon Yarrow has recently defined a saint as 'a person who by various means has demonstrated such worth during their lifetime as to posthumously merit the company of God... a "holy one"... whose exemplary and exceptional qualities bring them close to God'.¹⁹ Their lives, including their miracles, have inspired countless generations of believers. However, what exactly is a miracle? The most famous definition has been provided by the eighteenth century Scottish philosopher David Hume in his famous critique *On Miracles*. Here, Hume defines a miracle as 'a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent'.²⁰ Hume's arguments against miracles in this section of his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, including this particular definition, have continued to stimulate much debate, acceptance and counter-argument among contemporary philosophers and historians.²¹ Nevertheless, Hume was writing in an academic field removed from the modern investigation of the Anglo-Saxon past, making the applicability of his definition to the eighth century questionable. For example, in a chapter titled 'The Boundaries of the Supernatural', Robert Bartlett has suggested that the modern distinction between 'natural' versus 'supernatural' would be unknown to an early medieval audience; *supernaturalis* only became common as a concept from the thirteenth century.²² Instead, we must turn towards Bede himself and the efforts of Anglo-Saxon scholars in order to produce a

¹⁹ S. Yarrow, *The Saints: A Short History* (Oxford, 2016), p. 4.

²⁰ D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Millican (Oxford, 2008), p. 127.

²¹ Three very different contributions are the more balanced work of M. P. Levine, *Hume and the Problem of Miracles: A Solution* (London, 1989), the scathing critique of Hume in J. Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles* (Oxford, 2000), and the riposte by R. J. Fogelin, *A Defense of Hume on Miracles* (Princeton, NJ, 2003).

²² R. Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 12-13.

suitable definition. What follows outlines the contributions of previous scholars to the subject and highlights some areas that my own work seeks to address.

The earliest interpreters were quick to dismiss the miraculous element found in Bede as belonging to an earlier age of superstitious credulity. Plummer suggested that the presence of miracles in Bede's historical works 'may strike a modern reader unfavourably'.²³ He proposed that 'the large majority of them may be set aside at once', providing at least eight reasons to do so.²⁴ Nevertheless, he does concede that for Bede, belief in miracles 'was natural to his age, and especially natural to his religious spirit'.²⁵ The earliest specific work on the subject of the miraculous occurred in 1935 with Bertram Colgrave, who considered the attitude behind Bede's miracle stories 'primitive', 'naturally credulous' and 'simple-minded'.²⁶ In addition, he sought to drive a wedge between Bede as historian, hagiographer and theologian, a view which in light of more recent historiography now appears unwarranted.²⁷ However, whilst personally considering Bede's miracles as false, the result of a pious imagination, he is careful to remind us that we must view Bede on his own terms, rather than the 'self-confident materialism of the recent past', a view that this thesis seeks to follow.²⁸ In this essay, Colgrave places Bede's use of sources within their context, following historic precedent, discussing their veracity and what such sources might have meant for Bede. This focus on eyewitness testimony and the writing of history in Anglo-Saxon England will be explored in later chapters. C. G. Loomis furthered this exploration of sources, claiming that many of the miracle stories found in Bede find analogues in the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great, a collection of four books concerning the miracles of sixth-century Italian saints.²⁹ Loomis' main argument is that Bede felt his

²³ Plummer, *Baedae Opera Historica*, Vol. 1, p. lxiv.

²⁴ Namely, because the vast majority of medieval miracle claims are 'deficient in anything like contemporary evidence', 'silly', 'unspiritual', 'positively immoral', suspiciously modelled on biblical miracles, derive from myths or folk-tales, can be attributed to mere coincidence combined with pious imagination, or are the result of natural yet currently unknown processes. Ibid, pp. lxiv-lxv.

²⁵ Ibid., p. lxiv.

²⁶ B. Colgrave, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', in A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *Bede: His Life, Times and Writings* (London, 1935), pp. 202.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 228.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 229.

²⁹ C. G. Loomis, 'The Miracle Traditions of the Venerable Bede', *Speculum*, 21, no. 4 (1946), pp. 404-418.

stories would gain more credence if following the examples first laid down in the *Dialogi*. However, Loomis follows the opinion of Colgrave that Bede was a man of his times, his stories being nothing more than ‘benevolent magic’, ‘white magic’, or containing ‘Christian magical elements’.³⁰

By the 1970s, however, the historiography had shifted away from such bold statements. Rather than dismissing miracles as fiction, stemming from either pious credulity or outright fabrication, the academic consensus began to accommodate miracle stories and the supernatural as these categories would have been understood in the past. Rosenthal argued that Bede ‘believed in miracles. They were basic to him, both as a practising Christian and as a working historian’.³¹ Benedicta Ward’s brief essay contains a statement that best exemplifies this newer trend of accommodating miracles in academia: ‘Miracle stories are not the pre-requisite of the simple-minded and uneducated; they are there in the writings of some of the most sophisticated men of the Middle Ages’.³² Indeed, much of this short work seeks to address this issue, explaining that Bede believed in miracles as they were written, or at the very least considered *something* to have happened and later elaborated on the exact circumstances. This was because he trusted the authorities upon which these accounts were based.³³ Taking her examples chiefly from the *HE* (IV.24, II.6 and V.6), Ward dismisses the suggestion of ‘deliberate fraud’,³⁴ whilst reminding the reader that Bede was unafraid of shaping his narrative to suit his own ‘aims and purposes’.³⁵

In 1979, L. S. Creider’s Yale PhD dissertation ‘Bede’s Understanding of the Miraculous’ became the first monograph-length examination of this topic.³⁶ Creider’s approach built on that of Ward and Rosenthal, and his acknowledgment of the need to treat Bede’s works holistically was at that time revolutionary. Key to his first chapter ‘Miracle

³⁰ Loomis, ‘The Miracle Traditions of the Venerable Bede’, p. 404.

³¹ J. T. Rosenthal, ‘Bede’s Use of Miracles in “The Ecclesiastical History”’, *Traditio*, 31 (1975), p. 328.

³² B. Ward, ‘Miracles and History: A Reconsideration of the Miracle Stories used by Bede’, in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), p. 70.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁴ Ward, ‘Miracles and History’, pp. 70-71.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁶ See fn. 14, above.

and the Nature of Things' is his exploration of the terminology used by Bede, as well as seeking a definition of what Bede considered miraculous. Whilst Bede does not give a univocal answer to this question, Creider argued that for Bede miracles do not occur against nature *per se*, but against our current understanding and expectations of it. Bede's reliance on Augustine, Gregory and Isidore is noted, but Creider also demonstrates how Bede sometimes moves beyond the views of his predecessors, the first signs perhaps of a shift towards seeing Bede as an innovator. Soon afterwards, Gail Berlin published a useful short essay exploring Bede's understanding of the rules of evidence and authority in the narration of miracle stories.³⁷ In this work, she answers three main objections that arise concerning Anglo-Saxon miracle accounts. First, she is very dismissive of the earlier view that automatically claimed the Anglo-Saxon worldview as primitive or credulous; miracles were a natural part of their worldview, and modern historians must address the past as such.³⁸ Second, Berlin suggests that if medieval miracle accounts followed a pre-existing framework or convention (either from the Bible or from patristic authors), the reader would recognise the connection and the authority of the story would be confirmed. If God had acted in similar ways in the past, why should they expect any different in the present? Finally, and most importantly for the purposes of this thesis, Berlin argues that Bede is very careful to eradicate doubt in certain circumstances, particularly when miracles go beyond natural expectations.

McCready's *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*,³⁹ the first, and so far only, monograph published on the topic was highly influenced by his earlier work *Signs of Sanctity: Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great*.⁴⁰ His working hypothesis in *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* is that Bede followed Gregory with regards to the miraculous,⁴¹ though less space is devoted to comparisons with other patristic authors. Whilst McCready does acknowledge the debt Bede owed to other theologians, his chief focus in this work is a comparison between Bede and Gregory. Admittedly Gregory did

³⁷ G. I. Berlin, 'Bede's Miracle Stories: Notions of Evidence and Authority in Old English History', *Neophilologus*, 74, no. 3 (Jul., 1990), pp. 434-443.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

³⁹ See fn. 17, above

⁴⁰ W. D. McCready, *Signs of Sanctity: Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great* (Toronto, ON, 1989).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

have a great influence on Bede, and this research is furthered in Chapter One below, but the role of others should also be examined, particularly in light of new research. One such consideration is Bede's relationship to Augustine, highlighted by Thacker in his 2005 Jarrow Lecture.⁴² Furthermore, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* is divided into very similar sections to *Signs of Sanctity*, narrowing the scope of McCready's investigation. It appears that McCready wanted to see Bede as a mirror of Gregory, imitating his papal predecessor; Chapter Seven, for example, solely explores the influence of Gregory's *Dialogi* on Bede. Unsurprisingly, many of the conclusions McCready reaches with Gregory hold true with Bede too. For example, Bede considers the necessity of miracles to have largely passed, and shares Gregory's views on the role of miracles in the early Church for conversion.⁴³ Bede agrees with Gregory on miracles as signs of pre-existing sanctity, though miracles are not always necessary for someone to be considered a saint.⁴⁴ Bede uses eyewitness sources in the same manner as Gregory, seeking to guarantee the veracity of his accounts, though less frequently.⁴⁵ However, McCready is also aware that Bede does not always follow Gregory in every regard.

After McCready, K. Lutterkort published an article with the goal of investigating whether Bede had any specific aims in how he narrated miracle stories in the *HE* and the *VCB*.⁴⁶ Principally, Lutterkort chose to emphasise the didactic nature of Bede's work, that Bede can (and does) shape his narrative to draw out particular moral lessons. As Lutterkort suggests, for Bede, 'to tell a story is at the same time to interpret it for the benefit of his readers',⁴⁷ and the writing of both history and hagiography is for the audience's edification. Lutterkort is also aware of the debt Bede owes to earlier authors, and is careful to contextualise his hagiographical works within a pre-existing tradition. At the same time, Sharon Rowley submitted her PhD thesis under the title *Reading Miracles in Bede's*

⁴² A. Thacker, *Bede and Augustine of Hippo: History and Figure in Sacred Text* (Jarrow Lecture, 2005).

⁴³ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, Chs. Three and Four.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Ch. Five.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Ch. Seven.

⁴⁶ K. Lutterkort, 'Beda Hagiographicus: Meaning and Function of Miracle Stories in the *Vita Cuthberti* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', in L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (eds.), *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk and Northumbrian* (Groningen, 1996), pp. 81-106.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

“*Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*”.⁴⁸ In it, Rowley questions seeing Bede’s miracle stories and history purely through an exegetical lens. Whilst such an understanding of Bede is admittedly useful,⁴⁹ it does not paint the whole picture. Rowley seeks to show how many of our modern readings of Bede actually do his work a disservice, often creating a unified whole where in reality there is noticeable tension.⁵⁰ In a later work, Rowley reinforces this suggestion, arguing that if one considers Bede’s miracles purely in orthodox, exegetical terms, the result is the domestication of Bede into ‘an historian according to post-Enlightenment standards’.⁵¹ Instead, Rowley suggests, a dialogue must be held between Bede as medieval author and the historian as twenty-first century reader. Her more theoretical approach has merit, and, similar to Colgrave, her insistence to take Bede on his own terms whilst realising our own limitations as historians is an approach this thesis will seek to emulate.

More recently, a further article concerning Bede and miracles has since been published, this time comparing the miracles in the *HE* with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.⁵² Part of Yoon’s argument is that the miracles as recorded in the *HE* form part of a wider project within the conversion of England, whereby ‘prayer, blessing, and prophecy are substituted for charm, spell and omen’.⁵³ This approach regarding the replacement of pagan magic with Christianity is best exemplified by Valerie Flint,⁵⁴ particularly concerning Gregory’s letter to Abbot Mellitus as an example of religious syncretism.⁵⁵ Following a useful discussion of post-mortem miracles conducted through deceased saints,

⁴⁸ S. M. Rowley, *Reading Miracles in Bede’s “Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum”*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Chicago, 1996).

⁴⁹ For example, as explored by Ray, ‘Bede, the Exegete, as Historian’.

⁵⁰ For example, Chapter One discusses the contrast between grace and free will, whilst Chapter Four explores the certainty of final judgement compared to the uncertainty of personal salvation.

⁵¹ S. M. Rowley, ‘Reassessing Exegetical Interpretations of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*’, *Literature & Theology*, 17, no. 3 (Sept. 2003), p. 230.

⁵² M. Yoon, ‘Origin and Supplement: Marvels and Miracles in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*’, in N. H. Kaylor and R. S. Nokes (eds.), *Global Perspectives on Medieval English Literature, Language and Culture* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2007), pp. 195-228.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁵⁴ V. I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1991).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77. *HE* I.30.

Yoon's greatest contribution to the scholarship is his short suggestion that the process of writing actually helped memorialise and authenticate any given miracle story. Once written down, such stories were sanctioned, and the process of writing led to their official dissemination. This thesis will combine such ideas with Bede's use of sources, particularly concerning Bede's approach to oral sources and the way in which the use of named authorities lend credence to his text. Particularly important in this regard is Nicholas Higham's recent Jarrow lecture on 'Bede as an Oral Historian'.⁵⁶ Finally, the 2015 monograph by Duard Grounds contains a chapter on the *strafwunder* (miracles of punishment) recorded by Bede.⁵⁷ This text primarily focusses on this particular type of miracle in the works of Gregory of Tours (c.538-594), with the final chapter on Bede serving as a comparison. Here, Grounds suggests that Bede's historical and hagiographical texts did not focus on *strafwunder* to anywhere near the extent that Gregory did, though they did share the same purpose: 'to demonstrate the gravity of even the most trifling of sins, the importance of obedience, and the enormity of the pastoral responsibilities of church leaders'.⁵⁸ Grounds' work in categorising and exploring miracles by type exemplifies the variety of approaches scholars have taken in examining miracles in the age of Bede, of which my own approach here is the latest contribution to this academic conversation.

In lieu of a clearly established and accepted definition for a miracle amongst these Anglo-Saxon and early medieval historians,⁵⁹ one must ultimately look elsewhere. Bede himself provides little direct help; he wrote no such excursus as *De Miracula*, even in his scientific work *De Natura Rerum*.⁶⁰ Instead, an examination of his exegesis and comments in miraculous narratives provide partial clues which, once pieced together, allow us to see what Bede understood a miracle to be. Much of this work has already been undertaken by Creider and McCready. First, Bede, following Augustine, is more interested in the meaning

⁵⁶ N. J. Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian* (Jarrow Lecture, 2011).

⁵⁷ D. Grounds, *Miracles of Punishment and the Religion of Gregory of Tours and Bede* (Zürich, 2015).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁵⁹ Colgrave comes closest to providing a definition, suggesting that 'the pious and simple-minded were naturally ready to explain a phenomenon as the direct interposition of God on their behalf', 'Bede's Miracle Stories', p. 202.

⁶⁰ Bede, *De Natura Rerum*, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 123A (Turnhout, 1975), pp. 173-234; Bede, *On the Nature of Things and On Times*, trans. C. B. Kendall and F. Wallis (Liverpool, 2010).

of miracles as signs and how they can edify his audience than any philosophical questions one may have about them. Second, they ultimately derive from God, even when working through a secondary agent. Finally, they are usually events which run contrary to our expectations of how creation works. On at least four occasions, Bede describes a miracle as ‘*contra naturam*’,⁶¹ contrary to nature, implying an understanding of regularity that has been broken by the miraculous occurrence. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a miracle as ‘a marvellous event not ascribable to human power or the operation of any natural force and therefore attributed to supernatural, esp. divine, agency’.⁶² This is the definition I use throughout this thesis. This definition suitably captures both the idea that a miracle in most circumstances is ‘contrary to nature’ as understood by Bede, and that in our context the supernatural agency is understood as either God himself, or as God working through angels, demons, saints and even pagans or heretics. Understanding the nature of these events, however, and the motivations the agency may have for doing so, are entirely different questions. Note, there are always exceptions where something that may not fit this standard definition of miracle is nevertheless called one by the medieval author. For example, Bede once relates that Cuthbert scared some birds off of his crops, hardly a supernatural occurrence requiring godly power, yet nevertheless refers to the incident as ‘*miracula*’.⁶³ In such cases, I have followed the medieval author in their interpretation throughout this thesis.

Thesis Outline

The thesis is split into three sections: Part One: Historic Precedent (Chapters One to Three), Part Two: Truth and Doubt in the early Insular world (Chapters Four to Six) and

⁶¹ Jesus sweating blood as he prays before his arrest, Bede, *In Lucae Evangelium Expositio*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout, 1960), VI, XXII.44, p. 387, l. 957 [Henceforth *In Lucam*]; Blood and water pouring from the body of Jesus after he had died, Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, II.19, p. 19, l. 132, and Bede, *In Epistolas Septem Catholicas*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 121 (Turnhout, 1983), 1 John V.7-8, p. 321, l. 95; Balaam’s donkey talking, Bede, *In Epistolas Septem Catholicas*, 2 Peter II.15-16, p. 274, l. 229.

⁶² Oxford English Dictionary, ‘Miracle’,

<http://www.oed.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/Entry/119052?result=1&rskey=UU0BrF&> [accessed 14 November 2016].

⁶³ *VCB* XIX, p. 222.

Part Three: Miracles and Reform (Chapter Seven). There are also four appendices which list much of the evidence examined in Chapters Three to Six.

Part One looks at the various traditions that Bede had available before him in his own work on miracles. Much research has already been done by McCreedy on the relationship between Bede and Gregory the Great, but the developments in Bedan as well as Gregorian studies over the past 22 years mean there is still scope to re-examine him here. In particular, the work of Matthew Dal Santo does much in Chapter One to inform our understanding of how Bede was responding to the concept of doubt in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria and therefore used miracles as an opportunity to provide religious instruction.⁶⁴ The second section of Chapter One then examines the work of Augustine of Hippo as an influence on how Bede chose to write about miracle stories as well as impacting Bede's self-understanding as an historian.⁶⁵ In particular, it explores Augustine's conception of miracle as *signa*, which was later adopted by Bede, as well as how Augustine discussed the miracles of his own day in his famous *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*.⁶⁶ This chapter therefore questions Bede's originality as well as his reliance upon tradition, and asks whether Bede considered himself the equal of these Church Fathers, following the recent paradigm shift towards the 'New Bede', discussed above. Chapter Two builds on this theme of innovation versus tradition, suggesting that Bede's appropriation of Eusebius as a model for his *HE* is not as close as some previous scholars have suggested, and instead presents evidence that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles provide closer thematic and linguistic similarities. The discussion of Bede's models and influences through these first two chapters invites discussion of the extent to which as an historian he sought to narrate a truthful account in his work. Chapter Two thus ends with an examination of the loaded phrase '*vera lex historiae*', arguing that Bede used this phrase as a caveat that his narrative was only as reliable as his sources, though he nevertheless trusted such sources, naming them and adding epithets to them to further

⁶⁴ M. Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2012).

⁶⁵ Detailed assessments of Augustine's life and works can be found in P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London, 2nd ed., 2000) and H. Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life* (Oxford, 2010).

⁶⁶ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, eds. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47 and 48 (Turnhout, 1955) [Henceforth DCD]; Translation taken from Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998). [Henceforth *The City of God*].

reassure his audience. Chapter Three then moves from history to hagiography, examining six late antique examples of *vitae* literature that were familiar to Bede in order to ascertain what literary practices he adopted from his predecessors. These include Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*, Sulpicius Severus' *Vita Martini*, Paulinus' *Vita Ambrosii*, Possidius' *Vita Augustini*, Constantius of Lyon's *Vita Germani*, and the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great.⁶⁷ Chapter Three begins by providing a threefold distinction between different types of sources (named, anonymous and no source provided) in order to apply a consistent comparison between the methodologies of these texts and also the ones examined in Part Two of this thesis. This chapter ultimately shows how the hagiographical landscape available to Bede was broad and varied, with each text contributing in different ways to his own understanding of how to discuss miracles in historical and hagiographical literature.

Part One forms the foundation for Part Two, building on Bede's understanding of the role of the historian and the place of miracles in his texts in order to situate him as an innovator among his contemporaries. In particular, I suggest that the use of named sources attesting miracle stories was highly desirable by early insular authors, and provided their audiences with opportunities to engage with these witnesses. Following Francesca Tinti,⁶⁸ I

⁶⁷ *Vita Beati Antonii*, ed. J. P. Migne, PL 73 (Paris, 1849), cols. 125-169 [Henceforth *V.Ant*]; Translation taken from *Life of Anthony by Athanasius*, trans. C. White in her *Early Christian Lives* (London, 1998), pp. 3-70 [Henceforth *Life of Anthony*]; Sulpice Sévère, *Vie De Saint Martin*, ed. and trans. J. Fontaine, SC 133 (Paris, 1967) [Henceforth *V.Mart*]; Translation taken from *Life of Martin of Tours by Sulpicius Severus*, trans. C. White in her *Early Christian Lives*, pp. 131-159 [Henceforth *Life of Martin*]; *Vita Sancti Ambrosii*, ed. and trans. M. S. Kaniecka (Washington, D. C., 1928) [Henceforth *V.Ambr*]; Translation taken from the more recent Paulinus of Milan, *The Life of Saint Ambrose*, trans. B. Ramsey in his *Ambrose* (London, 1997), pp. 195-218 [Henceforth *Life of St. Ambrose*]; *Vita Sancti Aurelii Augustini*, ed. J. P. Migne, PL 32 (Paris, 1841), cols. 33-66 [Henceforth *V.Aug*]; Possidius, *The Life of Saint Augustine*, trans. F. R. Hoare, in T. F. X. Noble and T. Head (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995), pp. 31-73 [Henceforth *Life of Augustine*]; Constance de Lyon, *Vie De Saint Germain D'Auxerre*, ed. and trans. R. Borius, SC 112 (Paris, 1965) [Henceforth *V.Ger*]; Translation taken from *The Life of Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, trans. F. R. Hoare, in Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, pp. 75-106 [Henceforth *Life of St. Germanus*]; Grégoire le Grand, *Dialogues*, ed. A. de Vogüé and trans. P. Antin, SC 251, 260 and 265 (Paris, 1978-1980); Translation taken from Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, trans. O. J. Zimmerman (Washington D.C., 1959) [Henceforth Zimmerman].

⁶⁸ F. Tinti, 'Personal Names in the Composition and Transmission of Bede's *Prose Vita S. Cuthberti*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 40 (2011), pp. 15-42.

argue that names in texts represent real people with whom the author is highly likely to have spoken to, or at the very least were kept within living memory by the community to which a particular narrative belongs. Where such witnesses are known to have died or are otherwise unknown, the use of their names to attest miracles disappear. The writing of history and hagiography is thus shown to be very much a live process, one where texts are shaped and crafted by the evidence available to their author. Authorial intention highly impacted how miracles were used in such texts; hagiography as a genre is not as monolithic as the impression that often comes across in the literature. Chapter Four provides the basis of this comparison by examining a range of Bede's texts, showing how genre dictated his use of providing named or anonymous sources. In some instances he held himself to higher standards than others, revealing him as an author clearly conscious that varying forms of literature came with varying degrees of audience expectation. Chapter Five then compares Bede's practice to the miracles in three texts written about saints known within the lifetime of their author: The *Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo*,⁶⁹ Stephen's *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi*,⁷⁰ and the anonymous *Vita Ceolfredi*.⁷¹ I demonstrate that the miracles they contain are relatively well-attested where eyewitness attestation is available and desired. The fact that the *VCA*, *VW* and *VCB* share a complicated relationship provides fruitful insight into Bede's motives for writing a second prose life of Cuthbert, a question which has provided several complementary studies in the literature.⁷² This thesis adds the angle of miracles to this ongoing discussion. Likewise, the

⁶⁹ *Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert*, in B. Colgrave, (ed. and trans.), *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 59-139. [Henceforth *VCA*].

⁷⁰ *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, trans. and ed., B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927). [Henceforth *VW*].

⁷¹ *Vita Ceolfredi*, in C. Grocock and I. N. Wood, (eds. and trans.), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 77-121. [Henceforth *V.Ceol*].

⁷² D. P. Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus, and the *Life of Wilfrid*', *English Historical Review*, 98, no. 386 (Jan., 1983), pp. 101-114; W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), pp. 235-328; W. Berschin, 'Opus Deliberatum ac Perfectum: Why did the Venerable Bede write a Second Prose Life of St Cuthbert?', in G. Bonner, C. Stancliffe and D. Rollason (eds.), *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to A.D. 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 95-102; A. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Cuthbert', *Ibid.*, pp. 103-122; D. P. Kirby, 'The Genesis of a Cult: Cuthbert of Farne and Ecclesiastical Politics in Northumbria in the Late Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 46 (1995), pp. 383-397; A.

V. Ceol contains only a single miracle, but provides evidence of the shared tradition of Latin education available at Wearmouth-Jarrow, particularly in light of Bede's *Historia Abbatum* which contains very similar subject material.⁷³ In Chapter Six, the work from Chapter Five is then contrasted with two additional texts written about the same time whose subjects died over a century before their *vitae* were composed: Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*,⁷⁴ and the *Vita Gregorii*, likely composed at Whitby.⁷⁵ Here, confirming my hypothesis, the practice of naming sources for miracle stories is severely reduced. The differences between hagiographies of contemporary saints and those of distant generations therefore reveal the varying contexts in which early insular authors utilised miracle stories and the extent to which they attempted to show they were trustworthy.

The final Part of my thesis examines Bede's use of the miraculous from the perspective of his programme of reform. The foundation of this perspective in Bedan studies was first examined by Alan Thacker and has subsequently been expanded by Scott DeGregorio in particular. In 1983, Thacker suggested that Bede's 'later works were permeated with a vision of reform in church and society which was to leave its mark on more than his own generation'.⁷⁶ Essentially, this perspective argues that much of what Bede wrote was intentionally aimed at the moral and spiritual improvement of his kingdom. Such sentiments are most apparent in Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*,⁷⁷ written November 734, less than a year before his death in May 735. Here, Bede states his case for greater collaboration between church and state, particularly as

Thacker, 'Wilfrid, his Cult and his Biographer', in N. J. Higham (ed.), *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint: Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences* (Donington, 2013), pp. 1-16.

⁷³ Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, in C. Grocock and I. N. Wood, (eds. and trans.), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 21-75. [Henceforth *HA*]. The *HA* is an interesting text in that it defies easy categorisation. Bede calls it '*Historiam abbatum*' in *HE* V.24, but the text describes itself as *vita* literature. Wood and Grocock use both *History* and *Lives* interchangeably.

⁷⁴ Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, eds. and trans. A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson (Oxford, 1991). [Henceforth *VC*].

⁷⁵ *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Lawrence, KN, 1968). [Henceforth *VG*].

⁷⁶ A. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford, 1983), p. 130.

⁷⁷ Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*, in C. Grocock and I. N. Wood, (eds. and trans.), *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 123-161.

Bishop Ecgberht's cousin was Ceolwulf, King of Northumbria (d. 764). Yet whilst this letter is the clearest example of such ideals, much of Bede's exegetical and historical work has also been demonstrated to be concerned with reform too. DeGregorio has published five articles dealing with the subject.⁷⁸ The first three articles were written in preparation of publishing a translation and commentary of Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and as such contain many references to this particular text. Through such articles, the concept of Bede's agenda of reform has been widely accepted within the academic community;⁷⁹ one cannot speak of what Bede was doing without some acknowledgement that at its heart he was concerned about the present state of his Church and therefore sought its reform throughout his writings.

Chapter Seven expands such work, taking a case study from Bede's *HE* IV.27-V.6 to explore how Bede utilised the miracle stories of Cuthbert and John of Beverley to further this aim of reform, particularly in the promotion of his ideal bishop and by extension increasing the number of bishops across Anglo-Saxon England. This thesis concludes by suggesting that Bede did not blindly follow his predecessors when it came to the miraculous, but critically engaged with their thoughts and methodology in his own work. Nevertheless he was unafraid to diverge from the opinions of the past wherever it suited his purposes. His presentation of the miraculous when compared to his close contemporaries shows the uniqueness of Bede's work for his period, and reveals a careful scholar conscious of the spiritual needs of his own time whilst simultaneously working alongside the received wisdom of the past.

⁷⁸ S. DeGregorio, "'Nostrorum socordiam temporum': the Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis", *Early Medieval Europe*, 11, no. 2 (Aug., 2002), pp. 107-122; 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79, no. 1 (Jan., 2004), pp. 1-25; 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam*: A Document in Church Reform?', in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (eds.), *Bède le Vénérable: Entre Tradition et Postérité* (Lille, 2005), pp. 97-107; 'Monasticism and Reform in Book IV of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61, no.4 (Oct., 2010), pp. 673-687; 'Visions of Reform: Bede's Later Writings in Context', in P. Darby and F. Wallis (eds.), *Bede and the Future* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 207-232.

⁷⁹ See, for example, the essays by Thacker, Grocock and Hilliard in *Bede and the Future*.

Note on editions and translations

Most of Bede's work has now appeared in critical Latin editions in the *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, with a further six texts currently in preparation within that series.⁸⁰ The nature of the available critical editions are, however, variable, though some of the noted deficiencies in the printed versions are mitigated to a degree by the online search apparatus provided by the Library of Latin Texts which greatly assists cross-referencing to trace any omitted borrowings by Bede. In addition, many of Bede's works have also been translated into English, this work beginning in earnest from the mid-eighties onwards. Primarily, these works have appeared in the *Liverpool Translated Texts for Historians* series, *Oxford Medieval Texts*, or the *Cistercian Studies* series, though there are a few exceptions.⁸¹ Like the critical Latin editions, the translations are also of varying quality, with some containing extensive commentaries and background information, footnotes and indicators for the sources Bede used, whereas others simply present the translated text itself, with little or no critical commentary provided. In addition, there are some notable works by Bede that remain untranslated, namely, his commentaries on 1 Samuel,⁸² the Proverbs of Solomon, and his commentaries on Mark and Luke's Gospels. Nevertheless, the current translations have made Bede's work more accessible and available to a new generation of scholars, leading to fresh and fruitful insights in Bedan studies.

Bede's corpus was mainly composed in Latin, though in his final days he composed a short poem on death and judgement in Old English, and was in the process of translating the Gospel of John into the vernacular.⁸³ Throughout this thesis, the reader is given translations in English with reference to the respective critical editions in Latin provided at the bottom of the page. The Latin citations of the Bible are taken from Jerome's Vulgate which Bede would have been familiar with, although there are the occasional moments where he follows the *Vetus Latina* as his guide. Unless it diverges from the Latin text significantly, all English quotes from the Bible are taken from the English Standard

⁸⁰ Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 'In Preparation',

http://www.corpuschristianorum.org/series/ccsl_preparation.html [accessed 14 November 2016].

⁸¹ See the Bibliography for full details.

⁸² A translation is in preparation by Scott DeGregorio and Rosalind Love.

⁸³ 'Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede', in B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, (eds. and trans.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 582-583.

Version. Every effort has been taken to render accurately Bede's literary intentions and meaning, therefore any such faults of interpretation that remain are entirely my own.

Chapter One

Bede's Predecessors: Miracles, History and Truth

Opinions on Bede's originality (or otherwise) have swung in recent years towards seeing him as a true innovator, one unafraid to carve out 'footsteps of his own'.⁸⁴ This is no less true when it comes to discussing his approach towards miracles, history and truth. However, whilst I concur with Roger Ray and others regarding Bede's high view of his own work (particularly his later work),⁸⁵ it must always be noted that Bede's corpus did not appear in a vacuum; there is a long tradition of patristic and occasionally classical tropes that Bede consciously followed. The purpose of this chapter is to explore exactly where some of those debts with regards to miracles lie. I will begin with arguably the greatest patristic influence on Bede, Pope Gregory the Great (c.540-604). For McCready, Gregory's work was the prime influence on Bede's thoughts regarding miracles, particularly as found in his *Dialogi*. However, much more has been written regarding Bede and Pope Gregory in the period following the publication of *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*. I will therefore briefly explore some of the more recent scholarship published in the two decades since 1994 to further investigate the relationship between Bede and the man he dubbed 'our apostle' and 'the most vigilant apostle of our people', for Gregory had been instrumental in sending a mission in 597 to convert the Anglo-Saxons.⁸⁶ In particular, Dal Santo's thesis in *Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great* provides a strong theoretical framework through which to explore not only Bede's relationship to Gregory's work but also how he sought to provide an accurate and truthful account of the miracles of the saints.⁸⁷ In its essence, Dal Santo argued cogently that Gregory was participating in a pan-Mediterranean discussion and *apologia* of the role of saints,

⁸⁴ To quote S. DeGregorio, 'Footsteps of his Own: Bede's Commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah', in his *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006), pp. 143-168. This is a sentiment expressed throughout the essays collected in that work.

⁸⁵ R. Ray, 'Who did Bede think he was?', in *Ibid.*, pp. 11-35.

⁸⁶ '*nostrum... apostolum*', *HE* II.1, pp. 122-123; '*vigilantissimus... nostrae gentis apostolus*', in *Lucam*, Prologus, p. 7, ll. 99-100. On the mission to the Anglo-Saxons in the wider context of other missions sent by Gregory, see C. Ricci, 'Gregory's Missions to the Barbarians', in B. Neil and M. Dal Santo (eds.), *A Companion to Gregory the Great* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 47-55.

⁸⁷ See fn. 64, above.

particularly their post-mortem miracles and veneration, and that the issues he addresses in his *Dialogi* displays an audience more sceptical than previous generations of scholars have thought. I will explore whether such a reading is applicable to Bede, arguing that although his context was chronologically and geographically distinct, Bede took from Gregory a strong desire to accurately attest the past. When it came to composing his own work therefore, Bede looked back to earlier precedents to develop a greater understanding of how to write about his own people and times. In particular, I will explore the work of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) as foundational to Bede's understanding of both truth and history. The relationship between Bede and Augustine has been somewhat overlooked until recently,⁸⁸ so this chapter will provide a fresh contribution to their shared understanding of history and how Bede sought to apply that in his historical and hagiographical work.

It is the aim of this chapter and the next to establish some of the intellectual background that will undergird the rest of this thesis; by understanding Bede's relationship to his intellectual predecessors, we will more fully appreciate what he is attempting to achieve in his own work. The following chapter will subsequently expand upon the themes of miracles, history and truth from this current one by exploring a more practical rather than simply theoretical exemplar for Bede's historical understanding, that of Eusebius of Caesarea (c.260-339) and his own *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁸⁹ It will also offer an interpretation of Bede's much discussed '*Vera Lex Historiae*',⁹⁰ Bede's self-understanding of the role of a historian, and how that applies to miracles in particular.

Bede and Gregory

Gregory was born c.540 in Rome to wealthy parents before living as a monk between 575 and 579, and again from 586 until he was elected to the papal see in 590, serving until his death in 604.⁹¹ Over the course of his lifetime he wrote several important exegetical works

⁸⁸ See in particular Thacker, *Bede and Augustine*.

⁸⁹ A translation of the original Greek edition, as opposed to Rufinus' Latin translation used by Bede, can be found in Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, trans. G. A. Williamson and ed. A. Louth (London, 1989).

⁹⁰ 'A true law of history', *HE* Preface, pp. 6-7. However, the phrase could be translated using the definite article, '*the* true law of history', though even this interpretation is not without loaded consequences. See the discussion in Chapter Two, below.

⁹¹ The standard biographies can be found in R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997) and J. Richards, *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London, 1980). More

such as the *Moralia in Job* and *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam Prophetam*, as well as his *Dialogi*, which play a key role in the forthcoming discussion of miracles. His figure looms large amongst Bede's writings. Paul Meyvaert, in what can be considered the foundational study of the relationship between Bede and Gregory, writes that 'the more intimately we become acquainted with the works of both writers, and through their works with their personalities and characters, the more we seem to perceive a certain "family" resemblance'.⁹² For example, Bede frequently cited Gregory as an authority when commenting upon Scripture.⁹³ Gregory is named and his works are quoted (in no particular order) in Bede's *In Tobiam*, *In Cantica Canticorum*, *In Principium Genesis*, *De Tabernaculo*, *De Templo*, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, *De Eo Quod Ait Isaias*, *In Primam Partem Samuhelis*, *In Proverbia Salomonis*, *De Octo Quaestionibus*, *In Marcum*, *In Lucam*, *Homiliae Evangelii*, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* (and his *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum*), *In Epistolas VII Catholicas* and *Explanatio Apocalypseos*. *In Regum Librum XXX Quaestiones* appears to be without a direct quote from Gregory, but even there the editors detect allusions to Gregorian writings.⁹⁴ In sum, nearly all of Bede's extant biblical writings rely on Gregory to some degree, showing how Bede took on board the pope's ideas (if not his very words) into his own work. Furthermore, as mentioned at the introduction to the chapter, Bede saw Gregory as the prime motivator for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, likening Gregory's mission to the Temple of Solomon,⁹⁵ which played a key role in Bede's understanding of the Church.⁹⁶ The Gregorian mission to Britain led by Augustine plays a prominent part in Bede's *HE*, occupying roughly half of Book One and

recently, see the contributions in B. Neil and M. Dal Santo (eds.), *A Companion to Gregory the Great* (Leiden, 2013).

⁹² P. Meyvaert, 'Bede and Gregory the Great', in M. Lapidge (ed.), *Bede and his World, Vol. 1: The Jarrow Lectures, 1958-1978* (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 124-125.

⁹³ A. Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory the Great: The Origin and Transmission of a Papal Cult in the Seventh and Early Eighth Century', *Early Medieval Europe*, 7 (1998), p. 80.

⁹⁴ See W. T. Foley and A. Holder (eds. and trans.), *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999), pp. 94 and 111. The same is likely true with Bede's *Canticle on Habakkuk*, where the translator detected no Gregorian allusions either. See S. Connolly (ed. and trans.), *Bede: On Tobit and On the Canticle of Habakkuk* (Dublin, 1997).

⁹⁵ Bede, *De Templo*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout, 1969), II.20.7, p. 218, ll. 1041-1048.

⁹⁶ Cf. O'Brien, *Bede's Temple*.

the start of Book Two. In fact, the arrival of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England is difficult to discuss without recourse to Bede's overarching narrative.⁹⁷ In addition, Bede considered Gregory an instructor of good morals,⁹⁸ and an explicator of the end times, a topic which greatly interested Bede.⁹⁹ In total, he is mentioned nearly 100 times by name in Bede's writings according to the Library of Latin Texts, compared to approximately 80 times for Augustine, 80 for Jerome and 40 for Ambrose, clearly showing the prominence Gregory had in Bede's thought.¹⁰⁰ Through reading the short entry on Gregory in the *Liber Pontificalis*,¹⁰¹ Bede would also have been reminded that the same man who sent missionaries 'to preach to the English nation and convert them' was also the man responsible for composing '4 books of *Dialogues*'.¹⁰² As mentioned, the *Dialogi*, written

⁹⁷ The scholarship on the Gregorian mission to Anglo-Saxon England is vast. In the past 25 years, see N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester, 1991); Idem., *Bede and the English* (Jarrow Lecture, 1999); H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 3rd ed., 1991); R. Meens, 'A Background to Augustine's Mission to Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 22 (1994), pp. 5-17; I. N. Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English', *Speculum*, 69 (1994), pp. 1-17; R. Gameson (ed.), *St Augustine and the Conversion of England* (Stroud, 1999); B. Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain: Religion, Politics and Society, 600-800* (Harlow, 2006); Ricci, 'Gregory's Missions to the Barbarians'; R. Shaw, 'When did Augustine of Canterbury Die?', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 67, no. 3 (Jul., 2016), pp. 473-491.

⁹⁸ Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout, 1969), II.3, after Gregory's large commentary, the *Moralia in Job*, and *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, III, where Bede recommends the reading of both Gregory's *Omeliis Evangelii* and *Regulae Pastoralis* as directives for holy living.

⁹⁹ See his comments, for example, in *De Eo Quod Ait Isaias*, ed. J. P. Migne, PL 94 (Paris, 1862), Col. 707, l. 2, and *Expositio Apocalypseos*, ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A (Turnhout, 2001), I.5, I.6 and II.25. For a full discussion, see Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, Ch. Six.

¹⁰⁰ *Library of Latin Texts – Series A*, <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/Search.aspx> [accessed 7 September 16]. These figures exclude, of course, references to the fourth century Archbishop of Constantinople Gregory Nazianzus, and the eighth century Pope Gregory II. The figures for Augustine of Hippo exclude any references Bede makes to Augustine of Canterbury – nearly 70 in the *HE* alone. However, as Laistner suggests, names by themselves do not account for the full usage of these authors by Bede, as he often cites them without naming them: M. L. W. Laistner, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede', in A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *Bede: His Life, Times, and Writings* (Oxford, 1935), p. 240.

¹⁰¹ He refers to it frequently in *De Temporum Ratione* (particularly LXVI), the *HE*, and his *Martyrologium*.

¹⁰² 'exposuit... dialogorum libros iiii', *Gestorum Pontificum Romanorum, Pars I: Liber Pontificalis*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH (Berlin, 1898), p. 161; *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)*, trans. R. Davis (Liverpool, 1989), p. 61.

between July 593 and November 594, are a collection of four books narrating the miracles of sixth-century Italian saints,¹⁰³ told in the format of conversation and questions between Gregory and one of his deacons, Peter. The second Book, focussed on Benedict of Nursia (c.480-543x547) is particularly influential in its portrayal of monasticism (Gregory was, after all, a monk-turned-pope), whilst the fourth Book is a ‘more carefully argued exposition’ and a ‘clear development’, which formed part of the basis for later medieval thought on the post-mortem state of the soul as well as teachings regarding hell and purgatory.¹⁰⁴ Bede names the *Dialogi* and attributes them to Gregory in both the *HE* and *DTR*.¹⁰⁵ He also alludes to the Life of Benedict, Book Two of the *Dialogi*, in the *VCB*,¹⁰⁶ and adopts Gregory’s language describing Benedict when discussing his monastery’s own founder, Benedict Biscop, in the *HA*.¹⁰⁷ It is clear that Bede understood the *Dialogi* to be firmly part of Gregory’s body of writings, contrary to the suggestions of Francis Clark who, in a series of works, has argued that the text was a pastiche of genuine Gregorian writings combined with mid-seventh century forgeries regarding miracles that are unbecoming of Gregory.¹⁰⁸ This hypothesis, however, has been widely rejected by the

¹⁰³ R. Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Woodstock, 2013), p. 549 highlights the *Dialogi* for its singular geographical focus.

¹⁰⁴ S. Lake, ‘Hagiography and the Cult of Saints’, in B. Neil and M. Dal Santo (eds.), *A Companion to Gregory the Great* (Leiden, 2013), p. 228.

¹⁰⁵ ‘*Libros etiam Dialogorum III fecit*’, *HE* II.1; ‘...*quas beatus papa gregorius in libro dialogorum scripsit*’, *DTR* LXVI, s. a. 4480.

¹⁰⁶ *VCB* XIX.

¹⁰⁷ *HA* I, p. 22.

¹⁰⁸ F. Clark, ‘The Authenticity of the Gregorian Dialogues: A Re-opening of the Question’, in J. Fontaine, R. Gillet and S. Pellistrandi (eds.), *Grégoire le Grand: Acts du Colloque de Chantilly, 15-19 Septembre, 1982* (Paris, 1986), pp. 429-443; *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues* (Leiden, 1987); ‘The Authorship of the Gregorian Dialogues: An Old Controversy Renewed’, *Heythrop Journal*, 30 (1989), pp. 257-272; ‘St. Gregory and the Enigma of the Dialogues: A Response to Paul Meyvaert’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 40 (1989), pp. 323-343; ‘The Renewed Debate on the Authenticity of the Gregorian Dialogues’, *Augustinianum*, 30 (1990), pp. 75-105; ‘The Renewed Controversy about the Authorship of the Dialogues’, in *Gregorio Magno e il Suo Tempo*, 2 (Rome, 1991), pp. 5-25; *The ‘Gregorian’ Dialogues and the Origins of Benedictine Monasticism* (Leiden, 2003).

academic community.¹⁰⁹ One of the most recent assessments comments that ‘doubts about Gregory’s authorship do not seem to be well grounded’.¹¹⁰

A similar line of reasoning, in accordance with some early-mid twentieth century scholarship,¹¹¹ was a tendency to see the miracles within the *Dialogi* as allegory or metaphor in an attempt to somehow save Gregory from charges of credulity and/or superstition.¹¹² However, this is clearly not the way Gregory intended them to be read,¹¹³ and more importantly not the way in which Bede read them either.¹¹⁴ For Bede, there was no ontological disjoint between the miracles recorded by Gregory regarding sixth-century Italy and those miracle stories he knew from Anglo-Saxon England in his own era. This meant that Gregory’s text was worthy of Bede’s attention. The influence of the *Dialogi* with regards to miracles was (at least) twofold. First, at a practical level it provided Bede with both an exemplar and a method by which he could express his own miracle stories when relating the deeds of Anglo-Saxon saints. The language and imagery of the *Dialogi* showed Bede what Gregory thought was appropriate subject material when composing a work of hagiography. Indeed, some miraculous episodes in Bede’s work echo Gregory in

¹⁰⁹ For example, P. Meyvaert, ‘The Enigma of Gregory the Great’s Dialogues: A Response to Francis Clark’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 39, no. 3 (Jul., 1988), pp. 335-381; R. Godding, ‘Les Dialogues de Grégoire le Grand: à propos d'un Livre Récent’, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 106 (1988), pp. 201-229; A. de Vogüé, ‘Grégoire le Grand et ses Dialogues d'après Deux Ouvrages Récents’, *Revue D'histoire Ecclésiastique*, 83 (1988), pp. 281-348; Idem., ‘Les Dialogues: Oeuvre Authentique et Publiée par Grégoire Lui-même’, *Gregorio Magno e il Suo Tempo*, 2 (Rome 1991), pp. 27-40; McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. x-xiii; M. Dal Santo, ‘The Shadow of a Doubt?: A Note on the *Dialogues* and *Registrum Epistolarum* of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604)’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61 (2010), pp. 3-17; Lake, ‘Hagiography and the Cult of Saints’, pp. 225-226. That the *Dialogues* are genuinely Gregorian is also accepted in Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World*, *passim*.

¹¹⁰ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 45, fn. 89.

¹¹¹ Cf. Colgrave, ‘Bede’s Miracle Stories’, and Loomis, ‘The Miracle Traditions of the Venerable Bede’, discussed in the Introduction, above.

¹¹² For example, W. F. Bolton, ‘The Supra-historical sense in the Dialogues of Gregory 1’, *Aevum*, 33 (1959), pp. 206-213.

¹¹³ See the comments from *Dialogi* I.1 quoted below which suggest that Gregory intended these stories to be understood as real historical events. Cf. McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, *Passim*.

¹¹⁴ Idem., *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 45.

their detail with only the names and places differing;¹¹⁵ historic precedent was important to Bede. His imitation of Gregory (and beyond him, the Bible itself) showed his audience that God was not doing anything novel in eighth-century Northumbria; they should not be surprised by reports of saints in their own time if they had heard similar stories of saints in earlier hagiographical or historical works and the Bible. Second, and perhaps more importantly, at an intellectual level it suggested to Bede the appropriate rigour with which he would have to convince his audience through the detailed use of witnesses to the miracle stories within his own work. In the Prologue to the work, Gregory begins by telling Peter that their following discussion will be based upon ‘either [his] own observations or from the reports of good, reliable witnesses’.¹¹⁶ He then expands upon his use of sources:

I shall not hesitate to narrate what I have learned from worthy men. In this I am only following the consecrated practice of the Scriptures, where it is perfectly clear that Mark and Luke composed their Gospels, not as eyewitnesses, but on the word of others. Nevertheless, to remove any grounds for doubt on behalf of my readers, I am going to indicate on whose authority each account is based.¹¹⁷

As McCready suggests, ‘the point of such statements was to enhance credibility’;¹¹⁸ in other words, the naming of sources showed the audience that the miracle account was no mere hearsay but had been witnessed by people (usually men) of good repute, and by extension could therefore be trusted as a true narrative of God’s interaction with his creation. Such a line of reasoning was certainly true of Bede when he made similar comments in the Preface to both the *HE* and *VCB* and throughout those texts.¹¹⁹ Whilst

¹¹⁵ For example, *HE* IV.22 and *Dialogi* IV.59 with miracles concerning the loosening of chains following the prayers of an intercessor.

¹¹⁶ ‘ego homuncio uel bonis ac fidelibus uiris adtestantibus’, *Dialogues*, Vol. 2, I.Prologue.8, pp. 14-16, ll. 64-65; Zimmerman, Prologue, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ ‘Ea quae mihi sunt uirorum uenerabilium narratione conperta incunctanter narro sacrae auctoritatis exemplo, cum mihi luce clarius constet quia marcus et lucas euangelium quod scripserunt, non uisu sed auditu didicerunt. Sed ut dubitationis occasionem legentibus subtraham, per singula quae describo, quibus mihi haec auctoribus sint conperta manifesto’, *Ibid.*, I.Prologue.10, p. 16, ll. 80-86; *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 156.

¹¹⁹ Indeed, he adopts Gregory’s language here in the Preface of his *HE*. See p. 83, below.

relying upon the testimony of others, however, it is important to note that Gregory makes it clear that he occasionally edited the account as given by his source to produce a more elegant style. He states ‘You should bear in mind, however, that in some instances I retain only the substance of the original narrative; in others, the words as well. For if I had always kept the exact wording, the crude language used by some would have been ill suited to my style of writing’.¹²⁰ In this way, the finalised text becomes both a literary exercise in rhetoric as well as a literal account of past miracles. Gregory was happy to change the accounts of his sources if this could produce greater clarity or suited his didactic agendas. It is clear that Bede too followed suit in this regard.

The *Dialogi* were clearly important to Bede, particularly in how he chose to narrate miracle stories. As Wallace-Hadrill remarks, ‘the *Dialogues* were constantly in Bede’s mind, and for much more than verbal reminiscence’.¹²¹ McCready has carried out the fullest investigation of Bede’s use of the *Dialogi*, though as mentioned in the Introduction, despite McCready’s claims to the contrary, his findings appear highly influenced by his previous work on Gregory. For McCready, Bede sought to follow Gregory’s standards in the naming of witnesses for example, though his language suggests that Bede was somehow lacking at times in comparison.¹²² The *HE* in particular is distinctly Gregorian regarding its miracles, and Bede actively sought to mirror Gregory when discussing them.¹²³ Furthermore, Bede interpreted the miracles of the early Church in the same way as Gregory,¹²⁴ and they shared the same view of how miracles were connected to personal

¹²⁰ ‘Hoc vero scire te cupio quia in quibusdam sensum solummodo, in quibusdam vero et verba cum sensu teneo, quia si de personis omnibus ipsa specialiter et verba tenere voluissem, haec rusticano usu prolata stilus scribentis non apte susciperet’, *Dialogues*, Vol. 2, I.Prologue.10, pp. 16-18, ll. 87-91; Zimmerman, Prologue, p. 6.

¹²¹ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), p. 173.

¹²² On the *VCB* compared to the *Dialogi*: ‘This is a record that Bede does not come close to matching’. On the *HE* compared to the *Dialogi*: Bede ‘did not feel quite the same need as Gregory to marshal all the witnesses who could attest to the truth of his account’. In general: ‘not equalling Gregorian practice’. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 160, 166 and 232 respectively.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-179, and p. 193.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Ch. Three.

sanctity.¹²⁵ Recent historiography has questioned these views in some areas, whilst expanding upon them in others. For example, Alan Thacker traced the cult of Gregory within Anglo-Saxon England, suggesting that Archbishop Theodore (c.602-690) promulgated it in order to solidify his own position as archbishop over the English, not simply at Canterbury.¹²⁶ *HE* IV.1 makes clear that following the death of Deusdedit in 664, Theodore was to become ‘archbishop of the English Church’, and Bede states in *HE* IV.2 that ‘he was the first of the archbishops whom the whole English Church consented to obey’.¹²⁷ The cult of Gregory thus spread at a higher intellectual level among the clergy rather than a popular one, and as a result was disseminated mainly through written, liturgical means rather than promoted through Gregory’s corporeal remains.¹²⁸ First within this body of writings falls the *VG*,¹²⁹ as well as Bede’s own account of the pope found in *HE* II.1.¹³⁰ The fact that Gregory was commemorated in writing by two separate Northumbrian authors shows the influence the memory of this pope had over his Anglo-Saxon followers. It was clearly felt that he was someone worthy of remembrance, and in Bede’s case not simply for his deeds but more importantly for his written legacy.¹³¹ To Bede, Gregory was an *auctoritas* whose works deserved the fullest attention.¹³² However, Roger Ray, in what could be described as the quintessential article on the ‘New Bede’ paradigm, suggested that ‘further study of Bede’s relationship to the Fathers will show that he was less a follower than a colleague’.¹³³ In particular, Ray points out lacunae in the patristic exegetical library which Bede filled, such as his works on the Tabernacle, Temple

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Ch. Five.

¹²⁶ Thacker, ‘Memorializing Gregory the Great’, p. 77.

¹²⁷ ‘*ecclesiae Anglorum archiepiscopum*’, *HE* IV.1, pp. 328-329, and ‘*isque primus erat in archiepiscopos, cui omnis Anglorum ecclesia manus dare consentiret*’, *HE* IV.2, pp. 332-333.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-84.

¹²⁹ I discuss this text in much greater detail in Chapter Six.

¹³⁰ This is the fifth longest Chapter of the *HE*, showing how important Bede considered this account of Gregory’s life. Meyvaert, ‘Bede and Gregory the Great’, p. 108.

¹³¹ The Whitby author too appeals to Gregory’s written work in particular in order to justify their inclusion of miracle stories regarding the pope where eyewitness sources were otherwise unavailable. See Chapter Six for details.

¹³² Thacker, ‘Bede’s Ideal of Reform’, pp. 133-136.

¹³³ R. Ray, ‘Who did Bede think he was?’, p. 26.

and Ezra/Nehemiah. Whilst he would never have claimed the same authority or title of Church Father,¹³⁴ ‘it is clear that Bede wrote as if he thought he was working at the top of the field, among the other builders of Christian Latin culture, both in contents and style’.¹³⁵ More recently, DeGregorio sought to explore Meyvaert’s suggestion of a particular ‘spiritual affinity’ between the two,¹³⁶ asking how we should explain ‘the pervasive “Gregorianism”’ of Bede’s work.¹³⁷ He argued that context is key.¹³⁸ Unlike Augustine and Jerome, who were writing in a declining Roman setting still competing with pagan philosophy,¹³⁹ Gregory’s immediate culture was far more Christian. Gregory’s work was thus addressing a situation that Bede felt was more akin to his own. I return to the issue of context below. Nevertheless, DeGregorio detected that Bede’s exegesis was often more practical than Gregory’s; Bede preferred a moral interpretation of scripture to a mystical one, and promoted the active life more than the contemplative.¹⁴⁰ It is subtle nuances such as these that allows modern Bedan scholars to move beyond the earlier view of seeing Bede as merely following the works of his predecessors, important and inspirational though they were, towards a more rounded perspective where the dialogue between Bede and his patristic sources is not simply one-directional.

Debating the Saints’ Cult in the Age of Bede: A Study in Doubt

Dal Santo’s 2012 publication *Debating the Saints’ Cult* has provided a further, fresh way to interpret and assess the impact of Gregory’s *Dialogi*. He argued that ‘Gregory’s text was not merely intended to add to the saints’ cult, but to reflect discursively upon it and on its

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

¹³⁶ Meyvaert, ‘Bede and Gregory the Great’, p. 125.

¹³⁷ S. DeGregorio, ‘The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: Exegetical Connections, Spiritual Departures’, *Early Medieval Europe*, 18, no. 1 (Feb., 2010), p. 53.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

¹³⁹ For their context, see in particular P. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000* (Oxford, 2nd ed., 2003), Part 1: Empire and Aftermath, A.D. 200-500.

¹⁴⁰ DeGregorio, ‘The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great’, p. 60, contrary to Thacker, ‘Bede’s Ideal of Reform’, p. 132 who states ‘Bede undoubtedly believed that the contemplative life was superior to the active’.

ramifications for corollary aspects of Christian belief and practice',¹⁴¹ in particular the post-mortem state of the soul and the mechanisms through which a saint performs miracles. Lake concurs, showing how Gregory neglected more well-known Italian saints in this text and does not appear to promote the cult of saints in general. Instead, Gregory used the *Dialogi* to 'illustrate the highest form of the Christian life, and because through such stories [Gregory] is able to instruct his audience in the pursuit of virtue and, ultimately, preparation for death'.¹⁴² Dal Santo suggests that there are strong correlations between the questions asked by Gregory's interlocutor Peter the Deacon and the issues addressed by a close contemporary, and possible acquaintance,¹⁴³ Eustratius of Constantinople, in his text *De Statu Animarum Post Mortem*.¹⁴⁴ What his investigation reveals is that, across the Mediterranean,¹⁴⁵ there was a greater level of scepticism towards the place of the saints in the late sixth century than previous scholars had suggested.¹⁴⁶ The voice of Peter the Deacon, as well as being a semi-rhetorical device used by Gregory to expound the virtues of the saints, also reflects real concerns and questions at the Holy See at a much more foundational level.¹⁴⁷ The issue remains, however, how much Bede picked up from this discussion. To what extent did Bede's hagiographical and historical writings seek to

¹⁴¹ Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult*, p. 11.

¹⁴² Lake, 'Hagiography and the Cult of Saints', pp. 242-245, quote at p. 245.

¹⁴³ Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult*, p. 32, though as Dal Santo points out, their knowledge of each other is not strictly necessary for the argument.

¹⁴⁴ Eustratius of Constantinople, *De Statu Animarum Post Mortem*, ed. P. van Deun, CCSG 60 (Turnhout, 2006).

¹⁴⁵ He dedicates the entirety of Chapter Three to investigate the scope of this issue, examining five Eastern *Vitae* in particular, with comments on a further four, for the period c.575-625.

¹⁴⁶ Dal Santo defines scepticism as 'the inclination to question truth or soundness of given reports of saintly activity, especially miracles, on the grounds of their improbability for whatever reason', *Debating the Saints' Cult*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ The possible identity of Peter can be traced to one of two Peters serving under Gregory at that time. Ibid., p. 27. Furthermore, Gregory writes that Peter had been 'a very dear friend [to him] from his early youth and was [his] companion in the study of sacred Scripture', (*mihi a prima aetate iuventutis flore in amicitia familiariter obstrictus atque ad sacri uerbi indagationem socius*), suggesting a real, personal acquaintance: *Dialogues*, Vol. 2, I.Prologue.2, p. 10, ll. 9-11; Zimmerman, Prologue, p. 3. However, the scriptural significance of the name Peter, as well as the geographical connection between Rome and the Apostle, cannot be over-stated.

assuage the fears of a sceptical Anglo-Saxon audience? Or was his audience more accepting of the miraculous deeds of the saints?

Stephen Justice suggests that if miracle narratives were merely considered by medieval audiences as allegorical tales rather than historical events there would have been no reason to doubt them, for the moral truth contained therein is what matters most.¹⁴⁸ As such, it is implied that medieval authors were making claims regarding the nature of reality that led some to question these accounts. Doubt certainly plays an important part within Bede's worldview. '*Dubitare*' and its cognates, meaning 'doubt' or 'hesitation', occur some 214 times across his corpus.¹⁴⁹ Amongst his exegesis, Bede uses phrases such as 'it should not be doubted that...' or 'it is not to be doubted that...' for at least two reasons: to explain an unexpected or unusual aspect of the biblical text, and as a moral reminder or exhortation. For an example of the former, in his *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, regarding the conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household, Bede writes 'lest there might be any doubt about conferring baptism upon the Gentiles, support was given by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, who in an unexpected series of events acted in advance of the waters of the baptismal bath which are ordinarily the means of sanctification'.¹⁵⁰ As an example of the latter, in his commentary *De Tabernaculo*, regarding Moses' ascension of Mt. Sinai, Bede writes: 'Nor should we have any doubt that if we continue steadfastly in what we have begun, our weakness and lowness will be strengthened and raised up by the mountain of fortitude, and empowered against the attacks of every enemy'.¹⁵¹ Here, Bede urges his audience not to doubt the spiritual benefits of perseverance, utilising a metaphorical interpretation of the biblical mountain. Such a statement here and elsewhere essentially become encouragements for all believers not to doubt the tenets of their faith

¹⁴⁸ S. Justice, 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in their Miracles?', *Representations*, 103, no. 1 (Summer, 2008), p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ *Library of Latin Texts – Series A*, <http://clt.brepolis.net/llta/pages/Search.aspx> [accessed 10 December 2016]. The search term used with 'Beda Venerabilis' selected as author was 'dubit*'.

¹⁵⁰ '*Ne baptismata gentibus tradere dubitetur, spiritus sancti testimonio confirmatur, ipsas lauacri aquas quas sanctificare solet nouo ordine praecurrentis*', Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, X.44, p. 55, ll. 185-187; Bede, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. L. T. Martin (Trappist, KN, 1989), p. 103.

¹⁵¹ '*nec dubitandum quia, si in coeptis persistimus, per montem fortitudinis infirmitas atque humilitas nostra confirmata exaltetur et cunctis hostium temptamentis fortior efficiatur*', Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, I, p. 7, ll. 96-99; Bede, *On the Tabernacle*, trans. A. G. Holder (Liverpool, 1994), p. 4.

but to continue to trust and follow Christian doctrine. The call to continue believing was particularly acute in Bede's thought; he was frequently conscious of the threat of both heresy and apostasy.¹⁵² For Bede, heresy broadly defined posed a continuing threat to all generations of Christians, and was an issue of particular concern towards the end of his life as evidenced by certain passages in his *In Ezram*, the *HE* and his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*.¹⁵³ The frequent reminders in his exegesis not to doubt the orthodox truths of Christianity were therefore but one tool by which Bede sought to ensure that his audience remained faithful and catholic, standing firm against the false teaching and sins of heretics.

Furthermore, these phrases are sometimes connected to an appeal to authority: after stating 'it is not to be doubted that...', Bede will confirm his teaching with a quote from one of the Fathers. Bede is often explicit when quoting from earlier authors,¹⁵⁴ but on occasion leaves a quotation unreferenced, which subsequent critical editions and translations have recovered to varying degrees.¹⁵⁵ For example, in his *In Principium Genesis*, Bede uses Jerome's *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos* nearly 50 times to explain the meaning of biblical names and Hebrew culture,¹⁵⁶ but only mentions Jerome by name when quoting that work in two extended pieces of commentary.¹⁵⁷ Book IV, at the point where Bede comments on Genesis 17:19, is typical of such usage without attestation: '*Isaac means "laughter"*', and there is no doubt that he was called so from the fact that

¹⁵² See further A. Thacker, 'Why Did Heresy Matter to Bede? Present and Future Contexts', in P. Darby and F. Wallis (eds.), *Bede and the Future* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 47-66, and A. G. Holder, 'Hunting Snakes in the Grass: Bede as Heresiologist', in E. Mullins and D. Scully (eds.), *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly* (Cork, 2011), pp. 105-114.

¹⁵³ Thacker, 'Why Did Heresy Matter to Bede?', pp. 61-66.

¹⁵⁴ The most famous example being the system of source marginalia in his *In Lucam*. See *In Lucam*, Prologus, p.7, ll. 105-115. Cf. M. Gorman, 'Source Marks and Chapter Divisions in Bede's *Commentary on Luke*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 112 (2002), pp. 246-290.

¹⁵⁵ Those works in the Liverpool Translated Texts for Historians series tend to have a much greater index of sources, allusions and parallels than those in the Cistercian Studies series. This of course excludes currently untranslated titles: Bede's *Commentary on Proverbs*, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* and *Retractions on Acts*.

¹⁵⁶ Jerome, *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos*, ed. P. de Lagarde, CCSL 72 (Turnhout, 1959); Jerome, *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, trans. C. T. R. Hayward (Oxford, 1995).

¹⁵⁷ Bede, *Libri Quatuor In Principium Genesis*, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout, 1967), II, 6:3 and III, 10:26-29.

Abraham laughed in his heart when he heard of his birth'.¹⁵⁸ Abraham laughing 'in his heart' is an allusion back to Genesis 17:17; the italicised phrase is taken straight from Jerome. As I shall explain in subsequent chapters, this practice of sometimes naming his source and sometimes omitting it is prevalent not only in Bede's exegesis but also with the miracle stories he narrates in his historical and hagiographical texts. The appeal to a patristic authority reinforces Bede's own exegesis; if a predecessor has already explained the relevant passages in detail, Bede is often willing to paraphrase, edit or copy entire sections from their works. In this way, their thoughts become Bede's own; because Bede accepts them as authoritative their writings are deemed suitable for being incorporated into Bede's own commentary. Regarding miracle stories where Bede names his source(s), he has chosen to accept the authority of the witness to reinforce his own historical or hagiographical narrative. What is implicit where the source is left unstated, however, is that the information he relies upon had to have come from *somewhere*. As in the case of the Jerome quotes, absence of a stated source for miracle stories should not be taken to imply that Bede was either always fabricating stories wholesale or relying upon hearsay.

Amongst his historical and hagiographical writings, doubt plays a similar role. I explore Bede's comments explaining the role of his sources in the Preface to the *HE* in great detail in the following chapter, but he also writes of doubt in at least six further places in that text. In *HE* II.12, Bede writes that King Edwin (c.586-633) 'did not hesitate to promise that he would be suitably grateful to anyone who offered him such benefits'.¹⁵⁹ The hesitation/doubt here may not appear at first glance to have anything to do with spiritual encouragement, but the context makes it more apparent. According to this chapter, Edwin is in fact conversing with a spirit,¹⁶⁰ who makes clear the implication to the king: 'If the one who truly foretold all these great and wonderful benefits could also give you better and more useful counsel as to your salvation and your way of life... would you consent to

¹⁵⁸ 'Isaac interpretatur "risus", nec dubitandum est eum ita uocatum ab eo quod, audita eius natiuitate, Abraham riserit in corde suo', Bede, *In Principium Genesis*, pp. 207-208, ll. 493-495; Bede, *Commentary on Genesis*, trans. C. Kendall, (Liverpool, 2008), p. 286. Jerome, *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos*, XVII.17, p. 22, l. 7.

¹⁵⁹ 'non dubitauit promittere, quin ei, qui tanta sibi beneficia donaret, dignis ipse gratiarum actionibus responderet', pp. 178-179.

¹⁶⁰ Bede uses 'spiritum', *HE* II.12, p. 180. However, according to *VG* XVI, p. 100 the man was Paulinus himself.

obey him and to accept his saving advice?'.¹⁶¹ The lesson for Edwin, and Bede's contemporary audience, is clear: yes, Christianity can bring material benefit, but of greater importance is the salvation of one's soul and subsequent holy living. Like Edwin, Bede's audience should not doubt the import of their faith. Second, in *HE* III.13, an ailing Irish scholar says he does not 'doubt that after the death of [his] body, [his] soul will immediately be snatched to everlasting death to suffer the torments of hell'.¹⁶² Here the didactic reason is more apparent. The *scolasticus* is a voice of orthodox belief to Bede's audience: despite his deep knowledge of the scriptures, his indulging in vice will nevertheless damn his soul. It is tempting to speculate that Bede is directing such sentiments of orthodox soteriology here towards the pseudo-monasteries he had in mind in his later *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*; the 'very many extensive sites of this kind' that are 'described by the title monastery by a most foolish pen, but which have absolutely no trace of a monastic life'.¹⁶³ The Irishman explains that the only hope of salvation is God's grace and contrite repentance, something Bede's audience should not doubt. He also states a belief in the relics of King Oswald (r.634-642) to heal his illness, showing the reader not only the efficacy of relics in general, something Gregory too was keen to promote,¹⁶⁴ but also promoting the cult of Oswald in particular.¹⁶⁵ The third occurrence is similar. In *HE* III.23, a young boy is saved from a pestilence which kills many of his fellow monks. Bede states 'I do not doubt that he was delivered from the jaws of death by

¹⁶¹ 'Si autem, is, qui tibi tanta taliaque dona ueraciter aduentura praedixerit, etiam consilium tibi tuae salutis ac uitae melius atque utilius, ... ostendere potuerit, num ei obtemperare, et monita eius salutaria suscipere consentis?', *HE* II.12, pp. 178-179.

¹⁶² 'nec dubito me post mortem corporis statim ad perpetuam animae mortem rapiendum, ac infernalibus subdendum esse tormentis', *HE* III.13, pp. 252-253.

¹⁶³ 'huiusmodi maxima et plurima sunt loca', 'stilo stultissimo... in monasteriorum ascripta vocabulum, sed nichil prorsus monasticae conversationis habentia', Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, X and XI, pp. 142-143. See further DeGregorio, 'Monasticism and Reform', pp. 679-680.

¹⁶⁴ For example, the famous story of Gregory cutting a cloth and it subsequently bleeding, recorded in J. R. C. Martyn, (ed. and trans.), *The Letters of Gregory the Great, Vol. 1* (Toronto, ON, 2004), 4.30. Cf. J. M. McCulloh, 'The Cult of Relics in the Letters and "Dialogues" of Gregory the Great: A Lexicographical Study', *Traditio*, 32 (1976), pp. 145-184.

¹⁶⁵ On which, see in particular A. Thacker, 'Membra Disjecta: The Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult', in C. Stancliffe and E. Cambridge (eds.), *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford, 1995), pp. 97-127.

the intercession of his father Cedd to whose tomb he had come out of love for him'.¹⁶⁶ Again we see Bede promoting the idea of tomb-veneration and the post-mortem intercession of the saints; he clearly desires his audience to understand that the boy's healing is causally related to his devotion to the deceased bishop. In both these two incidents, Bede tells his readers not to doubt the efficacy of the saints' cult, implying that there were still some questions or hesitation regarding their post-mortem abilities in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria.

The fourth incident, from the Synod of Whitby in *HE* III.25, is slightly more complicated, but in context supports the extended argument Wilfrid makes in favour of the 'Roman' calculation of dating Easter.¹⁶⁷ Colman, of the 'Irish' party, appeals to Anatolius, fifth century Patriarch of Constantinople, and Columba, the founder of his monastery, to support their dating. He concludes by saying 'and as I have no doubt that they were saints, I shall never cease to follow their way of life, their customs and their teaching'.¹⁶⁸ The reader might assume therefore, with some justification, that if these men were indeed saints, they should, as faithful Christians, follow their examples too. Like Colman, the reader should not doubt their sanctity. If they do, they are denying the holiness of these respected men of God. This would run contrary to Bede's understanding of the saints throughout the *HE*; if the reader could hold doubts about these two saints, what does that say about the rest? Wilfrid's answer through Bede's narrative thus treads a fine line to counteract this line of thought. Wilfrid affirms Anatolius' sanctity whilst correcting Colman's false impression that Anatolius supports the Irish dating scheme; it is Colman

¹⁶⁶ *'De quo dubitandum non crediderim, quin intercessionibus, ut dixi, sui patris, ad cuius corpus dilectionis ipsius gratia uenerat'*, *HE* III.23, pp. 288-289.

¹⁶⁷ On the 'Easter Controversy' and Bede, see R. Abels, 'The Council of Whitby: A Study in Early Anglo-Saxon Politics', *Journal of British Studies*, 23 (1983), pp. 1-25; M. Ohashi, 'Theory and History: An Interpretation of the Paschal Controversy in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*', in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (eds.), *Bède le Vénérable: Entre Tradition et Postérité* (Lille, 2005), pp. 177-185; M. R. Grimmer, 'Columban Christian influence in Northumbria, before and after Whitby', *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*, 4 (2008), pp. 99-123; D. A. E. Pelteret, 'The Issue of Apostolic Authority at the Synod of Whitby', in I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (eds.), *The Easter Controversy in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Its Manuscripts, Texts and Tables* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 150-172.

¹⁶⁸ *'quos ipse sanctos esse non dubitans, semper eorum vitam, mores et disciplinam sequi non desisto'*, *HE* III.25, pp. 304-305.

and not Anatolius who is at fault. Likewise, Bede (via Wilfrid) reminds his readers that not all who claim to be Christians are in fact such,¹⁶⁹ but stops short of denying Columba is indeed a saint. Instead, he blames Columba's 'rude simplicity' for falling into such error despite his piety,¹⁷⁰ and that had he received proper, catholic, instruction he would have changed his ways. In sum, there is no room for doubt; the reader can affirm with Colman that these men were indeed saints, but, with Wilfrid, that they may not know the full story regarding their lives and that, on occasion, they can be doctrinally deviant yet still members of the Church universal.

The fifth usage of doubt in the *HE* is similar to the second. In *HE* IV.9, Torhtgyth, a nun at Barking, has a vision of a shrouded body rising in glorious light to the heavens. Soon afterwards Aethelburh, her abbess, died. Bede writes that 'such was her record that none who knew her can doubt that, as she departed this life, the gates of her heavenly country were opened for her'.¹⁷¹ Here, Bede wants his audience to properly understand that a virtuous life will result in the salvation of their soul. The Irish scholar in *HE* III.13 knew that his sins would damn him; here, Bede states that Aethelburh's virtue will save her, and this is confirmed by Torhtgyth's earlier vision. The confirmation of Torhtgyth's vision that Aethelburh is indeed in heaven has even greater significance for events at the middle and end of that chapter. A paralysed nun of that monastery is brought to Aethelburh's tomb to pray for healing. The first thing to be stated here is a belief that the corporeal remains of the saints are focal points for God's restorative work. More significantly, however, is the fact that she addresses Aethelburh 'as if she was a living person'.¹⁷² The assumption here, against those who might say or think otherwise, is that Aethelburh is able to hear and respond to the prayers of this nun. Like Gregory before him, some in Bede's day may have doubted this to be the case. The proceeding vision is thus of vital importance to this story; Aethelburh's soul is not simply asleep, nor, at the extreme end of scepticism, has she

¹⁶⁹ Using Matthew 7:22-23: 'On that day many will say to me [Jesus], "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness"'.

¹⁷⁰ '*simplicitate rusticae*', *HE* III.25, pp. 306-307.

¹⁷¹ '*Cuius talem fuisse constat vitam, ut nemo qui eam noverit dubitare debeat, quin ei exeunti de hac vita caelestis patriae patuerit ingressus*', *HE* IV.9, pp. 360-361.

¹⁷² '*quasi viventum*', *Ibid.*

ceased to exist. Instead, Torhtgyth has removed any doubts and confirmed she is currently residing with God in heaven, and by implication is able to intercede for those still on earth. The end of the chapter provides further confirmation that this is the case. An ailing Torhtgyth converses with a vision, and when asked who she was speaking to replies ‘With my beloved mother Aethelburh’.¹⁷³ Aethelburh, though dead, is still capable of interacting with her nuns. Torhtgyth’s subsequent death, as foretold through the conversation with her former abbess, brings the entire point full circle and thus helps reinforce Bede’s understanding of the place of the saint in Anglo-Saxon society.

The final usage of doubt in the *HE* is again linked to salvation. In *HE* IV.16, two young princes of the Isle of Wight are captured and await execution. Cyneberht, a local abbot and priest begs for the opportunity to instruct them in the Christian faith before their deaths. After their conversion and baptism they await their execution, and ‘gladly submitted to temporal death through which they did not doubt that they would pass to the eternal life of the soul’.¹⁷⁴ This passage again reinforces the idea that it is faith in Christ and baptism in his name that saves one’s soul, regardless of when they turn to him – even on the verge of death. If Bede’s readers were genuine Christian believers, they too should have no doubts that the death of their bodies was not the permanent end; eternity with God awaited them. Such sentiments accord well with the ‘more certain knowledge’ regarding the fate of man that Paulinus’ Northumbrian audience, including King Edwin and the high priest Coifi, desired in *HE* II.13; through the written history of his people, Bede is consistently reinforcing the idea that it is the Christian faith that provides real hope in the face of death. He does not want his readers to doubt, and reminds them that virtue and holy living will lead to salvation, whereas sin will lead to death and damnation.

The *VCB*, a forty-six chapter prose hagiography of the Northumbrian bishop Cuthbert, provides four further examples of Bede using doubt to provide a didactic point and answer potential questions regarding saints and their miracles. In *VCB* VIII, Cuthbert’s voice itself lends weight behind Bede’s argument concerning prayer and healing. Cuthbert has been struck by plague, but his brothers spend the whole night in prayer for his

¹⁷³ ‘*Cum carissima... mea matre Aedilburge*’, *Ibid.*, pp. 362-363.

¹⁷⁴ ‘*mortem laeti subiere temporalem, per quam se ad uitam animae perpetuam non dubitabant esse transituros*’, *HE* IV.16, pp. 382-382. Colgrave translates ‘*non dubitabant*’ with ‘they were assured’ which does not quite convey the same meaning.

recovery. Upon discovering this, Cuthbert states ‘Why do I lie here? For no doubt God has not despised the prayers of so many good men’,¹⁷⁵ and his strength begins to return. Importantly, this story is not present in the *VCA*. Its inclusion here by Bede shows how he is keen to draw attention to the causal link between the monks’ prayer and healing. Such a connection is already present in the Bible,¹⁷⁶ but Bede here desires to show that such prayerful healing is still possible for his own day, and it is Cuthbert himself in Bede’s narrative who provides authority to this idea. The second usage of *dubitare* attests to Cuthbert’s prophetic knowledge as saint. An anonymous brother has spied on Cuthbert praying in the sea, with two otters subsequently drying him. This incident fearfully unnerves the monk, and he approaches Cuthbert the following morning ‘not doubting that Cuthbert knew what he had done that night and why he was suffering’.¹⁷⁷ Bede makes explicit what is implicit in the Anonymous’ account – that Cuthbert knew why the brother had come to visit him. This is the first time Cuthbert’s gift of prophecy is mentioned in Bede’s account. The monk’s thoughts therefore introduce this aspect of his saintly character; Cuthbert’s prophetic insight is not to be doubted. Cuthbert does indeed know why the brother is sick, and furthermore commands him to keep silent about it in the same manner that Jesus commanded Peter, James and John regarding their vision of the Transfiguration until after his death.¹⁷⁸ This of itself is significant; no-one had heard this story until after Cuthbert had died. There may therefore have been questions as to why it was unknown for so long. The Anonymous author focuses on more practical matters such as the oddity of animals ministering to humans (like Daniel and the lions),¹⁷⁹ and how a saint can see hidden things (like Peter with Ananias and Sapphira).¹⁸⁰ Bede, however,

¹⁷⁵ ‘*quid iaceo... Neque enim dubitandum est, quia tot talium que uirorum preces Deus non despexerit*’, *VCB* VIII, pp. 180-181.

¹⁷⁶ Many of Jesus’ miraculous cures, and those of his followers in Acts, are proceeded by prayer. See also James 5:14-15: ‘Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.’

¹⁷⁷ ‘*nil dubitans illum nosse quid ipse noctu egerit, quid que pateretur*’, *VCB* X, pp. 190-191.

¹⁷⁸ Matthew 17:1–9, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36 and 2 Peter 1:16–18.

¹⁷⁹ Daniel 6. Cf. P. Cavill, ‘Some Dynamics of Story-telling: Animals in the Early Lives of St Cuthbert’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 43 (1999), pp. 1-20.

¹⁸⁰ Acts 5:1-11.

answers the more pressing intellectual issue of the veracity of this story by alluding to the secrecy commanded by Jesus.¹⁸¹ It is also worth noting that Bede had written commentaries on three of the four passages relating to the Transfiguration, as well as referring to it in three homilies,¹⁸² so it was familiar exegetical territory for him.

The third usage of doubt in the *VCB* is particularly explicit about its meaning. A girdle had been sent by Cuthbert to Ælfflæd by prophetic knowledge, and after it subsequently heals both her and a fellow nun it disappears. The passage, in *VCB* XXIII is worth quoting in full:

It is clear that this was done through divine dispensation, so that the holiness of the father beloved by God might be made apparent to believers through these two miracles of healing, and that henceforth all occasions for doubting his sanctity might be removed from the incredulous. For if that girdle had always been there, sick people would always have wished to flock to it; and when perhaps one of them did not deserve to be healed of his infirmity, he would disparage its power, because it did not heal him, when really he was not worthy of being healed.¹⁸³

This extract provides a double answer to those who may have questioned Cuthbert's position as saint, those Bede describes as *increduli*. First, as he explains, the healing miracles attest to Cuthbert's sanctity; through reading of his actions the audience should not doubt that he was both a prophet and miracle worker. However, the issue further lies in the fact that the miracles were performed through a contact relic; there was potential for more miracles to occur through it even long after Cuthbert had died. Bede thus anticipates a situation whereby others want the girdle to heal them but it does not,

¹⁸¹ The reason it was more pressing lies in the fact that the original source of this story, Plecgils, named in *VCA* II.3, is likely to have died by the time Bede came to compose his *VCB*, and thus was unable to be the continued source of this account. See Chapter Four for details.

¹⁸² Bede, *Homiliae Evangelii*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), I.8, I.24 and II.21.

¹⁸³ 'Quod diuina dispensatione factum intelligitur, uidelicet ut et per duo sanitatis miracula Deo dilecti patris sanctitas appareret credentibus, et deinceps dubitandi de sanctitate illius occasio tolleretur incredulis. Si enim eadem zona semper adesset, semper ad hanc concurrere uoluissent egroti, et dum forte aliquis ex his non mereretur a sua infirmitate curari, derogaret impotentiae non saluantis, cum ipse potius esset salutis indignus', *VCB* XXIII, pp. 232-233.

leading them to doubt its power and thereby the saint from whom it originated. It is therefore removed by God so that none will have the opportunity to ask such questions, something Bartlett suggests is ‘an answer to the problem of failed miracles’.¹⁸⁴ Bede’s comments regarding their own worth further challenge the reader to reflect upon their own merit before God if they ever desire healing. The final use of doubt in the *VCB* again concerns a miracle of healing and also provides explicit commentary explaining the rationale behind the narrative. A dying Cuthbert summons Walhstod into his chamber and cures him of his illness. Bede writes

Nor can it be doubted that this was brought about by the dispensation of the heavenly grace, so that he who had healed many before this, while he was well and strong, should when at the point of death also cure this man in order that by this sign too it might be plain how strong the holy man was in spirit, though he was weak in body.¹⁸⁵

The didactic message is familiar: the audience should not doubt Cuthbert’s ability as a saint to heal the sick, and the fact that he did so whilst terminally ill himself further attests to his sanctity.

This case study of doubt in Bede’s thought is not exhaustive, and does not factor in expressions of the notion without using the word itself. However, it is illustrative of the ways in which he took measures to explain ideas, either from scripture or contemporary history, to an audience who may have had questions. What the evidence shows from his exegesis is that Bede rarely let anything be taken for granted, frequently reinforcing his own arguments with direct quotes or references to his sources, and as we shall see in Chapter Four, this process was carried over into his historical and hagiographical work by providing detailed eyewitnesses for miracle stories in particular. When we turn to his historical and hagiographical works, his choice of language either reflects genuine questions that had been asked of him beforehand or pre-empts questions he believed others may later ask of his texts. Furthermore, through tracing the usages of doubt in these two

¹⁸⁴ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 364.

¹⁸⁵ ‘*Non autem dubitandum supernae pietatis hoc dispensatione procuratum, ut qui multos antea sospes adhuc ualens que curauerat, hunc quoque moriturus curaret quatinus hoc quoque indicio pateret etiam corpore infirmatus uir sanctus quantum spiritu ualeret*’, *VCB XXXVIII*, pp. 280-281.

texts, we can begin to understand the intellectual issues that were still present when discussing the lives of the saints in Bede's own day. This accords well with the work of Justice, who suggests that whilst medieval people did believe in their miracles, 'doubting and investigating the miraculous begin almost simultaneously with believing it'.¹⁸⁶ As is natural considering the varying source material, both texts highlight different issues that Bede seeks to address. In the *HE*, we saw that there are two main focal points. The first was that the Christian faith leads to salvation. The reader should not doubt that a sinful life will lead to damnation (III.13), but that a virtuous life will be rewarded (IV.9). More important, however, are the answers Bede seeks to provide in defence of the cult of saints. He uses doubt to explain that the relics of the saints can lead to healing (III.13), as can veneration at their tombs (III.23). We should not doubt the position of those widely held to be saints, but can also acknowledge that some saints thought or did things contrary to catholic doctrine due to a lack of proper education (III.25). The *VCB* focuses on the cult of an individual saint in particular, and uses instances of doubt to answer those who may question the credentials or abilities of Cuthbert. Bede thus addresses doubt regarding Cuthbert as both prophet (X) and healer (VIII, XXIII and XXXVIII). These two miraculous gifts are among the more unusual that a saint may be considered to possess;¹⁸⁷ unlike preaching, prayer or caring for the poor for example, they are unlikely to have been expected as a commonplace in Anglo-Saxon society. Stories of their occurrence within contemporary culture may therefore have been met with a higher degree of scepticism by Bede's audience.¹⁸⁸ This is particularly true considering the fact that by the time Bede composed the *VCB* Cuthbert had been dead for between twenty and thirty years; that meant that Bede's audience was one or two generations removed from his subject. His comments here thus seek to allay some of the questions regarding the life of a slightly distant saint that may have arisen in the years since Cuthbert's death.

We can now return to the question asked at the beginning of this section: In what ways was Bede seeking to answer a sceptical Anglo-Saxon audience through his written work? The answer partially comes through Bede's general method of utilising the voices of

¹⁸⁶ Justice, 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in their Miracles?', p. 19.

¹⁸⁷ They belong to the so-called charismatic gifts of the Spirit that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

¹⁸⁸ As I shall explain in later Chapters this is one reason why Bede used witnesses to emphasise the veracity of the miracle accounts he records.

his subjects to make a didactic point. The idea of doubt in particular was used by Bede to address areas of specific concern, namely, the miraculous powers of the saint, the place of relics and tombs of the saints, and the post-mortem state of the soul including how and whether it is possible that it can interact with the mortal world. These are near-identical to the issues that Gregory was addressing in his *Dialogi* according to Dal Santo's thesis. However, what we are lacking in Bede's period is any widespread evidence of systematic correspondence or treatises regarding these issues in a similar fashion to the way they were being discussed around the sixth century Mediterranean. The closest such discussion we find is Bede's work *De Eo Quod Ait Isaias*, written around 716 in response to a question asked by his bishop Acca. Here Bede provides clarification regarding Isaiah 24:22,¹⁸⁹ which he had addressed in his *In Primam Partem Samuhelis*, connecting it to the eternal fate of the damned.¹⁹⁰ Acca had apparently misunderstood his initial interpretation and thus Bede provided a fuller explication in this letter. Explaining the wider context of Isaiah 24 connected to his own eschatological expectations, Bede ultimately warns Acca against the heretical suggestions of those who believe 'that each of those sinners condemned for their crimes once and for all to the prison below should at some other time be called back to mercy by divine visitation'.¹⁹¹ Apart from this one episode we cannot say that similar correspondence regarding the status of the dead did not once exist and subsequently became lost. Nevertheless, to suggest these issues were being discussed at a similar high level in Anglo-Saxon England compared to Gregory's Mediterranean context would be to argue from silence.

What, then, are we to make of Bede's comments? Clearly his audience still had some of the same questions that Gregory and Eustratius faced over 100 years previously. This is despite the fact that the Northumbrians had been introduced to Christianity first by Paulinus in the late 620s and subsequently by the Irish mission invited to the kingdom by

¹⁸⁹ 'And they will be shut up there in prison, and after many days they will be visited' (*et cludentur ibi in carcerem et post multos dies visitabuntur*).

¹⁹⁰ Bede, *In Primam Partem Samuhelis*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119 (Turnout, 1962), III, pp. 160-161, ll. 998-1013.

¹⁹¹ 'peccatores quosque criminibus suis inferni carcere semel damnatos credat aliquando visitatione divina revocandos ad veniam', Bede, *De Eo Quod Ait Isaias*, Col. 709, ll. 43-46; Bede, *On What Isaiah Says*, in W. T. Foley and A. G. Holder (trans), *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999), p. 51.

Oswald. Looking beyond Northumbria, Mercia accepted missionaries in 653 after the Battle of Winwæd,¹⁹² and the last Anglo-Saxon kingdom to convert was that of Sussex, where Wilfrid preached in the 680s.¹⁹³ By the composition of the *HE* around 731 therefore, all of Anglo-Saxon England had at the very least been exposed to Christian teaching, though not necessarily continuously, for fifty years or more. That is not to say, however, that the new religion was fully established, or even fully understood. Sometime between 688 and 694 we can see two of the difficulties faced by Ine, King of the West Saxons, where part of his law code issued fines for not baptising one's children or failing to pay church-scot, a form of religious tax to support local clergy.¹⁹⁴ Likewise, the law code belonging to Wihtred, King of Kent, dated to 695,¹⁹⁵ contains laws regarding un-Christian (sexual?) relationships, priests failing to baptise the sick or being drunk, and sacrifices to devils.¹⁹⁶ The implication here, at the turn of the eighth century, is that Christian practice had not been fully incorporated at the popular level, and there were even still hints of pagan belief. Furthermore, Bede frequently alluded to the dire state of the priesthood in his day and the lack of Christian education among the laity; Scott DeGregorio has written extensively on the subject that Bede's 'reforming impulse' in response to these perceived problems permeated much of his later work.¹⁹⁷ What all this implies is that in the first thirty years of the eighth century there was a general sense of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England still undergoing what we might call spiritual growing pains. Whilst Christianity might have been accepted as the official religion in the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, in practice there were still problems applying it to everyday life. This is no less true for the understanding of saints, their relics and miracles. Admittedly, doubting miracle claims is

¹⁹² *HE* III.24.

¹⁹³ *VW* XLI, *HE* V.19.

¹⁹⁴ *The Laws of Ine (688-694)*, in D. Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents, Vol. 1, c.500-1042* (London, 2nd ed., 1979), p. 399, Laws 2 and 4 respectively.

¹⁹⁵ The code is prefaced by a dating clause: The fifth year of his reign, in the ninth indiction, on the sixth day of *Rugern*, which Whitelock interprets as the rye harvest.

¹⁹⁶ *The Laws of Wihtred, king of Kent (695)*, in Whitelock, *English Historical Documents, Vol. 1*, pp. 396-397, Laws 3-5.1, 6 and 12-13 respectively. For further information see C. Hough, 'Legal and Documentary Writings', in P. Pulsiano and E. Treharne (eds.), *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 174-175.

¹⁹⁷ See fn. 78 above for details.

not a uniquely Anglo-Saxon experience, but can be traced as far back as St. Thomas refusing to believe Jesus had risen from the dead until he could touch the wounds of his crucifixion, if not before.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, as a consequence, Bede chose to write in a manner that addressed any questions or concerns he felt that his audience may have held, whether that was providing clarity on theological issues, or giving guidance for more practical matters. Bede wrote with a high level of intentionality; we should not assume that what he wrote was superfluous. Everything he included or omitted was there or not there for a variety of reasons. With this context in mind, he chose to write history and hagiography in the best way that he could: using the help of those who had already written on the subject themselves. Whilst the following chapter will focus on Eusebius of Caesarea as a writer of *ecclesiastical* history in particular alongside the influence of Scripture itself, there was one particular author who stood out for Bede as foundational regarding his concepts of history, miracles, truth and exegesis: Augustine of Hippo.

Bede and Augustine

According to Augustine's autobiography,¹⁹⁹ the *Confessiones*, in his early years he was attracted to Manichaeism, an eastern, dualistic religion, before converting to Christianity in 386.²⁰⁰ His work was influenced not only by Christian tradition but also by Neoplatonic ideas, chiefly through the writings of the Greek philosopher Plotinus (c.205-270). A contemporary of Jerome (c.347-420), another key influence on Bede, Augustine was a prolific writer, composing multiple books, sermons and letters, some of the most famous of which are *De Trinitate*, *De Doctrina Christiana*, *De Consensu Evangelistarum* and *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*. Bede had access to over forty of Augustine's works as well

¹⁹⁸ John 20:24-29.

¹⁹⁹ The genre of the *Confessiones* is far more complex than simply that of autobiography. The first 9 books detail Augustine's life and conversion to Christianity, whilst the final 4 books form a complex treatise on God, creation, time and eternity. Fredriksen has argued that we should read the text not only as history but ultimately as theology; Augustine is not the central figure but God. The last 4 books on God and his relationship with his creation in time should dictate how we should read the rest of the text. P. Fredriksen, 'The *Confessions* as Autobiography', in M. Vessey (ed.), *A Companion to Augustine* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 87-98.

²⁰⁰ Augustine, *Confessiones*, ed. L. Verheijen, CCSL 27 (Turnhout, 1981), VIII.12.

as his sermons.²⁰¹ A near-complete list of Augustine's works known by Bede is provided by Lapidge, who suggests that he knew all of the texts discussed in this section.²⁰² This section will briefly explore Augustine's understanding of history and time before examining in greater detail his conception of the miraculous. This section argues that Augustine's definition of a miracle and their purpose as *signa* was a view later adopted by Bede. It will then proceed to explore the ways in which Augustine dealt with the miracles of his contemporaries, explaining how his views impacted Bede and his own literary aims and intentions in terms of both history and hagiography. As Augustine himself wrote, 'we should learn, without any pride, what has to be learnt from a human teacher; and those responsible for teaching should pass on, without pride or jealousy, the knowledge they have received';²⁰³ Bede knew that some tasks benefitted from the work of others, and this section will seek to show what he had learned from Augustine.

Any discussion of Augustine's understanding of history, and by extension, miracles within history, must begin with at least a cursory glance at his conception of time. Bede, as is well known, was fascinated by chronology and the passage of time, and Augustine's thought on such matters was highly influential.²⁰⁴ The literature regarding Augustine's views on time is vast; four brief points will have to suffice.²⁰⁵ First, for Augustine, creation

²⁰¹ Thacker, *Bede and Augustine*, p. 5.

²⁰² Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, Appendix E, pp. 196-204.

²⁰³ 'per hominum discendum est, sine superbia discat, et per quem docetur alius, sine superbia et sine invidia tradat quod accepit', Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford, 1995), Preface.5, pp. 6-7. [Henceforth *DDC*]. The title of Hill's translation accurately captures Augustine's pedagogical purpose in this text, that it is primarily a work on Christian education rather than simply an explication of Christian doctrine. See Augustine, *Teaching Christianity (De Doctrina Christiana)*, trans. E. Hill (Hyde Park, NY, 1996).

²⁰⁴ See in particular the extensive Introduction and Commentary by F. Wallis in her translations of Bede, *The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 2012), and Bede, *On Times*.

²⁰⁵ In the past fifteen years alone: M. T. Clarke, 'Augustine on Immutability and Mutability', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 74, no. 1 (2000), pp. 7-27; K. Flasch, *Was ist Zeit? Augustine Von Hippo: Das XI Buch der Confessiones* (Frankfurt, 2nd ed., 2004); F. W. von Herrmann, *Augustine, Husserl, and Heidegger on the Question of Time*, eds. and trans. F. Nan Fleteren and J. Hackett (Levison, NY, 2008); J. W. Carter, 'St. Augustine on Time, Time Numbers, and Enduring Objects', *Vivarium*, 49, no. 4 (2011), pp. 301-323; S. Knuuttila, 'Time and Creation in Augustine', in D. V. Meconi and E. Stump (eds.), *The*

and time are intrinsically linked; time began to exist at the first moment of creation.²⁰⁶ Before creation (if it is possible to apply the term ‘before’), God existed eternally and immutably, in other words, in a state without time.²⁰⁷ As he writes in *DCD*, ‘since the passage of time involves mutability, time cannot be co-eternal with an immutable eternity’.²⁰⁸ Second, there was no pre-existing matter through which God created; creation was *ex nihilo*. Augustine states that God was not like a craftsmen working in a pre-existing place with pre-existing materials merely transforming one thing into another. Instead, God created through his spoken Word, that is, the *Logos*, Christ.²⁰⁹ Third, upon understanding the nature of creation, one will see that time is necessary for change and mutability;²¹⁰ time introduced the possibility by which things are able to be different than what they previously were. Fourth, therefore, time is a prerequisite for history. The progression of time showed Augustine, and by extension Bede as Christian historian, that history has a (God-given) order. It develops and progresses according to his purpose, which is ultimately salvific;²¹¹ as he writes in *DDC*, ‘the whole temporal dispensation was set up by divine providence for our salvation’.²¹²

This understanding of history as a signpost towards salvation provides a suitable starting point of enquiry. Augustine developed a semiotic theory whereby he distinguished

Cambridge Companion to Augustine (Cambridge, 2nd ed., 2014), pp. 81-97; P. Helm, ‘Thinking Eternally’, in W. E. Mann (ed.), *Augustine’s Confessions: Philosophy in Autobiography* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 135-154.

²⁰⁶ Augustine, *Confessiones*, XI.13-14.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., XI.12. In answer to the question ‘What was God doing before He made heaven and earth?’ Augustine suggested that the somewhat facetious answer ‘Preparing hells for people who inquire into profundities’ was not a suitable response! Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick (Oxford, 2008), p. 229.

²⁰⁸ ‘*tempus autem quoniam mutabilitate transcurrit, aeternitati inmutabili non potest esse coaeternum*’, *DCD*, CCSL 48, XII.16, p. 372, ll. 83-85; *The City of God*, p. 522.

²⁰⁹ Augustine, *Confessiones*, XI.5. See John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17.

²¹⁰ Ibid., XI.4. C. Gross, ‘Augustine’s Ambivalence about Temporality: His Two Accounts of Time’, *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 8 (1999), p. 136.

²¹¹ J. Davidse, ‘On Bede as Christian Historian’ in L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (eds.), *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk & Northumbrian* (Groningen, 1996), p. 9.

²¹² ‘*facta est tota pro nostra salute per divinam providentiam dispensatio temporalis*’, *DDC*, I.35.39, pp. 48-49.

between things (Augustine frequently uses the Latin term *res*) and signs.²¹³ Things have the ability within themselves to act as a sign towards something beyond themselves. As he states, ‘a sign is a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses’.²¹⁴ All signs are things, but not all things are signs.²¹⁵ For a thing to be considered a sign it must take on additional meaning, either as desired by the person giving the sign, or in the mind of those who receive it. In this way, things have no intrinsic meaning as signs but form part of a three-way system of communication between the sign-giver, the sign itself, and the recipient.²¹⁶ Whilst Augustine’s concept of signs should be understood in more general terms of language and communication (in *DDC* he was writing in the context of Biblical exegesis),²¹⁷ it can fruitfully be applied to his understanding of miracles. Augustine is clear that whilst miracles produce wonder in those who witnessed them, their main purpose is to point those who experience them towards deeper truths of the Christian faith.

Citing John 4:48 (‘Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe’), Augustine suggests that Jesus ‘wished to lift the believer’s mind far above all changeable things, for he did not wish the faithful to seek after the miracles themselves, which, although they are signs of divinity, nonetheless occur in mutable bodies’.²¹⁸ In *DCD* X.12 he reiterates this idea in very similar language: ‘We must not listen to those who say that

²¹³ R. A. Markus, ‘St. Augustine on Signs’, *Phronesis*, 2, no.1 (1957), pp. 60-83; B. D. Jackson, ‘The theory of signs in St. Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*’, *Revue d’Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques*, 15 (1969), pp. 9-49; L. Cessali and N. Germann, ‘Signification and Truth: Epistemology at the Crossroads of Semantics and Ontology in Augustine’s Early Philosophical Writings’, *Vivarium*, 46, no. 2 (2008), pp. 123-154; P. King, ‘Augustine on Language’, in D. V. Meconi and E. Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge, 2nd ed., 2014), pp. 292-310.

²¹⁴ ‘*signum est enim res praeter speciem quam ingerit sensibus aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem venire*’, *DDC*, II.1.1, pp. 56-57.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I.2.2.

²¹⁶ Markus, ‘Augustine on Signs’, p. 72.

²¹⁷ Jackson, ‘The Theory of Signs’, p. 27, and Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, Ch. 23.

²¹⁸ ‘*usque adeo supra omnia mutabilia volens mentem credentis adtollere, ut nec ipsa miracula, quae quamvis divinitus de mutabilitate corporum fiunt, a fidelibus quaeri velit*’, Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, ed. F. Weihrich, CSEL 43 (Vienna, 1904), IV.10.13, p. 408, ll. 20-23; Augustine, *Agreement Among the Evangelists*, trans. K. Paffenroth, in B. Ramsey (ed.), *The New Testament, I and II* (Hyde Park, NY, 2014), pp. 326-327.

the invisible God does not work visible miracles... He does this in order to inspire the soul, hitherto given up to things visible, to worship Him, the Invisible'.²¹⁹ In other words, miracles are no mere spectacles but signs pointing the observer beyond the visible, changeable world towards the invisible, unchangeable realm of the divine. For example, in *DCD* X.8, he writes that the miracle of Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt after looking back towards Sodom and Gomorrah 'became a sign warning us that no one who has set foot on the path of redemption should yearn for what he has left behind'.²²⁰ In context, Peter Brown reminds us that *DCD* was written as 'a definitive rejection of the paganism of an aristocracy that had claimed to dominate the intellectual life of their age'.²²¹ Such statements remind his audience of the distinctly Christian interpretation behind the miraculous. Likewise, Augustine discusses John 4:48 in his *Confessiones* whilst dealing with the concept of harmful curiosity. Here he suggests that the demand for 'signs and wonders' 'desired not for any salvific end but only for the thrill' should be considered in the same category as someone investigating 'the operations of nature which lie beyond our grasp, when there is no advantage in knowing and the investigators simply desire knowledge for its own sake', as well as someone turning to 'perverted science' to 'try to achieve things by magical arts'.²²² As Colin Brown suggests, for Augustine, miracles had 'a discernible purpose. They were not merely wonders, designed to impress'.²²³ Such an understanding of miracles as signs was also adopted by Bede. *Signa* was the most common word used by Bede to describe a miracle. To him, the miracle itself was not the most important thing but rather how it pointed to a greater truth about God and his relationship

²¹⁹ 'Neque enim audiendi sunt, qui Deum invisibilem visibilia miracula operari negant', 'ad se invisibilem colendum excitet animam adhuc visibilibus deditam', *DCD*, CCSL 47, X.12, p. 286-287, ll. 13-14 and 26-27; *The City of God*, pp. 410-411.

²²⁰ 'magno admonuit sacramento neminem in via liberationis suae praeterita desiderare debere', *Ibid.*, X.8, p. 280, ll. 14-16; *Ibid.*, p. 402. See Genesis 19:1-29 for the context.

²²¹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 300.

²²² 'non ad aliquam salutem, sed ad solam experientiam desiderata', 'ad perscrutanda naturae quae praetor nos est, operta proceditur, quae scire nihil prodest et nihil aliud quam scire homines cupiunt', 'perversae scientiae fine per artes magicas quaeritur', Augustine, *Confessiones*, X.35.55, p. 185, ll. 31-36; *Confessions*, pp. 211-212.

²²³ C. Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Exeter, 1984), p. 8.

to creation.²²⁴ On this understanding, miracles are not only historic events but perform a rhetorical function: they serve as didactic signs.

In *DCD* Augustine develops the general idea of miracles acting as signs in at least two different ways. First, miracles act as signs confirming the pre-existing faith of believers. For example, considering biblical history, miracles served to confirm God's promises to Abraham. Abraham had been promised as many descendants as the stars in the sky or the number of grains of sand by the sea.²²⁵ Through them, all nations would one day be blessed. In *DCD* X.8, Augustine provides a list of miracles performed by God to this end, from Abraham's first calling to the escape from Egypt to the Promised Land under Moses. Part of Augustine's title for this chapter explains why God did this: 'in order to strengthen the faith of the godly'.²²⁶ Likewise, Augustine provides a list of miracles surrounding the Ark of the Covenant 'performed by God in confirmation of the authority of His Law and promise'.²²⁷ In the same way, contemporary miracles of the saints ultimately point backwards to the truth of Christ's resurrection. Concerning the miracles of the martyrs that he has just discussed in the previous chapter, Augustine asks 'If the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life had not already been accomplished in Christ... why are those who were slain for that faith which proclaims the resurrection now able to do such great things?'²²⁸ He suggests that God himself accomplishes these, or that he uses his servants ('the spirits of the martyrs', 'men still in the body' or 'the agency of angels'), but that 'all such miracles nonetheless bear witness to the faith which preaches the resurrection

²²⁴ See Ward, 'Miracles and History', pp. 71-72, and again with comparison to Augustine, 'Miracles in the Middle Ages', in G. Twelftree (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles* (Cambridge, 2011), pp.151-152.

²²⁵ The stars in Genesis 15:5, stars and sand in Genesis 22:17.

²²⁶ '*ad conrobmandum fidem piorum*', *DCD*, CCSL 47, Breviculus, p. xix, ll. 19-20; *The City of God*, X.8, p. 401.

²²⁷ '*ad commendendam legis ac promissionis auctoritatem divinitus*', *Ibid.*, p. xx, ll. 45-46; *Ibid.*, X.17, p. 417.

²²⁸ '*Nam si carnis in aeternum resurrectio vel non praevenit in Christo... cur et mortui tanta possunt, qui pro ea fide, qua haec resurrectio praedicatur, occisi sunt?*', *Ibid.*, CCSL 48, XXII.9, p. 827, ll. 10-14; *Ibid.*, p. 1134. This passage inspired Robert Bartlett's title *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*

of the flesh to life eternal'.²²⁹ This first understanding of the purposes of miracles subtly differs from Bede. Whilst not denying the relationship between contemporary miracles with those in the biblical past, following Gregory he preferred to highlight the present significance of miracles as signs of the sanctity of those who performed them.

More importantly for Augustine, however, and an understanding shared by Bede, is the belief that miracles act as signs to foster initial belief in the claims of the Christian faith. In *DCD* XXII.5, Augustine holds that the miracles recorded in Acts were worked so that people would believe the message of the apostles, 'obscure men of no importance and no education'.²³⁰ He considers it incredible that these men, though of low status, were able to persuade the entire world. The reason they could was due to their miracles: 'Those who had not seen Christ's resurrection in the flesh, and His ascension into heaven in that same flesh, believed the testimony of those who told what they had seen because they not only spoke of it, but wrought miraculous signs'.²³¹ As Mourant explains 'for Augustine [Christianity] is a reasonable faith with a proper foundation in an objective and divinely revealed truth [the resurrection as an historical event]. Within the perspective of such a faith, contemporary miracles merely contribute further verification of that faith and reflect certitude rather than credulity'.²³² However, because we do not have personal knowledge of the events in the Bible, either through the physical senses or mentally via reason and intuition, testimony is how we know the events recorded in Scripture are true.²³³ He writes 'As to objects remote from our senses... because we cannot know such things by the testimony of our own senses, we require the testimony of others in respect of them, and we rely on those from whose senses we do not believe the objects in question to be, or to have been, remote. Thus, in the case of visible things which we ourselves have not seen, we rely

²²⁹ 'per martyrum spiritus', 'per homines adhuc in corpore', 'per angelos', 'ei tamen testantur haec fidei, in qua carnis in aeternum resurrectio praedicatur', Ibid., pp. 827-828, ll. 17-19 and 23-25; Ibid., pp. 1134-1135.

²³⁰ 'homines ignobiles, infimos, paucissimos, inperitos', Ibid., XXII.5, p. 811, ll. 31-32; Ibid., p. 1114.

²³¹ 'Qui enim Christum in carne resurrexisse et cum illa in caelum ascendisse non viderant, id se vidisse narrantibus non loquentibus tantum, sed etiam mirifica facientibus signa credebant', Ibid, ll. 50-53; Ibid.

²³² J. A. Mourant, 'Augustine on Miracles', *Augustinian Studies*, 4 (1973), p. 125.

²³³ See Ibid., p. 122, and P. King and N. Ballantyne, 'Augustine and Testimony', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 39, no.2, (Jun., 2009), pp. 200-201.

upon those who have seen them'.²³⁴ Chapter Four of this thesis argues that such a view is essentially followed by Bede when narrating miracles in his Anglo-Saxon context; we trust the accounts are true because we know and trust those who told them.

Earlier in life, however, Augustine had proposed that the age of miracles had ceased because they were no longer needed for this apologetic purpose. In *De Vera Religione*, completed in 390, Augustine writes:

When the Catholic Church, you see, had spread and been established through the whole world, those miracles were not permitted to continue into our times for fear that the soul would always go on looking for visible signs and that, by getting used to things that had blazed up in their novelty, the human race might grow coldly indifferent. Nor would it be right for us to have any doubts believing these men [presumably the apostles], who have still been able to persuade whole populations to follow them, though they are proclaiming things which few can comprehend.²³⁵

At this early date, Augustine believed that miracles had helped spread the faith but that once established they were no longer needed. The evidence that the apostles had converted so many people was sufficient to believe their message was true. A year or two later, just after his ordination as priest in 391,²³⁶ Augustine repeated this explanation in *De Utilitate Credendi*. Asked why miracles do not occur in the present day he answers 'Because they would not have any effect unless they caused wonder, and, if they were common occurrences, they would not cause wonder... These things were done, therefore,

²³⁴ 'profecto ea, quae remota sunt a sensibus nostris, quoniam nostro testimonio scire non possumus, de his alios testes requirimus eisque credimus, a quorum sensibus remota esse vel fuisse non credimus. Sicut ergo de visibilibus, quae non vidimus, eis credimus, qui viderunt', *DCD*, CCSL 48, XI.3, p. 323, ll. 9-14; *The City of God*, p. 451.

²³⁵ 'Cum enim ecclesia catholica per tota orbem diffusa atque fundata sit, nec miracula illa in nostra tempora durare permissa sunt, ne anima semper visibilia quaereret et eorum consuetudine frigesceret genus humanum, quorum novitate flagrauit, nec iam nobis dubium esse oportet his esse credendum, qui cum ea praedicant, quae pauci assequuntur, se tamen sequendos populis persuadere potuerunt', Augustine, *De Vera Religione*, ed. K. D. Daur, CCSL 32 (Turnhout, 1962), XXV.47, pp. 216-217, ll. 27-34; Augustine, *True Religion*, trans. E. Hill, in B. Ramsey (ed.), *On Christian Belief* (Hyde Park, NY, 2005), p. 60.

²³⁶ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. 130-132.

at the appropriate time'.²³⁷ In considering the spiritual life of the individual, Augustine certainly seemed to have some sympathy to the idea that miracles were no longer needed post-conversion. In his *Confessiones*, Augustine allegorically interprets the 'living creatures' brought forth from the land in Genesis 1:24 as a 'living soul', that is a newly believing Christian.²³⁸ He writes 'It does not ask for great miracles to bring faith into being. Nor does it refuse to believe unless it sees signs and wonders [John 4:48 again]. For now the earth is believing and baptized, separated out from the sea-water [interpreted as non-Christians] bitter with faithlessness'.²³⁹ However, he states that ministers of the faith in dealing with 'the waters of unbelief' 'used miracles and sacred rites and mystical prayers to attract the attention of ignorance', but that beyond this they should point the new believer towards higher things.²⁴⁰ Miracles may have an initial purpose in conversion, but not in the ongoing life of a Christian.

Later in life however, Augustine seems to have changed his thought on the matter, coming to accept that miracles did still occur and recording several he had experienced or knew of in *DCD* XXII.8 as well as in the *Confessiones*.²⁴¹ In one of his sermons on the Psalms c.410, he notes that 'cures through the merits of the martyrs are becoming

²³⁷ 'quia non moverunt, nisi mira essent; at si solita essent, non mira essent... facta sunt igitur illa oportunissime', Augustine, *De Utilitate Credendi*, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25 (Vienna, 1891), XVI.34, p. 44, ll. 8-9 and 17; Augustine, *The Advantage of Believing*, trans. R. Kearney, in Ramsey, *On Christian Belief*, p. 145. This idea of diminishing returns if miracles persisted is noted by Maurant, 'Augustine on Miracles', pp. 126-127.

²³⁸ The Latin word used in the text of Genesis is *anima*, which can be taken to mean either life as in 'creature', or soul/spirit.

²³⁹ 'nec magnalia mirabilium quaerit, quibus fiat fides: neque enim nisi signa et prodigia viderit, non credit, cum iam distincta sit terra fidelis ab aquis maris infidelitate amaris', Augustine, *Confessiones*, XIII.21.29, p. 258, ll. 6-9; *Confessions*, pp. 289-290.

²⁴⁰ 'in aquis infidelitatis', 'per miracula et sacramenta et voces mysticas, ubi intenta fit ignorantia', Ibid., XIII.21.30, p. 258, ll. 28-29; Ibid., p. 290.

²⁴¹ H. de Vries, 'Fast Forward, Or: The Theologico-Political Event in Quick Motion (Miracles, Media, and Multitudes in St. Augustine)', in W. Otten, A. Vanderjagt and H. de Vries (eds.), *How the West was Won: Essays on Literary Imagination, the Canon and the Christian Middle Ages for Burcht Pranger* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 268-270. Yarrow, *The Saints*, p. 27. Augustine's comments on contemporary miracles are discussed below, pp. 63-65.

frequent'.²⁴² Commenting on his earlier remark in *De Vera Religione* XXV.47 in his *Retractationes*, Augustine qualifies his statement that the age of miracles was over. He agrees that particular biblical miracles such as speaking in tongues or the shadows of the apostles healing people (as in Acts 5:15-16) had now ceased. However, he claims 'what I said is not to be so interpreted that no miracles are to be performed in the name of Christ at the present time'.²⁴³ He mentions one particular miracle that he knew at the time of writing, and mentions others 'so numerous even in these times that we cannot know about all of them nor enumerate those we know'.²⁴⁴ In the same way, he states that in *De Utilitate Credendi* XVI.34 he 'meant, however, that such great and numerous miracles no longer take place, not that no miracles occur in our times'.²⁴⁵ Brown argues that this 'should not be regarded as a sudden and unprepared surrender to popular credulity'.²⁴⁶ Rather, the role of miracles had become more prominent over the decades since he had made such statements, and as a careful scholar he therefore adapted his beliefs accordingly. This change of thought in his later years is best summarised from *DCD* XXII.5: 'we bring together the witness of so many incredible things in order to render credible what we are told of one incredible thing: the resurrection and ascension of Christ in the flesh'.²⁴⁷ Recent miracles, like those of biblical times, continue to point those who read about them or experience them towards Christ.

If miracles are understood within this framework of signs, they need clear definitions in order to avoid the risk of missing their spiritual significance. Over the course

²⁴² 'crebrescunt sanitates meritis martyrum', Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, eds. D. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, CCSL 40 (Turnhout, 1961), CXVIII.30.5, p. 1769, l. 6.

²⁴³ 'Sed non sic accipiendum est quod dixi, ut nunc in Christi nomine fieri miracula nulla credantur', Augustine, *Retractationes*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 57 (Turnhout, 1984), I.13.7, p. 39, ll. 96-98; Augustine, *The Retractations*, trans. M. I. Bogan, (Washington, D.C., 1968), I.12.7, p.55.

²⁴⁴ 'qualia tam multa etiam istis Temporibus fiunt, ut nec omnia cognoscere nec ea quae cognoscimus enumerare possumus', *Ibid.*, p. 39, ll. 100-102; *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁴⁵ 'Hoc autem dixi, quia non tanta nec omnia modo, non quia nulla fiunt etiam modo', *Ibid.*, I.14.5, p. 44, ll. 85-86; *Ibid.*, I.13.5, p. 62.

²⁴⁶ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 419.

²⁴⁷ 'ut credatur unum incredibile, quod de carnis resurrection atque in caelum ascensione dicitur, multorum incredibilium testimonia tanta congerimus', *DCD*, CCSL 48, XXII.5, p. 811, ll. 64-67; *The City of God*, p. 1115.

of his lifetime, Augustine provided several complementary definitions of a miracle. In *De Utilitate Credendi* XVI.34, Augustine writes ‘I call a miracle any event that is so difficult or extraordinary as to be beyond the expectation or power of those it astonishes’.²⁴⁸ Five years or so later, Augustine reiterated this belief in his polemic *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*: ‘There is no impropriety in saying that God does something against nature when it is contrary to what we know of nature. For we give the name “nature” to the usual and known course of nature; and whatever God does contrary to this, we call “prodigies” or “miracles”’.²⁴⁹ Again, in his *De Genesi ad Litteram*, published in 416, he states that miracles, such as Jesus turning water into wine, ‘are performed in defiance of the usual course of nature’.²⁵⁰ As suggested in the Introduction, Bede adopted this consistent notion from Augustine that a miracle need not be against nature itself, but merely our expectations of its usual course. Chadwick explains that for Augustine, ‘God has given both laws of nature and also hidden potentialities of growth in the creative seeds he originally implanted’.²⁵¹ In this regard, nature runs its usual course unless and until God chooses to utilise those ‘hidden seeds’ that dwell within all created things.

In addition to this understanding of the relationship between miracle and nature, Augustine suggests in *De Utilitate Credendi* that there are two types of miracles: those that merely produce wonder, and those that ‘procure a great privilege and benefit’.²⁵² Of this latter category, he suggested that miracles act as an authority to aid someone to believe in the claims of Christianity, citing the miracles of Jesus as an example, through which ‘the

²⁴⁸ ‘*miraculum voco quicquid arduum aut insolitum supra spem vel facultatem mirantis adparet*’, *De Utilitate Credendi*, XVI.34, p. 43, ll. 16-17; *The Advantage of Believing*, p. 144.

²⁴⁹ ‘*sed contra naturam non incongrue dicimus aliquid deum facere, quod facit contra id, quod nouimus in natura. Hanc enim etiam appellamus naturam, cognitum nobis cursum solitum que naturae, contra quem deus cum aliquid facit, magnalia uel mirabilia nominantur*’, Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25 (Vienna, 1891), XXVI.3, p. 731, ll. 15-20.

²⁵⁰ ‘*contra naturae usitatum cursum fiunt*’, Augustine, *De Genesi Ad Litteram*, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 28.1 (Vienna, 1894), VI.14, p. 189, l. 12; Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. E. Hill, in J. E. Rotelle (ed.), *On Genesis* (Hyde Park, NY, 2002), p. 315. Like several of his other texts, Hill states that Augustine completed this work over several years, beginning *De Genesi ad Litteram* sometime between 309 and 404. Books I-IX were likely completed by 410. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²⁵¹ Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 79.

²⁵² ‘*quaedam vero magnam etiam gratiam benevolentiamque conciliant*’, *De Utilitate Credendi*, XVI.34, p. 43, ll. 20-21; Augustine, *The Advantage of Believing*, p. 144.

divine authority turned the straying souls of mortal men and women of those times towards itself'.²⁵³ In *DCD* he says something very similar: '[Miracles] were necessary then, before the world believed, in order that the world might come to believe'.²⁵⁴ These comments reiterate Augustine's belief that miracles are a means to an end: they serve as signs pointing the witness to greater spiritual truths. This concurs with what he wrote in *De Trinitate* between 10 and 30 years later: miracles and signs 'are presented to our senses to tell us something about God'.²⁵⁵ This understanding builds upon what Augustine had established earlier in *De Trinitate* regarding God's sovereignty over creation. Utilising imperial imagery he writes that

God's will is the first and highest cause of all physical species and motions. For nothing happens visibly and in a manner perceptible to the senses which does not issue either as a command or as a permission from the inmost invisible and intelligible court of the supreme emperor, according to his unfathomable justice of rewards and punishments, favours and retributions, in what we may call this vast and all-embracing republic of the whole creation.²⁵⁶

In *De Trinitate* III.5.11 Augustine then proceeds to contrast several natural occurrences alongside Biblical miracles involving similar phenomena. Speaking of Aaron's staff turning into a snake in Exodus 7:8-13, he states 'the one who animated that serpent for a

²⁵³ 'in se tunc animas errantes mortalium divina commovebat auctoritas', *Ibid.*, p. 44, ll. 6-7; *Ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁵⁴ 'necessaria fuisse, priusquam crederet mundus, ad hoc ut crederet mundus', *DCD*, CCSL 48, XXII.8, p. 815, ll. 2-3; *The City of God*, p. 1120.

²⁵⁵ 'divinitus annuntiandum nostris sensibus admoventur', Augustine, *De Trinitate*, ed. W. J. Mountain, CCSL 50 (Turnhout, 1968), III.9.19, p. 146, ll. 2-3; Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. E. Hill (Hyde Park, NY, 2nd ed., 2015), III.9.19, p. 139. This text was composed between 400 and 420.

²⁵⁶ 'per hoc voluntas dei est prima et summa causa omnium corporalium specierum atque motionum. Nihil enim fit visibiliter et sensibiliter quod non de interior invisibili atque intellegibili aula summi imperatoris aut iubeatur aut permittatur secundam ineffabilem iustitiam praemiorum atque poenarum, gratiarum et retributionum, in ista totius creaturae amplissima quadam immensaue republica', *Ibid.*, III.4.9, p. 136, ll. 23-29; *Ibid.*, p. 133.

few moments is no other than the one who animates all living things as they are born'.²⁵⁷ In this way, everything that transpires in the universe, including miracles, ultimately finds its source in the providence of God; God is the author of all.

With such a central understanding of the place of God in the performance of miracles it is little wonder that Augustine has such a strong opposition towards the miracles of magicians and demons throughout his corpus. This was no mere academic concern, however, but also had an apologetic purpose. Augustine, and later Bede, lived in an age where demons were feared as an accepted facet of the known world. During an Easter period, Augustine was approached by some Christian layman asking for answers to give the pagans concerning the workings of demons and how they achieved their powers. These people had apparently been motivated to discuss the issue with him after the example was given of a non-Christian who had foretold the unexpected destruction of the temple of the god Serapis in Alexandria in 391.²⁵⁸ The written record of their discussion with Augustine and his response formed his text *De Divinatione Daemonum*, composed c.406-409.²⁵⁹ Whilst he does appear to accept that magicians and demons (or humans possessed by demons) could perform miracles, he disputes the origins of their power as well as their motives. In the specific example of the Temple of Serapis, he writes 'it is not to be marvelled at that demons could know and predict that the destruction of their own temples and images was imminent, among other things, as far as it is permitted them [by God] to know and foretell'.²⁶⁰ His justification stems from scripture. In Matthew 7:22, Jesus states 'Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?"'. In his work *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, dated c.393-394, Augustine comments on this verse in response to those who say 'it is impossible for the wicked to perform those visible

²⁵⁷ 'Quis autem animat quaeque viva nascentia nisi qui et illum serpentum ad horam sicut opus fuerat animavit?', Ibid., III.5.11, p. 138, ll. 27-29; Ibid., p. 134.

²⁵⁸ Augustine, *De Divinatione Daemonum*, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 41 (Vienna, 1900), I.1, p. 599.

²⁵⁹ The most detailed recent discussion can be found in K. Kühn, 'Augustins Schrift *De Divinatione Daemonum*', *Augustiniana*, 47 (1997), pp. 291-337.

²⁶⁰ 'non esse mirandum, si istam eversionem templis et simulacris suis imminere daemones et scire et praedicere potuerunt sicut alia multa, quantum eis nosse et praenuntiare permittitur', *De Divinatione Daemonum*, I.1, p. 599, ll. 13-16.

miracles'.²⁶¹ First, Pharaoh's magicians performed similar wonders to Moses and Aaron in the book of Exodus,²⁶² and more importantly, Jesus himself said to expect false prophets who can perform signs and wonders.²⁶³ For Augustine, miraculous powers of non-believers and demons, imitating those of the saints, are clearly possible, but as Jesus' words suggests, he saw their powers as belonging to 'evildoers' who wish 'to deceive'.²⁶⁴ This moral angle helps explain his sharp repudiation in *De Consensu Evangelistarum* of those who (in his opinion) foolishly say Christ was not God but merely a wise man who had secret books wherein lay the knowledge used to perform his miracles. In his view, the miracles of magicians are real yet 'forbidden arts, which are justly condemned not only by Christian teaching but even by the administration of earthly government itself'.²⁶⁵

Despite this reluctant acceptance that magicians and demons could perform miracles, their powers nevertheless needed an explanation. In *De Trinitate*, Augustine suggests that the powers of magicians such as those in Exodus 7 and 8 come from 'rebel angels', but that they in turn 'are quite impotent unless they are given power from above'.²⁶⁶ In this way, Augustine argues that God is still the ultimate author of the miraculous, but permits the demons to perform miracles for three main reasons: to further deceive sinful humanity, to make the faithful not place too much hope in performing miracles if even the demons can achieve them, and to test and refine the just, citing the example of Job's downfall through Satan being solely by the permission of God. In *DDC* II.20.30 Augustine expands upon this relationship between magician and demon, suggesting that the two enter into a pact or agreement, not in a legal sense like a formal

²⁶¹ 'non posse iniquos visibilia illa miracula facere', Augustine, *De Sermonibus Domini in Monte*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 35 (Turnhout, 1967), II.25.85, p. 185, ll. 1951-1952; Augustine, *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, trans. M. G. Campbell, in B. Ramsey (ed.), *The New Testament, I and II* (Hyde Park, NY, 2014), pp. 112-113.

²⁶² Exodus 7:8-8:19.

²⁶³ Matthew 24:22-25.

²⁶⁴ Matthew 7:23 and 24:24.

²⁶⁵ 'illicita noverat, quae non solum disciplina christiana, sed etiam ipsa terrenae rei publicae ad ministrationem iure condemnat', *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, I.9.14, p. 15, ll. 3-5; *Agreement Among the Evangelists*, p. 146.

²⁶⁶ 'transgressores angelos', 'per quas magicae artes possunt quidquid possunt, valere aliquid nisi data desuper potestate', Augustine, *De Trinitate*, III.7.12, p. 139, ll. 9-10, 12-13; Idem., *The Trinity*, p. 135.

contract but by intention and association of an evil will.²⁶⁷ In this way, all sorts of idolatrous, magical, divinatory, or astrological practices become possible, which he discusses in *DDC* II.20.30-24.37 and groups together under the heading of ‘superstitions’. He is emphatic, however, that such powers are to the magician’s detriment and leads to further entanglement with evil. Augustine says they are ‘deluded and deceived’ and that ‘as they are caught up in them they may become ever more inquisitive and entrap themselves more and more in the manifold snares of this most deadly error’.²⁶⁸

The ability of magicians and demons to perform miracles apart from the purposes of God therefore made their abuse all the more blasphemous. In *DCD* IX.20, Augustine suggests that the word ‘demon’ comes from a Greek root meaning ‘knowledge’, though their knowledge is clearly misplaced. Following 1 Corinthians 8:1, he writes that ‘knowledge is without profit if it lacks charity. Without charity it puffs up: that is, it lifts us up with a pride which is only an inflated emptiness’.²⁶⁹ In his mind, this perfectly encapsulates the demons as they use their knowledge not out of love but out of selfish ambition. In *DCD* XXII.10, Augustine develops this thought, reiterating that the miracles of demons stem from ‘impure pride’, and that ultimately their desire is to be worshipped as gods. This is in comparison to the martyrs, whose miracles were performed as signs, as discussed above, ‘in order to strengthen the faith by which we believe not that they are our gods, but that both they and we have one God’.²⁷⁰ Likewise, in *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, collected between returning to North Africa in 388 and taking the episcopal office in 395 or 396,²⁷¹ Augustine answers the question ‘How did Pharaoh’s magicians produce certain miracles like Moses the servant of God?’.²⁷² He suggests that such

²⁶⁷ R. A. Markus, ‘Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory’, *Revue d'Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques*, 40, no.2 (1994), pp. 382-383.

²⁶⁸ ‘illudendi et decipiendi’, ‘quibus implicati curiosiores fiant et sese magis magisque inserant multiplicibus laqueis perniciosissimi erroris’, *DDC*, II.23.35, pp. 96-99

²⁶⁹ ‘nisi scientiam tunc prodesse, cum caritas inest; sine hac autem inflare, id est in superbiam inanissimae quasi ventositatis extollere’, *DCD*, CCSL 47, IX.20, p. 267, ll. 6-8; *The City of God*, p. 385.

²⁷⁰ ‘fastu impurae’, ‘ut fides illa proficiat, qua eos non deos nostros esse, sed unum Deum nobiscum habere credamus’, *DCD*, CCSL 48, XXII.10, p. 828, ll. 12 and 14-16; *Ibid.*, p. 1135.

²⁷¹ *Retractationes*, I.25.1.

²⁷² ‘Quare magi Pharaonis fecerunt quaedam miracula sicut Moyses famulus Dei?’, Augustine, *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 44A (Turnhout, 1975), LXXIX, p. 225, ll. 1-2.

miracles are of a qualitative difference to those of the saints; they are performed ‘for a different purpose and by a different law’.²⁷³ The key distinction lies in their overall motive. Augustine writes that magicians perform miracles by private contract, whereas good Christians do so through public righteousness, magicians seeking their own glory, Christians seeking God’s glory.²⁷⁴ Ultimately, Augustine believed that the miracles of magicians and demons were full of pride, performed for selfish reasons, and usually done in secret. The miracles of the saints, the miracles that were approved by God, however, came from a humble heart, were performed for selfless reasons, and were performed in the open for the public good, acting as clear, visible signs that pointed people towards God.²⁷⁵ In the eighth century, Bede would ensure that the miracles of the saints he discusses across his hagiographical and historical writings clearly exemplified Augustine’s understanding of their purpose and performance. Miracles recorded in scripture, however, held additional layers of interpretation that needed to be deciphered for the Christian to fully appreciate their didactic content.

Whilst Augustine understood miracles in the Bible as occurring in a literal sense, he also saw how an allegorical interpretation of events could often be of greater benefit to his audience. Three examples will suffice. In his *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, written c.400, Augustine addresses the questions of a disciple as they were reading the Gospels of Matthew and Luke together.²⁷⁶ In *QE* I.18, Augustine addresses Matthew 8:5-13 and 15:22-28 where Christ heals a centurion’s servant and a Canaanite’s daughter without physically being present with them. Presumably the question asked by Augustine’s disciple revolved around what this meant (the *QE* does not provide the questions, just Augustine’s responses). Augustine states ‘That [Jesus] cures the son of the centurion and the daughter of the Canaanite woman without coming to their homes signifies that the gentiles to whom

²⁷³ ‘diverso fine et diverso iure fiunt’, Ibid., p. 229, ll. 83-84.

²⁷⁴ ‘Illi enim faciunt quaerentes gloriam suam, illi quaerentes gloriam Dei’, ‘magi per privatos contractus, boni christiani per publicam iustitiam’, Ibid., p. 229, ll. 84-85 and 100-101.

²⁷⁵ Markus, ‘Augustine on Magic’, pp. 379-380.

²⁷⁶ *Retractationes* II.12. Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 44B (Turnhout, 1980). [Henceforth *QE*].

he does not come will be saved by his word'.²⁷⁷ In this way, Augustine provides the two Gospel miracles here with contemporary significance: whilst no longer physically present, gentiles (that is, all non-Jews) can still be saved through the preaching of Jesus' followers. Gentiles were the 'other sheep not of this fold' that Jesus refers to in John 10:16 that would later be included into the Church alongside the Jews. This conversion initially occurred through the teaching of the Apostles as recorded in Acts, beginning with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 and the Roman centurion Cornelius and his family in Acts 10. Augustine frequently mentions the 'whole world', which included his own see in the Roman colony of Hippo Regius, as now believing in Christ. It is clear from his answer in *QE* I.18 therefore that he saw the spread of Christianity as fulfilment of Jesus' promise that the gentiles would be included in God's plan for salvation. This continuation of the Apostles' work to the gentiles is something that Bede too would later develop when considering the conversion of his own people in the *HE*.²⁷⁸

The second and third examples of Augustine taking miracles in an allegorical sense come from the Gospel of Luke. The second example, also from *QE*, again focuses on how God brings both Jew and gentile together in his plan for salvation.²⁷⁹ In *QE* II.48.1, Augustine explains the healing of a blind man outside the city of Jericho as recorded in Luke 18:35-43. Matthew 20:29-34 records a very similar incident but with two blind men, and as such Augustine feels the need to explain the discrepancy. He argues that these were in fact two separate instances of healing, the one in Luke as Jesus and his disciples were approaching Jericho, the one in Matthew as they were leaving. This then provides the opportunity for an allegorical interpretation. Following Jerome, Augustine had already suggested that the translation of the word 'Jericho' is 'moon', 'and symbolises our mortality, because it begins, increases, grows old, and sets'.²⁸⁰ He argues that as Jesus was approaching his own mortality (his death on the Cross), he preached his message to the

²⁷⁷ 'Quod et puerum centurionis et filiam Chananee mulieris non veniens ad domos eorum salvat, significat gentes, ad quas non venit, salvas fore per verbum suum', *QE* I.18, p. 17, ll. 2-4; Augustine, *Questions on the Gospels*, trans. R. Teske, in B. Ramsey (ed.), *The New Testament, I and II* (Hyde Park, NY, 2014), p. 367.

²⁷⁸ See pp. 78-79, below.

²⁷⁹ Galatians 3:26-29.

²⁸⁰ 'significat mortalitatem nostrum propter quod nascitur, crescit, senescit et occidit', *QE* II.19, p. 62, ll. 5-6; *Questions on the Gospels*, p. 388. Jerome, *Liber Interpretationes Hebraicorum Nominum*, ed. P. de Lagarde, CCSL 72 (Turnhout, 1959), p. 82, l. 28.

Jews only, here symbolised by the one blind man in Luke. However, leaving his mortality behind him through his resurrection and ascension, Jesus' salvation was preached to both peoples, Jew and gentile, as symbolised by the two blind men in Matthew's account. Sin, like blindness (Luke 18:35-43 and Matthew 20:29-34), paralysis (Matthew 8:5-13) and demon-possession (Matthew 15:21-28), is considered by Augustine as a spiritual ailment. In this example, the miracle of healing is again interpreted allegorically as the overcoming of sin through salvation.

Third, in Luke 13:32, Jesus, speaking of his earthly mission, states 'I cast out demons and perform cures for today and tomorrow, and on the third day I complete my course'. The difficulty for Augustine lies in the fact that this passage 'was clearly not fulfilled literally' – according to the chronology of Luke's text Jesus did not finish his ministry three days after saying this.²⁸¹ The miracles Jesus mentions therefore demanded an allegorical interpretation, and Augustine again applies this passage to the restorative mission and future hope of the Church. He writes:

This refers to his body, the Church. For demons are cast out when the gentiles abandon their ancestral superstitions and believe in him, and cures are performed when they live by his commandments, renouncing the devil and this world, all the way to the end, that is, the resurrection. Then there will be that completion of *the third day*, when the church will be brought to the perfection of angelic fullness by the immortality of the body.²⁸²

The miracles of exorcism and healing performed by Jesus are once more understood allegorically by Augustine first as conversion to Christianity (their previous superstitions are exorcised) and then of Christian belief (their false beliefs and practices are 'cured' and replaced by Christianity). It is interesting to note that in his own exegesis of Luke 13:32,

²⁸¹ 'ad litteram certum est non esse conpletum', *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, III.25.80, p. 385, ll. 8-9; *Agreement Among the Evangelists*, III.25.80, p. 312.

²⁸² 'referatur ad corpus eius, quod est ecclesia. Expelluntur enim demonia, cum relictis paternis superstitionibus credunt in eum gentes, et perficiuntur sanitates, cum secundum eius praecepta vivitur, posteaquam fuerit diabolo et huic saeculo renuntiatum, usque in finem resurrectionis, qua tamquam tertia consummabitur, hoc est ad plenitudinem angelicam per corporis etiam immortalitatem perficietur ecclesia', *Ibid.*, II.75.145, p. 250, ll. 8-15; *Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

Bede copies Augustine's allegorical explanation from *De Consensu Evangelistarum* II.75.145 verbatim (a reference missed by Hurst), clearly showing the intellectual debt for which he owed this understanding of the miraculous.²⁸³

It was not only the miracles of the Bible however that could provide these moral instructions. As suggested above, in his more mature years Augustine came to see that, as he titles *DCD* XXIII.8, 'miracles, wrought so that the world might come to believe, have not ceased now that the world does believe'.²⁸⁴ This chapter is one of the longest in *DCD* and is particularly important as it contains Augustine's thoughts on the miracles he knew of in his own day. From the outset, he is clear that, whilst still of great benefit, contemporary miracles do not hold the same kind of weight as those contained within the Bible for two main reasons. First, they are not universally known. All Christians share the miracles of scripture, but not all Christians know of the miracles of local saints. At the start of the chapter he contrasts the healing of a blind man in Milan, 'a great city', when he and 'an immense crowd' were present, with the healing of Innocentius of his fistulae in Carthage, which is known to 'very few people'.²⁸⁵ Second, the sources of contemporary miracles have less authority than the Bible. As Augustine writes,

More recent miracles... wherever they occur, are scarcely known to all people of the city, or even to the whole district, in which they are performed. For the most part they are known to very few persons, and all the rest are ignorant of them, especially when the city in which they are wrought is a large one. And when the story is told in other places and to other people, it is not borne out by an authority sufficient to ensure that, even though told by faithful Christians to other believers, it will be accepted without difficulty or doubt.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ *In Lucam*, IV, XIII.33, p. 273, ll. 1695-1703.

²⁸⁴ '*De Miraculis, quae ut mundus in Christum crederet facta sunt et fieri mundo credente non desinunt*', *DCD*, CCSL 47, Breviculus, p. xlv, ll. 15-17; *The City of God*, XXII.8, p. 1120.

²⁸⁵ '*grandis est civitas*', '*inmenso populo*', '*paucissimos*', *DCD*, XXII.8, p. 816, ll. 39-40 and 46; *Ibid.*, p. 1121. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 419 briefly discusses Augustine's presence at the miracle in Milan. The miracle in Milan is also recorded in *V. Ambr* XIV.

²⁸⁶ '*Haec autem ubicumque fiunt, ibi sciuntur vix a tota ipsa civitate vel quocumque commanentium loco. Nam plerumque etiam ibi paucissimi sciunt ignorantibus ceteris, maxime si magna sit civitas; et quando alibi*

Just as we have seen with Gregory and Bede above, the people of Augustine's day were not overly credulous. They required good authority to believe the miracles that were told to them, and even then they might have struggled to believe such stories. This included Augustine himself. A little later in the chapter, he recounts the healing of an actor from Curubis who was cured of his paralysis and a genital deformity immediately upon his baptism. Augustine sends orders via a fellow bishop to send the man to Carthage, nearly 60 miles away, so he could hear the story for himself, 'even though we had already heard the story from those whose good faith we could not doubt'.²⁸⁷ Whilst known, named figures could provide reliable testimony for a miracle occurring, it appears that directly witnessing a miracle yourself or questioning those who had (if able) was preferable. This is certainly the case for the healing of the siblings Paulinus and Palladia, also recorded in *DCD* XXII.8. Paulinus is cured of his shaking sickness after praying at the shrine of Stephen the martyr in Hippo and then presents himself to Augustine alongside several witnesses. Not long afterwards, three days after Easter Sunday, the sick Palladia is presented to the congregation alongside her healthy brother, but during Augustine's sermon she is also cured at Stephen's shrine.²⁸⁸ Augustine had been able to witness the newfound health of both siblings for himself, and this story was so well known that he could state 'I suppose there is no one in Hippo who did not either see it or hear of it, and none could possibly forget it'.²⁸⁹ In Chapter Four I show how Bede developed Augustine's practice, naming living witnesses to attest miracle stories as well as omitting those from earlier sources where they were known to have since died.

Despite favouring direct contact with living eyewitnesses, Augustine was also conscious that miracle accounts should be written down and preserved for posterity. He explains that 'when I saw, in our own times, frequent signs of divine power similar to those of old, I desired to have such records made, lest such things perish from the minds of many

aliisque narrantur, non tanta ea commendat auctoritas, ut sine difficultate vel dubitatione credantur, quamuis Christianis fidelibus a fidelibus indicentur', Ibid., ll. 30-36; Ibid., p. 1121.

²⁸⁷ '*quamuis a talibus prius audierimus, de quorum fide dubitare non possemus*', Ibid., p. 820, ll. 190-191; Ibid., pp. 1125-1126.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 825-827.

²⁸⁹ '*ut nullum arbitrer esse Hipponensium, qui hoc non vel viderit vel didicerit, nullum qui oblivisci ulla ratione potuerit*', Ibid., p. 825, ll. 408-410; *The City of God*, p. 1132.

men'.²⁹⁰ These appear to be primarily local records akin to the hagiographical community texts of later cult figures such as Cuthbert or Columba. At the time of writing, nearly 70 miracles had been recorded at the shrine of Stephen in Hippo in the past two years according to Augustine's knowledge, with 'incomparably more' at Stephen's shrine at nearby Calama.²⁹¹ Augustine and his audience knew that others had likely occurred yet had not been written down. The miracles he does include in *DCD* XXII.8 are but a snapshot, and he apologises for not mentioning more, something the anonymous author of the *VCA* would also state.²⁹² The purpose of keeping such records was for public recital. If a miracle occurred, it was written down and then read out in church at an opportune time for the edification of the entire congregation. Augustine was aware, however, that this didactic element of publicly presenting miracle narratives was not without its issues. He writes that

Even where care is taken to read to the people the written accounts of those who receive such blessings – and we have now begun to do this at Hippo – those who are present hear the story only once, and many are not present. In any case, those who were present do not retain in their minds what they have heard for more than a few days, and scarcely anyone is found who can tell what he has heard to one whom he knows to have been absent.²⁹³

Nevertheless, this intention to utilise miracles for moral instruction was one shared by Gregory as well as Bede. Through the miracles he includes in *DCD* XXII.8, Augustine was keen to show how, in the fifth century just as in the first, God was still using miracles to achieve his purposes.

²⁹⁰ 'Id namque fieri voluminus, cum videremus antiquis similia divinarum signa virtutem etiam nostris temporibus frequentari et ea non debere multorum notitiae deperire', *Ibid.*, p. 824, ll. 350-353; *Ibid.*, p. 1130.

²⁹¹ 'incomparabili multitudine superant', *Ibid.*, ll. 358-359; *Ibid.*, p. 1130.

²⁹² *VCA* IV.18.

²⁹³ 'Nam et ubi diligenter est, quae nunc apud nos esse coepit, ut libelli eorum, qui beneficia percipient, recitentur in populo, semel hoc audiunt qui adsunt pluresque non adsunt, ut nec illi, qui adfuerunt, post aliquot dies quod audierunt mente retineant ex vix quisque reperiatur illorum, qui ei, quem non adfuisse cognoverit, indicet quod audivit', *DCD*, CCSL 48, XXII.8, p. 825, ll. 400-406; *The City of God*, p. 1132.

Ultimately for Augustine, all of human history, including miracles, forms a part of God's plan to save the human race; the past serves as a sign pointing towards the present as well as the eschatological future. Augustine highly valued the past, commissioning Orosius to write a history against the 'pagans', who are described as those who 'do not look to the future and have either forgotten or remain ignorant of the past'.²⁹⁴ Rather than through the miracles of contemporary saints however, God's continuing plan in history is revealed primarily through revelation, that is, through the Christian scriptures. Rigorous exegesis is thus a prerequisite to understanding the will and purposes of God. Yet truth is not to be kept to oneself but is to be shared. As Augustine explains at the start of *DDC*, 'there are two things on which all interpretation of scripture depends: the process of discovering what we need to learn, and the process of presenting what we have learnt'.²⁹⁵ As Michael Cameron remarks, 'Augustine asked not how Scripture was composed, but how it should be received... Augustine looks not so much for *meaning* as for *understanding*'.²⁹⁶ The theory behind such exegesis, combined with the content, form two branches of the same task; if one cannot correctly exegete the text, one will arrive at faulty conclusions, and will thus pass on error or worse, heresy.

Augustine's chosen method of exegesis was, on the whole, figurative, following the Alexandrian school of exegesis, though that is not to say he ignored the literal/historical sense.²⁹⁷ The literal sense is foundational; it 'could never be dismissed'.²⁹⁸ Without it, one cannot progress to the deeper, allegorical meanings of scripture. Indeed, many of the issues addressed by Augustine in *De Consensu Evangelistarum* focus on how apparent

²⁹⁴ 'qui cum futura non quaerunt, praeterita autem aut obliviscantur aut nesciant', Orose, *Histoires (Contre les Païens)*, ed. and trans. M-P. Arnaud-Lindet, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1990), Prologue.9, p. 8; Orosius, *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. A. T. Fear (Liverpool, 2010), Preface.9, p. 32.

²⁹⁵ 'Duae sunt res quibus nititur omnis tractatio scripturarum modus inveniendi quae intellegenda sunt et modus proferendi quae intellecta sunt', *DDC*, I.1.1, pp. 12-13.

²⁹⁶ M. Cameron, 'Augustine and Scripture' in M. Vessey (ed.), *A Companion to Augustine* (Oxford, 2015), p. 202. Emphasis in original.

²⁹⁷ T. Williams, 'Hermeneutics and Reading Scripture', in D. V. Meconi and E. Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge, 2nd ed., 2014), pp. 311-327.

²⁹⁸ Thacker, *Bede and Augustine*, p. 17.

contradictions in the Gospel accounts can be reconciled at the literal level.²⁹⁹ The same approach to discerning the literal level of the text can be found in his commentary *De Genesi ad Litteram*. This manner of interpreting the Bible was subsequently adopted by Bede, who had followed it through both Augustine and Gregory.³⁰⁰ The literal sense of scripture was not neglected but served as a signpost towards allegorical, tropological and anagogical truths. Holder explains that Bede felt ‘what would edify most was a spiritual interpretation of Scripture centring on Christ, the Church, and the sacramental life’.³⁰¹ Scripture may have a literal meaning, but it points the reader towards higher truths of the faith. This reasoning is most apparent in Bede’s commentaries on the Temple of Solomon and the Tabernacle, where he uses their physical descriptions, dimensions and materials as signs for the edification of his audience.³⁰² Three implications of this method of exegesis can be drawn regarding the writing of history. First, as has already been stated, the literal meaning of the past can be used didactically to inform the reader in both their present circumstances and regarding the future. A historical text does not always have to be merely a list of facts and figures but can be crafted to inform one’s audience.³⁰³ History can be an edifying endeavour. Secondly, if history is for the edification of the audience, this may sometimes allow the author to tailor, edit, omit or embellish parts of the past for the benefit of the moral point being raised.³⁰⁴ Whilst a modern historian may blanch at the prospect of doctoring their accounts of the past in this way, it was deemed acceptable to a certain extent by late antique and early medieval authors. As Thacker states, the fact ‘that history

²⁹⁹ For example, did Jesus give one ‘sermon on the mount’ or two? Augustine suggests that Jesus taught the same sermon in two places on the same occasion: first on the mountain as recorded by Matthew then repeated afterwards on a level place as recorded by Luke. Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, II.19.

³⁰⁰ Cf. A. G. Holder, ‘Bede and the Tradition of Patristic Exegesis’, *Anglican Theological Review*, 72, no. 4 (1990), pp. 399-411.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

³⁰² See in particular J. O’Reilly, ‘Introduction’, in Bede, *On the Temple*, trans. S. Connolly (Liverpool, 1995), pp. xvii-lv, Thacker, *Bede and Augustine*, pp. 21-25, and O’Brien, *Bede’s Temple*, *Passim*.

³⁰³ The specific historical style of ‘chronicle’, employed by Bede in both *De Temporibus* and *DTR*, appears in context in both texts as the culmination of his understanding of time; after explaining how time is divided and calculated, the world chronicles, dated by *annus mundi*, act among other things as a form of application to this understanding.

³⁰⁴ Cf. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, Ch. Nine.

should be edifying and teach through its portrayal of holy example undoubtedly affected its content in Bede's hands'.³⁰⁵ I argue in the next chapter, however, that Bede, '*quasi verax historicus*',³⁰⁶ sought to be as truthful and accurate in his historical works as he could. Furthermore, the existence of contemporary accounts allows us to cross-examine where one author has differed from another in their reporting of the past.³⁰⁷ Finally, as the Bible contains so many historical accounts, it can serve as a perfect model for the mores of writing history. This was of particular importance to Bede who, as I shall argue in the following chapter, regarded the books of Luke and Acts in particular as models for composing specifically *ecclesiastical* history. Inspired by God himself,³⁰⁸ the very words of scripture provided Bede, and other medieval authors, with what they believed to be a faultless exemplar to their literary endeavours.³⁰⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide some of the background relating to Bede's understanding of history through the works of two key individuals: Gregory the Great and Augustine. There are of course several other names that could be mentioned, such as Jerome, Ambrose, Orosius or Gildas, but Gregory and Augustine are the most prominent across the entirety of Bede's corpus. Gregory's *Dialogi* provided Bede with a text regarding miracles that he could mirror for the miracles of his own time. Gregory taught Bede not only what content was suitable to discuss in such texts, but more importantly *how* to talk about them. For example, Gregory's use of witnesses to attest these miracle stories was highly valued by Bede and other authors in the eighth century. Witnesses helped confirm the truth of the written account. From a small case study of doubt in the writings of Bede, there were clearly still issues regarding Christian practice and belief among the Anglo-Saxons, particularly concerning the saints, their roles and their miracles. He therefore chose to write history and hagiography in such a way as to minimise the doubt

³⁰⁵ A. Thacker, 'Bede and History', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 188.

³⁰⁶ *HE* III.17, p. 264.

³⁰⁷ This is particularly apparent considering Bede and Stephen's differing portraits of the life of Wilfrid.

³⁰⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

³⁰⁹ Bede makes this point throughout his work *De Schematibus et Tropis*.

his audience may have regarding the claims made therein. Chapters Five and Six will show the extent to which these differing Anglo-Saxon authors provided witnesses to reinforce the veracity of their miraculous claims. Augustine provided much of the intellectual background to Bede's understanding of the miraculous, including their definitions. His theory of miracles as signs was closely followed by Bede, instructing him that it was not the miracle itself but what it stood for that was most important. Likewise, Augustine's inclusion of contemporary miracles in *DCD* XXII.8 provided Bede with another exemplar to discuss the miracles of his own Anglo-Saxon past, in addition to those of early hagiographies explored in Chapter Three, below. His teaching on (salvation) history also had a profound influence on Bede; as Thacker writes, 'Augustine appealed to Bede's historical imagination'.³¹⁰ Finally, his understanding of how to interpret scripture, including the allegorical meaning of biblical miracles, impacted upon the related topic of the interpretation and written expression of the past. History was a religious exercise through which the historian not only informed but taught his audience appropriate moral lessons.

Gregory and Augustine can thus be perceived as two complementary influences on Bede's thought and written work. Gregory showed Bede some of the ways in which he could apply the exegetical and historical theory he had learnt through Augustine, whom Bede regarded as 'the foremost doctor of the Church'.³¹¹ The rest of this thesis will build on this foundation to explore both Bede's understanding of the role of the historian in the context of miracles as well as the application of what he had learnt from his two great predecessors.

³¹⁰ Thacker, *Bede and Augustine*, p. 33.

³¹¹ 'omnium doctor eximius ecclesiarum', *DTR* LXVI, p. 516, l. 1583; *Reckoning of Time*, p. 220.

Chapter Two

Bede's Historical Method

Bede has been described as ‘a natural historian’;³¹² history and matters of chronology are key focuses across many of his texts, whether that be narrating the history of his own people, calculating the date of Easter, or tracing the lives of the prophets and kings of scripture. This chapter deals with Bede’s conception of history, particularly as it is found in his most famous work, the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. It therefore serves as a precursor to understanding what Bede understood himself to be doing when composing historical and hagiographical texts and why, for the broader purposes of this thesis, he included eyewitness sources for miracle stories.³¹³

Much has been written on Bede as an historian; his complex understanding of time and history is, almost by necessity, a constant feature that must be acknowledged by modern research. Campbell was full of praise for Bede’s historical achievements, particularly the *HE*, stating that ‘no history that can rival it appeared in Western Europe until the twelfth century’.³¹⁴ Likewise Gransden wrote that Bede’s ‘grasp of historical method was unique in the Middle Ages’.³¹⁵ Important contributions to the subject can also be found amongst a plethora of other scholars.³¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is not my intention to exhaustively repeat already well-trodden ground; I am largely in agreement with the historiography regarding Bede’s understanding of the purposes and methods of history. Rather, this chapter continues the theme from the previous one in examining the models which may have influenced Bede in the composition of his texts. The previous chapter looked at two of Bede’s predecessors, Gregory and Augustine, showing how patristic

³¹² Thacker, ‘Bede and History’, p. 170.

³¹³ Discussed more fully in Chapter Three, with comparison between Bede and his contemporaries in Chapters Four and Five.

³¹⁴ J. Campbell, ‘Bede I’, in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1986), p. 2.

³¹⁵ A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c.550-c.1307* (London, 1974), p. 24.

³¹⁶ Including, but not limited to, W. Levison, ‘Bede as Historian’, in A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *Bede: His Life, Times and Writings* (Oxford, 1935), pp. 111-151; J. Davidse, ‘The Sense of History in the Works of the Venerable Bede’, *Studi Medievali*, 23 (Dec., 1982), pp. 647-695; Idem., ‘On Bede as Christian Historian’; A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 229-312; N. J. Higham, *(Re-) Reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in Context* (Abingdon, 2006).

thought shaped Bede's Christian conception of miracles. A large portion of this current chapter will be devoted to the writing of ecclesiastical history as a genre. A thorough understanding of Bede's literary models, including their use of miracles, will lead to a greater understanding of his methodology when writing about the miraculous in his own texts. I begin by exploring some of the similarities and then the more substantive differences between Bede's *HE* and that of Eusebius, the texts many historians have drawn obvious parallels between. Eusebius has been described as the 'fountainhead' of ecclesiastical historiography,³¹⁷ and his importance cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, this chapter ultimately proposes that greater emphasis should be placed on the original ecclesiastical history found in the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles* and that they have been under appreciated as sources of inspiration for Bede's *HE*, particularly in light of their prefaces. Eusebius was Bishop of Caesarea, Palestine, and wrote his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, divided into ten books, in the first quarter of the fourth century.³¹⁸ Bede knew this text through the Latin translation by Rufinus which added a further two books, updating Eusebius' work to the death of the Emperor Theodosius I in 395.³¹⁹ Having suggested that the differences between Bede and Eusebius' purposes and content are noticeable, I then focus specifically upon miracles in Eusebius' text. This serves as a brief case study to show that his use and understanding of miracles in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* is dissimilar to Bede in the *HE*, further reinforcing the divide between both authors. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Bede's '*vera lex historiae*' from the Preface to his *HE* and how my understanding of this phrase relates to our understanding of Bede as an historian and the value he placed on truthfully relating events of the past.

³¹⁷ R. A. Markus, 'Church History and the Early Church Historians', in D. Baker (ed.), *The Materials, Sources and Methods of Ecclesiastical History*, Studies in Church History, XI (Oxford, 1975), p. 1.

³¹⁸ Ibid., p. xii.

³¹⁹ Found in *Eusebius Werke*, Vol. II, *Die Kirchengeschichte*, Parts 1 and 2, ed. T. Mommsen (Leipzig, 1903-1908) [Henceforth *Historia Ecclesiastica*]. Rufinus' Latin edition of the text has not been translated into English. For his continuation, see *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia: Books 10 and 11*, trans. P. R. Amidon (Oxford, 1997). Amidon in his Introduction discusses the fact that, at least in part, Rufinus used a (now-lost) earlier Greek continuation of Eusebius by Gelasius of Caesarea, pp. xiii-xvii. Nevertheless, for our purposes I will refer to the text Bede had simply as Rufinus' text. See further L. W. Barnard, 'Bede and Eusebius as Church Historians', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), pp. 106-124.

Through enhancing our perspective of Bede as an historian, this chapter thus seeks to answer two of the research questions listed in the Introduction as they relate to the miraculous. First, the focus on Luke/Acts over Eusebius/Rufinus seeks to recontextualise the debate concerning Bede's literary influences. By showing how Bede focused more on biblical precedent than often thought, the first part of this chapter adds an air of caution towards our interpretation of some of the texts examined in Chapters Three, Five and Six that are often linked to the Northumbrian's work; earlier scholarly connections between texts should not always be taken for granted but reassessed in light of new evidence. Addressing the theme of miracles in particular, the middle part of this chapter reveals how Bede in the *HE* was far more concerned with the miraculous than Eusebius/Rufinus, that the contexts in which miracles occur in the *HE* differ to the earlier *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and that Bede relied upon oral tradition to attest his miracle stories to a far greater degree than Eusebius/Rufinus did. Second, the examination of '*vera lex historiae*' helps answer how Bede decided to write about the past in general, which by extension we can apply to his literary handling of the miraculous. This final part of the chapter thus serves as a natural extension to the discussion in Chapter One, namely, that Bede sought to provide an accurate and truthful account of the past (with minor qualification), often in response to a sceptical audience. When exploring Bede's practice of providing sources for miracles in Chapter Four, and in comparison to his contemporaries in Chapters Five and Six, this present chapter provides some of the rationale as to why Bede wrote the way he did. It offers a methodological insight into Bede's conceptions of truth and what suitable or best practice for a historian might entail when addressing miracles.

Bede, Eusebius and Luke

Many recent commentators, whilst not denying the biblical influences, have preferred to place the origins of Bede's *HE* firmly with Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Wallace-Hadrill, for example, states that the preface to Bede's *HE* is comparable to Eusebius' preface in terms of providing the general outline and rationale for his text as well as alluding to his sources. He states that Bede 'knows he stands in a tradition of which Eusebius was the great originator'.³²⁰ Nicholas Higham, following the 1975 Jarrow Lecture

³²⁰ Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary*, pp. 1-2.

by R. A. Markus,³²¹ writes that Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* was Bede's 'principal exemplar'.³²² George Brown has compared Bede's use of documents with Eusebius,³²³ and praises 'Bede's accomplishment of melding Eusebian historiography with local history'.³²⁴ Furthermore, Danuta Shanzer has argued that Bede developed his Latinity in the *HE* specifically from 'a deep and careful immersion in the style of Rufinus',³²⁵ who had translated Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* from the Greek.³²⁶ In sum, it appears that Wilhelm Levison's old suggestion that Bede's work was a form of 'British and Anglo-Saxon supplement' to Eusebius has been oft repeated.³²⁷ The connections between Bede and Eusebius are readily apparent, and have served historians to highlight the models for both content and style that Bede chose when composing his *HE*. At face value, both focus on the history of their respective churches (as implied by their titles), the succession of bishops and the interaction between Church and State over the periods they cover. Both texts are broadly chronological,³²⁸ and are subdivided by content. Campbell, writing in 1966, neatly summarises this view: 'His [Bede's] aim seems to have been to do for the history of the Church in England what Eusebius had done for the whole and he follows him

³²¹ R. A. Markus, *Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical Historiography* (Jarrow Lecture, 1975).

³²² Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, p. 75.

³²³ Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, p. 102.

³²⁴ Ibid. p. 103.

³²⁵ D. Shanzer, 'Bede's Style: A Neglected Historiographical Model for the Style of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', in C. D. Wright, F. M. Biggs and T. N. Hall (eds.), *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill* (London, 2007), p. 344.

³²⁶ Rufinus' work is not simply a verbatim translation, however, paraphrasing, adding or omitting much of Eusebius' text. See J. E. L. Oulton, 'Rufinus's Translation of the Church History of Eusebius', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 30 (Jan., 1929), pp. 150-174 and E. C. Brooks, 'The Translation Techniques of Rufinus of Aquileia (343-411)', *Studia Patristica*, 17 (1982), pp. 357-364. For example, Oulton, Ibid., shows how Rufinus downplayed Eusebius' supposed Arian sympathies (pp. 153-156) and removed questions regarding the (in)authenticity of certain biblical texts (pp. 156-158), but also added additional information regarding geography, history, and the martyrdom of early saints (pp. 164-173).

³²⁷ Levison, 'Bede as Historian', p. 133.

³²⁸ Nevertheless, Eusebius dates his work by the regnal years of Roman emperors, Bede famously using years since the Incarnation, on which see most recently M. MacCarron, 'Christology and the Future in Bede's *Annus Domini*', in P. Darby and F. Wallis (eds.), *Bede and the Future* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 161-179.

in choice of subject-matter and in technique'.³²⁹ Moreover, Bede had a living reminder of Eusebius as his 'most beloved abbot' Hwætberht was also known by that name.³³⁰ Bede writes in his *In Primam Partem Samuhelis* that it was Hwætberht's 'love and pursuit of piety [that] had once bestowed unto him the name Eusebius'.³³¹ Bede had composed perhaps his earliest work, the *Expositio Apocalypseos*, at the request of Hwætberht (named as Eusebius in that text),³³² showing that from the beginning of his career the figure of Eusebius was significant for Bede.

Whilst not denying the impact Eusebius' work had on his own, I believe that Bede's deep reverence of scripture, particularly the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles*,³³³ should be considered as additional major stylistic influences when composing his *HE*. Charles Jones was one of the first to sound a note of caution in drawing too close a connection between Bede and Eusebius, writing that whilst Bede 'used and venerated' his work, stylistic reasons show that 'fundamentally his *History* is not that of an English Eusebius'; he is doing something different.³³⁴ However, it was Roger Ray who was one of the first historians to develop the specific notion that Bede's use of the Bible influenced the way he narrated history.³³⁵ Ray suggested that 'other historical works are of value only in some illuminating relationship to *sacra historia*', and that for Bede, following Augustine, 'the Bible is the unparalleled book of history'.³³⁶ Towards the end of his Jarrow Lecture, having shown more caution towards the Eusebian model than many of his predecessors, Markus pondered that 'perhaps we fail to do justice to Bede the ecclesiastical historian if

³²⁹ Campbell, 'Bede I', p. 5.

³³⁰ 'dilectissime abba', *DTR* Praefatio, p. 265, l. 39; Bede, *Reckoning of Time*, p. 4.

³³¹ 'cui amor studiumque pietatis iam olim Eusebii cognomen indidit', Bede, *In Primam Partem Samuelhis*, Prologus, p. 212, ll. 15-17. Translation mine.

³³² Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Praefatio, p. 221, l. 3; Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, trans. F. Wallis (Liverpool, 2013), Preface, p. 101. He is also mentioned as Eusebius in Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, Preface, p. 3, l. 7; Bede, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Preface, p. 3.

³³³ Whilst there is some modern debate about whether these two works were actually written by Luke himself or by some anonymous author, there is general agreement that the two works were written by the same person. For ease of simplicity though, and following Bede's own beliefs, I will refer to the author of both Luke and Acts throughout this chapter as Luke.

³³⁴ C. Jones, 'Bede as Early Medieval Historian', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 4 (1946), p. 33.

³³⁵ Ray, 'Bede, the Exegete, as Historian'.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

we fail to read his historical work as he would have wished it to be read: in the light of his reflections on the “sacred history” contained in his commentaries on the Bible’.³³⁷

However, the question is left hanging in such a short space and is not explored thoroughly to its logical conclusion; this chapter takes on that challenge to show the benefit of a truly Bedan reading of Bede’s *HE*, one that takes more seriously into account his knowledge and love of the biblical text as a model for historical writing. An early approach to this suggestion came from McClure, who highlighted thematic and linguistic connections between the book of Samuel (which Bede had written a commentary on) and the *HE*.³³⁸ More recently, Paul Hilliard’s 2007 doctoral thesis *Sacred and Secular History in the Writings of Bede*,³³⁹ and Julia Barrow’s 2011 article ‘How Coifi Pierced Christ’s Side’ have continued this trend.³⁴⁰ Under such an understanding, Bede’s *HE* is seen less as a derivative work merely paralleling Eusebius and more as an innovative creation of his own, a careful amalgam of Holy Scripture with the genre Eusebius first established.³⁴¹ The reason for looking to Luke as a model stems from Bede’s comments on him in his *In Primam Partem Samuelis*. In the Prologue to that text Bede states that Luke ‘performed the office of historian’.³⁴² With such an opinion of the biblical author, it makes sense to examine how he may have influenced Bede in his own historiography; none of the other Gospel writers are mentioned in that passage.

³³⁷ Markus, *Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical Historiography*, p. 13.

³³⁸ J. McClure, ‘Bede’s Old Testament Kings’ in P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford, 1983) pp. 76-98.

³³⁹ P. Hilliard, *Sacred and Secular History in the Writings of Bede (†735)* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Cambridge, 2007).

³⁴⁰ J. Barrow, ‘How Coifi pierced Christ’s side: a re-examination of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, II, Chapter 13’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011), pp. 693-706.

³⁴¹ Dickerson states somewhat paradoxically that ‘Bede, like Augustine before him, believed the Bible to be the unparalleled book of history... The Bible... served as Bede’s primary historical text and as his paradigm of true history’, yet nevertheless agreed with the more traditional view that ‘Bede, in fact, was very much in debt to Eusebius’: W. W. Dickerson III, ‘Bede as Literary Architect of the English Church: Another Look at Bede’s Use of Hagiography in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*’, *American Benedictine Review*, 45 (1994), pp. 95 and 97.

³⁴² ‘*quam historici functum officio*’, Bede, *In Primam Partem Samuelis*, Prologus, pp. 9-10, ll. 34-47.

The following section will mainly be concerned with the Preface to the *HE* and how that closely follows Luke's methods in composing his two works. Prefaces or introductions provide much relevant information regarding authorial intention and stated methodology when considering the rest of their works as a whole. Some comments will also be made on how the rest of the *HE* can be seen to mirror Lukan interests. I will approach these texts in terms of composition, style and purpose.

Context

Bede wrote commentaries on both Luke and Acts. In terms of dating these texts, the Preface to Bede's *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* provides some helpful chronological markers. First, it is addressed to Bishop Acca, who was ordained in 710.³⁴³ Second, Bede mentions that he had been tasked by Acca to compose a commentary on Luke, which he describes as an 'explanation of the blessed evangelist Luke', but had not completed it yet.³⁴⁴ This work is mentioned in the first book of his *In Primam Partem Samuhelis*,³⁴⁵ the first three books of which can be dated to 716. We therefore have a firm dating for both works of between 710 and 716, with his *In Lucam* following the *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*. This is important, as they both predate Bede's *HE*, completed circa 731, and thus will have served as an influence when he came to composing that later text. The Gospel of Luke itself, usually dated between 75 and 100,³⁴⁶ is the longest book in the New Testament at 24 chapters and 1151 verses, recording the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. It was traditionally believed to have been written by Luke, a doctor and travelling

³⁴³ Following C. Stancliffe, 'Dating Wilfrid's Death and Stephen's Life', in N. J. Higham (ed.), *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint: Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences* (Donington, 2013), pp. 18-22, who rejects the commonly accepted date for the death of Wilfrid (Acca's predecessor) of 709.

³⁴⁴ 'explanationem... beati evangelistae Lucae', Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, Preface, p. 3, l. 9.

³⁴⁵ Bede, *In Primam Partem Samuhelis*, Prologus, pp. 9-10, ll. 34-47.

³⁴⁶ 'The best solution is to adopt the date that is used by many today, ca. A.D. 80-85', J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, NY, 1979), p. 57; 'The generally-agreed date is in the 80s or 90s, perhaps towards the end of that span if the theory that Luke knew Matthew is adopted', J. Knight, *Luke's Gospel* (London, 1998), p. 10; 'Most commentators tend to narrow the range to 85-100', R. B. Vinson, *Luke* (Macon, GA, 2008), p. 6; 'The time-setting of the composition of Luke is between 75 and 85 CE', V. G. Shillington, *An Introduction to the Study of Luke-Acts* (London, 2nd ed., 2015), p. 15.

companion of Saint Paul. Acts then serves as a sequel, telling of Jesus' ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the spread of the early church. For our purposes, though, both Luke and Acts contain a Preface or dedication of sorts that Bede drew upon in his own Preface to the *HE*, found in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2:

¹Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a narration of the things that have been accomplished among us, ²according as they have delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word: ³It seemed good to me also, having diligently attained to all things from the beginning, to write to thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that thou mayest know the verity of those words in which thou hast been instructed. (Luke 1:1-4, Douay-Rheims translation)

¹The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, of all things which Jesus began to do and to teach, ²until the day on which, giving commandments by the Holy Ghost to the apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up. (Acts 1:1-2, Douay-Rheims translation)

Composition

The first and most important aspect of Luke's Preface is his insistence that his account is based on the report of 'those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word'.³⁴⁷ Whilst modern New Testament textual criticism was unknown to Bede,³⁴⁸ his reading of the Gospels, particularly the synoptic gospels, would have shown him a variety of sources used in their composition. Matthew and Luke take large sections of their text from Mark for example, but share common material not found in Mark, known to modern scholars as Q, from the German *quelle* meaning 'source'. They also contain unique material not found elsewhere, designated M for Matthew and L for Luke. Such variety of sources is partially copied by Bede. First, his *HE* is, at least in the first book, derived from the works of earlier authors such as Orosius, Gildas, Pliny or Constantius. Bede himself alludes to this use of earlier material by saying 'From the period at which this volume begins to the time when the English race accepted the faith of Christ, I have

³⁴⁷ 'qui ab initio ipsi viderunt et ministri fuerunt sermonis', Luke 1:2.

³⁴⁸ The classic survey is B. M. Metzger and B. D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford, 4th ed., 2005).

obtained my material from here and there, chiefly from the writings of earlier writers'.³⁴⁹ Secondly, Bede's careful collection of original material in the *HE* can be seen as a reflection of the unique material found only in Luke's Gospel and not in Matthew or Mark. Just as Luke utilised 'those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word',³⁵⁰ Bede is reliant on several named sources: Albinus, Nothhelm, Daniel, the monks of Lastingham, Esi and Cyneberht, alongside other anonymous witnesses. In the main body of the *HE*, Bede also names many of his sources for the miracle stories he relates, which I explore in the following chapter. Like Luke's witnesses, these men contributed original material that formed the basis of Bede's text, though of course it was Bede himself who crafted the final version in a way suitable to his own agendas.³⁵¹

Furthermore, Luke 1:1 refers to 'many' who have 'undertaken to compile a narrative', or in verse 3 'to write an orderly account', so the unique material he collected might also have consisted of written accounts alongside oral reports. In addition, the Q material common to Matthew and Luke may have circulated as a written document, though again this is not certain.³⁵² More convincing, however, are the two letters Luke included in Acts 15:23-29, a letter from the Jerusalem church, and Acts 23:25-30, a letter from the Roman tribune Claudius Lysias. His use of written documents in the *HE* can therefore be seen as a conscious imitation of their use in Holy Scripture. This is further increased if one includes the New Testament books that were originally instructive letters to local churches or individuals.³⁵³ As Plassmann states, 'the inclusion of letters is quite obviously guided by didactic interest'.³⁵⁴ Thematically, however, the *HE* and Acts are linked through Christian

³⁴⁹ 'A principio itaque uoluminis huius usque ad tempus, quo gens Anglorum fidem Christi percepit, ex priorum maxime scriptis hinc inde collectis ea, quae promeremus, didicimus', *HE* Preface, pp. 2-3.

³⁵⁰ 'qui ab initio ipsi viderunt et ministri fuerunt sermonis', Luke 1:2.

³⁵¹ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 298.

³⁵² J. S. Kloppenborg, *Q, The Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville, KN, 2008), Ch. One.

³⁵³ Cf. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, p. 26 who notes how Stephen of Ripon in his *VW* had adopted the practice of copying documents in their entirety into his narrative before Bede completed his *HE*.

³⁵⁴ 'Die Einfügung von Briefen ist recht offensichtlich durch das didaktische Interesse gelenkt', A. Plassmann, 'Beda Venerabilis – Verax Historicus: Bedas *Vera Lex Historiae*', in M. Becher and Y. Hen (eds.), *Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947): Ein jüdisches Forscherleben zwischen wissenschaftlicher Anerkennung*

mission, and it is possible that Bede perceived his own work as a continuation of what Acts first began. Through seeing the inclusion of external documents in Acts, a book devoted to the spread of the church from Jerusalem to Rome, Bede might have felt justified in incorporating his own documents in the *HE*, which further charted the spread of Christianity from Rome to Anglo-Saxon England. As Howe remarks, ‘If Jerusalem stood at the center of the earth in Bede’s cosmology, as it did for his contemporaries, Rome figured in his historical imagination as capital city when he engaged with the here and now of the English church and people’.³⁵⁵ This connection between the mission in Acts and that to Anglo-Saxon England can be deduced by Bede’s comments in *De Templo* II.20.7. Furthermore, the fact that Bede wrote *De Templo* contemporaneously with his *HE* once again shows how his love of exegesis informed his historical writing too.³⁵⁶ In this passage, Bede explains that the wheels of God’s chariot, which represent the four Gospels, first carried the message of Christianity with Paul and Barnabas but have since arrived in Britain from Pope Gregory with Augustine and Paulinus.³⁵⁷ Indeed, whereas Eusebius charts the early history of the universal Church, Bede makes much of his work focussing on the *gens Anglorum* in particular and their conversion to the faith. Andy Merrills has argued that, unlike his predecessors, Bede ‘was the first writer to compose an ecclesiastical history that was nominally concerned with a single region of the world’.³⁵⁸

und politischem Exil (Siegburg, 2010), p. 127. My thanks to Miss E. Ross for her assistance in translating this article.

³⁵⁵ N. Howe, ‘Rome: Capital of Anglo-Saxon England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 34, no. 1 (2004), p. 156.

³⁵⁶ This relatively late dating of *De Templo* was suggested by H. Mayr-Harting, *The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St. Benedict, and Social Class* (Jarrow Lecture, 1976), pp. 12-13 and 19-22, and adopted by O’Reilly, ‘Introduction’, in *On The Temple*, p. xvii, and O’Brien, *Bede’s Temple*, p. xx. Bede states in his *Epistola ad Albinum*, recently edited in J. A. Westgard, ‘New Manuscripts of Bede’s Letter to Albinus’, *Revue Bénédictine*, 120, no. 2 (2010), pp. 208-215 that he will send a copy of his ‘recently published’ (*nuper edidi*) *De Templo* alongside his *HE* to Albinus, providing further confirmation that the two texts were composed simultaneously.

³⁵⁷ *De Templo* II.20.7, pp. 217-218, ll. 1004-1048; *On the Temple*, pp. 97-98.

³⁵⁸ Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, p. 235. The exegetical connections in the *HE* between the geography of the islands of Britain and conversion have also been explored by Jennifer O’Reilly: J. O’Reilly, ‘Islands and Idols at the Ends of the Earth: Exegesis and Conversion in Bede’s *Historia*

Returning to its composition, Bede certainly utilised written documents throughout the *HE*, largely consisting of what Nothhelm acquired from the papal archives in Rome. He also incorporated, amongst other things, passages from his own edition of Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis*, a letter from his abbot Ceolfrith to Necthan king of the Picts [V.21], and a book of miracles from the monastery at Barking [IV.7-11]. In IV.20, Bede justifies his inclusion of a poem regarding Æthelthryth's virginity by saying he is 'imitating the method of holy scripture in which many songs are inserted into the history'.³⁵⁹ Clearly Bede felt able to do so through his close reading of the methods used within the Bible. Comparing his use of a poem in *HE* IV.20 to that of scripture is a unique reference in the *HE* to his chosen methodology. This poem served as part of an *opus geminatum*, 'a pair of texts, one in verse and one in prose, which ostensibly treat the same subject', as IV.19 provides a prose life of Æthelthryth.³⁶⁰ Bede was certainly familiar with this literary form, having already composed a verse and prose life of Cuthbert, and translating Paulinus of Nola's verse *Vita Felicis* into prose.³⁶¹ It is also possible that Bede here felt the need to justify the incorporation of poetry, which to some was seen as secular or even pagan. Bede's justification here and the connection to the 'canticles in the Gospels' were noticed by Hilliard,³⁶² but he does not explicitly state which, nor did he provide any examples of any linguistic resonances. More importantly for the current argument though, we see a poem or song linked to virginity in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter One: Mary's song of praise to God – also known as the *Magnificat*. Whilst there are no direct linguistic connections between

Ecclesiastica', in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (eds.), *Bède le Vénérable: Entre Tradition et Postérité* (Lille, 2005), pp. 119-145.

³⁵⁹ 'imitari morem sacrae scripturae, cuius historiae carmina plurima indita', *HE*, pp. 396-397. Ray, 'Bede, the Exegete, as Historian', p. 127.

³⁶⁰ B. Friesen, 'The *Opus Geminatum* and Anglo-Saxon Literature', *Neophilologus*, 95 (2011), pp. 124, though Friesen does not mention this particular example. See in particular S. J. Harris, *Bede and Aethelthryth: An Introduction to Christian Latin Poetics* (Morgantown, WV, 2016), P. Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin Opus Geminatum, from Aldhelm to Alcuin', *Medium Aevum*, 50 (1981), pp. 215-219, and Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary*, p. 161.

³⁶¹ The best version of this text can be found in T. W. Mackay, *A Critical Edition of Bede's Vita Felicis*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Stanford, 1971).

³⁶² Hilliard, *Sacred and Secular History*, p. 206. For more on Bede and poetry, see M. Lapidge, *Bede the Poet* (Jarrow Lecture, 1993).

Bede and Mary's canticle, I believe it likely that Bede had this particular song in mind when justifying his poem on virginity in IV.20. It is important to note that neither Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* nor Rufinus' continuation of that text contain any poetry.³⁶³ In addition, Bede was familiar with Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*, written pre-709, yet there are no linguistic similarities between that text and Bede's poem in *HE* IV.20 either.³⁶⁴ Andy Orchard explains that there is a noticeable difference between the Southumbrian poetry of Aldhelm, Tatwine and Boniface, and the Northumbrian poetry of people such as Bede, Alcuin and Æthelwulf, which likely 'reflects regional differences in training'.³⁶⁵ Nevertheless, in *HE* V.18 Bede describes Aldhelm's text as a 'twofold work in both hexameter verse and in prose', providing a further clue that the *opus geminatum* was indeed his own intention on a similar subject concerning Æthelthryth; just as Aldhelm had composed such a dual work, so now in the following two chapters would Bede.³⁶⁶

Finally, when considering Bede's sources, it is worth considering Bede's belief in the first-hand nature of the Acts of the Apostles. For Bede, following Church tradition, there was no question that Acts was written by Luke the evangelist, the same follower of Paul mentioned in Colossians 4 and the letter to Philemon. In his preface to the *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, Bede quotes from Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*, Chapter Seven, stating that Luke was 'an inseparable travelling companion' of Paul and composed 'an

³⁶³ Alongside the absence of poetry, McClure notes the absence of direct speech of the protagonists in Eusebius/Rufinus which is found in Bede's *HE*, showing further deviation from that model: McClure, 'Bede's Old Testament Kings', p. 96.

³⁶⁴ C. E. Fell, 'Saint Æðelþryð: A Historical-Hagiographical Dichotomy Revisited', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 38 (1994), p. 23 states that in terms of content, Bede's *opus geminatum* of Æthelthryth 'is as unlike as possible the stories told by Aldhelm with such dramatic relish in *De Virginitate*'. There are, however, two minor phrases in his poem that Bede has borrowed. First, 'ignibus usta feris' is found as 'ferus ureret ignis' in Ovid, *Remedia Amores*, l. 265. Second, 'super astra manens' is also found in Arator, *Historia Apostolica*, ed. A. P. Orbán, CCSL 130 (Turnhout, 2006), I, p.261, l. 501, a text that Bede relied heavily upon in composing his *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*.

³⁶⁵ A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 246-247ff. Indeed, on p. 258, Orchard suggests Bede deliberately chose not to imitate Aldhelm, ruling against one common facet of Aldhelm's style of poetry in his *De Arte Metrica*.

³⁶⁶ 'geminato opera et versibus exametris et prosa composuit', *HE* V.18, pp. 514-515.

account of the Acts of the Apostles, just as he himself had seen them'.³⁶⁷ This belief in part stems from several passages in Acts that suddenly switch to a first person plural,³⁶⁸ which was taken by the early Christian understanding to imply that the author was present at the events he recorded.³⁶⁹ Bede is rarely so obvious in explicitly recording his own involvement in the events he narrates. *HE* V.14 appears to be the lone exception, where he relates the story of a sinful brother he knew. However, more generally, in the Preface to the *HE*, he does state that for the history of Northumbria, his own kingdom, he has in part discussed 'those matters of which I had personal knowledge'.³⁷⁰ Bede thus writes himself into the narrative in a general way for those events for which he may have been present. Following Luke, Bede considered it entirely appropriate that the author of sacred history should speak of those events to which he had personal knowledge. This was not done in an overt way or with any frequency, however, lest his authorial presence distract the audience from the main points he wished to draw their attention to.³⁷¹

To summarise with regards to composition, in reading Luke-Acts, Bede perceived a threefold pattern with regards to the sources Luke used: eyewitness evidence, the incorporation of documents, and personal testimony. When it came to composing his own *HE*, Bede followed this same pattern. Further evidence that this is the case can be found in his summary of the *HE* in V.24. Here, Bede writes that the work was 'gleaned either from ancient documents or from tradition or from [his] own knowledge' – again, the threefold division of sources.³⁷² We must now briefly consider why Bede (and Luke) went to such lengths in detailing their sources.

³⁶⁷ 'individuus in peregrinando comes', 'Actus vero apostolorum... sicut viderat ipse composuit', Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, Preface, p. 5, ll. 59-61; Bede, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 5.

³⁶⁸ Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28.

³⁶⁹ The historiographical introduction of W. S. Campbell, *The "We" Passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The Narrator as Narrative Character* (Atlanta, GA, 2007) proposes four different modern interpretations of these passages: they imply 1. the author-as-eyewitness (already alluded to), they imply 2. the source-as-eyewitness, they are 3. a fictional construct, or they are 4. a conventional construct of the particular genre the author is imitating.

³⁷⁰ 'his quae per me ipsum nosse', *HE* Preface, pp. 6-7.

³⁷¹ See further p. 171, below.

³⁷² 'vel ex litteris antiquorum vel ex traditione maiorum vel ex mea ipse cognitione scire potui', *HE* V.24, pp. 566-567.

In Luke 1:3-4, Luke tells his patron Theophilus that he has written his Gospel, ‘in order’, based on eyewitness testimony, so that he ‘may know the certainty of the words in which [he has] been instructed’.³⁷³ Again, we find a similar reassurance in the Preface of the *HE*. Just before Bede lists his sources, he says he does so ‘in order to remove all occasions of doubt about those things I have written’.³⁷⁴ This phrase is, as mentioned, taken from the Preface of Gregory’s *Dialogi*, showing clear intellectual links to his predecessor.³⁷⁵ Increasing certainty for Luke and decreasing doubt for Bede are two sides of the same coin. This is because for Bede, his *HE*, like a Gospel, must come with a certain amount of authority; it is written in such a way as to convince his audience of the content therein. Gail Berlin has likened Bede’s use of sources, particularly concerning miracle stories, to Anglo-Saxon law courts, with the use of oaths to testify to the truth of the account.³⁷⁶ I discuss where Bede got his sources from and their quality in Chapter Four, but it is sufficient to say here that he was usually very vigilant in pointing them out. Such care can again be seen through what Bede had already written concerning the authority of Luke-Acts. Regarding Luke 1:1-4, in his commentary on that book Bede writes that Luke composed his Gospel to counter the ‘false preaching’ of the ‘pseudo-evangelists’ who had written ‘under the names of the apostles’ such as Thomas, Bartholomew or Matthias.³⁷⁷ That the early Church accepted a fourfold Gospel which included Luke was sufficient for Bede to disregard these other texts as non-authoritative. The source and reliability of stories about Christ were just as important as the stories themselves; there was an authoritative, recognised chain of eyewitnesses.³⁷⁸ When it came to writing his own *HE* therefore, Bede was careful to state where he had received his information from alongside their credentials, not only in the Preface of the *HE* but throughout the work. Furthermore, in the Preface to his *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, Bede again defends the fourfold Gospel, stating that ‘we should not accept those who have no authority in the church,

³⁷³ ‘ex ordine’, ‘ut cognoscas eorum verborum de quibus eruditus es veritatem’.

³⁷⁴ ‘ut autem in his quae scripsi... occasionem dubitandi subtraham’, *HE* Preface, pp. 2-3.

³⁷⁵ ‘ut dubitationis occasionem legentibus subtraham’, *Dialogues*, I.Prologue.10, p. 16, ll. 84-85, discussed above, p. 27.

³⁷⁶ Berlin, ‘Bede’s Miracle Stories’, p. 442.

³⁷⁷ ‘pseudoevangelistis’, ‘falsa praedicandi’, ‘sub nomine apostolorum’, *In Lucam*, I, I.1-4, p. 19, ll. 17-22.

³⁷⁸ For development of this point, see the work of R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2006).

because they could not carry out what they had undertaken at all' and that 'all those are to be rejected who have ventured to write of the apostle's deeds and words without the faith that is required'.³⁷⁹ We have already seen that the qualification for Acts being accepted as scripture was that Bede believed Luke had been an eyewitness to the events he recorded. This caution in accepting some texts (or stories) over others through their eyewitness provenance is then followed by Bede in his own *HE*.

The structure of the *HE* itself can also be seen to mirror the structure of the *Acts of the Apostles*. A few examples will suffice. The first comes with the Synod of Whitby, found in *HE* III.25. As many have noted, this synod in 664 largely settled the question of the correct dating of Easter in favour of the 'Roman' calculation, and Bede presents it as something of a turning point in his *HE*. Looking at the biblical text, one can find parallels with the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15, where the question of whether gentile believers should be circumcised was resolved, with the apostles deciding against this suggestion.³⁸⁰ First, in both cases, the issue is described: the question of circumcision in Acts 15:1 and the fact that the divergent calculations of Easter in Northumbria caused it to be celebrated at two different times 'contrary to the custom of the universal church'.³⁸¹ A gathering is called to address the issue, and authorities are present (Acts 15:2, 6), namely, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, King Oswiu and his son Alhfrith at Whitby. After much debate (Acts 15:7), the chief authority makes the final decision, James in Acts 15:13-21, King Oswiu in Bede. What is perceived as the contrarian party is defeated, the Irish faction in Bede, the Christian Pharisees in Acts. The numerical location of the two in each respective text provides a further link. The Council of Jerusalem occurs in the fifteenth chapter of 28 chapters in Acts, or 54% of the way into the text rounded up. The Synod of Whitby, by comparison, occurs 57% of the way into the text rounded up,³⁸² meaning both chapters occur just over halfway through their respective texts. With the resolution of the

³⁷⁹ 'eos non debemus accipere quorum in ecclesia nulla extat auctoritas quia, id quod conati sunt, implere minime potuerunt', 'reprobatis omnibus qui non ea fide qua oportuit facta dicta que apostolorum scribere ausi sunt', Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, Preface, p. 4, ll. 43-45, 51-52; Bede, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 5.

³⁸⁰ My thanks to Prof. Sarah Foot for pointing me towards this analogue.

³⁸¹ 'contra universalis ecclesiae morem', *HE* III.25, pp. 294-295.

³⁸² There are 141 Chapters in the *HE*. (Namely, the Preface, 34 in Book I, 20 in Book II, 30 in Book III, 32 in Book IV, 24 in Book V).

two councils, the mission of the Church can continue, marking something of a watershed moment in these works. It is important to note that Eusebius does not discuss the Council of Jerusalem in the first two books of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, meaning Bede is taking this connection straight from the biblical text. This leads to the second structural connection between the two books, namely the fact that both end on a period of uncertainty. In Acts 28, Paul is placed under house arrest for two years; his eventual fate is unknown, though church tradition would state he was released and continued preaching for a few years before his martyrdom under the Roman emperor Nero (r.54-68). In the same way, in *HE* V.23 where Bede details ‘the present state of the whole of Britain’,³⁸³ he too ends his account with an air of uncertainty. Historians have read the famous passage ‘What the result will be, a later generation will discover’ either as an ominous warning or as an optimistic prediction.³⁸⁴ Paul Hilliard, in his recent article in *Bede and the Future*, interprets this passage in light of Bede’s exegesis that ‘these favourable times of peace and prosperity’ are a warning sign to the Church of coming adversity,³⁸⁵ but that such prosperity is a gift of God and should be enjoyed by the Christian as such.³⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Bede is certainly unsure on the exact course the future will take, and ends his text, like *Acts*, with the outcome unresolved.

More generally with regards to structure, Roger Ray has noted that the *HE* often follows the Bible’s structure in its ‘episodic’ nature. By this, he means that the *HE* is divided into shorter chapters which enabled easier reading and comprehension of the text, arguing that Bede ‘appears to have capitulated the *Historia* for such short-term readings as he knew in his abbey’s refectory’.³⁸⁷ Such a suggestion implies that Bede desired his work to be read with the same care as one would with scripture, meditating on each shorter section for the key messages it imparted whilst at the same time reflecting on the larger whole. Smaller divisions in texts such as the *HE* or *VCB* would also allow the work to be

³⁸³ ‘*inpraesentiarum universae status Britanniae*’, *HE* V.23, pp. 560-561.

³⁸⁴ ‘*Quae res quem sit habitura finem, posterior aetas videbit*’, *Ibid.*, pp. 560-561.

³⁸⁵ ‘*adridente pace ac serenitate temporum*’, *Ibid.*, pp. 560-561.

³⁸⁶ P. Hilliard, ‘*Quae Res Quem Sit Habitura Finem, Posterior Aetas Videbit: Prosperity, Adversity, and Bede’s Hope for the Future of Northumbria*’, in P. Darby and F. Wallis (eds.), *Bede and the Future* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 181-206.

³⁸⁷ Ray, ‘Bede, the Exegete as Historian’, p. 133.

read in communal gatherings, such as in the monastic refectory, or even as part of a homily, using historical Anglo-Saxon examples to reinforce a biblical message. This principle of brevity was one that Bede had developed from the very start of his literary career. Writing in his *Expositio Apocalypseos*, he notes that he had divided the work into three short books ‘for the sake of relieving the mind’. This is because, he states, ‘plain brevity usually makes a greater impression on the memory than wordy disputation’.³⁸⁸

Style

Turning to matters of style, the influence of Luke on Bede is further highlighted when we consider the care with which they both took in composing their accounts. In Luke 1:3, the evangelist writes that he has ‘diligently attained to all things from the beginning’.³⁸⁹ Likewise Bede writes that he has ‘diligently sought to put on record concerning each of the kingdoms and the more important places, those events [he] considers worthy of remembrance and likely to be welcome by the inhabitants’.³⁹⁰ In both instances, their *modus operandi* is the same as shown by the common Latin adverb ‘*diligenter*’. Considering the evidence explored so far, it appears that Bede copied Luke’s methodology when composing his own *HE* – a desire to diligently or carefully record his history for posterity.

However, there are other linguistic resonances from Bede’s *HE* that support the hypothesis that he was drawing on Luke’s Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles in its composition. As a case study, I will here simply list several comparisons between the Preface to the *HE* and Luke 1:1-4. A thorough assessment of the entire *HE* would almost certainly reveal more.³⁹¹ To begin then, and perhaps most convincingly, Bede implores his

³⁸⁸ ‘*relevandae mentis*’, ‘*nam et aperta magis brevitās quam disputatio prolīxa memoriae solet infigi*’, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Praefatio, p. 233, ll. 134 and 145-146; *Commentary on Revelation*, Preface, pp. 105-106.

³⁸⁹ ‘*adsecuto a principio omnibus diligenter*’.

³⁹⁰ ‘*qui de singulis prouinciis siue locis sublimioribus, quae memoratu digna atque incolis grata credideram, diligenter adnotare curauī*’, Bede, *HE* Preface, pp. 6-7.

³⁹¹ For example, Merrills has suggested that Bede’s two mentions of snakes in *HE* I.1 are reference to Paul’s defeat of a viper in Acts 28. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, pp. 266-268. In this regard, the first chapter of the *HE* again serves as a continuation of the final chapter of Acts. What Merrills does not mention is Bede’s reference in *HE* I.1 to the twenty-eight famous cities of Britain, (taken from Gildas’ *De*

reader that what he writes is ‘*veritas*’, nominative singular for the truth, and that he is working according to the much-discussed ‘*vera lex historiae*’, a true law of history.³⁹² I will return to my understanding of this issue below. Nevertheless, Luke explains to Theophilus that by reading his Gospel, he will know the ‘*veritatem*’, accusative singular for the truth. A second linguistic similarity occurs between the ‘*ministerium*’ of Bishops Chad and Cedd in Bede’s Preface which is related to those ‘*ministri*’ in Luke 1:2.³⁹³ Thirdly, Bede’s praise of his patron King Ceolwulf as ‘*gloriosissimo*’ mirrors Luke’s address of Theophilus with the superlative ‘*optime*’ in Luke 1:3.³⁹⁴ Additionally, Luke tells Theophilus that his Gospel will allow him to know the truth of the ‘*verborum*’ he has been taught.³⁹⁵ By Bede’s time, however, these words have been transformed into the ‘*verbis*’ of Holy Scripture that Bede says Ceolwulf keenly listens to.³⁹⁶ Finally, Bede’s account begins with the ablative phrase ‘*a principio*’,³⁹⁷ from the beginning of the Roman invasion of Britain in the same manner that Luke states he has ‘diligently attained to all things *a principio*’, starting his Gospel, unlike Mark and John, with an account of the conception and birth of Christ. To these examples one may add Bede’s remarks in his *In Lucam*, Book IV, commenting on Luke 11:50 where he writes ‘it is evidently the mores of scripture to often reckon the two generations of good men and also bad, that is, “those who were born not of blood, nor from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God”, and those to whom he says “you are from your father the devil”, and elsewhere “[you] serpents, [you] brood of vipers”’.³⁹⁸ Ray has compared this section of exegesis to Bede’s intention of discussing the ‘good men and their good estate’ or the ‘evil ends of wicked men’ in the

Excidio Britanniae, Part I), which immediately follows the first ‘snake’ reference. The inclusion of this extract may provide an additional numerical link back to Acts 28.

³⁹² *HE*, Preface, p. 6.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁹⁵ Luke 1:4.

³⁹⁶ *HE* Preface, p. 2.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁹⁸ ‘*Moris est scripturarum duas saepe generationes hominum bonorum scilicet malorumque computare, hoc est eorum “qui non ex sanguibus neque ex voluntate carnis neque ex voluntate viri sed ex Deo nati sunt” et eorum quibus dicitur, “vos ex patre diabolo estis”, et alibi, “serpentes generatio viperarum”*’, *In Lucam*, IV, XI.50, p. 245, ll. 565-570. Translation mine.

Preface to the *HE*.³⁹⁹ Such a comparison clearly shows Bede appropriating Luke's text to discuss his own historical method. As an aside, there may also be connections between Bede's '*a principio*' and the dative '*in principio*' of Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1, as well as Christ the '*Verbum*' in John 1:1 and 14, providing further evidence of the Bible being an important influence on Bede's text. Indeed, this may be the first inkling we have of Bede's desire to work on the Gospel of John, as he was composing a translation of it into Old English on his deathbed only a few years later.⁴⁰⁰

As mentioned, there are also linguistic similarities between Bede's preface and the rest of Luke-Acts. For example, Ceolwulf 'lends an attentive ear [*aurem*] to hear [*audiendis*] the words of Holy Scripture' in a similar way that Jesus commands 'whoever has an ear [*aures*] to hear [*audiendi*], let him hear' in Luke 8:8 and Luke 14:35. This command of having ears to hear is also found seven times in Revelation Chapters Two and Three, a book Bede had already written a commentary on around 703, further highlighting his use of familiar biblical language when composing his *HE*. Furthermore, in his commentary *In Lucam*, Bede explicitly makes the connection between Luke 8:8 and the 'hearing' passages in Revelation. He writes: 'whenever this little warning [*Qui habet aures audiendi audiat*] is inserted either in the Gospel or the Apocalypse of John, it is said mystically, that we must show it very careful attention'.⁴⁰¹

Purpose

Regarding their purposes, this truth, this *veritas*, which Bede and Luke wrote is designed to be didactic; the reader is at once edified and instructed in order to live a moral, Christian life. The *HE* has been referred to as a 'gallery of good examples',⁴⁰² and this moral focus can again be viewed through a Lukan lens. As Holy Scripture, Luke-Acts would have been held in the highest regard by Bede, and as such, the moral import of those

³⁹⁹ '*de bonis bona*', '*mala... de pravis*', Bede, *HE* Preface, p. 2; Ray, 'Bede, the Exegete, as Historian', p. 127.

⁴⁰⁰ 'Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede', p. 583.

⁴⁰¹ '*Quoties haec admonitiuncula vel in evangelio vel in apocalipsi Iohannis interponitur mysticum esse quod dicitur quaerendumque a nobis intentius ostenditur*', *In Lucam*, III, VIII.8, p. 175, ll. 358-360. Translation mine.

⁴⁰² Campbell, 'Bede I', p. 25.

texts would have had a far greater impact on Bede and his audience than Eusebius ever could. In one of the most famous sentences from the *HE*'s Preface, Bede states 'Should history tell of good men and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good'.⁴⁰³ The exhortation to 'imitate the good' finds close parallel in the command of Jesus at the climax of the parable of the Good Samaritan, a passage which is unique to Luke. Here Jesus' instruction '*vade et tu fac similiter*', go and do likewise, echoes Bede's intention;⁴⁰⁴ as Bede's readers would follow Jesus from the Gospels, so too should they 'imitate the good' and 'eschew what is harmful and perverse' through reading his *HE*.⁴⁰⁵ As Augustine had preached, if imitating Christ proved too difficult, the saints, as fellow mortals and fellow servants, were nevertheless given as examples for all Christians to live by.⁴⁰⁶ This moral intention is echoed again where Bede claims his work is 'for the instruction of posterity', using 'those events which I believe to be worthy of remembrance'.⁴⁰⁷

A further clue that it is a specifically Lukan moral model Bede is utilising comes from his comments on Acts 1:1. Here, he writes that 'the physician Luke wrote it [Acts] in order that he [the reader] might find health for his soul'.⁴⁰⁸ Through following the positive examples contained therein, Luke and Bede's readers would benefit on both a moral and spiritual level. Furthermore, Bede's choice here in writing a history rather than just an ethical treatise again follows from his understanding of Luke's two works on Jesus. He writes on Acts 1:1 that 'Jesus, establishing the pattern of a good teacher, taught nothing except those things which he did'.⁴⁰⁹ Returning to the 'hearing' passages in Luke and Revelation, Bede writes of Luke 14:35 in his commentary that 'he who has intelligent ears is able to perceive the word of God, and should not scorn but should clearly listen

⁴⁰³ '*Sive enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur*', *HE* Preface, p. 2-3.

⁴⁰⁴ Luke 10:37.

⁴⁰⁵ '*ad imitandum bonum*', '*devitando quod noxium est ac perversum*', *HE* Preface, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰⁶ Augustine, *Sermones*, ed. J. P. Migne, PL 38 (Paris, 1863), CCCXXV, col. 1448; Augustine, *Sermons*, III/9, trans. E. Hill (Hyde Park, NY, 1994), 325.1, p. 168.

⁴⁰⁷ '*ad instructionem posteritatis*', '*quae memorata digna... credideram*', *HE* Preface, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁰⁸ '*suae hic animae quia Lucas medicus scripsit inveniat salutem*', Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, I.1, p. 6, ll. 9-10; Bede, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

⁴⁰⁹ '*quia Iesus bonum doctorem instituens nulla nisi quae fecit docuit*', *Ibid.*, I.1, p. 6, ll. 11-12; *Ibid.*, p. 9.

obediently and do what he learnt'.⁴¹⁰ For Bede, action follows instruction. Moral education should not be held apart from the realities of everyday life, a point particularly evident in the practical instructions suggested in his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*. In the *HE*, therefore, his 'teaching' comes through meditating on the historic deeds of his people and then imitating or disregarding them. Such an idea is common to other works of Bede too. For example, in *VCB XXVI*, Bede states that Cuthbert 'taught what ought to be done, after first showing them by his own example', and describes this attitude as 'a great help to teachers [*doctores*]'.⁴¹¹

The Eusebian Preface

We must now also briefly consider any possible connections or divergences between the prefaces of Bede's *HE* and Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Of note, Eusebius' preface is much briefer than Bede's, and some of this length accounts for some of the differences found in Bede. Eusebius begins abruptly with a five-point summary of the topics he will discuss in the work, namely, the succession of bishops in key churches,⁴¹² heretics and their false teaching, the fate of the Jews, persecution, and martyrdom. Of these five stated foci, Bede certainly covers the first in some detail. However, his *HE*, and his historical work more generally, contains far less on heresy than Eusebius does; in the *HE* Bede reflects upon Pelagianism (as it originated in Britain), Monotheletism, and those who (in his opinion) falsely calculate the date of Easter. It is in his biblical commentaries where Bede's real condemnation and refutation of heresy becomes particularly noticeable.⁴¹³ Of the Jews, Bede's *HE* only mentions them in connection with the calculation of Easter.⁴¹⁴ Regarding persecutions and martyrdoms, the *HE* again has little overall to say, the Great Persecution of Diocletian and the death of

⁴¹⁰ 'qui habet aures intellegentiae quibus dei uerbum percipere possit non contemnat sed audiat oboediendo uidelicet et faciendo quae didicit', In *Lucam*, IV, XIV.35, p. 284, ll. 2158-2160.

⁴¹¹ 'ea quae agenda docebat, ipse prius agendo praemonstrabat', 'quod maxime doctores iuvat', *VCB XXVI*, pp. 242-243.

⁴¹² That is, Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria.

⁴¹³ Cf. Thacker, 'Why Did Heresy Matter to Bede?'.

⁴¹⁴ *HE* III.4, III.17 and III.25.

Alban, and the deaths of the two Hewalds being noticeable exceptions.⁴¹⁵ Instead, it focusses upon the initial mission and gradual growth of the Anglo-Saxon Church; any opposition to the spread of Christianity in Britain, such as the pagan king Penda or the apostasy of Edwin's successors,⁴¹⁶ is of a different nature to the systematic imprisonment and torture of Christians during certain periods of the Roman Empire. Indeed, Luke-Acts as a whole provides a far greater framework for mission and itinerant preaching as key themes of Bede's *HE* than Eusebius does.

By comparison, Bede's text, unlike Eusebius, is dedicated to a patron and thus begins with a personal address to King Ceolwulf. Rufinus' Latin translation, however, does contain a note to his patron, Chromatius, Bishop of Aquileia (d. c.406/407), who had commissioned him to translate the work.⁴¹⁷ Likewise, Bede ends his Preface with a personal supplication to the reader to pray on behalf of his soul; neither Rufinus nor Eusebius end their prefaces with such a plea, and neither do they end their work with prayer as Bede does in *HE* V.24. Finally, following the prefaces it is worth mentioning that Bede and Eusebius start their ecclesiastical history in very different ways. Eusebius chooses to focus on the scriptural basis for the divine nature of Christ and the prophecies surrounding his coming,⁴¹⁸ starting with Christ as he is the foundation of the faith and the one whose name the Church shares.⁴¹⁹ Bede, on the other hand, does not follow this suggestion. Instead, he decides to begin with a geographical outline of his island, the languages spoken there and its flora and fauna, highlighting the more localised nature of his text.⁴²⁰ The British Isles, whilst part of the universal history of the Church, are nevertheless distinct and have their own story to tell.

There are two other similarities between the Prefaces of Bede's *HE* and that of Eusebius. First, as mentioned by Wallace-Hadrill above, Eusebius alludes to his reliance on earlier Christian authors, metaphorically describing his methodology as plucking

⁴¹⁵ *HE* I.6-7 and V.10. This Great Persecution is the subject of Books VIII and IX of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

⁴¹⁶ *HE* III.1.

⁴¹⁷ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 2, Prologus Rufini, pp. 951-952.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Part 1, I.2-4.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I.1.7-8.

⁴²⁰ *HE* I.1, thoroughly explored by Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, pp. 249-273.

flowers from a field to create a new whole.⁴²¹ Nevertheless, he does not name any of them here, and laments the varying forms from which he has had to extract his information. He describes their work as ‘preceding footsteps’ and ‘scattered pieces’. They are ‘lit like the light of hidden torches and a high watchtower far away’; ‘by their voices we are admonished’.⁴²² Even when he names his sources in the body of the text, Eusebius is largely dealing with written material which in some instances is removed nearly 200 years from his own time. In the same way, Rufinus in the preface to his continuation of Eusebius speaks of gathering information from ‘the writings of those before us’,⁴²³ but again declines to mention who. Bede likewise has a reliance on earlier authors, particularly in *HE* Book 1. However, for more contemporary events, Bede’s preface by comparison explicitly names his sources of information for the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms; he shows these sources to be of a more personal rather than a purely textual nature. These are men with whom Bede had personal connections and communication. Secondly, Bede writes that his *HE* is ‘for the instruction of posterity’ in a similar way that Eusebius writes of his desire to preserve the memory of Christ’s apostolic successors.⁴²⁴ Both authors see their work as preserving the record of all that has gone before them that it might inform and address present concerns.

Bede, Eusebius and Luke: Summary

The chapter thus far has provided several reasons to shift the focus of Bede’s models for his *HE* towards a more scriptural basis, specifically the work of the evangelist Luke. This is not to deny the Eusebian connection; it is obviously there, but it should be neither our first nor only recourse when considering Bede’s archetypes for the *HE*. The evidence shows that following Luke is a conscious decision by Bede; there are several linguistic and thematic similarities in the *HE* which he has taken from Luke-Acts, especially in light of their Prefaces. The decision to choose Luke as a model is readily

⁴²¹ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 1, I.1.4.

⁴²² ‘*praecessisse vestigia*’, ‘*sparsim singulorum*’, ‘*luminum faces velut in obscuro positae eminus accenduntur et tamquam e sublimi specula*’, ‘*eorum vocibus admonemur*’, Ibid, I.1.3, p. 9.

⁴²³ ‘*in maiorum litteris*’, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 2, p. 957; *Church History of Rufinus*, Preface to the Continuation, p. 5.

⁴²⁴ ‘*ad instructionem posteritatis*’, *HE* Preface, pp. 6-7; *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 1, I.1.4, p. 9.

apparent. Luke is, first and foremost, a Christian historian. Acts is the first piece of Church history, centuries before Eusebius produced his own work; Bede is therefore going straight back to the source of sacred history. When placed alongside the other three Gospels, the choice of Luke as a model becomes even clearer. Mark, as a text, is full of short stories concerning the deeds and teachings of Jesus, but offers little in the way of a connective narrative until one reaches the Easter account. Bede's *HE*, on the other hand, is a broadly chronological and connected account, following the progress of various missions and reigns. The Gospel of Matthew has a specifically Jewish focus which for Bede, writing Christian history intended to edify the gentile Church, would have been inappropriate.⁴²⁵ Finally, John's Gospel has a very high Christology which at times shrouds or even removes the 'historical Jesus'. It contains the most developed and explicit Christian theology of the four Gospels, with great speeches of Jesus explaining the nature of the Trinity, the role of the Holy Spirit and the means of salvation. However, as mentioned, Bede is more interested in writing a history than a theological or ethical treatise. As the author of two inspired pieces of scripture, one a life of Christ, the other a history of the early Church, Luke was held in the highest regard by Bede. Roger Ray has suggested that 'Bede thought of the customs of scriptural narrative as the habits of perfect history'.⁴²⁶ It is therefore to Luke as the most 'historical' Gospel that Bede turned when composing his own *History*.

Miracles in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*

If Bede's work is noticeably different to Eusebius in some respects, what about the primary concern of this thesis: miracles? From the outset, a read through Bede's *HE* and that of Eusebius reveals that Eusebius was far less concerned about the miraculous than Bede. Despite neither of their prefaces stating that the miraculous would be a principle focus, Eusebius mentions only about 30 miracles in his text, compared to just under 90 in

⁴²⁵ Though see C. O'Brien, 'Bede on the Jewish Church', in P. D. Clarke and C. Metheun (eds.), *The Church on Its Past*, Studies in Church History, XLIX (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 63-73, who suggests that Bede understood the Jews, particularly in the imagery employed in *De Tabernaculo*, as participating in the pre-Incarnational sacraments of the Church.

⁴²⁶ Ray, 'Bede, the Exegete, as Historian', p. 132.

Bede's *HE*.⁴²⁷ To put this disparity into some perspective, according to the Library of Latin Texts Bede's *HE* has 79,751 word-forms compared to 84,663 in Rufinus' translation of Eusebius, (excluding the two books of Rufinus' continuation), clearly showing that despite its longer length Eusebius' work contains far less miracles. Interestingly, Rufinus' continuation, with 18,044 word-forms, adds just under 20 miracles to Eusebius' tally, proportionally more than Eusebius over the 10 Books in his original work. Amidon notes that Rufinus 'shows little of Eusebius' wariness of miraculous tales'.⁴²⁸ Another way to look at this is to say that Bede's *HE* includes a miracle roughly every 886 words, Eusebius roughly every 2822 words, and Rufinus' continuation every 902 words. Whilst miracles per se were not considered a necessity of ecclesiastical historiography by either Bede or Eusebius, Bede is nevertheless again deviating from his predecessor.⁴²⁹ This appears to have something to do with their religious expectations. In at least two instances, Eusebius notes the decline of the prophetic gifts promised to Christians in Acts 1-2 and 1 Corinthians 12-14. Around the time of Polycarp and Ignatius, that is, the early second century, he writes of Christian evangelists that 'just as in the beginning with the apostles, they were accompanied by divine signs through the grace of the Holy Spirit'.⁴³⁰ Similarly, he quotes with some surprise Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*, written c.180, recording miracles that had continued up to his day.⁴³¹ The inference from such statements is that miracles of this nature, and in general, were becoming unexpected and less frequent. Indeed, from the end of Book VII of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, when Eusebius begins to talk about his own time, the number of miracles he records is severely curtailed to just two. In VIII.7 he records how the wild beasts at Tyre refused to eat the Christians as they were protected by the divine power of Christ, and in IX.9 how Constantine's victory over Maxentius was a divine miracle akin to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Book X

⁴²⁷ I discuss Bede's exact figures in multiple texts and the accounting criteria in Chapter Four. Cf. Appendix Two.

⁴²⁸ Amidon, 'Introduction', in *Church History of Rufinus*, p. xvii.

⁴²⁹ Cf. Lutterkort, 'Beda Hagiographicus', pp. 91-92.

⁴³⁰ 'ut in exordio apostolos, divinorum signorum comitabatur effectus et sancti spiritu gratia', *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 1, III.37.3, p. 283.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, V.7.

contains no miracles at all, though this was omitted by Rufinus in his translation as it ‘has very little history in it’ and ‘add[s] nothing to our knowledge of the facts’.⁴³²

The anticipated decline of miracles from late antiquity through to the early medieval period was much discussed by the Church Fathers and theologians. Now that the Church had spread to all corners of the world, miracles in the context of evangelism, their original purpose, were seen as increasingly unnecessary. This was the view of Gregory the Great which McCready has conclusively shown had been followed by Bede.⁴³³

Nevertheless, the expected decline of miraculous occurrences for the purposes of conversion was mirrored with an increasing interest in them more generally. As we saw with Augustine, certain types of miracles ceasing in particular contexts did not logically imply that there would no longer be any miracles at all.⁴³⁴ Instead, miracles increasingly became the purview of the saint-as-holy-man rather than evangelist, Peter Brown seeing the miracles of these early holy men as a form of power by which they sought to address an increasingly shifting Eastern Mediterranean social context.⁴³⁵ Campbell highlighted this increased attention by Bede compared to Eusebius on the miracles of the saints, and attributed this development to the burgeoning genre of hagiography that first originated with Athanasius’ *Vita Antonii*, written shortly after Anthony’s death c.356.⁴³⁶ To Anthony we may add Sulpicius Severus’ *Vita Martini*, as well as *vitae* on St. Felix and St. Athanasius, the latter two of which Bede had revised and translated before composing his *HE*,⁴³⁷ as other hagiographical texts that influenced his historiography. More are examined in the following chapter. Bede’s interest and frequency in narrating miracles in his *HE* is therefore closer to Rufinus’ practice than Eusebius, for Rufinus belonged to the generation

⁴³² ‘perparum erat in rebus gestis’, ‘nihil ad scientiam rerum conferentibus’, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 2, Prologus Rufini, p. 952; *Church History of Rufinus*, Preface to Eusebius, p. 4.

⁴³³ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, Chapters One and Two; Idem., *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, Chapters Three and Four.

⁴³⁴ Pp. 52-54, above.

⁴³⁵ P. Brown, ‘The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), pp. 80-101.

⁴³⁶ Campbell, ‘Bede I’, p. 5. Bede directly compared a miracle of Cuthbert to that of Anthony in *VCB* XIX. Bede knew the Life of St. Anthony through the Latin translation by Evagrius, composed pre-374. See the introduction in C. White (ed. and trans.), *Early Christian Lives* (London, 1998), pp. 3-6.

⁴³⁷ He mentions them in the autobiographical note in *HE* V.24.

or two after Eusebius when such hagiographical literature was first taking shape. Such a development once again highlights the epistemic as well as the chronological difference between Bede and Eusebius as Christian ecclesiastical historians.

There appear to be three main contexts within which Eusebius recorded miracles. The first, found solely in Books One to Three, is that of Biblical miracles – Eusebius placing certain miraculous occurrences found in the Bible into his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. These are almost exclusively fulfilled prophecies; Eusebius cites or alludes to the relevant text before showing how they were fulfilled. With these, Eusebius wishes to remind his reader that God is sovereign and has the power to affect human history, first promised in various Old Testament passages and the words of Christ. Examples here include the birth of Jesus as the promised Messiah at a specific time,⁴³⁸ as well as the warnings given by him of the coming fall of Jerusalem in the year 70.⁴³⁹ Other recorded miracles from scripture occur with an angel appearing to Mary and Joseph in I.8, an angel freeing Peter from prison in II.9, and Herod punished for blasphemy in II.10. The second context occurs around persecution and martyrdom. Within this group of miracles, Christians either avoid pain and death entirely, or are somehow vindicated by God through their sufferings. Examples here include the martyrdom of Polycarp in IV.15, who could not be burned by fire and whose blood quenched the flames, the Christian in V.1 whose body was actually strengthened on the rack rather than broken, and Potamiaena following her martyrdom appearing to the soldier Basilides in a dream before his own execution in VI.5. The message of this group of miracles is that God will be faithful to those who witness to him till the end,⁴⁴⁰ ‘witness’ being the English meaning of the Greek word ‘martyr’. The final context that Eusebius records miracles in is that of heretics and pagans. This point is particularly interesting as it highlights the fact that demons also have the power to perform miracles on earth. Eusebius writes of the Gnostic heretics known for their sorcery and dream-summoning spirits in IV.7, the possession of Montanus and his fake prophecies contrary to scripture in V.16, and Astyrius praying to stop a yearly demonic miracle from ever occurring again in VII.17. There are, of course, a few other miracles in Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* that do not fall neatly into any of these contexts, such as Justus

⁴³⁸ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 1, I.5 and 6.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, III.5-7.

⁴⁴⁰ See Jesus’ promise and warning in Matthew 10:32-33.

Barsabas surviving poison in III.39, a miracle of rain and lightning caused by the prayers of Roman legionaries in V.5, and Narcissus, the Bishop of Jerusalem, turning water into lamp oil in VI.9.

These three main contexts for miracles in Eusebius are highly dissimilar to Bede's practice; they are areas of the past that Bede barely covers in his text. Firstly, as Bede is interested in the history of the Church on his own island he does not begin with a retelling of the origins of Christianity in general. Instead, after the geographic description in *HE* I.1, *HE* I.2 narrates how the Romans first found Britain under Julius Caesar; the Holy Land at the time of Christ is not mentioned in Bede's text until the introduction of Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis* in *HE* V.15, and the account of Stephen's vision of heaven in *HE* V.14 is retold to prove a moral point by way of comparison. Secondly, Bede's Church did not face the same high levels of persecution that Eusebius' had done in the recent past. In his *HE*, there are only two instances where Bede records miracles in the context of persecution or martyrdom, that of St. Alban in I.7, and of the two Hewalds in V.10. Finally, whilst Bede does mention some heresies in his *HE*, none of their adherents are recorded as performing miracles. The closest Bede gets are with the stories of a sinful layman and a sinful monk in *HE* V.13 and 14, both of whom have a vision of demons and hell due to their misdemeanours. This is not to say that Bede was uninterested in the topics of Christian history, persecution or heresy; Christian history and heresy are two of his most discussed topics across his entire corpus.⁴⁴¹ Rather, it is a statement of what Bede considered important and appropriate to record for posterity in his *HE*. Evidently, his considerations were different to that of Eusebius. When one comes to the evidence for Bede,⁴⁴² the vast majority of miracles in the *HE* are clustered around key individuals: Germanus in Book I, Oswald and Aidan in Book III, Cuthbert at the end of Book IV and John at the beginning of Book V. These figures have consecutive chapters in Bede's text devoted to their preaching and wonder-working. Other saints such as Fursa and the aforementioned Alban also have individual chapters devoted to their miracles. What this shows us is that there was indeed an increased interest on the lives of saints and their miracles between the time of Eusebius and that of Bede; Bede chose to narrate miracles in his history in the context of

⁴⁴¹ See further G. Olsen, 'Bede as Historian: The Evidence from his Observations on the Life of the First Christian Community at Jerusalem', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 33, no. 4 (Oct., 1982), pp. 519-530.

⁴⁴² See Appendix Two where I have listed all of the miracles Bede records in his broadly historical texts.

hagiography. For him, these ‘signs of sanctity’ are the outworking of a righteous holy life and point to deeper spiritual truths, and as such he includes the deeds of these saints as examples for his audience.⁴⁴³ The miracles of the past once again take on an educational role in the present. Neither Bede nor Eusebius mention miracles as a stated intention in the Prefaces of their ecclesiastical histories. However, unlike Eusebius or Rufinus, Bede is explicit about the idea that what he chose to record will encourage his readers to ‘imitate the good’. This imitation Bede desires is not of the miracles themselves, but of the greater signs, both internal and external, to which they point: a life lived in accordance with Christian morals and teaching, and an understanding of the transforming, redemptive power of Christ over all.⁴⁴⁴

Another key point where Bede’s handling of miracles differs from that of Eusebius/Rufinus occurs with the methods by which they note their sources for such stories. On the whole, Eusebius names nearly all of the works from which his miracle accounts originate. Indeed, his entire work is largely a collection of quotations and extracts from other authors; there is little of his own constructed narrative. Amidon notes that Eusebius’ work is ‘impressive in its discrimination of sources and nothing short of revolutionary in its citation of them’.⁴⁴⁵ The main difference from Bede, however, is that in the vast majority of these cases he has never spoken to the source. This is mainly due to the chronological gap between Eusebius as author and his subjects; he lived at a distance too far removed to have encountered these sources personally. In some instances, Eusebius was writing over two centuries apart from his subjects.⁴⁴⁶ He is therefore highly reliant on written rather than oral material. Bede’s reliance on written material in comparison to Eusebius is far more similar in the first three Books of his *HE* than the last two, the period within his own lifetime or within living memory where he had higher access to oral sources.⁴⁴⁷ As he explains in his Preface, and throughout the text, Bede had personally

⁴⁴³ Ward, ‘Miracles and History’, pp. 72-73; McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, Chapter Four.

⁴⁴⁴ Colossians 1:15-20.

⁴⁴⁵ Amidon, ‘Introduction’, p. xvii.

⁴⁴⁶ In this regard, Adomnán and the anonymous author of the *VG*, writing nearly a century after their subjects, encounter similar issues. See Chapter Six for details.

⁴⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Bede does not always explicitly acknowledge he’s using pre-existing written sources. For example, he declines to name his use of the *V.Ger* in *HE* I, or the *VW* in *HE* V.

corresponded with several named ecclesiastical authorities whilst constructing his *HE*. The oral nature of Bede's miracle stories provides a noticeable discrepancy when naming his sources between *HE* Books I-III and Books IV-V, which I explore in Chapter Four. This discrepancy is important, as it highlights the idea that, where able, Bede desired to provide eyewitness information as to the origins of his miracle stories. As Heffernan suggests, 'the testimony of the living witness was of greater value, it would seem, than the documentary evidence'.⁴⁴⁸ Such a desire stems from his understanding of history and the role of the historian in crafting a truthful narrative based on reliable sources. This idea, best examined through the lens of his famed '*vera lex historiae*', will now be addressed.

Vera Lex Historiae

Having established the relative strengths of Bede's historiographical debt to both Luke and Eusebius, it is worth investigating what Bede meant by this phrase in the Preface to his *HE* and the impact this has on our interpretation of his work when it comes to miracle stories. The relevant passage is worth quoting in full:

I humbly beg the reader, if he finds anything other than the truth set down in what I have written, not to impute it to me. For, in accordance with the principles of true history, I have simply sought to commit to writing what I have collected from common report, for the instruction of posterity.⁴⁴⁹

The phrase '*vera lex historiae*' has long been recognised to have first been used by Bede in his *In Lucam* when discussing Joseph as the alleged father of Jesus in Luke 2:33.⁴⁵⁰ Bede's argument there in turn originally stems from Jerome's *Adversus*

⁴⁴⁸ T. J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988), p. 33.

⁴⁴⁹ '*Lectoremque suppliciter obsecro ut, siqua in his quae scripsimus aliter quam se veritas habet posita reppererit, no hoc nobis inputet, qui, quod vera lex historiae est, simpliciter ea quae fama vulgante collegimus ad instructionem posteritatis litteris mandare studuimus*', *HE* Preface, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁵⁰ C. Jones, *Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England* (Ithaca, NY., 1947), p. 83. *In Lucam*, I, II.33-34, p. 67, l. 1910.

Helvidium.⁴⁵¹ It has challenged historians for decades and is ‘a crux much commented upon’.⁴⁵² However, Arthur Holder has conveniently summarised the three most common interpretations of what exactly Bede meant by the phrase. The three headings below are Holder’s own words.⁴⁵³

Bede was ‘justifying the inclusion of popular tales that he knew to be doubtful or even patently false’.

The use of the identical phrase in both Bede’s *In Lucam* and the Preface to his *HE* has led some to view both meanings as synonymous. Joseph, according to Christian teaching, was not the true father of Jesus, but following the ‘*opinionem vulgi*’ Luke was justified in incorporating such an idea into his Gospel. In the same way, Bede, following the ‘*fama vulgante*’ was justified in incorporating what he knew or suspected to be untrue stories that were nevertheless widely believed. Blair writes that ‘we are not bound to suppose that [Bede] believed everything that he chose to record’.⁴⁵⁴ This was also the initial view of Ray, who suggested that ‘what mattered was the message of narrative, not its details’, and that ‘it is probably true that... Bede retold in the *Historia* some things which he knew did not in fact happen’.⁴⁵⁵ Likewise, Higham follows a similar line, writing of traditional stories and common beliefs that ‘their value lay as much in terms of... pastoral utility as in any specific historical reality, which he presumably recognised to be ultimately untestable’.⁴⁵⁶ However, Ray later came to realise that whilst Bede understood and followed Jerome’s rhetorical device in his *In Lucam*, the ‘*vera lex historiae*’ he employs in the *HE* is of a different nature.⁴⁵⁷ Furthermore, McCready is quite clear in showing that the ‘*opinionem vulgi*’ and ‘*fama vulgante*’ are not to be read in identical

⁴⁵¹ Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium de Mariae Virginitate Perpetua*, ed. J. P. Migne, PL 23, (Paris, 1845), col. 0187C.

⁴⁵² Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary*, p. 5.

⁴⁵³ A. G. Holder, ‘Bede and the New Testament’, in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 154.

⁴⁵⁴ P. H. Blair, ‘The Historical Writings of Bede’, in *La Storiografia Altomedievale, 10-16 Aprile 1969*, Vol. 1 (Spoleto, 1970), pp. 201-202.

⁴⁵⁵ Ray, ‘Bede, the Exegete, as Historian’, pp. 129-130.

⁴⁵⁶ Higham, *(Re-) Reading Bede*, p. 81.

⁴⁵⁷ R. D. Ray, ‘Bede’s *Vera Lex Historiae*’, *Speculum*, 55, no.1 (1980), pp. 6-10.

ways.⁴⁵⁸ The context of the Preface to the *HE* shows that Bede is in fact still referring to his stated sources of information for the *HE*, not a principle for the writing of history in general. McCready holds that '*vera lex historiae*' thus 'allows for the use of unverified oral report in historical narrative when other or better sources are lacking. It involves no compromise with the historian's commitment to factual veracity, which remains unimpaired. Whereas *opinio vulgi* is false, *fama vulgans* can be presumed to be true. But its truth is not certain, and it cannot be confirmed'.⁴⁵⁹ As an example of a story considered *opinio vulgi*, McCready cites the famous narrative of Gregory and the Northumbrian slave boys in *HE* II.1, where Bede specifically uses the word '*opinio*'.

Bede was 'warning his readers that his narrative was only as reliable as his sources'.

This is perhaps the most straightforward reading of the text and is the view of Jones, Wallace-Hadrill and McCready. This became Ray's revised view after reconsidering his position first published in 1976 in *Famulus Christi*.⁴⁶⁰ Bede's '*vera lex historiae*' is an acknowledgment that he includes stories that he himself cannot verify but which he has nevertheless received from trustworthy sources. Such an understanding takes seriously Bede's claims in the Preface to the *HE* that he has carefully investigated the history of his island and corresponded with learned ecclesiastical sources; these stories are not mere 'rustic tittle-tattle'.⁴⁶¹ In other words 'he was satisfied that the common report was trustworthy so far as responsible ecclesiastical men could say'.⁴⁶² McCready writes that this passage is a safeguard by Bede 'to protect himself from the accusation of falsehood, and to warn his readers about possible errors of which he is unaware'.⁴⁶³ McCready had already suggested similar regarding the witnesses used by Gregory. His Christian worldview prohibited deliberate falsehood, meaning 'Gregory was only passing on with his comments what he had received in good faith from his informants'.⁴⁶⁴ On this view, Bede's

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁵⁹ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 211-212.

⁴⁶⁰ Ray, 'Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*', pp. 13-14.

⁴⁶¹ Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary*, p. 5.

⁴⁶² Ray, 'Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae*', p. 14.

⁴⁶³ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 212.

⁴⁶⁴ *Idem.*, *Signs of Sanctity*, p. 153.

‘*vera lex historiae*’ in context urges caution with some of his sources lest any inaccuracies get falsely attributed to him.

Bede was ‘suggesting that factual veracity was not as important as theological truth’.

Walter Goffart has more recently suggested that the interpretation above does not go far enough. He believed that the assumption that the ancient and medieval historian was to tell the truth was axiomatic, and that Bede’s statement here is thus saying something more than merely the claim to be truthful. Instead, he sees the use of ‘*vera lex historiae*’ as a statement concerning the nature of the particular stories Bede is discussing, and that the real word historians should focus on that gives Bede’s intention away is ‘*simpliciter*’,⁴⁶⁵ which Colgrave and Mynors translated as ‘simply’. Goffart suggests this word could be better translated as ‘naively’ or ‘innocently’, preferring the term ‘untheologically’.⁴⁶⁶ What this law does, Goffart believes, is that it allows Bede to absolve himself from using or recording the *opinio vulgi*, the common view of things, told in good faith, which may go against established theology. In this way, ‘the contrast was not between truth and falsehood (or error), but between theological truth and common perception’.⁴⁶⁷ McCready seems to support this to a degree, suggesting that when it came to telling the truth Bede follows Cassian and Jerome’s thinking that on rare occasion a white lie may be told in order to edify his readers or make a didactic point.⁴⁶⁸ Goffart believes this is what Bede is doing with the reference to Joseph as Jesus’ father in the Gospel of Luke, and cites a further four examples from the *HE* where he uses ‘*simpliciter*’ in this manner. For example, Drythelm describing hell as both freezing cold and scalding hot is a common opinion yet ‘theologically naïve’. Likewise, Aidan’s theology concerning the dating of Easter was patently false in Bede’s opinion, yet he narrates his deeds ‘*simpliciter*’.⁴⁶⁹ On such a view, ‘*vera lex historiae*’ concerns ‘neither the documentation of history nor its verifiability’.⁴⁷⁰ Rather, it is a statement concerning the ‘inherent limitation of historical discourse’.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁵ W. Goffart, ‘Bede’s *Vera Lex Historiae* Explained’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 34 (2005), pp. 111-112.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴⁶⁸ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 225ff.

⁴⁶⁹ Goffart, ‘Bede’s *Vera Lex Historiae* Explained’, p.114.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

Alheydis Plassmann developed Goffart's proposal that "*simpliciter*" is the key to reading Bede's '*vera lex historiae*', beginning her article by showing how, where we are able to compare, Bede clearly alters and develops pre-existing sources to further promote the salvation history (*heilgeschichte*) of the English people in the *HE*.⁴⁷² The examples given are Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae*, the *V.Ger*, the portrayal of Gregory compared to the *VG*, and the portrayal of Wilfrid compared to the *VW*. Like Goffart, Plassmann then uses Bede's comments in *HE* Preface, III.17 and V.24 to provide clues by which we should interpret what Bede means by this phrase throughout the *HE*.⁴⁷³ Unlike Goffart, however, she suggests that *simpliciter* should be taken to mean 'simply', and 'the *opinio vulgi*, *traditio maiorum* and *fama vulgans* are interpretational aids for the simple-minded'.⁴⁷⁴ Plassmann suggests that these phrases are used by Bede as clear, convenient signposts for the theologically uneducated reader that these particular stories, particularly related to the miraculous, are to be considered as part of the salvation history of the English people. In this way, *vera lex historiae*, deciphered through *simpliciter*, is Bede's way of telling his audience, particularly 'those for whom the instruments of biblical exegesis and education are not at hand', that sometimes he will speak in simpler language to really make it obvious what theological truths he is trying to instil.⁴⁷⁵ On this view, *vera lex historiae* is not a comment on the factual accuracy of some of his sources but rather a literary technique by which Bede, ever the teacher, 'opens his readers eyes, especially the non-theologian, to the history of salvation'.⁴⁷⁶

Of these three views, the second option appears most credible, though the third also has some merit. Goffart's reading seems plausible, but his evidence is slim. He notes that 'there surely are other places in the *HE* in which Bede, bending to the limitations of the genre, spoke *simpliciter* without giving notice that he was doing so'.⁴⁷⁷ Nevertheless, on

⁴⁷² Plassmann, 'Beda Venerabilis – *Verax Historicus*', pp. 125-137.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

⁴⁷⁴ '*Die opinio vulgi, die traditio maiorum, die fama vulgans sind Auslegungshilfen für den einfachen Geist*', *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴⁷⁵ '*die Instrumente der Exegese und der Bildung nicht zur Hand haben*', *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁶ '*öffnet seinen lesern, allen voran den Nichttheologen, die Augen für die heilsgeschichte*', *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ Goffart, 'Bede's *Vera Lex Historiae* Explained', p. 116.

the strength of the four examples he does provide, his argument is inconclusive. Not all stories based on the '*opinio vulgi*' need to be theologically unsound for example. Furthermore, the reliance on common report does in fact turn the question to matters of Bede's sources and what he knew to be true versus what he chose to include knowing it was unverifiable yet provided to him by trustworthy ecclesiasts. Likewise, Plassmann's article only provides two examples from Bede's biblical commentaries that *opinio vulgi* could be employed to signpost a deeper theological truth. More work should be done on Bede's use of these phrases throughout the *HE* to ascertain whether this suggestion has more merit. That Bede with '*vera lex historiae*' was offering a factual disclaimer to his work regarding his sources seems most appropriate to a historian who highly valued the literal truth of the Bible,⁴⁷⁸ which, as shown in Chapter One, is a particularly Augustinian concern. Hilliard, throughout his comprehensive study of Bede's corpus, has made it clear that for Bede, true understanding of the meanings of scripture must stem from a solid understanding of the literal level first before moving on to the allegorical: 'in order for Bede to create a sound theological and spiritual message in the text, he had to build it from the realities of history'.⁴⁷⁹ This attitude is then reflected in his historical endeavours. On the whole, where he could, Bede sought to be accurate and truthful in his historical work at the literal level, basing his texts on trustworthy information, though of course shaping the narrative and suppressing inconvenient facts to his own didactic ends. The implication of this understanding of history for our reading of Bede's miracle stories, particularly where he names his sources or else provides anonymous ones, is that these are the people with whom he had consulted or were the originators of miracle traditions. It is a statement regarding the quality of his sources, not the nature of the evidence itself.⁴⁸⁰ Such sources provide the foundation and testimony to the literal level of history before the reader understood the spiritual messages contained therein. In other words, Bede believed that his sources for miracles attested to the fact that something had genuinely happened,⁴⁸¹ yet, due

⁴⁷⁸ See in particular his early work *De Locis Sanctis*, and the responses he gives to Nothhelm in *In Regum Librum XXX Quaestiones*, both in W. Trent Foley and A. G. Holder (eds. and trans.), *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999).

⁴⁷⁹ Hilliard, *Sacred and Secular History*, passim. Quote at p. 202.

⁴⁸⁰ Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary*, p. 5.

⁴⁸¹ Ward, 'Miracles and History', pp. 70-71.

to the very nature of the miraculous, he himself could not verify their claims. In many cases, however, he adds epithets to his sources for miracles, reinforcing their credibility lest any should doubt their stories.⁴⁸² *Vera lex historiae* is thus a means by which Bede asserts this is the truth of the matter as best as he can know it from his sources, and that the Christian audience can therefore benefit from hearing it. As discussed above, Bede is not telling tales merely for their own sake or for entertainment but so that ‘the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good’.⁴⁸³

This view also takes into account the ‘humble beseeching’ of Bede’s request not to be misunderstood when he makes his case regarding this particular “true law of history”. Bede is, in this Preface, defending himself against potential charges of falsity,⁴⁸⁴ and reminds his reader that he is often reliant on sources outside of his immediate control. Nevertheless, by naming many of them here, and throughout his historical corpus, Bede sought to ‘[enlist] their collective authority to his work’.⁴⁸⁵ Whilst Bede was genuine in his desire not to be misunderstood,⁴⁸⁶ hence his giving the *vera lex historiae* caveat, we should not conflate his humility here with his understanding of the *HE* as a whole or his abilities as an author. Two of Bede’s other statements in the Preface regarding perceived modesty ring hollow. For example, he describes his *HE* as an *opusculi*, which Colgrave and Mynors translated as ‘modest work’, but could equally be translated as ‘little work’.⁴⁸⁷ Anyone who has ever read Bede’s *HE* can easily understand that it is neither little nor modest; it is his *magnum opus*, written at the zenith of a prolific career spanning nearly three decades. Furthermore, at the end of the Preface, he requests prayer for his

⁴⁸² I explore these suggestions in greater depth in Chapter Four, and compare Bede’s practice to his contemporaries in Chapters Five and Six.

⁴⁸³ *‘ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur’*, *HE* Preface, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁸⁴ Higham, *(Re-) Reading Bede*, p. 76, believes Bede was perhaps answering actual charges of falsehood in the initial reading of his work.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82. I also develop this point in the following chapter.

⁴⁸⁶ He had, after all, been accused of heresy following a careless reading of his work *De Temporibus*: Bede, *De Temporibus*, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 123C (Turnhout, 1980). For Bede’s response, see Bede, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, ed. C. Jones, CCSL 123C (Turnhout, 1980); Bede, *Letter to Plegwin*, in F. Wallis, (ed. and trans.), *The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 2012), pp. 405-415.

⁴⁸⁷ *HE* Preface, pp. 2-3.

‘weaknesses of both body and mind’,⁴⁸⁸ yet Bede could hardly have been considered of average intelligence. Such statements of humility should be understood in the context of a common medieval historiographic tradition, stemming from Eusebius (and earlier), where the author decries their own intelligence and lack of skill, and affirms the modest nature of their work. For Eusebius, however, he reminds the reader, quite rightly, that he is ‘the first to venture along this path’; his *Historia Ecclesiastica* is largely uncharted territory.⁴⁸⁹ His humble apology for any perceived deficiencies thus serves as a very real reminder that Eusebius is here doing something new. Rufinus, by comparison, wrote how he felt ‘unequal’ to the task given to him by Chromatius, and suggested that his Latin was not up to sufficient standard.⁴⁹⁰ He aligns himself with the young boy in John 6:1-14 who provided the food before Jesus feeds the 5000 ‘so that the divine power might be even more evident where the resources were hopelessly slim’.⁴⁹¹ Rufinus explains that his two additional books of ecclesiastical history are like the two fish added to the five loaves, and therefore prays that Chromatius will bless this offering and that his work, despite his personal misgivings, will thus ‘satisfy the crowds’.⁴⁹² Similar comments of modesty and humility are also to be found, for example, in the historical and hagiographical prefaces of Orosius or Sulpicius Severus.⁴⁹³ What this ultimately shows, therefore, is that whilst

⁴⁸⁸ ‘*meis infirmitatibus et mentis et corporis*’, *HE* Preface, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁸⁹ ‘*viam... itineris primi audeamus incedere*’, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 1, I.1.3, p. 9.

⁴⁹⁰ ‘*inferior*’, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 2, p. 951; *Church History of Rufinus*, Preface to Eusebius, p. 3.

⁴⁹¹ ‘*quo magis in augustis opibus et desperatis clara fieret divina potentia*’, *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁹² ‘*quod sufficient turbis*’, *Ibid.*, p. 952; *Ibid.*

⁴⁹³ In the preface, addressed to Augustine, his patron, Orosius writes of his ‘lowliness’ (*subiectio*) before Augustine and states that his work ‘returns from you to you [IE originated from and is sent back to Augustine], is entirely yours, [and] my only contribution to it is that I did the work willingly’ (*ex te ad te redit, opus meum hoc solo meo cumulatius reddidi, quod libens feci*). He also writes that he did not want to bother Augustine with it whilst finishing the eleventh book of his *City of God*: Orose, *Histoire*, Prologue.8 and 11; *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, pp. 31-33. In his dedicatory letter to Desiderius, Sulpicius Severus notes his ‘unpolished style’ (*sermo incultior*) and that he thinks he ‘should be deemed deserving of general censure for having had the temerity to appropriate a subject better left to more competent writers’ (*reprehensionis dignissimus iudicarer, qui materiam disertis merito scriptoribus reservandam inprudens occupassem*). He asks Desiderius to ensure that his readers understand that the content is more important than the style, and reminds him that it was fishermen, not orators, who were the first followers of Christ; ‘the kingdom of God is not founded on eloquence but on faith’ (*regnum Dei non in*

Bede's particular usage of '*vera lex historiae*' in the *HE* is unique to him, a new development from that employed by Jerome, the reasoning for which it was employed falls soundly within a traditional historiographic commonplace.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to rehabilitate the important role of scripture in shaping Bede's historiographical thought. The discussion has been for reasons of space limited mainly to the Prefaces of the texts involved; a whole thesis could be devoted to Bede's historical reliance on Luke across his entire corpus. Additionally, more research, better Latin editions, as well as a scholarly English translation, needs to be done on both Bede's *In Lucam* and his *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum*.⁴⁹⁴ These texts have been largely neglected among Bedan scholarship.⁴⁹⁵ With regards to the composition, key themes, style and purpose of his *HE*, Bede has been shown on many occasions to follow a distinctly Lukan model of historical writing. History, for Bede, appears to be a sacred genre, and his narration of the Anglo-Saxon past reflects the language and interests of the biblical narrative. Through the specific lens of the miraculous, Bede's practice was again shown to differ somewhat from Eusebius. I am not attempting to create a false dichotomy between Bede's use of Eusebius and Bede's use of the Bible. He did indeed use both. Rather, I have shown that historians should be less hasty in drawing quick comparison between Bede and the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius. For all their similarities, 'the differences between the work of Eusebius and that of Bede remain vast, as the most cursory perusal of Rufinus reveals'.⁴⁹⁶ The results of this investigation reemphasise Bede's honesty as an author

eloquentia, sed in fide constat). Furthermore, he urges Desiderius to anonymise the work if it is deemed too difficult to defend. *V. Mart* Dedicatory Letter to Desiderius, p.248; *Life of Martin*, p. 134. Such statements stem from 1 Corinthians 4:20.

⁴⁹⁴ Bede, *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum*, ed. M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout, 1983).

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. J. F. Kelly, 'Bede's Exegesis of Luke's Infancy Narrative', *Medievalia*, 15 (1993), pp. 59-70; Gorman, 'Source Marks and Chapter Divisions'; B. M. Kaczynski, 'Bede's Commentaries on Luke and Mark and the Formation of the Patristic Canon', in S. Echard and G. Wieland (eds.), *Anglo-Latin and Its Heritage: Essays in Honor of A. G. Rigg on his 64th Birthday* (Turnhout, 2001), pp. 17-26; E. J. Del Giacco, 'Exegesis and Sermon: A Comparison of Bede's Commentary and Homilies on Luke', *Medieval Sermon Studies*, 50 (2006), pp. 9-29.

⁴⁹⁶ McClure, 'Bede's Old Testament Kings', p. 93.

within the framework of his life as a Christian. He is not merely following a historiographic tradition derived in part from Eusebius; his historical writing and the desire to provide a truthful and accurate account of the past is an active outworking of his Christian faith and love of scripture. That is why he felt the need to mention his ‘true law of history’: Bede saw it as a matter of religious integrity that he should not be misunderstood whilst being acutely aware that he was also reliant upon sources, trustworthy though he deemed them, that were ultimately beyond his control. Holder’s final analysis provides much wisdom to round off the discussion from this chapter:

Without further elaboration from Bede himself, much about this ‘true law of history’ is bound to remain unclear. What we can say with confidence is that he obviously thought of Luke and the other evangelists as fellow historians who had collected documents, interviewed witnesses and crafted rhetorically effective narratives in order to tell the story of God’s providential work in the early days of the Christian Church. Surely Bede thought that he was justified in using similar methods to tell the ‘ecclesiastical history’ of his own English people.⁴⁹⁷

The next chapter will continue this theme of authorial reliance upon sources by exploring the methods through which six late antique hagiographical texts sought to attest miracle narratives. This serves as a prelude to a detailed discussion of Bede’s practice in the eighth century in Chapter Four, as well as that of his contemporaries in Chapters Five and Six.

⁴⁹⁷ Holder, ‘Bede and the New Testament’, p. 154.

Chapter Three

Hagiography in Late Antiquity

The world of late antiquity was pivotal not only in the consolidation of major Christian doctrines as we now know them but also in the popularisation of a distinctly Christian form of literature: hagiography, from the Greek for ‘holy writing’. Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* had spoken much about the martyrs of the earliest centuries of the faith, yet at the closing of the fourth century a new type of saint was emerging, ‘not those who died for their faith but those who lived for it, in a heroic and resolute way’: the confessors.⁴⁹⁸ Foremost among these were the Egyptian monk Anthony and Martin, Bishop of Tours, whose written *Lives* (Latin: ‘*vitae*’) served as the prime exemplars of the fledgling genre. Hagiographical texts sought not only to spread the fame of such saints but also to inspire readers to live a life in imitation of these figures.⁴⁹⁹ Such texts became one of the key features of the cult of saints; a written *vita* was soon an expected feature in nearly every major memorialisation of saints. As Heffernan explains, hagiography ‘provides a documentary witness to the process of sanctification for the community and in so doing becomes itself a part of the sacred tradition it serves to document’.⁵⁰⁰ Within these texts the miracles of the saints regularly featured as a sign of their special relationship to God. However, there have always been those who doubt such claims; the voice of Thomas who will not believe unless he too had seen the risen Christ is echoed throughout the centuries.⁵⁰¹ Partly in answer to such concerns and partly in the name of writing good history, the authors of hagiographies usually looked to provide some form of attestation and state their witnesses for the miraculous occurrences they include.

In order to gain an accurate understanding of the rationale behind Bede’s practices concerning sources for miracles, an examination of the historic precedent is appropriate. Chapters One and Two provided some of the intellectual background regarding how Bede

⁴⁹⁸ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 17. The origin of the confessor is also discussed briefly in J. M. Peterson, ‘Dead or Alive? The Holy Man as Healer in East and West in the Late Sixth Century’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 9, no. 2 (Jun., 1983), p. 91.

⁴⁹⁹ Yarrow, *The Saints*, pp. 111-113.

⁵⁰⁰ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 16.

⁵⁰¹ John 20:24-29.

viewed truth, history and miracles through the writings of Gregory, Augustine, Eusebius/Rufinus and Luke. This chapter will provide some of the methodological background to Bede's work by examining how six early hagiographical texts wrote about miracles.⁵⁰² These texts were all known to Bede as evidenced by him specifically mentioning them by name, or through quoting passages from them in his own work. They therefore provide the ability not only to explore late antique practice in writing about the miraculous but also to trace the development of their influences on Bede. Note, this list is not exhaustive of all the hagiographies that Bede had access to. Nevertheless these serve as some of the more important, providing a reasonable snapshot of the genre across multiple centuries and geographic locations.

The chapter will particularly focus on how miracles are attested in these texts, examining the extent to which these authors considered the need to provide sources for each miracle they contain and their reasoning why. To begin with, this chapter will explain my working methodology and how these results have been calculated. This is important as it sets the standard by which these texts are here measured, allowing a fair comparison between Bede's predecessors in this chapter, his own works in the next, and his contemporaries in the following two. The chapter will then address each of the six texts in chronological order, stating the figures calculated as well as providing commentary on how each author handled and understood their sources. It will close by briefly discussing the six texts in parallel, arguing that whilst all these texts contributed to how Bede wrote hagiographical and historical literature, nevertheless some were more influential than others when it came to miracles in particular. The intention of this chapter is that these earlier texts will provide a foundation through which historians can understand Bede's mind-set when it comes to exploring the sources he used for miracles recorded in the eighth century.

Counting Miracles and Monks: Methodology

Any statistical examination of miracles as well as the quality of their sources must begin with a clear methodology. McCready states that 'counting miracle stories is not a precise science. Some arbitrariness is involved in judging when a miracle is simply

⁵⁰² See p. 15, fn. 67, above.

mentioned rather than related, or when one ends and another begins'.⁵⁰³ I will follow McCready with counting individual miracles rather than accounts of miracles; he cites a difference between an individual miracle and an account that may contain more than one miracle.⁵⁰⁴ For example, *VCB* XXIII has three miracles in one narrative unit: Cuthbert sending a linen girdle to Ælfflæd by prophetic knowledge, the girdle healing a sick nun, and the girdle disappearing. Here, this is not a singular girdle miracle, but three separate incidents, each miraculous in their own right; they can stand by themselves and should therefore be counted separately. This distinction is important, and is largely responsible for the different totals reached by scholars over the years; it is the main reason why my figures for both Gregory's *Dialogi* and Bede's *HE* below appear higher than McCready's. As I am more interested in narrative descriptions of individual miracles, I have also avoided counting mere mentions of miracles without specific details. For example, these authors sometimes mention that various people or locations were known for their miracles, but do not provide any further information. A key example of this is *V.Aug* XXIX, where Possidius claims Augustine performed multiple exorcisms, yet does not elaborate on the details. Likewise in *HE* I.31, Pope Gregory's letter of advice to Augustine of Canterbury states that Augustine had been performing miracles, yet says nothing of what occurred, when or where.⁵⁰⁵ Such references to miracles are thus left outside of my calculations for those texts.

Concerning sources, I will be utilising a threefold division of 'named', 'anonymous' and 'no source given' to provide a fair comparison between Bede's own works and those of his predecessors and contemporaries.⁵⁰⁶

Named Sources

I define a 'named source' as the author specifically stating the name of the person or written account that had informed him of this story. In a different context, New Testament

⁵⁰³ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 158, fn. 12.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164, fn. 29.

⁵⁰⁵ For brief comment on this letter, see Ricci, 'Gregory's Missions to the Barbarians', p. 54.

⁵⁰⁶ Rosenthal uses 'source mentioned in the text' or 'source given with greater or lesser precision' (presumably against 'no source mentioned in the text'), but such a system is far too simplistic for the present analysis. Rosenthal, 'Bede's Use of Miracles', p. 331.

scholar Richard Bauckham suggests that ‘explanation of those names that do occur [in miracle stories] is certainly required’.⁵⁰⁷ In response to Bauckham, Samuel Byrskog has suggested that ‘the names may simply be part of the story’.⁵⁰⁸ However, contrary to Byrskog’s challenge, why name some figures and not others? Byrskog would have us suppose the names are to some extent fictional and irrelevant, whereas Bauckham suggests that the fact that some are named and not others points to the possibility that real people who had experienced such events were now telling their stories. Such a hypothesis allows us to take seriously Bede’s claims, for example, that he had ‘decided occasionally to place the names of these [his] authorities in the book itself’;⁵⁰⁹ every name is significant and was only there because Bede had reason for it to be there. As Tinti reminds us, ‘Bede lived in a world in which remembering people through their names, especially in liturgical contexts, was an act of utmost importance’.⁵¹⁰ An additional suggestion is that the omission of names in later accounts that had originally been present in earlier accounts is explained by the death of the witness. These authors sometimes mention a source as being ‘still alive’, and my hypothesis, concurring with Tinti, is that such a remark meant that these persons continued to be accessible to relate their story to others at the time of writing. I provide evidence of this below and in Chapters Four and Five, particularly concerning the *VCA* and Bede’s later *VCB*.

Anonymous Sources

By an ‘anonymous source’, I am referring to those instances where the author mentions the person he heard the story from, often with a comment on their character or where they currently or formerly resided, yet does not provide their name. For example, in *V.Mart* XXII.3, Sulpicius Severus states that ‘some of the brothers testified...’ regarding Martin’s conversation with a demon.⁵¹¹ As no individuals are specifically named, this source is considered anonymous.

⁵⁰⁷ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 53.

⁵⁰⁸ S. Byrskog, ‘The Eyewitnesses as Interpreters of the Past: Reflections on Richard Bauckham’s *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*’, *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, 6, no. 2 (2008), pp. 158-159.

⁵⁰⁹ ‘nomina in ipso libro aliquotiens... apponenda iudicavi’, *VCB* Prologue, pp. 142-145.

⁵¹⁰ Tinti, ‘Personal Names’, p. 23.

⁵¹¹ ‘testabantur etiam aliqui ex fratribus’, *V.Mart* XXII.3, p. 300.

No Source Given

‘No source given’ means that the story has no identifiers as to where the author had received their information from. However, whilst no source may have been given, this does not imply there was no source at all for the miracle in question; for whatever reason, they might have chosen not to name their informants. Rather, these chapters are more concerned with the attribution of miracle sources and how their authors present them instead of their use of sources in general.

Note, with the named and anonymous sources, I am not initially concerned with whether these are direct eyewitnesses to the miracle or not; occasionally these authors relate a story from a source one or two steps removed from the initial eyewitnesses. For example, Bede clearly states in *HE* V.5 that his informant, Berhthun, abbot of Beverley, was not present to witness a miracle but was told the story by some who were. Where these authors got their sources from and their quality are two separate questions. Likewise, a singular named or anonymous source can sometimes be deduced implicitly from the text where no source has been explicitly provided and is thus included in the calculations.⁵¹² A full table of results can be found in Appendices One, Two and Three.

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Antonii*

Athanasius’ *V.Ant* can rightly be described as the archetypal hagiographic text. Gregg describes it as ‘one of the most influential writings in Christian history’.⁵¹³ There is nothing quite like it before it was written, and its composition inspired subsequent authors to create similar texts in the same genre, several of which are examined in this chapter. Athanasius (c.296/298 - 2 May 373) was Bishop of Alexandria for 45 years during a particularly turbulent period of early Christianity. In Alexandria and across the eastern Mediterranean at this time, an unorthodox belief concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ,

⁵¹² These instances are clearly stated in the appendices, and in the relevant chapter sections where appropriate.

⁵¹³ R. C. Gregg, *Athanasius: The Life of Anthony and the Letter to Marcellinus* (Mahwah, NJ, 1980), p. 3.

known as Arianism, was growing in popularity.⁵¹⁴ Arianism, named after its founder Arius (d. 336), an Alexandrian priest,⁵¹⁵ suggested that God the Son was not eternal but had been created at some point in the past by the Father. As a result, the person of the Son was not of the same essence, or consubstantial, with the Father. Arianism therefore called into question the essential unity and eternal nature of the Godhead, and was denounced as heresy. It is important to note, however, that the conflict between Athanasius and the Arians was not the first such discussion of the nature of Trinity,⁵¹⁶ but is perhaps the most famous due to its role in the convening of the Council of Nicaea in 325.⁵¹⁷ At this ecumenical church council, the orthodox position regarding the co-eternality and consubstantiality of the God the Son with the Father was formally defined and affirmed. A creed of orthodox Christian beliefs was subsequently drawn up and forms the basis of what is still in use by many churches to this day. However, following the death of the emperor Constantine in 327, his successors Constantius II (r.337-361) and Valens (r.364-378) actively encouraged Arianism once more and Nicene clergy were persecuted. Over the course of his life, Athanasius spent some 17 years in exile. It was during one of these periods of exile that he wrote the *V.Ant* following Anthony's death in 356.⁵¹⁸ Anthony's recorded opposition to Arian doctrine has thus been read as Athanasius imposing his authorial prejudices over his subject, though the distinction between the two is difficult to make; it is possible that Anthony would also have been aware of the theological controversy occurring in nearby Alexandria at the time.⁵¹⁹ Athanasius also produced several works documenting his theology as well as his opposition towards the Arians, such as the *Orationes contra Arianos*, the *Epistulae iv ad Serapionem* defending the divinity of

⁵¹⁴ One of the best accounts is R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Edinburgh, 1988).

⁵¹⁵ See R. D. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London, 2nd ed., 2009).

⁵¹⁶ Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, Ch. Three.

⁵¹⁷ See L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, 2006), Ch. Four and Five in particular.

⁵¹⁸ Gregg, *Athanasius*, p. xi. Cf. B. R. Brennan, 'Dating Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 30, no. 1 (1976), pp. 52-54 who rejects Barnard's more precise dating of the original text to late 357/early 358.

⁵¹⁹ *V.Ant*, LXVIII-LXX, LXXXIX and XCI; Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 18. Cf. Gregg, *Athanasius*, p. 13, who describes Anthony as 'a vehicle for the doctrinal commitments of the author'.

the Holy Spirit, and the *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi* detailing the important events of 325.⁵²⁰

Bede read the *V.Ant* via Evagrius of Antioch's Latin translation, which was composed before the death of Evagrius' dedicatee Innocentius in 374.⁵²¹ It is not a definitively literal translation for, in Evagrius' own words, 'a literal translation made from one language to another conceals the meaning, like rampant grasses which suffocate the crops... Some people try to capture the syllables and letters, but you must seek the meaning'.⁵²² He reiterates this point in his epilogue, stating 'we were well aware that the Greek text, when translated into Latin, might lose its power'.⁵²³ Evidence that Bede knew this text comes from a citation of a miracle of Anthony in *VCB* XIX, as well as in his *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*.⁵²⁴ Evagrius was a priest and friend of Jerome. He was later one of three bishops associated with Antioch at this time following the death of Paulinus in 388, a situation further complicated by a rival Arian faction present in the city. He was still alive in 392 according to Jerome,⁵²⁵ and possibly died in 398.⁵²⁶

Anthony the Great, also known as Anthony of Egypt, was a monk famous for his popularisation of the monastic lifestyle. In the late third century, however, this did not necessarily mean living in organised communities but rather setting oneself apart from the world in order to develop a closer relationship with God. Anthony and many other early

⁵²⁰ See A. Petterson, *Athanasius* (London, 1995), Ch. Five-Seven, and Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, Ch. Fourteen for further details, particularly in light of his Anti-Arian polemics. The Latin titles are more prevalent in the scholarship than the Greek.

⁵²¹ Recorded in Jerome, *Letter III (To Rufinus the Monk)*, in W. H. Freemantle, G. Lewis and W. G. Martley (trans) and H. Wace and P. Schaff (eds.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. 6, St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works* (Oxford, 1893), p. 5.

⁵²² 'Ex alia in aliam linguam ad verbum expressa translatio, sensus operit, et veluti laetum gramen sata strangulat', 'Alii syllabas aucupentur et litteras, tu quaere sententiam', *V.Ant* Evagrius' Prologue, col. 126; *Life of Anthony*, p. 7.

⁵²³ 'sufficienter sciens quantam infirmitatem sustinet Graecus sermo translatus in Latinitatem', *V.Ant* Evagrius' Epilogue, col. 168; *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁵²⁴ Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, XXVIII.11, p. 97.

⁵²⁵ Evagrius' entry in Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, trans. T. P. Halton (Washington, D. C., 1999), CXXV, p. 159 implies he was still alive at the time of composition, 'the fourteenth year of the emperor Theodosius'.

⁵²⁶ White, *Early Christian Lives*, p. 5 suggests that John Chrysostom's correspondence to the Pope in 398 imply that Evagrius had recently died.

monks ‘sought the desert’, that is, an isolated location where one could focus on spiritual discipline. Albrecht Diem points out that, among other things, ‘the desert was full of demons, and monks deliberately chose to live there in order to reach perfection by fighting them and overcoming their temptations’.⁵²⁷ In the original sense this was a literal desert, but the phrase later came to mean any location where the solitary pursuit of the holy life could be achieved.⁵²⁸ In Anthony’s case, he lived for 13 years in the Nitrian Desert, in northern Egypt, then lived for 20 years in an abandoned Roman fort.⁵²⁹ Athanasius wrote the *V.Ant* at the request of monks wishing to know how Anthony lived so that they could emulate him, telling them that ‘everyone will rightly be impressed by this intention of yours’.⁵³⁰ As Brakke suggests, ‘Athanasius self-consciously presents Anthony’s life as an ideal, a “pattern” to be followed’.⁵³¹ Athanasius suggests that Anthony’s model for such an anchoritic existence was that of the biblical prophet Elijah, using him ‘as a mirror to organise his own life’.⁵³² Elijah, who lived in the ninth century B.C., is recorded in the Bible as following an ascetic lifestyle, living on his own off the land,⁵³³ performing miracles and dressed in a hair garment and leather belt.⁵³⁴ Like Elijah, Anthony was unafraid to confront the political authorities of his day, and in 311 he travelled to Alexandria to face martyrdom alongside his fellow believers.⁵³⁵ However, he was spared

⁵²⁷ A. Diem ‘Encounters Between Monks and Demons in Latin Texts of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages’, in K. E. Olsen, A. Harbus and T. Hofstra (eds.), *Miracles and the Miraculous in Medieval Germanic and Latin Literature* (Leuven, 2004), p. 51.

⁵²⁸ See, for example, A. MacDonald, ‘Seeking the Desert in Adomnán’s *Vita Columbae*’, in E. Mullins and D. Scully (eds.), *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O’Reilly* (Cork, 2011), pp. 191-203, who discusses the various voyages of Irish monks in the sixth century into the Ocean as a form of seeking the desert.

⁵²⁹ *V.Ant* XIII.

⁵³⁰ ‘et hanc voluntatem vestram juste quisque mirabitur’, *V.Ant* Preface, col. 126; *Life of Anthony*, p. 7.

⁵³¹ D. Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (London, 1998), p. 201.

⁵³² ‘speculum vitam suam debere componere’, *V.Ant* VII, col. 131b; *Life of Anthony*, p. 14. M. S. Williams, *Authorised Lives in Early Christian Biography: Between Eusebius and Augustine* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 106-107 sees Athanasius portraying himself in the text as Elisha, Elijah’s biblical successor.

⁵³³ 1 Kings 17:5-6.

⁵³⁴ 2 Kings 1:8. Note, some interpret the passage as Elijah being hairy himself, not necessarily covered by hair material.

⁵³⁵ *V.Ant* XXIII.

this fate. Instead, Athanasius suggested Anthony achieved a ‘daily martyrdom of faith and conscience’ due to his harsh lifestyle,⁵³⁶ and he died peacefully in 356.

The number of miracles in this text, according to the criteria listed above, is as follows: 32 miracles, 2 of which have Named Sources (6.25%). The rest have No Source attributed to them (93.75%).

The lack of individual attribution for these miracles is mitigated by the fact that Athanasius states he had two principle sources. He writes that he relied mostly upon ‘those things that I myself know (for I visited him often) and those I learned from the person who spent a good deal of time with him for the purpose of supplying him with water’.⁵³⁷ Athanasius adds that he had desired to seek further information via other monks who knew Anthony, but due to the inopportune sailing season and the urgency of the messenger he was unable to do so.⁵³⁸ Instead, alongside his account, Athanasius suggests that the enquiring monks should ‘believe everything that those who talk about him claim, and consider that you have heard only the least remarkable of all the very remarkable things he did’.⁵³⁹ This might suggest that Athanasius was being overly credulous towards reports of Anthony, but he adds the important caveat that his readers should ‘diligently question’ those sailing from Egypt bearing stories of the famous monk.⁵⁴⁰ What Athanasius is implying is that the stories they have heard about Anthony are likely true, the account he is providing will reinforce these claims, and if they hear further stories they should carefully discern whether they are ‘in keeping with such a great name and worthy of it’.⁵⁴¹ Of the two miracles with named sources, one of them is implied to be Athanasius himself through his use of the first person plural, denoting his personal involvement in the event.⁵⁴² The other

⁵³⁶ ‘quotidianum fidei ac conscientiae martyrium’, Ibid., col. 147d; *Life of Anthony*, p. 38.

⁵³⁷ ‘ideo ea quae et ipse noveram (frequenter enim eum visitavi) et quae ab eo didici, qui ad praebendam ei aquam non paululum temporis cum eo fecit’, *V.Ant* Preface, col. 127; Ibid., p. 8.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ ‘omnibus, quae de eo referentium sermo jactavit credite, et minima vos existimate audisse de maximis’, Ibid; Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ ‘studiose percontamini’, Ibid; Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ ‘congrua dignaque tanti nominis relatio compleatur’, Ibid; Ibid.

⁵⁴² *V.Ant* XLIII; Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, pp. 205-206.

miracle stands out for special attention by Athanasius as it does not directly concern Anthony but regarded a fellow monk, Ammon. In retelling Anthony witnessing Ammon's soul ascend to heaven, Athanasius diverts from his main narrative to relate a miracle experienced by Ammon. As Athanasius had already stated his two main sources for the life and miracles of Anthony, this inclusion of a miracle by someone else required similar attestation, lest the readers question its inclusion. The source of this miracle is therefore named as Ammon's companion Theodore.⁵⁴³

The place of miracles in the *V.Ant* is somewhat ambiguous. White writes that 'It is not primarily Anthony the wonder-worker whom we see in Athanasius' biography... It is instead Anthony's wisdom that is emphasised, together with his prophetic abilities, his calmness and spiritual strength – all of which are dependent on his close relationship with God. These are what set him apart and serve as an inspiration to all'.⁵⁴⁴ Nevertheless, miracles frequently occur throughout this text; there are more miracles in the *V.Ant* than the *V. Mart*, *V.Ambr* and *V.Aug*. Despite their prominence, however, they are not what Anthony himself wished to focus on. In *V.Ant* XXIV, for example, he moves away from the area he is staying in as too many people are visiting him due to the reports of his miracles. Furthermore, in the middle of the large sermon to his followers (*V.Ant* XV-XXI), Anthony advises them:

Be more concerned about your way of life than about miracles. If any of you performs miracles he must neither swell with pride nor look down on those who cannot manage it. Consider rather each individual's behaviour... It is not for our humble selves to perform miracles but for the power of the Lord, who in the Gospels said to the disciples when they were boasting 'Do not rejoice that the demons are subject to you but rather that your names are written in heaven' [Luke 10:20].⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ *V.Ant* XLII.

⁵⁴⁴ White, *Early Christian Lives*, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁵ 'Illud quoque, mei charissimi, admoneo, ut vitae magis sit vobis, quam signorum sollicitudo. Nullus ex vobis haec faciens, aut ipse superbia intumescat, aut despiciat eos qui facere non possunt. Conversationem magis scrutamini singulorum: in hac vita et imitari vos quae perfecta sunt convenit, et implere quae desunt. Nam signa facere non est nostrae parvitas, sed Domini potestatis, qui ad discipulos gloriantes, in Evangelio ait: Ne gaudeatis quia daemones vobis subjecti sunt, sed quod nomina vestra scripta sunt in coelis', *V.Ant* XIX, cols. 143c-143d; *Life of Anthony*, p. 32.

Likewise, after performing a miracle in front of a group of Greek philosophers he instructs them ‘Do not think that it is I who have given these people health. It is Christ who performs these miracles through his servants’.⁵⁴⁶ Gregg suggests that such sentiments reflect Athanasius directly challenging an Arian understanding of salvation where one’s own moral goodness, rather than the divine power of Christ himself, is enough to save the soul.⁵⁴⁷ In this regard, the ability of a saint to perform miracles is a God-given power, not a power within themselves. Athanasius’ summary of one of the miracles would seem to concur with this view: ‘No one who is wise attributes the miracle of healing to Anthony, but to the Lord Jesus who was displaying His usual benevolence to His creatures... Anthony merely prayed and the Lord granted everything *as a reward for Anthony’s virtuous life*’.⁵⁴⁸ That last phrase is crucial for our overall understanding of miracles in the *V.Ant.* In some respects Athanasius’ Anthony sought to distance his life from the miracles he performed. He knew that not everyone would realistically be able to emulate them, but they could follow the disciplined pattern of his lifestyle. It was his everyday life as a Christian therefore, and not his supernatural experiences, that he desired to be his legacy; virtue and discipline were of greater importance than the miraculous.

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Martini*

The *V.Mart* stands apart from all the other texts examined in this thesis as it was written before its subject had died. It therefore represents the contemporary efforts of one author, Sulpicius Severus, to capture the essence of Martin’s saintly life and spread fame of his deeds whilst he was still alive. The *V.Mart*, alongside the *V.Ant*, are foundational texts for the development of hagiography as a genre,⁵⁴⁹ and both were well known to Bede. The depictions of Cuthbert in the *VCA* and *VCB*, for example, are highly influenced by the

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Nolite me putare his sanitatem dedisse, Christus per servos suos facit ista miracula’, *V.Ant* XLIX, col. 161d; *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁵⁴⁷ Gregg, *Athanasius*, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁴⁸ ‘Nemo sapientum sanitatum admirationem ascribat Antonio, sed Domino Jesu, qui solitam erga creaturas suas exhibens benevolentiam... Antonius tantum orabat, et ob vitae ejus merita cuncta Dominus largiebatur’, *V.Ant* LII, col. 164a; *Life of Anthony*, p. 62. Emphasis added.

⁵⁴⁹ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, pp. 17-21.

portrayal of Martin and Anthony in these earlier *vitae*. Indeed, Cuthbert himself may have modelled his own life on Martinian or Antonian values.⁵⁵⁰

Martin was born to non-Christian parents in Sabaria in the Roman province of Pannonia (now Szombathely in western Hungary) around 336.⁵⁵¹ Following his father's career, he reluctantly became a soldier, but had also been instructed in the Christian faith and became a conscientious objector.⁵⁵² After his dismissal from the army he became associated with Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, who ordained him as an exorcist,⁵⁵³ and later lived as a hermit before his appointment as bishop of Tours c.370-372.⁵⁵⁴ As bishop, Martin quickly solidified the position of Christianity within the local area, carrying out a campaign against pagan practice and places of worship.⁵⁵⁵ His way of living was marked by the same asceticism he adhered to prior to the episcopate: he dressed in rough clothing, abstained from wine and lived apart from society with fellow monks in the countryside.⁵⁵⁶ He died on 11 November 397. Monasticism and the ascetic life were unknown in Gaul before Martin, so it has been suggested that the *V.Mart* in part served as an apology by Severus for this perceived novel way of Christian living.⁵⁵⁷ As Yarrow suggests, 'Martin was the prototype of a peculiarly medieval western figure, the holy man parachuted into episcopal administration'.⁵⁵⁸ Severus clearly saw Martin's monastic lifestyle as complementary to his role as bishop, not as a hindrance, stating that 'he fulfilled the high office of bishop without abandoning his monastic commitment and virtue'.⁵⁵⁹ It was a lifestyle which Severus wished his audience to follow, and the *V.Mart* is one of the earliest hagiographical texts with an explicitly didactic focus, something that would later become a

⁵⁵⁰ Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', pp. 107, 110-112.

⁵⁵¹ *V.Mart* II.

⁵⁵² *V.Mart* II-IV.

⁵⁵³ *V.Mart* V.

⁵⁵⁴ *V.Mart* IX.

⁵⁵⁵ *V.Mart* XII-XV

⁵⁵⁶ *V.Mart* X.

⁵⁵⁷ Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, pp. 2-3, C. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 72-73.

⁵⁵⁸ Yarrow, *The Saints*, p. 36.

⁵⁵⁹ 'inplebat episcopi dignitatem, ut non tamen propositum monachi virtutemque desereret', *V.Mart* X.2, p. 274; *Life of Martin*, pp. 143-144.

hallmark of the genre. In the Preface, Severus states that his work will act ‘as an example to others in the future’, and that it would ‘rouse the enthusiasm of its readers for the true wisdom, for heavenly military service and for divine heroism’.⁵⁶⁰

Severus was a well-educated Roman lawyer. He had heard stories of Martin through his friend Paulinus of Nola, who had previously been cured of an eye illness by Martin.⁵⁶¹ Severus had decided to write an account of Martin’s life encouraged by what he had heard, which culminated in personally visiting him c.393 or 394.⁵⁶² The final three chapters of the *V.Mart*, containing Severus’ personal recollections of the saint, are therefore invaluable in reconstructing the character and mannerisms of Martin. Inspired by what he had seen, Severus became a presbyter in 395. It is likely he finished writing the *V.Mart* a year later, before Martin’s death. The *V.Mart* contains no reference to Martin dying, which would be expected had Martin died prior to its composition. Despite the fact that this was one of the earliest examples of hagiographical literature, Severus’ education would have also made him familiar with Roman biography, which would have expected even a small mention of the subject’s death. The exact date of Severus’ own death is unknown, though he is known to have still been alive in 420.⁵⁶³

The figures for the *V.Mart* are as follows: 26 miracles, 1 from a Named Source (3.85%), 2 from Anonymous Sources (7.7%), with the remaining 23 having No Source attribution (88.45%).

Stancliffe has provided similar figures for the miracles in the *V.Mart*, though as she was also exploring Severus’ *Dialogues* and *Epistles* she divided these into five thematic categories rather than chronologically as they appear in the text, namely ‘Nature Miracles’, ‘Healing Miracles’, ‘Demoniacs and Exorcisms’,⁵⁶⁴ ‘Encounters with Supernatural

⁵⁶⁰ ‘*exemplo aliis mox futuram, perscripsero, quo utique ad veram sapientiam et caelestem militiam divinamque virtutem legentes incitabuntur*’, *V.Mart* Preface, I.6, p. 252; *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

⁵⁶¹ *V.Mart* XIX.3.

⁵⁶² *V.Mart* XXV-XXVII.

⁵⁶³ Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁴ Diem, ‘Encounters Between Monks and Demons’, p. 58 contrasts Martin’s interactions with demons with that of Anthony. Whilst their function appears similar, Martin is never threatened by the demons to the same extent Anthony is. They are ‘reduced to bit players in the great performance of the saint’s sanctity’.

Beings’, and ‘Dreams, Visions, Predictions and Telepathy’.⁵⁶⁵ In total she counted 28 occurrences of miracles in the text. Of these 28, two counted by Stancliffe do not fall under my criteria of narrative accounts of miracles: the general comment of people being healed through touching Martin’s clothing in *V.Mart* XVIII.4-5 and the appearance of the devil and his demons in various forms from *V.Mart* XXII.1-2.⁵⁶⁶ We only differed in our interpretations of *V.Mart* IX.3 and *V.Mart* XXIII.⁵⁶⁷ In addition, regarding their sources, Stancliffe makes a distinction between ‘definite witnesses’ and ‘presumed witnesses or line of transmission... with a fair degree of probability’.⁵⁶⁸ Of these ‘definite witnesses’, Stancliffe attributes some miracle narratives to the tradition of Martin’s abbey of Marmoutier, though as these references are not explicit in the text they were omitted from the calculations in this thesis.⁵⁶⁹ I do agree, however, that Severus had spoken to members of Martin’s monastic community, and this thesis will later argue that such shared memories of the saints were considered acceptable sources given to support miracle stories.

From the outset, Severus is conscious that he is undertaking a relatively novel enterprise in writing the life of a saint. He writes that although some people compose biographies for their own personal fame, this is temporary, ultimately fading, unlike his intention which is eternal life as a reward from God. Stancliffe suggests that antique biography is Severus’ main model, with the late-first century Roman author Suetonius a particular influence, though such authors ‘have entrusted their hopes of immortality to fables and their souls to tombs’.⁵⁷⁰ Like Athanasius’ comments concerning the veracity of

⁵⁶⁵ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, Appendix.

⁵⁶⁶ The first one is likely only included by Stancliffe due to its similarity to Acts 19:11-12. Ibid., p. 366.

⁵⁶⁷ I did not include the public rebuke of Martin’s detractor Defensor in *V.Mart* IX.3 as the supernatural element is not made explicit by Severus, despite the belief that this particular reading from the prophets had been ordained by God. To me, a natural occurrence (reading a particularly poignant passage of Scripture) produced a natural response (stirring up the crowd, leading to the censure and confusion of Defensor and his supporters). Providential perhaps, but not miraculous. Stancliffe may have omitted the demonic deceptions of *V.Mart* XXIII from her calculations as they are not directly experienced by Martin but one of his followers, Clarus.

⁵⁶⁸ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 363.

⁵⁶⁹ Likewise for the ‘presumed witnesses or line of transmission’ – we cannot be certain whether Severus heard such stories from the monks, Martin himself, or a third party.

⁵⁷⁰ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 87-90. ‘*spes suas fabulis, animas sepulcris dederint*’, *V.Mart* Preface, I.3, p. 252; *Life of Martin*, p. 135.

his account, Severus sees the method in which he writes as part of his Christian duty. He tells his readers ‘to believe what I say and not to think that I have written anything except what has been learned on good authority and proved to be true. If this were not the case I would have preferred silence to falsehood’.⁵⁷¹ Unlike those authors who seek the earthly fame of their subjects, Severus reminds his audience that it is better to say nothing than to lie. This is why he provides some clarification about his intentions and sources for the life of Martin. Severus states ‘it was impossible for me to get access to everything about him’ because Martin may have kept things hidden in humility - ‘he did not seek praise from men’.⁵⁷² Severus states he also omitted some things as he wanted to focus only on what was most important and not tire his readers through excessive detail.⁵⁷³ Nevertheless, apart from mentioning ‘those facts which are known to us’, Severus does not state in the Preface where the majority of his information had come from.⁵⁷⁴ As the *V.Mart* was his own undertaking, in some respects Severus implicitly serves as the chief source for the text, based as it was on his personal interactions with Martin.⁵⁷⁵ Indeed, the only miracle with a named source in the *V.Mart* is provided by Martin himself, who related to Severus a confrontation he had had with the devil.⁵⁷⁶ This does not mean, though, that Severus simply served as a scribe for Martin’s own account of his life; ‘he selected and shaped the material that came to him in accordance with his own designs’.⁵⁷⁷ There were, for example, other sources that Severus was obviously reliant upon. When he ends his account with his visit to Martin he also mentions gaining material from ‘those who had been present or who knew of his deeds’.⁵⁷⁸ These anonymous informants are the only other references Severus

⁵⁷¹ ‘*ut fidem dictis adhibeant, neque me quicquam nisi conpertum et probatum scripisse arbitrentur; alioquin tacere quam falsa dicere maluissem*’, *V.Mart* Preface, I.9, pp. 252-254; *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵⁷² ‘*quamuis nequaquam ad omnia illius potuerim pervenire*’, ‘*laudem ab hominibus non requirens*’, *V. Mart* Preface, I.7, p. 252; *Ibid.*

⁵⁷³ He reiterates this again in *V.Mart* XIX.5.

⁵⁷⁴ ‘*ex his, quae conperta nobis erant*’, *V.Mart* Preface, I.8, p. 252; *Life of Martin*, p. 136.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 165-166, who believes accounts of Martin’s visions of supernatural figures are likely to come from Martin himself, whereas his miracles of healing and power over nature are likely to originate from others.

⁵⁷⁶ *V.Mart* XXIV.4-6.

⁵⁷⁷ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 173.

⁵⁷⁸ ‘*ab his qui interfuerant vel sciebant cognovimus*’, *V.Mart* XXV.1, p. 310; *Life of Martin*, p. 157.

mentions for the remainder of his information for the *V.Mart*, and he explicitly refers to them at least once as a source for a miracle.⁵⁷⁹ There are likely more that Severus left unstated.

In discussing the miracle at the tomb of a supposed martyr, Severus writes that ‘Martin was not quick to believe things which were doubtful’.⁵⁸⁰ This is the attitude which Severus ultimately desired his audience to follow, and the reason why he provided several scattered references to his sources as an aid to his readers. ‘Driven to write by faith in these things and by the love of Christ’, he states ‘I am confident that I have given a clear account of things and spoken the truth’.⁵⁸¹

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Ambrosii*

The third text in this exploration, Paulinus of Milan’s *Vita Ambrosii*, was implicitly alluded to by Bede in his *DTR*,⁵⁸² and possibly used as a source in his *Martyrologium* too.⁵⁸³ Bede is also recorded as quoting Ambrose’s final words from *V.Ambr* XLV on his own deathbed.⁵⁸⁴ Moorhead describes this text as ‘a priceless source for the life of Ambrose’.⁵⁸⁵ Ambrose was one of the four Latin Church Fathers, a group of Christian scholars whose work highly influenced Bede, though as DeGregorio suggests, his influence appears to be the least of these great theologians.⁵⁸⁶ Ambrose was born c.339/340 and enjoyed a secular education including knowledge of Greek before becoming the local governor of Liguria

⁵⁷⁹ Monastic brothers in *V.Mart* XXII.3.

⁵⁸⁰ ‘*Martinus non temere adhibens incertis fidem*’, *V.Mart* XI.2, p. 276; *Life of Martin*, p. 144.

⁵⁸¹ ‘*Ego mihi conscius sum me, rerum fide et amore Christi impulsus ut scriberem, manifesta exposuisse, vera dixisse*’, *V.Mart* XXVII.7, p. 316; *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁵⁸² *DTR* LXVI, s. a. 4338.

⁵⁸³ H. Quentin, *Les Martyrologes Historiques du Moyen-Âge: Étude sur la Formation du Martyrologe Romain* (Paris, 1908), p. 101 cites it as a source, though the entry on Ambrose is absent in the translation in Head, *Medieval Hagiography*, where one would expect it under April, the month of his death. The complicated manuscript tradition of this text makes it uncertain whether the entry is originally Bedan or a later addition.

⁵⁸⁴ ‘*Non sic vixi ut me pudeat inter vos vivere; sed nec mori timeo, quia bonum Deum habemus*’, ‘Cuthbert’s Letter on the Death of Bede’, p. 582. This phrase was also discussed in *V.Aug* XXVII.

⁵⁸⁵ J. Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (London, 1999), p. 9.

⁵⁸⁶ DeGregorio, ‘Bede and Gregory the Great’, p. 45.

and Aemilia in northwest Italy.⁵⁸⁷ In 374 he was reluctantly elected straight to the episcopate following the death of the previous bishop Auxentius, who was considered an ‘Arian’ by Ambrose and Paulinus.⁵⁸⁸ However, it is more correct to define Auxentius as a *Homoian*, a later development of Arianism,⁵⁸⁹ which held that God the Father and God the Son were of *similar* substance, rather than a *Homoousian*, the Nicene position which held that they were the *same*.⁵⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the populace of Milan unanimously thought Ambrose was the most qualified man for the job, particularly to unify the two opposing parties, and his election occurred despite the unorthodox fact that he had not been baptised let alone ordained.⁵⁹¹ In the course of solving various theological disputes, including the perceived Arianism which still held influence in Milan at the time,⁵⁹² Ambrose became renowned for carefully managing the balance between both church and state, helping formulate a relationship that would last for centuries to come.⁵⁹³ Ramsey suggests that he ‘establish[ed] a sphere in which the Church could act independently of the state and as an entity completely responsible for governing itself’.⁵⁹⁴ He held great influence among his theological and political peers. For example, he twice intervened against the emperor, Theodosius I, after he ordered the rebuilding of a burnt down synagogue in 388 and massacred a town in Thessaloniki in 390, forcing him to repent.⁵⁹⁵ Likewise, he was

⁵⁸⁷ F. D. Gilliard, ‘Senatorial Bishops in the Fourth Century’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 77, no. 2 (1984), pp. 170-171 attributes his future success as bishop to this senatorial background, in comparison to many other contemporary bishops who were of lower social standing.

⁵⁸⁸ See the discussion regarding Arianism, pp. 113-114, above. On the reluctance, see *V.Ambr* VI-IX, and Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 190. Cf. T. D. Barnes, ‘Valentinian, Auxentius and Ambrose’, *Historia*, 51 (2002), pp. 227-237 who produces three alternative documents to the *V.Ambr* that question Ambrose’s supposed reluctance to become bishop.

⁵⁸⁹ Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 466-467, and Ch.18.

⁵⁹⁰ J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz and C. Hill, ‘General Introduction’ in their Ambrose, *Political Letters and Speeches* (Liverpool, 2005), pp. 7-9. See further Moorhead, *Ambrose*, pp. 111-122.

⁵⁹¹ *V.Ambr* VI.

⁵⁹² At the very least, some of his clergy would still be *Homoian*, following the legacy of Auxentius. Liebeschuetz and Hill, ‘General Introduction’, p. 10.

⁵⁹³ The collection of texts in Ambrose, *Political Letters and Speeches*, trans. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz and C. Hill (Liverpool, 2005) thoroughly acquaint the reader in this regard.

⁵⁹⁴ Ramsey, *Ambrose*, p. 48.

⁵⁹⁵ Moorhead, *Ambrose*, pp. 185-196.

responsible for the ordination of several bishops, among whom was Chromatius, the patron of Rufinus of Aquileia's Latin translation of Eusebius. Rufinus speaks well of Ambrose in his extension of Eusebius' work, describing him as 'the wall of the Church and its stoutest tower'.⁵⁹⁶ Stancliffe highlights these political affairs and interactions with heretics as the primary emphasis of the *V.Ambr.*⁵⁹⁷ In terms of his written legacy, Ambrose was particularly renowned for his allegorical style of exegesis, and over half of his works were biblical commentaries.⁵⁹⁸ Bede made particular use of Ambrose's *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* in his own commentaries on Luke and Mark.⁵⁹⁹ Furthermore, Ambrose's *Exameron*, a text regarding the six days of creation, is quoted several times throughout Bede's *In Principium Genesis* and *DTR* in particular.⁶⁰⁰ He died on 4 April 397, eight months before Martin of Tours.

Little is known about Paulinus,⁶⁰¹ though he was a contemporary of Ambrose and an associate of Augustine. What we do know about him comes primarily through the works of Augustine, who describes him as a deacon in *De Gratia Christi et De Peccato Originali* III.3 and *Contra Duas Epistulas Pelagianorum* II.4.6.⁶⁰² In *De gratia Christi et De Peccato Originali*, Augustine describes Paulinus' conflict in 411 with Caelestius, a follower of Pelagius, who they believed held heretical views concerning salvation. Paulinus had prepared a six-point document outlining the theological case against

⁵⁹⁶ 'ecclesiae murum et turrem validissimam', *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Part 2, XI.15, p. 1021; *Church History of Rufinus*, XI.15, p. 75.

⁵⁹⁷ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 99.

⁵⁹⁸ See in particular C. A. Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN., 2002).

⁵⁹⁹ Bede, *In Marci Evangelium Expositio*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout, 1960); Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, ed. A. Adriaen and P. A. Ballerini, CCSL 14 (Turnhout, 1957). Hurst's edition provides a list on pp. 671-672.

⁶⁰⁰ Ambrose, *Exameron*, ed. K. Schenkl CSEL 32/1 (Vienna, 1896). *In Principium Genesis* I.1.3, I.1.10, I.1.21 and I.2.4, *DTR* V-VII, XXVIII-XXIX, XXXI and XXXV.

⁶⁰¹ Not to be confused with Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, who wrote a poetic *Vita Felicis* which Bede translated.

⁶⁰² Augustine, *Contra Duas Epistulas Pelagianorum*, eds. K. F. Urbani and J. Zycha, CSEL 60 (Vienna, 1913), II.4.6, p. 466, ll. 22; Idem., *De Gratia Christi et De Peccato Originali*, eds. K. F. Urbani and J. Zycha, CSEL 42 (Vienna, 1902), III.3, p. 12.

Caelestius' position,⁶⁰³ and in 418 both Caelestius and Pelagius were finally condemned as heretics by Pope Zosimus.⁶⁰⁴ In both the first and final chapter of the *V.Ambr* Paulinus addresses Augustine who had commissioned him to compose the text, which he wrote in North Africa.⁶⁰⁵ Ambrose was one of the initial Christian contacts that had a formative influence on Augustine's newfound faith, as well as providing a model for his own prolific work. In *DDC*, for example, Augustine praises Ambrose's eloquence, particularly his ability to switch between plain words and more elegant rhetorical language depending on the circumstance.⁶⁰⁶ Tradition further states that Ambrose had baptised him.⁶⁰⁷ Despite the usual humility concerning his 'unskilled language', Paulinus was clearly conscious of the genre within which he was writing.⁶⁰⁸ In the first chapter he mentions Athanasius, Jerome and Sulpicius Severus as exemplars to his own work, writing that he was 'unequal to the talents of those great men'.⁶⁰⁹ To some extent this self-assessment may be fair; Ramsey, the most recent translator, complains that this *Life* often appears out of chronological order, with little obvious connection between each chapter. As he puts it, 'the result is a feeling that things are jumbled together'.⁶¹⁰ The text is dated to either 412-413 or 422, based upon the mention of John as prefect in *V.Ambr* XXXI. John is known to have been praetorian prefect in those years. Ramsey as well as Liebeschuetz and Hill favour the earlier date,⁶¹¹ whereas Moorhead favours the latter.⁶¹²

⁶⁰³ The six charges can be found in Marius Mercator, *Commonitorium Super Nomine Caelestii*, ed. J. P. Migne, PL 48 (Paris, 1846), cols. 67A-70A.

⁶⁰⁴ See *De Peccato Originali*, VII-VIII, XXII.

⁶⁰⁵ Paulinus details a miracle that happened there, stating 'in this province... where we are now living and writing these things', ('*in hac provincia, in qua nunc positi scribimus*'), *V.Ambr* LI, p. 96, ll. 2-3; *Life of St. Ambrose*, p. 217.

⁶⁰⁶ *DDC* IV.46-50.

⁶⁰⁷ Moorhead, *Ambrose*, p. 10, dates this event to 387.

⁶⁰⁸ '*inculto sermone*', *V.Ambr* I, p. 38, l. 21; *Life of St. Ambrose*, p. 196. Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, pp. 20-21.

⁶⁰⁹ '*ego ut meritis tantorum virorum... me imparem novi*', *V.Ambr* I, p. 38, ll. 13-14; *Ibid*.

⁶¹⁰ Ramsey, *Ambrose*, p. 195.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid*; Liebeschuetz and Hill, 'General Introduction', p. 27.

⁶¹² Moorhead, *Ambrose*, p. 10, rejecting the earlier date espoused by E. Lamirande, 'La datation de la "Vita Ambrosii" de Paulin de Milan', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 21 (1981), pp. 44-55.

Paulinus' text contains 26 miracles, 8 of which come from a Named Source (30.78%), 2 from an Anonymous Source (7.69%), and the remaining 16 bearing No Source at all (61.53%).

Though personally sceptical of at least some of the miracles recorded by Paulinus and his contemporaries,⁶¹³ Ramsey nevertheless states that 'the very fact that [Paulinus] narrates so many strange occurrences at all is a testimony to what he presumes that his readership is capable of ingesting'.⁶¹⁴ Indeed, in the early years after his death, Ambrose was primarily remembered as a miracle-worker.⁶¹⁵ As a result, from the outset Paulinus insists that what he records is accurate and true using a twofold approach, with the intent of convincing his readers through the careful exposition of his sources. First, he lists where the majority of his information has come from in five main categories:

I shall describe the things that I learned from [1] the very trustworthy men who attended [Ambrose] before I did, and especially from [2] his own sister, the venerable Marcellina, [3] that I saw myself when I attended him, [4] that I came to know from those who said that they saw him in different provinces after his death, and [5] that were written to him when people were still unaware that he had died.⁶¹⁶

In addition, multiple attestation of particular events provided Paulinus with warrant for including their account into his text. For example, in *V.Ambr* LI he writes 'since the [bishops of Africa] reported it as well, we felt all the more confident about putting these things, which are known to us, into this book'.⁶¹⁷ The detailed introductory source list, as well as the references provided in the text itself, act to mitigate the concerns of Moorhead

⁶¹³ He describes them as 'unlikely events' and 'fantastical improbabilities'. Ramsey, *Ambrose*, p. 195.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., p. 4. Note further the choice of wording with 'strange occurrences'.

⁶¹⁵ Liebeschuetz and Hill, 'General Introduction', p. 44.

⁶¹⁶ 'ea quae a probatissimus viris, qui illi ante me adstiterunt, et maxime ab sorore ipsius venerabili Marcellina didici, vel ipse ipse vidi, cum illi adstarem, vel quae ab iis agnovi, qui illum in diversis provinciis post obitum ipsius se vidisse narrarunt, vel quae ad illum scripta sunt cum adhuc obiisse nesciretur', *V.Ambr* I, p. 38, ll. 15-20; *Life of St. Ambrose*, p. 196.

⁶¹⁷ 'plurimis hoc ipsum retulit sacerdotibus, quibus etiam referentibus securius nobis cognita huic libro adiungere arbitrate sumus', *V.Ambr* LI, p. 96, ll. 3-5; Ibid., p. 217.

that Paulinus' 'account of events in the distant, earlier years need not be reliable'.⁶¹⁸

Second, based on the introductory information regarding his sources, he begs his readers 'to believe that what we have written is true; let no one think that, out of an overweening love, I have put anything in it that is unreliable. Indeed, it would be better to say nothing at all than to put forward something false, since we know that we are to give an account of all our words'.⁶¹⁹ This justification based on scripture seeks to close the matter; Paulinus has listed his sources, explained his motives and reminds his audience that to bear false witness of Ambrose and lie is contrary to Christian teaching.⁶²⁰

Of note among the texts examined in this chapter, Paulinus himself serves as the named witness to a majority of these miracles. Five of the eight named sources are from his own recollections, and occur around the final illness and death of Ambrose.⁶²¹ Nevertheless, as an author Paulinus clearly deemed it appropriate for his own voice to be added to those of the other witnesses he mentions, providing a direct personal connection to the saint. As argued in Chapter One, and as we shall see imitated by Bede in subsequent chapters, the early Christian ethos in writing history and hagiography was to clearly state one's sources for the stories contained therein. This was achieved either through introductory remarks or through appropriate references scattered throughout the text, and Paulinus is no exception. His close connection to his subject, and thus the reliability of his account, is revealed in the way that he describes some of these miraculous occurrences. In *V.Ambr* XL, for example, he explains how he was among those offering comfort to Ambrose when news that a bishop had died reached him, before Ambrose prophesied that he would not live past Easter. In XLII Paulinus was acting as a scribe for Ambrose, who was dictating a commentary on Psalm 43, when the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a flame over him. In XLIII he describes how 'we were filled with no little fear and astonishment' when an unclean spirit tears a sinful man to pieces in front of his eyes. He

⁶¹⁸ Moorhead, *Ambrose*, p. 10.

⁶¹⁹ 'credatis vera esse quae dicimus. Nec putet me quisquam studio amoris aliquid quod fide careat posuisse; quandoquidem melius sit penitus nihil dicere, quam aliquid falsi proferre, cum sciamus nos omnium sermonum nostrorum reddituros esse rationem', *V.Ambr* II, p. 40, ll. 11-15; *Life of St. Ambrose*, p. 197. See Matthew 12:36 for the reference to giving an account on Judgement Day for our words.

⁶²⁰ See further Leviticus 19:11.

⁶²¹ *V.Ambr* XL, XLII, XLIII, two in LIV.

immediately expands upon the power of Ambrose over evil spirits by providing a personal recollection that ‘in those days we saw many others purged of unclean spirits when he imposed his hands and commanded [them to depart]’.⁶²² Finally, in LIV, Paulinus tells two stories of how both a priest and a bishop were slain by God for slandering Ambrose who had recently died. Paulinus then uses these stories in the following chapter as an instruction to all future readers ‘to shun the tongues of slanderers if he wishes to have fellowship with Ambrose in the resurrection of life rather than, with those slanderers, to undergo a punishment that no one who is wise does not avoid’.⁶²³ In this way, miracles are once again employed to exhort the reader to live their life in a way pleasing to God, in imitation of the saints.

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Augustini*

Like Paulinus before him, certain details regarding the life of Possidius, the author of the *V.Aug*, are somewhat difficult to trace; we know nothing of his birth or his death, though he was a contemporary of Augustine. The two were very well acquainted; at the end of the *V.Aug*, Possidius writes that he had enjoyed ‘a lovely intimacy [with Augustine] without a single bitter disagreement for nearly forty years’.⁶²⁴ In addition, it appears that Possidius had been elected to the episcopate from Augustine’s own monastery. Possidius begins a story of Augustine campaigning against the Donatists of Calama saying ‘one of the bishops he [Augustine] had provided for the church from his monastery was making a round of the diocese of Calama...’;⁶²⁵ it is apparent from one of Augustine’s letters detailing the same

⁶²² ‘non minimo timore replete sumus et admiration. Multos etiam diebus illis, imponente illo manus et imperante, ab spiritibus immundis vidimus esse purgatos’, *V.Ambr* XLIII, p. 88, ll. 9-11; *Life of St. Ambrose*, p. 214.

⁶²³ ‘declinet detrahentium linguas, si vult magis consortium habere cum Ambrosio in resurrection vitae, quam cum detrahentibus illis subire supplicium quod nullus sapiens non declinat’, *Ibid.*, LV, pp. 98-100, ll. 25-2; *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁶²⁴ ‘cum quo ferme annis quadraginta Dei dono absque amara ulla dissensione familiariter ac dulciter vixi’, *V.Aug* XXXI, cols. 65-66; *Life of Augustine*, p. 73.

⁶²⁵ ‘unus ex iis quos de suo monasterio et clero episcopos Ecclesiae propagaverat, ad suam curam pertinentem Calamensis Ecclesiae dioecesim visitaret’, *V.Aug* XII, col. 43; *Ibid.*, p. 43.

incident that Possidius is here speaking in the third person about himself.⁶²⁶ He was Bishop of Calama, in the Roman province of Numidia, in what is now northeast Algeria. Calama lies just over 40 miles to the south-west of Hippo Regius, Augustine's see, meaning that the two enjoyed close access to one another. Possidius took part in the Council of Milevum in 416 condemning Pelagianism, apparently fled his see following the Vandal invasion in 428, and is recorded by Prosper of Aquitaine as being finally exiled in 437 by the Arian king Geiseric (c. 389-477).⁶²⁷ Much of the information has been provided in his own autobiography, the *Confessiones*, where Augustine had held little back of his emotional and spiritual development.⁶²⁸ As Brown states, 'nothing could be more vivid than an inner self-portrait sketched by a man who had not allowed himself to be lulled into certainty about what he was really like'.⁶²⁹ Augustine also provided a full list of his works as well as commentary in the *Retractationes*. It is perhaps for this reason that Possidius' *V.Aug* survives in few manuscripts; those that do survive post-date the composition of the text by at least five centuries. As Noble and Head suggest, Possidius' work was outshone by that of his subject, yet it was the very fame of Augustine that enabled this *vita* to be transmitted through the ages.⁶³⁰

In terms of dating Possidius' work, the *terminus post quem* is 431 after the siege of Hippo Regius was lifted.⁶³¹ Noble and Head date it to between 432 and 435,⁶³² the period before Possidius returned to Calama and was subsequently expelled. Such a date places the work about 60-75 years after Evagrius' translation of the *V.Ant*, 35-40 years after the work of Sulpicius Severus, and within 10-20 years of the *V.Ambr*, though whether Possidius was familiar with these texts is again uncertain.⁶³³ Nevertheless, Augustine had commissioned

⁶²⁶ Augustine, *Epistulae*, CI-CXXXIX, ed. K. D. Daur, CCSL 31B (Turnhout, 2009), CV.4, p. 51; Augustine, *Letters*, Vol. II (83-130), trans. W. Parsons (Washington, D. C., 1953), 105, pp. 198-199.

⁶²⁷ Prosper, *Epitoma Chronicon*, in T. Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora*, I, MGH IX (Berlin, 1892), p. 475.

⁶²⁸ The genre is admittedly complicated. See the comments in Chapter One for details.

⁶²⁹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 173.

⁶³⁰ Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 32.

⁶³¹ *V.Aug* XXIX.

⁶³² Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 31.

⁶³³ Hermanowicz suggests that Possidius 'certainly was familiar with Paulinus' *Vita Ambrosii* and probably knew as well the lives of Cyprian and Martin of Tours': E. T. Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama: A Study of*

the *V.Ambr*, patterned after, among other texts, the *V.Mart* and *V.Ant*.⁶³⁴ Furthermore, Augustine clearly knew of the *V.Ant*, and the tale of Anthony's life helping convert the friend of a friend later proved influential in his own eventual conversion to Christianity.⁶³⁵ It is also clear that Bede knew the *V.Aug* through references to it in at least three of his works; there are quotes from *V.Aug* XXVIII and XXIX regarding Augustine's life in *DTR* LXVI,⁶³⁶ a short quote from *V.Aug* LII in Bede's *In Proverbia Salomonis*,⁶³⁷ and he cites at length the solitary reference to the miraculous from *V.Aug* XXIX in *VCB* XXXVIII. This incident provided Bede with a literary precedent for recording a saint performing a healing miracle on his deathbed. As with Augustine, so with Cuthbert. The *V.Aug* is otherwise notable for its particular absence of the miraculous; as Noble and Head remark, 'this life does not present Augustine as a miracle-worker and reveals little of his spiritual life'.⁶³⁸ Indeed, in the Preface, Possidius directs his audience to Augustine's own works on the subject, specifically naming the *Confessiones* in case the reader wanted to enquire about Augustine's early life and the subsequent spiritual renewal he had found through Christianity. Instead, as Hermanowicz cogently argues, whilst firmly within the recognised genre of hagiography, the *V.Aug* was written as an introductory primer to Augustine's vast corpus of works for the purposes of preserving them from Vandal invasion. The *V.Aug* originally circulated with an attached *Indiculum*, 'a catalogue of Augustine's treatises, letters and sermons', though these eventually became separated in transmission.⁶³⁹ In reading the *vita* of Augustine (as ordered and arranged by Possidius), one would understand the order and arrangement of Augustine's works. In a similar way, Hamilton agrees with the historical context behind the composition of the *V.Aug*, but sees the text's primary purpose as providing a model of a clerical life most suited to post-Augustinian

the North African Episcopate at the Time of Augustine (Oxford, 2008), p. 22. On p. 76 Hermanowicz shows a clear verbal borrowing by Possidius from *V.Ambr*, XLV.

⁶³⁴ *V.Ambr* Preface.

⁶³⁵ Augustine, *Confessiones*, VIII.6. See Williams, *Authorised Lives*, Ch. Four, and pp. 150-154 in particular.

⁶³⁶ *DTR* LXVI, s. a. 4403.

⁶³⁷ Bede, *In Proverbia Salomonis*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119B (Turnhout, 1983), p. 123, ll. 98-99.

⁶³⁸ Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 31.

⁶³⁹ Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama*, pp. 18-19 and passim. See also C. Leyser, 'Augustine in the Latin West, 430-ca. 900', in M. Vesey (ed.), *A Companion to Augustine* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 452-453, and Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. 441-442.

North Africa, particularly in attempting to convert the Vandal invaders.⁶⁴⁰ These two proposed purposes are not mutually exclusive. Leyser highlights Possidius' statement that to hear or see Augustine and to have 'knowledge of him as he lived among his fellow men' was of great profit, in addition to his written legacy.⁶⁴¹

In terms of the figures for this text, Possidius records only two miracles,⁶⁴² both of which occur at the same time and are from his own personal recollections. This is almost certainly implied by his comments in *V.Aug* XXXI that he was present during the final illness of Augustine (when these miracles took place), and by his statements in the Preface that the text was composed from 'what I saw in him and heard from him... as I have learned [of Augustine's life] from him or observed [him] for myself through many years of close friendship'.⁶⁴³ Aside from a few scattered references to church documents corroborating his accounts,⁶⁴⁴ Possidius appears as the only named source for any of the events in his work, miraculous or otherwise.

The brevity of Possidius' comments reveal that despite Augustine's focus on miracles in his exegetical work, discussed in Chapter One, the miraculous did not play a prominent role in his personal spiritual life. Possidius only discusses Augustine and the miraculous in one chapter. At the end of *V.Aug* XXIX, he writes 'I know, too, that both as a priest and as a bishop, when asked to pray for sufferers from demon-possession, he has petitioned God with many tears and the demons have gone out'.⁶⁴⁵ Almost as if he feels

⁶⁴⁰ L. I. Hamilton, 'Possidius' Augustine and Post-Augustinian Africa', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 12, no. 1 (2004), p. 86. Hamilton suggests the long letter to Bishop Honoratus in *V.Aug* XXX shows Possidius' preoccupation with the response of clerics to the invasion, *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁶⁴¹ '*et eius praesertim inter homines conversationem non ignoraverunt*', *V.Aug* XXXI, col. 64; *Life of Augustine*, p. 72. Leyser, 'Augustine in the Latin West', pp. 455-456.

⁶⁴² The paucity of which is noted Hamilton, 'Possidius' Augustine', p. 87.

⁶⁴³ '*in eodem vidi, ab eoque audiui*', '*per eum didici, et expertus sum, quam plurimis annis ejus inhaerens charitati*', *V.Aug* Preface, col. 33; *Life of Augustine*, p. 33.

⁶⁴⁴ For example, in *V.Aug*, XII. Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama*, p. 4 and *passim* views these references to documentary evidence as part of the appeal by Possidius to protect the written legacy of Augustine from the invading Arians.

⁶⁴⁵ '*Novi quoque eundem et presbyterum, et episcopum, pro quibusdam energumenis patientibus ut oraret rogatum, eumque in oratione lacrymas fundentem Deum rogasse, et daemones ab hominibus recessisse*', *V.Aug* XXIX, col. 59; *Life of Augustine*, p. 63. I have not counted this reference in my figures as it is not a narrative account of a particular miracle occurring.

expected to say something of Augustine's relationship to miraculous, Possidius immediately adds the following story where our two miracles occur:

Again, when he was ill and in bed, someone came to him with a sick patient and asked him to lay his hand on him, so that he might recover. He replied that if he had any powers of that kind he would surely have used them on himself first. But the man insisted that he had a vision and had been told in his dream: 'Go to Bishop Augustine and get him to lay his hand on him and he will recover'. Informed of this, Augustine acted on it without further delay and the Lord at once enabled the sick man to leave his presence healed.⁶⁴⁶

A man receives a vision that Augustine would heal his sick patient with the laying on of hands,⁶⁴⁷ and Augustine subsequently heals the man in response. It is his statement in between, however, which helps solve the issue of why there are not more miracles recorded by Possidius. Unlike his predecessors Martin, Anthony or even Jesus Christ,⁶⁴⁸ Augustine was not known as and did not consider himself a miracle worker. This section of Possidius' work reveals the nuances of a saint as a performer of miracles; Augustine could perform exorcisms through prayer (Possidius' words imply he performed at least two),⁶⁴⁹ but did not have the ability to heal sickness. Augustine clearly states here in the *vita* that he did not possess such powers, and it is only after he is convinced by the other man's dream that he realises he had been empowered by God for this one specific task.⁶⁵⁰ This relative

⁶⁴⁶ *'Itemque ad aegrotantem et lecto vacantem quemdam cum suo aegroto venisse, et rogavisse ut eidem manum imponeret, quo sanus esse posset: eumque respondisse, si aliquid in his posset, sibi hoc utique primitus praestitisset: et illum dixisse visitatum se fuisse, sibi per somnium dictum esse: Vade ad Augustinum episcopum, ut eidem manum imponat, et salvus erit. Quod dum comperisset, facere non distulit, et illum infirmum continuo Dominus sanum ab eodem discedere fecit'*, Ibid.; Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ See James 5:14-15.

⁶⁴⁸ See G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove, IL, 1999) and E. Eve, *The Healer from Nazareth: Jesus' Miracles in Historical Context* (London, 2009).

⁶⁴⁹ Hamilton, 'Possidius' Augustine', p. 91.

⁶⁵⁰ Augustine's own belief that he himself did not possess miraculous healing powers is not contradictory to the fact that in *DCD* XXII.8 he was part of a group who prays for a sick man who subsequently recovers.

lack of miracles in the *V. Aug* is therefore to be expected.⁶⁵¹ Possidius' text therefore has a different focus; Augustine is portrayed as the orthodox Catholic bishop fighting the various heresies of Arianism and Donatism, as well as protecting his flock in light of pagan invasion.⁶⁵² In this latter context Possidius includes at the end of his *vita* a letter from Augustine to Honoratus, bishop of Thiabe which further reveals Augustine's understanding of God's providence and the miraculous. Augustine has been asked whether it is best for the clergy to flee in the face of persecution by their enemies. His answer is carefully balanced between a strong trust in God's divine protection but also a surprisingly modern sense of pragmatism. He writes that the laity 'can hide their bishops and clergy in such ways as God makes possible, who has everything under His control and is able to save by His most marvellous power even those who do not run away'.⁶⁵³ Augustine's religious conviction, however, is immediately tempered with the understanding that God's ability to save, whilst definitely possible, is not certain. He writes 'we do not want to be thought to be experimenting with God by looking to Him for a miracle every time'.⁶⁵⁴ As suggested in Chapter One, miracles for Augustine are still possible but not to be always expected; God is still intimately involved with his creation, but will act as he pleases.⁶⁵⁵ Augustine knew he could not prophesy over the future, and as such, whilst he encourages Honoratus with a reminder of God's ability to protect his flock, he nevertheless adds an air of caution lest God in his sovereignty decide not to intervene in this matter. With such an understanding of God's providence as this, it is Augustine's intellectual achievements, not his spiritual prowess, which Possidius directs his audience's attention to. With a mind of Augustine's calibre, and in lieu of any miraculous material to include, he could hardly do otherwise.

⁶⁵¹ Cf. Hamilton, 'Possidius' Augustine', pp. 93-95 who views Possidius' choice not to include more miracles as symptomatic of the purpose and audience of the *vita* he wished to construct, rather than, as I suggest, that there was simply a lack of miraculous material to include.

⁶⁵² Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, pp. 100-101.

⁶⁵³ '*possunt occultare quoquo modo episcopos et clericos suos, sicut ille adjuverit in cuius potestate sunt omnia, qui potest et non fugientem per mirabilem conservare potentiam*'. In PL 32, Migne omits the final sections of this letter (10-14) where this quote and the following one come from, directing the reader to the full version contained in PL 33, Epistola CCXXVIII. Quote at col. 1017; *Life of Augustine*, p. 69.

⁶⁵⁴ '*ne in omnibus exspectando divina miracula tentare Dominum judicemur*', Ibid., col. 1017; Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ See Psalm 115:3.

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Germani*

The *V.Ger* was composed in the second half of the fifth century by Constantius of Lyon at the behest of his bishop, Patiens, who held the position from 456 to 498. Noble and Head suggest that the consensus date for the text is between 475 and 480.⁶⁵⁶

Constantius writes that Patiens' motivation for commissioning this text was 'to secure for a holy man the fame due to his virtues and to publish the witness of his miracles for all to profit by'.⁶⁵⁷ It is particularly notable from the texts examined here that Constantius draws attention to the miracles specifically. He continues in the Preface that whilst some may be pleased with an abundance of subject material 'I am filled with trepidation at the number of his miracles', and mentions how Germanus' 'countless miracles' have inspired him to write this text.⁶⁵⁸ He again reiterates the hope that his account of Germanus' miracles will allow his audience to 'profit by a knowledge of them'.⁶⁵⁹

Germanus (375-446) became bishop of Auxerre in France in 418. He is perhaps most famous for travelling to Britain c.429 and again in the mid-430s to mid-440s to combat the Pelagian heresy.⁶⁶⁰ Pelagianism, named after its founder Pelagius (c.360-418), was the belief that man's free will was sufficient to overcome man's sinful nature and enter heaven, thus calling into question God's grace. However, like Arianism, Pelagianism was a multi-faceted idea that subtly developed over the years, and the adherents that Germanus faced in Britain likely held different views to Pelagius himself. In Britain, Germanus promoted the cult of Saint Alban, the first British martyr, potentially as an aid to combat a resurgence of Pelagianism.⁶⁶¹ It is likely that he commissioned or even authored the *Passio*

⁶⁵⁶ Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 76.

⁶⁵⁷ 'dum et sanctum virum illustrare virtutibus suis desideras et profectui omnium mirabilium exempla largiris', *V.Ger*, Dedication to Patiens, p. 112, ll. 5-7; *Life of St. Germanus*, p. 77.

⁶⁵⁸ 'incutitur pro miraculorum numerositate trepidatio', 'innumerabilium miraculorum', *Ibid.*, Preface, p. 118, ll. 5-6 and 13-14; *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁶⁵⁹ 'quae agnitioni vel profectui', *Ibid.*, ll. 14-15; *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁰ The first visit is recorded in *V.Ger* XII-XVIII, the second in *V.Ger* XXV-XXVII. Cf. A. A. Barrett, 'Saint Germanus and the British Missions', *Britannia*, 40 (2009), pp. 197-217 who believes that Germanus' second mission was a literary mistake on Constantius' part, and that evidence from Prosper and elsewhere shows that the Pelagian heresy had been successfully quelled after the first mission. He writes 'All of our source information cannot be right. We have to assume an error somewhere', *Ibid.*, p.210.

⁶⁶¹ *V.Ger* XVI and XVIII, *HE* I.18.

Albani which Bede used in his discussion of the saint.⁶⁶² Despite these achievements, in Constantius' opinion it was Germanus' miracles that had initially secured his renown, 'verifying the words of the Gospel that a city set on a hill cannot be hidden'.⁶⁶³ It was these that Constantius wished to draw the reader's attention to.

In comparison to Germanus, however, little is known of Constantius' life. Noble and Head describe him as 'an extremely shadowy figure', and he is only known apart from this text through the letters of Sidonius Apollinarius (c.430-c.480).⁶⁶⁴ He was evidently a cleric, and describes himself as a sinner.⁶⁶⁵ His dedicatory letters and Preface show the customary humility topos often associated with hagiographical texts, twice lamenting his 'rustic idiom',⁶⁶⁶ suggesting Patiens should have chosen a 'worthier narrator' and that he wished 'another than [him]self should have been the historian of such good things'.⁶⁶⁷ Nevertheless, these are rhetorical flourishes common to the genre.⁶⁶⁸ It is possible, though not certain, that Constantius as a young man had met Germanus on his visit to Lyon c.435.⁶⁶⁹

The *V.Ger* was well known to Bede. It serves as the main source for a large section of *HE* Book I detailing Germanus' dealings with the Pelagians in Britain in the early fifth century.⁶⁷⁰ The fact that Bede then skips over 150 years of history in one chapter to the arrival of the Gregorian mission in 582 shows how significant he viewed the life of

⁶⁶² *HE* I.7; I. N. Wood, 'Germanus, Alban and Auxerre', *Bucema*, 13 (2009), pp. 123-129.

⁶⁶³ '*in quo vero evangelica sentential probatur civitatem supra montem positam latere non posse*', *V.Ger* XXI, p. 164, ll. 2-4; *Life of St. Germanus*, p. 92.

⁶⁶⁴ Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, pp. 75-76.

⁶⁶⁵ *V.Ger* Dedication to Patiens, p. 112 and Dedication to Censurius, p. 114. For a later example of this self-assessment, see D. Ganz, 'Einhardus Peccator', in P. Wormald and J. L. Nelson (eds.), *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 37-50.

⁶⁶⁶ '*verborum meorum abiectio*', *V.Ger* Dedication to Censurius, p. 114, l. 14, and '*verborum abiectio*', Preface, p. 118, l. 19; *Life of St. Germanus*, p. 78

⁶⁶⁷ '*relatorem magis dignum*', *V.Ger* Dedication to Patiens, p. 112, l.14, and '*vere maluissem tantorum relatores bonorum alios potius quam me fuisse*', Preface, p. 120, ll. 23-24; *Life of St. Germanus*, pp. 77 and 78-79.

⁶⁶⁸ Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 78, fn. 6 describe his Latin as 'highly polished'.

⁶⁶⁹ *V.Ger* XXIII.

⁶⁷⁰ *HE* I.17-21.

Germanus in the development of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England.⁶⁷¹ From the passages borrowed from the *V.Ger*, Bede's *HE* records six miracles performed by Germanus.⁶⁷² The fact that the three miracles immediately preceding these in the *HE* surround the martyrdom of Alban cannot be mere coincidence; Germanus and Alban are intricately connected figures in the earliest history of the English church.

Despite his worry about the profusion of miracles he has had to work through, Constantius' account contains a similar amount of miracles to the four texts examined above. The numbers for the *V.Ger* are as follows: 23 miracles, none of which have any sort of source attestation.

If details of Constantius' life are noticeably vague, his sources for the *V.Ger* are even more so. The most concrete statement Constantius provides is a reference to six anonymous bishops who attended Germanus in Italy who 'years afterward... were living to bear witness to his works', including his miracles.⁶⁷³ The rest of the text is markedly silent concerning his sources, though some of his statements do help illuminate the issue. Constantius states that the composition of the *V.Ger* should not be considered a reflection of his pride but of hard work, 'for so many cycles of the seasons have gone round that a knowledge of the facts, dimmed by long silence, can now only be acquired by labour'.⁶⁷⁴ He also tells Censurius that the work was composed 'far from completely', and reiterates the sentiment in the Preface.⁶⁷⁵ Describing Germanus' time in Lyon for example, he prays 'May God forgive me for omitting so much that I know!'.⁶⁷⁶ He explains his reasoning

⁶⁷¹ Germanus' second visit to Britain in *HE* I.21 occurred in the mid-430s or 440s, Gregory's mission in 582 is then mentioned in *HE* I.23. Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary*, p. 26.

⁶⁷² Appendix Two, p. 264, below.

⁶⁷³ '*Hi testes operum suorum multis fuere temporibus*', *V.Ger* XXXVII, p. 192, ll. 7-8; *Life of St. Germanus*, p. 102. I discuss the idea of living witnesses in Chapter Four.

⁶⁷⁴ '*tanta enim iam temporum fluxere curricula, ut obscurata per silentium vix colligatur agnitio*', *V.Ger* Preface, p. 120, ll. 21-23; *Life of St. Germanus*, p. 78.

⁶⁷⁵ '*vel ex parte*', *V.Ger* Dedication to Censurius, p. 114, l. 4, and '*vel ex aliqua parte*', Preface, p. 118, ll. 4-5; *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ '*sed dabit Deus veniam quod sciens plura praetereo*', *V.Ger* XXIII, p. 166, l. 11-12; *Life of St. Germanus*, p. 93.

here by stating that he does not wish to ‘weary the reader from my prolixity’.⁶⁷⁷

Constantius’ concluding words summarise these concerns:

I call God to witness, who knows all secrets, that the known and attested miracles of my lord Bishop Germanus that I have passed over in silence are more numerous than those I have recorded; and I have to own myself guilty of suppressing marvels that the power of God wrought for the benefit of all. I think that I have written too summarily rather than too much.⁶⁷⁸

From such statements we can conclude that Constantius did have access to further information regarding Germanus but he knowingly omitted some of this for the sake of a shorter narrative. Nevertheless, he considered the miracles he did include as sufficient to attest to both God’s goodness and the holiness of Germanus. However, he also struggled in other areas due to the distance, both chronologically and geographically, between subject and author which hindered access to reliable accounts of the saint. He was, after all, writing at least 30 years after Germanus’ death,⁶⁷⁹ and some 175 miles away from Auxerre in Lyon. Barrett suggests that ‘he did not have a comprehensive body of source-data to draw upon’, highlighting the fact that Constantius provides only four extended narratives of Germanus’ life in the *V.Ger.*⁶⁸⁰ Despite, or perhaps because of, these difficulties and Constantius’ explanations, the *V.Ger.* clearly stands out among the texts examined in this chapter and the following two for not mentioning by name any of its sources, miraculous or otherwise.

⁶⁷⁷ ‘*prolixitas congesta fastidium*’, Ibid, ll. 10-11; Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ ‘*Et tamen Deum testor conscium secretorum me plura de domini mei Germani factis agnita et probate tacuisse; ex quo reum esse me fateor subprimendo quod mirabiliter ad profectum omnium divina virtus operata est. Et ideo in scribendo succinctum magis me arbitror fuisse quam nimium*’, *V.Ger* XLVI, p. 204, ll. 16-22; *Life of St. Germanus*, p. 106.

⁶⁷⁹ Hence his reference to the ‘many cycles of the seasons’.

⁶⁸⁰ Barrett, ‘Saint Germanus and the British Missions’, p. 198.

Miracles and Sources: *Dialogi*

Chapter One explored how Gregory wrote his *Dialogi* in part as a response to contemporary intellectual challenges concerning the power of the saints. This framework through which to view the text helps deepen our understanding of the relevant figures concerning the types of sources for miracles that Gregory employed throughout the work. However, McCready has already done much of the work regarding Gregory's position on miracles, truth and history, and I am largely in agreement with him. In summary, McCready stated Gregory's 'own theology eliminates the possibility of pious fraud, and the manner in which he appeals to witnesses to authenticate his stories makes it unlikely that his claims to factual veracity are not meant to be taken seriously'.⁶⁸¹ He has also calculated the number of miracles and sources for the *Dialogi*,⁶⁸² and it is my intention here, in line with the aims of this wider chapter, to compare our reasoning behind these figures and explain why they may differ.

Note, Book II of the *Dialogi* stands apart from both our calculations. As explained above, the entirety of this Book is devoted to the life of Benedict.⁶⁸³ As a distinct hagiographical text within the wider structure of the *Dialogi*, Book II could sit equally alongside the five previous works examined as its own self-contained unit. Indeed, the manuscript tradition shows that it often did circulate as a separate text to the main body of the *Dialogi*.⁶⁸⁴ I concur with McCready to treat it separately. At the very beginning of the Book, Gregory makes it explicit that it will focus solely on Benedict, and he draws particular focus towards Benedict's miracles. Benedicta Ward describes Benedict's miracles as 'the climax of St. Gregory's description of the true Christian man', that is, 'the

⁶⁸¹ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, p. 175. See Chapters Five to Seven in particular. This is contrary to Lake, 'Hagiography and the Cult of Saints', p. 236, who states that 'we have no corroborating evidence that [Gregory] attempted to investigate most of those to whom he ascribes stories, and his claims to this effect in the work itself have no independent value... much of the *Dialogi* cannot be verified'. However, Lake, *Idem.*, pp. 241-242 also provides evidence that at least one narrative by Gregory was invented due to historical anachronisms, with another derived almost entirely from earlier written sources.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115, fn. 8, and Appendix B.

⁶⁸³ P. 25, above.

⁶⁸⁴ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, p. 46.

miracles validate Benedict, they place him in the main stream of Christian witness'.⁶⁸⁵ Unlike the other Books where individual stories have their sources attached to them at the relevant juncture, in this Book Gregory's primary sources are given at the start and left blank in the main body of the text, with very few exceptions.⁶⁸⁶ This means that the figures for the text cannot be calculated with the same level of rigor as Books I, III and IV. Instead, he writes:

I was unable to learn about all his miraculous deeds. But the few that I am going to relate I know from the lips of four of his own disciples: Constantine, the holy man who succeeded him as abbot; Valentinian, for many years superior of the monastery of the Lateran; Simplicius, Benedict's second successor; and Honoratus, who is still abbot of the monastery where the man of God first lived.⁶⁸⁷

As no single miracle in Book II can be attributed to any one of these individuals, this statement is taken to imply that the entirety of Book II has been compiled through the recollections of these four sources after discussion with Gregory.⁶⁸⁸ The 46 miracles of Book II have therefore been omitted from the following calculations. Due to the large and composite nature of the *Dialogi*, a table is the best way to explain the figures calculated by myself and McCready, dividing the work by Book and then providing total figures.

As is apparent from Table One, below, both McCready and I have come to very similar figures for the sources and miracles contained in Books I, III and IV of the *Dialogi*. This is highly useful as it allows meaningful comparison in the places where our calculations do differ. Such differences ultimately show that methodological assumptions,

⁶⁸⁵ B. Ward, 'The Miracles of Saint Benedict', in E. Rozanne Elder (ed.), *Benedictus: Studies In Honor of Benedict of Nursia* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1981), pp. 2-3.

⁶⁸⁶ *Dialogi*, II.15, II.26 and II.28 where Honoratus, Anthony and Peregrinus are named as sources.

⁶⁸⁷ 'Huius ego omnia gesta non didici, sed pauca quae narro quatuor discipulis illius referentibus agnovi: Constantino scilicet, reverentissimo valde viro, qui ei in monasterii regimine successit; Valentiniano quoque, qui multis annis Lateranensi monasterio praeftuit; Simplicio, qui congregationem illius post eum tertius rexit; Honorato etiam, qui nunc adhuc cellae eius, in qua prius conservatus fuerat, praeest', *Dialogues*, Vol. 2, II.Preface.2, p. 128, ll. 16-23; Zimmerman, II.Preface, p. 56

⁶⁸⁸ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, p. 114, fn. 8, and Appendix B, p. 265.

(in this case, defining a miracle and the types of sources to be counted) can have a significant impact on how one understands a text.

Table One: Comparative Figures of Sources for the Dialogi

Section	Total Number of Miracles	Named Sources	Anonymous Sources	No Source Attribution
Book I	35	48.57% (17)	20% (7)	31.43% (11)
Book I (McCready)	36	72.22% (26)	22.22% (8)	5.56% (2)
Book III	58	41.38% (24)	53.45% (31)	5.17% (3)
Book III (McCready)	61	45.90% (28)	50.82% (31)	3.28% (2)
Book IV	53	58.48% (31)	32.08% (17)	9.44% (5)
Book IV (McCready)	48	43.75% (21)	25% (12)	31.25% (15)
Overall	146	49.32% (72)	37.67% (55)	13.01% (19)
Overall (McCready)	145	51.72% (75)	35.17% (51)	13.1% (19)

McCready explains the particular difficulties of the *Dialogi* in counting miracles and their sources with the following:

A certain amount of reasonable conjecture is necessary, for Gregory often names two sources for a series of miracles, leaving it unclear how the responsibility is to be divided; and he often refers to his source only at the beginning of a series of episodes, making it difficult to determine how far into the series he would have us understand the authority of the source extends.⁶⁸⁹

Our differences mostly lie in our understanding of what can be considered ‘reasonable conjecture’. A starting example of the difficulties in counting miracles and sources can be

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 114, fn. 8.

found in *Dialogi* III.16 concerning the miracles of Martin the hermit. In this chapter Gregory relates six miracles of Martin, though the attribution of the sources he mentions at the beginning of the passage to each miracle is uncertain. He writes ‘Many of our people knew him and were witnesses to his miraculous deeds. I also heard much about him from Pope Pelagius, my predecessor of happy memory, and from other God-fearing men’.⁶⁹⁰ The six miracles themselves have no individual attestation; this opening statement is taken to cover them all. There are clearly three groups here that Gregory relied upon as sources: two anonymous (‘our people’ and the ‘other God-fearing men’) and one named (Pope Pelagius II). The question, then, lies in how best to assess these miracles (and other passages like them, on an individual basis) according to the accounting criteria set out above. Considering the uncertainty, but in light of the fact that Gregory clearly does state his sources here, I preferred to err on the side of caution and treat all six as anonymously sourced.⁶⁹¹ There is insufficient data to assume that Pelagius lies as the main, named source behind any one of these miracles. By contrast, because he is named at the start, McCready interpreted the whole chapter as belonging to both Pope Pelagius *and* the anonymous sources.⁶⁹²

The attribution of named sources to particular miracles is perhaps the largest discrepancy between McCready and me. In Book I our named sources differed by nine, by four in Book III and ten in Book IV. One example of ‘reasonable conjecture’ explaining the differences in the figures occurs with those miracles attested by Gregory himself. McCready rejects the three suggestions of Umberto Moricca, early editor of the Latin text of the *Dialogi*, of ‘miracles confirmed by [Gregory’s] own first-hand experience’ in *Dialogi* III.35, IV.49 and IV.57.⁶⁹³ However, such phrasing allows one to see why different figures have been calculated for some of the named sources. In III.35 I agree that Floridus is the named source of the miracle. In the latter two chapters, however, I have taken

⁶⁹⁰ ‘*Quam multi ex nostris noverunt, eiusque actibus praesentes extiterunt. De quo multa ipse, et beatae memoriae papa Pelagio decessore meo et aliis religiosissimus viris narrantibus, agnovi*’, *Dialogues*, Vol. 2, III.16, p. 326, ll. 4-7; Zimmerman, III.16, p. 141.

⁶⁹¹ See Appendix One, p. 256.

⁶⁹² McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, Appendix B, p. 266.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 112, fn. 3.

Gregory to be the named source as, whilst not a direct eyewitness himself,⁶⁹⁴ he is the implied primary source for the miracles as per my stated methodological definition, above. The same is true for other miracles experienced or witnessed by members of his monastery, even if he does not attribute a particular name to those narratives.⁶⁹⁵ The ‘reasonable conjecture’ here is that if Gregory mentions miracles that occurred among his monastic community, their traditions were his traditions, he was part of their shared collective memory, and he may even have known direct eyewitnesses of such miracles himself. In IV.27, for example, Gregory states that a severely ill monk called Gerontius had an angelic vision ‘about ten years ago’, an episode that clearly happened within living memory.⁶⁹⁶ This appeal to miracles in the recent past may also help explain some instances where Gregory does not provide a source: the stories were simply assumed to be common knowledge.⁶⁹⁷

Of the six works examined in this chapter, Gregory provides the best attestation to the miracles he records. Lake states that his practice in this regard is ‘strikingly more assiduous than most hagiographical authors’.⁶⁹⁸ Roughly 87% of the miracles in the *Dialogi* have either a named or anonymous source attached to them. Half of them alone have a named source, and in many of the anonymous instances there are good reasons to suspect a probable named source lying behind those too. These figures for the *Dialogi* provide further confirmation of Dal Santo’s thesis that Gregory was responding to issues of disbelief regarding the powers of the saints. The implication from such a systematic approach to providing attestation appears clear: ‘Gregory believes the miracle stories he tells, and is anxious that his readers believe them as well’.⁶⁹⁹

Conclusion

⁶⁹⁴ ‘He did not really experience any miracle himself’, Ibid.

⁶⁹⁵ These occur in *Dialogi* III.36, IV.27, IV.40, and IV.49 already mentioned. See Appendix One for details.

⁶⁹⁶ ‘ante decennium’, *Dialogues*, Vol. 3, IV.27, p. 88, l. 30; Zimmerman, IV.27, p. 220.

⁶⁹⁷ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, p. 113, fn. 6 states that at least four of his nineteen miracles without sources can be explained this way.

⁶⁹⁸ Lake, ‘Hagiography and the Cult of Saints’, p. 235.

⁶⁹⁹ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, p. 175.

The foregoing discussion has shown that the landscape of late antique hagiography provided Bede with multiple avenues through which to understand as well as emulate these authors' practices. In the 200 years over which these texts were written no singular method of composing the life of a saint, including discussion of their miracles, emerged, though the family resemblance within the genre is clearly apparent.⁷⁰⁰ Common aspects such as an informative Preface, the didactic purpose of hagiography and the role of living witnesses, as well as issues of chronological and geographical distance between author and subject, will be explored further in subsequent chapters. In the present context, Stancliffe writes that 'In late antiquity, all Christians accepted the reality of God's intervention in the course of human events, and "miracle stories" were therefore regarded as no less "historical" than other stories'.⁷⁰¹ This has been the argument of this chapter. As miracles recorded in the *vita* of a saint were within the reasonable expectations of a Christian audience, they therefore needed to be addressed using suitable methods of historiography: sources and eyewitnesses.

Table Two: Comparison of Sources for Miracles in the Six Texts

<u>Text</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Named %</u>	<u>Anonymous %</u>	<u>No Source Mentioned %</u>
<i>V.Ant</i>	32	6.25% (2)	0% (0)	93.75% (30)
<i>V.Mart</i>	26	3.85% (1)	7.7% (2)	88.45% (23)
<i>V.Ambr</i>	26	30.78% (8)	7.69% (2)	61.53% (16)
<i>V.Aug</i>	2	100% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
<i>V.Ger</i>	23	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (23)
<i>Dialogi</i> (Books I, III+IV)	146	49.32% (72)	37.67% (55)	13.01% (19)

Table Two, above, displays the figures for the six texts examined in this chapter in tandem. Each text provided Bede with its own lessons. Not all hagiographical texts required multiple miracles for example (*V.Aug*). The earliest two texts showed little concern in how their miracles were attested (*V.Ant* and *V.Mart*), though this possibility was

⁷⁰⁰ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 15.

⁷⁰¹ Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer*, p. 101.

still apparent nearly 80 years later with the *V.Ger.* The *V.Ambr* laid some of the foundations for more accurate attestation in hagiographical literature by providing nearly 40% of its miracles with a source of some kind. It was the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great, however, that provided Bede and his contemporaries with an example of a more consistent approach to supplying sources for the vast majority of miracles in the text. The findings of this chapter will help show how these texts served to underpin the writing of history and hagiography in the early Insular context, the subject of the next three chapters.

Chapter Four

Bede's Innovation: Sources, Evidence and Eyewitnesses

For many of the miracle stories Bede relates, he often, though not always, provides a source for his evidence. These are sometimes named witnesses, sometimes anonymous, occasionally written sources but more often related to him orally. Such divisions of sources have been explored in varying detail by Colgrave, Loomis, Rosenthal and McCready.⁷⁰² However, these investigations have yielded differing results, and are far from complete. For example, Loomis claims there are 52 miracles in the *HE* and Rosenthal 51,⁷⁰³ whereas McCready counts 76.⁷⁰⁴ The problem occurred in that neither Loomis nor Rosenthal specified exactly what they had counted, and whilst McCready gives some clarification, he too fails to provide a list of his dataset. This same issue of differing numbers is faced by Colgrave, Loomis and McCready when considering Bede's *VCB*, again due to no clear statement of the accounting criteria. In the *VCB*, Colgrave counts 40 miracles,⁷⁰⁵ whereas Loomis only reached 38,⁷⁰⁶ and McCready arrives at 43.⁷⁰⁷ As mentioned above,⁷⁰⁸ I will be taking McCready's approach, counting miracles individually rather than chapters that may contain more than one miracle. Another issue that occurs in these studies is that whilst Bede's reliance on ecclesiastical figures as sources has regularly been acknowledged,⁷⁰⁹ there has not been any concerted effort to tabulate the ranks these people hold. Furthermore, the descriptions and epithets Bede assigns to these witnesses have not been fully explored; Rosenthal only states that 'when Bede did give a source, the style of

⁷⁰² Colgrave, 'Bede's Miracle Stories'; Loomis, 'The Miracle Traditions of the Venerable Bede'; Rosenthal, 'Bede's Use of Miracles in "The Ecclesiastical History"'; McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*.

⁷⁰³ Loomis, 'Miracle Traditions', p. 404; Rosenthal, 'Bede's Use of Miracles', pp. 329-330.

⁷⁰⁴ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 164, fn. 29.

⁷⁰⁵ B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*, p. 14.

⁷⁰⁶ Loomis, 'Miracle Traditions', p. 404.

⁷⁰⁷ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 158.

⁷⁰⁸ Pp. 110-111, above.

⁷⁰⁹ Berlin, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', p. 438ff; Colgrave, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', pp. 206, 224-225; McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 70-72; Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian*, p. 12ff.

identification was much the same for the earlier and later books',⁷¹⁰ yet omits the evidence necessary to reinforce this claim.

The aim of this chapter and the next two is to address most of these shortcomings in a thorough and comparative manner, the consequences of which will be a fuller appreciation of Bede's approach not only to miracle material but also to his conceptions of truth and evidence. Following the previous chapter where the practices of six of Bede's predecessors were examined, this chapter will primarily explore Bede's use of witnesses for miracles in both the *HE* and his *VCB*, with shorter commentary on his *Chronica Minora*,⁷¹¹ *Chronica Maiora* and *Martyrologium*. The *HA* has been omitted here for the simple reason that it does not contain a single miracle story.⁷¹² For this section the reader should refer to Appendix Two which lists every occurrence of a miracle in the *HE* and *VCB*. The breakdown of the quality of miracle sources for the *VCB* has only been undertaken by McCready, but he distorts the issue when considering Bede's use of the earlier *VCA*,⁷¹³ combining the figures for Bede's text with the earlier anonymous work to make the miracles in the *VCB* appear better attested. Taken separately, however, the *VCA* has more reliable attestation for its miracles than the *VCB*.⁷¹⁴ Having explored the relevant figures across these texts, this chapter will examine the epithets Bede uses to describe his sources. Whilst these have often been noted, no study has systematically investigated Bede's descriptions of his miracle sources. I will explore how regularly these titles occur, and the status of those they are applied to, in other words, whether certain forms are solely applied to bishops, abbots or priests for example. For this section, the reader should refer to Appendix Four. The chapter will end with an evaluation of the evidence and how this impacts upon our understanding of Bede as an author and historian.

⁷¹⁰ Rosenthal, 'Bede's Use of Miracles', p. 331.

⁷¹¹ MacCarron has argued that we should not view this chronicle contained in Bede's *De Temporibus* as a lesser or prototype version of the chronicle found in his *DTR* of 725 but as a separate entity with different intentions, having different style and structure to the later text. For this reason she has proposed renaming it the 'Chronicle of 703'. M. MacCarron, 'Bede's World Chronicles: A Re-appraisal of the "Chronica Minora"', paper delivered at the Institute of Historical Research, London (11 February 2015).

⁷¹² Comparison to its closely related text, the *Vita Ceolfredi*, is provided in Chapter Five.

⁷¹³ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 158-160.

⁷¹⁴ See my discussion on the *VCA* in Chapter Five.

It is my intention in this chapter to show in various ways how Bede was careful and deliberate in his use of sources and eyewitnesses for miracle stories, filling in some of the gaps left by previous scholars. In addition, I will show the subtle differences in Bede's practice between varying literary genres, namely hagiography, martyrology, chronicle and ecclesiastical history. For example, Tinti has described hagiography as 'a genre which since its very beginning and for its very nature has always depended upon the testimony of people who are said to have witnessed the events reported by the hagiographer, *especially the miraculous ones*'.⁷¹⁵ Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting here the fact that genre is not a static concept; boundaries are not as clear-cut as we might like. Indeed, Lifshitz has stated that upon examination 'many "hagiographical" texts do not fit into the category "hagiography"',⁷¹⁶ and she questions a univocal definition of the term in general.⁷¹⁷ Instead, Lifshitz suggests we must be aware of the unique circumstances of each period we are studying, to understand how they considered their texts, and not to apply our categories or ways of thinking onto the past anachronistically.⁷¹⁸ For Bede, he had spent his life 'applying [him]self entirely to the study of the scriptures',⁷¹⁹ and all of his work was diffused with the rich intellectual inheritance of Christian theology derived from the Church Fathers. This implies that all of his texts will reflect this Christian worldview; it is inescapable. However, I cannot fully agree with Lifshitz, citing the difficulties in categorising ninth to eleventh century Frankish *gesta*, that 'at a certain point, constant "cross-over" [between genres] must be taken as an indication that the categories themselves are hopelessly inadequate'.⁷²⁰ Rather than dismissing our genres for problem texts as 'hopelessly inadequate', I would prefer to see such texts as opportunities for reflection and consider whether a new categorical term or genre would be more appropriate. In our present context, Bede felt able to group the entirety of his corpus into varying related categories as evidenced by his list of works in *HE* V.24. Clearly in his

⁷¹⁵ Tinti, 'Personal Names', p. 17. Emphasis added.

⁷¹⁶ F. Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical" Texts as Historical Narrative', *Viator*, 25 (1994), p. 96, fn. 4. One might include Bede's *Historia Abbatum* here.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-102.

⁷¹⁹ '*omnem meditandis scripturis operam dedi*', *HE* V.24, p. 566-567.

⁷²⁰ Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre', pp. 102-103.

mind, at least, Bede had distinct categories of literature among his corpus that for my purposes will provide fruitful comparisons when comparing his treatment of the miraculous. It is from this understanding that the remainder of this chapter will proceed.

Concerning recent historiography, this chapter will engage particularly with the work of Gail Berlin on the issue of authority and testimony, William McCready's detailed exploration of miracles in the *HE* and *VCB*, Francesca Tinti's work on personal names in the *VCB*, and Nicholas Higham's Jarrow Lecture on Bede's oral sources. This chapter combined with the previous one will then serve as a foundation for Chapters Five and Six where a comparative approach will be taken, examining Bede's originality in his use of witnesses in contrast to his early Insular counterparts. McCready spends a short amount of time on the *VCA*, even less on the *VW*, and his only real point of close, systematic analysis is between Bede and the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great.⁷²¹ In the next two chapters I subject all the relevant texts to the same sort of analysis as this chapter, so as to truly be able to compare Bede and his contemporaries rather than work with generalisations.

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*

For the *VCB*, McCready counted 43 miracles, 11 of which he believes have a named source (26%), 3 of which he believes are related anonymously (7%), with the remaining 29 having no source (67%).⁷²² Following the definition of a miracle outlined in the Introduction combined with my method of counting them individually, I have produced slightly different results:

46 miracles, 15 of which are from a named source (33%), 9 of which are from an anonymous source (19%), with the remaining 22 having no source attribution (48%).⁷²³

⁷²¹ McCready, *Signs of Sanctity*, Passim.

⁷²² McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 158.

⁷²³ Whilst I do not want to make too much of what could just be simple coincidence, if 46 is the accurate number of miracles it could confirm Berschin's suggestion that 46 chapters in the *VCB* is a deliberate exegetical echo by Bede. The number 46 reflects the number of years the Temple took to construct (John 2:19-22) and also, following Augustine, the number of days it takes a human soul to form. See Berschin, 'Opus Deliberatum ac Perfectum', pp. 99-101.

The largest discrepancy occurs with the anonymous sources; I count six more miracles here than McCready. Following my stated criteria above, there are clearly nine such miracles in the *VCB*: one in III, XX, XXX, XXXIII and XXXV, and two each in X and XI. Even counting Chapters X and XI as singular miracles still leaves seven anonymous miracles compared to McCready's three. With no explicit explanation of McCready's counting methods, I can do little else to explain the difference.

Miracles and Sources: *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*

As mentioned, for the *HE* McCready counted 76 miracles. However, he adopted an alternative approach to analysing the sources Bede used here compared to the method he used for the *VCB*. He divided the *HE* into named sources (18, or 24%), written sources (15, or 20%), anonymous sources (7, or 9%) and no source (36, or 47%).⁷²⁴ This entails that McCready's results for the *HE* are not entirely comparable to his data from the *VCB*. As this present chapter is interested in assessing any differences between Bede's historical and hagiographical practice, a univocal approach will be taken for the sake of consistency. My results for all five books of the *HE* taken together are as follows:

87 miracles, 35 of which are from a named source (40.2%), 8 of which are from an anonymous source (9.2%), with the remaining 44 having no source attribution (50.6%).

However, in his final analysis McCready quite sensibly decided to exclude Books I-III and combine the results of Books IV and V. He did this to provide a more realistic portrait of Bede's use of sources in the *HE* 'on the premise that for events much earlier there would have been a greater chance of his having had to rely on unsubstantiated general report'.⁷²⁵ After all, Book III ends in the late 660s, at least fifty years before Bede began the *HE* in the 720s, meaning most if not all witnesses of earlier events would more than likely be dead. As further evidence of this, the named sources for miracles in Book III appear to be exceptions. First, the account in III.13, attested by Bishop Acca from Willibrord, is out of chronological order, and if this was Bede's only concern would have been more appropriate in Book IV. However, it is an account of a miracle connected to Oswald (d.

⁷²⁴ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 164-165.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

642) but occurring several years later and is included in Book III as part of Bede's overall portrait of the saint. Second, III.15 is a miracle connected to Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, who died in 651, and the miracle itself can be dated to the mid-640s when Eanflæd and Oswiu were married. However, Bede's source Cynemund was not a contemporary but had heard it sometime afterwards from the recipient of the miracle itself, Utta. Likewise, in III.19 Bede names his source for Fursa's miracles as coming from the book of his life, not from a specific person. For Books IV and V, the results are therefore as follows:

50 Miracles, 30 of which are from a named source (60%), 3 of which are from an anonymous source (6%), with the remaining 17 having no source attribution (34%).

Miracles and Sources: *Martyrologium*

The third of Bede's texts to be examined is his *Martyrologium*.⁷²⁶ Written between 712 and 731,⁷²⁷ this piece has received little scholarly attention;⁷²⁸ it has yet to receive a critical edition.⁷²⁹ It takes the form of a religious calendar centred on the death, martyrdom or burial of famous Christian saints, usually with a brief description of their life. Earlier martyrologies simply listed the date and saint; Bede's addition of a historical or narrative

⁷²⁶ J. Dubois and G. Renaud (eds.), *Edition Pratique Des Martyrologes de Bède, de l'Anonyme Lyonnais et de Florus* (Paris, 1976); Bede, *Martyrology*, ed. and trans. F. Lifshitz, in T. Head (ed.), *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (London, 2001), pp. 169-197.

⁷²⁷ The entry for 28 August mentions Liutprand, King of the Lombards, transferring St. Augustine's body from Sardinia to Pavia. Liutprand ruled 712-744. Bede mentions his *Martyrologium* in *HE* V.24.

⁷²⁸ Directly relevant articles are G. Kotzor, 'Anglo-Saxon Martyrologists at Work: Narrative Pattern and Prose Style in Bede and the *Old English Martyrology*', *Leeds Studies in English*, 16 (1985), pp. 152-173 and A. Thacker, 'Bede and his *Martyrology*', in E. Mullins and D. Scully (eds.), *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly* (Cork, 2011), pp. 126-141. Also of interest are works regarding the composition of the *Old English Martyrology*, which relied to some extent on the Latin text of Bede: C. Rauer, 'The Sources of the *Old English Martyrology*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 32 (2003), pp. 89-109, M. Lapidge, 'Acca of Hexham and the Origin of the Old English Martyrology', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 123 (2005), pp. 29-78, and C. Rauer (ed. and trans.), *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge, 2013).

⁷²⁹ Scholars investigating the Latin text of Bede's *Martyrologium* should consult Quentin, *Les Martyrologes Historiques du Moyen Âge*, and Dubois and Renaud, *Edition Pratique*.

account appears to be an innovation to the genre.⁷³⁰ For our purposes, these very short biographical entries sometimes contain miracle stories. The results for the *Martyrologium* are as follows:

44 Miracles, 4 of which are from a named source (9%), 0 of which are from an anonymous source (0%), with the remaining 40 having no source attribution (91%).

To put these figures into some perspective, there are 115 entries in Bede's *Martyrologium* and these 44 miracles occur in 30 unique entries, meaning only 26% of them contain references to a miracle. Due to the nature of this text, it is inappropriate to ask whether Bede had access to living sources for these stories as the vast majority of these martyrs died several centuries before him. The most reasonable understanding is that Bede was relying on earlier written accounts for almost all of these entries, in particular, the fifth-century martyrology of pseudo-Jerome.⁷³¹ However, he frequently omitted reference to the sources he had received his information from. As a calendrical work designed to remind Christians of the annual feast days they celebrated, there was little need to inform his readers where he got his information from. Indeed, three of the four miracle stories where he does list his source had a personal connection to Bede. Under 14 January, Bede mentions Paulinus of Nola as a source for his entry on St. Felix;⁷³² Bede reworked Paulinus' metrical *Vita Felicis* into a new prose version. Under 17 January, Bede mentions Neon as the scribe for the deeds of the triplets Speusippus, Elasippus and Melasippus.⁷³³ These three saints were buried outside the town of Langres, and it was here that Bede's beloved abbot Ceolfrith was also buried.⁷³⁴ It is likely that Bede's inclusion of these saints, and Neon as their scribe, stemmed from Bede's own interest in the place where Ceolfrith rested. Furthermore, the brothers of Wearmouth-Jarrow who returned from Langres may have brought stories of their martyrdom, either oral or written, that Bede thought fitting to include and commemorate here in his *Martyrologium*. Finally, under 7 August, Bede

⁷³⁰ 'Introduction' in Bede, *Martyrology*, ed. and trans. F. Lifshitz, p. 171, and Yarrow, *The Saints*, p. 113.

⁷³¹ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, ed. H. Delehay, P. Peeters and M. Coens (Brussels, 1931).

⁷³² Bede, *Martyrology*, p. 179.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁷³⁴ Bede, *HA*, XXIII; *V. Ceol*, XXXVI.

mentions the miracle of Donatus of Arezzo coming from Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*,⁷³⁵ a work which, as discussed in Chapter One, Bede was highly familiar with. A further explanation as to why Bede omitted sources for miracle stories here comes from the etymology of the word 'martyr' itself. It takes its root from the Greek meaning 'witness', with the religious connotation being one who has borne public witness to their faith. In the work as a whole, Bede may not have therefore seen the need to provide sources for these miracles, as the holy manner of these martyr's lives and deaths provided testimony enough. As Thacker suggests, 'Bede's focus was on the suffering of the living, not the cult of the dead'.⁷³⁶ If correct, the inclusion of witnesses to verify the miracles of the proposed saint in question would be unnecessary; Bede was not intending to foster new cults of these saints but to commemorate their holy lives. In this regard, we once again see Bede's focus turning to the miraculous deeds of the saints as instructive for contemporary Christian living.

Miracles and Sources: *Chronica Minora*

Bede's *Chronica Minora* can be found as Chapters XVI-XXII of his *De Temporibus*.⁷³⁷ It can be dated to 703 through the final entry of the *Chronica*, namely that 'at present, Tiberius has reigned for five years, and it is the first indiction'.⁷³⁸ The work itself is thus one of Bede's earliest and is a teaching-aid of Christian time-reckoning,⁷³⁹ known as 'computus',⁷⁴⁰ beginning with the smallest units, moments and hours, and ending

⁷³⁵ Bede, *Martyrology*, p. 189.

⁷³⁶ Thacker, 'Bede and his *Martyrology*', p. 129.

⁷³⁷ Bede, *De Temporibus*, pp. 600-611; Bede, *On Times*, pp. 117-131.

⁷³⁸ 'Tiberius dehinc quintum agit annum ind. Prima', *Ibid.*, p. 611, ll. 79-80; *Ibid.*, p. 131. Tiberius III Apsimar, Eastern Roman Emperor, ruled 698-705, placing *De Temporibus* in 703.

⁷³⁹ In his *DTR*, Bede says he wrote this earlier work '*stricto sermone... discentibus... necessarios*' (in a summary style... necessary for my students). *DTR* Praefatio, p. 263, l. 2; Bede, *Reckoning of Time*, p. 3.

⁷⁴⁰ Two good introductions can be found in A. A. Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus and the Origins of the Christian Era* (Oxford, 2008) and I. Warntjes, 'Computus as Scientific Thought in Ireland and the Continent in the Early Medieval West', in R. Flechner and S. Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe: Identity, Culture and Religion* (New York, 2016), pp. 158-178.

with the longest, the world ages.⁷⁴¹ Concerning the present study, to my knowledge no scholar has examined this text in terms of the few miracles it contains; it has chiefly been examined with regards to Bede's understanding of time. The *Chronica Minora* itself begins with an explanation of the world-age before moving from the first age through to the sixth, present age, listing the most important people and events that took place in each age. It is worth pointing out that as this is a history of the world starting from creation, the majority of this *Chronica* and the *Chronica Maiora* contained in *DTR* are outside the period that any witnesses can realistically be expected to be alive.⁷⁴² My calculations for this text are as follows:

5 Miracles, none of which are from a named or anonymous source, but all having the Bible as their ultimate, unstated source. These five miracles are: Enoch being translated to heaven,⁷⁴³ the flood of Noah,⁷⁴⁴ the languages of the world being confused because of the Tower of Babel,⁷⁴⁵ the prophet Elijah being translated to heaven,⁷⁴⁶ and the Incarnation of Jesus.⁷⁴⁷

It appears that in this text, Bede was simply not interested in the miracles of the people he includes. Rather, they form chronological markers with which to calculate the ages of the world. For example, Bede had ample opportunity to comment on the miracles of key biblical figures that he names, such as Moses, Joshua, Gideon or Samson, yet merely mentions the period which they ruled. Further, Bede mentions the crucifixion of Jesus yet says nothing here of his miracle-working ministry or resurrection. In the period after Christ, he mentions the martyrdom of several saints, but no miracles that occurred in the

⁷⁴¹ For Bede's understanding of the world ages in *De Temporibus*, see Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, Ch. One. Bede's views developed and expanded, and his later thought, particularly as evidenced in *DTR*, are explained by Darby in Chapter Three of the same work.

⁷⁴² The sixth, present age, began with the birth of Christ.

⁷⁴³ Genesis 5:24.

⁷⁴⁴ Genesis 6:9-9:17.

⁷⁴⁵ Genesis 11:1-9, although Bede simply states its construction, not the action of God, though as this story comes from a single passage, the connection is implicit.

⁷⁴⁶ 2 Kings 2:1-15.

⁷⁴⁷ Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25.

sixth age. Coming at the end of a work explaining chronology, it appears that the *Chronica Minora* is more interested in showing how Bede's readers had progressed to the present age through the various reigns of biblical and classical kings rather than the specific detail of what exactly had occurred during their rule. *De Temporibus* as a whole thus appears to be far more straightforwardly 'scientific' with regards to time, history and the miraculous than its later cousin *DTR*.

Miracles and Sources: *Chronica Maiora*

The *Chronica Maiora*, Chapter LXVI of Bede's *DTR*,⁷⁴⁸ contains many more miracles than the *Chronica Minora*. This text was finished in 725, which Bede mentions as the present year in Chapters XLIX, LII and LVIII.⁷⁴⁹ It thus represents Bede's most complete work concerning computus as well as his eschatological vision; in *DTR* LXVII-LXXI, immediately after this history of the world, Bede explains what he believes will happen at the end of time.⁷⁵⁰ In comparison to the division into the six ages of the world in the *Chronica Minora*, the *Chronica Maiora* begins with a brief explanation of Bede's expanded scheme of eight world ages before proceeding through history using *annus mundi* dating. This system allows Bede to present a continuous historical narrative beginning from creation to his own day. The number of miracles in this text is as follows:

28 Miracles, 3 of which are from a named source (11%),⁷⁵¹ none of which are from an anonymous source (0%), with the remaining 25 having no source attribution (89%).

The *Chronica Maiora* provides clear evidence that the nature of the individual text played a crucial role in Bede's choice of attribution for sources of miracles. Of the 25 miracles where Bede chose not to mention his source, not a single one cannot be identified.

⁷⁴⁸ *DTR* LXVI, pp. 463-535; Bede, *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 157-237.

⁷⁴⁹ Though Wallis has shown that Bede was working on parts of this text at least as early as 722 by reference to the seventeenth day of the moon falling on 7 May in that year. Bede, *Reckoning of Time*, p. 43, fn. 121.

⁷⁵⁰ On which see Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, Chs. Four and Five, and Idem., 'Bede's History of the Future', in P. Darby and F. Wallis (eds.), *Bede and the Future* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 115-138.

⁷⁵¹ Though two of these are from the Bible (Zechariah and Acts), where he mentions the book in question by name.

As could be expected for the earlier years of the *Chronica Maiora*, nine of the miracles are taken from the Bible.⁷⁵² The rest are from a collection of patristic authors which Bede was clearly familiar with. These include Isidore, Jerome, Eusebius/Rufinus and the *Liber Pontificalis*. Of the four miracles where Bede specifically names his source, two of them are from the Bible. A third is Bede mentioning his own *vitae* of St. Cuthbert.⁷⁵³ There is a reference to the miracles of St. Benedict however, that is of greater interest. Under AM (*Annus Mundi*) 4480, Bede writes that ‘Abbot Benedict shone forth in the glory of his miracles, which the blessed Gregory wrote down in his book of *Dialogues*’.⁷⁵⁴ The fact that of the miracles contained in the *Chronica Maiora* only this reference has its source mentioned by name is significant. Gregory’s *Dialogi* have been shown to have had a major impact in the way that Bede narrated miracles,⁷⁵⁵ and this unique reference is therefore a way for Bede to pay homage to one of his main patristic inspirations.⁷⁵⁶ Furthermore, Bede only uses the honorific of ‘*beatus*’, blessed, for three other people in the *Chronica Maiora*: Theophilus, Bishop of Caesarea, (who had written a letter against the ‘Jewish’ dating of Easter on 14 Nisan), Augustine of Hippo, and the Apostle Peter. He thus places his beloved Gregory among highly esteemed company. Bede had plenty of opportunity to name his other sources for miracles yet chose not to; this inclusion of Gregory’s name, and Gregory’s name only, is therefore a deliberate choice on Bede’s part, again highlighting his importance within Bede’s intellectual worldview.

In terms of length, the *Chronica Maiora* is much longer than the earlier one, partly due to its more narrative style but also due to the increased content it covers, particularly in the sixth age, thus providing a possible explanation for why there are more miracles contained within. The *Chronica Maiora*, in its Latin CCSL edition, is 2066 lines long compared to the 203 lines of the *Chronica Minora*, (or in other words is roughly 10 times

⁷⁵² Namely: Creation, Enoch being withdrawn from the world, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, Elijah stopping the rain for three and a half years, Elijah being taken into heaven, Elisha cleansing the water, Ezekiel’s vision of a restored Jerusalem, and the Incarnation.

⁷⁵³ *DTR* LXVI, p. 530, s.a. 4652.

⁷⁵⁴ ‘*Benedictus abbas virtutum gloria claruit, quas beatus papa Gregorius in libro Dialogorum scripsit*’, *DTR* LXVI, p. 521, ll. 1706-1707; Bede, *Reckoning of Time*, p. 224.

⁷⁵⁵ Chapter One, above. Cf. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, Ch. Seven.

⁷⁵⁶ Cf. Meyvaert, *Bede and Gregory the Great*, and DeGregorio, ‘The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great’, *Passim*.

bigger) and has 5.6 times the amount of miracles within it than the *Chronica Minora*. This difference in length versus the number of miracles contained within is not overly disproportionate. However, upon closer inspection, the location of the majority of these additional miracles highlights Bede's increased eschatological intention for the later work in at least two respects.

The first fact that can be drawn by comparing the two texts is the vast increase in miracles in the *Chronica Maiora* that occur in the sixth age of the world. Just over two-thirds, or 20 out of 28 miracles recorded in the *Chronica Maiora* occur in this age, yet only two of them are taken from the Bible.⁷⁵⁷ The remaining eighteen of these come from the period after the New Testament, which in Bede's *Chronica Minora* contains no miracles at all. The largest group of these are the miraculous revelations of relics such as a piece of the cross and the bodies of famous saints such as John the Baptist, Stephen, Nicodemus and Barnabas. A secondary group of miracles is concerned with the miracle workings of ecclesiastical figures throughout the centuries since Christ, among whom can be counted Gregory Thaumaturgus, James of Nisibis, Pope John I, Anastasius, Pope Martin and Cuthbert. Taken together, both groups of miracles represent the development and spread of the church; the faith was founded by the earlier figures and focussed around the salvific work of Christ on the cross, and was subsequently spread through the actions of his saints as evidenced by their miracles.

Consequently, the inclusion of these additional post-New Testament miracles point the reader from the sixth age towards the end of the world, a topic Bede covers after the *Chronica Maiora* in *DTR* LXVII-LXXI and upon which he is largely silent in *De Temporibus*. From 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Bede knew that at the end of the world, 'when that which is perfect is come',⁷⁵⁸ the age of miracles would finally cease: 'that which is in part shall be done away'.⁷⁵⁹ For Bede, miracles acted to establish the faith; they had an apologetic purpose.⁷⁶⁰ The inclusion of post-New Testament miracles in *DTR* LXVI thus serves a two-fold purpose: Bede at first shows his audience that the church has been built

⁷⁵⁷ The Incarnation, recorded as AM3952, and the death of Herod Agrippa by an angel, recorded under AM3966 but occurring later. Cf. Acts 12:20-23.

⁷⁵⁸ 'Cum autem venerit quod perfectum est', 1 Corinthians 13:10.

⁷⁵⁹ 'Evacuabitur quod ex parte est', 1 Corinthians 13:10.

⁷⁶⁰ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 105ff.

on the miracle-workings and faithful preaching of the saints, but that secondly, this preaching and miracle-working is merely a signpost towards the ultimate destiny of the world, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal rest of the eighth age. Such an understanding accords well with Bede's use of the term *signa* for miracles as pointers towards a greater spiritual reality.⁷⁶¹

The second point that can be taken from the additional miracles provides further evidence for the growth of Bede's eschatological thought. Under AM3056, the miracle of Elijah stopping the rain in Israel for three and a half years is included.⁷⁶² The *Chronica Minora* only contained the story of Elijah's ascension into heaven, where he is a passive recipient in the miracle. 2 Kings 2:1 says it was the Lord who was to take him, and Elijah twice says he is to be taken in 2 Kings 2:9 and 10. The fact that the *Chronica Maiora* contains this additional rain miracle conversely reminds the reader that this prophet was also an active miracle worker. Such an inclusion in this later work is highly significant as Elijah had come to form a crucial lynchpin in Bede's more developed eschatological vision. In *DTR* LXIX, Elijah is one of two prophets (the other being Enoch) who will signal the coming end of times by converting the Jews prior to Antichrist's arrival.⁷⁶³ Crucially, this period of preaching and conversion is said by Bede to again last three and a half years,⁷⁶⁴ the same length that Elijah stopped the rain in Israel. Just as he once withheld the rain by God's command to the Jews, at the end of the age he will bring an outpouring of preaching back to them for the same amount of time. Having returned, Enoch and Elijah also provide a secondary pointer for the end times; their death coincides with the rise of Antichrist, who will persecute the church for a further three and a half years.⁷⁶⁵ As they had not formerly died, this death at the hand of the beast re-affirms their miraculous ascension to heaven that Bede had earlier recorded in *DTR* LXVI.

⁷⁶¹ Ward, 'Miracles and History', p. 71.

⁷⁶² 1 Kings 17 and 18.

⁷⁶³ Cf. Darby, 'Bede's History of the Future', pp. 119-121.

⁷⁶⁴ '*tres semis annos*', *DTR* LXIX, p. 538, l. 11, after the 1260 days in Revelation 11:1-12.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 538-539.

Bede's Descriptions and Epithets of Sources for Miracle Stories

Having counted the miracles and whether their sources were named, anonymous or none were provided, I will now examine the nature of these sources. Bede's descriptions of his sources stem from two of the tropes from his early work *De Schematibus et Tropis*, a pedagogical text aimed at showing how the various methods of rhetoric can be found throughout the Bible. Ray suggests that such 'ancient rhetorical devices... were of course easily transferable into his own historiographical method'.⁷⁶⁶ Bede describes the first, *antonomasia*, as follows:

Antonomasia is the use of an epithet in place of a proper name. One can clearly identify a particular person by means of his distinguishing traits. This is effected in three ways by means of: (a) his qualities of character (b) his physical attributes (c) external circumstances.⁷⁶⁷

The second trope is the epithet:

An *epithet* is a descriptive phrase preceding a proper name. Whereas *antonomasia* takes the place of a name, an epithet is never used unless the proper name is given... An epithet is also used in three ways. With it we may describe (a) qualities of character, (b) physical attributes, (c) external circumstances. We may censure, identify, or praise a man by means of these two tropes.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁶ Ray, 'Bede, the Exegete, as Historian', p. 128.

⁷⁶⁷ '*Antonomasia est significatio vice nominis posita: ex accidentibus videlicet propriam significat personam. Quae fit tribus modis: ab animo, a corpore, extrinsecus*', Bede, *De Schematibus et Tropis*, ed. C. W. Jones, CCSL 123A (Turnhout, 1975), II, p. 155; G. H. Tanenhaus, 'Bede's *De Schematibus et Tropis* – A Translation', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 48, no. 3 (Oct., 1962), p. 246. Note, Tanenhaus did not have access to the Latin edition by Jones, but was instead reliant upon an earlier edition based upon three manuscripts of the text in K. Halm, *Rhetores Latini Minores* (Leipzig, 1863), pp. 607-618.

⁷⁶⁸ '*Epitheton est praeposita dictio proprio nomini. Nam antonomasia vicem nominis sustinet, epitheton numquam sine nomine fit... Fit etiam epitheton modis tribus: ab animo, a corpore, extrinsecus. His duobus tropis vel vituperamus aliquem vel ostendimus vel ornamus*', Ibid., p. 156; Ibid., p. 247.

The epithet can only properly be accorded to a named source, whereas *antonomasia* can be used for both anonymous and named sources. Furthermore, as Bede states, his use of *antonomasia* and epithets to describe his sources for miracles is primarily to identify and praise them. Bede is rarely interested with their physical appearance, however. It is the quality of their character that he is far more concerned about. As shall be argued below, the use and level of detail provided by these two tropes helps Bede persuade the reader of the truthfulness of his account.

At the beginning of this section it is worth highlighting the fact that we are dealing with a relatively small sample size: 17 named or anonymous miracle sources in the *VCB*, and 25 in *HE* Books III-V.⁷⁶⁹ Three more are added by the *Chronica Maiora* and four by the *Martyrologium*, discussed above.⁷⁷⁰ If we were to take into account all of Bede's sources, not just those for miracles, the results might be slightly different.⁷⁷¹ In general, Higham is correct in stating that Bede's use of descriptions serve as 'guarantees of the veracity of stories which he included';⁷⁷² Bede included witnesses to affirm the truth of these accounts, whatever the ultimate reality behind them might have been. To quote Benedicta Ward, 'certainly something was thought to have happened; the rest is interpretation'. Furthermore, she dismisses the possibility of 'deliberate fraud' that Bede had simply fabricated these stories;⁷⁷³ as I have suggested through Chapters One and Two, Bede considered the role of the historian as one who accurately reported the past where able. First, I will explore some of the most common titles and epithets used by Bede, looking at who these descriptions were applied to. Such an investigation will reveal whether the status of Bede's sources mattered when it came to describing them. A comparative analysis of the two texts will highlight the similarities and differences between the two genres of ecclesiastical history and hagiography. It is recommended that the reader closely examines Appendix Two alongside this section.

⁷⁶⁹ See Appendix Two.

⁷⁷⁰ Pp. 152-159, above.

⁷⁷¹ See the work of Higham for the *HE* and Tinti for the *VCB*, fn. 56 and 68 respectively.

⁷⁷² Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian*, p. 5.

⁷⁷³ Ward, 'Miracles and History', pp. 70-71.

To begin then, Colgrave describes Bede's sources for miracles as 'men of weight',⁷⁷⁴ and this is certainly true in two respects. Looking at Bede's named sources in the *HE* in general, Higham counted five bishops, four abbots and nine priests or monks.⁷⁷⁵ For named sources for miracles specifically, this list is reduced to three bishops, one abbot and five priests or monks.⁷⁷⁶ For the *VCB* we may add one bishop, six priests and one hermit as named sources.⁷⁷⁷ In addition, all of these named sources for miracles were men in both texts.⁷⁷⁸ Tinti links the fact that the majority of Bede's sources were male ecclesiasts with his ideal of reform; these named figures were some of the *doctores* and *praedicatores* who would transform the Northumbrian church.⁷⁷⁹ A geographic examination of where Bede got his miracle sources from sheds further light on this hypothesis. Table Three below shows the location of these named sources for miracle stories in *HE* Books IV and V and the *VCB*.

Table Three: The Location of Bede's Named Sources for Miracle Stories

	<i>HE (Books IV and V)</i>	<i>VCB</i>
Northumbrian Sources	8 (Acca, Pehthelm, Berhthun, Cynemund, Owine, Eadgisl, Guthfrith and Hæmgisl)	8 (Trumwine, Ingwald, Sigfrith, Herefrith, Baldhelm, Aethilwald, Cynimund and Felgild)
Non-Northumbrian Sources	2 (Daniel ⁷⁸⁰ and Ecgberht ⁷⁸¹)	0

⁷⁷⁴ Colgrave, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', p. 225.

⁷⁷⁵ Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian*, p. 13.

⁷⁷⁶ In order: Daniel, Acca, Pehthelm, Berhthun, Cynemund, Owine, Eadgisl, Guthfrith and Hæmgisl. Ecgberht is possibly a fourth bishop. See fn. 790, below.

⁷⁷⁷ In order: Trumwine, Ingwald, Sigfrith, Herefrith, Baldhelm, Aethilwald, Cynimund and Felgild.

⁷⁷⁸ Whilst Ælfflæd was the original source for *VCB* XXIII and XXIV, Bede is clear that these stories were told to him via Herefrith.

⁷⁷⁹ Tinti, 'Personal Names', p. 23, after Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform'.

⁷⁸⁰ Assuming he was the source of the rain miracle in *HE* IV.13, following Bede's mention of him as a source for the history of the Isle of Wight in *HE* Preface, and that Wilfrid himself had not told Bede this directly.

⁷⁸¹ As he was living in exile in Ireland, and Bede never explicitly says otherwise, Ecgberht is counted as a non-Northumbrian source. However, he did have connections to the court of Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria as

Whilst there is question about whether two of these named sources have a non-Northumbrian origin or not, as should immediately be apparent, the vast majority of these sources are of a Northumbrian provenance. This shows that Bede was drawing upon a regional monastic network to support his miracle stories; these were men to whom he had relatively close access in comparison to other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms which were further away. Indeed, in the *VCB* five sources for miracle accounts (or 11% of all the miracles in that text) come from his own monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow.⁷⁸² By comparison, for the entirety of the *HE* Bede was reliant upon a national array of witnesses as evidenced by his comments in the Preface, discussed in Chapter Two. These named sources for miracles, however, came from locations that would have been familiar to the inhabitants of Northumbria, and by extension they may have known (or at least heard of) these figures themselves. What this implies is that when it came to miracle sources Bede was clearly conscious of his immediately Northumbrian audience and context when composing these two texts; these names provided Bede's immediate readers with the opportunity to go and learn more directly from the sources about the more extraordinary events that these accounts narrate.⁷⁸³ As suggested in the Introduction and Chapter One, miracles have always been difficult to understand or accept, and Bede, like Gregory, knew his audience could have their doubts. His use of sources therefore, particularly named sources, also served to counteract any unease Bede may have felt towards how such miracle stories would be received.⁷⁸⁴ Through these sources, and in line with Augustine's ideas on testimony,⁷⁸⁵ Bede had provided the best information available to his knowledge (following his phrase '*vera lex historiae*'), and the onus was now on his audience should they desire to further clarify and confirm what he had stated. It therefore appears that Tinti's hypothesis when applied to miracle sources is correct with minor clarification:

evidenced in *HE* IV.26. A son from a noble family, Mayr-Harting claims he was 'almost certainly Northumbrian', H. Mayr-Harting, 'Ecgbert', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [accessed 11 June 2015].

⁷⁸² Three anonymous monks plus Ingwald and Sigfrith: *VCB* III, V, VI, XXXV and XLVI.

⁷⁸³ See below, pp. 166-169 and 181-184.

⁷⁸⁴ J. Moorhead, 'Some Borrowings in Bede', *Latomus*, 66, no.3 (2007), p. 715.

⁷⁸⁵ Explored above, pp. 51-52 and 63-65.

Bede's named sources for miracles were not simply male ecclesiastics, but were generally *Northumbrian* male ecclesiastics.

From this geographically homogenous collection of named sources, one might be inclined to suggest a network of shared belief in miracles, yet the nature of all these accounts varies to such a degree that the evidence for such an hypothesis becomes insubstantial. The miracles themselves differ too greatly in terms of type (healings, prophecy, visions etc.), location (inside, at sea, whilst travelling etc.), how they were enacted (after prayer, with the saint present/absent, by touch, instantly or delayed) and what their final result was for any shared belief system in the miraculous to be inferred. All that can be proposed is that such men all believed that they had genuinely witnessed the direct action of God in human history.

Turning to the varying ways in which Bede described his miracle sources, the most common adjective used in the *VCB* is '*religiosus*', meaning pious or devout. It is used four times by Bede to describe a source for miracles in that text, and each reference is exclusively applied to a priest, '*presbiter*'.⁷⁸⁶ By comparison, it is only used once by Bede in the *HE*,⁷⁸⁷ with an additional cognate found in the noun '*religionis*'.⁷⁸⁸ In the *HE*, Bede more often relies on superlatives to describe his sources for miracles, with the most common being '*reverentissimus*', most esteemed/reverend, which he uses seven times to describe a miracle source.⁷⁸⁹ At least four of these Bede applies to a bishop.⁷⁹⁰ The other superlatives Bede used to describe miracle sources are '*fidelissimus*',⁷⁹¹ most faithful, and '*veracissimus*',⁷⁹² most truthful. Bede uses these twice each, but on one occasion also

⁷⁸⁶ *VCB* V, VI, XXX and XLVI.

⁷⁸⁷ *HE* III.19.

⁷⁸⁸ *HE* IV.31.

⁷⁸⁹ *HE* Preface, III.13, IV.3, IV.14, IV.25, V.2, V.18.

⁷⁹⁰ Daniel in the Preface, Acca in *HE* III.13 and IV.14, Pehthelm in V.18. The possible addition is Ecgberht; Colgrave suggests in *HE* III.4 'it is possible that *sacerdos* should be translated "bishop" here, as commonly in Bede, for several early writers give Ecgberht that title', p. 225, fn. 3. He is again referred to as *sacerdos* in V.9. Certainly Bede is sometimes ambiguous about his proper ecclesiastical title, simply referring to him as '*patris*' or '*patrem*', father, in *HE* IV.3 and IV.26.

⁷⁹¹ *HE* III.15 and IV.14. Moorhead, 'Some Borrowings in Bede', p. 716, links Bede's use of '*fidelis*' to describe a source to the practice of Gregory.

⁷⁹² *HE* III.27 and V.2.

combines ‘*veracissimus*’ with ‘*reverentissimus*’: Berthun is ‘most reverend and truthful’.⁷⁹³ By comparison, the *VCB* makes less use of superlatives than the *HE*, but they are still important: three uses of ‘*reverentissimus*’,⁷⁹⁴ and one of ‘*probatissimus*’,⁷⁹⁵ meaning most worthy/esteemed. ‘*Reverentissimus*’ is in fact the second most common description of a miracle source in the *VCB*; the remaining descriptions are mostly unique. What is apparent is that ‘*reverentissimus*’ is Bede’s most common superlative applied to sources for miracles in both the *HE* and *VCB*, and is applied exclusively to named sources.

Higham suggests that ‘his naming of informants added their authority as churchmen to his own and by reinforcing their reputations Bede delivered potency to his message, stressing their credentials as witnesses’.⁷⁹⁶ These were men of repute who were staking their reputation that what they had attested to was genuine. Their inclusion not only served as a guarantee for Bede on his miracle accounts, but conversely acted as a public statement of the religious beliefs of the informant; these were men who could be identified as believing in miracles. As Gransden writes, ‘when Bede cites a witness he is probably to be believed, because most of the men he names were well known and it seems unlikely that he would have spread false reports about them’.⁷⁹⁷ By extension, this implies that Bede sought not only to provide suitable authorities for his miracle account but to align himself with men of orthodox Christian faith. Having been accused of heresy earlier in life,⁷⁹⁸ Bede was acutely aware of the threat heresy posed and thus in the *HE* and *VCB* included himself in a large group of respectable clerics. Moreover, by using ‘*reverentissimus*’ specifically, Bede was not only reminding his audience of the circles in which he moved, that he was in esteemed or reverend company, but that the truth-claims of such witnesses for miracle stories was therefore unimpeachable.⁷⁹⁹ The consequence of this for our understanding of Bede is that should anyone question his account, they were also calling into question the authority and faith of these his witnesses. It was an invitation for readers of these texts to

⁷⁹³ *HE* V.2.

⁷⁹⁴ *VCB* XXIII, XXIV and XLVI.

⁷⁹⁵ *VCB* III.

⁷⁹⁶ Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian*, p. 13.

⁷⁹⁷ Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, p. 26.

⁷⁹⁸ See Bede, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, as well as Thacker, ‘Why did Heresy matter to Bede?’.

⁷⁹⁹ On the other hand, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the sources described least in both texts are those which Bede decide not to name, the anonymous sources.

understand the quality of his sources and even to go and question Bede's authorities should they so desire. This is directly pertinent to another feature of both works, namely Bede's focus on whether his source was still alive.

The second most common epithet applied to miracle sources by Bede in the *HE* is 'venerabilis',⁸⁰⁰ meaning venerable. Apart from this description, on three separate occasions in the *HE*,⁸⁰¹ and four in the *VCB*,⁸⁰² Bede makes explicit reference to the age or current living status of his source for a miracle. There are of course several other occasions where the fact that Bede's source is still alive can be assumed implicitly, particularly in Books IV and V of the *HE*. Conversely, in the *VCB*, Bede twice notes that his source has since died,⁸⁰³ an important fact to remember considering that this second prose life was written some fifteen to twenty years after the *VCA* upon which it is based.⁸⁰⁴ The evidence suggests that for the majority of the time Bede was careful to include names only where he himself, or someone by proxy, had personally interviewed the still-living eyewitness. Tinti sees these names as personal interviews by Bede;⁸⁰⁵ names are indicators of people Bede had access to at the time of writing. She continues that in comparison to the *VCA*, Bede in his *VCB* 'was keen to point out the old age and closeness to death of some of his named witnesses, thus highlighting the extremely valuable significance of their testimony'.⁸⁰⁶ Such comments by Bede presented the earliest readers with the possibility of enquiring with the source further should they have so desired; upon reading his works, they could have gone and visited the source and hear the story told in person. Bede inviting his readers to check his sources stems in part from the text of the New Testament itself. In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul is defending and explaining the significance of the central miracle of Christianity, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. In verses one to eleven, Paul provides a form of creedal statement detailing the basic gospel message and listing the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Verse six states that 'he was seen by more than five

⁸⁰⁰ As an adjective in *HE* V.1 and V.13, with a cognate participle in III.27.

⁸⁰¹ *HE* III.19, IV.31 and V.12.

⁸⁰² *VCB* VI, XXV, XXXVI and XLVI.

⁸⁰³ *VCB* XXXIII and XXXV.

⁸⁰⁴ These and other differences are further discussed in the next two chapters.

⁸⁰⁵ Tinti, 'Personal Names', pp. 24-25.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

hundred brethren at once: of whom many remain at present, and some are fallen asleep'.⁸⁰⁷ In effect, Paul is stating that the remainder of these 500 people are available to act as witnesses to the risen Jesus, and that furthermore, readers in Corinth could enquire of them should they so desire. As New Testament theologian N. T. Wright explains, 'the whole thrust of the paragraph is about evidence, about witnesses being called, about something that actually happened for which eyewitnesses could and would vouch'.⁸⁰⁸ Such comments in Bede's work referring to the living status of his witnesses offers the same opportunity for his Anglo-Saxon audience, once more revealing Bede's close attention to scripture in the way that he composed his corpus.

But what does all this mean? In a sentence, whilst the exact adjectives and titles used vary slightly between the two texts, it appears the *purpose* of describing miracle stories in both Bede's ecclesiastical history and hagiography remains identical. Ultimately, Bede was seeking to provide evidence that what he narrated was the truth, confirmed by the testimony of reliable men, and this is just as true for miraculous occurrences as non-miraculous occurrences. There is evidence to suggest that a shared monastic intellectual culture had also developed this desire in another part of Anglo-Saxon England in the early eighth century. Around 716, Boniface (c.672-754), the famous Anglo-Saxon missionary to the Germanic peoples on the Continent, wrote a letter detailing the vision of heaven and hell experienced by a monk of Wenlock in Mercia.⁸⁰⁹ This vision bears a strong resemblance to the vision of Drythelm recorded by Bede in *HE* V.12, and also to the earlier vision of Fursa, also incorporated by Bede in *HE* III.19.⁸¹⁰ Jesse Keskiäho suggests

⁸⁰⁷ 'deinde visus est plus quam quingentis fratribus simul ex quibus multi manent usque adhuc quidam autem dormierunt', 1 Corinthians 15:6.

⁸⁰⁸ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London, 2003), p. 325.

⁸⁰⁹ MGH *Epistolae Selectae* 1, ed. M. Tangl (Berlin, 1916), pp. 7-15. See P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800* (Cambridge, 1990), Ch. Nine; Idem., 'A Recension of Boniface's Letter to Eadburg about the Monk of Wenlock's Vision', in K. O'Brien O. Keefe and A. Orchard (eds.), *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, Vol. 1 (Toronto, 2005), pp. 194-214.

⁸¹⁰ See A. Rabin, 'Bede, Drythelm, and the Witness to the Other World: Testimony and Conversion in the *Historia ecclesiastica*', *Modern Philology*, 106, no. 3 (Feb., 2009), pp. 375-398.

that both visions imply a need to establish the truthfulness of the visionary's account.⁸¹¹ At the end of the Wenlock text, for example, Boniface writes: 'I have written down these things at your diligent demand as he [the monk] told them to me in the presence of three pious (*religiosis*) and very venerable (*valde venerabilibus*) brothers, who are distinguished as trustworthy witnesses (*fidelis testes*) and vouchers'.⁸¹² This is particularly significant because, as shown above, all three of these qualities, piety, trustworthiness and being venerable, are also applied by Bede to some of his witnesses for miracle stories.

In addition, it also appears that Bede devoted more time to listing the qualities of men of lower ecclesiastical rank such as priests or monks than bishops and abbots. This accords well with the work of Gail Berlin. She has suggested that we should interpret Anglo-Saxon miracle sources as a form of legal testimony akin to a defence in court. McCready appears sceptical of the idea that descriptions of character lend credence to the miracle they related 'as if integrity could guarantee accuracy, or honesty reliability'.⁸¹³ However, Berlin states that under such an interpretation 'generally only the word of an individual of considerable rank is weighty enough to stand on its own. If the eyewitness were a high-ranking cleric, so much the better'.⁸¹⁴ The results seen in Appendix Four add further evidence to this belief; if the word of a priest or a monk were taken at lower value than that of an abbot or bishop, a greater description of their good character was necessary in order for the story to gain credibility. This would also explain why Bede's named figures are exclusively ecclesiastical figures and not laymen; the testimony of anyone outside the church, except at the highest levels, would not be as valuable. With such an understanding, specifically named sources in Bede's texts are essentially having their character and credentials approved by him; these are figures upon whom he trusted to give a reliable account of the miracles they had witnessed. In this regard, Bede as author becomes the 'compurgator' of the Anglo-Saxon law court, 'vouch[ing] for the good

⁸¹¹ J. Keskiäho, *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages: The Reception and Use of Patristic Ideas, 400-900* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 64-65.

⁸¹² '*Haec autem te diligenter flagitante scripsi que tribus mecum religiosus et valde venerabilibus fratribus in commune audientibus exposuit, qui mihi in hoc scripto adstipulatores fideles testes esse dinoscuntur*', MGH *Epistolae Selectae* 1, p. 15.

⁸¹³ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 70.

⁸¹⁴ Berlin, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', p. 441.

character and reliability of his source'.⁸¹⁵ This again reveals Bede to be placing himself in a high position of authority; as author, Bede had the final say of what, or more pressingly, who, was included in his texts. Indeed, in the Prologue to the *VCB*, Bede writes that regardless of being given additional information about Cuthbert after its first draft reading, he would not deign to alter a 'planned and complete' work.⁸¹⁶ Despite never progressing past the ecclesiastical rank of priest himself, Bede's writings enabled him to have a say over the textual legacy of men far above his station, including abbots, bishops and kings.

Conclusion

When it came to describing his sources there is no significant difference in Bede's methods between texts. Genre has no great bearing on *how* Bede chose to describe his sources. What is of greater relevance is the *type* of source used by Bede, whether these were named, anonymous or no source was provided. Table Four below shows the relative percentages of each type of miracle source for the five texts examined, ranked in order of the highest percentage of Named plus Anonymous sources.

Table Four: Source Attribution for Miracles in Bede's Texts

<u>Text</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Named %</u>	<u>Anonymous %</u>	<u>No Source Mentioned %</u>
<i>HE</i> (Books IV+V Only)	50	60% (30)	6% (3)	34% (17)
<i>HE</i> (Whole Work)	87	40.2% (35)	9.2% (8)	50.6% (44)
<i>VCB</i>	46	33% (15)	19% (9)	48% (22)
<i>Chronica Maiora</i>	28	11% (3)	0% (0)	89% (25)
<i>Martyrologium</i>	44	9% (4)	0% (0)	91% (40)
<i>Chronica Minora</i>	5	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (5)

The text with the highest percentage of named and anonymous sources is the *HE* if one factors in only Books IV and V, those containing events closest to the time of composition. To put it another way, for 66%, or two-thirds, of the 50 miracles in those

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., p. 443.

⁸¹⁶ 'deliberato ac perfecto', *VCB* Prologue, pp. 144-145. Cf. Berschin, 'Opus Deliberatum ac Perfectum'.

books, Bede provides at least some form of source. By comparison, the *VCB* only has named or anonymous sources for miracles 52% of the time. The difference between his *Chronica Maiora* and *Martyrologium* with the other two texts is even more apparent, with a mere 11% and 9% respectively of his miracle stories attested by any form of source. McCready claimed that ‘in this his masterpiece [the *HE*] Bede worked to a more exacting standard’,⁸¹⁷ yet it is perhaps fairer to claim that such differences here provide evidence that genre does indeed matter when it comes to Bede’s employment of sources for miracle stories. These results confirm the hypothesis that in a more obviously historical narrative text, such as the *HE*, we should expect to see a greater number of named or anonymous sources. As Barnard suggests, ‘it is clear that Bede’s aim, like that of Eusebius his model, was to tell a documented story’.⁸¹⁸ Whilst I have argued in Chapter Two that Eusebius is not the only model Bede was reliant upon when composing his *HE*, it is clear that he viewed the genre of ecclesiastical history distinct from that of hagiography. The moral, didactic dimension of a hagiography does not disappear, but the specifics of chronology such as dates, places and witnesses are mentioned to a much more significant degree in this genre of writing.

The genre of ecclesiastical history is certainly different from chronicle or martyrology. Despite there being eighty miracles between the two chronicles and Bede’s *Martyrologium*, he only lists his sources for eight of them, reflecting a clear barrier between different genres. The two chronicles and his *Martyrologium* have different intentions that made listing his sources for the miracles therein unnecessary or even inappropriate. In the majority of these cases, the miracle had occurred many years if not centuries previously, meaning there were no living witnesses around to attest to the occurrence. By contrast, the *HE* and *VCB* were written with parts still within living memory; named and even anonymous sources in these two texts were able to affirm the truth of Bede’s written account. The type of sources employed by Bede also provide evidence that there was a pluralism or fluidity regarding which authorities he relied upon depending on the text in question. With the two chronicles and the *Martyrologium*, Bede relied upon the biblical text as well as written histories and hagiographies to supplement his own work. In works where the subject was more contemporary, Bede was also able to

⁸¹⁷ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 162.

⁸¹⁸ Barnard, ‘Bede and Eusebius as Church Historians’, p. 107.

use living eyewitnesses alongside the institutional memory of various monastic communities. These differing authorities, (scripture, written sources, eyewitnesses and institutional memory), complement each other and are utilised by Bede across his historical and hagiographical corpus where they are most suitable. This conscious choice of different types of sources, as well as the appeal to living witnesses where possible, shows Bede as a careful innovator, crafting his texts in different ways to meet audience expectation and to fit the demands and purposes of varying genres. Whilst Bede may have had a clear overall conception of the place of the miraculous in human experience, this investigation shows that he was nevertheless conscious that he should compose his work in a suitable manner; there was no homogeneous method to write about the miraculous occurrences of the past. Genre mattered and informed his choices when providing sources for miracle stories.

A further factor for consideration is that despite the fact Bede mentions several times that some of his sources had personally told him their stories,⁸¹⁹ the vast majority of miracle stories in the *VCB* and *HE* are told in the third person. On the whole, Bede is relating stories he has been told but in his own words.⁸²⁰ Bede is a reporter of miracles. To narrate a miracle story from a first-person perspective, even if related by a direct eyewitness, would invariably distract the reader's attention away from the saint performing the miracle in question. In other words, as miracles for Bede are *signa*, the narrative and its message(s) come first, with the identity of its narrator a secondary concern. This may also explain the greater preponderance of anonymous sources or no sources provided compared to named sources; it is the *content* of a miracle story that is most edifying, *not* who told it. This would further explain why the expectations in different genres makes such a difference between these figures. For a more historical narrative text, the *HE* would be expected to contain relevant information such as names, dates and locations to alert the reader to its overall veracity. By contrast, whilst such details were of some importance in a more obviously hagiographical text, their primary purpose was to serve as an edifying biography of the saint in question, written to provide an exemplar for Christian living and

⁸¹⁹ For example, *HE* III.27, IV.3, IV.19, IV.25, IV.32, V.1-4.

⁸²⁰ This transformation of the narrative from spoken source to written text increases when one considers the additional transformation of the story from the vernacular into Latin. See Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian*, p. 16.

teaching,⁸²¹ or in the case of the *Martyrologium*, dying. In this regard, and as we shall see in the next two chapters, hagiographical texts on the whole contain fewer definitive details for miracles than their more historical counterparts.

⁸²¹ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 19.

Chapter Five

Witnesses to Miracle Stories in Early Insular Literature: The *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*

Auctore Anonymo, Stephen's *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi* and the *Vita Ceolfridi*

Any student of Bede is fully aware that he was not writing in a vacuum but was merely one voice (albeit a large and influential voice) among a much broader intellectual milieu. This chapter and the next applies the same methodology as the previous one to five of Bede's early Insular contemporaries, namely: Stephen of Ripon; Adomnán of Iona; an anonymous author at Lindisfarne; an anonymous author at Whitby; an anonymous author at his own monastery. All of these writers lived between 50 and 200 miles of Wearmouth-Jarrow,⁸²² and wrote within Bede's lifetime; their texts all pre-date Bede's *VCB* and *HE*. They thus represent an opportunity to explore the wider early Insular context within which Bede was working. The academic tendency has often been to compare and contrast these authors in relation to Bede. Such an approach is perhaps understandable given Bede's stature, but I intend below to investigate these authors first in their own right, their own methods and approaches, before offering any commentary by way of comparison. Furthermore, these authors and texts are normally examined in isolation rather than all together; whilst fruitful, the purposes of previous research into the miracles of these texts have produced disparate results.⁸²³ These two chapters seek to rectify that by analysing all five of these texts utilising the same consistent method, thus allowing accurate comparisons. Chapters Five and Six therefore seek to contextualise Bede's practices for historical accuracy and attesting miracles examined in Chapters One, Two and Four amongst the work of his contemporaries, ultimately arguing that whilst they do indeed share a common desire to provide sources for miracles, their practices vary. There was not an overarching early Insular method of deploying evidence when it came to discussing miracles; literary genre, the contexts of composition and authorial intention had a greater impact on how sources were employed. Under this approach, it would be wrong to suggest

⁸²² With the obvious exception of the author of the *V. Ceol*.

⁸²³ McCready is the only author to deal with all of these texts in a single work, though he does not examine all of them in tandem. Instead, comments are made at various points throughout *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, and he does not apply a consistent methodology to compare them to Bede's works.

that these authors are somehow inferior to Bede for not being as exacting in their practices; they are simply handling miracle material in differing ways.

The present chapter concerns texts whose authors were contemporary to their subjects. The first text to be explored in this chapter is the *VCA*, with Bede's own *VCB* approached afresh in light of the earlier text. Following that, Stephen's *VW* will be considered, asking whether this text had any bearing on how Bede chose to narrate the miracles of Cuthbert in his *VCB*. This chapter will then proceed to a brief discussion of the single miracle found in the *V.Ceol* and how that text relates to Bede's *HA*, a text devoid of the miraculous. Chapter Six will then discuss two works by authors who lived nearly a century after their subjects: the *VG* and Adomnán's *VC*. A summary will be provided at the end of this chapter with a full conclusion at the end of the next.

Splitting these five texts this way allows me to test the hypothesis given in Chapter Four that named eyewitness sources for miracles more than likely represent living figures whom the author still had access to; the attestation for miracle stories should therefore in theory be better in this chapter than the texts examined in the next. This is because, of the four types of sources mentioned, the authors of the *VG* and *VC* would not have had access to living eyewitnesses to attest non-posthumous miracle stories. Where named sources are provided in the *VC*, for example, these sources are almost exclusively part of the institutional memory of Columba's monastery at Iona; the original source has died but their name has been preserved by the community as the originator of a miracle tradition. Likewise, the *VG* contains no named sources at all. Whilst I intend to examine all these texts in their own right, nevertheless some comparison will be made to Bede through questioning whether he was influenced by them or not. With such an intention in mind, I have deliberately omitted Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* from this survey. The evidence suggests it was written late into Bede's life or after his death,⁸²⁴ and that as it was unknown to Bede it could not have served as a formative influence on his own writings.

⁸²⁴ The Preface is addressed to King Ælfwald of the East Angles who ruled c.713-749; the end of Ch. LII implies he is well-established in his reign at the time of writing. Guthlac died in 715 (Ch. L), and was translated twelve months later in 716 (Ch. LI). Felix's use of the *VCB* precludes a date earlier than Bede's text, dated pre-721. Guthlac is unmentioned in Bede's *HE*, dated c.731. Colgrave therefore gives a date for this text between 730 and 740 i.e. postdating any of Bede's relevant works. *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 15-19.

Furthermore, Bede's *VCB* provided a substantial amount of material for Felix's portrayal of his saint showing that any such borrowing was actually taken from Bede and not by him.⁸²⁵

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo*

The *VCA* marks a suitable starting point for this chapter as its close relation to Bede's *VCB* provides perhaps the best opportunity to examine the approaches of two authors dealing with the miracles of the same subject. The *VCA* was the first to be written, dating sometime between 699 when Cuthbert's relics were translated, and 705 when Aldfrith, king of Northumbria died. Bede then wrote the *Vita Cuthberti Metrica* sometime between 705 and 716, with his *VCB* coming after that text but before 721 when Bishop Eadfrith of Lindisfarne died.⁸²⁶ Bede tells us in the Prologue to his *VCB* that it had been commissioned by Eadfrith. As many have noted over the years, Bede's *VCB* closely follows the *VCA* in its miracle-per-chapter structure, using some stories almost verbatim, whilst editing others, improving the Latin, or inserting entirely new material to universalize Cuthbert as a saint suitable to his own agendas.⁸²⁷

What follows is a comparison between the figures for Bede's *VCB* first provided in Chapter Four and the *VCA*:

Table Five: Sources for Miracles in the VCA and VCB

<u>Text</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Named</u>	<u>Anonymous</u>	<u>No Source Given</u>
<i>VCA</i>	35	11 (31.4%) ⁸²⁸	6 (17.2%)	18 (51.4%)
<i>VCB</i>	46	16 (34.8%)	8 (17.4%)	22 (47.8%)

⁸²⁵ Discussed by C. Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of early Anglo-Saxon Saints', in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds.), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 50-57.

⁸²⁶ W. Jaager, ed., *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti* (Leipzig, 1935). [Henceforth *VCM*]. For full details on the relationship between the three *vitae* of Cuthbert, see pp. 178-179, below.

⁸²⁷ B. Colgrave, 'The Earliest Saints Lives Written In England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 44 (1958), pp. 46-47; C. Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative', pp. 42-43; E. Knibbs, 'Exegetical Hagiography: Bede's Prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 114 (2004), p. 236.

⁸²⁸ Cubitt counts 30 miracles in the *VCA*, 10 of which have 'explicitly assigned informants', which from the context I take to be the same as my 'Named source' category: Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative', p. 40.

As Table Five shows, the relative percentage differences between both texts are negligible; Bede has produced a work that is attested with as much frequency as that of the *VCA*. This clearly shows us that in this second prose life as a whole, Bede was conscious to mirror the relative percentages of his predecessor for these categories; if the quality of Bede's sources for miracles was substantially less than in the *VCA*, some may have questioned why his life should be considered superior to the original. Just as he claimed in the Prologue to the text, Bede's *VCB* thus appears to have been composed with 'the scrupulous examination of credible witnesses' and 'with the help of those who knew [Cuthbert]'.⁸²⁹ In the long-running historiographical debate over why Bede wrote a second prose life of Cuthbert, such results appear to rule out one possibility: that the earlier *VCA* was somehow lacking in the manner with which it attested miracle stories. Bede has not substantially improved the attestation of Cuthbert's miracles in this second prose life.⁸³⁰ However, these figures do not reflect the true situation when one considers that the vast majority of Bede's sources for these miracles are not originally his but belong to the Anonymous author from whom he has lifted much of his material. When one compares only the material shared by both authors, a different pattern emerges:

Table Six: Sources for Miracles Shared by both the VCA and VCB

<u>Text</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Named</u>	<u>Anonymous</u>	<u>No Source Given</u>
<i>VCA</i>	34 ⁸³¹	11 (32.35%)	6 (17.65%)	17 (50%)
<i>VCB</i>	34	7 (20.59%)	6 (17.65%)	21 (61.76%)

This comparison of the relative percentages between only the miracles contained in both texts reveals that the Anonymous author was slightly more exacting in his approach than Bede. The Anonymous author utilises 4 more named sources than Bede does; I will return to these individuals shortly. By contrast, just over three-fifths of the shared miracles in the *VCB* are given without a source. Such disparity requires some explanation.

⁸²⁹ 'subtili examinatione testium indubiorum', 'ab his qui noverant', *VCB* Preface, pp. 142-143.

⁸³⁰ Cf. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 158-160.

⁸³¹ Bede does not mention Cuthbert foreseeing his own death 'with the prophetic spirit of God' which is recorded by the Anonymous author in IV.11. In this chapter, the Anonymous author is explicit that Cuthbert retired from the bishopric, a detail which Bede conveniently passes over.

McCready suggested that Bede wrote the *VCB* in expectation that his audience would be in possession of, or at least aware of the earlier work.⁸³² For some of his initial audience, those based in Northumbria for example, this certainly seems plausible. McCready suggests that under such circumstances, ‘a general practice of continuing to identify the original sources could well have misled readers by creating the impression that these sources were [Bede’s] informants as well, that he had learned of the events in question from them directly, which, of course, he had not’.⁸³³ Speaking more generally, in a similar manner, Bertram Colgrave, the editor of both the *VCA* and *VCB*, suggests that Bede ‘often deliberately omits the name of a person or place which he thinks may not be familiar to the wider circle of readers for whom his [Prose] *Life* [of Cuthbert] was probably intended’.⁸³⁴ However, there is reason to add an important caveat to McCready’s and Colgrave’s suggestion here.

When we examine just the twelve new miracles Bede adds to the *VCA*, his practice of attesting miracles is far stronger than the Anonymous author. Comparing the *VCB* to the *VCA*, Thacker states that ‘new episodes are fully documented with a full complement of place-names and personal names wherever possible’.⁸³⁵ This is largely true for the new miracle material added by Bede:

Table Seven: Sources for Miracles Unique to the VCB

<u>Text</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Named</u>	<u>Anonymous</u>	<u>No Source Given</u>
<i>VCB</i>	12 ⁸³⁶	9 (75%)	2 (16.66%)	1 (8.33%)

These miracles represent further stories Bede desired to include in his life of the saint. Two of these miracles are alluded to at the end of the *VCA*,⁸³⁷ and Bede then

⁸³² McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 159-160.

⁸³³ Ibid., p. 160.

⁸³⁴ B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 4.

⁸³⁵ Thacker, ‘Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Cuthbert’, p. 119, a point also made by Knibbs, ‘Exegetical Hagiography’, p. 238.

⁸³⁶ Cubitt counted 13, Knibbs counted 8: Cubitt, ‘Memory and narrative’, p. 43, and Knibbs, ‘Exegetical Hagiography’, p. 236, fn.17.

⁸³⁷ That of bread Cuthbert had blessed healing a man, and Cuthbert making water taste like wine

provides a full narrative for them,⁸³⁸ but the rest are entirely new additions. For example, in *VCB XXXVI*, Cynimund served as Bede's source for the great storm which suddenly detains the monks after they had disobeyed Cuthbert's orders, an event Grounds suggests is the sole occurrence of a *strafwunder* in that text.⁸³⁹ These additional sources represent the true 'credible witnesses' Bede claims to have personally drawn upon; these are the authorities he, that is Bede himself and not the Anonymous author, has decided to occasionally place in the book.⁸⁴⁰ What the percentages for Bede's additional miracle material shows is that, where he is able to, he provides a named or anonymous figure to attest the miracle, that he took steps to ensure the veracity of the miracles he himself had incorporated into his texts. Such a conclusion is further reinforced by Bede's practice concerning two additional miracles of Cuthbert that he includes in the *HE*. In *HE IV.30*, Bede states that he has 'recently chanced to hear' some additional healings wrought through the intercession of Cuthbert.⁸⁴¹ The first, a healing of a sudden paralysis down one side from head to foot, possibly a stroke, possibly came from the sick man himself, a monk from Lindisfarne called Baduthegn. The second, the healing of a tumour on a monk's eyelid, comes from the monk himself, but Bede does not name him. However, Bede dates the miracle to 'three years ago', that is, around 728, he names the monastery where it occurred, and named the current and previous abbot there.⁸⁴² The level of detail provided by Bede in these two new miracles again show that he was keen to attest the continuing, posthumous power of Cuthbert as saint.

Bede's more exacting practices when it came to miracles he himself had investigated leads to an alternative suggestion than that proposed by McCready. Certainly, Bede was being honest that the witnesses he chose not to name, or omitted entirely, were not his witnesses. My suggestion, however, as mentioned in Chapter Four, was that the original witnesses were not available for Bede to consult, in most cases because they had died between the writing of the *VCA* and *VCB*. Such a hypothesis takes seriously the idea that the names represent real people attesting various miracle stories. At their greatest

⁸³⁸ *VCB XXXI* and *XXXV* respectively.

⁸³⁹ Grounds, *Miracles of Punishment*, pp. 191-192.

⁸⁴⁰ 'testium indubiorum', *VCB* Prologue, pp. 142-143.

⁸⁴¹ 'nos nuper audisse contigit', *HE IV.30*, pp. 444-445.

⁸⁴² 'Ante triennium', *HE IV.32*, pp. 446-447.

differences of composition, between the *terminus post quem* of the *VCA*, 699, and the *terminus ante quem* of the *VCB*, 721, there is potentially twenty-two years difference. The issue is complicated further by the existence of Bede's *VCM*, which was written before the *VCB*. Michael Lapidge suggests that an early version of Bede's *VCM* found in MS Besançon 186 was written c.705, whilst the more well-known text was re-written and updated at a later date whilst Bede was considering his own prose life of Cuthbert. Lapidge suggests this occurred in the second decade of the eighth century, in other words, pre-721.⁸⁴³ However, the exact timing between the two texts remains somewhat ambiguous. Bede states in the Prologue to his *VCB* that the *VCM* was produced in the Latin '*dudum*', which Colgrave translates as 'formerly', though Lapidge reminds us that it can also be translated as 'some time ago',⁸⁴⁴ or even 'a little while ago'. Nevertheless, the fact remains that when Bede came to writing his *VCB* it is a strong possibility that many of the 'Anonymous' witnesses would have died.

In at least five instances, we can have some certainty that the named witness had since died, and thus were unavailable to be the continued source of that particular miracle. The first is Abbess Ælfflæd,⁸⁴⁵ named by the Anonymous author in IV.10, but unnamed by Bede in *VCB* XXXIV. We know that she had died around 713 or 714,⁸⁴⁶ likely before Bede had started writing his *VCB*. In the second case, Plecgils, named by the Anonymous author in II.3 is unnamed in *VCB* X. According to the PASE database, the name Plecgils is unattested in any other text, so the details of his life are uncertain, yet in Bede's text this figure's testimony of Cuthbert is referred to in the past tense, '*indicare curabat*', or in some manuscripts '*curavit*'.⁸⁴⁷ In the *VCA*, however, the text is firmly in the present tense,

⁸⁴³ M. Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical Vita S. Cuthberti', in G. Bonner, C. Stancliffe and D. Rollason (eds.), *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to A.D. 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 84-85.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 85, fn. 30.

⁸⁴⁵ *VCA* IV.10 where she is named as the source cf. *VCB* XXXIV where she is not.

⁸⁴⁶ In *HE* III.24 Bede states she was 'scarcely a year old' at the Battle of Winwæd, 'on 15 November in the thirteenth year of [Oswiu's] reign', 654 or 655, and died 'about the age of sixty'. J. E. Story, 'The Frankish Annals of Lindisfarne and Kent', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 34 (2005), pp. 100–101, shows that a Frankish annal lists the date as 713.

⁸⁴⁷ 'Plegils 1', *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, <https://www.pase.ac.uk>, [accessed 9 December 2017]. 'He took care to show', *VCB* X, pp. 190-191.

as evidenced by the present participle '*narrans*'.⁸⁴⁸ This use of the past tense could imply that he was dead by the time Bede came to writing his *VCB*; Plecgils used to take care telling this story, but no longer. The disappearance of Plecgils in Bede's text due to his death is reinforced by Bede's use of Bishop Trumwine as a source in *VCB* I. Here, Bede refers to Trumwine as 'of blessed memory',⁸⁴⁹ a phrase usually used for the deceased. In a similar way to Plecgils, Trumwine's testimony is in the imperfect tense '*perhibebat*', implying that he used to relate this story, but no longer. On the other hand, in the *VCA*, the story is related with the present participle '*dicentes*',⁸⁵⁰ implying that the author had heard this story from Trumwine and the priest Elias directly. We know for certain that Trumwine was dead by the time Bede completed his *HE* circa 731,⁸⁵¹ and Bertram Colgrave gives the date of his death as 'shortly before 705',⁸⁵² though this is uncertain. Nevertheless, the fact that the other witness to this miracle in the *VCA*, Elias, disappears from the Bede's text lends additional credence to the idea that both had since died, Bede retaining Trumwine's name as the source as he was a well-known bishop.

The fourth example of a source that is likely to have died before Bede composed his *VCB* is the priest Tydi. In the *VCA*, Tydi is named as the source for a miracle in three chapters, yet is entirely absent in Bede's accounts of the same miracles. The best piece of evidence that he was no longer available as a witness occurs in the differences between *VCA* IV.6 and Bede's *VCB* XXXIII. In the *VCA*, the author begins the account stating 'Tydi, the priest whom I have mentioned, told me the following...', his account is written in the first person, and ends stating 'the mother and son who are still alive are witnesses of the truth of this'.⁸⁵³ Bede's account, however, has no source, is told in the third person, and ends, again in the imperfect tense, stating 'the mother herself and her son lived long afterwards to bear testimony to the truth of this prophecy'.⁸⁵⁴ These three factors suggest

⁸⁴⁸ 'narrating', 'reporting' or 'telling'. Colgrave translated it as 'he told'. *VCA* II.3, pp. 82-83.

⁸⁴⁹ '*beatae memoriae*', *VCB* I, pp. 156-157.

⁸⁵⁰ 'Saying/telling'. *VCA* I.3, pp. 64-65.

⁸⁵¹ *HE* IV.26, where Bede mentions his death.

⁸⁵² *HE* IV.26, p. 428, fn. 4.

⁸⁵³ '*Presbiter Tydi a me memoratus, mihi indicavit dicens...*', '*Cuius rei sic factum esse, mulier et filius adhuc vitam comitem ducentes testes sunt*', *VCA* IV.6, pp. 118-121.

⁸⁵⁴ '*Cuius prophetiae veritati ipsa cum filio mater multo exinde tempore vivens testimonium dabat*', *VCB* XXXIII, pp. 260-261.

that Tydi was indeed dead by the time Bede wrote the *VCB*, thus explaining his absence; he was no longer available for Bede to consult as a source. Further evidence that Tydi was indeed dead can be found in *VCA* II.4. Here, the author states that Tydi is ‘still alive’, and ‘declared [this] to us before many witnesses’,⁸⁵⁵ implying a personal relationship between author and source. Bede’s account of the same incident omits both details, merely stating that the anonymous brother who later became a priest was the source of this miracle.

A final example of a source who may have died before Bede wrote his text is that of Walhstod, a direct recipient of a miraculous healing. In the *VCA*, he serves as the witness to this miracle, with the Anonymous author stating he is ‘still alive’.⁸⁵⁶ In the *VCB* however, Herefrith narrates this story, and there is no mention of Walhstod still being alive. Whilst Walhstod’s name is retained by Bede, it would appear odd that, had he still been alive, Bede instead utilised a second-hand witness rather than a direct recipient of a miracle. Rather, Bede refers to Walhstod in the imperfect tense, stating ‘for that *was* the brother’s name’.⁸⁵⁷ Had Walhstod still been alive, even if Bede allowed Herefrith to tell his story, one would reasonably expect the reference to be in the present tense (‘for that *is* the brother’s name’), Bede to retain the reference to Walhstod still being alive, or even a comment on Walhstod’s character as is Bede’s common practice for his sources. Without these, it is a fair assumption that Walhstod too had died by the time Bede composed his *VCB*.

Bede states that he had been commissioned by the Lindisfarne community to produce his *VCB*, and that the work had been read by the whole monastery. Indeed, as spiritual payment for his work, Bede’s name was placed in the monastic register at Lindisfarne by Guthfrith the sacrist.⁸⁵⁸ Whilst there is some debate about whether Bede had visited Lindisfarne himself,⁸⁵⁹ it lies just over sixty miles north of his monastery at Jarrow,

⁸⁵⁵ ‘*adhuc vivens*’, ‘*nobis... coram multis testibus indicavit*’, *VCA* II.4, pp. 84-85.

⁸⁵⁶ ‘*Adhuc vivens*’, *VCA* IV.12, pp. 128-129.

⁸⁵⁷ ‘*Hoc enim erat nomen fratris*’, *VCB* XXXVIII, pp. 280-281. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁵⁸ *VCB* Prologue, pp. 146-147.

⁸⁵⁹ Plummer, *Baedae Opera Historica*, Vol. 1, p. xvi thinks he had, based on the Prologue to the *VCB*.

However, the Prologue to the *VCB* is ambiguous. Bede never explicitly mentions going there, and could plausibly have been commissioned via written correspondence. Herefrith is mentioned as checking Bede’s draft work when he visited Bede ‘here’ (*huc*) (i.e. at Wearmouth-Jarrow), not the other way round.

Nevertheless, Bede writes that the final work was read and consulted ‘in our presence’ (*praesentibus nobis*),

so the journey would not have been too long, especially if he went by boat. If the witnesses from the *VCA* were still alive at Lindisfarne by the time he composed the *VCB*, Bede was certainly in a suitable location to engage them directly, either visiting them personally, or through written correspondence. They could become *his* witnesses too, despite originally being used by the Anonymous author. Yet more often than not, in the miracle material shared by both texts, Bede employs anonymous sources rather than use the names provided in the earlier text, or omits a source entirely rather than retain even an anonymous reference. Putting the evidence together, there is clearly a large disparity between Bede's handling of the miracle material originally belonging to the *VCA* and that unique to his own *VCB*.

Table Eight: Bede's Use of Sources for Miracles in his VCB

<u>Content</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Named</u>	<u>Anonymous</u>	<u>No Source Given</u>
Miracles shared with the <i>VCA</i>	34	7 (20.59%)	6 (17.65%)	21 (61.76%)
New miracles added by Bede	12	9 (75%)	2 (16.66%)	1 (8.33%)

McCready's suggestion thus does not go far enough – Bede did not simply omit or change the Anonymous author's sources because they would already be familiar to readers of the earlier work, and that they were not technically Bede's own sources, but because they were not available for him to include when he was preparing his text. As Tinti states, Bede 'presented his story as the fruit of the memories of people whom he had personally interviewed'.⁸⁶⁰

At least three alterations by Bede lend credence to the theory that these omissions or changes were due to the continued availability of the witness. In *VCB* V, Bede names Ingwald, a priest of his monastery at Wearmouth, as his source for a miraculous discovery of food where the parallel account in *VCA* I.6 has no source. What is important in this story

perhaps implying that Bede had delivered it to Lindisfarne in person. Furthermore, the accurate description of the tides surrounding the island in *HE* III.3 should give the reader some pause for thought. See further Bede's direct observation of tidal theory in *DTR* XXIX.

⁸⁶⁰ Tinti, 'Personal Names', p. 25.

is that Bede draws attention to Ingwald's 'lengthy old age',⁸⁶¹ thus implying he is still alive. The fact that Ingwald was a part of Bede's monastery, and that Bede provides commentary on how 'with a pure heart [Ingwald] contemplates things heavenly' shows that Bede knew his source here.⁸⁶² Likewise, in *VCB* XXV, Bede names the priest Baldhelm as his source for a miraculous cure which in *VCA* IV.7 was provided anonymously. Again, Bede explicitly states that Baldhelm is 'still alive',⁸⁶³ is a priest at Lindisfarne, and provides a personal remark that Baldhelm enjoys telling people this story. Finally, as we have already seen, in *VCB* XXXVIII, Bede relies on Herefrith's account of Walhstod's healing, whereas in *VCA* IV.12 Walhstod himself is the source of the story. Bede explicitly states in his Prologue that he frequently consulted Herefrith when composing his *VCB*, again showing the personal connection between Bede as author and his source. Indeed, Herefrith served as Bede's chief witness to Cuthbert's final hours, and Walter Berschin has concluded that the Latinity of Bede's account from *VCB* XXXVII and XXXVIII reflects Herefrith's verbatim report as recorded by Bede.⁸⁶⁴ Bede had thus almost certainly spoken to these three figures and therefore felt justified in naming them as sources in his own text.

In line with the findings in Part One, this section has shown that for Bede and the Anonymous author, accurate attestation of miracle stories was a key feature of composing a hagiography. Bede's later revisions of, and additions to, the same material reveals him to be an author who worked to consistent standards. When one compares the miracles shared by both texts, named and anonymous sources present in the *VCA* disappear in Bede's work as he himself had not spoken to them. Bede was deliberate in removing the sources for miracle stories that were no longer available to him, the chief reason being that such sources had since died in the time that had passed between the *VCA* and *VCB*. As Rosenthal concludes, 'there is no question that in Bede's work we are one pen, one set of eyes, farther removed from the living, remembered Cuthbert. Our conclusion clearly seems to be that for the freshest, most ingenuous information about the saint, read *The*

⁸⁶¹ 'longe... senectutis', *VCB* V, pp. 170-171.

⁸⁶² 'corde... coelestia... contemplatur', *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

⁸⁶³ 'qui nunc usque superest', *Ibid.*, XXV, pp. 240-241.

⁸⁶⁴ Berschin, 'Opus Deliberatum ac Perfectum', p. 102.

Anonymous Life'.⁸⁶⁵ Conversely, both authors utilised phrases similar to 'this brother is still alive' to explicitly show that the witness was still available to testify to their story. What this section proposes is that, for at least these two authors, their introductory suggestions that their work is reliable, based on eyewitness testimony, should be given greater credence than is lent to a genre that is often perceived to be formulaic and based on earlier precedents. Granted, hagiographical texts often bear a family resemblance, but what the evidence shows is that the differences matter. Such an understanding could thus fruitfully be applied to texts from varying periods or locations to explore whether different authors had the same priorities. For Bede and the Anonymous author, the names they refer to were real people whom they had conversed with, and through them, we have closer access to the life of their subject.

When considering the composition of Bede's *VCB*, one aspect must also be addressed: the role of Stephen of Ripon's *VW* as a motivation for Bede producing this second *vita* of Cuthbert in the manner that he did. It is to the miracles in that text that our attention must now turn.

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi*

Stephen's *VW* was written to promote the cult of the famous Northumbrian bishop Wilfrid, who experienced a contentious time in office through the late seventh and early eighth centuries. It was written in support of Wilfrid's sanctity, his multiple episcopacies and appeals to the Pope in Rome, Thacker describing the *vita* as 'an apologia' and 'overwhelmingly defensive'.⁸⁶⁶ Indeed, the author himself describes it as a 'humble apology'.⁸⁶⁷ Its partisan nature has divided scholarly opinion. Some, most notably Walter Goffart and David Kirby,⁸⁶⁸ have read Bede's later work as a strong riposte to Stephen's

⁸⁶⁵ J. T. Rosenthal, 'Bede's *Life of Cuthbert*: Preparatory to the *Ecclesiastical History*', *Catholic Historical Review*, 68 (1982), p. 605.

⁸⁶⁶ Thacker, 'Wilfrid, his Cult and his Biographer', p. 119.

⁸⁶⁷ 'humili excusatione', *VW* Preface, pp. 2-3.

⁸⁶⁸ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 235-328; Idem., 'The *Historia Ecclesiastica*: Bede's Agenda and Ours', *Haskins Society Journal*, 2 (1990), pp. 29-45; Idem., 'L'Histoire Ecclésiastique et L'engagement Politique de Bède' in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (eds.), *Bède le Vénérable: Entre Tradition et Postérité* (Lille, 2005), pp. 149-158; Idem., 'Bede's History in a Harsher Climate', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006), pp. 203-226;

vita. Goffart famously argued that Stephen's appropriation of the *VCA* 'soiled and devalued' the work in the eyes of the Lindisfarne community, who commissioned Bede to compose a second prose *vita* of Cuthbert.⁸⁶⁹ Bede's *VCB* thus formed part of what Thacker, writing independently of Goffart, has described as a 'pamphlet war' between competing saints' cults in Northumbria and competing ideals of how the Church should be structured and governed.⁸⁷⁰ More recently, however, scholars such as Nicholas Higham and Mark Laynesmith have tempered such views. Higham has shown that Bede's *HE* is overwhelmingly favourable towards Wilfrid in the prominence it gives the bishop and the language it uses to describe him.⁸⁷¹ Likewise, Laynesmith shows caution towards Goffart's textual argument that Stephen's borrowing of portions of the *VCA* was an attempt 'to trump the young Lindisfarne-based cult, and in its place put Wilfrid'. He argues that the actual level of borrowing, only 34/2000 lines in Latin, is statistically insignificant,⁸⁷² though Stancliffe suggests that what was borrowed and how it was altered shows the true significance, describing the borrowing as 'far from innocent'.⁸⁷³ Whilst Stancliffe agrees that Bede's *VCB* was written in response to the *VW*,⁸⁷⁴ she is firm in rejecting Kirby's proposal that the text of the *VW* we have today is in fact a revision produced in the 730s as a response to ecclesiastical politics in Northumbria at that time between Lindisfarne and the Wilfridians.⁸⁷⁵ The final chapter, below, lends credence to the idea that sections of Bede's *HE* were in part written in favour of Cuthbert over Wilfrid, but for reasons very different to Goffart or Kirby. Bede was not anti-Wilfrid *per se*, but simply more in favour

Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus, and the *Life of Wilfrid*'; Idem., 'The Genesis of a Cult', and to a lesser extent Idem., *Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum: Its Contemporary Setting* (Jarrow Lecture, 1992).

⁸⁶⁹ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 284.

⁸⁷⁰ Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Cuthbert', p. 122.

⁸⁷¹ N. J. Higham, 'Wilfrid and Bede's *Historia*', in his *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint: Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences* (Donington, 2013), pp. 54-66.

⁸⁷² M. Laynesmith, 'Stephen of Ripon and the Bible: Allegorical and Typological Interpretations of the *Life of St. Wilfrid*', *Early Medieval Europe*, 9, no.2 (2000), p. 164.

⁸⁷³ C. Stancliffe, 'Disputed Episcopacy: Bede, Acca, and the Relationship between Stephen's *Life of St Wilfrid* and the early prose *Lives of St Cuthbert*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 41 (2013), p. 19.

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-24.

⁸⁷⁵ Stancliffe, 'Dating Wilfrid's Death and Stephen's *Life*', pp. 24-25.

of the pattern of episcopal sanctity modelled by Cuthbert and his later successor, John of Beverley.

The traditional belief is that the author of this text was ‘Eddius Stephanus’,⁸⁷⁶ but this has been challenged over the past few decades, and the current consensus is that we should attribute it only to the monk known as Stephen of Ripon.⁸⁷⁷ In terms of dating the text, the year of Wilfrid’s death is key as our sources conflict.⁸⁷⁸ Stephen states Wilfrid was 76 when he died, and that he reigned as bishop for 46 years.⁸⁷⁹ Bede, however, states he ruled for 45 years,⁸⁸⁰ and that the year after Wilfrid’s death was the fifth year of the reign of Osred.⁸⁸¹ Stephen’s *VW* was written soon after the anniversary of Wilfrid’s death, that is, after 711,⁸⁸² depending on which source we follow. The most recent proposal has come from Clare Stancliffe, who has done some interesting work concerning the white arc of light in *VW* LXVIII, which she interprets as a naturally occurring moonbow. Through detailed reconstruction aided by computer scientists at Trinity College, Dublin, she has shown that such an event did indeed occur in Northumbria, ultimately suggesting a firm date for the writing of the *VW* between July 712 and March 714,⁸⁸³ the latter date marked by the death of Abbess Ælfflæd.⁸⁸⁴

Very little has been made of the nature as well as the quantity of miracles in this text in the relevant historiography. One of the text’s earliest interpreters, Benjamin Wells,

⁸⁷⁶ B. Colgrave, ‘Introduction’ in his *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), pp. ix-x, though he does state the evidence is ‘far from strong’. [Henceforth ‘Introduction (*VW*)’]. The inference is based from two manuscripts bearing this name, and by a reference in *HE* IV.2 to an ‘Aedde surnamed Stephen’ which interpreters have taken to be the same person.

⁸⁷⁷ Notably in Kirby, ‘Bede, Eddius Stephanus, and the *Life of Wilfrid*’, pp. 102-104, and followed *passim* N. J. Higham (ed.), *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint: Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences* (Donington, 2013). Intriguingly, Laynesmith has suggested we could even read ‘Stephen’ as an allegorical pseudonym, echoing the biblical proto-martyr: Laynesmith, ‘Stephen of Ripon and the Bible’, p. 178.

⁸⁷⁸ Discussed at an early date in R. L. Poole, ‘St. Wilfrid and the See of Ripon’, *English Historical Review*, 34, no. 133 (Jan., 1919), pp. 22-24.

⁸⁷⁹ *VW* LXVI.

⁸⁸⁰ *HE* V.19.

⁸⁸¹ That is, 710. *HE* V.20.

⁸⁸² *VW* LXVIII.

⁸⁸³ Stancliffe, ‘Dating Wilfrid’s Death and Stephen’s *Life*’, pp. 22-24.

⁸⁸⁴ Though see fn. 846, above, where Story has suggested there is continental evidence for 713.

was not very positive regarding its miracles. He states that the healing of Æbbe in *VW* XXXVII ‘smacks of pious fraud’,⁸⁸⁵ presumably because of its reference to the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law.⁸⁸⁶ The allusion appears to be a common motif in eighth century Northumbria, being used in *VCA* IV.3 as well as *VCB* XXIX to describe a miracle of Cuthbert, and also in *HE* V.4 describing a miracle of John of Beverley. Furthermore, Wells is dismissive of the miracles at the end of Wilfrid’s life, writing that they are ‘the usual ones and call for no comment’.⁸⁸⁷ Colgrave stated that believing in miracles ‘was natural to his [Stephen’s] age, and, like all other religious and orthodox people of his time, he readily believed in stories of supernatural imposition in the everyday affairs of life’,⁸⁸⁸ lending some weight to the earlier views of Wells and Poole that Stephen was a credulous author. However, in a positivistic later work, he rated the *VW* above the two prose *vitae* of Cuthbert, describing it as part of the ‘earliest form of what we can properly call historical writing’.⁸⁸⁹ Somewhat surprisingly, McCready has very little to say regarding the miracles in the *VW*, even in his chapter titled ‘Bede and the Hagiographical Tradition’. He discusses the already acknowledged connection between the preface to the *VCA* and the *VW*,⁸⁹⁰ and has a brief discussion of *VW* XXXVII, the healing of the reeve’s wife, and the similarities this miracle has with the *VCA*, *VCB* and *HE* V.4.⁸⁹¹ Furthermore, Foley has little time for the miraculous occurrences within the *VW*, writing of hagiography in general that ‘reports of the miraculous within them are so fantastic and so frequent that even the most credulous minds will refuse to accept them as documentary evidence of real historical events’.⁸⁹² Foley sees the text as conforming more to a historical genre than other early Insular

⁸⁸⁵ B. W. Wells, ‘Eddi’s Life of Wilfrid’, *English Historical Review*, 6, no. 23 (Jul., 1891), p. 545.

⁸⁸⁶ Mark 1:29–31, Luke 4:38–41 and Matthew 8:14–15.

⁸⁸⁷ Wells, ‘Eddi’s Life of Wilfrid’, p. 550.

⁸⁸⁸ Colgrave, ‘Introduction (*VW*)’, p. xii.

⁸⁸⁹ Colgrave, ‘Earliest Saints’ Lives’, p. 57.

⁸⁹⁰ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 156.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 168–169. I explore this further in Chapter Seven.

⁸⁹² W. T. Foley, *Images of Sanctity in Eddius Stephanus’ ‘Life of Saint Wilfrid’, an Early English Saint’s Life* (Lewiston, NY, 1992), p.1.

works.⁸⁹³ Furthermore, he acknowledges the comparative lack of miracles in this text, suggesting that Stephen's intentions are very different from those of the *VCA* and others.⁸⁹⁴ Whilst not made explicit, Foley implies that miracles were of secondary importance to Stephen, and this is indeed borne out by the evidence, below.

When the same methodology for counting miracles is applied to the *VW*, these were the results: 21 miracles, 2 of which had named sources (9.5%), 3 with anonymous sources (14.3%), and the remaining 16 with no source given (76.2%).

There are at least three things worth commenting upon from the data that, taken together, add an additional layer of understanding as to why Bede wrote a second prose life of Cuthbert. First, it should be apparent that with only 21 miracles, the *VW* contains far fewer miracles than either the *VCA* (35) or the *VCB* (46) despite being of similar length.⁸⁹⁵ Unlike the Anonymous author and Bede,⁸⁹⁶ Stephen does not state that miracles will be one of his key foci. He does provide some insight into his theological worldview, however, describing a miracle as something 'contrary to nature',⁸⁹⁷ very similar to Bede's own understanding of a miracle.⁸⁹⁸ In this unique instance, Stephen describes how flaming torches, thrown onto a thatched roof (and thus presumably expected to ignite it), are extinguished as if dampened. Miracles are certainly important in the *VW*,⁸⁹⁹ and play a key

⁸⁹³ Though 'this book has no concern to either to attack or defend the so-called "historical-veracity" of Stephen's Life', *Ibid.*, p.2. Cf. Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', pp. 55ff, who lists the *VW* alongside the *HA* and *VC* as the more historical works in his survey.

⁸⁹⁴ First introduced in Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, pp. 16-18 and subsequently developed in Chapters Two, Three and Five.

⁸⁹⁵ '(unusually for a hagiography of the time) miracles are rare', Laynesmith, 'Stephen of Ripon and the Bible', p. 179. Cf. Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, p. 2.

⁸⁹⁶ *VCA* I.2 begins by explaining the miracles the Anonymous author has omitted and how Cuthbert was often very secretive about them. Cf. *VCA* IV.18 of more miracles omitted. In his Preface to the *VCB*, Bede reminds Eadberht that in his earlier *VC* he had promised to write more fully about Cuthbert's '*vita et miracula*' and that this text is the result. Cf. *VCB* XLVI '*Explicit liber vita et miraculis sancti Cudberhti*'.

⁸⁹⁷ '*contra naturam*', *VW* LXVII, pp. 144-145.

⁸⁹⁸ See the Introduction, above, and L.S. Creider, *Bede's Understanding of the Miraculous*, Chapter Two.

⁸⁹⁹ Against Colgrave, 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p. 55.

role in validating Stephen's image of Wilfrid,⁹⁰⁰ yet they are not as central as the two *vitae* of Cuthbert, where miracles occur nearly every chapter.⁹⁰¹ Rather, Stephen's chief focus appears to be the defence of Wilfrid's memory against those who would question his reputation and episcopal authority, as evidenced by the considerable space devoted to Wilfrid's letters and appeals to Rome.⁹⁰²

Second, only two of the miracles in the *VW* definitively come from named sources: Æbbe is the source for the first in *VW* XXXVII,⁹⁰³ and Ælfflæd, abbess of Whitby and Æthilberg are the sources for the second in *VW* LIX.⁹⁰⁴ Whilst their exact identities are uncertain, what is noticeable is that all three are abbesses. It is also possible, though not certain, that Stephen himself may have recorded the white arc of light in *VW* LXVIII based upon his own experience, indicated by the first person plural used to describe the worship following this sign.⁹⁰⁵ However, unlike the miracles in the *VCA* and *VCB*, the *VW* contains no miracles attested by bishops or abbots.⁹⁰⁶ As much of Wilfrid's ecclesiastical disputes

⁹⁰⁰ Particularly the miracles surrounding Wilfrid's death and burial, which often serve as the foundation of a new saint's cult. Stephen writes that God 'proved to men by virtue of miracles' that the deceased Wilfrid was with him and his saints: '*miraculorum virtutibus hominibus declaravit*', *VW* LXVI and ff. Colgrave suggests that the posthumous miracles 'proved that Wilfrid was as well able to defend his followers and their property from the depredations of kings and nobles as he had been during his lifetime', 'Earliest Saints' Lives', p. 56.

⁹⁰¹ See Appendices Two and Three.

⁹⁰² *VW* XXIX-XXXI and L-LX

⁹⁰³ Possibly, though not certainly, the same Æbbe, abbess of Coldingham in *VW* XXXIX. See Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, p.174. The Coldingham connection would be apparent through Æthelthryth, a friend of Wilfrid, who first retired to that monastery after being given leave by her husband, Ecgrith, King of Northumbria. See *HE* IV.19.

⁹⁰⁴ Colgrave suggests that the Æthilberg here is the daughter of Anna, King of East Anglia, and sister of Æthelthryth, though this particular Æthilberg was abbess in Faremoutiers in Brie. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, p. 184. Another suggestion is that this Æthilberg is the abbess of Barking, sister of Eorcenwald, Bishop of the East Saxons, *HE* IV.6, 9 and 10. The geographical connection between the East Angles and East Saxons would perhaps make most sense; Ælfflæd and Æthilberg are said to have been present to witness the words of Aldfrith in Northumbria itself.

⁹⁰⁵ 'We worshipped and praised the Lord', (*Nos vero adorantes laudavimus Dominum*), *VW* LXVIII, pp. 148-149.

⁹⁰⁶ According to *VW* LXVI, towards the end of his life Wilfrid told Tatberht the priest his entire story and this same Tatberht, now an abbot, is a dedicatee in the Preface. It is possible he narrated some of the miracles directly to Stephen, though Stephen provides no evidence of this.

centred on his various episcopacies, the lack of bishops attesting his miracles is perhaps understandable; they would not want to associate themselves with such a contentious figure, even if personally amiable with Wilfrid.

Finally, looking at the evidence another way, 90.5% (19/21) of the miracles in Stephen's text are attested by either an Anonymous source or no source is provided at all (14.3% Anonymous, 76.2% no source provided). By comparison, in the *VCB* only 65.2% (30/46) of the miracles are attested by either an Anonymous source or no source at all (17.4% Anonymous, 47.8% no source provided). Such a difference again quite clearly shows that the miracles of Wilfrid are not Stephen's priority, important as they are. If portraying Wilfrid as a miracle-worker was Stephen's chief focus, he could have included more miracles or, as the Whitby author of the *VG* did, be more apologetic that he could not provide better witnesses for his text.⁹⁰⁷ The miracles in the *VW* are not incidental, but are clearly secondary to Stephen's primary focus of exonerating the memory of his bishop.

These three factors combined certainly appear to have influenced the manner with which Bede decided to compose his *VCB* in light of the *VW*. First, the *VCB* has more than double the amount of miracles than the *VW*. Cuthbert is far more of a miracle-working saint than Wilfrid. The authorial intention between Bede and Stephen in these two texts is thus markedly different; Bede wants Cuthbert to be known by his holy deeds and thus places a much greater emphasis on his miracles. More miracles means more spiritual lessons are available to be learnt from Cuthbert's sanctity. If Cuthbert's miracles are so important to Bede's portrayal of the saint compared to Stephen's intentions, they must be attested to a high degree, and this is borne out by the evidence. Even if we consider only the miracles in the *VCB* unique to Bede, the *VCB* contains just over three times the amount of named witnesses than the *VW*.⁹⁰⁸ If we factor in the named sources from the miracles original to the *VCA* too, the miracles in Bede's *VCB* overall has four times the amount of named witnesses than the *VW*.⁹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the *VCB* contains a much wider variety of

⁹⁰⁷ See Chapter Six, below.

⁹⁰⁸ 9 miracles with Named sources unique to Bede in the *VCB* compared to 2 in the *VW*.

⁹⁰⁹ 16 miracles with Named sources in the *VCB* overall compared to 2 in the *VW*.

named sources: a bishop,⁹¹⁰ abbots,⁹¹¹ priests and monks,⁹¹² as well as an abbeſs.⁹¹³ Bede's text is thus more reflective of a broader ſpectrum of the eccleſiaſtical community than Stephen's. In addition, as I argued in Chapter Four, the named ſources in the *VCB* are all Northumbrian, providing the original audience with the opportunity to ſpeak to theſe witneſſes for theſelves; Cuthbert's miracles all occurred in Northumbria. By comparison, Wilfrid's life was ſpread over a much wider geographical region, taking him to Mercia, the South Saxons, Frankia and eventually Rome, thus rendering the queſtion of acquiring miracle traditions and witneſſes all the more difficult for Stephen. Moſt of the miracles Stephen records occur in Northumbria; his knowledge of miracles appears comparatively dim at the edges. The miracles in *VW* XIII (the South Saxons) and *VW* XXVI (the Friſians) appear to be exceptions, and the three miracles recorded anonymously occur at Oundle which had clear connections to the community at Ripon as this was where Wilfrid had died. In *VW* LXV, a 'cloud of witneſſes', preſumably including members of Wilfrid's entourage, atteſt to the ſudden ſound of birds approaching immediately upon his death.⁹¹⁴ Likewise, the 'witneſs of many' atteſts to the miraculous preſervation from fire after the attack at Oundle in *VW* LXVII.⁹¹⁵ The fact that Oundle is ſome 140 miles ſouth from Ripon teſtifies to the breadth of Wilfrid's monaſtic empire. The geographical factor ſhows that when conſidering the *VW* one ſhould bear in mind the context ſurrounding Stephen's compoſition of his text, in other words, the relative difficulty he may have had accessing information regarding events diſtant from his monaſtery in Ripon. If Stephen had access to an Anglo-Saxon (not juſt a Northumbrian) monaſtic information network ſimilar to the one Bede liſts in the Preface to his *HE*, or if Wilfrid had ſpent the majority of his life ſolely in Northumbria (like Cuthbert), the atteſtation and quantity of miracles in the *VW* could likely have been very different.

Stephen's uſe of miracles in the *VW* thus ſheds ſome light on the reaſoning behind Bede's own portrayal of Cuthbert in the *VCB*. In both quantity of material and quality of

⁹¹⁰ Trumwine.

⁹¹¹ Herefrith, Aethilwald.

⁹¹² Ingwald, Sigfrith, Baldhelm, Cynimund and Felgild.

⁹¹³ Ælfflæd (through Herefrith).

⁹¹⁴ '*nube teſtium*', *VW* LXV, pp. 140-141.

⁹¹⁵ '*multorum teſtimonio*', *VW* LXVII, pp. 146-147.

attestation, comparison between both texts shows how Bede sought to improve Stephen's earlier work to better suit his aims of portraying Cuthbert as a miracle-working saint. Miracle material is therefore one further context that must be considered when discussing how Bede chose to write a second prose life of Cuthbert. However, any perceived deficiency by Bede in how Stephen handled miracles in his hagiography should not be considered a cause of Bede writing his *VCB*. Rather, in comparison to the model of sanctity promoted through Stephen's portrayal of Wilfrid, one should interpret Bede's greater focus on the miracles of Cuthbert as evidence of the type of saint he promoted through Cuthbert.⁹¹⁶ As Thacker suggests, 'Cuthbert's cult was probably associated with a rejection of Wilfridian values';⁹¹⁷ they were two rather different models of episcopal sanctity. As Foley cogently argues, Stephen's Wilfrid was not the 'ascetic wonder-worker' that Cuthbert had been portrayed as in the *VCA* and that Bede later took up and revised in the *VCB*.⁹¹⁸ The literary interaction between Stephen and Bede thus reveals Bede as an author conscious of other literature circulating contemporaneously, taking into account how other texts would affect the intentions and composition of his own work. Once again hagiography is shown to address current concerns as well as preserve the memory of the saints; the past informs the present.⁹¹⁹

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Ceolfridi*

Our final text is perhaps an anomaly in that it contains only a single miracle, though other late antique and early medieval Continental *vitae* also have a noticeable absence of the miraculous.⁹²⁰ Patrick Wormald describes the *HA* and *V.Ceol* as belonging to 'an older style of hagiographical writing... where sanctity is confirmed not by signs and wonders but

⁹¹⁶ See Chapter Seven where I argue that the miracles of Cuthbert and John of Beverley in the *HE* reflect Bede's ideal bishop, one very different to the episcopal model proposed by Stephen.

⁹¹⁷ Thacker, 'Wilfrid, his Cult and his Biographer', p. 11.

⁹¹⁸ Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, p. 18.

⁹¹⁹ 'The writer's service was to show how God was to be seen working in the past and present through saints, sinners and circumstances', J. C. Eby, 'Bringing the *Vita* to Life: Bede's Symbolic Structure of the *Life of St. Cuthbert*', *American Benedictine Review*, 48, no. 3 (Sept., 1997), p. 316.

⁹²⁰ For example, the *V.Aug*, discussed above in Chapter Three. Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, p. xxii.

by personal virtues and affecting death-scenes'.⁹²¹ The *V.Ceol* will therefore be covered only briefly here.

The recent Latin edition, translation and commentary by Ian Wood and Christopher Grocock has re-opened some of the debate and interpretation between both the *V.Ceol* and its related text, Bede's *HA*. Their main contribution is to re-orientate the relative chronology between the two texts, suggesting that Bede's *HA* was in fact composed first at the end of 716, with the *V.Ceol* coming a year or so after.⁹²² Turning to the 'sole concession to the miraculous' in the text, *V.Ceol* XL states that the night after Ceolfrith's body had been handed over for burial, a fragrant scent was experienced where his body lay, and a bright light appeared which eventually moved outside and ascended to the heavens, lighting everything up 'as if it were day'.⁹²³ The author interprets this light as the presence of angels, their purpose appearing to be to consecrate the site of Ceolfrith's burial, with the additional 'signs and healings' mentioned as occurring there later providing further evidence of the sanctity of his corporeal remains.⁹²⁴ Wood and Grocock, following Coates,⁹²⁵ suggest there is a parallel here with a miracle occurring at the burial of St. Honoratus as recorded by Hilary of Arles.⁹²⁶ This southern Gaul connection, Coates suggests, stems from Benedict Biscop's (and thus Wearmouth-Jarrow's) link with the monastery at Lérins. Miracles occurring immediately around the death or burial of the saint appear to be somewhat of a hagiographic commonplace, helping contextualise this singular example in the *V.Ceol*. Among the late antique examples examined in Chapter Three, Anthony sees the soul of Ammon ascend to heaven, Ambrose has prophetic insight as well as a vision of Christ on his deathbed, and Augustine heals a man despite his own

⁹²¹ P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), p. 151

⁹²² Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. xviii-xxi. This is also summarised in C. Grocock, 'Wilfrid, Benedict Biscop, and Bede – the Monk who Knew Too Much?', in N. J. Higham (ed.), *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint: Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences* (Donington, 2013), p. 93.

⁹²³ Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 154. 'velut interdiu', *V.Ceol* XL, pp. 120-121.

⁹²⁴ 'signa et sanitates', *V.Ceol* XL, pp. 120-121. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 54.

⁹²⁵ S. Coates, 'Ceolfrid: History, Hagiography and Memory in Seventh- and eighth- century Wearmouth-Jarrow', *Journal of Medieval History*, 25, no. 2 (1999), pp. 78-79.

⁹²⁶ *V.Ceol*, p. 121, fn. 185.

impending death.⁹²⁷ In the early Insular context, Cuthbert is recorded as healing Walhstod of dysentery whilst on his deathbed.⁹²⁸ Likewise, Stephen records sudden heavenly birdsong at both the death and burial of Wilfrid.⁹²⁹ In *VG* XVII the soul of Paulinus is seen ascending to heaven in the form of a dove upon his death, and in the *VC* the church is filled with angelic light whilst Columba prays at the altar immediately before his death.⁹³⁰ Before his death, Columba prophesied that only his own community of monks would attend his funeral, and a great storm prevents others from arriving that day.⁹³¹ The *HE* also contains many similar examples.⁹³²

The miracle in *V.Ceol* XL was related to the anonymous author by ‘the companions... who returned to us’, eyewitnesses from Ceolfrith’s travelling party who had been present at the events surrounding his death in Langres.⁹³³ There are at least two reasons why the attestation for this miracle was left anonymous. First, the *V.Ceol*, like the *HA*, was intended as an internal written memorial of one of Wearmouth-Jarrow’s founders. The witnesses of this miracle were likely sufficiently well-known among the community that to include their names would have been regarded as unnecessary; as the wording implies, they returned ‘to us’, in other words, to our community. Second, on a more practical level, this group was likely of some size. Both Bede and the Anonymous author record that around eighty had travelled with Ceolfrith to Rome.⁹³⁴ For simplicity’s sake, the anonymous author groups them together as ‘the companions’.

The previous chapter showed that all of Bede’s hagiographical and historical texts contain at least one miracle; the absence of one in the *HA* is remarkable and has called for explanation. D. H. Farmer once commented that it appeared ‘difficult’ that the *V.Ceol* and not the *HA* contains information of a burgeoning cult of Ceolfrith at Langres had it been written first.⁹³⁵ Coates suggested that this miracle ‘was thought inappropriate for his

⁹²⁷ *V.Ant* LX; *V.Ambr* XLVI and XLVIII; *V.Aug* XXIX.

⁹²⁸ *VCA* IV.12 and *VCB* XXXVIII.

⁹²⁹ *VW* LXV and LXVI.

⁹³⁰ *VC* III.23.

⁹³¹ *Ibid.*

⁹³² For example, *HE* I.7, I.33, III.8, IV.3, IV.8, IV.9, IV.11, IV.23, V.10, V.13 and V.14.

⁹³³ ‘*nobis reversi comites*’, *V.Ceol* XL pp. 120-121.

⁹³⁴ ‘*plusquam octaginta numero*’, *HA* XXI, p. 70; ‘*octaginta circiter*’, *V.Ceol* XXXIV, p. 114.

⁹³⁵ D. H. Farmer, ‘Introduction’ in his *The Age of Bede* (London, Rev. ed., 2004), p. 28.

intended audience: the monks [of Wearmouth-Jarrow] themselves'; the *HA* was a local text with limited scope, and thus the miracle's inclusion was unnecessary.⁹³⁶ A further proposal is that, as Bede was keen to honour the memory and teachings of his abbots, 'we should not exclude the possibility that Biscop and Ceolfrid were uninterested in being remembered by [miracles]';⁹³⁷ Bede thus declined to mention this one, even if he knew about it. As Grounds remarks, in the *HA*, 'the abbots display their virtue through actions done in the service of their communities and not through contemplative withdrawal or miraculous signs'.⁹³⁸ This is the view of Hilliard, who proposes that Bede's portrayal of the abbots' sanctity in the *HA* is implicit, meaning there is no need for obvious external miracles.⁹³⁹ A further suggestion is that Bede did not want to single Ceolfrith out if his abbatial predecessors had no miracle traditions associated with them.⁹⁴⁰ This suggestion is also taken by McCready.⁹⁴¹ There is also the possibility that Bede simply did not know about it, an option made more likely if, as proposed by Wood and Grocock, his text was indeed written first, before the more full account of Ceolfrith's death and burial contained in the *V.Ceol* arrived at Wearmouth Jarrow.⁹⁴² This suggestion was proposed by Meyvaert but dismissed by McCready on the basis of the *HA* being written after the *V.Ceol*.⁹⁴³ Irrespective of the true reason, the mere existence of the *V.Ceol* shows that the shared monastic education at Wearmouth-Jarrow could produce more than one author with a high

⁹³⁶ Coates, 'Ceolfrid: History, Hagiography and Memory', p. 80.

⁹³⁷ Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 151.

⁹³⁸ Grounds, *Miracles of Punishment*, p. 195.

⁹³⁹ Hilliard, *Sacred and Secular History*, pp. 98-99.

⁹⁴⁰ J. McClure, 'Bede and the Life of Ceolfrid', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), p. 81.

⁹⁴¹ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 54.

⁹⁴² Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, p. xxi, note the curious absence of Pope Gregory's letter in *V.Ceol* XXXIX from the *HA*, which could only have arrived in Wearmouth-Jarrow after part of Ceolfrith's group who had continued their pilgrimage had returned with it from Rome. Could it be that the sole miracle contained in *V.Ceol* XL also occurred after Bede's initial informants had left Langres soon after the burial?

⁹⁴³ P. Meyvaert, 'Bede the Scholar', in G. Bonner, (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), p. 54. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 52.

level of literacy and familiarity with hagiographic tropes.⁹⁴⁴ The inclusion of a miracle in the *V.Ceol*, which its cousin Bede's *HA* omits, is this anonymous author's personal take on how he wished his community to remember their abbot, ending his days in a foreign land blessed by a visitation of angels.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how authors contemporaneous to their subjects were able to draw upon still-living witnesses or at the very least upon the memory of the recently deceased to narrate miracle stories. The existence of the *VCA* alongside the *VCB* provided fruitful comparison, showing how in Bede's later work the names of some of the witnesses that are known to have died have been removed. This suggested that Bede updated the earlier text to more accurately reflect the current status of his informants. Where he adds new miracles to the earlier work, 11 out of 12 have either a named or anonymous source, again showing that Bede was conscious to support his hagiographical and historical writing with the best available information. Conversely, Stephen's *VW* was written as an apology for the life and actions of his bishop, and portrays a different model of sanctity to that favoured by Bede. Unlike Wilfrid, Bede's Cuthbert is known as a miracle worker, which for Bede meant that his deeds had to be accurately attested.⁹⁴⁵ Due to its differing focus, the *VW* does not include many named or anonymous sources for miracles (5 out of 21, or 23.8%), showing how a divergence in authorial intention impacted the miraculous aspect of hagiographical literature. By comparison, the *VCA* has nearly double the level of named or anonymous attestation than the *VW* (17/35, or 48.6%), again showing that in setting Wilfrid up as a saint in counterpoise to this earlier portrayal of Cuthbert, miracles were not Stephen's number one priority. The levels of attestation in the *VCA* show that, with a near-contemporary record of a saint's life, witnesses could still be drawn upon to testify to their sanctity if that was the author's aim. In addition, due to the nature and geographical spread of Wilfrid's life, Stephen might not have had as much access to such sources as a less

⁹⁴⁴ Contrary to McClure's suggestion that Bede was the author of both texts: McClure, 'Bede and the Life of Ceolfrid', passim. Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, pp. lxiv-xcv conclusively show that their use of Latin is noticeably different.

⁹⁴⁵ Explored more fully in Chapter Seven, below.

controversial and more localised text like the *VCA* had. Finally, this chapter ended briefly on the lone miracle contained in the *V.Ceol*, a miracle absent in Bede's account of his abbot's life, showing how similar hagiographical practices were employed by another anonymous monk at Wearmouth-Jarrow. The texts explored in this chapter share the fact that they were written within close proximity to the death of their subjects, allowing the possibility that eyewitnesses could be called upon to attest their miracles should the individual author so desire. This was indeed the practice of the two prose *vitae* of Cuthbert, and to a lesser extent with the singular miracle in the *V.Ceol*. Stephen in the *VW* chose to do otherwise. The following chapter will explore the methods of attesting miracles in two early Insular authors who were writing nearly a hundred years after their subjects had died.

Chapter Six

Witnesses to Miracle Stories in Early Insular Literature: The Whitby *Vita Gregorii* and Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*

This chapter continues immediately where the previous one left off. Following my hypotheses regarding named and anonymous sources for miracle stories representing living authorities, the two texts explored in this chapter, Adomnán's *VC* and the anonymous *VG*, do indeed exhibit lower levels of attestation than those investigated in the previous one. This is because the longer the period between the saint and their hagiographer, the higher the chance that witnesses to any miraculous occurrences would have died. This chapter will then provide a longer conclusion concerning witnesses to miracle stories in early Insular literature, also factoring in findings from the previous two chapters.

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Gregorii*

The late sixth-century Pope Gregory the Great, as discussed in Chapter One, was a profound influence on Bede. Gregory was instrumental in sending a Christian mission under Augustine to convert the Anglo-Saxons, and was thus held in the highest regard as the 'Apostle of the English'.⁹⁴⁶ In the early eighth century a *vita* was written about him by an anonymous Anglo-Saxon, universally regarded to have been based in Whitby.⁹⁴⁷ Andrew Breeze has suggested that the author could have been a nun, pointing to a few features of the text that suggest a female authorship, and laments the lost opportunities for other historians to pass proper judgement on the question.⁹⁴⁸ Whilst in my own opinion the issue remains uncertain, in deference to Breeze's suggestion I will address this anonymous author as a woman, using she/her pronouns. Nevertheless, the discussion of the author's gender, whilst of interest regarding early medieval female literacy, education and status, has little bearing on the present investigation of the author's use of the miraculous.

⁹⁴⁶ See p. 21, fn. 86, above.

⁹⁴⁷ B. Colgrave, 'Introduction', in his *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby* (Lawrence, KN, 1968), pp. 45-46 for the location of this text. [Henceforth 'Introduction (*VG*)'].

⁹⁴⁸ A. Breeze, 'Did a Woman Write the Whitby Life of St. Gregory?', *Northern History*, 49, no. 2 (2012), pp. 345-350.

The *VG* is slightly harder to date than the *VCA*, *VCB* or *VW*, as there are few concrete chronological markers inside the text itself, which exists in only a single ninth-century manuscript. The first hint is that it was written after the reign of Æthelred, King of Mercia, (who retired to a monastery in 704 according to *HE* V.24), as evidenced by his mention in *VG* XVIII.⁹⁴⁹ From the same Chapter, Colgrave suggests that Ælfflæd was still alive at the time of composition,⁹⁵⁰ and Bede tells us she died in 714.⁹⁵¹ Colgrave further suggests that the statement relating to Edwin's conversion occurring 'long before the time of any who are now alive' means that the text could be placed as early as 700, but not earlier.⁹⁵² However, Dailey has interpreted the text as promoting the idea of a homogenous *gens* between the Northumbrians and the Mercians following the ascension to the throne of Osred in 705. He argues this was orchestrated in part by Abbess Ælfflæd of Whitby, Osred's aunt, which, if correct, refines and narrows the dating even further.⁹⁵³ Additional evidence regarding the dating of the texts can be found in dissimilarity between the *VG* and the *VW* or Bede's *VCB*, which prompted Colgrave to suggest that the *VG* must have preceded those, otherwise it would likely have followed their hagiographical conventions.⁹⁵⁴ Whilst the sample size is possibly too small to propose what an author would or would not have written had they known of the other works, a dating between 705 and 714 does seem a logical conclusion. This date range places it before Bede's *VCB* and possibly before the *VW* and *VCA*, presenting yet another model which Bede could potentially have drawn upon.

Of greater interest, therefore, is the question of whether Bede knew of this work when writing about Gregory in the *HE*, particularly in *HE* II.1, and by extension whether this anonymous author's philosophy of the miraculous was utilised by Bede or not. Colgrave summarises the evidence by stating that it is unlikely either author knew of the

⁹⁴⁹ 'in the days of their king Æthelred' (*diebus Edilredi regis illorum*), *VG* XVIII, pp. 102-103.

⁹⁵⁰ Colgrave, 'Introduction (*VG*)', pp. 47-48.

⁹⁵¹ *HE* III.24, though see fn. 846 above, which suggests 713 may be a possible date.

⁹⁵² Colgrave, 'Introduction (*VG*)', p. 48. '*Hoc igitur multo ante horum omnes qui nunc supersunt*', *VG* XVI, pp. 98-99. However, M. Lapidge, 'The Anglo-Latin Background', in S.B. Greenfield and D.G. Calder (eds.), *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York, 1986), p. 15 dates it 680-704

⁹⁵³ E. T. A. Dailey, 'The *Vita Gregorii* and Ethnogenesis in Anglo-Saxon Britain', *Northern History*, 47 (2010), pp. 204-207.

⁹⁵⁴ Colgrave, 'Introduction (*VG*)', pp. 48-49.

other's work.⁹⁵⁵ If they had, there are several pieces of information in both texts that the other would more than likely have utilised in their own work. For example, the *HE* contains Gregory's famous *Libellus Responsionem* to Augustine of Canterbury, and has details of Gregory's epitaph, whereas the Whitby author complains of a lack of information regarding Gregory's death.⁹⁵⁶ Conversely, Bede omits Gregory's mother's name, has no mention of the locust/*sta in loco* pun employed by the Whitby author, no mention of Paulinus' soul ascending to heaven like a swan, and no mention of the recovery of Edwin's relics.⁹⁵⁷ Colgrave reminds us that Bede appears to have little information regarding Whitby after the death of Hild in 680.⁹⁵⁸ An alternative view proposed by Robert Rix is that Bede did know the earlier text, yet did not actively draw upon it in his own portrayal of Gregory due to 'monastic competition' between Bede and Whitby as the *VG* 'claimed a privileged status for the monastery at Whitby in regard to Edwin's heritage and thereby also the Roman mission' sent by Gregory to convert the Anglo-Saxons.⁹⁵⁹ Plassmann, following Goffart, also suggests that Bede did know the earlier text, but suggests the evidence connecting the two is small, though unlike Goffart leaves open the possibility of a shared Northumbrian tradition.⁹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, such independence between these two authors is highly useful, allowing us to see their differing working practices without first having to establish where one is borrowing from, altering or repudiating the other, as in the case of the *VCA*, *VW* and *VCB*.

When exploring the *VG* for its miracle stories utilising the same criteria for the other texts, the results are as follows: 16 miracles, none from Named Sources, 3 from Anonymous Sources (18.7%) with the remaining 13 having No Source attribution (81.3%).

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 56-59.

⁹⁵⁶ *VG* XXXII.

⁹⁵⁷ Recorded in *VG* I, X, XVII and XVIII-XIX.

⁹⁵⁸ Colgrave, 'Introduction (*VG*)', p. 59.

⁹⁵⁹ R. W. Rix, 'Northumbrian Angels in Rome: Religion and Politics in the Anecdote of St Gregory', *Journal of Medieval History*, 38, no. 3 (2012), p. 262.

⁹⁶⁰ Plassmann, 'Beda Venerabilis – *Verax Historicus*', pp. 128ff. Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 303-306.

The main comment to make on this text is that the author is very rarely able to provide any sort of source for the miracles contained within. Three miracles were attested by a single anonymous source, the kinsman or relative (*cognatus*) of the priest who experienced them.⁹⁶¹ The rest have no source given. This is perhaps unsurprising, as Colgrave states the author ‘is dealing with the history of a saint who has been dead for a century and with whom he has no close connection’.⁹⁶² Indeed, the three miracles attested by this anonymous priest are connected to the recovery of Edwin’s relics, not with Gregory himself. Edwin died nearly 30 years after Gregory, in 633, and the recovery of his relics can be dated between 680 and 704.⁹⁶³ In other words, these attested miracles are an exception to the rest of the text, occurring within living memory of the author; unlike the miracles related to Gregory himself, the author is likely to have had direct access to at least one witness for these three miracles related to Edwin’s relics.

For the remainder of the miracles, the author is incredibly apologetic and takes steps to explain why she has no more reliable information or a lack of information. There are multiple examples of this. In *VG* III, she begins by explaining that the work will contain fewer miracles than usually expected, for ‘we have heard of few miracles’.⁹⁶⁴ In the next chapter, she states that there are those who do not perform miracles, such as John the Baptist, who are nevertheless the equals, if not greater, than those who do, such as the apostles. In *VG* VI, following Gregorian teaching, she places a spiritual life above any miracles the saint may have performed. I will return to this shortly. In *VG* XXIII, she admits that for many of the stories she narrates she ‘do[es] not know the full details’.⁹⁶⁵ *VG* XXX, serving as a summary of Gregory’s deeds, is a notable example. Here, the author writes that this work has been written out of ‘love rather than knowledge’,⁹⁶⁶ and challenges her readers to produce a better work if they are critical of this one. She then appeals to the Bible to explain the jumbled nature of her stories in the *VG*, using the

⁹⁶¹ *VG* XVIII and XIX, see Appendix Three.

⁹⁶² Colgrave, ‘Earliest Saints Lives’, p. 50.

⁹⁶³ *VG* XVIII states that it was after Eanflæd took charge at Whitby following the death of Hild in 680 (*HE* IV.23), and during the reign of Aethelred, King of Mercia, who, as mentioned, retired to a monastery in 704 (*HE* V.24).

⁹⁶⁴ ‘*pauca... audivimus signorum*’, *VG* III, pp. 76-77.

⁹⁶⁵ ‘*licet ex parte, ut cetera, nesciatur ex nobis*’, *VG* XXIII, pp. 114-115.

⁹⁶⁶ ‘*dilectione magis quam scientia*’, *VG* XXX, pp. 128-129.

seeming contradiction between Matthew 21:12 and John 2:14-16 as justification.⁹⁶⁷

Perhaps more startlingly, the author appeals to the shared faith of all Christians to excuse her if she has incorrectly attributed to Gregory a miracle that was worked by someone else.⁹⁶⁸ She reiterates that she ‘did not learn about [the miracles] directly from those who saw and heard them but only by common report’.⁹⁶⁹ Taken at face value, it is perhaps understandable that Colgrave could call this text ‘primitive’ in comparison to other Early Insular hagiographies.⁹⁷⁰ Such protestations are largely unknown to Bede, Stephen, Adomnán or the anonymous authors of the *VCA* and *V.Ceol*.⁹⁷¹ What such comments imply is that the author (and her audience) had access to earlier *vitae*, either Irish or Continental examples, and was acutely aware of the limitations of her own work in comparison. She would have seen the commonplace assertions of veracity and use of witnesses in those, realised her own work was lacking, and thus took steps to justify herself before her audience.

Such statements by the author have led Kate Rambridge to come to a nuanced conclusion concerning the author’s use of miracles. She writes that ‘the author relies far less on narrative and anecdotal evidence of miracles than do authors of comparable *vitae*, and far more on the construction of a case for Gregory’s saintly status through the use of textual resources’.⁹⁷² In other words, the Whitby author, likely due to the chronological distance between her and her subject, appeals far more to a robust theology of miracles, using Gregory’s own teachings, than to any eyewitness attestation. The appeal to Gregory’s writings regarding miracles frame how they should be read in the *VG*. It is

⁹⁶⁷ These two passages concern when Jesus drove the traders out of the Temple, Matthew placing the event in the last week of Jesus’ life, John placing it at the beginning of his ministry. A traditional explanation is that these were in fact two separate events, a line also taken by Bede, *Homiliae Evangelii*, II.1.

⁹⁶⁸ Following Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 on unity and equality in the Church. Cf. Romans 12:3-8.

⁹⁶⁹ ‘*non ab illis qui viderunt et audierunt per ore didicimus, vulgata tantum habemus*’, *VG* XXX, pp. 130-133. Is this a key to interpreting Bede’s ‘*fama vulgante*’ in the Preface to the *HE*?

⁹⁷⁰ Colgrave, ‘Earliest Saints’ Lives’, p. 50.

⁹⁷¹ With the possible exception of Bede’s ‘*vera lex historiae*’ in the Preface to the *HE*. See Chapter Two, above.

⁹⁷² K. Rambridge, ‘*Doctor Noster Sanctus*: The Northumbrians and Pope Gregory’, in R. H. Bremner, K. Dekker and D. F. Johnson, (eds.), *Rome and the North* (Leuven, 2001), p. 12.

beside the point that some of the miracles related are ‘wildly improbable tales’ or ‘fantastic’;⁹⁷³ to take them at face value, according to the author, is to miss their (and Gregory’s) purpose. Rather, the miracles in the *VG* are of greater importance for their spiritual lessons. Whilst this is of course a common idea, one which I have suggested is a key understanding shared by Bede, by compositional necessity it is entirely more explicit in the *VG*. Gregory had, after all, been dead nearly a century, meaning there would be no living witnesses to his life, and lived geographically distant from the initial audience of the *VG*. As a result, questions of where certain events took place,⁹⁷⁴ who narrated the account or whether the miracle was actually performed by Gregory at all are of secondary importance to the lessons that can be learnt from such stories. As this thesis has consistently emphasised, the relating of miracle stories in hagiographical and historical texts almost always has a didactic purpose. This is the same conclusion drawn by Butler, who has undertaken a close-reading of *VG* XXIII and has concluded that overall, ‘the Whitby author is less concerned with the historicity of his stories than he is with their spiritual message, viewing them as channels of spiritual truth’.⁹⁷⁵ The author ends *VG* XXIII explaining that ‘in some of these stories we give the sense only, lest, as he [Gregory] himself says, concerning the acts of the saints in the book which he wrote [the *Dialogi*], by quoting their rustic speech we might fail to utter spiritual truths’.⁹⁷⁶ Such a statement clearly reinforces Rambridge and Butler’s theses; the author believes excessive details in the story may dilute the moral import of the miracle.⁹⁷⁷

In this regard, Colgrave is justified in stating that the Whitby author was ‘clearly experimenting’ when it came to composing the *VG*.⁹⁷⁸ Her appeal to the spiritual message

⁹⁷³ Colgrave, ‘Introduction (*VG*)’, p. 50.

⁹⁷⁴ See C. Daniell, ‘York and the Whitby author’s *Anonymous Life of Gregory the Great*’, *Northern History*, 29 (1993), pp. 197-199, who explores whether Edwin’s baptism in *VG* XV occurred in York, with Lincoln or Yeavering as possible alternatives.

⁹⁷⁵ B. Butler, ‘Doctor of Souls, Doctor of the Body: Whitby *Vita Gregorii* 23 and its Exegetical Context’, in D. Scully and E. Mullins (eds.), *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O’Reilly* (Cork, 2011), p. 169.

⁹⁷⁶ ‘*Hec igitur sensu in quibusdam proferimus, ne ut ipse de sanctorum ait actibus que scripsit, rustice dicentes nil spiritale dicamus*’, *VG* XXIII, pp. 116-117.

⁹⁷⁷ See Colgrave, ‘Notes (*VG*)’, pp. 154-155.

⁹⁷⁸ Idem., ‘Introduction (*VG*)’, p. 49.

behind Gregory's miracles is a facet unique in comparison to other Early Insular authors. Whilst some of the authors examined thus far simply related the miracles of their respective saints, the Whitby author stands out in going one step further by contextualising Gregory's miracles against Gregory's explicit teachings on the role of miracles. Despite the fact that Bede definitely understood miracles as signs, it is not always evident as to what the signs actually point to. In this way, this anonymous author has palpably provided the framework through which the miraculous occurrences in their text should be read. The miracles in the *VG* are not related merely as events testifying to the saint's sanctity, (though the Whitby author describes this focus as 'not unreasonable'),⁹⁷⁹ but provide readers with opportunities for spiritual reflection on the written teachings of Gregory himself.

Nevertheless, the question still remains as to where the author had obtained her information from regarding Gregory's miracles. One source can immediately be ruled out: the *Liber Pontificalis*, the record of the lives of the popes since the apostle Peter. Despite the author's knowledge of at least part of that text, Gregory's entry is brief and does not record any miracles.⁹⁸⁰ The Whitby author does use it, however, for their knowledge of Gregory's father's name in *VG* I, and details of Gregory's death in *VG* XXXII. Thankfully, the Whitby author's wider sources, not just for the miracle stories, have been the subject of some discussion, and these provide stronger possibilities. Thacker has concluded that the author had access to early written accounts of Gregory that had originally been compiled in Rome.⁹⁸¹ This is certainly supported by the evidence. The author writes in *VG* XXIX that 'some of our people also tell a story related by the Romans',⁹⁸² explicitly stating where this account of Gregory and Trajan was believed to have originated. She also describes one account as an 'ancient story',⁹⁸³ and one originating from 'ancient tradition';⁹⁸⁴ both of

⁹⁷⁹ 'nec inmerito', *VG* III, pp. 76-77.

⁹⁸⁰ *Liber Pontificalis*, pp. 161-162; *The Book of Pontiffs*, pp. 61-62. C. J. Mews and C. Renkin, 'The Legacy of Gregory the Great in the Latin West', in B. Neil and M. Dal Santo (eds.), *A Companion to Gregory the Great* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 318-319 suggest the brevity of Gregory's entry is due to the conflict between his promotion of monks and monasticism against the clergy.

⁹⁸¹ Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory the Great', p. 67.

⁹⁸² 'Quidam quoque de nostris dicunt narratum a Romanis', *VG* XXIX, pp. 126-127.

⁹⁸³ 'antiquorum... narratio', *VG* XX, pp. 104-105.

⁹⁸⁴ 'vetus... relatio', *VG* XXI, pp. 108-109.

these specifically occur in Rome. Thacker believes that the early Gregorian material was originally collated in Rome before its distribution to England, likely through Theodore of Tarsus, who had spent time there before his appointment as archbishop and was familiar with Gregory's writings.⁹⁸⁵ The Whitby author herself was equally familiar with Gregory's works too; Rambridge states that 19/32,⁹⁸⁶ or nearly 60%, of the chapters contain direct quotations or allusions to his corpus. An alternative, though not mutually exclusive, proposal is that the 'saga tradition' regarding Gregory arrived in Northumbria from Canterbury via Paulinus, the first bishop of King Edwin.⁹⁸⁷ Paulinus had been commissioned by Gregory to assist in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons,⁹⁸⁸ and his instruction of the Northumbrians may also have included knowledge of Gregory's life which remained within ecclesiastical memory until our author wrote the *VG*.

It is clear from the above discussion that the Whitby author's miracle material was chronologically and geographically separated from their place of composition; in only one instance did they have access to a witness, and that to a miracle which occurred in Northumbria, not Rome. Nevertheless, in either of these proposed scenarios, transmission through Theodore or through Paulinus, the Whitby author clearly had some link to Rome, again highlighting the intellectual connections between Anglo-Saxon England and the continent.⁹⁸⁹ Rome featured prominently in Bede's theology of the Church and Anglo-Saxon connections to the continent,⁹⁹⁰ and the Whitby author clearly acknowledges the debt the Anglo-Saxons owed to Gregory for their conversion. In relaying his life and miracles, this anonymous author chose to emphasise the information she did have available: Gregory's teachings. The greater emphasis on the spiritual interpretation of Gregory's miracles thus uniquely points the Anglo-Saxon audience back to his writings; Bede, Stephen and the anonymous author of the *VCA* could not do this as neither Cuthbert nor Wilfrid left any recorded written material. In this regard, the *VG* clearly portrays yet

⁹⁸⁵ Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory the Great', pp. 75-77.

⁹⁸⁶ Rambridge, '*Doctor Noster Sanctus*', p. 5.

⁹⁸⁷ Colgrave, 'Introduction (*VG*)', p. 53.

⁹⁸⁸ *HE* I.29.

⁹⁸⁹ For the period immediately following Bede's death in 735 see J. Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c.750-870* (Aldershot, 2003).

⁹⁹⁰ See E. O'Carragain, *The City of Rome and the World of Bede* (Jarrow Lecture, 1994), and Howe, 'Rome: Capital of Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 150-156 and *passim*.

another model of how the life of a saint could be portrayed in Anglo-Saxon England, a model that highlighted and drew upon the high intellectual as well as the physical achievements of its subject.

Miracles and Sources: *Vita Columbae*

Another author writing just under a century after his subject died was Adomnán of Iona, who wrote a *vita* of St. Columba in the late-seventh century. Whilst this *vita* is in many ways distinct from the Anglo-Saxon cultural milieu of the above texts, it was known by Bede and will thus serve as a useful final comparison in the present survey. Columba (c.521-597) was an Irish saint who was most famous for founding the monastery of Iona in the Inner Hebrides of Scotland.⁹⁹¹ He subsequently travelled throughout much of the region preaching and providing pastoral care, sometimes through miracles of healing or through prophetic words of knowledge. Adomnán, the author of his *vita*, was his abbatial successor, the ninth abbot of Iona (r. 679-704). The commonly accepted dating of the completion of the text places it as a close contemporary of the *VCA*, that is, just over a hundred years after Columba's death. Adomnán narrates a miracle that occurred 'about seventeen years ago'.⁹⁹² Assuming Adomnán was abbot at the time of writing, this would place the text post-696. In *VC* II.45 he also mentions a synod that Picard connects to the Synod of Birr, held in 697.⁹⁹³ Richard Sharpe suggests the centenary of Columba's death was thus the main impetus for the composition of the text.⁹⁹⁴ Picard writes that, in lieu of further certainty regarding date, 'it is then better to speak of the date of the completion of the *Vita* rather than a date of composition'.⁹⁹⁵ The question then turns upon whether Bede knew of and subsequently had read this text. That he knew of a 'life of Columba' seems beyond doubt. In *HE* III.4 he states that 'some written records of his [Columba's] life and teachings are said to have been preserved by his disciples'.⁹⁹⁶ The assumption frequently

⁹⁹¹ M. Herbert, 'Columba', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [accessed 30 December 2016].

⁹⁹² 'ante annos... ferme xvii', *VC* II.44, pp. 172-173.

⁹⁹³ J. Picard, 'The Purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', *Peritia*, 1 (1982), pp. 168-169, followed by M. O. Anderson, 'Introduction' in *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, eds. and trans. A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson (Oxford, Rev. ed., 1991), p. xlii.

⁹⁹⁴ R. Sharpe, 'Introduction', in his *Life of St Columba* (London, 1995), p. 55.

⁹⁹⁵ Picard, 'The Purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', p. 167.

⁹⁹⁶ 'cuius vita et verbis nonnulla a discipulis eius feruntur scripta haberi', *HE* III.4, pp. 224-225.

made is that, had Bede known the name of the author, Adomnán, he would have mentioned it.⁹⁹⁷ He certainly does so in *HE* V.15-17 with regards to Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis*, a text exploring the geography and architecture of the Holy Land, which Bede quotes from and uses as the basis for his own version of that work. The fact that Bede knew there were written records of Columba available nevertheless leaves open the possibility that he was familiar with Adomnán's work. Thacker has suggested some parallels between the *VC* and *VCA* which at the very least show they were 'shaped by the same hagiographical conventions'.⁹⁹⁸ McCready highlights several additional parallels between the *VCB* and *VC* which, whilst falling short of a full proof, suggest that 'directly or indirectly, Bede's account has been influenced by Adomnán'.⁹⁹⁹ Bede's not mentioning any full knowledge of the *VC* should perhaps be framed in light of Iona's stance on the Easter controversy. Columba was, after all, the authority invoked by the Irish party at the Synod of Whitby in 664.¹⁰⁰⁰ Indeed, Bede immediately continues after his acknowledgment of written records of Columba that despite living a pious lifestyle, the monks of Iona continued to rely on 'tables of doubtful accuracy' to date Easter until 715.¹⁰⁰¹ Adomnán appears quite conscious of this at the time of writing. Easter is barely mentioned in the *VC*, leading Jennifer O'Reilly to suggest that instead, Adomnán removed Columba from this context, showing that his 'sanctity did not depend on his method of dating Easter but that he lived it and continued, after his death, to mediate its fruits'.¹⁰⁰² Bede as author did not hesitate to omit mention of other texts despite utilising them in his own work: the *VCA* is unmentioned in his *VCB* and barely mentioned in the *HE*, the *VW* and Stephen as author are unmentioned in the *HE*.¹⁰⁰³ It is no stretch of the imagination that, whilst mentioning some aspects of Columba's life, Bede did not wish to draw undue attention to his less favourable aspects, namely, his acceptance of a false (in his opinion) dating of Easter, and a pattern of sanctity

⁹⁹⁷ Picard, 'The Purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', p. 164; Anderson, 'Introduction', p. xlii; *HE* III.4, p. 225, fn. 2.

⁹⁹⁸ Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Cuthbert', p. 112.

⁹⁹⁹ McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 169-175, quote at p. 175.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *HE* III.25.

¹⁰⁰¹ 'dubios circulos', *HE* III.4, pp. 224-225.

¹⁰⁰² J. O'Reilly, 'Reading the Scriptures in the Life of Columba', in C. Bourke (ed.), *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba* (Dublin, 1997), p. 103.

¹⁰⁰³ Used by Bede in *HE* V.19.

that was contrary to the one he championed through Cuthbert and also, as will be argued in Chapter Seven, John of Beverley.¹⁰⁰⁴ In this way, Bede's treatment of Columba in the *HE* mirrors somewhat his approach to Wilfrid, praising where possible, yet omitting or passing quickly over anything controversial or contrary to his own aims.

In terms of the purpose of the *VC*, Adomnán writes that he was responding to the 'importunity of the brothers', that is, his community commissioned him to write this text as a fitting memorial of Columba.¹⁰⁰⁵ As mentioned, the *VC* is, at face value, very much an Ionan text directed to the memory of Columba,¹⁰⁰⁶ excerpts from his life providing continued edification and instruction to his community nearly a century after his death. Nevertheless, Picard has also detected additional leanings towards secondary Northumbrian and Continental audiences.¹⁰⁰⁷ In the former, Picard states that, at least in part, the *VC* 'is Adomnán's answer to Northumbrian attacks on Columba',¹⁰⁰⁸ particularly regarding the dating of Easter and the tonsure question. Whilst not as obvious as the relationship between the *VCA*, *VW* and *VCB*, the aims of the *VC*, and Bede's possible omission of it in the *HE*, again highlight the multi-faceted use of hagiographical literature to promote theological and political agendas.

Regarding content, the *VC* focusses almost exclusively on Columba's miracles as individual episodes; unlike Bede or Stephen's approach, there is little sense of connected chronology in Adomnán's account.¹⁰⁰⁹ Instead, he divides the work into three Books of nearly equal length which are arranged thematically, the division into three parts following Sulpicius Severus' *V.Mart.*¹⁰¹⁰ Book I covers 'prophetic revelations',¹⁰¹¹ Book II covers 'miracles of power',¹⁰¹² whilst Book III details 'angelic visions'.¹⁰¹³ In addition to his

¹⁰⁰⁴ Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of Cuthbert', p. 113, suggests that in comparison to the *VCA*, the *VC* has a lack of chronological focus and a greater emphasis on the fantastic and magical.

¹⁰⁰⁵ '*fratrum flagitationibus*', *VC* First Preface, pp. 2-3

¹⁰⁰⁶ Picard, 'The Purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', p. 166.

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-177.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁰⁰⁹ The final (and longest) chapter, III.23, is, however, devoted to Columba's last days and death.

¹⁰¹⁰ Sharpe, 'Introduction', pp. 57-58, Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, p. 30.

¹⁰¹¹ '*de profeticis revelationibus*', *VC* I.1, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰¹² '*de virtutum miraculis*', *VC* II.1, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰¹³ '*de angelicis visionibus*', *VC* III.1, pp. 182-183.

division of Columba's miracles into three broad sections, Adomnán also shares, this time alongside Bede and Stephen, an understanding of a miracle as something 'contrary to nature'. In at least three instances he uses the phrase '*contra naturam*' to describe a miracle, and the accounts provide clarity to the sort of miracle he has in mind: a stone floating like an apple in water,¹⁰¹⁴ and a crop planted long after midsummer yet grown to full ripeness and harvested in August.¹⁰¹⁵ From this, we can deduce that, in at least part of Adomnán's understanding, a miracle is an event not naturally possible; an external force has acted upon an object to produce an unexpected result. Ó Carragáin has pointed out that 'all too often, scholars have been reluctant to discuss the signs and miracles, as though they saw them as embarrassing reflections of primitive superstition'.¹⁰¹⁶ This more sophisticated understanding of a miracle by Adomnán should give such scholars pause for thought; at least some of the miracles Adomnán describes are far from 'primitive superstition'. However, it must be noted that not all of Adomnán's miracles follow this pattern, there is nothing normal or natural about prophecy in Book I or angelic visitations in Book III for example, though most of the miracles in Book II do fit this understanding.¹⁰¹⁷

My results for the *VC* are as follows: 146 miracles, 13 of which come from Named Sources (8.9%), 15 from Anonymous Sources (10.3%), with the remaining 118 having No Source attribution (80.8%).

The first comment to make in comparison is that the *VC* contains the most miracles out of any of the texts discussed in this chapter or the previous two; the next closest,

¹⁰¹⁴ In summary *VC* I.1, related in full II.33.

¹⁰¹⁵ *VC* II.3.

¹⁰¹⁶ E. Ó Carragáin and T. Ó Carragáin, 'Singing in the Rain on Hinba? Archaeology and Liturgical Fictions, Ancient and Modern (Adomnán, *Vita Columbae* 3.17)', in E. Mullins and D. Scully (eds.), *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly* (Cork, 2011), p. 204.

¹⁰¹⁷ Cf. The intervention of Columba with 'miracles of sustenance' and 'miracles of re-integration', discussed by J. Miles-Watson, 'Adomnán - Vanquisher of Binary Opposition: A Structural Analysis of the Miracles in the Second Book of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', *Northern Studies*, 38 (2004), pp. 124-126 and pp. 126-128 respectively.

Bede's *HE*, has 87 miracles compared to the *VC*'s 146.¹⁰¹⁸ The *VC* is very much, from beginning to end, as it states: a book of the 'miraculous powers' of Columba.¹⁰¹⁹ Despite the larger number of miracles in this text, the percentages of their attestation by named or anonymous figures is comparable to the numbers recorded for the *VW* and *VG*. Adomnán too states his concern from the very beginning to relate his account of Columba both accurately and truthfully, which includes the use of witnesses. The passage is worth quoting in full:

Let not any one suppose that I will write concerning this so memorable man either falsehood or things that might be doubtful or unsure; but let him understand that I shall relate what has come to my knowledge through the tradition passed on by our predecessors, and by trustworthy men who knew the facts; and that I shall set it down unequivocally, and either from among those things that we have been able to find put into writing before our time, or else from among those that we have learned, after diligent enquiry, by hearing them from the lips of certain informed and trustworthy aged men who related them without any hesitation.¹⁰²⁰

After such a passage, one might praise Adomnán for his stated high standards. Picard suggests of this statement that 'in writing *VC* he wants to forestall accusations of fictitious claims and he does his best to ensure that his stories are based on historical material and related in the formal style of historians', continuing that 'although he does not claim like Bede to be a *verax historicus*, there is little doubt that Adomnán wanted to put himself forward as such'.¹⁰²¹ Nevertheless, the figures above tell a very different story: the

¹⁰¹⁸ An example of my miracle counting criteria described above producing 'maximalised' results occurs by comparing my count for miracles in Book II of the *VC*, 59, with Miles-Watson's count of 44, though again, he fails to list them all. See Miles-Watson, 'Adomnán - vanquisher of binary opposition', p. 124.

¹⁰¹⁹ '*virtutum*', *VC* III.23, pp. 234-235.

¹⁰²⁰ '*Nemo itaque me de hoc tam praedicabili viro aut mentitum estimet aut quasi quaedam dubia vel incerta scripturum; sed ea quae maiorum fideliumque virorum tradita expertorum cognovi relatione narraturum et sine ulla ambiguitate craxaturum sciat, et vel ex his quae ante nos inserta paginis repperire potuimus, vel ex his quae auditu ab expertis quibusdam fidelibus antiquis sine ulla dubitatione narrantibus diligentius sciscitantes didicimus*', *VC* Second Preface, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰²¹ J. Picard, 'Bede, Adomnán and the Writing of History', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), pp. 55-56.

‘tradition’ is left anonymous, the ‘trustworthy men’ are mostly unnamed. McCready notes that ‘in point of fact, however, Adomnán is not particularly faithful in identifying his sources’;¹⁰²² in just over 80% of the miracles, he does not provide any form of source. There is clearly a discrepancy between written intention and finished reality.

Like the author of the *VG*, Adomnán also provides some comments that explain his rationale concerning the appeal to eyewitness evidence. In at least two different locations, for example, Adomnán appeals to scripture to show how he is able to provide substantially more witnesses for a particular miracle than the Old Testament law required, perhaps to mitigate against the fact that in the majority of these miracle stories, he cannot. Deuteronomy 19:15b states: ‘in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall stand’.¹⁰²³ In context, Moses is referring to criminal accusations in court; a single witness is not sufficient to convict someone, and this is likely how Adomnán perceived his text. Sharpe reminds the reader that ‘Irish law favoured eyewitness testimony over documents, so that Adomnán’s use of the Latin language of testimony and his naming of informants may be seen as repeatedly underlining the credibility of what he writes’.¹⁰²⁴ Adomnán’s use of Deuteronomy 19:15 thus states that he can go above and beyond the letter of the law. In the first example, where people are rescued from fire and sword through singing praises of Columba, Adomnán states that ‘Of this miracle it has been possible to produce not two witnesses or three, as the law requires, but a hundred or more... We have learned these things, without room for doubt, from people who knew the facts in every district, wherever the same thing happened, with the same miracle’.¹⁰²⁵ The second example is similar. Referring to Columba’s posthumous power to change the winds, Adomnán writes ‘to the truth of the foregoing narrative there are still living not two witnesses only, or three, as the law requires, but a hundred, and more’.¹⁰²⁶ Note Adomnán’s insistence that these witnesses are ‘still living’, a phrase this present study has repeatedly highlighted in

¹⁰²² McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, p. 158, fn. 13.

¹⁰²³ ‘*in ore duorum aut trium testium stabit omne verbum*’.

¹⁰²⁴ Sharpe, ‘Introduction’, pp. 56-57.

¹⁰²⁵ ‘*Huius miraculi testes non duo aut tres iuxta legem sed etiam centeni aut eo amplius adhiberi potuere... Haec ab expertis uniuscuiusque regionis ubicumque res eadem simili contegit miraculo indubitanter didicimus*’, *VC* I.1, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰²⁶ ‘*Huius ergo praemisae narrationes testes non bini tantum vel terni secundum legem sed centeni et amplius adhuc exstant*’, *VC* II.45, pp. 178-179.

multiple texts. A further context to read Adomnán's use of sources occurs with his *De Locis Sanctis*. Here, Adomnán describes the Holy Land through the recollections of a (supposed) expert witness, the bishop Arculf.¹⁰²⁷ O'Reilly states that in a similar way, Iona and its surroundings are portrayed as a second 'holy land' in the *VC*.¹⁰²⁸ Consequently, the history of that land, as affected by Columba in his life and travels, deserves at least a modicum of attestation from similar such witnesses.

Whilst Adomnán claims in the above two instances to have over a hundred witnesses, it is, however, puzzling that he is not so exacting with regards to providing multiple witnesses for all the other miracles he relates in the *VC*. At a distance of nearly 100 years between completion of the *VC* and its subject, it is highly likely that any such witnesses would have died before Adomnán could personally verify many of the miracles attributed to Columba. Another possible explanation, not unrelated and provided through Adomnán's own words, is that knowledge of miracles in the present helps verify miracles in the past. Returning to the wind miracles attributed to Columba in *VC* II.45, Adomnán writes 'the credibility of miracles of this kind, that happened in past times and that we have not seen, is confirmed for us beyond doubt by those of the present day, that we ourselves have observed'. In the context here, the silent implication is that Adomnán's immediate audience knew of the events he was describing in II.45. By extension, some of the other miracles in his text could have already been known by the monastic community; in their daily readings or discussion in the refectory, stories of miracles are likely to have been discussed, particularly if they occurred within living memory. These are the stories of the *maiorum*, the elders or predecessors that Adomnán mentions in his second Preface. Despite the fact that the *VC* was written nearly 100 years after Columba's death, continuous sharing of Columba's memory as the founder of their monastery would have ingrained the details of such stories into the monastic memory. Alternatively, Anderson reminds us that 'in a century or more, myths had had time to grow and spread'.¹⁰²⁹ Adomnán merely provides the authoritative written account from what he had received from his community;

¹⁰²⁷ The best overview of the text is T. O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places* (London, 2007).

O'Loughlin himself is sceptical of Arculf's role; at worst he is merely a literary device, at best, Adomnán as author has largely replaced Arculf's original voice. *Idem.*, pp. 50-63.

¹⁰²⁸ O'Reilly, 'Reading Scripture in the Life of Columba', p. 86.

¹⁰²⁹ Anderson, 'Introduction', p. lxvi.

whether truth or myth, this was the story the community wanted to tell, something Sharpe terms ‘devotional truth’.¹⁰³⁰ Under this scenario, details such as who had originally witnessed these miracles would gradually become omitted in the familiarity of the telling and retelling of these stories.

With this in mind, the reverse of Adomnán’s statement also becomes true: miracles from the past, particularly biblical miracles, confirm the occurrence of similar miracles in the present. As Lake states in the context of Gregory the Great, ‘they are true because the same miracles occurred in biblical history, and they therefore *could* occur again’.¹⁰³¹ In other words, one should not be surprised that miracles of contemporary or near-contemporary saints echo those of early Christian or biblical figures.¹⁰³² At the very least, contemporary miracles act as a type of biblical precedent. O’Reilly, in her characteristic exegetical style, has taken this approach with several episodes from the *VC*. For example, the procession of Columba’s relics to end a drought in *VC* II.44 bears similarities to the renewal of the Mosaic covenant and a plea of repentance from the Israelites, Columba’s relics acting in a similar fashion to the Ark of the Covenant.¹⁰³³ This incident, which O’Reilly states is ‘rather more than a rain-making ceremony’,¹⁰³⁴ is also an allusion, with some modification, to the story of St. Eutychius as recorded in Gregory’s *Dialogi*.¹⁰³⁵ The similarities between this incident recorded by Adomnán and the *Dialogi* have led Richard Sharpe to question the integrity of Adomnán as a recorder of history, particularly because he claims to be a direct eyewitness to this miracle. Sharpe asks ‘did it happen, is it a literary fiction, or was the act itself influenced by Gregory’s book?’¹⁰³⁶ Responding to this challenge, Lawrence Morris has argued that literary parallels are not sufficient to rule out

¹⁰³⁰ Sharpe, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.

¹⁰³¹ Lake, ‘Hagiography and the Cult of Saints’, pp. 239-240. Emphasis in original. See also Plassmann, ‘Beda Venerabilis – *Verax Historicus*’, p. 133.

¹⁰³² Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 6.

¹⁰³³ O’Reilly, ‘Reading Scripture’, pp. 91-93.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁰³⁵ T. O. Clancy, ‘Columba, Adomnán and the Cult of the Saints in Scotland’, *Innes Review*, 48, no.1 (Jun., 1997), p. 11. *Dialogi*, III.15.

¹⁰³⁶ Sharpe, ‘Introduction’, p. 59.

the veracity of the latter, supposedly fabricated, event.¹⁰³⁷ Instead, Morris showed that several of the features of the rain miracle have late antique and early medieval precedent: the procession of prayer and penitence,¹⁰³⁸ clothing relics,¹⁰³⁹ and the use of books.¹⁰⁴⁰ He concludes that ‘early medieval Christians acted typologically, that is, they consciously strove to imitate their predecessors, even in details that can seem trivial to a modern consciousness. As a result, literary parallels can equally be historical realities’.¹⁰⁴¹ This is ultimately the view that Sharpe settles on: rather than outright fabrication, Adomnán is ‘reinforcing his words with echoes of more famous saints’.¹⁰⁴² Such a conclusion is highly significant; all such texts with literary parallels, not just those in the *VC*, should be carefully examined rather than quickly dismissed as derivative. If Morris is correct, early medieval believers actively sought to imitate their predecessors in action and in word. One such parallel to scripture is Columba’s striking of a rock to produce water subsequently used for baptism in *VC* II.10. This story finds biblical link to Exodus 17:1-7, where Moses provides water for the Israelites at Horeb by striking a rock. In the New Testament, Paul had interpreted this same rock as Christ.¹⁰⁴³ By repeating the same miracle as Moses, and by using the water for baptism, O’Reilly states that the circumstantial details here in the *VC* ‘bring to life, here and now, the sacramental continuation of Christ’s work of redemption and provision of spiritual refreshment for his pilgrim people which the Old Testament type prefigured’.¹⁰⁴⁴ Columba’s act is thus a sign of the continuing work of Christ. In this way, the Bible itself testifies to his miraculous work; just as ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever’,¹⁰⁴⁵ so too will similar miracles occur through his saints pointing people towards him.

¹⁰³⁷ L. P. Morris, ‘Did Columba’s Tunic Bring Rain? Early Medieval Typological Action and Modern Historical Method’, *Quaestio*, 1 (2000), p. 61.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-57.

¹⁰³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁴² Sharpe, ‘Introduction’, p. 59. See also his comments on this passage in note 331 on p. 345 of the translation.

¹⁰⁴³ 1 Corinthians 10:4.

¹⁰⁴⁴ O’Reilly, ‘Reading Scripture’, p. 88.

¹⁰⁴⁵ ‘*Iesus Christus heri et hodie ipse et in saecula*’, Hebrews 13:8.

A further concern regarding the nature of the witnesses in the *VC* is that, uniquely for the early Insular context, it contains five miracles attested by the author himself, accounting for 3.4% of the miracles in the text. At the end of Book II, devoted to ‘miracles of power’, Adomnán himself attests to the continuing power of Columba regarding five miracles occurring in his own lifetime, some experienced through his own eyes.¹⁰⁴⁶ Two of these are concerned with the relics of Columba, two occur through praying to Columba, and one is attributed to Columba’s intercession. Of note is that fact that these are the same issues examined in Chapter One that Bede was facing in his Northumbrian context regarding the posthumous role of the saint. Two of these miracles provides a clear allegorical message, which is worth examining here to contextualise part of Adomnán’s motive for composing the *VC*. In *VC* II.45, Columba’s relics and invoking his name in prayer twice bring favourable winds that enable the transportation of building materials for the construction and repair of the monastery. In this way, these posthumous miracles show how the saint is utilised in the ongoing expansion of his church; just as he was responsible for its original founding, the living memory of Columba continues to be a constructive presence among his community. Such an idea can, by extension, be internalised; Columba as remembered saint is also responsible for the spiritual construction of his church, that is, those men and women who follow his teachings and seek to live a Christian life shaped by his example. We must again be conscious that the *VC* was primarily written as a memorial of ‘our blessed patron’,¹⁰⁴⁷ that is, those who still belong to Columba’s monastic community. It was they who had the most to gain and learn from reading accounts of the life of their ecclesiastical forefather. The cult of saints is thus employed for both physical and spiritual edification; from the Latin *aedificare*, Columba is understood as a builder of his church.

If Columba’s life as an example to his monks was one of Adomnán’s main purposes in writing, this perhaps explains the numerical preponderance of miracles in this text compared to the others. Columba was a saint whose reputation extended widely across Britain and Ireland, just as Wilfrid had a monastic empire covering much of Anglo-Saxon

¹⁰⁴⁶ *VC* II.44-46.

¹⁰⁴⁷ ‘*Beati nostri patroni*’, *VC* First Preface, pp. 2-3. Indeed, these are the opening words of the first Preface contained within the two extant manuscripts of the *VC*, showing how, from the very beginning, this text is directed towards commemoration of Columba as founder and ongoing protector of Iona.

England,¹⁰⁴⁸ thus explaining the sheer number of people and locations mentioned in the *VC*. Together, the multitude of examples provide a broad spectrum of evidence to his sanctity. By comparison to Wilfrid, however, Adomnán's work is far more of a celebration of his subject than Stephen's *apologia* discussed above. The smaller number of miracles in the *VW* by comparison is thus reflective of the varying aims of the two authors. Likewise, the *VCA* was initially a localised text interested in commemorating the saint at Lindisfarne and thus contains even fewer miracles but with a distinctly Northumbrian emphasis; it is Bede who subsequently universalises Cuthbert and removes many of the geographical markers from the *VCA* for the miracles he keeps in the *VCB*. In all this, however, Adomnán faced the same problems as the author of the *VG*: he was chronologically removed from his subject, thus rendering access to witnesses of Columba's life and miracles difficult. The foregoing discussion, and the relative percentages of named and anonymous sources, present an author at odds with his stated methodology. Adomnán had much to say about the ideals of historical writing, and how that interacted with scripture, but was hampered by his sources in the text he could ultimately produce.

Conclusions

Considering all the texts examined in these three chapters, it is safe to conclude that a modicum of named and/or anonymous attestation for miracles was expected by early Insular audiences if reading a work of hagiography. The broad reasons given for the need to attest miracle stories have been examined above in Chapter Four and the evidence shows that this applies to these non-Bedan texts too.¹⁰⁴⁹ Such attestation took a variety of forms depending on the subject of the text, circumstances of composition and authorial intention, but was usually a complementary combination of biblical references, earlier writings, eyewitnesses and institutional memory. This fluidity in attesting miracles shows that there was no form of hierarchy between the varying types of sources. If there was, all of these authors would have sought to do the same thing in attesting their miracle material, yet the evidence suggests otherwise. However, whilst there was clearly some expectation to

¹⁰⁴⁸ S. Foot, 'Wilfrid's Monastic Empire', in Higham (ed.), *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint*, pp. 27-39.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Namely, that witness attestation reinforces the veracity of the miracle, that it is a statement of orthodoxy from the witness (particularly named witnesses), and that it shows the circles within which the author attaches themselves to.

provide witnesses to attest miracles in their texts, the extent to which these authors did so was clearly variable and was usually not their primary concern. The table below puts the first four texts examined in this chapter together alongside the *VCB* and is ordered by the percentage of Named plus Anonymous sources combined:

Table Nine: Sources for Miracles in Early Insular Hagiographical Texts

<u>Text</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Named</u>	<u>Anonymous</u>	<u>No Source Given</u>
<i>VCB</i>	46	16 (34.8%)	8 (17.4%)	22 (47.8%)
<i>VCA</i>	35	11 (31.4%)	6 (17.2%)	18 (51.4%)
<i>VW</i>	21	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	16 (76.2%)
<i>VC</i>	146	13 (8.9%)	15 (10.3%)	118 (80.8%)
<i>VG</i>	16	0 (0%)	3 (18.7%)	13 (81.3%)

The highest attestation in a non-Bedan text is the *VCA*, with 48.6% of its miracles having Named or Anonymous sources, followed by the *VW* with 23.8%, the *VC* with 19.2%, and finally the *VG* with 18.7%. Being able to provide a witness for a miracle was desirable, but came secondary to other authorial intentions. Adomnán, for example, seems to tell as many miraculous tales of Columba as possible, regardless of being able to provide witnesses for these stories or not; there are more miracles in the *VC* than the *VCA*, *VW*, *VG* and *V.Ceol* combined. The negligible difference in percentage between the *VC* and *VG*, texts written over a century distant from their subjects, compared to the *VW*, written within living memory of Wilfrid, shows that Stephen's understanding of sanctity did not rest solely on the miraculous. There is also a very clear division in the quality of attestation between the older subject material of the *VC* and *VG* compared to the more recent matter in the *VCB* and *VCA*.

Bede's standards in the *VCB* appear the highest out of all the texts examined in these chapters. One might be tempted to explain this through his experience of a prolific career of writing; Bede, well-read and well-practised, held himself to greater standards. Among the other authors, only Adomnán is known to have produced more than one text. However, what these chapters have shown is that the reality is more nuanced than that. Whilst Bede was more experienced in composing extended pieces of literature, individual authorial intention played a greater role when considering both the use of miracles and

their witnesses. Hagiography in the early Insular world should not be considered a monolithic genre but broad and multi-faceted, despite these authors holding many similar aims and narrating similar incidents in the life of a saint. The *V.Ceol*, for example, defies easy categorization and crosses genre boundaries by only including a single miracle. Turning to the question of innovation versus tradition therefore, Bede is part of a shared understanding among his peers that writing about miracles in a hagiographical context requires at least some attestation. The extent to which he followed this, however, exceeds these other authors, a fact particularly evidenced in the 12 additional miracles he added in the *VCB*.¹⁰⁵⁰ It is evident that early Insular authors approached the miraculous in a variety of different ways. Adomnán seemed to prefer quantity of miracles over the quality of their attestation; the Whitby author was ashamed they did not know more but relied on the intellectual prowess of their subject to justify those they did include; Bede and the anonymous author at Lindisfarne took a more balanced approach. The use of structure to narrate miracles also played a varying role among these texts: Adomnán is very thematic; Bede, the author of the *VCA* and Stephen are more chronological; the Whitby author appealed to scripture to justify the jumbled nature of her text. The following chapter will explore this further, drawing together some of the threads from this chapter and the previous two to show how Bede utilised the structure of his *HE* in narrating the miracles of Cuthbert and John of Beverley to promote his ideals of spiritual leadership.

¹⁰⁵⁰ See Table Seven and discussion.

Chapter Seven

Cuthbert, Æthelwald and John, HE IV.27-V.6: Miracles and Episcopal Reform

Sophia Boesch Gajano suggested that a close qualitative and quantitative analysis of miracle accounts, particularly using grids or tables, can reveal a text's content or purpose in ways that may otherwise have passed unnoticed.¹⁰⁵¹ Such an approach has been undertaken by John Eby, who argued that two sections of the *VCB* reveal that the spiritual transitions in Cuthbert's life can be read through a Eucharistic lens.¹⁰⁵² In a similar manner, in producing the data for Chapter Four and Appendix Two in particular, I discovered a cluster of miracles in *HE* IV.27-V.6 concerning the lives of Cuthbert (c.635-687),¹⁰⁵³ Æthelwald (d. c.699),¹⁰⁵⁴ and John (d.721),¹⁰⁵⁵ which serves as an important case study of the way in which Bede structures his miracle stories to further promote his ideals of reform. This chapter will therefore present the sequence in text first, before displaying it in a table for clearer reference. Subsequently, the sequence will be explained from two angles. First, Bede's account of the life and miracles of Bishop John in *HE* V.2-6 is written to portray John in a similar light to Cuthbert at the end of the preceding Book. John was responsible for Bede's ordination as both deacon and priest,¹⁰⁵⁶ and here I suggest that Bede's spiritual debt to John is reflected in the account of his life. Second, Cuthbert and John, taken together, reflect shared qualities of Bede's ideal bishop. Thacker has suggested that 'the guardians of Cuthbert's cult were anxious to present their saint as an appropriate patron for an episcopal see', showing how towards the beginning of both the *VCA* and *VCB*

¹⁰⁵¹ S. Boesch Gajano, 'The Use and Abuse of Miracles in Early Medieval Culture', in L. K. Little and B. H. Rosenwein (eds.), *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings* (Oxford, 1998), p. 335.

¹⁰⁵² Eby, 'Bringing the *Vita* to life', summarised at pp. 333-334.

¹⁰⁵³ D. Rollason and R. B. Dobson, 'Cuthbert', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [accessed 7 November 2015].

¹⁰⁵⁴ Assuming he lived twelve years after Cuthbert's death in 687 and not twelve years after Cuthbert became bishop and left Farne in 685, *HE* V.1. *The Old English Martyrology* dates his death to 21 April, C. Rauer (ed. and trans.), *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 82-85.

¹⁰⁵⁵ D. M. Palliser, 'John of Beverley', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [accessed 7 November 2015]; *HE* V.6.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *HE* V.24, p. 567.

there are prophecies concerning Cuthbert's future role as a bishop.¹⁰⁵⁷ This chapter argues that this consideration of episcopal appropriateness extends to John. The only miracles of John recorded by Bede begin when he is Bishop of Hexham; there are none from his earlier life, meaning that it is John as a bishop specifically that Bede chose to focus on.¹⁰⁵⁸ Taken together with *HE* V.1 on Æthelwald, *HE* V.2-6 propose that John is a true and worthy successor of Cuthbert. I will ultimately argue that John, through his miracles, is being portrayed in a Cuthbertine model of sanctity, and that by extension, John's more traditional episcopacy is reflected back onto Cuthbert. These chapters of the *HE* serve as a means to an end, providing the modern reader with a collection of miracle stories that draw together some of the key themes of this thesis: Bede's techniques as an author and historian, his understanding of scripture, his understanding of genre, and the role of narrative in influencing his society.

The Sequence

The first half of the sequence regards the life of Cuthbert, a section Rosenthal describes as 'a narrative masterpiece, in which a mile of impression is conjured up by a few yards of prose'.¹⁰⁵⁹ In *HE* IV.26, there are no recorded miracles. There are then six chapters of miracles regarding Cuthbert, largely stemming from the *VCM* and *VCB*; the portrayal of Cuthbert here appears to be largely a summary of those two earlier works, with an addendum in *HE* IV.31 and 32. *HE* IV.27 refers to the fact that he had 'distinguished himself by great tokens of his spiritual powers' prior to his life at Lindisfarne.¹⁰⁶⁰ Whilst not mentioning any specific incidents by name here in this chapter of the *HE*, Bede clearly knew of earlier miracles and merely alludes to them here, as evidenced in his previous works. In *HE* IV.28 Cuthbert exorcises the Farne Island of evil spirits that made it previously uninhabitable. In the same chapter a spring of water is found by his prayers, and

¹⁰⁵⁷ *VCA* I.3 and *VCB* VIII. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', pp. 111-112.

¹⁰⁵⁸ This led Wilson to suggest that Bede's portrayal of John in the *HE* cannot technically be called a *vita*, because *vitae* 'represent different episodes of the saint's adult life', not just a single period. S. E. Wilson, *The Life and After-Life of St. John of Beverley: The Evolution of the Cult of an Anglo-Saxon Saint* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 45.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Rosenthal, 'Bede's *Life of Cuthbert*', p. 609.

¹⁰⁶⁰ '*magnis virtutum signis effulgeret*', *HE* IV.27, pp. 434-435.

a crop of barley miraculously grows on the island ‘long after the proper time of sowing... when there seemed no hope of any harvest’.¹⁰⁶¹ In *HE* IV.29, Cuthbert is foretold by divine oracle that he would soon die and reveals this to ‘certain people’, and the priest Herbert asks to die on the same day as Cuthbert, which Cuthbert foresees will also come to pass.¹⁰⁶² In *HE* IV.30, we are told that his ‘sublime life had been attested before his death by frequent signs [*indiciis*] and miracles [*miraculorum*]’.¹⁰⁶³ After eleven years, Cuthbert’s body and burial clothing is found to be incorrupt, a common trope of a saint’s purity. Bede also mentions ‘miracles of healing’ at his tomb, as recorded in *VCB* XLI-XLVI. However, he then adds two new miracles ‘which I have recently chanced to hear’.¹⁰⁶⁴ These two miracles are important for the witness credentials that Bede attaches to them. The first, in *HE* IV.31 involves Brother Baduthegn’s curing of paralysis by praying at Cuthbert’s tomb. It is implied that Bede was told this story by the brothers at Lindisfarne and not by Baduthegn himself. If the story in *HE* IV.31 had come to Bede from Baduthegn himself, surely he would have stated as such, as he does in the following miracle of the healing of an eye tumour by Cuthbert’s relics in *HE* IV.32, which was told to Bede ‘recently by the very brother to whom it happened’.¹⁰⁶⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, in his commentary on the *HE*, states that these final two chapters added to the previous four show that ‘the holy life of a bishop is immediately efficacious but its effects are even more notable after death’.¹⁰⁶⁶ In this first section of the sequence at the end of *HE* IV therefore, we have six chapters of miracles or allusions to miracles, attested by trustworthy eyewitnesses (either here in the *HE* or through the longer versions recorded in the *VCM* and *VCB*), ending with a story reinforced by the authority of a direct recipient of a miracle.¹⁰⁶⁷

¹⁰⁶¹ ‘*ultra omne tempus serendi... ultra omnem spem fructificandi*’, *HE* IV.28, pp. 436-437. These stories are expanded in *VCB* XVII-XIX.

¹⁰⁶² ‘*eodem nonnullis*’, *HE* IV.29, p. 441. Also recorded in *VCB* XXVIII.

¹⁰⁶³ ‘*ante mortem vita sublimis crebris etiam miraculorum patebat indiciis*’, *HE* IV.29, pp. 442-443.

¹⁰⁶⁴ ‘*quae nos nuper audisse contigit*’, *HE* IV.30, pp. 444-445.

¹⁰⁶⁵ ‘*nuper mihi per ipsum in quo factum est fratrem innotuit*’, *HE* IV.31, p. 447.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary*, p. 173.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Note, these six chapters are unaffected by the missing chapters which occur in the *c* class manuscripts of the *HE*, discussed in the Introduction to Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds. J. McClure and R. Collins (Oxford, 2008), pp. xx-xxiii and p. 404.

The second half of this sequence also contains six chapters on miracles, one of Cuthbert's successor on the Farne Islands, Æthelwald, and five from Bede's former bishop John, who became Bishop of Hexham in 687 then of York in 706. The first chapter, in *HE* V.1 relates to the calming of a fierce storm at sea, is another story told to Bede by the direct recipient of a miracle, Guthfrith, abbot of Lindisfarne. This is possibly the same Guthfrith, then a sacrist, whom Bede mentions in the Preface to the *VCB*.¹⁰⁶⁸ There then follows five miracles of Bishop John, 'which rely on the testimony of people who were all intimate with John during his lifetime'.¹⁰⁶⁹ The first three of these are related as eyewitness accounts of Berhthun, John's former deacon and now abbot at Beverley. The fourth miracle, in *HE* V.5, is clearly marked as being second-hand information: 'The abbot [Berhthun] recounted the miracle, though he was not himself present when it happened, but it was told to him by some who were there'.¹⁰⁷⁰ In this way, Bede clearly marks a distinction between the authority of the source behind this miracle and the ones that proceeded it. The fifth miracle by John, and the final one in this sequence, was told by Herebald, abbot at Tynemouth, who had had a serious fall whilst racing a horse and was subsequently healed by John's prayers (and the assistance of a doctor).¹⁰⁷¹ I have categorised this miracle as a first-hand eyewitness account for two reasons. First, due to the fact that it is related in the first-person, it appears as if these were the very words of Herebald himself. As suggested elsewhere in this thesis, Bede believed the use of the first person in Scripture suggested eyewitness testimony, and a natural reading of *HE* V.6 would suggest this is the case.¹⁰⁷² Second, as Bede begins to recount the story, he uses the phrase 'he said', *inquit*, to begin the narration, and this same phrase is also used in Guthfrith's first-hand account in *HE* V.1. This same choice of wording to begin the narrative thus asks the reader to take both stories as personal testimony to miraculous events; the first story is a clear case of personal involvement, the same use of language in

¹⁰⁶⁸ *VCB* Prologus, p. 146.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Wilson, *Life and After-Life*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷⁰ '*Hoc autem miraculum memoratus abbas non se praesente factum, sed ab his qui praesentes fuere sibi perhibet esse relatam*', *HE* V.5, p. 465.

¹⁰⁷¹ Cf. Plummer, *Baedae Opera Historica*, Vol. 2, p. 277 who says there is 'nothing distinctly miraculous' about this story.

¹⁰⁷² Pp. 81-82, above.

HE V.6 suggests we should read the latter in the same way. Following the suggestions in Chapters Four and Five in particular, the inclusion of named eyewitnesses for the miracles of John therefore invited the interested reader to examine their testimony for themselves should they so desire. After all, John had only died ten years before the *HE* was written. Bede had personally known John, and he had clearly spoken to some of those who knew him closest. Relying upon strong eyewitness testimony therefore, Bede could ensure that his portrayal of John was not only accurate but also trustworthy, following his own high standards that he had already laid out in the Preface of the *HE*. These chapters thus form a distinct grouping: a chapter devoid of miracles, six chapters on the miracles of Cuthbert ending *HE* IV, then *HE* V opening with six chapters on the miracles of Æthelwald and John, ending with another chapter without miracles. We can thus perceive both sets of miracles as a miraculous diptych; they can be read and reflected upon individually, yet structurally are also meant to be taken together as a whole. In addition, the sequence of Cuthbert and John's miracles here in the *HE* moves from eyewitness or third-hand testimony to a final chapter narrated by a direct recipient of the bishop's spiritual power, clearly displaying a sense of authoritative progression. The significance behind this sequence of chapters will now be analysed.

Table Ten: Sequence of Miracles and their Sources in HE IV.26-V.7

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Miracle-Worker</u>	<u>Miracle</u>	<u>Source</u>
<i>HE</i> IV.26	NONE	NO MENTION	N/A
<i>HE</i> IV.27	Cuthbert	Reference to 'signs and miracles'	(As recorded in Bede's <i>VCM</i> and <i>VCB</i>)
<i>HE</i> IV.28	Cuthbert	Exorcism and Nature Miracle	Eyewitnesses at Lindisfarne?
<i>HE</i> IV.29	Cuthbert	Prophecy	Third-hand
<i>HE</i> IV.30	Cuthbert	Nature Miracle and reference to Healings in <i>VCB</i>	Eyewitnesses at Lindisfarne?
<i>HE</i> IV.31	Cuthbert	Healing + references to Healing in <i>VCB</i>	Third-hand
<i>HE</i> IV.32	Cuthbert	Healing	Recipient of the Miracle

<i>HE</i> V.1	Æthelwald	Nature Miracle	Recipient of the Miracle
<i>HE</i> V.2	John	Healings	An Eyewitness
<i>HE</i> V.3	John	Healing	An Eyewitness
<i>HE</i> V.4	John	Healing	An Eyewitness
<i>HE</i> V.5	John	Healing	Third-hand
<i>HE</i> V.6	John	Healing	Recipient of the Miracle
<i>HE</i> V.7	NONE	NO MENTION	N/A

Analysis

There are at least three explanations for this sequence. Firstly, perhaps most obviously, John, with the chapter on Æthelwald as a bridge, is being portrayed in a like manner to Cuthbert. Bede's honouring of John as his former diocesan bishop, and as the one responsible for his ordination, led him to portray John in a positive manner akin to the famed Northumbrian saint, and this included accounts of miracles as attested by eyewitnesses. Secondly, juxtaposed together, John and Cuthbert reflect qualities of Bede's ideal episcopacy, one who both values the monastic ideal but also cares for his diocese in practical ways. In our case study, this is reflected in part by the miracles they perform. Thacker has suggested that Bede's 'presentation of Cuthbert reflects above all his desire to link Northumbria's leading saint with the reforming ideals formulated in his biblical commentaries'.¹⁰⁷³ The contention of this chapter is to show that we may also add John in addition to Cuthbert. Finally, John and Æthelwald are in a fairly straightforward sense understood as worthy successors to Cuthbert, and thus appear together at this juncture of the *HE* after Cuthbert. However, Bede's promotion of John here in the *HE* again reveals a quality Bede favoured for the ideal bishop within Northumbria: that episcopal power best serves the laity in a smaller, more localised fashion compared to the geographically dispersed sees of Wilfrid or Theodore. In this regard, Bede's record of Cuthbert and John's lives accords with Heffernan's definition of the purpose of hagiography, which 'is to teach (*docere*) the truth of the faith through the principle of individual example'.¹⁰⁷⁴ For Bede, concerned with the reform of his church, their examples are part of the truth he desires

¹⁰⁷³ Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St. Cuthbert', p. 121.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 19.

Northumbria to follow, contrary to the assertion made by Higham that ‘there is comparatively little which is explicitly and actively reformist in the *EH*, as regards the Church at least’.¹⁰⁷⁵ In the first full length academic study on John, Susan Wilson tentatively suggests the possibility that Bede saw John ‘in the same mould as Cuthbert, and wished to show a continuation of Cuthbertian values in the next generation of bishops’.¹⁰⁷⁶ What follows will provide evidence to confirm this hypothesis.

1. John as a reflection of Cuthbert

First and foremost, this sequence of the *HE* serves to edify the memory of John by placing him next to the great Northumbrian saint Cuthbert. As mentioned, John had ordained Bede as both deacon and priest, and was Bede’s bishop at Hexham until c. 706. In this capacity, he would have had a formative influence on the young Bede, and *HE* V.2-6 thus serves as a respectful memorial for John. By placing John’s life immediately after that of Cuthbert, Bede is showing that his former bishop should be considered just as important as his predecessor. This is seen in a few different ways. First, in both Cuthbert’s and John’s lives in the *HE*, Bede has spoken to eyewitnesses directly to ascertain the veracity of the miracle stories he recounts, in particular *HE* IV.31 and 32. Bede is clear that he had spoken to eyewitnesses on Lindisfarne when composing the *VCB*.¹⁰⁷⁷ When it came to writing John’s life, Bede wanted to portray it with the same level of reliability as his accounts of Cuthbert’s life. Indeed, every chapter on John in *HE* V is attested by an eyewitness, exceeding the quality of attestation to events in Cuthbert’s life at the end of *HE* IV.¹⁰⁷⁸ Cuthbert has four chapters of miracles unattested, then one potentially from an eyewitness in *HE* IV.31,¹⁰⁷⁹ before closing with one definitely received from an eyewitness recipient of a miracle in *HE* IV.32. John on the other hand has three chapters attested by

¹⁰⁷⁵ Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, p. 56. Cf. Thacker, ‘Bede’s Ideal of Reform’, p. 131.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Wilson, *Life and After-Life*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *VCB* Prologue.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Bearing in mind, as argued in Chapters Four and Five, that most witnesses to Cuthbert’s early life would have been dead by the time Bede composed the *HE*.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Bede mentions that Baduthegn is still alive, but also mentions the ‘testimony of all the brothers and the guests who visited there’ (*testimonium habens ab universis fratribus cunctisque supervenientibus hospitibus*), leaving the reader unsure as to where he received his information from, pp. 444-445.

eyewitnesses, one received second hand via an eyewitness in *HE* V.5, and a final one from an eyewitness recipient of a miracle in *HE* V.6.

Secondly, following from this, this is a question of spiritual authority for Bede; he writes to show John as holding similar efficacious power as Cuthbert through his healing miracles, although John is not shown to prophesy or have power over nature as Cuthbert did. Whilst not every bishop in the *HE* is recorded as being a miracle-worker, Simon Coates has stated that ‘miracles offered Bede a means of defining episcopal power’.¹⁰⁸⁰ In particular, he shows how all the miracles recorded of John are performed whilst he is carrying out episcopal duties, and that the *VCB* shows there is a noticeable change in the type of miracles performed by Cuthbert after he becomes bishop.¹⁰⁸¹ Following J. L. Derouet, these are primarily ‘horizontal’ miracles whereby the bishop uses his miraculous powers in a pastoral sense to aid those around him, particularly through healing. Coates suggests that this connection between miracle-working bishop and layman ‘both affirmed and created relationships of dominance and subordination. By communicating their power through healing miracles, bishops promoted and reinforced the dependence of communities upon their authority’.¹⁰⁸² Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the healing miracles performed by Cuthbert and John are also a form of liberation whereby the recipient is nevertheless freed from the physical power of sin over the body, whether that is Baduthegn’s paralysis cured by Cuthbert in *HE* IV.31, or the mute boy cured by John in *HE* V.2. Concerning the latter miracle, Irina Dumitrescu has suggested that John’s actions in making the young boy speak is also a form of freedom by promoting the acceptance of English, that is, the vernacular language of the layman over the liturgical Latin shared amongst the clergy of Western Europe.¹⁰⁸³ Through such miracles, Bede desires John to be remembered as a miracle-working bishop alongside Cuthbert, and deliberately placing the account of John’s life immediately after Cuthbert links the two together in the reader’s mind.¹⁰⁸⁴

¹⁰⁸⁰ S. Coates, ‘Bede – the Miraculous and Episcopal Authority in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Downside Review*, 113 (1995), p. 219.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 221, and pp. 222-223.

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁸³ I. A. Dumitrescu, ‘Bede’s Liberation Philology: Releasing the English Tongue’, *PMLA*, 128, no. 1 (Jan., 2013), pp. 40-56.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *HE* V.1 in this context should be read as tying up the loose end of Cuthbert’s successor as hermit on the Farne island before proceeding to John’s life.

The very nature of a written account permanently memorialises the individual in question, and also serves to authorise *this* account of their lives as opposed to an unofficial, collective remembrance.¹⁰⁸⁵ This written account by Bede is how he wanted John to be remembered. Bede was in a good position to write a life of John, having known him personally, and these five chapters represent the first account of his life until Folcard's *Vita Sancti Johannis*, composed in the second half of the eleventh century.¹⁰⁸⁶ In a similar way that he had already written two *vitae* of Cuthbert, *HE* V.2-6 represent Bede's desire for his former bishop to be remembered and serve as an exemplar for his fellow Northumbrians. Bede may well have spoken to eyewitnesses regarding Cuthbert and John's lives, but it is ultimately his own account, his own interpretation of these sources that is written down for posterity. In this way, Bede becomes 'a collector, a recorder and an "authorizer" of the particular version or variant he inscribes in his history'.¹⁰⁸⁷

Thirdly, Bede devotes a similar amount of space to narrate John's life in the *HE* as he does to Cuthbert (five chapters against Cuthbert's six), although John does appear earlier in *HE* IV.23 among a list of fellow bishops too. This shows an equal prominence for both individuals in the *HE*. Finally, John also stands out of Book Five of the *HE* as the bishop *par excellence*. Each Book in the *HE* includes at least one extended section devoted to particular bishops, someone who was influential in the growth or development of Christianity in that particular period of Anglo-Saxon history. In *HE* I there is Germanus, fighting against the Pelagians and encouraging British Christians. In *HE* II, Paulinus brings Christianity to the Northumbrians, sent by Gregory, the Bishop of Rome, whose life and works are detailed in *HE* II.1. In *HE* III, Aidan re-establishes the Christian faith in Northumbria under King Oswald. At the start of *HE* IV, Theodore serves as archbishop of the Angles before we arrive at Cuthbert himself at the end of that Book. John is Bede's episcopal exemplar at the start of *HE* V, though with a large chapter devoted to Wilfrid in *HE* V.19. It is to this episcopal consideration that we now turn, considering the relationship between Cuthbert and John in particular.

¹⁰⁸⁵ M. Yoon, 'Origin and Supplement', pp. 221-222.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Folcard, *Life of Saint John, Bishop of York*, in S. E. Wilson (ed. and trans.), *The Life and After-Life of St. John of Beverley* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 143-156.

¹⁰⁸⁷ J. McNamara, 'Bede's Role in Circulating Legend in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 7 (1994), pp. 66-67.

2. Cuthbert and John: Shared Characteristics for Bede's Ideal Bishop

The second explanation for this sequence, as suggested by Wilson, is that Bede also 'represents John, whom he calls *'vir sanctus'*, as an ideal type of bishop'.¹⁰⁸⁸ Ever since Alan Thacker's highly influential 1983 article, historians have recognised the reforming impulse of Bede's *oeuvre*,¹⁰⁸⁹ and part of Thacker's analysis involved the role of Cuthbert as *doctore* of the Northumbrian Church.¹⁰⁹⁰ *HE* IV.27-V.6 presents both Cuthbert and John, taken together, as a model for an ideal bishop that Bede wished to champion. From the evidence available, this model has two main features: 1. it is pastoral, and by extension, localised, and 2. it nevertheless allows the bishop to focus on his own salvation through prayer and private contemplation.¹⁰⁹¹ Holder shows how contemplation need not be some sort of mystical, solitary experience but includes practical measures such as prayer, communion and meditating on the scriptures to 'provide pastors and teachers with the wisdom and insight they need to perform their ministry'.¹⁰⁹² Such a model bears a clear resemblance to arguably Bede's greatest patristic influence, Gregory the Great.¹⁰⁹³ Gregory was a monk-turned-pope, and balanced his life between the demanding role of Bishop of Rome and the contemplative reflection he had enjoyed from his time in the monastery. This dual insight helped him write the *Regula Pastoralis*,¹⁰⁹⁴ a text designed to instruct and inform the lives of bishops and clergy throughout Europe. Whilst there are no direct quotations from the *Regula Pastoralis* in Bede's *HE*, Bede knew of the work and refers to it elsewhere.¹⁰⁹⁵ Indeed, Bede admonishes bishop Ecgberht to read this work in 'which

¹⁰⁸⁸ Wilson, *Life and After-Life*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁸⁹ See the multiple articles on this theme by Scott DeGregorio, p. 18, fn. 78, above.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 136-143.

¹⁰⁹¹ Such a model is to be distinguished from the 'Roman' model promoted through Stephen of Ripon's portrayal of Wilfrid. See Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, Chapters Two to Four for Stephen's chosen model, and Chapter Five for the comparison, where he contrasts Cuthbert's sanctity as one marked by asceticism, Wilfrid's as one marked by spiritual martyrdom.

¹⁰⁹² A. Holder, 'Christ as Incarnate Wisdom in Bede's Commentary on the Song of Songs', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006), p. 183.

¹⁰⁹³ On their relationship, see Chapter One, above, Meyvaert, *Bede and Gregory the Great*, and DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great'.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, trans. H. Davis (London, 1950).

¹⁰⁹⁵ Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, Appendix E, pp. 211-212 has no reference to the text except where it is mentioned by name in *HE* II.1. For an example of Bede's knowledge of the text, however, see Bede, *On Ezra*

[Gregory] discourses very attentively on both the conduct and the failings of rulers'.¹⁰⁹⁶ The model of bishop Bede envisaged, as promoted in Cuthbert and John, is distinctly Gregorian, namely, that 'it is helpful to engage in the good works of the active life which may in their turn act as a springboard towards divine contemplation'.¹⁰⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Stancliffe also detects an Irish influence on Cuthbert's life - 'what we would expect from a country recently evangelised by the Irish'.¹⁰⁹⁸ It is perhaps safest to conclude that the contrast between pastoral care and a life of monastic contemplation for all Christians was a difficult equilibrium to maintain, yet a balanced approach was what Bede favoured most. Just three chapters before our section in question, for example, we find the cowherd-turned-evangelist Caedmon portrayed as 'both a contemplative exegete, ruminating on scripture... and a vernacular preacher whose words are able "to turn his hearers away from delight of sin and arouse in them the love and practice of good works"'.¹⁰⁹⁹ This dichotomy between the active and contemplative life is best exemplified in our section under examination by Bede's description of Cuthbert (as Prior of Melrose) in *HE* IV.27:

Not only did he teach those in the monastery how to live under the Rule and show them an example of it at the same time, but he also sought to convert the neighbouring people far and wide from a life of foolish customs to a love of heavenly joys... he frequently went forth from the monastery to correct the errors of those who had sinned.¹¹⁰⁰

and *Nehemiah*, p. 139, coming just after a section referring to Ezra as '*pontifex, id est archepiscopus*', a designation DeGregorio convincingly states is linking Bede's commentary on Ezra with an ideal of ecclesiastical reform for Northumbria. See the Introduction to this commentary, pp. xxxi-xxxvi, building on DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church'.

¹⁰⁹⁶ '*quibus de uita simul et uitiiis rectorum... multum curiose disseruit*', Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*, pp. 126-127. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p. 135 also draws attention to the life of Benedict in Gregory's *Dialogi* Book II as another text which influenced Bede's thinking on the role of the ideal preacher.

¹⁰⁹⁷ C. Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary', in G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe, *Cuthbert: His Cult and Community to A.D. 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 38.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-42.

¹⁰⁹⁹ DeGregorio, 'Visions of Reform', p. 222, quoting *HE* IV.24 directly.

¹¹⁰⁰ '*Nec solum ipsi monasterio regularis vitae monita simul et exempla praebebat, sed et vulgus circumpositum longe lateque a vita stultae consuetudinis ad caelestium gaudiorum convertere curabat*

Aside from the passage above, Cuthbert, as bishop, ‘protected the people who had been committed to his charge with his constant prayers and summoned them to heavenly things by his wholesome admonitions. He taught them what should be done but first showed them how to do it by his own example, *as is most helpful for a teacher to do*’.¹¹⁰¹ This last phrase shows Bede’s favour of a bishop who is keenly involved in the spiritual affairs of his see. Duncan sees Cuthbert’s time on Farne as preparation for his future ascendancy to the bishopric, the building of his shelter preceding the divine foundation upon which he helped build the Northumbrian church.¹¹⁰² Bede’s choice to include in *HE* IV.28 the miracles on Farne, which carry strong biblical resonances,¹¹⁰³ thus points the reader to the idea that this chapter should indeed be read with the episcopacy in mind. Likewise, John is portrayed as actively engaged with his diocese: twice he dedicates a church whilst visiting a local *gesith*,¹¹⁰⁴ he visits a monastery,¹¹⁰⁵ and is seen in the custom of giving alms.¹¹⁰⁶ In John’s example, the bishop is involved in the lives of both clergy and laity. This is Christian mission from the bottom up, working among the lower ends of society in the same manner as Jesus’ first followers as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. As Eby suggests, ‘the work of a Christian is to go outside the confines of the Church to minister to the world’.¹¹⁰⁷

amorem... ad utrorumque ergo corrigendum errorem crebro ipse de monasterio egressus, *HE* IV.27, pp. 432-433.

¹¹⁰¹ ‘*Commissam namque sibi plebem et orationibus protegebat adsiduis et admonitionibus saluberrimis ad caelestia vocabat; et, quod maxime doctores iuvare solet, ea quae agenda docebat ipse prius agendo praemonstrabat*’, *HE* IV.28, pp. 438-439. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁰² S. Duncan, ‘*Signa De Caelo* in the Lives of St Cuthbert: The Impact of Biblical Exegesis and Imagery on Early Medieval Hagiography’, *Heythrop Journal*, 41, no. 4 (2000), pp. 401-402.

¹¹⁰³ For example, the spring of water from the rock can be read figuratively as the ‘living water’, the Holy Spirit promised by Christ, who is himself the rock. Alternatively, though she is cautious to suggest this attribution, the rock can represent the Church itself, the water being the sacrament of baptism. *Ibid.*, pp. 402-403.

¹¹⁰⁴ *HE* V.4 and 5.

¹¹⁰⁵ *HE* V.3.

¹¹⁰⁶ *HE* V.2.

¹¹⁰⁷ Eby, ‘Bringing the *Vita* to Life’, p. 335.

A consequence of Bede's desire for actively involved bishops is the necessity for multiple, smaller bishoprics that could suitably address the needs of the laity, as opposed to one large Northumbrian diocese like that held for a time by Wilfrid. As evidenced by his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*, adequate pastoral care was a great concern for Bede. He wrote this text in November 734, and it serves as something of a polished treatise for Bede's final hopes for the future of Northumbria; he died six months later in May 735. In the *Epistola*, he explains that 'the places in the diocese you [Ecgbert] guide are too widespread for you to be able to travel through them all and preach the word of God in every single hamlet and farmstead by yourself, even making use of the course of a whole year'.¹¹⁰⁸ He therefore advocates more clergy to aid in this task. Furthermore, in order 'to [establish] our race's Church in a better condition than it has been in up to now', Bede requests of Ecgbert a church council to be held to consecrate more bishops,¹¹⁰⁹ following the plan of Gregory the Great as recorded in *HE* I.29 for twelve bishops plus a metropolitan to be established North of the Humber.¹¹¹⁰ This need for more bishops had been a noted concern for several decades. Sixty-one years previously, at the Council of Hertford convened by Archbishop Theodore in 673, the ninth *capitulum* highlighted that 'more bishops shall be created as the number of the faithful increases'.¹¹¹¹ Such a suggestion had not been carried out sufficiently however, something Bede desired to rectify. In this way, he argues, 'as the number of teachers grows larger the Church of Christ may be more perfectly instructed in those matters which affect the observance of holy religion'.¹¹¹² The underlying assumption is one of secular and ecclesiastical authority working harmoniously together; Ecgbert was the cousin of Ceolwulf, the dedicatee of the

¹¹⁰⁸ 'quia latiora sunt spatia locorum quae ad gubernacula tuae diocesis pertinent, quam ut solus per omnia discurrere et in singulis uiculis atque agellis uerbum Dei praedicare, etiam anni totius emenso curriculo, sufficias', Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*, pp. 130-131.

¹¹⁰⁹ 'statum nostrae gentis ecclesiasticum in melius quam hactenus fuerat instaurare curetis', *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

¹¹¹⁰ DeGregorio, 'A Document in Church Reform?', p. 102 shows there are clear connections between this request to Ecgbert and his commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah.

¹¹¹¹ 'Ut plures episcopi crescente numero fidelium augerentur', *HE* IV.5, pp. 352-353.

¹¹¹² 'quatinus abundante numero magistrorum perfectius ecclesia Christi in his quae ad cultum sacrae religionis pertinent institutur', Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*, pp. 140-141.

HE, who ruled as King of Northumbria until his abdication in 737.¹¹¹³ Indeed, Bede writes that Ceolwulf will be ‘a most willing helper for such a righteous task’.¹¹¹⁴ Bede suggests that such an increase of bishoprics will thus divide the ‘enormous weight of ecclesiastical government’.¹¹¹⁵ DeGregorio is thus justified in highlighting ‘the high importance [Bede] attached to Gregory’s plan, as one sure step Ecgbert should take towards improving pastoral administration’.¹¹¹⁶ Similarly, Kirby has highlighted the fact that Bede was critical of those ‘neglecting their pastoral responsibilities to preach and minister’.¹¹¹⁷ It must be noted that by the time Bede closed the account of his *HE* around 731, only four bishoprics had been created in Northumbria,¹¹¹⁸ compared to the eleven South of the Humber, including Canterbury as a metropolitan diocese.¹¹¹⁹ As a result, the necessity for more bishops would have been at the forefront of Bede’s mind, and ideally such men should follow the episcopal pattern as exemplified by Cuthbert and John in *HE* IV.27-V.6.

Regarding the solitary, contemplative nature of the episcopacy, Bede writes in the *HE* that both Cuthbert and John devoted themselves to prayer, echoing Christ taking himself off into the wilderness to pray after healing or teaching in Galilee.¹¹²⁰ Elsewhere,

¹¹¹³ ‘Continuations’, in B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, (eds. and trans.), *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), p. 573. Cf. J. E. Story, ‘After Bede: Continuing the Ecclesiastical History’, in S. Baxter, C. Karkov, J. E. Nelson and D. Pelteret (eds.), *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 165-184.

¹¹¹⁴ ‘*promptissimum tam iusti laboris adiutorem*’, Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*, pp. 138-139.

¹¹¹⁵ ‘*enorme pondus ecclesiastici regiminis*’, *Ibid.*, p. 140. The translation is taken from Bede, *Letter to Ecgbert*, in *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds. R. Collins and J. McClure (Oxford, 2008), p. 349, which I believe captures the forceful nature of Bede’s rhetoric better than ‘the guiding of the Church, being a matter of such weight’ in Wood and Grocock. A. Thacker, ‘Priests and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England’, in G. H. Brown and L. E. Voigts (eds.), *The Study of Medieval Manuscripts of England: Festschrift in Honor of Richard W. Pfaff* (Tempe, 2010), p. 203 highlights how this episcopal burden often fell on the priests.

¹¹¹⁶ DeGregorio, ‘Visions of Reform’, p. 215.

¹¹¹⁷ Kirby, ‘The Genesis of a Cult’, p. 384.

¹¹¹⁸ York, Hexham, Lindisfarne and Whithorn. *HE* V.23.

¹¹¹⁹ Two in Kent (Rochester and Canterbury), one in Essex (London), two for the East Angles, two for the West Saxons, one for Mercia (Lichfield), one for those West of the Severn, one for the Hwicce and one in Lindsey. *HE* V.23.

¹¹²⁰ Mark 1:35, Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12.

Bede goes out of his way to highlight the contemplative origins of bishops. In *HE* IV.12, he states that Bosa and Eata ‘were promoted to the rank of bishop from a monastic community’.¹¹²¹ This example is significant as Bosa was Bishop of York and Eata at Hexham and Lindisfarne, the future sees of Cuthbert and John. Likewise, Gregory the Great had monastic origins before becoming the Bishop of Rome in 590. In this way, their monastic background serves as a precedent for their successors, showing that there was nothing unusual in such a practice; Cuthbert was a monk at Lindisfarne, and John had been a monk at the monastery at Whitby.¹¹²² The three chapters whilst Cuthbert was still alive all mention his solitary life, prayer and contemplation,¹¹²³ and this theme is expanded in Bede’s *vitae* of Cuthbert. Likewise, John’s prayer causes the healing of the nun in *HE* V.3, the servant in V.5, and his clergyman Herebald in V.6, where he ‘spent the whole night alone in vigil and prayer’.¹¹²⁴ As a further example, Bede comments that John had an oratory in which he ‘very often used to devote himself to prayer and reading when a favourable opportunity occurred, *especially in Lent*’, providing additional evidence of John in the pattern of the praying, contemplative Cuthbert.¹¹²⁵ The phrase ‘especially in Lent’ also lends credence to Trent Foley’s suggestion that one reason Bede emphasised suffering in his *VCB* was for personal meditation and reflection during Lent, as Cuthbert’s feast day always occurs in Lent, thus further linking the two saints.¹¹²⁶

Furthermore, both Cuthbert and John retire from their roles as bishop when they are reaching the end of their lives.¹¹²⁷ For John, Bede is explicit that such a decision is a responsible one because ‘he was unable to administer the bishopric’;¹¹²⁸ for Bede, a bishop must be able to sufficiently care for his diocese, and as John could no longer do so, retiring was the most appropriate thing to do. He thus ‘ended his days in a way of life honouring to

¹¹²¹ ‘*ambo de monarchorum collegio in episcopatus gradum adsciti*’, *HE* IV.12, pp. 370-371.

¹¹²² *HE* IV.23.

¹¹²³ *HE* IV.27-29.

¹¹²⁴ ‘*solus in oratione persistens noctem ducebat pervigilem*’, *HE* V.6.

¹¹²⁵ ‘*oportunitas adridebat temporis, et maxime in Quadragesima, manere cum paucis atque orationibus ac lectioni quietus operam dare consuevit*’, *HE* V.2, pp. 456-457.

¹¹²⁶ W. Trent Foley, ‘Suffering and Sanctity in Bede’s *Prose Life of St. Cuthbert*’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 50, no.1 (1999), pp. 111-113.

¹¹²⁷ *HE* IV.29 and V.6.

¹¹²⁸ ‘*episcopatu administrando sufficeret*’, *HE* V.6, pp. 468-469.

God'.¹¹²⁹ For Bede therefore, John 'just like that other great northern saint Cuthbert' represents 'a *vir dei* who conscientiously accomplished his duties in carrying out his pastoral role'.¹¹³⁰ According to Bede, a bishop should lead by example, seeking not only their own salvation and spiritual growth, but also the benefit of those they were responsible for. Ultimately, the spiritual growth and nurture of Northumbria could only be achieved by a sufficient number of localised bishops to share the growing responsibility of caring for his Church. Coates states that 'in order to assert their authority they needed the support of their communities and to move within them'.¹¹³¹ Such bishops should ideally follow Cuthbert and John's example, actively engaged in pastoral work, but also aware of the value of contemplation, solitude and reflection, values that Bede himself experienced in his monastic environment.

3. John and Æthelwald as worthy successors to Cuthbert

The third explanation for this sequence is that Bede is portraying John and Æthelwald as worthy successors to Cuthbert. After Cuthbert's death in 687, we are told that Æthelwald followed him as his successor as hermit on the Farne island.¹¹³² His position here at *HE* V.1 is thus a neat continuation of Cuthbert's story,¹¹³³ perhaps placed at the start of *HE* V rather than the end of *HE* IV to mark the beginning of a new phase in Northumbrian Christianity. The succession for John appears to be centred around his time at Hexham, where Cuthbert first began his episcopacy. Although *HE* V.2 says that John succeeded Eata as bishop there (no mention of Cuthbert), Eata could only have been bishop in Hexham for a year or so after Cuthbert transferred to Lindisfarne. The text says that Eata died 'at the beginning of Aldfrith's reign', (that is, in 685), and that Cuthbert was consecrated initially to Hexham in Easter 685 before moving to Lindisfarne and Eata taking Hexham again.¹¹³⁴ When Wilfrid was restored to his see in 686,¹¹³⁵ Eata was either

¹¹²⁹ '*vitam in Deo digna conversatione compleuit*', Ibid.

¹¹³⁰ Wilson, *Life and After-Life*, p. 98.

¹¹³¹ Coates, 'Bede – the Miraculous and Episcopal Authority', p. 227.

¹¹³² *HE* V.1, *VCB* XLVI.

¹¹³³ Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary*, p. 174.

¹¹³⁴ '*regni principio*', *HE* V.2, pp. 456-457. The date of 685 comes from *HE* IV.26. Cuthbert's episcopal movements can be found in *HE* IV.28

¹¹³⁵ *HE* V.19, p. 525.

already dead or would have been deposed. Eata can thus only have been in charge at Hexham for a matter of months after Cuthbert's election before he died. In this regard, John's episcopacy at Hexham, lasting about eighteen years before his election to York,¹¹³⁶ can be considered a more stable successor to Cuthbert than Eata's period there, particularly if Eata was deposed by Wilfrid in 686.

Additional evidence that this section concerns worthy succession comes from analysing the episcopacies after Cuthbert's death and the place of Wilfrid here in the *HE*. As Kirby highlights, the danger to Lindisfarne remaining as a bishopric in 687 was apparent. In 686 Wilfrid was restored to his sees (Hexham, York and Ripon), and the following year after Cuthbert's death was given Lindisfarne as a caretaker,¹¹³⁷ effectively uniting Northumbria into a single diocese.¹¹³⁸ Bede's anxiety for more bishoprics, not one greater diocese, is readily apparent in his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*, as discussed above, but also appears a few years earlier here in the *HE*. John's consecration at Hexham later in 687, and Eadberht's subsequent election to Lindisfarne in 688, thus subdivided Wilfrid's large Northumbrian diocese, a move that the teenage novice Bede would not have been unaware of; John, not Wilfrid, was now his bishop. Positioning John here after Cuthbert, as a distinct bishop of Hexham, then of York, allows Bede to carefully gloss over the fact that at one point in the near past serious questions were being asked about the future of Northumbria's dioceses. In the early eighth century, the question of a suitable amount of bishoprics in Northumbria was clearly being asked, and answered, by Bede himself as part of his ideals of reform.¹¹³⁹ By placing Cuthbert at the end of *HE* IV then

¹¹³⁶ John was replaced by Wilfrid at Hexham in 706, *VWLX*, and then succeeded to York on Bosa's death sometime after, *HE* V.3. Bede gives us no exact dating for Bosa's death so we cannot be certain, but it appears around the same time as Wilfrid's restoration at Hexham.

¹¹³⁷ *HE* IV.29, though not without certain difficulties: See Bede's comments in *VCB* XL about the trials faced by Lindisfarne that year, though he fails to mention Wilfrid by name. As a hagiography seeking to present a particular model of sanctity of Cuthbert, it appears that Wilfrid's presence in the *VCB* disturbs that image and is thus omitted. In the same vein, as a Christian history seeking to show the unity and growth of the Anglo-Saxon church, the *HE* omits the reference to the disruption and disturbance caused during (or by?) Wilfrid's supervision of Lindisfarne.

¹¹³⁸ Kirby, 'The Genesis of a Cult', pp. 395-396.

¹¹³⁹ See J. E. Story, 'Bede, Willibrord and the Letters of Pope Honorius I on the Genesis of the Archbishopric of York', *English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), pp. 783-818.

John at the start of *HE* V, Bede presents an ideal unbroken chain of multiple bishoprics in Northumbria. In the *HE*, there is no trouble in Lindisfarne in 687 as recorded in Bede's *VCB*, and there is no mention of Wilfrid's restoration to Hexham, Ripon and York in 686 until *HE* V.19. It is only in V.19 that Bede finally alludes to the fact that Wilfrid was bishop over 'the whole Northumbrian kingdom'.¹¹⁴⁰ Chronologically, Wilfrid's life was more contemporary to Cuthbert than John, yet Bede deliberately moves the record of his life away from Cuthbert to the end of the *HE*. As Wood and Grocock propose, 'By devoting one long chapter to Wilfrid's achievements, Bede could do him justice, while at the same time removing him from the general presentation of ecclesiastical development, where his actions would have disturbed the model image of the Church in the days of Cuthbert'.¹¹⁴¹ Such a move stops Wilfrid appearing as adversarial or divisive in comparison to Cuthbert and John.¹¹⁴² As Stancliffe suggests, Bede was 'trying to synthesize divergent strands from the Northumbrian past in order to create a unified Northumbrian Christian identity in the present'.¹¹⁴³ Wilfrid's turbulent though influential life was thus treated as a separate topic much later in *HE* V, after Bede had already presented his own case for episcopal reform via Cuthbert and John.¹¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

This extended examination of the miracles of Cuthbert, Æthelwald and John has two main conclusions. The first is that Bede is using this section of miracles in the *HE* to portray his preferred model of an ideal bishop through Cuthbert and John. At the first instance, Bede was highlighting the importance of John by comparing him favourably to Cuthbert, and showing that both Æthelwald and John were worthy successors to his legacy. John was highly influential in Bede's early monastic life, yet this section also invites the

¹¹⁴⁰ 'totius Nordanhymbrorum provinciae', *HE* V.19, pp. 522-523.

¹¹⁴¹ Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, p. xlv.

¹¹⁴² Cf. Plassmann, 'Beda Venerabilis – *Verax Historicus*', who sees Bede as actively suppressing Stephen's portrayal of Wilfrid in the *HE*. On p. 133, fn. 45 she suggests three miracles of John bear strong similarities to three miracles of Wilfrid in the *VW*, and on p. 136 states 'Not only are Wilfrid's miracles suppressed but his rivals such as John of Hexham and the holy Chad come across well'.

¹¹⁴³ Stancliffe, 'Disputed Episcopacy', p. 39.

¹¹⁴⁴ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 307-320 lists at least ten ways in which Bede altered Stephen's portrayal of Wilfrid in the *HE* to more suitably reflect his own intentions for the text.

reader to reflect upon both Cuthbert and John together. Whilst Thacker describes Bede's Cuthbert as 'the ideal Gregorian',¹¹⁴⁵ this chapter has suggested that the two both reflect Bede's desired characteristics of an ideal episcopacy, one that is balanced between an active and contemplative life, following the pattern advocated by Gregory the Great.¹¹⁴⁶ This model was then placed within Bede's broader concern for the welfare of the Northumbrian Church to have an adequate number of bishops, as advocated through his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum episcopum*. As Wilson suggests, 'By setting John up as an exemplary priestly figure of great spiritual power, Bede was primarily commending his behaviour to others, and especially to other bishops'.¹¹⁴⁷ In line with the findings from previous chapters, through this section of the *HE* Bede is utilising miracles to contribute to the spiritual education of his audience.

Secondly, this section shows Bede's careful methodology as an historian. As Higham explains, 'Bede's care to acknowledge his sources for these stories implies that he valued the authority offered by naming informants'.¹¹⁴⁸ In portraying the life of his former bishop John, Bede utilised the best historical methodology known to him, providing both accuracy and reliability through sources that his audience could verify or question should they so desire. This section of the *HE* thus serves as a microcosm for the lessons he had learnt through his predecessors examined in Part One of this thesis. More importantly, Bede was an author who was clearly conscious of genre; the method he employed re-telling John's life in the *HE* is not identical to writing hagiography such as in the *VCB*. He is firmly writing ecclesiastical *history*, and as a good historian, provides references to his sources. However, like his understanding of Scripture, there are always multiple layers of meaning in Bedan texts. The *HE* is not just historical or hagiographical, but uses the past to speak to present concerns and look to the future.¹¹⁴⁹ In this instance, John and Cuthbert reflect Bede's desire for a strong episcopate in Northumbria following Gregory the Great's plan for twelve sees north of the Humber under a metropolitan bishopric based at York.

¹¹⁴⁵ Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p. 142.

¹¹⁴⁶ 'Neither the active nor the contemplative life can be valued in isolation. Like two sides of a coin, they presuppose one another', McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 124-128, quote at p. 127.

¹¹⁴⁷ Wilson, *Life and After-Life*, p. 52.

¹¹⁴⁸ Higham, *Bede as an Oral Historian*, p. 16.

¹¹⁴⁹ On this theme, see in particular Hilliard, '*Quae Res Quem Sit Habitura Finem, Posterior Aetas Videbit*'.

For Goffart, this desire was the key driving focus behind the publication of the entire *HE*.¹¹⁵⁰

¹¹⁵⁰ Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 297.

Conclusion

This thesis began by asking three questions concerning Bede's use of the miraculous in his hagiographical and historical work: what was his working practice; to what extent was he influenced by his predecessors; and what was his unique contribution compared to his contemporaries? In answering these questions, it appears that the recent historiographical trend of the 'New Bede' accurately reflects the thoughts and literary compositional choices made by the great Northumbrian. The preceding chapters show several instances where Bede may be considered truly innovative. One of the major insights of this thesis is to show how the interplay between the *VCA*, *VW* and *VCB* revealed that miracle stories in hagiographies could very much be updated and re-written to address current concerns, in line with the wider body of research on these three texts. Chapter Five showed that Bede was careful to remove the names of witnesses who were known to have died, whilst the additional miracles he adds to those from the earlier anonymous *vita* are some of the best-attested in any of the works examined in this thesis. The method of naming individuals as sources for miracle stories is an indication that the author had personally spoken to those involved or at the very least that the named sources formed part of the traditions kept within the communal memory of the relevant monasteries. In so doing, Bede's practices as a historian were exacting, relying upon the most up-to-date information available. Another important contribution came in Chapter Four, where the variable degrees of miracle attestation in five of Bede's texts show that it was genre and authorial intention, not miracles per se, that dictated how he wrote about them in each distinct context. For example, the differences in the miracles between his *Chronica Minora* and *Chronica Maiora* show that Bede's eschatological thought was developing; the increase of miracles recorded in the latter text, particularly within the sixth age of the world, ultimately point the reader towards the end of time. In this way, Bede's practice concerning the subject of miracles was not static, and he was clearly conscious of the expectations of his audience in each of the different types of text he composed.

Regarding hagiography specifically, the variety of practices concerning the miraculous as evidenced by the six texts in Chapter Three show that Bede was not merely indebted to copying late antique precedent, for there was no singular method of talking about miracles in this period. The results from this chapter emphasise how in its earliest

days the genre of hagiography was clearly still under development. As such, Bede was setting a fresh standard for miracle attestation when it came to composing his own hagiographical texts. Whilst the closest analogue to Bede's practice in the *HE* and *VCB* was found to be, perhaps unsurprisingly, the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great, the similarity is not universal across his corpus. For example, his *HA*, devoid of the miraculous, is closer to Paulinus' *V.Aug*, which only contained two miracles. The choice of how to approach each text was largely Bede's own, for he had a wide selection of models to draw upon. By the eighth century, he appears unique among his contemporaries in both the consistency with which he attests his miracle stories as well as the level of detail which he provides. As argued in Chapters Five and Six, this was partly due to the chronological distance between these authors and their subjects, partly due to geographical concerns, and partly again due to authorial intention.

Having stressed Bede's originality, it is important to remember some of the traditions from which he had derived his own standards and practices. In particular, Chapter One examined how the beliefs of Gregory the Great and Augustine of Hippo concerning both history and miracles were adopted by Bede. Bede took from Augustine a distinctly Christian understanding of human history as being directed towards an eschatological end by God, as well as seeing miracles as *signa* pointing the reader or witness towards higher spiritual truths. In the same way, the moral intention behind Augustine's insistence in *DCD* XXII.8 in preserving accounts of contemporary miracles for posterity was echoed by Bede when he came to compose his *HE*. Nevertheless, despite this Augustinian influence, Bede's historical achievement, particularly through the *HE*, should still be considered innovative. Chapter Two made clear that we should be more hesitant in accepting the conclusion that the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius of Caesarea served as a key if not the primary influence on Bede when he composed this text. A closer analysis of Eusebius' work reveals that the similarities between the two ecclesiastical histories are far more superficial than had previously been taken for granted. The Eusebian preface, for example, (as well as Rufinus' own in his continuation) contained little that supports the argument that Bede's content is in any way analogous. When considering miracles in particular, Eusebius' practice differs somewhat from Bede. For a start, in terms of sheer numbers Bede recorded far more miracles than Eusebius does despite their texts being of comparable lengths. Likewise, whilst Eusebius appears more exacting in naming

his sources, he was reliant upon far earlier written accounts, whereas Bede had access to oral reports and had spoken to eyewitnesses. Through these, Bede engaged in critical self-reflection on the role of the historian in providing an accurate and truthful representation of the past, particularly through his use of the phrase '*vera lex historiae*', a true law of history. Bede used this phrase as a general caveat that the historian's account is only as accurate as the sources upon which it is based; these are taken in good faith and are presumed true by the author, though he himself cannot verify them. Nevertheless, the inclusion of such sources is a sign of trust by Bede towards those who provide such accounts.

On balance therefore, it appears that the 'New Bede' hypothesis has much to commend it, for it has allowed Bede to stand in his own light, highlighting the ways in which he stood out among both his contemporaries and predecessors. Certainly through the sheer volume of his work alone Bede was the leading light of his age. However, this vast literary output did not arise out of a vacuum, as Part One of this thesis repeatedly emphasised. This research has therefore furthered our understanding of Bede as one who was unafraid to take new directions in both historical and hagiographical literature, yet these were ultimately built on the solid foundation of earlier tradition. This is not to do Bede a disservice but merely recognise in greater detail the degrees to which his extensive learning influenced the ways in which he composed his texts. As Moorhead suggests, Bede's 'following of authorities does not prevent his own voice from being heard',¹¹⁵¹ and as the article title by DeGregorio implies, current scholars should concern themselves with both the connections Bede had to his forerunners as well as the departures he made from them.¹¹⁵²

This thesis also shows that the cultures and audiences for which these texts were written share many of the same questions and anxieties as the present day. Miracles, as suggested in the Introduction, have delighted and frustrated both scholar and layman alike for centuries. Dal Santo has argued that Gregory's *Dialogi* were written to assuage sixth-century philosophical concerns regarding the power of the saint and the post-mortem state of the soul. An extended case study in Chapter One on the role of doubt in Bede's thought revealed that he too was facing similar issues and questions in his own eighth-century

¹¹⁵¹ Moorhead, 'Some Borrowings in Bede', p. 717.

¹¹⁵² DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great'.

milieu. The ability to speak to a named, well-known witness of a miracle story therefore provided Bede's texts with a further layer of credibility to answer a potentially sceptical audience. As the thesis title implies, sanctity and authority are intrinsically linked in the early medieval world; Bede pre-empted questions from his audience by stating, to varying levels of detail, where he had received his information from regarding the miracles of the Anglo-Saxon past. This thesis therefore contributes to the development of Bedan studies not only by exploring his understanding of the miraculous but also the innovative methods he used to persuade others, telling us as much about his audience's concerns and expectations as it does about Bede himself. Furthermore, this broad survey has wider applications for our understanding of the Anglo-Saxon world. Through its comparative approach, the models followed (or ignored) by these authors highlight the relative levels of education within the early Insular monastic context as well as some of the literature they had available before them, providing greater awareness of the reception history of earlier texts. Likewise, it reveals how the desire to attest miracle accounts to at least some degree was one shared at Whitby, Iona, Lindisfarne and Ripon, as well as Wearmouth-Jarrow. It was not particular to Bede. The conclusion must surely be that these early Insular audiences are not to be considered overly superstitious or credulous, for all these authors took steps to ensure that their texts had at least a modicum of credibility. This has additional implications regarding the limits of religious belief in the eighth century. Turning further afield, in assessing miracles in the age of Bede this thesis provides medieval scholars with the ability to take Bede and his world as a starting point through which more general questions regarding medieval scepticism, historiography, hagiographical practice and faith can now be explored with greater insight.

The main focus of this thesis has been to examine the works of one particular monk, Bede, but the research could easily be expanded to integrate further social and intellectual milieus to deliver a more extensive comparison. For example, more work remains to be done on Bede's exegesis, particularly those texts that have hitherto received little scholarly attention, particularly *In Lucam* and *In Marcum*, where the miracles of Christ often serve as archetypes for those performed by medieval saints. A systematic examination of Bede's commentary on the miracles of scripture may reveal different aspects that broaden our understanding of his historiographical practice. In addition, extending the survey geographically towards early medieval Ireland or the continent could

show how Bede's understanding of miracles was part of a shared Christian heritage in the eighth century. Alternatively, a comparison between Bede and his early Islamic counterparts in the Umayyad Caliphate or his Buddhist or Daoist equivalents in Tang Dynasty China could reveal the role that differing religious beliefs played in working with miracle material in this period. Likewise, extending this survey into the ninth or tenth century would enable the scholar to trace any subsequent developments in Anglo-Saxon hagiographic practice, with Bede serving as the starting point. In the same way, the methodology first provided in Chapter Three as well as the findings contained herein could equally be applied to other contexts, broadening the scope and impact of this research beyond that of the famous Northumbrian.

Bede died on 26 May 735. His follower, Cuthbert, wrote that at the time of his death Bede was producing a vernacular translation of the Gospel of John.¹¹⁵³ The point at which he had reached however, John 6:9, was the beginning of the fourth of the seven great miracles or 'signs' in John's gospel. John 6 details the feeding of the 5000, but verse 9 does not reach the point at which the miracle is performed. For Bede on his deathbed it is fitting that the point he had arrived at in the biblical text pre-empted the miracle that was about to take place in his own life. In his exegesis he had argued that the greater miracles were spiritual and not physical, with the greatest being the salvation of the human soul through Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross. This greater miracle was about to occur for Bede; now he was ready to meet his risen Lord. In his own words, paraphrasing Isaiah 33:17, 'my soul longs to see Christ my King in all His beauty'.¹¹⁵⁴ Modern historians ask questions of Bede that his written work does not directly address, meaning much will likely remain unknown regarding his exact thoughts concerning the miraculous. Nevertheless his copious literary output has allowed scholars to gain valuable insights into this fascinating subject. This thesis is but one part of that continuing discussion.

¹¹⁵³ 'Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede', p. 583.

¹¹⁵⁴ '*anima mea desiderat Regem meum Christum in decore suo videre*', Ibid., pp. 584-585.

Appendix One: Miracle Counts in Late Antique Works

Format: Miracle Number, Book/Chapter, Brief Description, Type of Source

Evagrius' Latin Translation of Athanasius' Vita Antonii (V.Ant)

- #1 – VI – The devil, defeated in his attempts to seduce Anthony, appears to him in the form of a small black boy – No source
- #2 – VIII – The devil sends his minions to severely beat and torture Anthony – No source
- #3 – IX – After Anthony returns to his tomb-cave, the devil sends minions in the form of wild animals to attack him – No source
- #4 – X – Jesus himself intervenes, his light dispelling the demons and healing Anthony – No source
- #5 – XI – The devil tries to trick Anthony into getting lost in the desert with a silver plate – No source
- #6 – XII – Upon his arrival, snakes immediately flee the abandoned fort in which Anthony makes his new home – No source
- #7 – XIII – People hear voices behind Anthony's door, which are revealed to be invisible demons – No source
- #8 – XIV – After 20 years of a secluded existence, Anthony appears fresh and in good bodily health, contrary to all expectations – No source
- #9 – XXXIX – The devil appears to Anthony as a great light but disappears after he prays – No source
- #10 – XXXIX – Demons appear before Anthony quoting scripture at him – No source
- #11 – XL – The devil appears to Anthony as a strong tall man, but disappears after Anthony attacks him – No source
- #12 – XL – The devil appears to a fasting Anthony disguised as a monk offering bread – No source
- #13 – XLI – The devil again appears to Anthony as an enormously tall man, upset that his power has been broken by Christ – No source
- #14 – XLVIII – A military officer's daughter is cured after Anthony tells him to have faith and pray – No source

#15 –LII – Anthony banishes a horde of wild animals sent by the devil to attack him – No source

#16 – LIII – A half-man, half-ass creature appears before Anthony and is banished – No source

#17 – LIV – Anthony prays and a spring appears, saving him and his brothers from death – No source

#18 –LVII – A man named Fronto from Palestine is cured of his demon possession – No source

#19 – LVIII – Anthony is given foreknowledge that a sick girl would arrive to his dwelling and be cured – No source

#20 –LIX – Anthony sends help after being given prophetic knowledge that a monk has died of thirst and another is about to – No source

#21 – LX – Anthony sees the soul of Ammon ascend to heaven accompanied by angels – No source

#22 – LX - Ammon is carried across a river by God without getting his body wet – Named source (Theodore)

#23 – LXI – Anthony prays for the virgin Polycratia at a distance and cures her – No source

#24 – LXIII – Anthony heals a young man who was demon possessed aboard a boat – No source

#25 – LXIV – Anthony heals another demon-possessed young man who had attacked him – No source

#26 – LXV – Anthony experiences being taken up to heaven by a group of angels – No source

#27 – LXVI – Anthony has a vision of a huge devil attempting to stop souls from getting to heaven – No source

#28 –LXXI – Anthony heals a girl in Athanasius presence – Named source (implied, Athanasius himself)

#29 –LXXX – Anthony heals some people possessed by demons through the sign of the cross – No source

#30 –LXXXII – Anthony has a vision of the forthcoming damage the Arians would do – No source

#31 – LXXXVI – Balacius, commander in Egypt and persecutor of Christians, is mauled to death by a horse after Anthony's prophetic warning – No source

#32 – LXXXIX – Anthony receives prophetic knowledge that he is soon to die – No source

Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini (V.Mart)

#1 – III.3 – Martin has a dream of Jesus wearing the cloak he'd given to a beggar at Amiens – No source

#2 – V.3 – Martin is told in a dream to visit his parents to convert them – No source

#3 – VI.1-2 – Martin converses with the Devil in human form, who disappears when Martin quotes Scripture – No source

#4 – VI.5-6 – Martin accidentally eats poisonous hellebore but prays and is saved – No source

#5 – VII.1-5 – A catechumen falls sick and dies; Martin's prayers and tears bring him back to life – Anonymous source

#6 – VIII.1-3 – A servant who had committed suicide is brought to life through Martin's prayers – No source

#7 – XI – Whilst praying at a tomb, Martin sees a shade who reveals his identity as a criminal and not a Christian martyr – No source

#8 – XII – Martin has the ability to stop a funeral procession he mistook for a pagan ceremony – No source

#9 – XIII – Martin makes the sign of the cross and a felled sacred pine tree is diverted from crushing him – No source

#10 – XIV.1-2 – Martin's presence causes wind to arise and avert a fire from burning down a house – No source

#11 – XIV.3-7 – Martin prays and fasts for three days and two armed angels appear to assist him in demolishing a pagan temple – No source

#12 – XV.1-2 – Martin offers his neck to a murderous pagan, who falls over when he raises his sword to strike – No source

#13 – XV.3 – A knife used by a pagan about to stab Martin is knocked from his hand and disappears – No source

#14 – XVI – Martin restores a paralysed and wasted little girl to health through prayer and holy oil – No source

- #15 –XVII.1-4 – Martin heals a slave boy of his demon that inflicted great pain – No source
- #16 – XVII.5-7 – Martin exorcises a demon from a cook, which is unable to bite him, despite putting his fingers into its mouth – No source
- #17 – XVIII.1-2 – Martin forces a demon to confess it had spread lies about an imminent barbarian attack – No source
- #18 – XVIII.3-4 – Martin blesses and kisses a leper who is then cured – No source
- #19 – XIX.1 – Physical contact with a letter written by Martin heals the daughter of Arborius – No source
- #20 – XIX.3 – Martin heals Paulinus of an eye illness – No source
- #21 – XIX.4 – Martin is healed by an angel after falling down some steps – No source
- #22 –XX.8-9 – Martin predicts the success then defeat of Maximus against Valentinian – No source
- #23 – XXI.2-4 – The devil appears to Martin, showing him that someone close to him had been gored by a bull – No source
- #24 – XXII.3-5 – Martin has a conversation about sin, mercy and forgiveness with a demon – Anonymous source
- #25 –XXIII – The devil, disguised as a monk, produces flashing lights and sounds in a priest’s cell, as well as a miraculous tunic, which disappears when taken to Martin – No source
- #26 – XXIV.4-6 – The devil appears to Martin in the visage of Christ, and departs with a strong smell – Named source (Martin himself)

Paulinus of Milan’s Vita Ambrosii (V.Ambr)

- #1 – X – A bath keeper is cured of her paralysis by Ambrose’s prayer and touch – Anonymous source
- #2 –XIV – The bodies of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius revealed themselves to Ambrose – No source
- #3 – XIV – Severus is cured of blindness at their new tombs – No source
- #4 – XVI – One of the palace members is seized by an unclean spirit and prophesies that the others present, who had accused Ambrose of falsehoods, would also be tormented – No source

#5 – XVII – An Arian sees an angel speaking into Ambrose’s ear whilst he preaches and is converted – No source

#6 – XVIII – Two Arians are suddenly thrown from their carriage and die after challenging Ambrose on the Incarnation then fleeing – No source

#7 – XX – A pagan soothsayer is punished by an angel for opposing Ambrose – No source

#8 – XX – Ambrose’s house is protected from demons by an impassable fire – No source

#9 – XX – An assassin is miraculously stopped from slaying Ambrose and is healed – No source

#10 – XXI – The devil leaves a man when he approaches Milan but returns after he leaves, as he feared Ambrose – No source

#11 – XXVIII – Ambrose restores the child Pansophius back to life – No source

#12 – XXIX – The bodies of Vitalis and Agricola reveal themselves to Ambrose in Bologna – No source

#13 – XXXII – The body of the martyr Nazarius is found to be incorrupt, including his blood and hair – No source

#14 – XXXIII – The body of the martyr Celsus is revealed by Ambrose praying in the spot where he was buried – No source

#15 – XXXIII – A man with an unclean spirit is silenced by Ambrose’s rebuke – No source

#16 – XXXVII – Macedonius cannot enter a church despite its open doors, just as Ambrose had prophesied – No source

#17 – XL – Ambrose prophesies that he will be dead by Easter – Named source (Paulinus himself)

#18 – XLII – A shield-shaped flame descends and enters Ambrose’s mouth – Named source (Paulinus himself)

#19 – XLIII – After Ambrose’s judgement, an unclean spirit enters a sinful servant and is torn to pieces – Named source (Paulinus himself)

#20 – XLIV – Nicentius is cured of his severe foot pain after Ambrose accidentally kicks him at the altar – Named source (Nicentius himself)

#21 – XLVI – On his deathbed, Ambrose hears and approves four of his deacons suggesting Simplicianus as his successor, even though they were at a distance and speaking in whispers – No source

#22 – XLVIII – On his deathbed, Ambrose has a vision of Jesus smiling upon him –
Named source – Bassianus, Bishop of Lodi

#23 – LI – The deceased Ambrose appears to Mascezel, promising him victory in battle –
Named source (Mascezel himself)

#24 – LII – A man is cured of blindness after being instructed by Ambrose in a vision to
visit the bodies of the martyrs Sisinnius, Martyrius and Alexander – Anonymous source
(the man himself)

#25 – LIV - The priest Donatus is slain after slandering Ambrose – Named source
(Paulinus himself)

#26 – LIV - Bishop Muranus is slain after slandering Ambrose, after Paulinus had told him
the above story – Named source (Paulinus himself)

Possidius' Vita Augustini (V. Aug)

#1 – XXIX – A man has a vision that Augustine will heal a sick patient – Named source
(Possidius himself)¹¹⁵⁵

#2 – XXIX – Though sick himself, and therefore disbelieving, Augustine heals the man –
Named source (Possidius himself)

Constantius of Lyon's Vita Germani (V. Ger)

#1 – VII – Germanus publicly exorcises a man who had stolen a money bag – No source

#2 – VIII – Germanus heals his congregation of a demonic illness by blessing some oil –
No source

#3 – IX - Germanus exorcises a demon-possessed monk – No source

#4 – X - Two spirits appear to Germanus, and he gives them a proper Christian burial – No
source

#5 – XI – Germanus blesses some seed and silent birds begin crowing again – No source

#6 – XIII – Germanus prays and sprinkles the stormy ocean with oil, which becomes still –
No source

#7 – XV – Germanus uses a relic to cure a blind girl – No source

¹¹⁵⁵ Possidius being the source for these two miracles is implied by his comments in the Preface regarding his close friendship with Augustine, as well as his comments in Ch. XXXI which state he was present during Augustine's final illness and death.

- #8 – XVI – Germanus’ presence prevents a fire from burning down a building – No source
- #9 – XVIII – The British army defeat the Saxons with the cry of ‘Alleluia’ – No source
- #10 – XX – A thief is unable to move forward until he returns Germanus’ stolen horse – No source
- #11 – XXII – Straw that Germanus had slept on cures a demon-possessed man – No source
- #12 – XXIV – Germanus cures the Prefect’s wife – No source
- #13 – XXVII – Germanus heals a boy of a damaged leg – No source
- #14 – XXIX – Germanus cures a dumb girl with oil and spiced wine – No source
- #15 – XXX – Germanus cures a young girl’s deformed hand – No source
- #16 – XXXII – A demon identifies Germanus in a crowd in Italy – No source
- #17 – XXXIII – Germanus knows that his deacon has kept a gold coin from two beggars – No source
- #18 – XXXIV – Germanus heals an entire household of their infirmities – No source
- #19 – XXXVI – Germanus’ prayers open a jail and all the prisoners are released – No source
- #20 – XXXVIII – Germanus restores a dead boy to life – No source
- #21 – XXXIX – Germanus expels a demon from a boy – No source
- #22 – XLI – Germanus has a dream of Jesus announcing his death – No source
- #23 – XLV – Germanus’ body cures a woman of her paralysis – No source

Gregory the Great’s Dialogi

- #1 – I.1 - Honoratus stops a large boulder from crushing his monastery – Named source (Lawrence)
- #2 – I.2 – Horses are totally unwilling to cross a river as one of them has been stolen from Libertinus – Named source (Lawrence)
- #3 – I.2 – Buccelin and the Franks break into a chapel but fail to see a praying Libertinus or steal anything – Named source (Lawrence)
- #4 – I.2 – The sandal of Honoratus, through Libertinus’ prayers, restores a young boy to life – Named source (Lawrence)
- #5 – I.3 – The monastery gardener commands a snake to guard his vegetables from a thief, who is subsequently caught – Named source (Felix)

- #6 – I.4 – During prayer, Equitius has a vision of him becoming a eunuch, accompanied by an angel – Named source (Fortunatus)
- #7 – I.4 - Equitius knows a sick nun will be cured after the expulsion of the magician Basil from their monastery - Named source (Fortunatus)
- #8 – I.4 – Equitius expels the devil from a nun who had failed to pray before eating a lettuce - Named source (Fortunatus)
- #9 – I.4 – Equitius’ authority to preach comes from a vision of a young man in radiant beauty placing a lancet on his tongue - Named source (Fortunatus)
- #10 – I.4 – The Pope has a vision warning him not to summon Equitius to Rome - Named source (Fortunatus)
- #11 – I.4 - A box of grain irreverently placed on Equitius’ tomb is immediately blown off – Named source (Valentine)
- #12 – I.4 – A monk calls upon Equitius name against attacking Lombards and they are all seized by an unclean spirit and cease - Named source (Fortunatus)
- #13 – I.5 – Constantius changes water into oil to light the church’s lamps – Anonymous source
- #14 – I.6 – The presence of bishop Marcellinus forces flames to turn back and die – No source
- #15 – I.7 – Nonnosus prays and a huge boulder is removed, allowing them to plant vegetables – Named sources (Maximilian and Laurio)
- #16 – I.7 – Nonnosus prays and a smashed glass lamp is restored to wholeness - Named source (Fortunatus)
- #17 – I.7 – Oil partially filling a collection of jars is found to be totally full the next day – No source
- #18 – I.8 – A voice is heard calling people by name in the order they were to shortly die in – No source
- #19 – I.8 – A monk whose name was not called pleads with Anastasius to be taken too, and as a result dies several days later – No source
- #20 – I.9 – Boniface of Ferentino makes an abundance of wine despite a destroyed grape crop – Named source (Gaudentius)
- #21 – I.9 – Boniface predicts a minstrel will be killed upon leaving the house – No source

- #22 – I.9 – Boniface prays to Mary and receives 12 gold coins to replace those belonging to his nephew that he had given to the poor – No source
- #23 – I.9 – A small cask of wine given by Boniface lasts several days, apparently refilling when drunk – No source
- #24 – I.9 – At his command, all the caterpillars leave Boniface’s garden – Anonymous source
- #25 – I.9 – Through prayer, Boniface’s granary is totally restocked after he had given all the grain away to the poor – Anonymous source
- #26 – I.9 – Boniface prays and a fox immediately returns with a stolen hen before dropping dead – Anonymous source
- #27 – I.10 – Fortunatus’ prayers remove an evil spirit from a woman where magicians had failed – Named source (Julian)
- #28 – I.10 – A disguised evil spirit, expelled by Fortunatus, causes a little boy to be thrown into a fire and die – No source
- #29 – I.10 – Fortunatus heals a blind man – No source
- #30 – I.10 – Fortunatus cures a mad horse – No source
- #31 – I.10 – A Goth who had stolen two boys is struck down as predicted by Fortunatus – Anonymous source
- #32 – I.10 – The Goth is healed by holy water sent from Fortunatus – Anonymous source
- #33 – I.10 – Fortunatus raises the dead Marcellus to life – Anonymous source
- #34 – I.11 – Untouched bread in an oven is marked with the sign of the cross by Martyrius - Named source (Fortunatus)
- #35 – I.12 – Severus raises a dead man to life in order that he has a chance to repent – No source
- #36 – II.1 – A broken tray is repaired through Benedict’s prayer¹¹⁵⁶
- #37 – II.1 – The devil throws a rock and breaks a bell used to summon Benedict for a bread delivery
- #38 – II.1 – The Lord appears to a priest in a vision on Easter Sunday telling him to go feed Benedict

¹¹⁵⁶ As discussed above in Chapter Three, all of the miracles in Gregory’s *Life of Benedict*, Book Two of the *Dialogi*, are from the reports of four named witnesses connected to the saint: Constantine, Valentinian, Simplicius and Honoratus.

- #39 – II.2 – The devil appears to Benedict as a little blackbird, tempting him into sin
- #40 – II.3 – Benedict shatters a poisoned pitcher with the sign of the cross
- #41 – II.4 – Benedict can see a little devil tempting a monk to avoid prayer
- #42 – II.5 – The spot where Benedict prays becomes a stream of water for three monasteries
- #43 – II.6 – Benedict miraculously recovers a blade than had accidently fallen into a lake
- #44 – II.7 – At Benedict's command, Maurus runs onto the lake to save Placid from being swept away
- #45 – II.8 – Benedict instructs a raven to remove poisoned bread from his presence
- #46 – II.8 – Florentius, the jealous priest, is struck down by God
- #47 – II.8 – After the destruction of pagan shrines at Monte Cassino, the devil appears taunting Benedict
- #48 – II.9 – Benedict expels the devil sitting on a rock preventing it from moving
- #49 – II.10 – A bronze idol creates the appearance of flame in the monastery kitchen
- #50 – II.11 – The devil appears to Benedict telling him he would visit the monks
- #51 – II.11 – Benedict completely heals a monk who had been crushed by a wall demolished by the devil
- #52 – II.12 – Through prophetic knowledge Benedict reveals the exact food and drink some monks had taken outside of the monastery
- #53 – II.13 - Through prophetic knowledge Benedict knows that Valentinian's brother had eaten with an evil spirit after initially refusing
- #54 – II.14 – Benedict knows that the man claiming to be King Totila is in fact his disguised servant Riggo
- #55 – II.15 – Benedict predicts the future of King Totila, that he will die in ten years – Named source (Honoratus)
- #56 – II.15 – Benedict predicts the fall of Rome by Totila – Named source (Honoratus)
- #57 – II.16 – A cleric from Aquino is cured by Benedict's prayer
- #58 – II.16 – The same cleric is seized by the devil after ignoring Benedict's warning not to advance to holy orders
- #59 – II.17 – Benedict prophesies to Theoprobis the sacking of the monastery but the sparing of all the monks

- #60 – II.18 – Benedict knows that Exhilaratus has hidden a flask of wine and that it contains a serpent
- #61 – II.19 – Benedict knows that a monk had hidden handkerchiefs given to him by nuns
- #62 – II.20 – Benedict knows the prideful thoughts of a young monk
- #63 – II.21 – During a famine Benedict knows that the next day they will have plenty; 200 measures of flour arrive at the monastery
- #64 – II.22 – Benedict appears in a dream to an abbot and a prior to show them where to build a new monastery
- #65 – II.23 – Two sinful deceased nuns rise from their tombs with the non-communicants at the offering of Mass
- #66 – II.24 – The body of a monk who absconded refuses to remain buried until reconciled to Benedict
- #67 – II.25 – A monk sees a dragon which had tempted him to leave the monastery
- #68 – II.26 – A servant is immediately cured of his leprosy – Named source (Anthony)
- #69 – II.27 – Benedict prays and thirteen gold coins appear to pay off a layman's debt - Named source (Peregrinus)¹¹⁵⁷
- #70 – II.27 – A poisoned man is cured of his leprosy-like symptoms by Benedict
- #71 – II.28 – A glass oil container is unbroken despite being thrown out of a window onto rocks
- #72 – II.29 – Through prayer an empty cask is totally filled with oil
- #73 – II.30 – Benedict expels an evil spirit from an elderly monk by striking him on the cheek
- #74 – II.31 – The bonds tying a man's hands together instantly fall off at Benedict's mere glance
- #75 – II.32 – Through prayer Benedict restores a farmer's son to life
- #76 – II.33 – Benedict's sister Scholastica prays and creates a heavy storm
- #77 – II.34 – Three days later Benedict sees her soul ascend to heaven like a dove
- #78 – II.35 – Benedict sees a great light encompassing the whole world signifying the death of Germanus of Capua
- #79 – II.37 – Benedict foretells the day of his death to some of his disciples

¹¹⁵⁷ As discussed in Chapter Three, miracles #55, #56, #68 and #69 appear to be exceptions to the four main sources for Gregory's *Dialogues*.

- #80 – II.37 – Two monks see a vision of a magnificent road upon which Benedict travelled to heaven
- #81 – II.38 – A mentally disturbed woman is cured after spending a night in Benedict's cave
- #82 – III.1 – Paulinus knows that the Vandal king will soon die – Anonymous source
- #83 – III.1 - The Vandal king has a dream that Paulinus will be his judge and that he will soon die – Anonymous source
- #84 – III.1 – The room where Paulinus died shakes like an earthquake – Named source (The annals of his church)
- #85 – III.2 – A horse refuses to seat a woman after Pope John has sat on it – Anonymous source
- #86 – III.2 – Pope John cures a man of his blindness – Anonymous source
- #87 – III.3 – Pope Agapitus cures a man of his from being lame and dumb – No source
- #88 – III.4 – Datius of Milan expels a noisy demon from a house – No source
- #89 – III.5 – Sabinus, though blind, knows that the king offered him wine, not a servant – Anonymous source
- #90 – III.5 – Sabinus knows that a cup is poisoned – Anonymous source
- #91 – III.5 – Sabinus drinks the poisoned cup and is unharmed; the poisoner dies instead – Anonymous source
- #92 – III.6 – Cassius expels an evil spirit from Totila's sword bearer – Anonymous source
- #93 – III.7 – A Jew has a vision of evil spirits, one of whom was tempting Bishop Andrew – Anonymous source
- #94 – III.8 – Constantius of Aquino prophesies who his successors will be – Anonymous source
- #95 – III.9 – Frigidianus uses a handmade hoe, prays and walks, which redirects the course of a river behind him – Named source (Venantius)
- #96 – III.10 – A letter written by Bishop Sabinus causes the Po River to recede during a flood - Named source (Venantius and John)
- #97 – III.11 - A fierce bear suddenly becomes docile and licks the feet of Bishop Cerbonius who had been condemned to death – Anonymous source
- #98 – III.11 – Cerbonius' sanctity prevents rain from falling on the ship his body is being carried on – Named source (Venantius)

- #99 – III.12 – Rain does not fall in the circle in which Fulgentius had been forced to stand – Anonymous source
- #100 – III.13 – Herculaneus’ body is found incorrupt after forty days and his head reattached to his body - Named source (Floridus)
- #101 – III.14 - Isaac expels an avenging spirit from a sacristan - Named source (Eleutherius)
- #102 – III.14 - Isaac prophesies that clothes would be found hidden inside a tree trunk – Named source (Eleutherius)
- #103 – III.14 - Isaac knows that a servant has hidden a basket of food and that it now contains a serpent in it – Named source (Eleutherius)
- #104 – III.15 – God sends the lonely Florentius a tame bear to act as shepherd - Named source (Sanctulus)
- #105 – III.15 – In his anger Florentius curses four monks who killed his bear; they are struck with leprosy and die – Named source (Sanctulus)
- #106 – III.15 - Florentius prays and serpents are struck dead by thunder then carried away by a flock of birds – No source
- #107 – III.15 – Eutychius’ cloak brings rain during drought – Anonymous source
- #108 – III.16 – Water appears in a cave as soon as Martin starts inhabiting it – Anonymous source¹¹⁵⁸
- #109 – III.16 – The devil appears to Martin as a serpent for three years and burns the mountainside as he flees – Anonymous source
- #110 – III.16 – A woman is killed by God for trying to tempt Martin into sin – Anonymous source
- #111 – III.16 – Martin’s prayer protect a little boy who had fallen into a ravine on his way to visit the saint – Anonymous source
- #112 – III.16 – A boulder that threatened to crush Martin and his cave is miraculously displaced by angels – Anonymous source
- #113 – III.16 – A chain that had once bound Martin prevents a well rope from ever breaking again – Anonymous source

¹¹⁵⁸ As discussed in Chapter Three, the miracles of Martin (#108-#113) are particularly difficult to ascribe definite sources to.

- #114 – III.17 – A holy man causes a dead man to return to life - Named source (Quadragesimus)
- #115 – III.18 – Benedict is unscathed a day after being thrown into an oven – Anonymous source
- #116 – III.19 – Floodwater is unable to enter a church despite rising up above the open doors - Named source (Pronulfus via John)
- #117 – III.20 – The devil unties Stephen’s shoes – Anonymous source
- #118 – III.21 – A holy nun expels a demon and casts it into a pig - Named source (Eleutherius)
- #119 – III.22 – A thief is fixed to the spot after stealing a sheep by the spirit of a deceased holy man - Named source (Valentio)
- #120 – III.23 – An abbots’ dead body turns on its side in the grave to create space for the body of a priest, as had been prophesied – Anonymous source
- #121 – III.24 – Theodore has a vision of St. Peter – Named source (Theodore himself)
- #122 – III.25 – A girl has a vision of St. Peter telling her to go see Acontius – Anonymous source
- #123 – III.25 – Acontius heals the girl of her paralysis – Anonymous source
- #124 – III.26 – At Menas’ rebuke, a thieving Lombard is struck down by an evil spirit – Anonymous source¹¹⁵⁹
- #125 – III.26 – Menas knows the gifts given by Carterius the sinner by prophetic knowledge – Anonymous source
- #126 – III.29 – A church shakes, its lamps are re-lit and a light bursts forth, blinding an Arian bishop - Named source (Boniface)
- #127 – III.30 – A loud noise like running, attributed to the devil, is heard on top of a newly consecrated church roof – Anonymous source
- #128 – III.30 – A cloud descends from heaven surrounding the altar and filling the church with a fragrant smell – Anonymous source

¹¹⁵⁹ However, Gregory explicitly states ‘I am not going to name any particular person as the source of my story, because the witnesses for it are nearly as numerous as the people familiar with the province’, (*De cuius operis narratione unum auctorem non infero, quia paene tot mihi in eius vita testes sunt, quot Samnii provinciam noverunt*) *Dialogues*, Vol. 2, III.26, p. 366, ll. 4-6; Zimmerman, p. 159.

- #129 – III.30 – Multiple times a fire sent from heaven lights the church lamps – Anonymous source
- #130 – III.31 – Burning lamps and sung psalms occur around the body of the martyr-king Hermangild – Anonymous source
- #131 – III.32 – Catholics in Africa continue to speak against Arianism despite having their tongues cut out – Anonymous source
- #132 – III.33 – Eleutherius and his monks expel an evil spirit from a boy - Named source (Eleutherius himself)
- #133 – III.33 – Gregory is relieved of a stomach illness in order to fast over Easter – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #134 – III.35 – Amantius cures a mentally ill patient through prayer - Named source (Floridus)
- #135 – III.36 – Despite being filled with water, a ship floats for eight days and sinks as soon as the passengers disembark – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #136 – III.37 – Sanctulus adds water to an olive press and oil is produced - Named source (Sanctulus himself)
- #137 – III.37 – A loaf of bread miraculously replaces itself and feeds workmen for ten days – Named source (Sanctulus himself)
- #138 – III.37 – The executioner's arm is seized just before he is about to behead Sanctulus – Named source (Sanctulus himself)
- #139 – III.38 – Redemptus has a vision of Juticus the Martyr announcing the end of the world; the Lombards soon invade Italy – Named source (Redemptus himself)
- #140 – IV.9 – Gregory sees the soul of his brother Speciosus ascend to heaven – Anonymous source
- #141 – IV.10 – Passengers on a boat see the soul of a recluse ascend to heaven - Anonymous source
- #142 – IV.11 – Abbot Spes is cured of blindness after forty years – Anonymous source
- #143 – IV.11 – When Spes dies, onlookers witness his soul ascend to heaven in the form of a dove – Anonymous source
- #144 – IV.12 – A priest has a vision of Peter and Paul on his deathbed - Named source (Stephen)

- #145 – IV.13 – The spirits of two martyrs appear to Probus of Rieti on his deathbed - Named source (Probus, his nephew)
- #146 – IV.14 – The nun Galla has a vision of Peter, prophesying she will soon die, and another nun thirty days later – Anonymous source
- #147 – IV.15 – The paralysed Servulus hears heavenly song, and a fragrant smell is witnessed at his death – Anonymous source
- #148 – IV.16 – Three nuns have a vision of a heavenly light accompanied by a fragrant odour, followed on the fourth day by a vision of a heavenly choir accompanying Romula's soul to heaven - Named source (Speciosus)
- #149 – IV.17 – Felix appears to Tarsilla in a vision – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #150 – IV.17 – On her deathbed, Tarsilla has a vision of Jesus and a refreshing fragrance fills the room – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #151 – IV.18 – Musa has a vision of Mary who prophesies her death in thirty days, and returns again to collect her when the time has come - Named source (Probus)
- #152 – IV.19 – A dying boy sees evil spirits coming to claim his soul – Anonymous source
- #153 – IV.20 – Some people see angels and all experience fear at the deathbed of Abbot Stephen - Named source (Probus)
- #154 – IV.22 – At night, the spirits of two murdered monks begin to chant psalms – Named source (Valentio)
- #155 – IV.23 – A ground tremor occurs at the martyrdom of Suranus – Anonymous source
- #156 – IV.24 – An evil spirit enters the executioner of a deacon – No source
- #157 – IV.27 – Gerontius has a vision of men in white robes calling some of the monks to join their host – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #158 – IV.27 – Mellitus is given a heavenly letter prophesying that he and several others will soon die - Named source (Felix)
- #159 – IV.27 – A dead boy returns to life and has the ability to speak unknown languages, proving his prophesies about who would be next to die were true - Named source (Ammonius)
- #160 – IV.28 – Theophane correctly predicts fair weather will return upon his death – Anonymous source
- #161 – IV.28 – Theophane's gout is found to be completely cured upon washing his body – Anonymous source

- #162 – IV.28 – A fragrant odour is found coming from Theophane's tomb four days after burial – Anonymous source
- #163 – IV.31 – A holy man has a vision of Theodoric causing the deaths of Pope John I and Symmachus - Named source (Julian)
- #164 – IV.32 – Reparatus has a vision in hell of a large pyre destined for the priest Tiburtius - Named source (Deusdedit)
- #165 – IV.33 – The body of a sinful city official is consumed by fire in his grave - Named source (Maximian)
- #166 – IV.35 – A dying monk sees three Old Testament prophets on his deathbed – Anonymous source
- #167 – IV.36 – John knows the name of a fellow monk who dies at the exact same time as him - Named source (Eleutherius)
- #168 – IV.36 – Two men send messengers to each other at the moment of their death - Named source (Gregory himself)
- #169 – IV.37 – Peter, a Spanish monk, has a vision of hell – Anonymous source
- #170 – IV.37 – Stephen dies and has a vision of hell before returning to life - Named source (Stephen himself)
- #171 – IV.37 – A Roman soldier has a vision of the bridge between death and life before being returned to life – No source
- #172 – IV.38 – A man has a vision of the heavenly home being built for the shoemaker Deusdedit – No source
- #173 – IV.40 – Theodore has a vision of the dragon coming to claim his sinful soul – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #174 – IV.40 – Chrysaorius sees evil spirits before his death - Named source (Probus)
- #175 – IV.40 – A lying monk also has a vision of the dragon coming to claim his sinful soul - Named source (Athanasius)
- #176 – IV.42 – Paschasius' dalmatic covering his coffin cures a possessed person – Anonymous source
- #177 – IV.42 – Paschasius appears to Germanus at the baths as his sin has not been fully purified – Anonymous source
- #178 – IV.48 – A saintly man appears to his followers after death dressed in a white robe – Named source (Gregory himself)

- #179 – IV.49 – Anthony is told in a vision to prepare himself for death – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #180 – IV.49 – Merulus has a vision of white flowers descending upon his head before he died – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #181 – IV.49 – Fourteen years later, a fragrance rises from his tomb, indicating the vision was indeed real – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #182 – IV.49 – An old man appears to John in a vision stating that his current illness will not kill him – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #183 – IV.49 – Two years later, John hears the voice of a recently deceased monk calling his name; he dies ten days later – Named source (Gregory himself)
- #184 – IV.53 – A sacristan has a vision of the spirit of a nun torn in two, with one part burnt at the altar - Named source (Felix)
- #185 – IV.54 – The martyr Faustinus appears to a sacristan in a dream warning him not to bury the body of a sinner in his church - Named source (John)
- #186 – IV.55 – Some sacristans see two evil spirits dragging the body of Valentine out of the church - Named source (Venantius and Liberius)
- #187 – IV.56 – A sacristan hears the body of a craftsman screaming; upon opening his tomb his body is gone, leaving his clothes behind – Anonymous source
- #188 – IV.57 – A priest meets the spirit of a man returned to serve at the hot springs he used to own until his sin is forgiven - Named source (Felix)
- #189 – IV.57 – Justus appears to his brother confirming their prayers have forgiven his soul - Named source (Gregory himself)
- #190 – IV.58 – A priest has a vision telling Cassius he will die on the feast of the Apostles – No source
- #191 – IV.59 – A man is freed from his chains on the days his wife offers a mass for him – No source
- #192 – IV.59 – Someone appears to a presumed-lost boatman and offers him bread at the same moment a mass is offered for his soul – Anonymous source

Appendix Two: Miracle Counts in Bede's Works

Format: Miracle Number, Book/Chapter, Brief Description, Type of Source

Vita Sancti Cuthberti (VCB)

- #1 – I – A child prophesies over the young Cuthbert – Named source (Trumwine)
- #2 – II – An angel heals Cuthbert's knee – No source
- #3 – III – Cuthbert prays and changes the winds to rescue a raft of monks – Anonymous source
- #4 – IV – Cuthbert sees the soul of Aidan ascend into heaven accompanied by the heavenly host – No source
- #5 – V – Cuthbert's horse finds food after prayer – Named source (Ingwald)
- #6 – VI – Boisil foresees in the Spirit Cuthbert's future character – Named source (Sigfrith)
- #7 – VII – Cuthbert ministers to an angel who disappears and leaves him 3 loaves of bread – No source
- #8 – VIII – Cuthbert healed of sickness after the brethren's prayers - Named source (Herefrith)
- #9 – VIII – Boisil's prophecies of his death, of the coming plague and Cuthbert becoming bishop – Named source (Herefrith)
- #10 – X – Otters dry Cuthbert's feet as he prays – Anonymous source
- #11 – X – Cuthbert heals the monk who had been watching him – Anonymous source
- #12 – XI – Cuthbert and his brethren are fed after prayer - Anonymous source
- #13 – XI – Cuthbert predicts after three days the wind will change and allow them safe passage – Anonymous source
- #14 – XII – Cuthbert predicts an eagle will feed them and it does – No source
- #15 – XIII – Cuthbert foresees the devil will interrupt his preaching – No source
- #16 – XIII – Cuthbert vanquishes the devil's flames with his prayers – No source
- #17 – XIV – Cuthbert extinguishes real flames by his prayers – No source
- #18 – XV – Cuthbert rids a woman of an evil spirit – No source
- #19 – XVII – Cuthbert defeats the evil spirits on the Farne Island – No source
- #20 – XVII – Cuthbert builds huts on the island 'with angelic aid' – No source

- #21 – XVIII – Cuthbert prays, digs a well, and water fills it – No source
- #22 – XIX – A miraculous crop of barley – Named (Cuthbert himself)
- #23 – XIX – Cuthbert converses with the birds, who leave his crops alone – Named (Cuthbert himself)
- #24 – XX – A raven begs Cuthbert’s forgiveness and brings him some lard – Anonymous source (inferred)
- #25 – XXI – The sea provides a plank of an exact measurement to build a hut – No source
- #26 – XXIII - Cuthbert send Ælfflæd a girdle through prophetic knowledge – Named source (Ælfflæd via Herefrith)
- #27 – XXIII – The girdle heals a nun and Ælfflæd herself – Named source (Ælfflæd via Herefrith)
- #28 – XXIII – The girdle miraculously vanishes - Named source (Ælfflæd via Herefrith)
- #29 – XXIV – Cuthbert prophesies about the future – Named source (Ælfflæd via Herefrith – inferred)
- #30 – XXV – Cuthbert heals a servant of a *gesith* with holy water – Named source (Baldhelm)
- #31 – XXVII – Cuthbert, though absent, sees the death of King Ecgfrith – No source
- #32 – XXVIII – Cuthbert predicts his and Hereberht’s simultaneous deaths – No source
- #33 – XXIX – Cuthbert heals the wife of a *gesith* with holy water – No source
- #34 – XXX – Cuthbert heals a girl with oil – Named source (Aethilwald)
- #35 – XXXI – Cuthbert heals a man with bread – No source
- #36 – XXXII – Cuthbert heals a youth wasted by sickness – No source
- #37 – XXXIII – Cuthbert prophesies a youth will survive the plague – Anonymous source
- #38 – XXXIV – Cuthbert foresees the death of the monk Hadwald before he dies – No source
- #39 – XXXV – Cuthbert makes water taste like wine – Anonymous source
- #40 – XXXVI – A storm detains brethren who had disobeyed Cuthbert – Named source (Cynimund)
- #41 – XXXVIII - Cuthbert heals Walhstod of his diarrhoea – Named source (Herefrith)
- #42 – XLI - A boy is cured of a demon by soil where Cuthbert's body had been washed – No source
- #43 – XLII – Cuthbert’s body was found incorrupt after eleven years – No source

- #44 – XLIV – A sick man is cured by praying at Cuthbert’s tomb – No source
- #45 – XLV – A paralytic is healed by wearing Cuthbert’s shoes – No source
- #46 – XLVI – A facial swelling is cured at Cuthbert’s oratory - Named source (Felgild)

Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (HE)

- #1 – I.7 – Alban prays on his way to martyrdom and a river is parted – No source
- #2 – I.7 – Alban prays for water and it appears – No source
- #3 – I.7 – The second executioner’s eyes fall out – No source
- #4 – I.17 – Germanus calms a storm – No source
- #5 – I.17 – Germanus performs exorcisms – No source
- #6 – I.18 – Germanus uses relics to heals a blind girl – No source
- #7 – I.19 – Germanus is preserved from a fire raging nearby – No source
- #8 – I.19 – Germanus is healed by an angel – No source
- #9 – I.21 – Germanus heals a boy’s knee – No source
- #10 – I.33 – A light marks the site of Abbot Peter’s grave until his body is moved – No source
- #11 – II.2 – A blind man is cured by Augustine – No source
- #12 – II.2 – Augustine’s prophecy against the British is later confirmed by their defeat in battle – No source
- #13 – II.6 - Bishop Laurence's vision and scourging by St. Peter – No source
- #14 – II.7 - Mellitus prays and a fire is averted from a church – No source
- #15 – II.12 – Edwin’s vision which leads to his conversion – No source
- #16 – III.2 – Bothelm’s broken arm is cured by moss from the cross at Heavenfield – No source
- #17 – III.6 – Oswald’s arm is preserved intact after it is severed after his death – No source
- #18 – III.8 – Eorcingota has a vision predicting her imminent death – Anonymous source
- #19 – III.8 – The monks hear a heavenly choir and see a bright light at her death – Anonymous source
- #20 – III.8 – A sweet smell rises from her tomb as they elevate the body – No source
- #21 – III.8 – Aethelburh’s body is found uncorrupted after being buried for 7 years – No source

- #22 – III.9 – A sick horse rolling around is cured when it finds the site on which Oswald was slain – No source
- #23 – III.9 – A paralysed girl is brought to that spot and is cured – No source
- #24 – III.10 – Soil taken from that site saves a post from a burning house – No source
- #25 – III.11 – A pillar of light shines up to the heavens from the bones of Oswald, kept in Lindsey – No source
- #26 – III.11 – Soil from the site of the washing of Oswald’s bones cures a demon-possessed man – No source
- #27 – III.12 - A boy is cured of a fever by sitting at the tomb of Oswald – Anonymous source
- #28 – III.13 – A piece of the stake on which Oswald’s head was fixed cures an Irish scholar – Named source (Acca)
- #29 – III.15 – Aidan predicts a storm but also predicts his holy oil will calm it – Named source (Cynemund)
- #30 – III.16 – Aidan prays and fire is diverted away from Bamburgh – Anonymous source
- #31 – III.17 – The buttress against which Aidan died is preserved from flame after the church burns down – No source
- #32 – III.19 – Fursa sees a vision of angels when ill – Named source (his *Life*)
- #33 – III.19 – Fursa has 2 further visions when ill – of angels and heaven, and also of evil spirits, who burn him on his jaw and shoulder - Named source (his *Life*)
- #34 – III.19 – His body is found incorrupt 27 days later and 4 years later whilst being moved - Named source (his *Life*)
- #35 – III.22 – King Sigebert is murdered following the angry prophecy of Bishop Cedd – No source
- #36 – III.23 – A boy is saved from plague by the intercession of Cedd at his tomb – No source
- #37 – III.27 - Æthelhun has a vision that Ecgbert would recover from plague (in answer to Ecgbert's prayers) – Anonymous source
- #38 – IV.3 – Owine hears heavenly singing – Named source (Owine himself)
- #39 – IV.3 – Chad has a vision of his brother Cedd that he would soon be taken to heaven – Named source (Owine)

- #40 – IV.3 – A man, possibly Ecgberht, has a vision of Chad’s soul being taken to heaven by Cedd – Named source (Ecgberht himself)
- #41 – IV.3 – A madman is made sane after spending the night at Chad’s tomb – No source
- #42 – IV.7 – A heavenly light shows the nuns where plague victims should be buried – Named source (miracle book of Barking)
- #43 – IV.8 – A nun has a vision of a bright light that nobody could see – Named source (miracle book of Barking)
- #44 – IV.8 – She also has a vision of a man of God who had died earlier that year, telling her she too would depart at daybreak – Named source (miracle book of Barking)
- #45 – IV.9 – Torhtgyth has a vision of a brilliantly white body being carried to heaven by golden cords – Named source (miracle book at Barking)
- #46 – IV.9 – A nun prays at the tomb of Æthelburh for death and is granted it twelve days later – Named source (miracle book at Barking)
- #47 – IV.9 – Torhtgyth is restored from her illness after a vision of Æthelburh – Named source (miracle book at Barking)
- #48 – IV.10 – The wife of a gesith is cured from blindness at Barking – Named source (miracle book at Barking)
- #49 – IV.11 – King Sebbi has a vision of three men in shining robes on his deathbed – Named source (miracle book at Barking)
- #50 – IV.11 – Sebbi’s coffin miraculously expands to fit his body – Named source (miracle book at Barking)
- #51 – IV.13 – A three year drought is relieved the day the South Saxons convert to Christianity – No source
- #52 – IV.14 – A boy has a vision of Peter and Paul announcing his death later that day – Named source (Acca)
- #53 – IV.19 – Æthelthryth prophesies the plague that would kill her, and names others who would die with her – No source
- #54 – IV.19 – Æthelthryth’s body is found incorrupt after 16 years – Named source (Cynefrith)
- #55 – IV.22 – Imma is unable to be bound as his brother offers prayers for his soul – Anonymous source

- #56 – IV.23 – Breguswith has a dream that her daughter Hild would have great impact all over Britain – No source
- #57 – IV.23 – Begu the nun has a vision of Hild's soul carried to heaven despite being 13 miles away – No source
- #58 – IV.23 – An initiate nun has a vision of Hild's soul carried to heaven – No source
- #59 – IV.24 – Someone appears to Cædmon in a dream, instructing him to sing – No source
- #60 – IV.24 – Cædmon displays his new gift to his reeve and the abbess – No source
- #61 – IV.25 – Adamnan prophesies the destruction of Coldingham due to their sins – Named source (Eadgisl)
- #62 – IV.28 – Evil spirits flee the Farne Island at Cuthbert's arrival – Named source (Bede's own *vitae* of Cuthbert)
- #63 – IV.28 – Cuthbert's prayers and faith produce water from a well dug into hard rock - Named source (Bede's own *vitae* of Cuthbert)
- #64 – IV.28 – Barley produces a crop despite being sown long after expectation - Named source (Bede's own *vitae* of Cuthbert)
- #65 – IV.29 – Cuthbert is warned by a divine oracle that the day of his death is near - Named source (Bede's own *vitae* of Cuthbert)
- #66 – IV.29 – Hereberht requests that he may die the same day as Cuthbert, which Cuthbert foresees - Named source (Bede's own *vitae* of Cuthbert)
- #67 – IV.30 – Cuthbert's body is found incorrupt - Named source (Bede's own *vitae* of Cuthbert)
- #68 – IV.31 – Baduthegn is cured at Cuthbert's tomb – Anonymous source
- #69 – IV.32 – A young man's eyelid tumour is cured through relics of Cuthbert - Anonymous source
- #70 – V.1 – Æthelwald calms a storm by his prayers – Named source (Guthfrith)
- #71 – V.2 – John of Beverley restores speech to a dumb youth – Named source (Berhthun)
- #72 – V.3 – A nun's swollen arm is cured through John's prayer – Named source (Berhthun)
- #73 – V.4 – The wife of a gesith is cured through holy water blessed by John – Named source (Berhthun)

- #74 – V.5 – A servant is healed on his deathbed by John’s prayer – Named source (Berhthun)
- #75 – V.6 – Herebald is cured from his severe fall through John’s prayers and catechizing - Named source (Herebald himself)
- #76 – V.8 – Archbishop Theodore had a dream that he would live a long life – No source
- #77 – V.9 – A servant of Boisil has a vision of his master instructing Ecgberht to go to Iona, contrary to his plans to visit the continent – No source
- #78 – V.9 – The servant has another vision of Boisil a few days later repeating his instructions – No source
- #79 – V.9 – A great storm damages Ecgberht’s ship, but all his possessions are spared – No source
- #80 – V.10 – The bodies of the two Hewalds are carried 40 miles against the river current – No source
- #81 – V.10 – Every night a great heavenly light illuminates the spot where their bodies lay – No source
- #82 – V.10 – Tilmon the monk has a vision of one of the brothers telling him where their bodies are – No source
- #83 – V.10 – A spring burst forth from the spot where the Hewalds were killed – No source
- #84 – V.12 – Drythelm has a vision of heaven and hell – Named source (Hæmgisl)
- #85 – V.13 – A man has a vision of angels and demons showing him his good and evil deeds – Named source (Pehthelm)
- #86 – V.14 – A sinful man has a vision of hell – Named source (Bede himself)
- #87 – V.19 – Wilfrid has a vision of the Archangel Michael recalling him from death – No source

Martyrologium

- #1 – 10 January – Anthony sees the soul of Paul the hermit carried to heaven by angels – No source
- #2 – 13 January – Hilary of Poitiers revives a dead man by his prayers – No source
- #3 – 14 January – Felix is released from prison by an angel – Named source (Bishop Paulinus)

- #4 – 17 January - The triplets Speusippus, Elasippus and Melasippus are thrown into a fire but are unharmed – Named source (Neon)
- #5 – 20 January – Sebastian appears in a dream to Lucina telling her where his body is buried – No source
- #6 – 21 January – Agnes quells flame meant to kill her with her prayers – No source
- #7 – 5 February – Agatha’s torture wounds are healed – No source
- #8 – 9 March – The bodies of forty Christian soldiers are found unmutilated despite torture – No source
- #9 – 16 March – Cyriacus exorcises Artemia of a demon and baptises her – No source
- #10 – 16 March – Cyriacus exorcises Iobe of a demon and baptises her – No source
- #11 – 1 April – Agape and Chionia are sent into a fire but unharmed by the flames – No source
- #12 – 25 April – Mark the Evangelist has a vision of an angel and the Lord – No source
- #13 – 14 May – Pachomius wrote rules for monasteries dictated by an angel – No source
- #14 – 14 May – Victor is put into a furnace for three days and emerges unharmed – No source
- #15 – 14 May – Victor drinks poison but does not die – No source
- #16 – 14 May – After severe torture Victor is hung upside down for three days but survives – No source
- #17 – 14 May – Corona has a vision of two crowns given to her and Victor – No source
- #18 – 2 June – Dorotheus the executioner has a vision of two of victim’s souls ascending to heaven – No source
- #19 – 19 June – Ambrose discovers the tombs of Gervasius and Protasius by divine revelation – No source
- #20 – 19 June – The bodies of Gervasius and Protasius are incorrupt – No source
- #21 – 19 June – A blind man is given his sight by touching the bier on which Gervasius and Protasius lay – No source
- #22 – 22 June – The eyes of Alban’s executioner fall out after he is beheaded – No source
- #23 – 22 June – Alban’s prayers dry a riverbed allowing him to pass over – No source
- #24 – 23 June – Æthelthryth’s body is discovered incorrupt after 16 years – No source
- #25 - 9 July – Anatholia survives being locked up with a serpent all night – No source
- #26 – 23 July – Apollinaris is publicly nourished by an angel in prison – No source

#27 – 7 August – Donatus restores a broken holy chalice through prayer – Named source (Gregory's *Dialogi*)

#28 – 20 September – Fausta recites the psalms and a hot frying pan is made cold – No source

#29 – 20 September – A voice from heaven calls the spirits of Fausta and Evilasius – No source

#30 – 23 September – Januarius sees a flame coming from Sossius' head signalling he would become a martyr – No source

#31 – 24 September – Andochius, Thyrsus and Felix are sent into fire but are untouched by the flames – No source

#32 – 27 September – Cosmos and Damian survive sea, fire, crucifixion, stoning and arrows 'through divine influence' – No source

#33 – 3 October – A great light marks the site of the bodies of the two missionaries named Hewald – No source

#34 – 14 October – Callistus is strengthened and consoled by a vision of a priest – No source

#35 – 14 October – Callistus cures a soldier of his painful sores – No source

#36 – 31 October – The body of Quintinus is discovered after 55 years through the revelation of an angel – No source

#37 – 1 November – Benignus destroys idols through praying – No source

#38 – 1 November – An angel provides Benignus with bread and removes his torture devices – No source

#39 – 1 November – At the death of Benignus, a dove and a fragrant smell appear – No source

#40 – 1 November – Caesarius is surrounded by a heavenly light whilst he prays – No source

#41 – 23 November – Clement's body is revealed after the sea withdraws three miles at the prayers of his disciples – No source

#42 – 10 December – A dove leaves Eulalia's body after she is beheaded – No source

#43 – 13 December – Lucy is unable to be moved by strong men, rope and oxen – No source

#44 – 13 December – Lucy survives severe torture until priests arrive and she receives communion – No source

Chronica Minora (Chapters XVII-XXII of De Temporibus)

#1 – 17 – God withdraws Enoch from the world – No source¹¹⁶⁰

#2 – 17 – The Flood – No source

#3 – 18 – Confusion of the languages at Babel – No source

#4 – 20 – Elijah translated to Heaven – No source

#5 – 22 - The Incarnation of Jesus Christ – No source

Chronica Maiora (Chapter LXVI of De Temporum Ratione)

#1 – AM1 – God creates the world in 6 days – No source¹¹⁶¹

#2 – AM687 – God withdraws Enoch from the world – No source

#3 – AM1656 – The Flood – No source

#4 – AM1757 - Confusion of the languages at Babel – No source

#5 – AM3056 - Elijah stops the rain for 3 and a half years – No source

#6 – AM3064 – Elijah translated to Heaven – No source

#7 – AM3064 – Elisha performs his first miracle – No source

#8 – AM3377 – Ezekiel's visions of a restored Jerusalem – No source

#9 – AM3468 - Zechariah visited by an angel – Named source (Book of Zechariah)

#10 – AM3966 – Herod struck dead by an angel – Named source (Book of Acts)

#11 – AM3952 – The Incarnation – No source

#12 – AM4170 – Alexander declared Bishop of Jerusalem by divine revelation – No source

#13 – AM4222 - Gregory the Thaumaturge was known for his miracles, including moving a mountain – No source

#14 – AM4314 - Bishop James of Nisibis' prayers saved the city several times – No source

#15 – AM4316 - John the Baptist's relics miraculously preserved – No source

¹¹⁶⁰ No sources are given for these five miracles, but all are drawn from the Bible. See Chapter Four, pp. 154-156 for more details.

¹¹⁶¹ No sources are given for many of these miracles, but most are drawn from the Bible. See Chapter Four, pp. 156-158 for more details.

- #16 – AM4362 - The bodies of Habakkuk and Micah miraculously discovered – No source
- #17 – AM4377 - Revelation of Lucian the Priest of the bones of Stephen, Gamaliel and Nicodemus – No source¹¹⁶²
- #18 – AM4410 - Miraculous Revelation of John the Baptist's Head – No source
- #19 – AM4410 – Miraculous victory of St. Germanus shouting ‘Alleluia’ – No source
- #20 – AM4444 - Body of Barnabas and autograph of Matthew revealed – No source
- #21 – AM4472 - Anastasius killed by a divine thunderbolt for persecuting the Catholics – No source
- #22 – AM4480 – John, Bishop of Rome, heals a blind man – No source
- #23 - AM4518 - Body of St Anthony the Monk discovered by divine revelation – No source
- #24 – AM4591 - Martyrdom of Anastasius, healing of a demon-possessed man who puts on his tunic – No source
- #25 – AM4639 – Æthelthryth’s body discovered undefiled after 16 years – No source
- #26 – AM4652 – A relic of the cross discovered by revelation – No source
- #27 – AM4652 – Cuthbert’s body discovered undefiled after 11 years – Named source (VCB and VCM)
- #28 – AM4671 – A flood in Rome recedes after frequent litanies are said – No source

¹¹⁶² Though Bede mentions that Lucian had written down his revelation in Greek for the whole Church, he accessed this information via Gennadius: Bede, *Reckoning of Time*, p. 218, fn. 611.

Appendix Three: Miracle Counts in Other Early Insular Texts

Format: Miracle Number, Book/Chapter, Brief Description, Type of Source

Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo (VCA)

- #1 – I.3 - A small child prophecies that Cuthbert would become a priest and bishop –
Named source (Tumma and Elias)
- #2 – I.4 - An angel heals Cuthbert's knee – No source
- #3 – I.5 - Cuthbert sees the soul of Aidan ascend into heaven accompanied by the heavenly
host – No source
- #4 – I.6 - Cuthbert's horse finds food after prayer – No source
- #5 – II.2 - Cuthbert ministers to an angel who disappears and leaves him 3 loaves of bread
– Anonymous source
- #6 – II.3 – Little sea animals dry Cuthbert's feet as he prays – Named source (Plegils)
- #7 – II.3 - Cuthbert heals the monk who had been watching him – Named source (Plegils)
- #8 – II.4 - Cuthbert and his brethren are fed after prayer – Named source (Tydi)
- #9 – II.4 - Cuthbert predicts after three days the wind will change and allow them safe
passage – Named source (Tydi)
- #10 – II.5 - Cuthbert predicts an eagle will feed them and it does - Named source (Tydi)
- #11 – II.6 - Cuthbert foresees the devil will interrupt his preaching – No source
- #12 – II.6 – A fiery illusion of the devil confuses Cuthbert's audience – No source
- #13 – II.7 - Cuthbert extinguishes real flames by his prayers – No source
- #14 – II.8 – Cuthbert rids a woman of an evil spirit – No source
- #15 – III.1 - Cuthbert defeats the evil spirits on the Farne Island – No source
- #16 – III.2 - A very heavy stone is miraculously moved – No source
- #17 – III.3 – Cuthbert prays, digs a well, and water fills it - Anonymous source
- #18 – III.4 - The sea provides a plank of an exact measurement to build a hut – No
source¹¹⁶³
- #19 – III.5 – Cuthbert, invoking the name of Christ, banishes two ravens, who leave his
building alone – Anonymous source

¹¹⁶³ Although it is 'still to be seen by mariners', (*adhuc usque hodie navigantibus... apparet*).

- #20 – III.5 - A raven begs Cuthbert's forgiveness and brings him some lard – Anonymous source
- #21 – III.6 - Cuthbert prophesies about the future – No source
- #22 – IV.3 - He blesses some water, then a priest carries it to Hemma's wife and she is healed – No source
- #23 – IV.4 – Cuthbert heals a nun with head and side pains - Named source (Aethilwald)
- #24 – IV.5 – Cuthbert heals a paralysed boy – Named source (Penna)
- #25 – IV.6 – Cuthbert prophesies a youth will survive the plague - Named source (Tydi)
- #26 – IV.7 - A servant is healed by being given water blessed by Cuthbert – Anonymous source
- #27 – IV.8 - Cuthbert, though absent, sees the death of King Ecgrith – Anonymous source
- #28 – IV.9 - Cuthbert predicts his and Hereberht's simultaneous deaths – No source
- #29 – IV.10 - Cuthbert foresees the death of the monk Hadwald before he dies – Named source (Ælflæd)
- #30 – IV.11 - Cuthbert foresees his own death 'with the prophetic spirit of God' – No source
- #31 – IV.12 – Cuthbert heals a brother of his dysentery - Named source (Walhstod)
- #32 – IV.14 – Cuthbert's body is incorrupt after 11 years – No source
- #33 – IV.15 – A monk takes water from where Cuthbert's body had been washed and a boy is healed – No source
- #34 – IV.16 - A sick man is cured by praying at Cuthbert's tomb – No source
- #35 – IV.17 - A paralytic is healed by wearing Cuthbert's shoes – No source

Stephen of Ripon's *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi* (VW)

- #1 – I - The house where Wilfrid is born miraculously appears to be on fire – No source
- #2 – XIII – With the aid of God through prayer, Wilfrid's companions push back the pagan army three times – No source
- #3 – XIII – Wilfrid prays and the tide returns before its usual hour so they can escape – No source
- #4 – XVIII – Wilfrid restores a dead boy to life – No source
- #5 – XXIII – Bothelm restored to health after falling from a tall height and breaking many bones – No source (though 'still alive')

- #6 – XXIV – After being expelled from his see, Wilfrid prophesies that in 12 months’ time there will be tears; King Aelfwini dies at that time – No source
- #7 – XXVI – There is an unusually large catch of fish and harvest when Wilfrid evangelises the Frisians – No source
- #8 – XXXVI – Upon praying, Wilfrid’s dark cell is filled with holy light – No source
- #9 – XXXVII – Wilfrid cures the reeve’s wife and she ministers to him like Peter’s mother-in-law – Named source – Abbess Æbbe
- #10 – XXXVIII – Wilfrid is unable to be bound by chains; they become either too loose or too small – No source
- #11 – XXXIX – The possessed queen is healed after Wilfrid is released through the intercession of Æbbe – No source
- #12 – LVI – A sick, dying Wilfrid is visited by the Archangel Michael and told he will live 4 more years – No source
- #13 – LIX – King Aldfrith struck down with sickness and dies as prophesied by Pope John VI – Named source – Abbess Ælfflæd and Abbess Æthilberg
- #14 – LXII - Wilfrid cured of a sickness through prayer – No source
- #15 – LXV – A sound of birds appear at Wilfrid’s death in Oundle – Anonymous source
- #16 – LXVI – At his burial in Ripon, the sound of birds appear again, interpreted as angels – No source
- #17 – LXVI – A nun has her withered hand and arm straightened through water that had washed the robe Wilfrid’s body had been rested upon – No source
- #18 – LXVII – Attackers are unable to set fire to the house where Wilfrid died; their torches are extinguished *contra naturam*, and an angel is seen defending the house – Anonymous source (inferred from #19)
- #19 – LXVII – Part of a hedge does not set fire in that same incident and is extinguished when it reaches the same house as #18 – Anonymous source
- #20 – LXVII - The attackers are miraculously blinded by God whilst it is still day, surrounded and mostly slain – No source
- #21 – LXVIII – A white arc appears in the sky on the anniversary of Wilfrid’s death – No source

Vita Ceolfridi (V.Ceol)

#1 – XL - A perfumed scent and a miraculous light occur around the body of Ceolfrith – Anonymous source

The Whitby Vita Gregorii (VG)

#1 – VII – A column of light in the form of a ladder reveals Gregory's whereabouts after he had gone into hiding – No source

#2 – IX – Gregory 'through the Spirit of God and the incomparable discernment of his inward eye' prophesies the future salvation of the Anglo-Saxons – No source

#3 – X - Gregory told by a locust to stay where he was (*sta in loco*) – No source

#4 – XVI – Edwin's vision that leads to his conversion – No source

#5 – XVII – Paulinus' soul is seen ascending to heaven in the form of a white bird/swan – No source

#6 – XVIII – A man twice appears to a priest in a dream to find Edwin's relics – Anonymous source

#7 – XIX – The priest witnesses the man in a third dream and is whipped – Anonymous source

#8 – XIX – The priest sees four spirits attending their bodies – Anonymous source

#9 – XX - Gregory prays and the communion bread turns into flesh to prove to a doubting woman – No source

#10 – XXI - Gregory prays and relics are shown to be genuine by bleeding when cut – No source

#11 – XXII – Gregory defeats evil spirits frightening his horse – No source

#12 – XXII – The Holy Spirit blinds the evil magicians – No source

#13 – XXIII – Gregory pacifies a king of the Lombards 'by a like miracle' – No source

#14 – XXVIII – Gregory frees a man from hell – No source (but story from the *Dialogues*)

#15 – XXVIII – Gregory appears posthumously to his successor rebuking and eventually killing him – No source

#16 – XXIX – Gregory's prayers and tears posthumously baptise the pagan emperor Trajan – No source

Adomnán's Vita Columbae (VC)

- #1 – Second Preface – Maecte prophesies the birth and fame of Columba – Anonymous source
- #2 – I.1 – Columba appears to King Oswald in a dream, promising victory in battle – Named source (Faílbe, abbot of Iona)
- #3 – I.1 – On multiple occasions, singing songs about Columba saved people from enemies and fires – Anonymous source
- #4 – I.2 – Columba prophesied that Finten would request to become a monk upon hearing news of his death – Named source (Finten himself, via Oisséne the priest)
- #5 – I.3 – Columba prophesied that Ernéne will become a fruitful Christian, learned in doctrine – Named source (Ségéne and Faílbe)
- #6 – I.4 – Columba prophesied that Cainnech would join them, despite a storm – No source
- #7 – I.5 – Columba spiritually sees Colmán in peril at sea – No source
- #8 – I.6 – Columba spiritually sees Cormac about to undertake a journey, but knows his travelling partner has left without permission from his abbot – No source
- #9 – I.7 – Columba narrates an account of a battle, despite not being present – No source
- #10 – I.8 – Columba knew the time of a battle, when it ended, and the number of men slain – No source
- #11 – I.9 – Columba predicts the deaths of King Áidan's sons and who his successor will be – No source
- #12 – I.10 – Columba prophesies Domnall's future as king and his peaceful death – No source
- #13 – I.11 – Columba prophesies that Scandlán will reign for 30 years, will be exiled, then reign for 3 more months – No source
- #14 – I.12 – Columba foreknew the deaths of kings Báitan and Echoid – No source
- #15 – I.13 – Columba prophesies over the life of Óingus, a future king – No source
- #16 – I.14 – Columba forewarns Áid that if he kills the king's son, he will not reign over the whole kingdom and will die early – No source
- #17 – I.15 – Columba prophesies that king Roderic will die peacefully – No source
- #18 – I.16 – Columba predicts the imminent death of one boy, and the long life of another – No source

- #19 – I.17 – Columba spiritually sees a hidden sin of Colcu’s mother, and predicts Colcu’s death – No source
- #20 – I.18 – Columba foresees that Laisrán will become a monk – No source
- #21 – I.19 – Columba forewarns Berach of a great whale if he deviates from a certain course, and predicts that Baithéne will see it too – No source
- #22 – I.20 – Columba predicts the burial place of Báitán – Named source (Mailodrán the priest)
- #23 – I.21 – Columba predicts the future state of Nemán, eating with thieves in a forest – No source
- #24 – I.22 – Columba spiritually sees a man committing incest, and predicts his arrival to Iona. He then predicts his end – No source
- #25 – I.23 – Columba foresees that only a single vowel of ‘I’ was omitted from a psalter – No source
- #26 – I.24 – Columba predicts a book will fall into a ewer – No source
- #27 – I.25 – Columba predicts a man will spill his ink-horn – No source
- #28 – I.26 – Columba predicts the arrival of a guest – No source
- #29 – I.27 – Columba predicts the death of a man by the end of the week – No source
- #30 – I.28 – Columba spiritually sees a rain of sulphurous fire destroying a Roman city – No source
- #31 – I.29 – Columba spiritually sees Laisrán working his monks hard and is aggrieved, at which point Laisrán stops and gives the monks food and rest – No source
- #32 – I.30 – Columba prophesies that a man will sail to them from Ireland seeking forgiveness – No source
- #33 – I.31 – Columba prophesies the imminent death of the monk Cailtán – No source
- #34 – I.32 – Two brothers become monks, and Columba prophesies their death within a month – No source
- #35 – I.33 – Columba prophesies a man will arrive, be baptised and die that same day – No source (though his burial cairn ‘can still be seen today’)
- #36 – I.34 – Columba foresees a great fire, so moves his boat in advance – No source
- #37 – I.35 – Columba spiritually sees Gallán dragged to hell by demons, and this is confirmed by Colcu some months later – No source

- #38 – I.36 – Columba prophesies a priest's hand would decay and fall off, and that a bloodthirsty monk would be killed, after a false ordination – No source
- #39 – I.37 – Monks experience a sweet smell, warmth, a joyful feeling and a lightened load half-way to their monastery – No source
- #40 – I.37 – Columba sometimes had a miraculously loud singing voice that carried over great distance - Anonymous source
- #41 – I.38 – Columba predicts the impoverished death of Luguid the Lamé – Anonymous source
- #42 – I.39 – Columba prophesies that Nemán will be killed by his enemies, who will find him with a harlot – No source
- #43 – I.40 – Columba sees the hidden sin of a priest delivering the Eucharist – No source
- #44 – I.41 – Columba knows exactly where to find a thief, and knows when he will die – No source
- #45 – I.42 – Columba declines a sung poem, knowing the poet is shortly to be killed – No source
- #46 – I.43 – Columba spiritually sees two noblemen kill each other – Anonymous source
- #47 – I.44 – Columba knows a man is a bishop, despite concealing this information – No source
- #48 – I.45 – Columba predicts he will not see his uncle again in life, the prophecy looks like it will fail after Ernán returns, but he suddenly drops down dead – No source
- #49 – I.46 – Columba spiritually sees a certain man's village has been ransacked – No source
- #50 – I.47 – Columba predicts the death of Góire – No source
- #51 – I.48 – Columba predicts a bird will arrive and will require care – No source
- #52 – I.49 – Columba predicts a well will become unusable after a man will be slain over it in battle – Named source (Finán the anchorite)
- #53 – I.50 – Columba knows the character of the people who gave certain gifts – No source
- #54 – II.1 – Columba prays and turns water into wine – No source
- #55 – II.2 – Columba turns the bitter fruit of a tree sweet – No source
- #56 – II.3 – Columba orders a crop planted after midsummer and is miraculously harvested in August – No source

- #57 – II.4 – Columba prophesies that an evil rain storm will make men sick but they will be healed by his intervention through eating blessed bread – Named source (Silnán)
- #58 – II.5 – Columba heals the hip of Maugin the virgin and predicts how long she will live afterwards – No source
- #59 – II.6 – Columba heals many at the place called *dorsum Cete* - Anonymous source
- #60 – II.7 – Columba blesses some rock-salt, which is preserved despite a house fire – No source
- #61 – II.8 – A page of a book that Columba had handwritten was preserved, despite being underwater for 20 days – No source
- #62 – II.9 – A hymnbook written by Columba is preserved despite being in a rotten satchel after falling into a river – Anonymous source
- #63 – II.10 – Columba prays and water appears from a rock to baptise an infant, who Columba prophesies over – No source
- #64 – II.11 – A well, known for making people sick, is made pure after Columba drinks from it and washes himself with its water – No source
- #65 – II.12 – Columba calms a storm whilst at sea – No source
- #66 – II.13 – Columba spiritually sees that Cainnech will pray for their safety at sea during a storm – No source
- #67 – II.14 – Cainnech's staff is transferred across the sea through Columba's prayers – No source
- #68 – II.15 – Columba prays and the wind becomes favourable in two different directions on the same day – No source
- #69 – II.15 – Columba prophesies that Colmán will not see him alive again – No source
- #70 – II.16 – Columba exorcises a demon from a milk-jug, which miraculously re-fills – No source
- #71 – II.17 – A sorcerer draws 'milk' from a bull (in reality blood). The bull becomes lean and wasted but recovered through water blessed by Columba – No source
- #72 – II.18 – Columba permanently heals Lugne of a nosebleed – No source
- #73 – II.19 – Columba tells his companions to cast their nets once more and they will find a salmon – No source
- #74 – II.19 – Columba tells his companions they will find no fish for 2 days, but on the third they will find two great salmon – No source

- #75 – II.20 – Columba blesses Nesán’s herd of cows, stating that he will eventually have 105 instead of 5 – No source
- #76 – II.21 – Columba promises the same for Colmán, and that both men’s herds will not exceed 105 cows – No source
- #77 – II.22 – Columba prays in the sea and a thief’s boat sinks through a predicted storm – No source
- #78 – II.23 – Columba prophesies the death of a murderer before he eats pig flesh in autumn – No source
- #79 – II.24 – A spear is unable to pierce the cloak of Columba, which becomes like armour – No source
- #80 – II.24 – A year later, Columba spiritually sees his original attacker killed by a spear – No source
- #81 – II.25 – Columba prophesies immediate death on the killer of a girl they had failed to protect – No source
- #82 – II.26 – Columba stops and slays a giant boar by his invocation to God – No source
- #83 – II.27 – Columba, through the sign of the cross, stops a water beast from eating Lugne – No source
- #84 – II.28 – Columba prophesies that snakes will not poison the men or cattle on Iona – No source
- #85 – II. 29 – Columba accidentally blesses a dagger, which becomes unable to kill cows; even smelted down and the metal redistributed it is still blessed – No source
- #86 – II.30 – Columba prays for his servant Diormit and he recovers and lives a long while afterwards – No source
- #89 – II.31 – Columba prays for the healing and long life of Fintén – No source
- #90 – II.32 – Columba restores a dead boy to life – No source
- #91 – II.33 – Columba predicts messengers will arrive from the king bearing news of the sick Broichan and that he will release his slave-girl – No source
- #92 – II.33 – A white stone in water blessed by Columba cures Broichan after he releases the slave girl, and it cannot sink – No source
- #93 – II.34 – Germanus prays and clears storms and darkness whilst sailing – No source
- #94 – II.34 – Columba prays and his boat sails straight through adverse winds caused by the magician Broichan – No source

- #95 – II.35 – Columba opens the gates by the sign of the cross – No source
- #96 – II.36 – Columba opens the locked doors of a church without keys – No source
- #97 – II.37 - Columba blesses a stake that never fails to kill wild animals, but loses it powers when the owner's wife intervenes – No source
- #98 – II.38 – Columba prophesies a milk skin will disappear in the tide but will return – No source
- #99 – II.39 – Columba prophesies that he and Librán will live for seven years until Librán completes his penance – No source
- #100 – II.39 – Columba prophesies that Librán will be freed from his bonds of servitude, that his father will die within a week, and his mother soon after – No source
- #101 – II.39 – Winds change against sailors for scorning Librán as Columba's servant, but are favourably restored when they allow him on board – No source
- #102 – II.39 – Columba relates back all that had occurred to Librán without having been told by anyone – No source
- #103 – II.39 – Columba prophesies that Librán will die in Ireland, not Britain, at a good old age – No source
- #104 – II.40 – Columba prays for a woman to be delivered from a painful childbirth – Anonymous source
- #105 – II.41 – Columba prays for a husband and wife, that the wife will love her husband and engage in marital relations – No source
- #106 – II.42 – Columba foresaw that Cormac would land in the Orcades – No source
- #107 – II.42 – Columba predicts Cormac will arrive back to them that very day – No source
- #108 – II.42 – Columba prays for a change in the winds after Cormac's boat is attacked by sea creatures – No source
- #109 – II.43 – Columba travels in a carriage safely, despite the axles not being pinned – No source
- #110 – II.44 – Columba's relics bring rain in a drought - Named source (Adomnán himself)
- #111 – II.45 – Columba's relics produce favourable winds to transport building timbers - Named source (Adomnán himself)

- #112 – II.45 – A prayer to Columba grants favourable winds when transporting wood to repair the monastery - Named source (Adomnán himself)
- #113 – II.45 - A prayer to Columba grants a favourable wind to return the brothers to Iona to celebrate his feast day - Named source (Adomnán himself)
- #114 – II.46 – Columba’s intercession protected Adomnán and his companions from plague whilst travelling in Britain - Named source (Adomnán himself)
- #115 – III.1 – An angel foretells Columba’s birth to his mother in a dream – No source
- #116 – III.2 – Cruithnechán sees a ball of light hover above the sleeping child Columba – No source
- #117 – III.3 – Brénden sees a pillar of light and a host of angels accompany Columba – No source
- #118 – III.4 – Finnio sees Columba accompanied by an angel – Anonymous source
- #119 – III.5 – Columba has a vision of an angel who scourges him for refusing to ordain Áidán – No source
- #120 – III.6 – Columba sees angels taking the soul of a monk to heaven – No source
- #121 – III.7 – Columba sees angels taking the soul of Diormit to heaven – No source
- #122 – III.8 – Columba fights a battle against demons with the help of angels – Anonymous source
- #123 – III.8 – Columba prophesies that the defeated demons will instead terrorise the monks of Tiree – Anonymous source (implied from #122)
- #124 – III.8 – Columba spiritually sees that Baithéne’s community will be protected by their fasts and prayers – Anonymous source (implied from #122)
- #125 – III.9 – Columba sees angels carry the soul of Columb the iron-smith to heaven – No source
- #126 – III.10 – Columba sees the soul of a pious woman ascend to heaven – No source
- #127 – III.10 – A year later, Columba sees her and a group of angels battling with demons to save her husband’s soul upon death – No source
- #128 – III.11 – Columba knew that Brénden had died after seeing his soul carried to heaven by angels – No source
- #129 – III.12 – Bishop Colmán’s death is revealed to Columba – No source
- #130 – III.13 – Columba sees monks who have recently drowned fighting hostile powers for the soul of a guest that was also with them – No source

- #131 – III.14 – Columba sees angels awaiting to carry Emchath to heaven, so rushes to baptize him before he dies – No source
- #132 – III.15 – Columba urgently sends an angel to catch a monk who had fallen off of a monastic building – No source
- #133 – III.16 – A spy sees angels surrounding Columba as he prays – Anonymous source
- #134 – III.17 – A fiery ball is seen above Columba’s head as he consecrates the communion bread – No source
- #135 – III.18 – Columba is visited by the Holy Spirit for three days and nights, manifested as a bright light in his house which reveals many heavenly mysteries – No source
- #136 – III.19 – Virgno witnesses an exceedingly bright light following Columba into the monastery – Named source (Commán, Virgno’s nephew)
- #137 – III.20 – Colcu witnesses a bright light surrounding Columba as he prayed – No source
- #138 – III.21 – Berchán spies Columba surround by heavenly light by peering through a keyhole – No source
- #139 – III.22 – Columba sees angels coming for his soul, but he is instead granted four more years of life – No source
- #140 – III.23 – Columba sees an angel at the end of his life – No source
- #141 – III.23 – Columba reveals the day of his death to his servant Diormit – No source
- #142 – III.23 – A horse weeps over Columba and places his head against him, knowing through God that he is soon to die – No source
- #143 – III.23 – Diormit and a few others witness the church filled with angelic light whilst Columba is praying at the altar – Anonymous source
- #144 – III.23 - Luguid knows Columba is dead, despite being a distance away, and sees Iona surrounded by angels – Anonymous source
- #145 – III.23 – Ernène sees a pillar of fire light up the night sky then disappear on the night when Columba died – Named source (Ernène himself)
- #146 – III.23 – Before his death, Columba prophesied that his funeral would only be attended by his own monks, and a storm prevents others from arriving – No source

Appendix Four:

Descriptions and Epithets of Bede's Sources for Miracles in the *HE* and *VCB*

The lists below show the descriptions and epithets Bede uses to describe his sources for miracle stories in the *VCB* and *HE* alongside an English translation.¹¹⁶⁴

Bede's Sources in the *VCB*¹¹⁶⁵

- *Beate memoriae* – of blessed memory (Named source, Bishop (*Episcopus*) Trumwine, I)
- *Probatissimus* – very worthy/esteemed (Anonymous monk (*Frater*), III)
- *Rusticae simplicitatis viro et simulandi prorsus ignaro* – a man of rustic/boorish simplicity, altogether/utterly unaware/incapable of falsehood (Anonymous lay eyewitness, III)
- *Religiosus* – pious/devout (Named source, Ingwald the priest (*Presbiter*), V)
- *Religiosus ac veteranus* – pious/devout and veteran/old (Named source, Sigfrith, servant of God and priest (*Dei famulus et presbiter*), VI)
- *Presbiter et abbas quondam* – Priest and former abbot (Named source, Herefrith, VIII)
- *Unus e fratribus* – One of the brothers (Anonymous source, X)
- *Quorum unus postea presbiterii functus officio* – One of which afterwards took the office of priest (Anonymous source, XI)
- *Sicut ipsa postea reverentissimo Lindisfarnensis aecclesiae presbitero Herefrido et ille mihi referebat* - as she [Ælflæd] herself afterwards related to the most

¹¹⁶⁴ There are of course, other occasions, notably the Preface to the *HE*, where Bede describes his sources in general, but this Appendix is limited solely to the scope of this thesis.

¹¹⁶⁵ Note, some of Bede's descriptions in the *VCB* are taken almost verbatim from the same stories that first appeared in the *VCA*. Nevertheless, the fact that he continued to use them in his own text shows that he still thought them appropriate descriptions to apply to the sources. Some of the differences are discussed in Chapter Four and Five. In addition, *VCB* XIX presents an exception whereby Bede states that Cuthbert himself was the source for this story: '*sicut post ipse referebat*' – as he himself afterwards related, pp. 220-221. As such, Bede's description here of Cuthbert ('being of a happy disposition and very friendly') is excluded from the present investigation as it forms part of the hagiographical image of the saint, not as a comment on the quality of his sources.

esteemed priest Herefrith of the church of Lindisfarne and he to me [Bede] (Named source, XXIII)

- *Eadem reverentissima virgo et mater virginum Christi* - the same most esteemed virgin and mother of the virgins of Christ (Named source, Ælfflæd, XXIV)
- *Ministro comitis nomine Baldhelmo qui nunc usque superset, et in aecclesia Lindisfarnensi presbiterii gradum officio tenens moribus implet, virtutesque viri Dei cunctis scire volentibus referre melle dulcius habet* – a servant of the gesith named Baldhelm, who is still alive and holding by appointment the office of priest in the church of Lindisfarne adorns it by his character. He counts it sweeter than honey to relate the miracles of the man of God to all who wish to know about them (Named source, XXV)
- *Religiosus* – pious/devout (Named source, Aethilwald the priest (*Presbiter*), XXX)
- *Cuius prophetiae veritati ipsa cum filio mater multo exinde tempore vivens testimonium dabat* - The mother herself and her son lived long afterwards to bear testimony to the truth of this prophecy (Anonymous source, XXXIII)
- *Sicut unus ex ipsis postea in nostro monasterio quod est ad hostium Wiri fluminis non paruo tempore demoratus, ibidemque nunc placida quiete sepultus, sua mihi relatione testatus est* – one of these related it to me himself, for he dwelt some considerable time in our monastery which is at the mouth of the river Wear, and he now lies peacefully buried in the same place (Anonymous source, priest (*presbiter*) XXXV)
- *Vitae videlicet venerabilis monacho et presbitero eiusdem monasterii Cynimundo, qui plurimus late fidelium longevitatis et vitae gratia iam notus existit* – namely from Cynimund, a monk and priest of the same monastery, who is still alive and well-known far and wide to many of the faithful, on account of his great age and of his manner of life (Named source, XXXVI)
- *Religiosus* – pious/devout (Anonymous source, priest (*presbiter*), XLVI).
- *Reverentissimi patris... ipse est qui tercius eiusdem loci et militiae spiritualis heres hodie maior septuagenario in magno vitae futurae desiderio terminum praesentis expectat* – Most esteemed father... he [Felgild] is the third heir of that dwelling and of that spiritual warfare and today, more than seventy years of age, he awaits the end

of the present life, eagerly longing for the life to come (Named source, anchorite (*anachorita*), also XLVI)

Bede's Sources in the *HE*¹¹⁶⁶

Preface

- *Reverentissimus... qui nunc usque superest* – most esteemed... who still survives (Named source, Bishop (*episcopus*) Daniel, assuming he was the source of Wilfrid's rain miracle in *HE* IV.13)

Book III

- *Multa quidem ab incolis loci* – many of those who live in that place (Anonymous source, III.8)
- *Multi de fratribus eiusdem monasterii* – many of the brothers of the same monastery (Anonymous source, also III.8)
- *A maioribus* – from our elders (Anonymous source, III.9)
- *Frater inde adveniens* – the brother who came from there (Anonymous source, III.12)
- *Reverentissimus* – most esteemed (Named source, Bishop (*antistes*) Acca, III.13)
- *Non quilibet dubius relator sed fidelissimus... nostrae ecclesiae presbyter* – No uncertain source but [from] a most faithful priest of our church (Named source, Cynemund, III.15)
- *Multi qui nosse potuerunt* – many who were able (were in a position) to know (Anonymous source, III.16)
- *Superest adhuc frater quidam senior monasterii nostri, qui narrare solet dixisse sibi quendam multum veracem ac religiosum hominem, quod ipsum Furseum viderit* - An aged brother is still living in our monastery who is wont to relate that a very truthful and pious man told him that he had seen Fursa himself (Anonymous source, III.19)

¹¹⁶⁶ As Book I and II do not contain any sources, they are omitted here. However, it is clear that the accounts of Alban and Germanus in Book I are based on earlier written accounts, yet Bede does not refer to these.

- *Libellus de vita eius conscriptus... libellum vitae eius... in libello eius* – the book written about his life... the book of his life... in his book (Anonymous source, a written *Life of Fursa*, also III.19)
- *E quibus Ecgbert, sicut mihi referebat quidam veracissimus et venerandae canitiei presbyter, qui se haec ab ipso audisse perhibebat* – A most truthful priest of venerable old age told me this story about Ecgbert, declaring that he had heard it from [Ecgbert] himself (Anonymous source, III.27)

Book IV

- *Erat autem idem Ovinus monachus magni meriti et pura intentione supernae retributionis mundum derelinquens, dignusque per omnia cui Dominus specialiter sua revelaret arcana, dignus cui fidem narranti audientes accomodarent* – This Owine was a monk of great merit who had left the world with the sole object of winning a heavenly reward, and therefore in every respect a fit person to receive a special revelation of the mysteries of the Lord and worthy too of being believed by such as heard his story (Named source, IV.3)
- *Reverentissimi patris... quod utrum de se an de alio aliquo diceret, nobis manet incertum, dum tamen hoc, quod tantus vir dixit, quia verum sit esse non possit incertum* – Most esteemed father... Whether he was speaking of himself or of another is uncertain, but what cannot be uncertain is that whatever such a man said must be true (Named source, Ecgbert, also IV.3)
- *Libellus* – book (Anonymous source for IV.7-11)
- *Mihi reverentissimus antistes Acca saepius referre et a fidelissimus eiusdem monasterii fratribus sibi relatum* – often related to me by the most esteemed bishop Acca, who declared that it had been told to him by most faithful brothers of the same monastery (Named source, IV.14)
- *Sed certiori notitia medicus Cynifrid, qui et morienti illi et elevatae de tumulo adfuit* – But more certain proof is given by the doctor Cynefrith, who was present at her death-bed and at the elevation of her tomb (Named source, IV.19)
- *Hanc mihi historiam etiam quidam eorum, qui ab ipso viro in quo facta est audire, narrarunt; unde eam quia liquido conperi, indubitanter historiae nostrae ecclesiasticae inserendam credidi* – This story was told to me by some of those

who heard it from the very man to whom these things happened; therefore since I had so clear an account of the incident, I thought that it should undoubtedly be inserted into this history (Anonymous sources, IV.22)

- *Reverentissimus meus con-presbyter* – my most esteemed fellow priest (Named source, Eadgisl, IV.25)
- *Erat in eodem monasterio frater quidam, nomine Badudegn, tempore non pauco hospitum ministerio deseruiens, qui nunc usque superest, testimonium habens ab uniuersis fratribus, cunctisque superuenientibus hospitibus, quod uir esset multae pietatis ac religionis, iniunctoque sibi officio supernae tantum mercedis gratia subditus* – There was in the same monastery a brother named Baduthegn, who is still alive and who for a long time had acted as guestmaster. It is the testimony of all the brothers and guests who visited there that he was a man of great piety and devotion, who carried out his appointed duties solely for the sake of his heavenly reward. (Named source, IV.31)
- *Fratrem* – brother (Anonymous source, IV.32)

Book V

- *Unus e fratribus propter quos et in quibus patratum, videlicet Gudfrid, venerabilis Christi Famulus et presbyter* – one of the brothers for whom and in whom it was performed/accomplished, namely Guthfrith, venerable servant of Christ and priest (Named source, V.1)
- *Qui eum familiariter noverunt... et maxime vir reverentissimus ac veracissimus Berhthun* – those who knew him well... and especially by the most esteemed and most truthful man Berhthun (Named source, abbot (*abbas*), V.2)
- *Famulus Christi* – servant of Christ (Named source, Herefrith, V.6)
- *Quem bonis actibus adaequabat, gradu praeminens, qui adhuc superest et in Hibernia insula solitarius ultimam vitae aetatem pane cibario et frigida aqua sustenat* - of pre-eminent rank, which he attained by good deeds, who is still alive and living the last years of his life in solitude in Ireland sustained by bread and cold water (Named source, Hæmgisl the monk, also a priest (*monachus... presbyteratus etiam*), V.12)
- *Venerabilii* – venerable (Named source, Bishop (*antistite*) Pethhelm, V.13)

- *Reverentissimus* – most esteemed (Named source, Bishop (*antistes*) Pehthelm, V.18)

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