

BEDE'S ESCHATOLOGICAL THOUGHT

by

PETER NICHOLAS DARBY

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Department of Medieval History
School of History and Cultures
The University of Birmingham

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Abstract

This thesis examines the eschatological thought of Bede (673-735). Relevant content is drawn from a wide range of Bede's exegetical and non-exegetical works. The world ages analogy, crucial to Bede's perception of time, chronology and eschatology, is discussed in the first four chapters. These chapters explain the significant changes that Bede made to the analogy following an allegation of heresy that arose in 708. Chapters five, six and seven outline Bede's beliefs regarding key eschatological concepts such as: Antichrist, the day of judgement and the post-judgement afterlife. Bede's 'eschatological perspective' is the final major theme to be considered. Bede's perceived proximity to the end of time is shown to be a variable factor that changed according to time and circumstance. The thesis reveals that Bede was an innovative scholar who re-worked the traditional theoretical models that he inherited from earlier Christian theologians. Bede is shown to be a commanding scholarly authority who played an important role in defining the eschatological beliefs of his contemporaries. Finally, this thesis distinguishes aspects of Bede's early eschatological thought from his beliefs in the mature stages of his authorial career. This has implications for the dating *termini* of several texts.

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Abbreviations and Conventions

All translated excerpts are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Anglo-Saxon personal names are reproduced in accordance with the conventions established by the online Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England database (<http://www.pase.ac.uk>).

Biblical citations and references follow the language and numbering conventions of the New International Version unless stated otherwise. Scriptural citations in Latin are taken from the Clementine Vulgate. For further details regarding the editions of the Bible used in this study see the bibliography, p. 362.

The following abbreviations are used throughout the course of this study:

AD	<i>Annus Domini</i>
AM	<i>Annus mundi</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
PL	Patrologia Latina

All secondary works are referred to in full on the occasion of their first use and abbreviated accordingly thereafter. Full details of each cited work can be found in the bibliography.

Prologue

The following passage attests to the importance that eschatological themes held in an environment that Bede would have been familiar with:

Fifthly, he brought back many holy pictures of the saints to adorn the church of St Peter he had built: a painting of the Mother of God, the Blessed Mary ever-Virgin and one of each of the twelve apostles which he fixed round the central arch on a wooden entablature reaching from wall to wall; pictures of incidents in the gospels with which he decorated the south wall and scenes from St John's vision of the apocalypse for the north wall. Thus all who entered the church, even those who could not read, were able, whichever way they looked, to contemplate the dear face of Christ and His saints, even if only in a picture, to put themselves more firmly in mind of the Lord's Incarnation and, as they saw the decisive moment of the last judgement before their very eyes be brought to examine their conscience with all due severity.¹

This is an excerpt from Bede's *Historia abbatum*, a historical account of the lives of the abbots of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. The *Historia abbatum* records the early history of the twin monastic foundation and it offers a detailed account of the life of Benedict Biscop, the founder and first abbot of Monkwearmouth.² The excerpt cited above

¹ Bede, *Historia abbatum*, chapter 6: 'Quintum, picturas imaginum sanctarum quas ad ornandam aecclesiam beati Petri apostoli, quam construxerat, detulit; imaginem videlicet beatae Dei genetricis semperque virginis Mariae, simul et duodecim apostolorum, quibus mediam eiusdem aecclesiae testudinem, ducto a pariete ad parietem tabulato praecingeret; imagines evangelicae historiae quibus Australem aecclesiae parietem decoraret; imagines visionum Apocalipsis beati Iohannis, quibus septentrionalem aequae parietem ornaret, quatinus intrantes aecclesiam omnes etiam litterarum ignari, quaquaversum intenderent, vel semper amabilem Christi sanctorumque eius, quamvis in imagine, contemplarentur aspectum; vel dominicae incarnationis gratiam vigilantiori mente recolerent; vel extremi discrimen examinis, quasi coram oculis habentes, districtius se ipsi examinare meminissent'. Cited in translation from: Farmer, D. H. and Webb, J. F. 1998, trans. *The Age of Bede* (London), pp. 192-3.

² The life of Benedict Biscop is covered in chapters 1-13 of the *Historia abbatum*. See also: *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.18, 5.19 and *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.13. Benedict was born to a noble

describes the return of Benedict Biscop from one of his many visits to Rome, an event that occurred circa 679-680. In addition to the pictures described here, Bede tells us that Benedict brought a great number of books and relics back from Rome, as well as a choirmaster named John and a papal privilege granted by Pope Agatho. The church described in this passage is St Peter's Monkwearmouth. St Peter's had been constructed a few years prior to the events described here, with the help of glaziers and stonemasons imported from Gaul.³ Bede's description of the paintings brought back to adorn the newly-built church provides an appropriate starting point for this study. Images of the last judgement, based upon the book of Revelation, were given a prominent position on the north wall of St Peter's Church.⁴ Bede comments that the images inspired thoughts of repentance in those who looked upon them, and he clearly considered the pictures to be valuable tools for the education of the illiterate. Bede may have looked upon these images innumerable times throughout the course of his lifetime. He might have first gazed upon them as a child, before he was literate himself.

Northumbrian family. He temporarily served as abbot of SS Peter and Paul, Canterbury before founding Monkwearmouth in the early 670's. On his life and career, see: Wormald, P. 1976, '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), pp. 141-69; Fletcher, E. 1981, *Benedict Biscop* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow).

³ *Historia abbatum*, 5.

⁴ Several scholars have commented upon Bede's description of the apocalypse paintings in St Peter's Church. For example, see: Bonner, G. 1966, *Saint Bede in the Tradition of Western Apocalyptic Commentary* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow), pp. 11-12; Henderson, G. 1980, *Bede and the Visual Arts* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow), pp. 13-15; Ward, B. 1990, *The Venerable Bede* (London), p. 45. On the form and style of the paintings themselves, see: Meyvaert, P. 1979, 'Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow', *Anglo-Saxon England* 8, 63-77; Kitzinger, E. 1993, 'Interlace and Icons: Form and Function in Early Insular Art', in R. M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds.), *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh), pp. 3-15, at pp. 6-8.

Introduction

From childhood onwards, Bede lived as a monk at Wearmouth-Jarrow until his death in 735.⁵ Bede became the most learned scholar of his age, benefiting from the substantial library assembled by Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith (a close companion of Benedict's who became the first abbot of Jarrow).⁶ Bede's best known work is the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, an account of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to the Christian faith. At the end of this work, Bede includes an autobiographical account of his own life.⁷ Bede tells us that he was born within close proximity to Wearmouth-Jarrow,⁸ and that he entered the monastery at the age of seven to be educated by Benedict and Ceolfrith.⁹ Bede was ordained as a deacon aged nineteen and he was made priest at the canonical age of thirty (circa 703).¹⁰ In a famous sentence, Bede attests to the pleasure that he has derived from the three main activities of his life: 'It has always been my delight', he writes, 'to learn or to teach or to write'.¹¹

The *Historia ecclesiastica* ends with a detailed list of Bede's Latin works. This extensive catalogue is dominated by several biblical commentaries, but it also contains contributions to a wide variety of disciplines and genres. Bede compiled a variety of hagiographic, historic, poetic and educational works, as well as several letters and a

⁵ For the date of Bede's death, see below note 692.

⁶ Ceolfrith assumed joint control of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow upon the death of Benedict Biscop in 689. For a discussion of Ceolfrith's life, career and legacy see Wood, I. N. 1995, *The Most Holy Abbot Ceolfrid* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow).

⁷ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24.

⁸ Though little is known about Bede's family, it has recently been suggested that he was of noble descent. See: Campbell, J. 2004, 'Bede', in H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. IV (Oxford), pp. 758-65. For further comment, see the views of Thacker discussed below at p. 53, note 199.

⁹ Bede's entry into the monastery would have been roughly contemporaneous with Benedict Biscop's return from Rome with the apocalypse paintings for St Peter's Church (circa 679-680).

¹⁰ On the date of Bede's ordination to the priesthood, see below note 73.

¹¹ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24: '... semper aut discere aut docere aut scribere dulce habui'.

martyrology.¹² Though a small number of compositions that are known to be authentic are not included in Bede's autobiographical list, the list gives a reasonably comprehensive overview of Bede's body of work.¹³ The collection of Latin texts listed in the final chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica* will be the primary focus of the present study. The theme of eschatology will be traced through this large group of source materials in order to reconstruct several different aspects of Bede's eschatological thought. In basic terms, the predominant research questions that are to be considered can be summarised as follows: what did Bede think would happen at the end of time, why did he think it would happen that way, and when did he expect it to occur?

Before these questions can be addressed, it is first necessary to clarify the meaning of the term 'eschatology'. Because the increased prominence of eschatological themes is a comparatively recent academic development, scholars are yet to agree on consistent definitions of key terms. Adjectives such as 'apocalyptic' or 'eschatological' might have very different meanings in the works of two different scholars.¹⁴ Such problems are compounded by the variety of interpretations attached to other, more specific terms such as 'millenarianism'. With this in mind, the present study employs the term 'eschatology' in a wide sense (other terms such as 'millenarianism' will be defined clearly whenever there is reason to use them). Eschatology encompasses all

¹² For an up to date list of Bede's works, see: Gorman, M. 2001, 'The Canon of Bede's works and the World of PS. Bede', *Revue Bénédictine* 111, 399-445, at 402-5. Gorman lists each work by number, alongside information regarding the most up to date editions and bibliographic references. Note though that Gorman's list is not completely comprehensive. He expressly avoids 'the problem of poems and prayers which were attributed to Bede'. Gorman's list is superior to the one offered in the most recent edition of the *Clavis patrum latinorum* index, which includes a number of inauthentic works alongside genuine ones: Dekkers, E. and Gaar, E. 1995, eds. *Clavis patrum latinorum: qua in Corpus christianorum edendum optimas quasque scriptorum recensiones a Tertulliano ad Bedam* (Turnhout), pp. 444-58. Though the inauthentic works, such as the anonymous *Vita Ceolfredi* and *Vita Cuthberti*, are labelled as such, their inclusion amongst the genuine works is confusing at first glance.

¹³ Bede's *De locis sanctis* is quoted, in abbreviated form, in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.17 but it is not listed in 5.24. Other works not listed include *De octo quaestionum liber* and Bede's letters to Albinus and Egbert (both of which post-date the completion of the *Historia ecclesiastica*).

¹⁴ Useful discussion of the terms 'eschatology', 'apocalypse', 'apocalypticism' and 'millenarianism' can be found in: Emmerson, R. K. 1999, 'The Secret', *American Historical Review* 104, 1603-14, at 1610-13.

aspects of Bede's beliefs relating to: the end of time, the last judgement, and the terrors and hopes of Christ's second coming. The wide scope of this term is appropriate for an analysis of Bede, as it allows us to focus on several different yet interconnected aspects of his thought. In using this label to categorise a specific area of Bede's thought and group together a number of interrelated concepts, it is important to acknowledge that this term was never actually employed by Bede himself.

It is necessary to stress, at the outset of this investigation, that Bede's eschatological thought is a multi-faceted fusion of several different elements. Bede gradually established a clear vision for the end of time over the course of his authorial career. In constructing his eschatological vision, Bede brought together a diverse range of ideas from a variety of source materials. Several different influences are considered in this study, including: the works of earlier Christian theologians, oral traditions that were circulating in eighth-century Northumbria, and near-contemporary Anglo-Saxon literature. The Bible is, of course, the most important influence upon Bede's vision for the end of time, and it is important to acknowledge the diverse nature of the eschatological material that it contains. The Scriptures offer no coherent, singular vision of the last days; the various aspects of biblical eschatology are scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments. Bede made significant use of prophetic material from several different parts of the Bible, including (but not limited to): the synoptic Gospels, the books of Revelation, Daniel and Isaiah, and the Petrine and Pauline epistles. Concepts that form an integral part of the eschatological vision promoted in one of these scriptural source texts can often contradict material from the others. The important eschatological concept of the day of judgement offers a suitable example of this. This topic enjoys considerable prominence within Bede's vision for the end of time but the

Scriptures did not transmit a coherent and complete picture of the last judgement to Bede. His vision of the world's final act was constructed from a range of biblical material. A very short judgement scene is outlined in Revelation 20.11-15 in the context of a description of the general resurrection of the dead. Christ often speaks of the last judgement in the Gospels, but the synoptic accounts of the Olivet discourse (the most significant eschatological passages to be found in the Gospels) make no mention of an act of judgement.¹⁵ In Revelation, the judgement scene is the culmination of a lengthy drama that follows the thousand-year reign of the saints (Revelation 20.4-6). In contrast, the synoptic accounts of the Olivet discourse stress that the end of time will come quickly and unexpectedly. It is not necessary to outline the several other paradoxes that are found amongst the various prophetic parts of the Bible. It will suffice to note that in constructing his master narrative for the end of time, Bede was required to fuse a wide range of disparate scriptural passages together in order to create a single eschatological vision.

Medieval eschatology and the weak thesis

Eschatological topics have experienced a remarkable growth in popularity in the previous three decades of academic study.¹⁶ This boom in interest has been evident in several humanities subjects and other related disciplines, such as: history, theology, literature, sociology and the history of art. This developing interdisciplinary field of research has produced a wide range of scholarship. The general growth of academic research into eschatological topics has had an impact upon the various medieval studies

¹⁵ Matthew 24; Luke 21; Mark 13.

¹⁶ The establishment of the Centre for Millennial Development under the directorship of Professor Richard Landes at Boston University reflects the growth of academic interest in eschatological themes and topics. The existence of such a research centre in a large American university would have been considered unlikely 30 years ago. A much smaller centre (the Hope Centre for Millennialism Studies) has been established in the United Kingdom at Liverpool Hope University.

disciplines. A series of publications by Bernard McGinn and Richard Emmerson have contributed a great deal to our understanding of medieval eschatology,¹⁷ culminating in a 1992 collected volume of essays entitled *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* for which they collaborated as editors.¹⁸ More recently, the passing of the year 2000 inspired a selection of medieval conferences and seminar programmes to adopt time, eschatology or apocalyptic belief as an overarching thematic strand.¹⁹ The end of the second millennium has fuelled great interest in the period circa 1000 AD. Many scholars have attempted to assess medieval reactions to the passing of this temporal milestone, and a number of collaborative volumes have appeared in the early years of the twenty-first century.²⁰ The millennium-inspired boom in interest has facilitated an increased appreciation for the influence that eschatological beliefs can have upon the mentality of an individual, or the actions of a community or religious group.

¹⁷ In 1979, Bernard McGinn published the monograph *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York). This landmark publication was soon joined by Richard Emmerson's full-length study of medieval perceptions of Antichrist: Emmerson, R. K. 1981, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: a Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Manchester). Emmerson and McGinn both contributed to a volume of conference proceedings published in 1988: Verbeke, W., Verhelst, D. and Welkenhuysen, A. 1988, eds. *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven).

¹⁸ Emmerson, R. K. and McGinn, B. 1992, eds. *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca). This volume features contributions on eschatological topics from Emmerson, McGinn and several other leading scholars such as Robert Lerner, Paula Fredriksen and E. Ann Matter. Another important collection, which contains essays on a variety of eschatological topics, was published in the year 2000: Walker Bynum, C. and Freedman, P. H. 2000, eds. *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia).

¹⁹ The International Medieval Congress in Leeds adopted 'time and eternity' as its special thematic strand in the year 2000. A volume of papers read at the conference has been published: Jaritz, G. and Moreno-Riano, G. 2003, eds. *Time and Eternity: the Medieval Discourse* (Turnhout). In the same year, the annual Harlaxton symposium focused its attention upon eschatological topics: Morgan, N. J. 2004, ed. *Prophecy, Apocalypse and the Day of Doom: Proceedings of the 2000 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington). The York Medieval Seminar series of 1999 centred upon the use and representation of time in the medieval world, yielding a collected volume of essays: Humphrey, C. and Ormrod, W. M. 2001, eds. *Time in the Medieval World* (Woodbridge). The introduction to this volume makes it clear that the theme of the seminar series was inspired by the impending approach of the third millennium (see the introduction by Chris Humphrey, p. 1).

²⁰ In particular, see: Frassetto, M. 2002, ed. *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium* (New York), and Landes, R., Gow, A. C. and Van Meter, D. C. 2003, eds. *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050* (Oxford). For a discussion of the latter volume, see: MacLean, S. 2007, 'Review article: Apocalypse and Revolution: Europe around the year 1000', *Early Medieval Europe* 15, 86-106, especially 96-106.

Most importantly, the many conferences and collaborative volumes of the past decade have started to encourage a synthesis of ideas and methodologies. The most notable example of this can be seen in the recent collected volume of essays; *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium*, edited by Michael Frassetto. This book contains a contribution by Edward Peters which offers a survey of historians' responses to the passing of the year 1000.²¹ Many prominent nineteenth century academics, such as the French historian Jules Michelet, emphasised the importance of the so-called 'terrors of the year 1000' by employing the works of writers such as Abbo of Fleury and Rodulfus Glaber.²² Peters describes this position as the 'strong thesis of the terrors'. The 'strong thesis' proposed that the year 1000 was met with widespread fear and panic across Europe. It follows that the milestone's uneventful passing inspired relief, and that this relief subsequently influenced many aspects of medieval life in the post-millennium period. These notions were later challenged by a 'strong counter thesis' which successfully discredited the ideas associated with Michelet, arguing that the sources cited in support of the 'terrors thesis' were representative of a small clerical elite.²³ It is this counter position, Peters suggests, that tends to dominate mainstream historical analyses to this day.

Against this backdrop, Peters coins the term 'the weak thesis', to characterise a new, more subtle approach to the study of eschatological belief in the Middle Ages which is now starting to emerge. The weak thesis marks an attempt to move away from

²¹ Peters, E. 2002, 'Mutations, Adjustments, Terrors, Historians, and the Year 1000', in M. Frassetto (ed.), *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium* (New York), pp. 9-28.

²² For an overview, see Peters, E. 2002, 'Historians and the Year 1000', pp. 13-15. Michelet expressed his belief in the 'terrors of the year 1000' in several works (for example, see the 1981 reprint of *Le moyen Âge* (Paris), pp. 229-30). For further comment on Michelet, see: Landes, R. 2003, 'Introduction: The Terrible hopes of 1000 and the Tacit Fears of 2000', in R. Landes, A. Gow and D. C. Van Meter (eds.), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050* (New York), pp. 3-15.

²³ Peters, E. 2002, 'Historians and the Year 1000', pp. 16-18.

the previous tendency to discuss the existence or non-existence of the ‘terrors of the year 1000’. It seeks to move the historical debate on from simplistic questions such as ‘did people believe that the world was going to end?’ Rather, we are encouraged to appreciate the importance of eschatological belief in the medieval period, whilst always considering the historical context of the sources under consideration. The weak thesis has enabled historians to emphasise the important role that eschatological beliefs played in the lives of medieval individuals and societies, but they are now able to do so from a sound theoretical standpoint. Frassetto endorses the weak thesis in his introduction to *The Year 1000*, and the principles established by Peters are adopted by many of the volume’s contributors.²⁴ The movement towards a weak thesis of medieval eschatological thought is a promising development. Its principles have been applied to discussions of Wulfstan, Ademar of Chabannes and several other figures that lived in Europe in the period circa 1000 AD.²⁵

As a result of the recent flurry of activity inspired by the passing of the year 2000, the collected body of medieval eschatological scholarship now has a rather imbalanced feel. A large number of studies have focused upon the passing of the first millennium, but comparatively little interest has been shown in the earlier Middle Ages. This imbalance inadvertently serves to create the impression that the period circa 1000 AD was something of a historical one-off, a case of heightened interest in eschatological ideas because of a unique quirk of the calendar. The concentrated focus

²⁴ Frassetto, M. 2002, 'Introduction', in M. Frassetto (ed.), *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium* (New York), pp. 1-7.

²⁵ In addition to the essays in *The Year 1000* (which cover Wulfstan, Ademar of Chabannes and Thietmar of Merseburg, as well as more general themes and topics), the principles of the weak thesis lie behind an earlier article by Frassetto: Frassetto, M. 2001, 'The writings of Ademar of Chabannes, the Peace of 994, and the 'Terrors of the Year 1000'', *Journal of Medieval History* 27, 241-55. A similar methodology underpins several of the essays in Landes, R., Gow, A. C. and Van Meter, D. C. 2003, eds. *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*. In particular, see Daniel Verhelst’s study, 'Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000', at pp. 81-92.

upon the year 1000 is particularly notable in studies of Anglo-Saxon England. For the most part, the study of Anglo-Saxon eschatology is limited to the period immediately before and after the passing of the first millennium. Malcolm Godden has published an important discussion of the later Anglo-Saxon period. Godden considers the expression of apocalyptic sentiments in sermons compiled around 1000 AD in light of the continuing Viking invasions.²⁶ Some scholars have not defined their historical focus as clearly as Godden; other recent studies of Anglo-Saxon eschatology do not discuss source materials from before the tenth century.²⁷

The present study seeks to take the study of medieval eschatology onto fresh ground. Bede is an ideal subject for an extended consideration of the importance of eschatological thought in the earlier Middle Ages. The autobiographical list of works appended to the *Historia ecclesiastica* offers the benefit of a clearly defined canon. Bede composed commentaries upon many of the most significant eschatological parts of Scripture, including the book of Revelation, but one Bedan work deserves a special mention here. *De temporum ratione* is a comprehensive manual of time reckoning.²⁸ The tract covers all aspects of time, from its smallest divisions through to its largest

²⁶ Godden focuses his attention upon the homilies of Wulfstan and Ælfric: Godden, M. 1994, 'Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in M. Godden, D. Gray and T. Hoad (eds.), *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E. G. Stanley* (Oxford), pp. 130-62. Another essay by Godden also focuses upon the later Anglo-Saxon period: Godden, M. 2003, 'The Millennium, Time, and History for the Anglo-Saxons', in R. Landes, A. Gow and D. C. Van Meter (eds.), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050* (New York), pp. 155-80.

²⁷ Carruthers, L. 1998, 'Apocalypse Now: Preaching and Prophecy in Anglo-Saxon England', *Études anglaises* 51, 399-410; Bremner jr, R. H. 2003, 'The Final Countdown: Apocalyptic Expectations in Anglo-Saxon Charters', in G. Jaritz and G. Moreno-Riano (eds.), *Time and Eternity: the Medieval Discourse* (Turnhout), pp. 501-14.

²⁸ *De temporum ratione* is published as CCSL volume 123B. This is a reprint of Jones's edition of chapters 1-65 (Jones, C. W. 1943, ed. *Bedae Opera de temporibus* (Cambridge), pp. 175-291) combined with an amended version of Mommsen's edition of chapters 66-71 (*Chronica minora III*, MGH Auctores Antiquissimi 13 (Berlin, 1898), pp. 247-327). A translated edition of *De temporum ratione* has been published: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Bede: the Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool). Wallis offers a translation of the entire text, along with numerous useful appendices, a comprehensive introduction and an insightful chapter by chapter commentary.

cycles.²⁹ *De temporum ratione* was immensely popular in the years following Bede's death, and it became an influential educative text that was widely used in Carolingian classrooms.³⁰ Bede offers a clear exposition of the structure of universal history and he outlines his vision for future time and the end of the world in its final five chapters.³¹ *De temporum ratione* preserves an accurate record of Bede's eschatological beliefs at a mature stage of his life and career. It was completed and dedicated to Abbot Hwætberht in the year 725, ten years before Bede's death.³²

Eschatology intersects with the known events of Bede's life on a number of occasions, yet a full survey of this topic has never been produced before and there are few obvious precedents for the task ahead.³³ Some of the most significant episodes in Bede's career can be linked to contemporary eschatological beliefs, such as the heresy allegation directed against him in 708. Bede also engaged in a debate concerning the nature of the post-judgement afterlife, and one of his exegetical works tackles problematic contemporary notions of a thousand-year judgement day. In covering such issues, this study will adopt the weak thesis approach pioneered by scholars such as Frassetto and Peters to offer a full reappraisal of Bede's eschatological thought. When

²⁹ After four chapters of introductory material, *De temporum ratione* begins with chapters on day and night. From there, the text progresses through larger units such as weeks and months, before covering larger temporal cycles (the paschal table, six ages of world history). The structural format of *De temporum ratione* emulates that of Bede's earlier tract *De temporibus*.

³⁰ Jones's hand-list contains 245 manuscripts of *De temporum ratione*. Many of these preserve the complete text: Jones, C. W. *De temporum ratione liber*, CCSL 123B (Turnhout, 1977), at pp. 242-56.

³¹ *De temporum ratione*, 67-71.

³² For 725 as the date of completion see *De temporum ratione*, chapters 49, 52 and 58 (where 725 is given as the present year and used in three calculations). Wallis demonstrates that chapter 11 must have been composed in 722, see Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 43, note 121.

³³ Very little has been written on Bede's vision for the end of time. Bede's thoughts on Antichrist, the day of judgement and the post-judgement afterlife are covered in depth for the first time in chapters 5-7 of this study. Jan Davidse and William McCready have both considered the issue of where Bede perceived his own era to be in relation to the end of time, but there is considerable scope for the revision of their ideas. In both cases, the eschatological dimension of Bede's thought is a peripheral issue to the main focus of the study in question: Davidse, J. 1982, 'The Sense of History in the Works of the Venerable Bede', *Studi Medievali* 23, 647-95, at 662-70; McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* (Toronto), pp. 89-104. The views of Davidse and McCready are considered in the analysis of 'Bede's eschatological perspective' carried out in chapters 8-10, below.

charting the development of Bede's eschatological beliefs, the specific context of each work will be considered with reference to the events of Bede's lifetime and the development of his authorial career.

Innovation, tradition and the new Bede

In studying Bede in the twenty-first century, scholars now have access to wide variety of resources that were not available to a previous generation. Computerised databases such as the CETEDOC Library of Christian Latin Texts allow citations and sources to be traced with relative ease.³⁴ Though a small number of Bede's minor exegetical works are only available in outdated *Patrologia Latina* volumes,³⁵ workable modern Latin editions of most of Bede's texts have now been published in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* volumes 118 to 123.³⁶ English translations of many of Bede's non-historical works have been produced, and new editions are currently in

³⁴ The searches carried out in the present study employ version 6 of the CETEDOC Library of Christian Latin Texts (2005). This database has an impressive coverage of Latin literature from the late-second to the fifteenth century and it contains computerised versions of the vast majority of Bede's exegetical and educational works. However, the CETEDOC library is not without its flaws for the Bede scholar. Certain Bedan texts are omitted from the electronic library, most notably the hagiographical works (*Vita metrica Cuthberti*, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti prosaica*, *Vita Sancti Felicis*, *Vita Sancti Anastasii*) and the major historical works (*Historia ecclesiastica*, *Historia abbatum*). The exclusion of the *Historia ecclesiastica* is particularly frustrating for scholars wishing to detect linguistic resonance between Bede's theological work and his historical masterpiece.

³⁵ *De mansionibus filiorum Israel* and *De eo quod Isaiah ait* are currently only available in PL 94. *De VIII quaestionibus* does not feature in a CCSL volume, but the PL edition of this work has been revised by Michael Gorman (see below, note 613). Bede's *Collectaneum* of extracts from Augustine on the Pauline Epistles is the only exegetical work not to have been printed in a modern Latin edition, though several medieval manuscripts of this compilation are extant. It has not experienced total neglect, however, as a translated edition has been published in the Cistercian Studies series: Hurst, D. 1999, trans. *Bede the Venerable: Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine on the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul* (Kalamazoo).

³⁶ The CCSL volumes of Bede's works are produced to varying standards of critical scholarship and many have drawn dissatisfied comments. However, for the most part, these volumes are produced to a much higher standard than the unreliable PL editions that a former generation of scholars were dependent upon. Laistner's edition of *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* and Gryson's edition of *Expositio Apocalypseos* are often singled out for praise: Sharpe, R. 2005, 'The Varieties of Bede's Prose', in T. Reinhardt, M. Lapidge and J. N. Adams (eds.), *Aspects of the Language of Latin Prose* (Oxford), pp. 339-55, p. 343; DeGregorio, S. 2006, trans. *Bede: on Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool), p. xiv, note 2; Lapidge, M. 2006, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford), pp. 35-6, note 25.

progress.³⁷ These translated editions have helped to bring Bede's lesser-known works to a new audience, and they have stimulated interest in Bede's activities as a scriptural exegete or compiler of educational materials. Further breakthroughs are imminent; a new critical edition of the Latin text of the *Historia ecclesiastica* has been prepared by Michael Lapidge (though at the time of writing only the first volume, containing books one and two, had appeared in print).³⁸

The major developments in the historiographical reception of Bede can be measured by referring to three significant volumes of collected essays. In 1976, Gerald Bonner edited a collaborative volume entitled *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*.³⁹ The majority of the contributions to this collection were first read at a conference held at Hatfield College in Durham in 1973. *Famulus Christi* was a conscious attempt to produce a successor volume to an earlier collection of essays, *Bede, His Life, Times, and Writings*, which had been published in 1935 to mark the twelfth centenary of Bede's death.⁴⁰ The 1935 collection featured papers from several notable Bede scholars of the time, including Max Laistner, Bertram Colgrave and Wilhelm Levison. *Famulus Christi* reflects the scholarly trends of its era, and a comparison of the two volumes

³⁷ Many of Bede's exegetical and educational texts have been published in English translation in the Translated Texts for Historians series (Liverpool University Press), the Cistercian Studies series (Cistercian Publications) and a variety of other formats. A new translation of *Expositio Apocalypseos* is being prepared for publication by Faith Wallis, though it was yet to appear at the time of writing.

³⁸ The first instalment of a three-volume series has been published in which Lapidge's revised edition of the Latin text is accompanied by a parallel translation of the *Historia* into Italian by Paola Chiesa: Lapidge, M. 2008, ed. *Beda: Storia Degli Inglesi. Testo Latino a Fronte. Vol. 1: Libri I-II* (Milan). As Lapidge's revised text of the *Historia ecclesiastica* is not yet fully-available, this study uses the standard edition by Colgrave and Mynors for the Latin text of the *Historia ecclesiastica*: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English people* (Oxford).

³⁹ Bonner, G. 1976, ed. *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London). The volume's title derives from a form of self-address which is often employed by Bede. Bede frequently styles himself as *famulus Christi* ('servant of Christ'), *famulus Dei* ('servant of God') or similar.

⁴⁰ Hamilton Thompson, A. 1935, ed. *Bede, His Life, Times, and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Centenary of his Death* (Oxford).

reveals the areas in which Bede scholarship had developed since the pre-war years. Many of the contributions to *Famulus Christi* attempt to consider Bede in a European context (this point is highlighted in Bonner's introduction to the collection).⁴¹ Henry Mayr-Harting noted a second major development in a contemporary review of the volume. Mayr-Harting highlighted the growing scholarly awareness of the importance of Bede's activities as a scriptural exegete.⁴² Particularly notable in this regard is Roger Ray's essay, 'Bede the exegete as historian', which considers the *Historia ecclesiastica* within the context of Bede's theological writings.⁴³ Before Ray's essay, Bede scholars tended to separate different aspects of Bede's scholarly output and study them in isolation of each other.⁴⁴ Ray's essay was one of the first studies to demonstrate the value of an intertextual approach to Bede's works.⁴⁵ This methodological development had a profound impact upon subsequent scholarship and it continues to influence the field of Bede studies to this day.

Though other collected volumes have been published since 1976,⁴⁶ a recent publication stands out as a worthy successor to *Famulus Christi*. Three decades on from

⁴¹ See Bonner's comments at *Famulus Christi*, pp. 2-4 and note 4.

⁴² Mayr-Harting, H. 1978, (Review Article) 'G. Bonner, *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the 13th Century of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (1976)', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 29, 363-5.

⁴³ Ray suggests that Bede's biblical commentaries and the *Historia ecclesiastica* are 'inseparable' and he encourages the reader to approach them as products of the same scholarly enterprise: Ray, R. D. 1976, 'Bede, the Exegete as Historian', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the 13th Century of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London), pp. 125-40.

⁴⁴ As Davidse points out ('Sense of History', 647-8), Ray's consideration of the *Historia* within the context of Bede's work as an exegete can be contrasted with the essays in *Bede, His Life, Times, and Writings* where these aspects of Bede's canon were dealt with separately (Levison wrote on 'Bede as Historian' and Jenkins contributed an essay entitled 'Bede as exegete and theologian').

⁴⁵ Campbell's classic essay of 1966 had also stressed the need to consider the *Historia ecclesiastica* within the context of the rest of Bede's canon: Campbell, J. 1966, 'Bede', in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Latin Historians* (London), pp. 159-90, at p. 159.

⁴⁶ Houwen, L. A. J. R. and MacDonald, A. A. 1996, eds. *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk and Northumbrian* (Groningen); Lebecq, S., Perrin, M. and Szerwiniack, O. 2005, eds. *Bède le Vénérable: entre tradition et postérité / The Venerable Bede: Tradition and Posterity* (Lille). Each collection contains a selection of useful essays, though neither has had a profound effect upon Bedan scholarship comparable to that of *Bede, His Life, Times, and Writings* or *Famulus Christi*: Several papers on Bede have also been published in: Farrell, R. T. 1978, ed. *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England: Papers in Honour of the 1300th Anniversary of the Birth of Bede, given at Cornell University in 1973 and 1974* (Oxford), and Hawkes, J. and Mills, S. 1999, eds. *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud).

Bonner's volume, Scott DeGregorio has edited a collection entitled *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*.⁴⁷ At the time of writing, another collaborative volume is due to be published in the near future, the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to Bede*.⁴⁸ The publication of two major volumes of collected essays in quick succession is testimony to the health of Bede studies as a discipline in the early twenty-first century. Several of the papers in *Innovation and Tradition* concern Bede's exegetical commentaries, mirroring the general rise in interest in Bede's wider canon of works that has been evident in the thirty years since *Famulus Christi* was published. The intertextual method that defined Ray's contribution to *Famulus Christi* is developed in many of the contributions to *Innovation and Tradition*. But whilst the ultimate aim of Ray's 1976 essay was to further our understanding of Bede's historical works by reference to the exegesis, the essays in *Innovation and Tradition* demonstrate that scholars no longer need to make Bede's wider body of work subservient to the *Historia ecclesiastica*. The volume contains studies dedicated to the commentaries on Genesis, 1 Samuel, Ezra, and the Song of Songs, as well as a discussion of Bede's homiletic writings. The growth of interest in Bede's wider scholarly output is also evident in Faith Wallis's consideration of Bede's scientific writings, Ray's analysis of Bede's perception of himself and Alan Thacker's essay on Bede's educative programme. Only one contribution, that of Walter Goffart, adopts the *Historia ecclesiastica* as its immediate focus.

⁴⁷ DeGregorio, S. 2006, ed. *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown). The majority of the contributors to this volume were regular attendees of a series of sessions on Bede, coordinated by DeGregorio, for the 'Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture' strand of the yearly International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

⁴⁸ Two roundtable sessions at the 44th International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo (May 2009) marked the forthcoming publication of the *Cambridge Companion to Bede*. The volume is due to be published by the Cambridge University Press.

At the outset of *Innovation and Tradition*, DeGregorio talks of a ‘fundamentally changed world of Bedan scholarship’.⁴⁹ His comment does not just refer to the increased tendency for scholars to concern themselves with Bede’s non-historical works. It also encompasses new theoretical approaches to the study of Bede that have become prominent in recent years. In the volume’s introduction, DeGregorio explains that the majority of the contributions to *Innovation and Tradition* are underpinned by a set of shared principles. Two developments set this volume aside from the scholarship of a previous generation. First, the volume proposes a radical reassessment of Bede’s perception of his own standing as a scholarly authority. Also, the collection offers a reconsideration of the nature of the relationship between Bede and the theoretical traditions of the Church fathers. Both of these notions are important developments, and they will each be referred to throughout the course of this study. Both ideas merit further consideration here.

The *Innovation and Tradition* collection offers a fresh reappraisal of Bede which stands in stark contrast to traditional perceptions of his character. This notion is reflected in the subheading attached to DeGregorio’s introductory essay: ‘the new Bede’. Several of the volume’s essays style Bede as a commanding scholarly presence. Where there was once a tendency to emphasise his humility and modesty, Bede is now reckoned to be a scholar who was aware of the magnitude of his own importance to the development of Christian thought. Ray’s contribution to the *Innovation and Tradition* collection suggests that Bede saw himself as a worthy successor to the Church fathers.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ DeGregorio, S. 2006, ‘Introduction: The New Bede’, in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown), pp. 1-10 (quotation taken from p. 9).

⁵⁰ Ray, R. D. 2006, ‘Who Did Bede Think He Was?’ in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown), pp. 11-36. At p. 32, Ray comments: ‘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’.

Alan Thacker endorses this view, commenting that Bede thought of himself as ‘the Augustine of his age’.⁵¹ Even Bede’s oft-quoted statement that he was ‘following the footsteps of the fathers (*patrum vestigia sequens*)’ has now been subjected to a radical reappraisal.⁵² No longer taken as a statement of modesty indicative of Bede’s perceived inferiority to his predecessors,⁵³ the phrase is interpreted as rhetorical device employed by Bede to establish himself as one of their equals.⁵⁴

Similar themes run through many of the essays in the *Innovation and Tradition* volume, particularly those that concern Bede’s activities as a scriptural exegete. Many of the essays discuss notions of innovation and tradition in Bede’s thought in order to explain the nature of his debt to the Church fathers. As a whole, the collection stresses the originality of Bede’s thought and it emphasises the importance of his contribution to the development of Christian theology in the Middle Ages. It therefore breaks with previous assessments of Bede’s exegetical work which defined Bede’s theological thought as a traditional (and, by extension, largely unoriginal) synthesis of the ideas of others. Such notions were advanced in Jenkins’s contribution to *Bede, His Life, Times,*

⁵¹ Thacker, A. 2006, ‘Bede and the Ordering of Understanding’, in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown), pp. 37-63. The quotation cited above is found on p. 63. At pp. 43-6, Thacker suggests that Bede thought of himself as a *doctor*, a word for teacher that carries ‘distinctly elitist implications’.

⁵² Variations of the phrase ‘*patrum vestigia sequens*’ are employed by Bede on several occasions to describe his own scholarly endeavours. For a list of examples, see Meyvaert, P. 1976, ‘Bede the Scholar’, in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London), pp. 40-69, at pp. 62-3, note 7.

⁵³ In *Famulus Christi*, Meyvaert interpreted the phrase ‘*patrum vestigia sequens*’ as an expression of Bede’s humility (see ‘Bede the Scholar’, p. 42). Meyvaert’s assertion that ‘Bede had a very modest opinion of himself’, is representative of the traditional position commonly stated by Bede scholars throughout the twentieth century.

⁵⁴ The notion that ‘*patrum vestigia sequens*’ is a rhetorical device is expounded forcefully in Ray’s contribution to the *Innovation and Tradition* volume, ‘Who Did Bede Think He Was?’ (see in particular pp. 19-24). A similar line of interpretation is put forth in the essay by DeGregorio, ‘Footsteps of His Own: Bede’s Commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah’, at pp. 143-68. Also, see the comments in DeGregorio’s introduction to the *Innovation and Tradition* volume: ‘New Bede’, pp. 6-10.

and Writings,⁵⁵ and they were often restated in subsequent appraisals of Bede's activities as an exegete.⁵⁶ The recent surge in interest in Bede's commentaries has inspired a complete revision of these long-held views, and a new appreciation for Bede's achievements as a theologian has developed in recent years.⁵⁷ This shift in perception is fully realised in the *Innovation and Tradition* collection. The essays discuss Bede's debt to patristic authorities such as Gregory the Great, Augustine and Jerome, but they also detect strands of originality in Bede's exegetical interpretations. Bede's theological thought must be considered within the context of previous developments in Christian theology, but it is incorrect to assume that Bede contributed little or nothing of substance. Even on the occasions when Bede was acting as a synthesiser of the ideas of others, the reader is urged to appreciate the important role that Bede played in transmitting the ideas of the past to the contemporary Anglo-Saxon world.⁵⁸

It will become clear in the course of this study that the historiographical shifts outlined in the *Innovation and Tradition* volume offer productive ways to approach the study of Bede and his world. In considering how Bede refined, adapted and developed ideas inherited from his Christian predecessors regarding the end of the world, this study will frequently have cause to reflect upon the way in which innovation and tradition dynamically interact in his work. So often, Bede's thought can be characterised as a process of innovation within a tradition, and this is especially true

⁵⁵ Jenkins, C. 1935, 'Bede as Exegete and Theologian', in A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *Bede, His Life, Times, and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Centenary of his Death* (Oxford), pp. 152-200. At p. 167, Jenkins describes Bede as 'modest and humble-minded' and he remarks that 'originality seems to him to be of quite secondary importance'.

⁵⁶ The comments of Campbell, J. 1966, 'Bede', p. 159 can be considered typical. Encyclopedia entries often style Bede as a transmitter of the ideas of others. For example, see: Lienhard, J. T. 2000, 'Bede the Venerable', in P. W. Carey (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Theologians* (London), pp. 61-2.

⁵⁷ The new-found appreciation for the originality of Bede's thought mirrors the reappraisal of scholarly perceptions of Gregory the Great which occurred in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

⁵⁸ DeGregorio, S. 2006, 'New Bede', pp. 8-9.

with regards to his eschatological thought. This study will also lend great support to DeGregorio's notion of a 'new Bede'. Bede should no longer be thought of as an unassuming soul who was satisfied to restate the theological ideas of the Church fathers. Rather, he should be regarded as a key figure in the intellectual environment of his day who engaged with and was influenced by the society in which he lived.

This study will adopt the methodological principles that are prominent in contemporary Bedan scholarship and pursue an intertextual approach. Eschatological themes permeate a wide range of Bede's works and it is vital to consider each text in concert with the others. Many of the contributors to the *Innovation and Tradition* volume demonstrate the value of such an approach, but there is still scope for their work to be developed. Bede's historical and exegetical works have benefited from an integrated approach, but some areas of Bede's canon are still very much neglected. For example, the wider body of Bede scholarship rarely mentions Bede's poetic works, even though they can offer a unique insight into his character. One of Bede's letters to Bishop Acca is a critically-important source for the purposes of the present study, yet almost nothing has been written about it in contemporary scholarship.⁵⁹ This study will seek to bring lesser-studied works such as these into a sharper focus. In doing so, it will demonstrate the value of further widening out the intertextual approach which has come to define Bedan scholarship in the twenty-first century.

⁵⁹ The letter in question, Bede's *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, is discussed at length in chapter 7 below, pp. 225-232. A short introduction precedes Holder's translated edition of this text: Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany* (Liverpool), pp. 35-8. With the exception of Holder's brief introduction, *De eo quod Isaiah ait* has rarely received any attention at all from contemporary Bede scholars.

Structure of the present study

The ten chapters of the present study are organised into three main thematic groups: the world ages framework, Bede's eschatological vision and Bede's eschatological perspective. Bede's eschatological thought is closely linked to his views on chronological periodisation, and this topic is the immediate focus for the first four chapters of the present study. *De temporibus*, Bede's first treatise on time-reckoning, is considered in chapter one. Bede's earliest thoughts on time were firmly rooted in a theoretical tradition associated with Augustine of Hippo and Isidore of Seville, yet *De temporibus* caused considerable controversy and led to an allegation of heresy. Chapter two considers the nature of this allegation and proceeds to discuss Bede's immediate response in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. Chapter three sets Bede's early eschatological thought within a wider context, by considering the alternative system of temporal division promoted in the *Laterculus Malalianus* (a chronological text circulating in Anglo-Saxon England in Bede's era). Chapter four concerns Bede's longer term response to the heresy allegation, with particular focus upon his attempt to justify, confirm and further develop his theory of time-reckoning in works compiled after the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.

The second major theme to be explored in the present study is Bede's vision of what is expected to happen at the end of time. This aspect of Bede's eschatological thought is ultimately defined by Scripture, but a variety of Church fathers exert an influence over Bede's perception of the last days, most notably: Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great. Chapters five, six and seven aim to reconstruct Bede's eschatological vision, focusing upon the sequence of events leading up to the day of judgement (chapter five), the day of judgement itself (chapter six), and the expected

nature of the post-judgement afterlife (chapter seven). In a sense, chapters five, six and seven of this study can be regarded as extended commentaries on the topics covered in the final five chapters of *De temporum ratione*.⁶⁰

The third major theme to be addressed in the present study is Bede's eschatological perspective (the issue of where Bede perceived his own era to be in relation to the end of the world). It is possible to trace the changes in Bede's eschatological perspective and set them within the context of the major events of his life and the progression of his authorial career. Chapters eight, nine and ten explore the nature and extent of Bede's debt to textual authorities, beginning with a discussion of the relationship between the eschatological perspectives of Bede and Gregory the Great (chapter eight). Chapter nine focuses upon the eschatological sentiments expressed in *In primam partem Samuhelis*, a work written during a crisis period in Bede's life. Chapter ten sets the findings of chapter nine within the wider context of Bede's authorial career and it proceeds to consider the development of Bede's eschatological perspective as he advanced into old age.

⁶⁰ After the *Chronica maiora* of chapter 66, an eschatological treatise follows in chapters 67-71. These chapters cover: the eschatological events that are to precede the end of the world, the day of judgement and Bede's vision for the post-judgement kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 1: *De temporibus*

Introduction

De temporibus has been described as ‘a concise and focused course in basic computistics’.⁶¹ It is an introductory text, designed to give the reader a grounding in the methods of calculation employed in reckoning the date of Easter. The work also explains the various units of time, the calendar and the structure of universal history. The preface to *De temporum ratione* states that *De temporibus* was compiled for the benefit of Bede’s own pupils:

Formerly, I composed two small books in a summary style that I deemed necessary for learners: on the nature of things (*De natura rerum*) and the reckoning of time (*et ratione temporum*).⁶²

Though Bede’s Latin refers to the earlier work as ‘[*De*] *ratione temporum*’, it became known by the title ‘*De temporibus*’.⁶³ Bede’s description of the work as being written ‘in a summary style (*stricto sermone*)’ is apt: the chapters of *De temporibus* are constructed from sentences that are noticeably short.⁶⁴ Bede clearly appreciated that the tricky subject of Paschal calculation required straightforward and concise exposition.

⁶¹ Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 1xv (see also appendix 4 ‘a note on the term computus’ at pp. 425-6). The standard edition of *De temporibus* is found in pp. 585-611 of CCSL volume 123C. This is a reprint of the edition of chapters 1-16 from Jones, C. W. 1943, ed. *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, pp. 161-7, combined with Mommsen’s edition of the world chronicle (chapters 17-22). The world chronicle was originally printed in *Chronica minora III*, MGH Auctores Antiquissimi 13, pp. 247-317. Mommsen reproduces the world chronicles from *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione* in a parallel edition. The chronicle from *De temporum ratione* is found in the top portion of each page, with corresponding passages from *De temporibus* below.

⁶² *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 1-3: ‘De natura rerum et ratione temporum duos quondam stricto sermone libellos discentibus ut rebar necessarios composui’.

⁶³ The title ‘*De temporibus*’ derives from Bede’s description of the work in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24. It distinguishes the early tract from the later, more comprehensive text *De temporum ratione*.

⁶⁴ In a recent assessment of Bede’s prose style, Richard Sharpe demonstrates that the average length of a sentence in *De temporibus* is shorter than in many other Bedan works: Sharpe, R. 2005, ‘The Varieties of Bede’s Prose’, pp. 351-3. Sharpe admits that his data are somewhat crude, but his calculations of average sentence length are a useful guide for comparing Bede’s works against each other. *De temporibus* is said

De temporibus was completed in the year 703. Chapter fourteen explains how to calculate the number of years which have elapsed ‘since the Incarnation of the Lord (*ab Incarnatione Domini*)’.⁶⁵ In doing so, Bede calculates the present year, the fifth year of Tiberius III, as 703.⁶⁶ In the final chapter, chapter twenty-two, Bede once again refers to present day as being in the fifth year of Tiberius,⁶⁷ but a curious discrepancy with the number given in chapter fourteen exists in some manuscripts. Two of the earliest manuscripts of *De temporibus* state, in chapter twenty-two, that 709 years have thus-far elapsed in the sixth age,⁶⁸ whilst others omit the number altogether.⁶⁹ The reference to the year 709 has traditionally been interpreted as a scribal error,⁷⁰ though an alternative theory, that the text was altered by computists in Gaul, has recently been proposed.⁷¹ Whether the internal discrepancy in these manuscripts is a result of editorial manipulation, scribal mishap or an alternative reason,⁷² the correct date of composition for *De temporibus* is undoubtedly the year 703 (the correct date for the fifth year of

to have an average of 9 words per sentence. In contrast, *De natura rerum* has 16, *De temporum ratione* 23 and *In Ezram et Neemiam* has 40.

⁶⁵ Bede played a crucial role in popularising this method of dating; he used it as the chronological framework for the *Historia ecclesiastica* and gave the system prominence in his Easter tables. On the origins of the AD system of dating see McCarthy, D. P. 2003, 'The Emergence of *Anno Domini*', in G. Jaritz and G. Moreno-Riano (eds.), *Time and Eternity: the Medieval Discourse* (Turnhout), pp. 31-53.

⁶⁶ *De temporibus*, 14, lines 1-7.

⁶⁷ *De temporibus*, 22, lines 79-80.

⁶⁸ *De temporibus*, 22, line 1: 'Sexta aetas continent annos praeteritos DCCVIII'. The year 709 is given in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, 128 (Phill. 1831) and Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, pal. lat. 1448. These two manuscripts were chosen as the basis of the text of the *Chronica minora* by Mommsen.

⁶⁹ The number is omitted in manuscripts *E*, *H*, and *M* as listed in Mommsen's edition: Einsiedeln, Klosterbibliothek, 167; St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 251; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 4860.

⁷⁰ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I (Oxford), p. cxlvi.

⁷¹ Masako Ohashi suggests that the discrepancy may be due to computists in Gaul amending the text of chapter 22 to fit a Victorian chronology. As there was a discrepancy of 6 years between the Victorian chronology and the Dionysian reckoning followed by Bede, the number may have been altered to fit the Victorian date for the fifth-year of Tiberius (709). Ohashi, M. 2003, 'Sexta aetas continet annos praeteritos DCCVIII' (Bede, *De temporibus*, 22): a Scribal Error? in G. Jaritz and G. Moreno-Riano (eds.), *Time and Eternity: the Medieval Discourse* (Turnhout), pp. 55-62. Ohashi does not explain why the figure in chapter 14 was not also amended.

⁷² The manuscripts containing the figure 709 in chapter 22 could derive from a copy (or copies) which had been emended at Wearmouth-Jarrow in the course of classroom teaching by Bede or a colleague. Alternatively, the manuscripts could derive from a copy sent to Bishop Acca, Wilfrid's successor at Hexham, soon after his accession.

Tiberius III) as given in chapter fourteen. This places the work near the beginning of Bede's authorial career, and it would more or less have been contemporaneous with his ordination to the priesthood.⁷³

The completion of *De temporibus* almost certainly coincided with that of another work; *De natura rerum*. *De natura rerum* provides an introduction to the study of the natural world and it had many precedents in classical and post-classical literature. The text was very popular in the centuries following Bede's death, with well over one-hundred medieval manuscripts surviving.⁷⁴ *De natura rerum* itself contains no explicit clues regarding its date of composition. The main body of the work is prefaced by four lines of verse which are preserved in numerous manuscripts under the title 'verses of Bede the priest' (*Versus Bedae Presbiteri*). The reference to Bede's priestly status would seem to imply that the work was composed after Bede's ordination (circa 703). However, as no autograph manuscript of *De natura rerum* has survived, the title of the quatrain may not have originated with Bede himself. It would be unwise to put too much faith in the title's reference to Bede's status as '*presbiter*' (the title could have been an introductory label added by a later scribe). Though Bede scholars have usually accepted it as an early work, there is no general consensus about the date of *De natura rerum*. Many have chosen to see this text as contemporaneous with *De temporibus*, but

⁷³ Bede declares that he was ordained priest by John of Beverly at the age of 30 in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24. Though he does not mention the year he was born, he states that he was currently in the 59th year of his life. If Bede was 58 when he completed the *Historia* in 731, it follows that he was born in 673 and ordained circa 703.

⁷⁴ The most comprehensive list of manuscripts is provided by Jones, C. W. *De natura rerum liber*, CCSL 123A (Turnhout, 1975), pp. 174-84. This list is intended to supplement that of Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *A Hand-list of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca). Though the earliest manuscripts of *De natura rerum* date from the Carolingian era, the work was known and used in the pre-Carolingian period: King, V. 1993, 'An Unreported Early use of Bede's *De natura rerum* ', *Anglo-Saxon England* 22, 85-91. King demonstrates that *De natura rerum* was the source for two passages in the eighth-century revision of the *Aratus Latinus*.

Plummer did not consider this to be a safe assumption.⁷⁵ C. W. Jones, who edited the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina edition of *De natura rerum*, was confident that the text was one of Bede's earliest compositions.⁷⁶ In contrast, Richard Sharpe has recently classified *De natura rerum* as a middle career work.⁷⁷

It seems sensible to follow Jones and consider *De natura rerum* as an early work. Several chapters indicate that Bede's mind had not yet achieved the sophisticated level of scientific understanding that is evident in *De temporum ratione*, a work which displays significant advances in certain fields such as tidal theory.⁷⁸ Bede's willingness to use sources that he later came to mistrust is another indication of an early date. His liberal use of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* and *De natura rerum* (the latter of which probably suggested the title of Bede's work to him)⁷⁹ is particularly illuminating. Bede cited Isidore less frequently as he advanced in age,⁸⁰ and it seems that his attitude towards the bishop of Seville cooled considerably in his later years. A dismissive comment in *De temporum ratione* suggests that Bede did not consider Isidore to be a

⁷⁵ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, p. cxlix.

⁷⁶ Jones, C. W. *De natura rerum liber*, CCSL 123A, p. 174. See also the comment that *De natura rerum* is 'at least as early as *De temporibus* and probably earlier' in Jones, C. W. 1937, 'Manuscripts of Bede's *De Natura Rerum*', *Isis* 27, 430-40, at 438. This view is echoed by: Bolton, W. F. 1967, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature*, vol. I (Princeton), p. 157; Stevens, W. M. 1985, *Bede's Scientific Achievement* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow), p. 4; Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable* (Boston), p. 37.

⁷⁷ Sharpe classifies *De natura rerum* in the same bracket as *In Marci evangelium expositio*. The commentary on Mark was composed after *In primam partem Samuhelis* (which itself was completed circa 716-717). Sharpe, R. 2005, 'The Varieties of Bede's Prose', p. 352.

⁷⁸ In *De natura rerum*, 39, Bede describes an 8-year tidal cycle which is based upon book 2, chapter 99 of Pliny's *Historia naturalis*. In *De temporum ratione*, 29, Bede rejects the 8-year cycle and replaces it with a more sophisticated 19-year cycle. The acceptance of the 8-year cycle in *De natura rerum* is a significant factor in Jones's argument for assigning the work an early date: Jones, C. W. *De natura rerum liber*, CCSL 123A, p. 174. For more on Bede's innovative tidal theory, see note 526 below.

⁷⁹ Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. lxxx. Bede would also have known Isidore's *De natura rerum* by its alternative title '*Libri rotarum*'. This title refers to the illustrative diagrams of concentric circles that often featured in medieval manuscripts of Isidore's work. The *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* refers to Isidore's work using the alternative title, see: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 582-3. There is no evidence to suggest that Bede included diagrams in his *De natura rerum*, though some do appear in a limited number of manuscripts. These diagrams are often copied from Isidore and occur most often in manuscripts of English origin from the post-Conquest period: Jones, C. W. *De natura rerum liber*, CCSL 123A, p. 186.

⁸⁰ Bede became much less dependent on Isidore as his career progressed; *De temporum ratione* borrows far fewer passages from Isidore than *De natura rerum*, despite the former work being a great deal longer.

particularly reliable authority.⁸¹ Cuthbert's *Epistola de obitu Bedae* indicates that Bede was thoroughly dissatisfied with Isidore's *De natura rerum* shortly before his death.⁸²

A strong case can be made for seeing *De natura rerum* and *De temporibus* as companion pieces. The two works are referred to together in *De temporum ratione* and the *Historia ecclesiastica*, suggesting that Bede considered them to be a pair.⁸³ *De temporibus* does not have its own preface, but Faith Wallis has suggested that the preface to *De natura rerum* may well have been intended for both works.⁸⁴ Wallis states that the prefatory quatrain, reproduced below, does not seem appropriate for *De natura rerum* alone. It would, however, fit a hypothetical fusion of the two works:

I, Bede, servant of God, have summarised in brief chapters
the various natures of things and the broad periods of the
fragile age. You who read the stars, I beseech you, look with
fixed mind above to the everlasting day.⁸⁵

De natura rerum does not discuss the 'broad periods of the fragile age (*labentis ... aevi ... tempora lata*)' and it contains very little that is relevant to the wider topic of time. The reference to 'broad periods' seems to be a far more appropriate

⁸¹ *De temporum ratione*, 35, lines 38-44. The comment concerns Isidore's dating of the beginning of the four seasons. On this passage, and for insightful comments regarding Bede's attitude towards Isidore in general, see Meyvaert, P. 1976, 'Bede the Scholar', pp. 58-60.

⁸² Cuthbert relates that Bede was preparing a revised edition of Isidore's *De natura rerum* shortly before he died. Regarding Isidore's work, Cuthbert quotes Bede as saying: 'I cannot have my children learning what is not true, and losing their labour on this after I am gone (*Nolo ut pueri mei mendacium legant, et in hoc post meum obitum sine fructu laborent*)'. Extract and translation taken from Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 582-3.

⁸³ *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 1-3 (see above, note 62). *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24: 'Two books, one on the nature of things and the other on chronology (*De natura rerum, et de temporibus, libros singulos*)'.

⁸⁴ Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. lxvi.

⁸⁵ *De natura rerum*, preface: 'Naturas rerum uarias labentis et aevi / Perstrinxi titulis, tempora lata citis, / Beda Dei famulus. Tu fixa obsecro perennem / Qui legis astra, super mente tuere diem'. The authenticity of the prefatory quatrain is thought to be 'beyond question', Jones, C. W. 1937, 'Manuscripts of *De Natura Rerum*', 436.

description of *De temporibus*, particularly the world chronicle of chapters seventeen to twenty-two.

The world ages and the ages of man

The world chronicle that occupies the final chapters of *De temporibus* is often referred to as Bede's 'lesser chronicle' or '*Chronica minora*'. The chronology is based upon a six-part method of temporal division. It is preceded by chapter sixteen ('*De mundi aetatibus*') which outlines the six-fold scheme. Bede describes universal history as being split into six world ages, with each age being defined by well known biblical events. The Flood provides the splitting point for ages one and two, and the divisions for ages three to six derive from the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew.⁸⁶ The ages are reckoned as follows:

<i>Prima aetas</i>	Adam to Noah
<i>Secunda aetas</i>	Noah to Abraham
<i>Tertia aetas</i>	Abraham to David
<i>Quarta aetas</i>	David to the Babylonian Exile
<i>Quinta aetas</i>	The Exile to the Incarnation of Christ
<i>Sexta aetas</i>	Incarnation to the death of the world

World Age divisions: *De temporibus*, 16

Chapter sixteen of *De temporibus* represents Bede's earliest discussion of the world ages doctrine, but the theme recurs time and time again throughout his works.⁸⁷ The

⁸⁶ Matthew 1.1-18. Bede cites Matthew as the source for the reckoning of ages three to six in *De temporibus*, 16 and again in *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 2.

⁸⁷ Though the world ages theme permeates a great number of Bede's works, the most important discussions are found in: *In Genesim*, *De temporum ratione*, *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.14 and the *Hymnus de opere sex dierum primordialium et de sex aetatibus mundi*.

importance of the world ages scheme to Bede's thought has long been appreciated.⁸⁸ C. W. Jones stressed the importance of this theme to Bede's educational programme, suggesting that the doctrine intersects with almost all of Bede's identifiable interests as a teacher.⁸⁹ Several secondary works have commented upon the prevalence of the world ages theme in Bede's works,⁹⁰ and it has been referred to as his favourite doctrine.⁹¹ There can be little doubt that the world ages scheme was a fundamentally important aspect of Bede's world-view. It provided a historical framework for the biblical and post-biblical events of the past and it also defined Bede's perception of the present. According to the scheme set forth in *De temporibus*, the present day fell within a sixth and final age of historical time which would end with the death of the whole world.⁹²

The origins of the world ages doctrine lie in the Judaic hexaemeral tradition.⁹³ The theme became common amongst early-Christian writers and the association of universal history with a six-part scheme of division can be traced back at least as far as the second-century '*Epistle of Barnabas*'.⁹⁴ The six world ages are primarily associated with Augustine of Hippo. Augustine played a prominent role in developing and

⁸⁸ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, p. xli-xlii.

⁸⁹ Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Some Introductory Remarks on Bede's Commentary on Genesis', *Sacris Erudiri* 19, 115-98, at 191-8. Earlier in his career, Jones suggested that the world-ages doctrine was 'fundamentally a teaching device' for Bede which had little connection to historical reality: Jones, C. W. 1946, 'Bede as Early Medieval Historian', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 4, 26-36 at 31-2. As Wallis points out, Jones's comments in his 1970 article suggest that he modified this belief later in his career (Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 362, note 219).

⁹⁰ See, for example, Mayr-Harting, H. 1991, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London), p. 45.

⁹¹ Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis* (Liverpool), p. 97, note 129.

⁹² *De temporibus*, 17, lines 20-2.

⁹³ See: Ladner, G. B. 1959, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge), p. 224; Burrow, J. A. 1986, *The Ages of Man: a Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford), p. 81. Burrow points out that St Augustine alluded to the Jewish origins of the six-age tradition in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.23-4.

⁹⁴ On the *Epistle of Barnabas* see Landes, R. 1988, 'Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100-800 CE', in W. Verbeke, C. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven), pp. 137-209, at pp. 141-4 and Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 192. As Jones notes, the concept of a six-age world had evidently been developing for many years before the *Epistle of Barnabas* was written. A modern edition of the Epistle is available in the Sources Chrétiennes series: Prigent, P. and Kraft, R. A. *L'épître de Barnabé*, Sources Chrétiennes 172 (Paris, 1971).

popularising the six-age model. He referred to it in several works including (but by no means limited to) *De civitate Dei*, *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, and *De catechizandis rudibus*.⁹⁵ The divisions that Bede proposed for the six ages of historical time, as reproduced in the table above, are entirely traditional and derive directly from Augustine.

Augustine based the world ages scheme upon two principal analogies: the days of creation and the ages of man.⁹⁶ For Augustine, the six ages of universal history correspond to the six days in which God created the world. For example, the fourth day of creation, on which God adorned heaven with lights, is related to the fourth age when the glory of David shone forth in the world.⁹⁷ In later works, notably *De temporum ratione* and the commentary on Genesis, Bede explored the parallels between the days of creation and the world ages at length but the creation week analogy is entirely absent from *De temporibus*.⁹⁸ The discussion of the world ages in *De temporibus* instead focuses on Augustine's other favoured comparison; the ages of historical time and the ages of man.

Various conceptions of the human life-cycle were developed throughout the medieval period.⁹⁹ Augustine equated the six ages of history with six stages of life, and

⁹⁵ *De civitate Dei*, 22.30; *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, 58; *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.23-4; *De catechizandis rudibus*, 22.39. This is a brief and incomplete list. See further Ladner, G. B. 1959, *The Idea of Reform*, p. 225, note 13.

⁹⁶ The world ages, primordial days and ages of man are all woven together in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.23. On the world ages theme in Augustine's works, see Tristram, H. L. C. 1985, *Sex aetates mundi: die Weltzeitalter bei den Angelsachsen und den Iren: Untersuchungen und Texte* (Heidelberg), pp. 22-4.

⁹⁷ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.23.38.

⁹⁸ *De temporum ratione*, 10; 66. The world ages are a prominent theme throughout *In Genesim* but see in particular: book 1, lines 1093-224. Bede's fondness for the world ages and creation-week analogy is also evident in the hymn that he composed specifically on this theme. On the *Hymnus de opere sex dierum primordialium et de sex aetatibus mundi*, see below pp. 133-135, and appendix 2, p. 334.

⁹⁹ Two monographs on the Ages of Man have been published: Burrow, J. A. 1986, *Ages of Man* and Sears, E. 1986, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton). See also the lengthy discussion in Ladner, G. B. 1959, *The Idea of Reform*, pp. 222-38, and the wide ranging study,

his scheme enjoyed extraordinary success throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁰ According to Burrow, the two Augustinian works which were cited most frequently by medieval authors on the ages of man were *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII* and *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*.¹⁰¹ In the former work, Augustine defined the six stages of human life as *infantia*, *pueritia*, *adolescentia*, *iuventus*, *gravitas* and *senectus*. Isidore of Seville played an important role in popularising Augustine's six ages of man and transmitting them to later scholars.¹⁰² Isidore incorporated a discussion of the theme into his *Etymologiae* and he reproduced the Augustinian terminology for each stage of the life-cycle.¹⁰³

Bede's treatment of the ages of man and world ages analogy in *De temporibus* is indebted to Augustine's theoretical model, though it must be noted that he adopts a different term for the sixth stage of human life.¹⁰⁴ This is a subtle, but significant adaptation of the received terminology, the full significance of which will be discussed later in the present study.¹⁰⁵ For now it is sufficient to note that Bede, even at a very early stage in his authorial career, was prepared to make alterations to a well-defined theoretical tradition. This example of Bede's willingness to adapt an established model supports the recent historiographical developments in Bede scholarship outlined in

which surveys the tradition through to the modern era, by Archambault, P. 1966, 'The Ages of Man and the Ages of the World: a Study of Two Traditions', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 12, 193-228.

¹⁰⁰ It has been suggested that; 'most, if not all of the medieval writers who made use of the metaphor did so in imitation or under the inspiration of Augustine', Archambault, P. 1966, 'The Ages of Man and the Ages of the World', 206.

¹⁰¹ Burrow, J. A. 1986, *Ages of Man*, pp. 80-1. The relevant passage from *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, 58, is reproduced by Burrow in an appendix, pp. 199-200. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.23-4, contains a more elaborate exposition of the analogy, on which see Ladner, G. B. 1959, *The Idea of Reform*, pp. 232-7 and note 96 above.

¹⁰² Isidore of Seville's role in popularising the ages of man doctrine and transmitting it to later writers is discussed by Sears, E. 1986, *Ages of Man*, pp. 59-63 and Burrow, J. A. 1986, *Ages of Man*, pp. 82-3.

¹⁰³ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 11.2. Isidore does not explore the relationship between the ages of man and the six world ages. The discussion in *Etymologiae* 11 concerns the ages of man alone.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine associates the sixth world age with a human state of '*senectus*' (old age), but Bede defines the sixth age as a 'decrepit age (*aetas decrepita*)'. *De temporibus*, 16, lines 20-2.

¹⁰⁵ See chapter 8, below pp. 247-252.

DeGregorio's introduction to the *Innovation and Tradition* volume.¹⁰⁶ Though indebted to the traditional doctrine of his predecessors, it is clear that Bede felt no obligation to follow them without question.

Alternative frameworks of temporal division in Bede's works

In basing the *Chronica minora* upon a six-age framework, Bede was endorsing the world ages scheme as a legitimate model for reckoning universal history. The divisions between each age, in Bede's mind, represented separate eras with distinct characteristics. The first world age perished in the flood, just as infancy (*infantia*) ought to be drowned in forgetfulness. The Hebrew language was discovered in the second world age, and so this age corresponds to childhood (*pueritia*), the second stage of the life-cycle when a human learns to speak.¹⁰⁷ The Augustinian world ages were undoubtedly a historical reality for Bede, and he was to use the framework as the backbone of a second world chronicle in *De temporum ratione*.¹⁰⁸ On occasion, however, Bede alludes to other schemes of temporal division. These alternative frameworks, which were intended as theoretical concepts rather than serious chronological frameworks, merit consideration here.

The scheme of temporal periodisation which Bede alludes to most frequently (aside from the world ages framework) involves a three-part division of time. The three eras are: two periods of Old Testament history, divided in relation to the establishment of the Mosaic law, and a third period of grace inaugurated by the coming of Christ into the world. The division of historical time into periods *ante legem*, *sub lege*, and *sub gratia*, is a common patristic theme. A similar idea is prevalent in the works of

¹⁰⁶ DeGregorio, S. 2006, 'New Bede'.

¹⁰⁷ *De temporibus*, 16, lines 1-9.

¹⁰⁸ *De temporum ratione*, 66.

Augustine, though he also describes a fourth age of peace.¹⁰⁹ Bede's tripartite scheme is, as DeGregorio has observed, closer to the three-part figure expounded by Gregory the Great in his homily on the parable of the fig tree.¹¹⁰ Isidore also makes a clear reference to a tripartite scheme in book six of his *Etymologiae*.¹¹¹ Bede consistently refers to the three periods using the non-specific Latin term '*tempora*' (which in this context can be translated as 'times' or 'eras').¹¹² The tripartite division of time features in *De temporibus*, and it is referred to in several other works including *In primam partem Samuhelis*, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, and Bede's homily on the wedding feast at Cana.¹¹³

A notable reference to the three eras is found in chapter sixty-four of *De temporum ratione*. This reference adequately sums up the way in which the tripartite scheme of temporal division is employed by Bede. The scheme is alluded to in a discussion of the allegorical interpretation of Easter. Jesus is said to have come in the world's third era ('*tertio tempore saeculi*').¹¹⁴ This aptly corresponds to the resurrection of Christ on the third day after the crucifixion. Bede refers to three *tempora*: a first era of natural law, a middle era under written law and a final period after the advent of

¹⁰⁹ For example, see *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, 66.3, which describes four periods (*ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia* and *in pace*). On Augustine's four-part concept, which derives from Paul's epistle to the Romans, see Fredriksen, P. 1991, 'Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity: from John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo', *Vigiliae Christianae* 45, 151-83 at 163-4 and 180, notes 70-1.

¹¹⁰ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 2.31, lines 24-7 (on Luke 13.6-13). See DeGregorio, S. 2006, trans. *Ezra and Nehemiah*, p. 147, note 4. DeGregorio's footnote is misleading with regards to Isidore; the reference cited refers to a three-part scheme, rather than the fourfold division implied.

¹¹¹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 6.17: 'Primum enim tempus est ante legem, secundum sub lege, tertium sub gratia; ubi iam manifestatum est sacramentum prius occultum in prophetico aenigmate'.

¹¹² Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. 1879, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford), pp. 1851-2.

¹¹³ *De temporibus*, 15, lines 7-13; *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 634-8; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 2, lines 1845-9; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.14, lines 45-53. Compare *In Cantica canticorum*, 4, lines 396-402.

¹¹⁴ *De temporum ratione*, 64, lines 24-5. See also, a second reference to Christ coming in the third age (again using '*tertio tempore saeculi*') at line 103. Compare *De temporibus*, 15, lines 7-13.

divine grace.¹¹⁵ The *tempora* are defined loosely and they are not assigned specific dates. Their significance is subsidiary; they are intended to facilitate an allegorical interpretation of the celebration of Easter. The tripartite scheme is not employed as a method of chronological division in the same way as the six world ages are used to provide a framework for the *Chronica maiora* of chapter sixty-six. In *De temporum ratione*, as in *De temporibus*, the two alternative schemes sit side by side in the same work, but only one of them is employed as a serious framework for the reckoning of universal history.¹¹⁶

In his compilation of commentaries on the seven Catholic Epistles, Bede makes reference to another traditional model of temporal periodisation. Commenting on the first epistle of John, Bede interprets the pericope ‘Dear children, this is the last hour’¹¹⁷ by relating it to the parable of the workers in the vineyard from the Gospel of Matthew. In the parable, men are hired to work in a vineyard at the first, third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours, though each receives an equal wage at the day’s end.¹¹⁸ In the commentary on 1 John, Bede relates each of these hours to an era of the world (*‘tempus saeculi’*). In doing so, he alludes to a fivefold division of world time in which each hour marks the commencement of a new era. Those hired at the first hour are related to the people who lived at the beginning of the world. The third hour is equated with an era that began with Noah and the sixth hour is similarly reckoned in relation to Abraham. Those who lived under the Mosaic Law are said to have lived from the ninth hour, and

¹¹⁵ *De temporum ratione*, 64, lines 27-30: ‘Prima namque saeculi tempora lege naturali per patres, media lege literali per prophetas, extrema charismate spiritali per seipsum ueniens illustrare dignatus est’.

¹¹⁶ Both schemes also feature in *In primam partem Samuhelis* and *In Ezram et Neemiam*. In Bede’s homily on the wedding feast at Cana, the three *tempora* are discussed alongside a lengthy exposition of the six world ages: *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.14.

¹¹⁷ 1 John 2.18.

¹¹⁸ Matthew 20.1-16.

the eleventh hour is equated with a present era during which Christ came into the world.¹¹⁹

The fivefold scheme shares some similarities with the world ages doctrine. The era which began at the eleventh hour is equivalent to the sixth world age, as both begin with Christ and finish at the end of the world. Similarly, Noah and Abraham are used as dividing points in both systems, though the five-part scheme gives prominence to Moses where the Augustinian world ages framework does not.¹²⁰ Bede's source for the five-part division of universal history is Gregory the Great's homily on the parable of the workers in the vineyard.¹²¹ Gregory's homily compares the five *horae* of the parable with five ages of man, as well as the five eras of historical time. Gregory's homily is an important influence upon Bede's eschatological perspective, and it will be considered in full later in this study (see chapter eight). For now it is sufficient to note that the fivefold scheme, which Bede took from Gregory for his interpretation of the first epistle of John, was not used by either scholar as a legitimate chronological framework. The scheme held only symbolic significance for Gregory. He defined the five eras in general terms and he did not attempt to use them in a chronological context. The commentary on 1 John marks Bede's only full explanation of the relationship between the five *horae* and *tempora*. The analogy is only used in this instance in order to offer an allegorical interpretation of the pericope in question, and it appears that Bede became less sympathetic to the fivefold scheme in his later exegetical works.¹²² Like

¹¹⁹ *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam I Iohannis*, 2, lines 214-26. Compare *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 3, lines 1-7.

¹²⁰ Sears, E. 1986, *Ages of Man*, pp. 83-4.

¹²¹ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.19. Burrow notes the influence of Origen upon Gregory's interpretation of the parable, *Ages of Man*, pp. 60-71. See also Sears, E. 1986, *Ages of Man*, pp. 79-88.

¹²² Bede alludes to the five *horae* of the parable in his commentary on Acts, though he does not explain the analogy in detail nor refer directly to historical periods: *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 3, lines 1-7. The commentary on 1 John and *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* were composed early on in Bede's exegetical career. Both works were sent to Acca relatively soon after 710. The absence of the five-part

the tripartite division of time into periods *ante legem*, *sub lege*, and *sub gratia*, Bede did not attempt to use the fivefold scheme as the basis for any serious chronological calculations.

A third alternative system of temporal division appears in *De tabernaculo*. This text is an extended allegorical interpretation of the Tabernacle of Moses.¹²³ In commenting upon the Tabernacle's golden lampstand, Bede relates the lampstand's six branches to six temporal periods.¹²⁴ Bede develops a novel interpretation which is not repeated in any of his other works. The description of the lampstand in Exodus is very precise: 'Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand. Three on one side and three on the other'.¹²⁵ The division of the six branches into two threes forms the basis of a system which has three periods before the Incarnation of Christ and three more after it (see appendix one for a illustration of this). Bede explains:

That there were three cups, bowls, and lilies for every branch signifies the three divisions of time (*ternas temporum differentias*) in which the elect lived devotedly for God, both before and after the Lord's incarnation. For there were righteous persons before the law (*ante legem*), as there were under the law (*sub lege*), and as there were in the time of the prophets; likewise, after the Lord's ascension the primitive Church was gathered from Israel, now it is gathered from the Gentiles, and at the end of the world it will be gathered from the remnants of Israel.¹²⁶

scheme from Bede's later exegetical works suggests that he became less sympathetic to this analogy as his authorial career progressed. On the date of *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, see below p. 122. For the commentary on 1 John see pp. 103-105.

¹²³ *De tabernaculo* is a verse by verse commentary on Exodus 24.12 to 30.31.

¹²⁴ The golden lampstand is described in Exodus 25.31-6.

¹²⁵ Exodus 25.32.

¹²⁶ *De tabernaculo*, 1, lines 1110-18. 'Quod autem per singulos calamos tres fuere scyphi sperulae et lilia significat ternas temporum differentias quibus electi et ante incarnationem dominicam et post deo deuote uixerunt. Fuerunt etenim iusti ante legem fuerunt sub lege fuerunt temporibus prophetarum, item post ascensionem dominicam congregata est ecclesia primitiua de israhel congregatur nunc de gentibus

The terminology employed in this passage is loose, with Bede referring to ‘three divisions of time (*ternas temporum differentias*)’. The first two divisions employ similar terminology to the tripartite division of time discussed above, with the addition of a third pre-Incarnation ‘time of the prophets’. The three post-Christ periods, which correspond to the entire sixth *aetas* in the world ages framework, reflect a three-stage model of redemptive history. The relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles outlined in the passage cited above is the key dynamic in Bede’s perception of the history of salvation. Bede relates that the Church originated amongst the Jews before spreading to the Gentiles. At the end of the world the Jews will be reconciled with the Church in a final stage of salvation history. This three-part pattern for salvation is a major motif in Bede’s exegesis, and it is a theme which has significant bearing on his conception of eschatological time. It will be considered again in the subsequent chapters of this study.

In addition to the *differentiae temporum* outlined above, *De tabernaculo* also makes reference to the regular world ages framework.¹²⁷ The world ages framework was the sole system that had any significance for Bede with regards to time reckoning and chronological calculation. Like the tripartite and five-fold systems discussed above, Bede did not attach anything more than symbolic significance to the ‘two times three’ scheme outlined in *De tabernaculo*. Whenever Bede discussed historical events in relation to their chronological context, whether in works of chronology, poetry or exegesis, he always did so in relation to the six world ages. In terms of chronological calculation there was no room for flexibility. Flexibility was, however, afforded to

congreganda est in fine mundi de reliquiis israhel’. Translation cited from: Holder, A. G. 1994, trans. *Bede: on the Tabernacle* (Liverpool), p. 36.

¹²⁷ *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 424-36 and 2, lines 967-75.

interpretations of scriptural passages that lent themselves more readily to alternative schemes of temporal division. The presence of alternative schemes in Bede's works is indicative of his exegetical method as a whole. The way in which Bede interpreted biblical literature could be fluid, and he often adapted his exegetical interpretations in order to fit specific pericopes.¹²⁸

In each of the alternative frameworks for temporal division alluded to by Bede, his use of non-specific terms such as '*tempora*' or '*differentiae temporum*' can be contrasted with the precise terminology associated with the world ages doctrine. In *De temporibus*, the world ages are described as '*aetates mundi*', and they are alternatively labelled as '*aetates saeculi*' in many of Bede's other works. These terms are synonymous and interchangeable, though '*aetas saeculi*' is the term most commonly used to describe an individual world age.¹²⁹ Bede never uses '*aetas saeculi*' or '*aetas mundi*' to refer to a period defined by any of the alternative frameworks discussed above. These terms have a precise meaning which is exclusively attached to the six-age system of chronological division. Bede inherited his terminology for the world ages doctrine from Augustine and Isidore. His deployment of the terms '*aetates mundi*' and '*aetates saeculi*' is entirely in line with a predefined theoretical tradition.¹³⁰ Though the theoretical basis for Bede's world chronicle in *De temporibus* was entirely traditional, it will become clear that his implementation of the world ages model was not.

¹²⁸ Holder, A. G. 1991, 'The Venerable Bede on the Mysteries of our Salvation', *American Benedictine Review* 42, 140-62. At 152, Holder demonstrates that the precise delineation of the stages of Christian salvation differs from one Bedan work to the next depending on the biblical verse in question. The same is true of Bede's allusions to alternative systems of temporal division.

¹²⁹ The frequency with which each of these terms appears in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* is illustrative of Bede's usage overall. The *Epistola* uses both terms, but refers to the '*aetates mundi*' just once (at line 54 where Bede is citing his own work *De temporibus*). This can be compared to several references to the '*aetates saeculi*' (at lines 9, 20, 26-7, 269 and 290).

¹³⁰ Both terms are used frequently by Augustine; they have a specific association with the six-part scheme of periodisation. Isidore also employs both terms interchangeably and associates them exclusively with the sixfold model.

A brief survey of Christian chronology before Bede

The notion of reckoning dates relative to the Incarnation of Christ did not become popular until after Bede's lifetime (indeed, Bede is credited with playing a significant role in popularising the system of dating which is readily familiar to us today).¹³¹ In the early-Christian period, dates were commonly reckoned in terms of the total number of years that were thought to have elapsed since the beginning of time. This method of calculation dates events by assigning them to a year of the world, or '*annus mundi*' (commonly abbreviated to 'AM'). The world chronicle in *De temporibus* was Bede's first attempt to calculate the duration of world time by providing a framework for universal history which ran from creation to the present day. In creating his *Chronica minora*, Bede was following in a tradition of Christian chronology that had been established over several centuries. In order to fully understand the significance of Bede's contribution to this field, it is first necessary to examine the background by looking at the works that had been produced before the early eighth century. The following analysis of early-Christian perceptions of chronology presents a somewhat simplified appraisal of an extremely complex field, and it draws upon Faith Wallis's masterful survey of the topic in her translated edition of Bede's *De temporum ratione*.¹³² Due to the constraints of this project, it has been necessary to focus attention upon the major writers that are directly relevant to the study of Bede's chronological work: Eusebius of Caesarea and Isidore of Seville.

¹³¹ On Bede and the AD method of dating, see above, note 65.

¹³² Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*. See the Introduction, pp. lxviii-lxxi and the commentary to chapter 66, pp. 353-66. Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', an important article which is regularly cited by Wallis, also provides a thought-provoking survey of the sources under discussion here.

Eusebius of Caesarea was a pioneer in the field of Christian chronography.¹³³ He produced two chronological works, the *Chronici canones* and the *Chronographia*. These volumes were intended to be companion texts. The *Chronographia* was a preliminary volume to the *Chronici canones* and contained regnal lists from several prominent kingdoms. No copy of the original Greek version of the *Chronographia* has survived.¹³⁴ In the *Chronici canones*, Eusebius synchronised chronological data in numerous parallel columns.¹³⁵ Eusebius presented the historical data from pagan kingdoms alongside events from biblical history. Eusebius's chronology was based upon extensive calculation. He principally relied upon the Septuagint for his biblical data, as he considered this to be the most reliable edition of the Scriptures.¹³⁶ The *Chronici canones* was a comprehensive chronological study, and it achieved an unprecedented degree of accuracy. The original Greek version of the *Chronici canones* has also failed to survive, but this work had an enormous impact upon Christian perceptions of time through St Jerome's Latin translation.¹³⁷ Early in his authorial career Jerome edited the work and added his own continuations.¹³⁸ This revised edition of Eusebius's work became very popular (Bede had access to a complete edition).¹³⁹

¹³³ Eusebius lived circa 260-340 CE. On Eusebius's life and career see Wallace-Hadrill, D.S., *Eusebius of Caesarea* (Oxford, 1960).

¹³⁴ Burgess, R. W. and Witakowski, W. 1999, *Studies in Eusebian and post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart), pp. 21-2 and 31-2, note 11.

¹³⁵ For a survey of modern scholarly opinion regarding the *Chronici canones*, see the article by Burgess, R. W. 1997, 'The Dates and Editions of Eusebius's *Chronici canones* and *Historia ecclesiastica*', *Journal of Theological Studies* 48, 471-504.

¹³⁶ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', p. 151.

¹³⁷ Regarding Eusebius's impact upon the chronographic tradition, see: Mosshammer, A. A. 1979, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Lewisburg); Croke, B. 1983, 'The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle', in B. Croke and A. M. Emmett (eds.), *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford), pp. 116-31.

¹³⁸ Jerome's Latin edition of Eusebius's *Chronici canones* is available in an edition by Helm, R. W. O. *Die Chronik des Hieronymus: Hieronymi Chronicon*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 47 (Berlin, 1956).

¹³⁹ Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 354-6. The copy that Bede had access to contained further continuations by Prosper and Marcellinus Comes.

Jerome dated the Incarnation of Christ to *annus mundi* 5199, and this became the traditional date for the Incarnation in the West.¹⁴⁰

St Augustine pioneered the notion that universal history can be split into six world ages, but it is important to note that Augustine did not concern himself with chronological calculations. Augustine was not interested in defining the world ages chronologically and he spoke of their length in broad terms.¹⁴¹ Augustine wavered between the Incarnation and the start of Christ's ministry as the point at which the sixth age began, and he was aware of, but largely unconcerned by the inconsistencies in chronological data that existed in the various editions of the Bible.¹⁴² For Augustine, the world ages were a generalised theoretical framework for world history. His interest in the world ages centred upon the multi-layered symbolic comparisons that the model facilitated, such as the analogies with the ages of man and the days of creation.

Isidore of Seville was the most significant immediate influence upon Bede's first attempt to develop a framework for universal history in *De temporibus*. Isidore produced a world chronicle, known as the *Chronicon* (or *Chronica maiora*) which extends to the early-seventh century.¹⁴³ In addition, a short world chronicle features in the *Etymologiae*.¹⁴⁴ In both works, Isidore fused Eusebius's chronological data with the Augustinian world-ages model. This was a significant innovation on Isidore's part.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 354-6.

¹⁴¹ In his response to question 58 of *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Augustine speaks of the number of generations that make up each age, but he does not attempt to assign a set number of years to each generation. The first two world ages consist of 10 generations each. Ages three, four and five each contain 14 generations. The number of generations assigned to the sixth age is unknown.

¹⁴² For example, see: *De Civitate Dei* 18.43.

¹⁴³ A new edition of the *Chronicon* has recently been published: Martin, J. C. *Isidorus Hispalensis Chronica*, CCSL 112 (Turnhout, 2003). On the *Chronicon*, see the study by Bassett, P. M. 1976, 'The Use of History in the *Chronicon* of Isidore of Seville', *History and Theory* 15, 278-92.

¹⁴⁴ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 5.39.

¹⁴⁵ On Isidore's role in developing the chronological tradition, see: Tristram, H. L. C. 1985, *Sex aetates mundi*, pp. 24-5; Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 357; Kleist, A. J. 2003, 'The Influence of Bede's *De temporum ratione* on Ælfric's Understanding of Time', in G. Jaritz and G. Moreno-Riano (eds.), *Time and Eternity: the Medieval Discourse* (Turnhout), pp. 81-97, at pp. 86-7.

Isidore charts the progress of world time through six clearly defined world ages and the familiar points of division are used.¹⁴⁶ Each world age is explicitly labelled ('*prima aetas*,' '*secunda aetas*' and so on). Bede knew the *Etymologiae* well and he often used it as a reference tool, particularly in the early years of his authorial career.¹⁴⁷ Several key aspects of Bede's *Chronica minora* are directly influenced by Isidore.¹⁴⁸ Both chronicles are very short, and are aptly referred to as each writer's '*Chronica minora*' (Bede, like Isidore himself, would also produce a more comprehensive world chronicle later on in his career).¹⁴⁹ Bede adopts Isidore's policy of dating reigns in relation to their closing year. It is also likely that the use, in *De temporibus*, of the label '*aetates mundi*', rather than the more common '*aetates saeculi*', is a direct emulation of the terminology employed in the *Etymologiae*.

To summarise, Bede's most significant predecessors in the field of chronological study were Eusebius of Caesarea and Isidore of Seville. Isidore's world chronicles were based upon a fusion of the Augustinian world ages with chronological data derived from the Septuagint, as used by Eusebius in the *Chronici canones*. Though Isidore's was by no means the only chronological framework in circulation (it will become clear below, that less-sophisticated alternatives were circulating in Anglo-Saxon England) his world chronicles set significant precedents that were replicated in Bede's *Chronica minora*. The world chronicle in *De temporibus* owed much to the structure pioneered by Isidore, but Bede made a significant revision that was to have

¹⁴⁶ The first age runs from Adam to Noah, the second from Noah to Abraham, the third from Abraham to David, the fourth from David until the exile, and the fifth age runs from the exile until Christ.

¹⁴⁷ On Bede and the *Etymologiae* see Laistner, M. L. W. 1935, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede', in A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *Bede, his Life, Times, and Writings* (Oxford), pp. 237-66, at pp. 256-7. See further note 81, above.

¹⁴⁸ Wallis points out that several of Isidore's innovations were taken on by Bede: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 356-7.

¹⁴⁹ *De temporum ratione*, 66. Bede's second world chronicle, commonly referred to as his '*Chronica maiora*' is several times the length of the world chronicle in *De temporibus*.

major repercussions for his reputation amongst his contemporaries in early-eighth-century Northumbria.

Dating the world ages in *De temporibus*

The fundamental difference between Bede's *Chronica minora* and the world chronicle presented in Isidore's *Etymologiae* is the scriptural basis for the chronological data employed in either text. Bede's exegetical works reveal that he had several different versions of the Bible at his disposal, and he was keen to point out variant readings and engage in textual criticism of the editions that he had access to.¹⁵⁰ A profound difference exists between the chronological data in the various editions of the Bible, and Christian scholars had long been aware of these discrepancies.¹⁵¹ The major differences relate to the number of years assigned to several Old Testament patriarchs, some of whom are conventionally assigned huge life spans.¹⁵² In matters of chronology, Bede strongly believed that the Vulgate was the most reliable authority because for the most part it is a direct translation of the original Hebrew codices.¹⁵³ Bede never wavered from this conviction; he often referred to the Vulgate translation as the 'Hebrew truth (*Hebraica veritas*)'.

Bede employed the Hebrew data presented in the Vulgate as the basis for his *Chronica minora*. This represented a significant revision of the existing chronological orthodoxy and it resulted in a reduction of the length of the first and second world ages.

¹⁵⁰ This is particularly evident in Bede's commentary on Acts. See: Laistner, M. L. W. 1937, 'The Latin Versions of Acts Known to the Venerable Bede', *The Harvard Theological Review* 30, 37-50.

¹⁵¹ For example, see Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 15.13-14; 16.10.

¹⁵² Augustine argued that these large numbers ought to be seen as legitimate in *De civitate Dei*, 15.14. Bede cites an extract from this chapter of *De civitate Dei* in *De temporum ratione*, 37.

¹⁵³ The Vulgate is a translation of the Bible into Latin from the original languages and it was mostly the work of St Jerome. The term 'Vulgate' post-dates Bede (it became popular in the later Middle Ages). Jerome worked on the project between 383 and 405 CE at the request of Pope Damasus. See Browning, W. R. F. 1996, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Bible* (Oxford), p. 390. In the preface to his translation of the book of Chronicles, Jerome explains that the Septuagint version had become corrupt (see PL 28, cols. 1325-6). Bede cites a passage from Jerome's preface to Chronicles in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 9.

Bede presented the alternative figures alongside each other in his first world chronicle, but he did not discuss the chronological discrepancies in any detail. In contrast, when he came to compose his second world chronicle, the *Chronica maiora*, Bede offered an extensive justification of his preference for the Hebrew data.¹⁵⁴ In *De temporibus*, each world age is dealt with in a separate chapter, and each chapter begins with a summary of the total number of years in each age. Chapter seventeen begins with the statement: ‘The first age contains 1656 years according to the Hebrews and 2242 years according to the Seventy Translators’.¹⁵⁵ Chapter eighteen concerns the second world age, and it begins in much the same way, highlighting a 650-year discrepancy between the two sets of data.¹⁵⁶ No further discrepancies are noted, except for one regarding the calculation of the fourth age (which in Bede’s reckoning is twelve years shorter than the Septuagint figure).¹⁵⁷ Bede’s preference for the Hebrew figures radically altered the total amount of time considered to have elapsed since the creation of the world. Bede dated the Incarnation to 3952 AM; a significant revision of the traditional date, which the Eusebian-Septuagint chronology had placed near the beginning of a sixth millennium of world history.

Richard Landes, in his article exploring the correlation between apocalyptic expectation and chronological revisions, has labelled Bede’s new chronology as the

¹⁵⁴ See the preface to *De temporum ratione*, lines 13-37. The *Chronica maiora* itself contains several references to the scriptural discrepancies. Bede offered detailed explanations of the contentious dates but followed the data contained within the *Hebraica veritas* without fail. For an example, see the entry on the Flood (*De temporum ratione*, 66, *sub anno* 1656), though note that discrepancies between the different scriptural editions are highlighted in almost every entry for the first and second world ages. The extensive justification of the Hebrew data is a response to the criticism that Bede received following the publication of *De temporibus*.

¹⁵⁵ *De temporibus*, 17, lines 1-2: ‘Prima ergo aetas continet annos iuxta Hebreos IDCLVI, iuxta LXX interpretes IICCXLII’.

¹⁵⁶ The second age has 292 years according to the Hebrews and 942 years in the Septuagint. With the addition of the generation of Cainan (which Eusebius had discounted) the Septuagint figure is 1072. *De temporibus*, 18, lines 1-2. On the generation of Cainan and the calculation of the second age, see below, note 239.

¹⁵⁷ *De temporibus*, 20, lines 1-2.

‘AM III’ system.¹⁵⁸ Landes demonstrates that Bede’s chronology was the second major revision of the *annus mundi* system of chronological reckoning in the western Christian tradition. Bede’s system followed Eusebius’s AM II, which was itself a modification of the original *annus mundi* chronology associated with earlier scholars such as Hippolytus and Julius Africanus.¹⁵⁹ Landes states that Bede’s AM III system was largely unsuccessful. He argues that it was not widely adopted by later writers, and that the advent of AD dating ultimately rendered it redundant anyway.¹⁶⁰ Landes discusses Bede within the context of a lengthy article which sweeps forward through several centuries. His purpose is to detect a pattern in the way in which western scholars adapted their chronological systems in order to respond to and diffuse contemporary apocalyptic expectation. Bede’s restructured chronology is viewed in the same context as previous revisions, that is: as a reaction to contemporary speculation regarding the end of time. Landes talks of Bede following in the footsteps of previous scholars to exploit a ‘safety valve’ which was available to a trained elite of specialist chronographers. In Landes’s view, Bede restructured world history as a way of countering a notion, which existed amongst his contemporaries, that the year 6000 *annus mundi* could be associated with the apocalypse.¹⁶¹ The apocalyptic expectations present in Bede’s Northumbria will be considered in full shortly, but for now it is necessary to briefly consider the implications of Landes’s thoughts on Bede with specific reference to *De temporibus*. Can the implication that Bede was consciously

¹⁵⁸ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', pp. 174-8.

¹⁵⁹ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', pp. 144-9.

¹⁶⁰ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', p. 178. For a different perspective see Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 362-3. Wallis points out that the AM III framework was adopted in a selection of Carolingian and post-Carolingian sources.

¹⁶¹ Landes suggests that the restructured framework, first developed in *De temporibus*, was a conscious attempt to counter contemporary belief in the approaching year 6000. He states; ‘And, just as in the sixtieth century AM I, the anti-millenarian expert [i.e. Bede] in the last century of AM II changed the date’, Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', p. 176.

restructuring the *annus mundi* chronology in order to counter contemporary apocalyptic speculation be sustained?

Landes implies that Bede's AM III system was designed to counter contemporary apocalyptic belief, but this seems to be a flawed way of approaching the first manifestation of the revised chronology in *De temporibus*.¹⁶² Apocalyptic expectation became a prominent theme after the publication of Bede's first world chronicle but there is no evidence to suggest that Bede's concerns with his contemporaries' thought pre-dated the *Chronica minora*. Wallis reaches an appropriate middle ground in her discussion of these issues. Her commentary to the translated edition of *De temporum ratione* considers Bede's later works within the context of contemporary eschatological thought, though it is made clear that the chronological revisions of *De temporibus* were made 'in the interests of what he [Bede] saw as historic accuracy'.¹⁶³ Wallis thus demonstrates that different motivations lay behind Bede's first attempt to restructure world history and his subsequent attempts to justify the innovative new framework (a subtlety of analysis not evident in Landes's article).

Bede chose to use the Hebrew data as the basis for the *Chronica minora* because he was convinced that the Vulgate was the superior scriptural authority. The shortened duration of world time was a by-product of Bede's choice, rather than a motivating factor behind his decision to jettison the Septuagint data. Bede's faith in Jerome's translation was unwavering, and this remained his favoured edition of the Scriptures throughout his career. No further evidence is needed for the high regard in which the

¹⁶² Landes's methods have drawn criticism from other scholars. See, in particular, the excellent critique by Robert Markus: Markus, R. A. 2001, 'Living Within Sight of the End', in C. Humphrey and W. M. Ormrod (eds.), *Time in the Medieval World* (Woodbridge), pp. 23-34, at pp. 27-30.

¹⁶³ Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 361. A similar interpretation of Bede's first attempt at chronological revision is put forth by Blair, P. H. 1970, *The World of Bede* (London), pp. 265-8. Blair suggests: 'his own standards of scholarship persuaded him that it was better to go back to primary sources, in this case the Latin translation of the Hebrew Bible, rather than to accept without questioning figures derived at third or fourth hand'.

Vulgate text was held at Bede's monastery than the *Codex Amiatinus*, one of three magnificent pandects produced at Wearmouth-Jarrow in Bede's lifetime.¹⁶⁴ In a sense, Bede's decision to use the Hebrew data was pre-empted by Augustine, who argues in *De civitate Dei* that where the Septuagint and Hebrew data differs, the latter ought to be preferred in matters of chronology.¹⁶⁵ Augustine's view represents an important scholarly premise that would be fully realised in 703 when Bede produced *De temporibus*. Once Jerome's Vulgate became readily available and an established scriptural authority in the West, the decision to incorporate its data into a world chronicle was a natural development. The resulting chronology was seen as radical by some of Bede's contemporaries, but basing a world chronicle upon the 'Hebrew truth', rather than the textually-corrupt Septuagint, would have seemed like a logical progression to Bede. Any impact that Bede's AM III chronology had in countering existing popular eschatological belief was, at least when it was initially conceived, largely unintentional on his part. The chronological revisions of *De temporibus* should be considered as a manifestation of two of Bede's scholarly concerns: an interest in reckoning time, combined with an unwavering belief that Jerome's Vulgate was the most accurate scriptural translation available.

¹⁶⁴ As the oldest extant complete version of the Latin Vulgate, the *Codex Amiatinus* is an important witness to the Vulgate text. It was one of three editions of the complete Bible commissioned by Abbot Ceolfrith. The *Codex Amiatinus* was produced at Wearmouth-Jarrow and it was intended to be a gift for Pope Gregory II. The format and layout of the *Codex Amiatinus* was evidently modelled on the now-lost *Codex Grandior* (a complete version of the *Vetus Latina* edition of Bible that was closely associated with Cassiodorus). On the *Codex Amiatinus*, see: Meyvaert, P. 1996, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the *Codex Amiatinus*', *Speculum* 71, 827-83; Bruce-Mitford, R. L. S. 1967, *The Art of the Codex Amiatinus* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow). On the relationship between the *Codex Amiatinus* and the *Codex Grandior*, see Lapidge, M. 2006, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 28-9.

¹⁶⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 15.13: 'I should be in no way right to doubt that, when some divergence is found as between the two versions such that they cannot both be a true record of established fact, we should believe the original language rather than versions made by translators into another tongue'. Passage cited in translation from: Dyson, R. W. 1998, trans. *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans* (London), p. 659. Bede twice draws upon this chapter of *De civitate Dei* in defence of his revised chronology: *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 10; *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 135-44.

Chapter 2: The *Epistola ad Pleguinam*

Introduction

The final line of *De temporibus* is a brief statement concerning the amount of time left in the sixth world age: ‘The remainder of the sixth age is known only to God’.¹⁶⁶ This remark is entirely in line with traditional Christian thought; statements of this nature had been made by many of the Church fathers.¹⁶⁷ Bede did not discuss future time or the end of time in *De temporibus*, though he would come to provide an extended discussion of these themes in the final five chapters of *De temporum ratione*.¹⁶⁸ The short statement cited above is the only reference to future time in *De temporibus*, aside from a similar comment in chapter sixteen that the sixth age is not fixed according to any number of times or generations.¹⁶⁹ The four-line poetic preface to *De natura rerum*, which should be considered as applicable to *De temporibus* as well,¹⁷⁰ could also be relevant in this context. In the final part of the quatrain, the reader is urged to focus upon the heavenly kingdom when studying ‘the broad periods of the fragile age’: ‘You who read the stars, I beseech you, look with fixed mind above to the everlasting day’.¹⁷¹ Bede was concerned by those who sought to predict fate according to the stars, and his direct plea against this practice here echoes the frequent warnings about astrologers (*‘mathematici’*) that

¹⁶⁶ *De temporibus*, 22, line 80: ‘Reliquum sextae aetatis Deo soli patet’.

¹⁶⁷ The final line of *De temporibus* corresponds closely to closing remarks in both of Isidore of Seville’s world chronicles (it is particularly close to the final line of Isidore’s own *Chronica minora*). Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 5.39; *Chronicon*, 418.

¹⁶⁸ *De temporum ratione*, 67-71. It is likely that Bede’s ideas concerning the future dimension of the world ages model were not fully developed by the time he published *De temporibus* in 703; this aspect of his thought was only fully formulated in the years after the Plegwine controversy. This theory is developed later in this study (see chapter 4).

¹⁶⁹ *De temporibus*, 16, lines 20-3: ‘Sexta quae nunc agitur, nulla generationum uel temporum serie certa’.

¹⁷⁰ See the discussion above, p. 26.

¹⁷¹ *De natura rerum*, preface, lines 5-6: ‘Tu fixa obsecro perennem / Qui legis astra, super mente tuere diem’. For the full quatrain, see above p. 26.

are found in later Bedan texts.¹⁷² The prefatory quatrain provides a strong hint that Bede may have anticipated the future misuse of his work.

Bede's concerns about the reception of his text were well grounded; his statement that the remainder of the sixth age is known only to God needed to be forcefully reiterated just five years after the publication of *De temporibus*. The *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, a letter which Bede wrote in response to criticism of the *Chronica minora*, reveals a great deal about Bede's eschatological thought. It also presents an insight into the eschatological beliefs of Bede's contemporaries and it is a useful illustration of the intellectual environment that Bede was working in. The editors of the *Epistola* for the modern Latin and translated editions have each produced valuable discussions of the circumstances surrounding its composition.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, there is scope for further insights to be made in this area. The *Epistola ad Pleguinam* attests to a number of significant traditions relating to eschatology, time and chronology that were circulating in Bede's day, and these are worthy of a full analysis in the current chapter. It is necessary to reconstruct the events that prompted Bede to compose the *Epistola*, and consider Bede's immediate response to the criticism that he received.

Origins of the heresy allegation

Following the publication of *De temporibus* in 703, Bede was subjected to an allegation of heresy. The circumstances surrounding this allegation must be

¹⁷² For example, see *De temporum ratione*, 3, lines 34-42. On *mathematici* who seek to predict fate according to the position of the stars, Bede states: 'Let us see to it that these things are avoided, because such observance is futile and alien to our faith (*Quae, quia uana et a nostra fide aliena est obseruatio, neglecta ea uideamus*').

¹⁷³ Jones's edition of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* is published in CCSL volume 123C (Turnhout, 1975), pp. 612-6. This is a reprint of the text from Jones, C. W. 1943, ed. *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, pp. 307-15. See pp. 132-5 and 171-2 of the latter edition for discussion of the *Epistola* (though see note 178 below on an error in Jones's account). Jones also comments on the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* in his article of 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', at 194-5. An English translation of Bede's letter is published as appendix 3 in Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 405-15. For comment, see her introduction, pp. xxx-xxxi and the notes to chapter 66, pp. 353-66.

reconstructed from the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, a letter written by Bede in defence of his orthodoxy which survives in five medieval manuscripts.¹⁷⁴ The *Epistola* informs us that Plegwine was a monk who was connected in some way to Bishop Wilfrid.¹⁷⁵ The opening words of the *Epistola* explain that a messenger from Plegwine's monastery had recently visited Bede. The messenger had informed Bede of an allegation of heresy that had been made against him in Plegwine's presence. The allegation was connected to the chronological framework of the *Chronica minora*; Bede was accused of denying that Christ had come in the flesh in the sixth age.¹⁷⁶ The date of this episode is firmly fixed to the year 708, as Bede relates that *De temporibus* had been written five years previously.¹⁷⁷

It is not known precisely who was behind the heresy allegation. In the letter's closing paragraph, Bede asks Plegwine to present the *Epistola* to a common acquaintance of theirs named David, so that David may present his case before Bishop Wilfrid. David's role in the controversy has sometimes been misunderstood,¹⁷⁸ but the final paragraph of the *Epistola* makes it clear that he was not responsible for the heresy allegation. Bede wants David, who is referred to as 'our religious and most learned

¹⁷⁴ The most up to date list of manuscripts of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* can be found in Stevens, W. M. 1985, *Bede's Scientific Achievement*, p. 36. The three earliest manuscripts were consulted by Jones for his Latin edition of the text.

¹⁷⁵ This is made clear in the letter's final paragraph, where Plegwine is urged to petition a certain David to present Bede's case before Wilfrid, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 17.

¹⁷⁶ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 1, lines 8-10.

¹⁷⁷ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 3, lines 32-3. On the date of *De temporibus*, see above p. 23.

¹⁷⁸ Jones originally thought that David was Bede's accuser: Jones, C. W. 1943, ed. *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, pp. 132-5. This mistake has been repeated in some subsequent scholarship, notably: Bolton, W. F. 1967, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, vol. I, p. 150; Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', p. 175. The confusion surrounding David's role in the Plegwine episode was cleared up in a short essay by Schaller, D. 1973, 'Der verleumdete David: Zum Schubkapitel von Bedas *Epistola ad Pleguinam*', in A. Önnertfors, J. Rathofer and F. Wagner (eds.), *Literatur und Sprache im europäischen Mittelalter: Festschrift für Karl Langosch zum 70. Geburtstag* (Darmstadt), pp. 39-43. For the correct interpretation, see further: Stevens, W. M. 1985, *Bede's Scientific Achievement*, p. 36; Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 415, note 46.

brother (*religioso ac doctissimo fratri nostro*)', to assist in clearing his name.¹⁷⁹ The link between the heresy allegation and Bishop Wilfrid is intriguing. Though it would be unwise to follow Jones's suggestion that Wilfrid himself might ultimately have been behind the allegation,¹⁸⁰ some historians have wondered whether the Plegwine episode coloured Bede's portrayal of Wilfrid in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.¹⁸¹ This is not the place to discuss such matters, and it will suffice to note that the accusation was originally made in Wilfrid's presence without apparently receiving censure or correction from the bishop.¹⁸²

It has often been assumed that the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* was directed towards Hexham,¹⁸³ but this assumption is not necessarily secure. The letter itself does not mention Hexham. All that is certain is that Bede expected his addressee to have access to David, and that David would have the opportunity to present Bede's case to Wilfrid. Nothing is known about David or Plegwine aside from what can be gleaned from Bede's letter, so it is not possible to link these names to a particular monastic foundation. By 708, Wilfrid had links in numerous different areas of Anglo-Saxon England which he had formed during his turbulent career and various periods of exile.¹⁸⁴ That said, the allegations against Bede probably originated in Northumbria. Wilfrid spent his final years in the kingdom acting as bishop of Hexham and abbot of

¹⁷⁹ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 17, lines 309-10.

¹⁸⁰ Jones raises this idea in 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', at 195.

¹⁸¹ For example, see: Campbell, J. 1966, 'Bede', pp. 177-9.

¹⁸² Bede makes it clear that the heresy allegation was originally made in Wilfrid's presence, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 17, lines 312-3.

¹⁸³ The frequent repetition of the idea that Plegwine was a monk of Hexham in secondary scholarship derives from Plummer's account of the *Epistola in Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, p. cxlvi. Tristram assumes that Plegwine is 'einen Mönch zu Hexham', Tristram, H. L. C. 1985, *Sex aetates mundi*, p. 27. See also: Bolton, W. F. 1967, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, vol. I, p. 150; Blair, P. H. 1970, *World of Bede*, p. 267; Brown, G. H. 1996, *Bede the Educator* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow), p. 10.

¹⁸⁴ The *Vita Wilfridi* reminds us that Wilfrid possessed monasteries in Mercia right up until his death, Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 64. Wilfrid had also founded a monastery at Selsey (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.13). On the life and career of Bishop Wilfrid, see the various contributions to the volume edited by Kirby, D. P. 1974, *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham* (Newcastle upon Tyne).

Ripon. By 708 Wilfrid was an old man (he died shortly after the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* was written). It seems likely that Wilfrid would have spent most of his old age in the monasteries of Hexham and Ripon after these foundations had been returned to him at the Synod of Nidd in 706.¹⁸⁵

Either one of these communities are plausible locations for the origin of the defamatory remarks made against Bede. Stephen of Ripon's *Vita Wilfridi* gives the impression that Wilfrid spent a great deal of time at Ripon shortly before his death. It is entirely logical that this hagiographical text, produced at Ripon to promote Wilfrid's cult, would emphasise the subject's links with the author's home community in the final years of his life.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the evidence of the *Vita Wilfridi* is strong. When Wilfrid falls ill shortly before his death, Stephen relates that the bishop's most faithful friends were summoned to Ripon rather than Hexham for a meeting.¹⁸⁷ After concluding this meeting, Stephen states that Wilfrid immediately set off for his final journey (Ripon is therefore the implied departure point).¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, Wilfrid's body is returned to Ripon after his death en route to Rome.¹⁸⁹ The case for Hexham is supported by Bede's subsequent attempts to develop the eschatological dimension of the world ages doctrine in works dedicated to Acca, Wilfrid's successor as bishop of Hexham. This will be discussed in detail in chapter four, below, but for now it is sufficient to note that an expanded world ages framework features in several biblical commentaries which were composed for Acca in the years following the Plegwine controversy. Bede's expansion of the controversial chronological framework in the

¹⁸⁵ Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 60.

¹⁸⁶ On the contrasting accounts of Wilfrid's life by his biographer and Bede, see: Kirby, D. P. 1983, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the Life of Wilfrid', *The English Historical Review* 98, 101-14; Goffart, W. 1988, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton), pp. 235-328.

¹⁸⁷ Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 63.

¹⁸⁸ Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 64.

¹⁸⁹ Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 66.

years after 708 might be seen as a conscious attempt to justify his theory and disseminate it amongst the Hexham community. This could, in turn, lend support to the notion that the heresy allegation originated there.

Epistola ad Pleguinam: tone and style

De temporibus represents a rare (though not unique) example of a Bedan work which was met with resistance in his own lifetime. Evidence of the contemporary reception of Bede's work comes through in the *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum*, where Bede responds to criticism directed at his first commentary on Acts.¹⁹⁰ A climate of debate regarding the fate of the damned after the day of judgement is evident in the short tract *De eo quod Isaiah ait*.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, the interpretation of the evangelist symbols that Bede put forth in *Expositio Apocalypseos* is known to have been challenged.¹⁹² These examples concern points of detail or interpretation, and they are not comparable to the heresy allegation of 708. The unnamed accuser had disputed the theoretical basis of the *Chronica minora* and directly undermined Bede's orthodoxy. The allegation was an extremely serious matter for Bede. Needless to say, he was infuriated by the suggestion that his chronological framework was heretical.

The *Epistola ad Pleguinam* is written in a direct manner which does little to conceal Bede's anger. His furious reaction to the heresy allegation is evident throughout

¹⁹⁰ For example, see Bede's exegesis of Acts 13.2 in *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum*, 13, lines 14-19. Here, Bede takes care to explain that Paul was appointed as apostle in the 13th year after the Passion. Bede is defending his earlier exegesis of the same verse: *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 13, lines 1-7. As Martin has noted, Bede's comment in the *Retractatio* suggests that the interpretation put forth in the *Expositio* had been criticised: Martin, L. T. 1989, trans. *The Venerable Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Kalamazoo), p. 122, note 1.

¹⁹¹ For a full discussion of *De eo quod Isaiah ait* and the issues that it raises, see below, pp. 225-232.

¹⁹² Bede associated Luke with an Ox, John with an Eagle, Mark with a human and Matthew with a lion: *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 5, lines 62-79. The preface to *In Lucae euangelium expositio* is made up of two letters; one from Acca to Bede and another which contains Bede's response to his bishop. Acca's letter reveals that Bede's interpretation had prompted criticism, specifically regarding the symbols assigned to Mark and Matthew. Bede's response offers a defence of his position in which he explains that he had taken his symbolic associations directly from Augustine. *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, preface, lines 68-75 and 123-217. See Jenkins, C. 1935, 'Bede as Exegete and Theologian', pp. 168-9.

this deeply personal letter. No other work from Bede's entire corpus comes close to achieving a similar tone. The uncompromising prose style of the *Epistola* has been compared by some scholars to the forceful tone evident in several of St Jerome's works.¹⁹³ In the opening paragraph, Bede describes his reaction at hearing of the accusation against him. He remarks: 'I confess I was aghast (*exhorruui*); blanching (*pallens*), I asked of what heresy I was accused'.¹⁹⁴ Bede was anxious to clear his name. He wrote to Plegwine just two days after he had heard about the heresy allegation from the unnamed messenger.¹⁹⁵ Bede's anger is evident in the harsh vocabulary employed throughout the letter. Though he is courteous to Plegwine, addressing him with due reverence throughout,¹⁹⁶ Bede does not hide his contempt for the unnamed accuser. Bede states that he has fallen victim to the abusive talk of the foolish.¹⁹⁷ He urges Plegwine to encourage David to expel the 'madness of spirit (*fuorem spiritus*)' from the brother responsible for the allegation.¹⁹⁸

Alan Thacker has suggested that Bede's incensed tone in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* might be explained by his high social status.¹⁹⁹ This is certainly an interesting way of approaching the letter. Thacker's representation of Bede as a socially grand figure fits the newly devised concept of the 'new Bede', the case for which is

¹⁹³ Roger Ray has compared Bede's style in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* with Jerome, see: Ray, R. D. 1987, 'Bede and Cicero', *Anglo-Saxon England* 16, 1-15, at 9-12. The comparison with Jerome is also suggested by Brown, G. H. 1996, *Bede the Educator*, p. 10, and Sharpe, R. 2005, 'The Varieties of Bede's Prose', p. 354.

¹⁹⁴ *Epistola ad Pleguinam* 1, lines 7-8: 'Exhorruui, fateor, et pallens percunctabar, cuius hereseos arguerer'.

¹⁹⁵ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 1, line 1.

¹⁹⁶ Bede addresses Plegwine as his 'dearest brother' several times throughout the letter. See *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 1, line 1 ('*fratri dilectissimo*'); 14, line 239 ('*dilectissime frater*') and 16, line 286 ('*dulcissime frater*').

¹⁹⁷ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 17, line 313.

¹⁹⁸ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 17, lines 312-17. As Wallis notes, Bede is making an allusion to the biblical David's ability to calm King Saul: *Reckoning of Time*, p. 415, note 47.

¹⁹⁹ Thacker, A. 2006, 'Ordering of Understanding', pp. 37-64 at p. 40. Thacker refers to Bede's close connection with Ceolfrith and speculates about a possible familial link with Benedict Biscop. He states: 'Bede was not a humble or a modest figure. He was probably socially very grand'.

made by Thacker and his co-contributors to the *Innovation and Tradition* volume edited by DeGregorio.²⁰⁰ Whatever the reality of Bede's social status, it is likely that the mere suggestion that his chronology was heretical would have been enough to fill Bede with indignant rage. In his commentary on 1 Samuel, Bede explicitly styles himself as a defender of the faith whose responsibilities include countering heretical doctrine and keeping the Church free from error.²⁰¹ Bede's exegetical works contain innumerable references to various heresies, several of which were unlikely to have been live issues in the contemporary Anglo-Saxon Church. To question his orthodoxy would have been the gravest insult that anyone could have directed towards Bede, a scholar who was wholeheartedly committed to the observance of correct doctrine.

Background to the heresy allegation: the millennial week

The main point of dispute in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* centres upon the chronological framework that Bede had proposed in *De temporibus*. Bede was charged with denying that Jesus had come in the flesh in the sixth age.²⁰² This is a surprising allegation considering the prominence that was given to the Incarnation in the *Chronica minora*; Bede had employed the coming of Christ into the world as the starting point for the sixth world age. This point is made explicitly clear in chapter sixteen of *De temporibus*, and again in chapter twenty-two.²⁰³ The accusation is clearly based upon a misrepresentation of Bede's chronological framework, but how could such a basic point

²⁰⁰ The 'new Bede' theory is discussed in the introduction to this study, pp. 14-18.

²⁰¹ See *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 1019-41, where Bede refers to battles against heresy in commenting upon Goliath's decapitation by his own sword (1 Samuel 17.50-1). Bede styles himself as being amongst those who actively counter heretical doctrine, using the personal pronoun 'nos' and verbs in the first person plural ('conuincimus', 'deicimus'). An analogous, and even more personal passage from the Samuel commentary is highlighted by Thacker, A. 2006, 'Ordering of Understanding', pp. 44-5. Thacker comments upon *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2493-7, where Bede refers to the role that he has performed in restraining the Church from idolatry and vice in the present day.

²⁰² *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 1, lines 8-10.

²⁰³ *De temporibus*, 16, lines 16-17; 22, lines 2-6.

of dispute have arisen? To understand the allegation, and Bede's response to it, the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* must be appreciated within the wider context of contemporary thought regarding time, chronology and eschatology. In dismantling the charge against him, Bede highlights erroneous views that he supposes are held by his unnamed accuser. A variety of interesting eschatological ideas are mentioned, and these merit close analysis. Before considering them in detail, it is first necessary to sketch the background to the beliefs that Bede vehemently refutes.

Bede's accuser has often been referred to as a 'millenarian' in contemporary scholarship.²⁰⁴ This is a problematic term which should not be used without some attempt to clarify its meaning. A wide body of scholarship now exists to cover apocalyptic and eschatological belief in the Middle Ages.²⁰⁵ The contributors to this relatively new field are yet to establish consistent agreed meanings for key words such as 'millenarianism' or associated terms such as 'chiliasm'. The variety of definitions employed in different scholarly works can be confusing for students, teachers and scholars alike. Some attempts have been made to rectify this problem. Richard Landes defines a number of key terms in the appendix to his 1988 essay 'Apocalyptic Expectations'.²⁰⁶ Paula Fredriksen, another leading contributor to this field, does likewise in an article published in 1991 (Fredriksen bases her definitions on those proposed by Landes).²⁰⁷ However, not all scholars provide specific definitions in the manner of Landes and Fredriksen. It is important to offer a clear and concise definition

²⁰⁴ For a recent example of this see Ray, R. D. 2006, 'Who Did Bede Think He Was?', pp. 20-1.

²⁰⁵ For an overview of recent scholarship in this field, see the Introduction to this thesis, above pp. 6-12.

²⁰⁶ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', pp. 205-8. See also Landes, R. 2000, 'The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern (Examining the Dynamics, Power and Emotional Impact of Eschatological Fervor in Western European Chronography)', *Speculum* 75, 97-145 at 101.

²⁰⁷ Fredriksen, P. 1991, 'Apocalypse and Redemption', 168, note 3.

of a term such as ‘millenarianism’ so that it can be used in a consistent manner throughout the remainder of this study without causing confusion.

For Landes and Fredriksen, ‘millenarianism’ has specific connotations with an anticipated period of joy on earth. Though the term implies a thousand-year period of heavenly reward,²⁰⁸ so far as these scholars are concerned the most important aspect of millenarianism is that heavenly rewards will be received on earth by humans living in the flesh.²⁰⁹ This is an important theoretical tradition which derives from the account of the thousand-year reign of the saints in Revelation 20.1-6. Bede does not explicitly discuss the concept of an earthly kingdom of the saints in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. If the definitions of Landes and Fredriksen are followed strictly, then we cannot be entirely confident of labelling the anonymous accuser a millenarian. Of course, the person behind the allegation may well have been sympathetic to such notions, but it is impossible to establish this by using the evidence of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* alone.

Two major theoretical traditions need concern us here: the ‘millennial week’ and the ‘sabbatical millennium’. The millennial week is a significant tradition which became part of popular religious folklore in the early Christian and medieval periods.²¹⁰ The concept derives from mutated interpretations of two biblical passages. The first passage is found in Psalm 90. It describes how for God a thousand years pass like a day:

²⁰⁸ The term ‘millenarianism’ derives from ‘*mille*’, the Latin word meaning ‘thousand’. Similarly, ‘chiliasm’ derives from the Greek word for ‘thousand’. St Augustine, in *De civitate Dei*, 20.7, uses the terms ‘millenarian’ and ‘chiliast’ interchangeably: Kleist, A. J. 2003, ‘Influence of Bede’s *De temporum ratione* on Ælfric’, pp. 88-9, notes 34-5.

²⁰⁹ Landes, R. 1988, ‘Apocalyptic Expectations’, p. 206: ‘By millenarianism I mean a belief that the final events will usher in a reign of Peace, Justice and Plenty here on Earth and that salvation for the Just will be collective and its rewards experienced while living in the flesh’. Landes uses ‘chiliasm’ to denote forms of millenarianism that are specifically linked to thousand-year kingdoms. Compare: Fredriksen, P. 1991, ‘Apocalypse and Redemption’, 168.

²¹⁰ The term ‘millennial week’ is employed throughout Landes’s article ‘Apocalyptic Expectations’, though see especially pp. 143-4.

‘For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by.’²¹¹ An analogous passage is found in the second epistle of Peter: ‘With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day’.²¹² The idea of a day being the equivalent of a thousand years in the sight of the Lord became attached to the creation story, in which God made the world in the course of a single week. The result was a belief that can be termed the ‘millennial week’ whereby world time is equated with six millennia. If each day of God’s labour is equivalent to a thousand years then the world can be expected to last for a total of 6000 years.

The sabbatical millennium is an important concept which is closely connected to the millennial week. It is a form of millenarianism in the specific sense defined by Landes and Fredriksen. The sabbatical millennium associates the seventh day of creation, God’s day of rest, with an extended period of rest for mankind on earth. St Augustine is known to have favoured this belief early in his career but he came to drop the scheme entirely and mount a forceful campaign against it.²¹³ The sabbatical millennium is not amongst the beliefs that Bede counters in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, though he does address the issue in chapter sixty-seven of *De temporum ratione*.²¹⁴ Bede introduces his critique of the sabbatical millennium by using past tenses to refer to those who adhered to the doctrine.²¹⁵ In contrast, he refers to the millennial week in the

²¹¹ Psalms 90.4.

²¹² 2 Peter 3.8.

²¹³ For Augustine’s early belief in the sabbatical millennium, see *Sermo* 259 (composed circa 393 CE), and the comments of Cranz, F. E. 1954, ‘The Development of Augustine’s Ideas on Society before the Donatist Controversy’, *The Harvard Theological Review* 47, 255-316, at 271-2. Augustine refers to his former belief in the sabbatical millennium in *De civitate Dei*, 20.7. Augustine’s change of heart was inspired by his revulsion at the contemporary practices of the Donatists. His main objections to the concept were: the emphasis that it placed on earthly, as opposed to spiritual rewards and the materialistic nature of the speculation that it encouraged. For further discussion, see: Ladner, G. B. 1959, *The Idea of Reform*, pp. 224-5; Fredriksen, P. 1991, ‘Apocalypse and Redemption’, 160-8; Kleist, A. J. 2003, ‘Influence of Bede’s *De temporum ratione* on Ælfric’, pp. 88-91.

²¹⁴ *De temporum ratione*, 67, lines 34-52. Bede states that the sabbatical millennium is a dangerous concept and he maintains that such beliefs are ‘heretical and frivolous (*heretica ... et frivola*)’.

²¹⁵ *De temporum ratione*, 67, lines 34-9.

same chapter as if he perceives it to be a live contemporary issue (Bede uses a number of verbs in the present tense to warn that no one should pay attention to those who advance such a theory).²¹⁶ Chapter sixty-seven of *De temporum ratione* suggests that contemporary belief in a millennial week was a live issue in Bede's lifetime, something which is not necessarily also true of the sabbatical millennium.

For the time being, it will suffice to limit ourselves to the specific theoretical tradition which has relevance for Bede's response to the heresy accusation of 708. The rather rudimentary notion of a millennial week dates back as least as far as the *Epistle of Barnabas*. The *Epistle* is a tract written in Greek which was widely circulated in the early years of the Church. It hovered on the edge of the New Testament canon but never became fully accepted.²¹⁷ The author proposes a simplistic notion that the world will endure for 6000 years based upon an amalgamation of the scriptural passages cited above:

Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, 'He finished in six days'.²¹⁸ This implies that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. And He Himself testifies to this, saying, 'Behold, today will be as a thousand years'. Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished.²¹⁹

The concept of the millennial week is based upon a crude equation of historical periods and millennia, yet simplicity was its greatest asset. One might assume that the advent of more sophisticated chronological studies would have discouraged the linking of

²¹⁶ *De temporum ratione*, 67, lines 23-34.

²¹⁷ Browning, W. R. F. 1996, *Oxford Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 36.

²¹⁸ This is an allusion to Genesis 2.2.

²¹⁹ *Epistle of Barnabas*, 15.4. Translation taken from Lake, K. 1912, trans. *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I (London), pp. 395-7 (with slight modification of Lake's archaic English).

historical periods with thousand-year eras. However, as Landes demonstrates, the works of the earliest Christian chronographers only served to encourage this theoretical tradition.²²⁰ For example, the Eusebian AM II chronology dated the Incarnation of Christ to the early years of the sixth millennium (the date popularised by Jerome was *annus mundi* 5199).²²¹ When combined with a six-part model for historical periodisation such as Augustine's six world ages, legitimate works of chronology such as Eusebius's *Chronici canones* could easily (if unintentionally) fuel belief in a millennial week. If the Incarnation of Christ, the starting point for the sixth historical period, can be dated to the early sixth millennium, then it is not difficult to appreciate how orthodox texts might have been misinterpreted to endorse the concept of the thousand-year age.²²²

Bede stood accused of denying that Jesus had come in the flesh in the sixth age. If the chronological framework of the *Chronica minora* is considered within the context of a millennial week, then it is possible to see how such an allegation came about. This criticism of the *Chronica minora* makes sense if the accuser's perception of chronological time was rooted in a belief that each era of history must last approximately 1000 years. It is worth reconsidering the radical nature of Bede's AM III chronology. Bede shaved over 1200 years off the total amount of time that was thought to have elapsed since the creation of the world. The Incarnation of Christ was given a revised *annus mundi* date of 3952. Bede's revolutionary new framework for world history shattered the notion of the thousand-year age. By placing the Incarnation at the end of a fourth millennium of historical time, Bede, in the mind of his critics, had

²²⁰ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', pp. 141-4.

²²¹ See the discussion of Eusebius and Jerome above, pp. 39-40.

²²² Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 359: 'when the schema of the six ages is laid over this [*annus mundi*] chronology, it immediately suggests that each of the six world ages is about 1000 years long'.

effectively denied Christ's coming in the sixth historical era. It is known that like Bede, the seventh-century writer Julian of Toledo was also engaged in debates concerning chronology and eschatology. Julian was compelled to respond to Jewish criticisms of his work, and C. W. Jones has drawn parallels with the situation that Bede found himself in when facing the heresy allegation of 708.²²³ Though Julian and Bede's situations are not entirely comparable, it seems that both men encountered resistance primarily because of an enduring association of historical eras and millennia in the minds of their contemporaries.

So far as Bede was concerned, the objections to his chronological framework were a result of the fanciful traditions of the uneducated. Bede considered himself to have been slandered 'by lewd rustics (*a lascivientibus rusticis*)'.²²⁴ The *Epistola ad Pleguinam* offers an extended justification of the *Chronica minora* which draws upon several patristic authorities. In doing so, Bede makes reference to a number of eschatological traditions that were circulating amongst his contemporaries. These will be considered in detail below, but it is important to note that one of the traditions that Bede refers to is a 'vulgar opinion' that the apocalypse will come in the year 6000.²²⁵ Bede evidently believed that this notion was closely connected to the anonymous accuser's criticism of the *Chronica minora*. If the orthodox AM II date for the Incarnation is added to the 708 years that had elapsed since Christ, the year 6000 was reckoned at being less than a hundred years away from the present at the time when the

²²³ Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 194. See also Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', pp. 171-4.

²²⁴ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 1, line 6. Bede again refers to '*rustici*' in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, see paragraph 15, line 262. The term *rustici* is discussed below, pp. 70-71.

²²⁵ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 14, lines 238-41: 'On the subject of times and years, I warn your simplicity, dearest brother, lest seduced by vulgar opinion you should expect that this present world will endure 6000 years, as it were (*Haec inter ea quam de temporibus et annis sermo est, tuam simplicitatem, dilectissime frater, admoneo ne opinione uulgari seductus quasi sex annorum millia speres saeculum praesens esse duraturum*)'. Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 412.

heresy allegation was made.²²⁶ Of course, Bede's detractors might not have been skilled chronographers and they may have been entirely ignorant of Eusebius's chronological framework. Their criticism of Bede could have arisen from a simplistic understanding of the millennial week. To those who believed that the apocalypse could be expected to arrive around *annus mundi* 6000, whether they had a sophisticated appreciation of the AM II chronology or not, Bede's chronological revisions effectively moved the present day more than a thousand years away from the all-important target year.

Bede's defence of the AM III chronology

As Bolton has noted, the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* itself is almost as long as *De temporibus*, the tract that it defends.²²⁷ Bede begins by repeating exactly what he had written concerning the world ages five years previously in *De temporibus*. He reproduces the entirety of chapter sixteen (*De mundi aetatibus*) and he cites the figures for each world age as they were given in the *Chronica minora*.²²⁸ Bede proceeds to discuss Eusebius's chronological work. Bede refers to Eusebius respectfully, calling him 'erudite' and 'worthy of praise'.²²⁹ Despite this reverence for his predecessor, Bede offers a critical appraisal of Eusebius's work. According to Bede, Eusebius used the Hebrew data to correct the number of generations in his chronology but he did not also amend the number of years. Bede concludes his appraisal of Eusebius with a succinct

²²⁶ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', pp. 174-8. Jerome popularised 5199 AM II as the traditional date for the Incarnation in the West. 708 years had elapsed since Christ when the heresy allegation was made. The sum of these two figures is 5907. The year 6000 AM II was thus expected to fall within the next century or so.

²²⁷ Bolton, W. F. 1967, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, vol. I, p. 151.

²²⁸ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 4-5.

²²⁹ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 6, lines 98-102: 'Haec sunt quae iuxta fidem sacrae historiae mihi meis quae rogantibus strictim et simpliciter ut credidi et sensi abbreviare curavi, nequaquam chronographo tam erudito tantis quae laudibus digno contradicens in his dumtaxat in quibus ipse diuinae scripturae contrarius non est'. Bede does not directly refer to Eusebius by name here, but it is clear that Bede is discussing his work. Bede offers further comment on Eusebius in *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 16, lines 303-8. Bede commends Eusebius's rhetorical abilities and refers to him as a 'praiseworthy man (*laudabilem virum*)'.

critical remark: ‘Thus observing neither road, he proceeded by the way he wished’.²³⁰ Bede is making the point that Eusebius did not follow the Septuagint or Hebrew figures faithfully. In contrast, his own chronology was based on a policy of unwavering adherence to the Hebrew Truth. It is clear that that the *Chronica minora* was the product of a great deal of chronological research. The Latin edition of Eusebius’s *Chronici canones* had evidently received close scrutiny in the course of its preparation.

Many of the principles of the ‘new Bede’ theory are apparent in Bede’s critique of the *Chronici canones*.²³¹ Bede is challenging Eusebius, a well established Church father whose chronological work was further legitimised in the medieval west through the weighty endorsement of St Jerome. When criticised by his contemporaries, Bede’s reaction was to undermine the theoretical basis of Eusebius’s chronological calculations and staunchly defend his own. This is all the more significant when one considers that the Plegwine controversy arose relatively early in Bede’s authorial career. By 708 Bede had produced a very small portion of the extensive catalogue of works that would establish his reputation as the leading theological authority of his era. The completed versions of the overwhelming majority of Bede’s exegetical works can be dated with confidence to the period after 710.²³² This was the year in which Acca, the dedicatee for several Bedan texts, was ordained as bishop of Hexham following the death of Wilfrid.²³³ The critique of Eusebius demonstrates that Bede’s self-confidence as a

²³⁰ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 6, lines 105-10: ‘Sic que neutram uiam obseruans ipse qua uoluit incessit’.

²³¹ On the ‘new Bede’ theory see the introduction to this study, pp. 14-18.

²³² *Expositio Apocalypseos* is almost certainly a significant exception. This work is traditionally assigned an early date, based upon a reference to it as already completed in the preface to *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*. For further comment see p. 116 of this study. In *Cantica canticorum*, *In prouerbia Salomonis* and *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae* contain no explicit clues regarding their date. These works can only be assigned to the period before 731 (on the basis of their inclusion in Bede’s autobiographical list of works, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24). There is no compelling stylistic reason to allocate any of them to the pre-708 period of Bede’s career.

²³³ Wilfrid is often said to have died in 709 but Alan Thacker has demonstrated that this should almost certainly be revised to 710: ‘In pre-conquest England, Wilfrid was commemorated by two feasts, 12

scholarly authority (at least in matters relating to time and chronology) was established relatively early on in his career.

The *Epistola ad Pleguinam* proceeds to cite a variety of authorities in support of Bede's position. In paragraphs seven to nine Bede draws upon Jerome to explain the dating discrepancies between the Vulgate and Septuagint.²³⁴ Two citations from a tract by the Jewish historian Josephus are also referenced in support of Bede's chronology.²³⁵ Bede invokes the authority of St Augustine by reproducing two lengthy excerpts from *De civitate Dei* and a citation from one of Augustine's epistles.²³⁶ All of these authorities serve the same purpose in Bede's letter, that is: to validate his decision to favour the Hebrew data over the Septuagint figures. A succinct summary of Bede's justification for the revised chronology is offered near the end of the *Epistola*:

For you know ... by what authority I build the assertion of my computation: namely by the Hebrew Truth, recorded by Origen,²³⁷ published by Jerome, praised by Augustine, confirmed by Josephus. I have found none more learned in such matters than these.²³⁸

October and 24 April. In 709 neither date was a Thursday, the death-day which Stephen of Ripon expressly says was kept as Wilfrid's feast. Although the October date has traditionally been regarded as the main commemoration, marking Wilfrid's death or deposition, the April feast is in fact earlier - it alone occurs in the eighth- and ninth-century calendars; 24 April was a Thursday in 710, and is therefore probably the date of Wilfrid's death'. Thacker, A. 2004, 'Wilfrid [St Wilfrid] (c.634 - 709/10)', in H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford).

²³⁴ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 7-9. Wallis points out that portions of the text cited by Bede in this section of the *Epistola* are actually adapted from Augustine's *De civitate Dei*: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 410-12, especially notes 17-19.

²³⁵ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 8, lines 129-46. Bede includes two excerpts from Josephus's treatise *Contra Apionem*. On Bede's knowledge and use of Josephus, see Laistner, M. L. W. 1933, 'Bede as a Classical and a Patristic Scholar', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 16, 69-93 at 78.

²³⁶ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 10, 11, 13.

²³⁷ This is a reference to the work carried out by Origen in compiling the *Hexapla*, an edition of six ancient versions of the text of the Old Testament arranged in parallel columns.

²³⁸ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 16, lines 297-302: 'Agnoscas etiam ... qua ipse auctoritate assertionem meae computationis astruam: hebraica uidelicet veritate, per originem prodita, per hieronimum edita, per augustinum laudata, per iosephum confirmata'. Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 414.

Bede was confident that his theoretical position had substantial patristic backing and he was convinced that his innovative chronological framework was entirely justified.

Following the lengthy justification of his position in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, Bede continued to support the AM III chronology throughout the remainder of his authorial career. Bede refers to chronological issues at opportune moments in several exegetical works. For example, in his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Bede reminds the reader of his 292-year calculation for the second world age.²³⁹ In this case, Bede also includes the Septuagint figure alongside his revised calculation (just as he had done in *De temporibus*).²⁴⁰ Bede employed the Hebrew data as the basis for a second, much larger world chronicle in chapter sixty-six of *De temporum ratione*. The preface to *De temporum ratione* contains an explicit justification of this policy.²⁴¹ Bede informs the reader that his chronicle reproduces the Septuagint data alongside the Hebrew figures so that the reader can follow whichever they prefer. Nevertheless, Bede firmly pushes the Hebrew data as correct:

It is my firm judgement (which I dare say is not countered by any of the wise) that, just as the most reverend translator of this same Hebrew Truth said to those who cavilled at his work, ‘I neither condemn nor reprove the Seventy, but I prefer the apostles to all of

²³⁹ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 1, lines 2796-815. The passage in question concerns the inclusion, in Luke 3.36, of a reference to the generation of Cainan. The generation of Cainan does not occur in the Hebrew codices for the Old Testament but it does feature in the Septuagint. Bede proceeds to remind the reader of his 292-year figure for the second world age (from the Flood until the birth of Abraham). He also informs us that the figure according to the Septuagint data is 1077 years, and that certain chronographers (by which he primarily means Eusebius) reckon 942 years. The latter figure is reached by employing the Septuagint data for the second age, but omitting the generation of Cainan in line with the practice of the Hebrew Truth. This passage echoes the critique of Eusebius in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 5-6. See also, *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 160-75 (*sub anno* 1693) and *In Genesim*, 3, lines 769-83.

²⁴⁰ The *Chronica minora* gives prominence to the Hebrew data, but Bede also includes the Septuagint figures for the total number of years for each world age in which a discrepancy occurs (that is the first, second and fourth ages).

²⁴¹ *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 13-37.

them', so also shall I proceed with confidence.²⁴²

The citation is taken from Jerome's *Apologia aduersus libros Rufini*.²⁴³ Jerome wrote this tract to answer several points of criticism that had been made against his works by his former friend Rufinus. By equating his own situation with Jerome's and dismissing his detractors' concerns with similar confidence, Bede implicitly places himself alongside Jerome as a comparable authority. The position of supremacy adopted by Bede in the preface to *De temporum ratione* is revealing. It can be taken alongside the critique of Eusebius in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* as evidence of the confidence that Bede had in the weight of his own authority as a scholar.

Eschatological traditions in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*

Having established the legitimacy of his decision to favour the Hebrew data over the Septuagint figures in the *Chronica minora*, Bede proceeds to discredit a number of erroneous eschatological traditions in the remaining portion of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. The millennial week appears to have been just one of several alternative eschatological ideas circulating in Bede's day. Bede explains that all of these ideas are dangerous, illogical and heretical. The alternative contemporary traditions are addressed in paragraphs fourteen and fifteen of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. It is worth considering these sections of Bede's letter closely.

In paragraph fourteen, Bede warns the reader not to be seduced by the belief that the world will last for 6000 years.²⁴⁴ Contemporary belief in a millennial week may well have perpetuated this notion, but Bede explains that the tradition of associating the

²⁴² *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 18-22: 'Fixa autem stat mihi sententia, quam a nullo prudentium redarguendam autumo, ut, sicut reverentissimus eiusdem Hebraicae Veritatis interpres obtrectatoribus sui operis, 'Non damno', inquit, 'non reprehendo LXX; sed omnibus his apostolos praefero'. Ita et ego confidenter profitear'. Translation cited from Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 3.

²⁴³ Jerome, *Apologia aduersus libros Rufini*, 2.25.

²⁴⁴ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 14, lines 238-41.

year 6000 with the end of the world also had textual backing. The text in question is described in the following manner:

According to a book of I know not what heretic which I remember seeing as a lad, written in old fashioned script, though the day and hour of judgement cannot be known, the year can.²⁴⁵

The calculations of the unnamed chronographer are then explained. The figures are not based upon the six-part framework of the millennial week. The book in question proposed that the Incarnation had come after 5500 years. 500 years remained from then until the day of judgement, of which 300 were thought to have elapsed when the tract was written. The parable of the workers in the vineyard is cited in support of this theory.²⁴⁶ As demonstrated above, many Christian writers, not least Gregory the Great, used this parable as the basis for theories about the periodisation of history.²⁴⁷ However, the writer of the anonymous source cited by Bede interpreted the parable in an unusual way. In the parable, the workers were hired to work various portions of a twelve-hour day and those hired last, at the eleventh hour, worked only for a single hour. The author of the unnamed text associated each hour of the parable with a period of 500 years, and cited the first epistle of John to the effect that this hour will be the world's last.²⁴⁸ The anonymous author stated that the day of judgement would come to pass after 6000 years had elapsed. That is, after the completion of twelve five-hundred year periods.

²⁴⁵ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 14, lines 241-3: '.... et iuxta nescio cuius heretici librum, quem me puerum memini antiquo stilo descriptum uidisse, diem quidem et horam iudicii nesciri annum'. Translation: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 412-3.

²⁴⁶ Matthew 20.1-16.

²⁴⁷ See the discussion of Gregory the Great's five-part model for the division of universal history, above pp. 33-35.

²⁴⁸ 1 John 2.18: 'Dear children, this is the last hour'.

Levison suggested that the text that Bede was referring to might be Hilarius's *De duratione mundi*,²⁴⁹ but Jones identified it with the 'Cologne Prologue' (an identification endorsed by Faith Wallis).²⁵⁰ Bede had consulted this text at some point before 708 (the reference to his youth would suggest that several years had elapsed since he had first encountered the tract).²⁵¹ The Cologne Prologue was several centuries old by the time it came to Bede's attention.²⁵² Despite the tract's controversial subject matter, it had survived into the late-seventh century and made it into a Northumbrian monastic library where it was then consulted by Bede. Though the theory advanced in this source seems rather simplistic, it actually had a reasonably sound traditional basis. Before Eusebius developed the AM II chronology, 5500 was the popular *annus mundi* date for the Incarnation according to the AM I system associated with Hippolytus and Julius Africanus.²⁵³ The interpretation of the parable's twelve hours might seem fanciful, but the dating of the Incarnation to 5500 was probably based upon the conventions of the period in which the tract was written. In many regards, the notion of twelve periods of five-hundred years each is not dissimilar to the six thousand-year periods of the millennial week. Each theory has rounded historical eras, each associates the end of time with the year 6000 and they were both based upon misinterpretations of

²⁴⁹ Levison, W. 1935, 'Bede as Historian', in A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *Bede, his Life, Times, and Writings* (Oxford), pp. 111-51, at p. 115.

²⁵⁰ Jones, C. W. 1943, ed. *Beda Opera de temporibus*, p. 91 and p. 135; Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. lxxii, note 171 and p. 413, notes 33, 36.

²⁵¹ Bede refers to himself as a being a '*puer*' when he consulted the anonymous tract: *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 14, line 242. The precise meaning of this term is difficult to ascertain. It may variously mean 'boy' 'youth' or even 'young man'. As Bede would have been approximately thirty-five years old in 708, we can safely assume that several years would have passed since he first encountered the text, whichever meaning is intended. Bede defined '*pueritia*' as the second stage of the human life cycle in *De temporibus* (see above, p. 30). This stage follows infancy and precedes adolescence; it is the stage of life in which a human learns to speak.

²⁵² The Cologne Prologue can be dated to circa 395 AD: Jones, C. W. 1943, ed. *Beda Opera de temporibus*, p. 14.

²⁵³ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', pp. 138, 144-9.

well-known scriptural passages. Needless to say, Bede thought that the chronological theory that he encountered in the Cologne Prologue was preposterous and heretical.²⁵⁴

Having dismissed the teachings of the Cologne Prologue, Bede moves on to discuss contemporary speculation about the end of time in a more general sense. In paragraph fifteen, Bede describes the irritation that he suffered when fielding questions about this issue:

On this matter I confess I am quite grieved, and often irritated to the limit of what is permissible, or even beyond, when every day I am asked by rustics how many years are left in the final millennium of the world, or learn from them that they know that the final millennium is in progress ... For I notice that when in conversation with the brothers the occasion arises for us to dispute concerning the ages of the world, certain of the less learned ones allege that we are speaking of 6000 years, and there are those who think that this world will end at 7000 years because it unfolded in seven days.²⁵⁵

This comment suggests that oral speculation about the end of time was common in Bede's society. Clearly, the notion of the thousand-year world age had considerable backing amongst Bede's less-educated contemporaries. The questioning that Bede was subjected to was based upon two variant forms of the millennial week. One of these associated the end of time with the year 6000, the other with the year 7000 *annus*

²⁵⁴ Bede uses the verb '*deliro, delirare*' (*Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 14, line 251). This verb can be translated: 'to be mad, crazy, deranged or silly; to speak deliriously; to rave'. See, Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. 1879, *A Latin Dictionary*, p. 539. Bede refers to the author of the unnamed text as a heretic in lines 241 and 248.

²⁵⁵ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, lines 261-73: 'Vnde et ipse satis doleo, fateor, et quantum licet uel amplius irasci soleo quoties a rusticis interrogor quot de ultimo milliario saeculi restent anni. Atque contra ipsi ab illis sciscitari unde nouerunt quod nunc ultimum agatur milliarius ... Animaduerto enim quia cum sermonem facientes ad fratres incidente occasione de aetatibus saeculi disputamus, quidam simpliciorum sex annorum millia nos praedicare autumant, nec defuere qui septem annorum millibus saeculi huius statum quia et septem diebus uoluitur terminandum esse putarent'. Passage cited in translation from: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 413-4.

mundi. Bede suggests that both of these years are commonly associated with the end of time again in paragraph sixteen.²⁵⁶ These references to the year 7000 as a prospective apocalypse date are understated, making this belief seem like a variant of a more common tendency to attach significance to the year 6000. But, just as the latter notion was supported by a literary tract that was circulating in Bede's Northumbria, contemporary belief that the world would endure for 7000 years was also encouraged by textual sources. In contrast to the Cologne Prologue, which must have been several centuries old by the time it came to Bede's attention, the concept of the seven-thousand-year world was being perpetuated in near-contemporary texts. A full consideration of this literature is found in the following chapter, which considers the *Laterculus Malalianus* and the works of Aldhelm in light of the beliefs recorded in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. For now, it is necessary to point out that Bede's dismissive remarks concerning the year 7000 in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* conceal a serious reality. It will become clear that the idea that the world would endure for seven millennia was an important eschatological tradition with considerable textual support.

The *Epistola ad Pleguinam* bears witness to a variety of eschatological traditions, but a wider consideration of Bede's works reveals that he must have encountered several other ideas that do not get reflected in this source. As noted above, Bede explained and discredited the traditional millenarian concept of the sabbatical millennium in *De temporum ratione*.²⁵⁷ A similar idea is countered in Bede's commentary on 2 Peter, where Bede argues against the prospect of a thousand-year judgement day.²⁵⁸ Bede also became engaged in a debate with his own bishop regarding

²⁵⁶ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 16, lines 297-8.

²⁵⁷ See the discussion of this above, pp. 56-58.

²⁵⁸ *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam II Petri*, 3, lines 54-125. The issue of the 1000-year judgement day is discussed below, pp. 192-194.

the post-judgement fate of the damned.²⁵⁹ The cumulative impression created by the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* and Bede's wider body of work is that eschatological issues were the subject of lively discussion amongst several different groups in Bede's society.

Before concluding the present analysis of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, it is necessary to consider the significance of this source as a witness to the climate of eschatological speculation that existed in Bede's Northumbria. Bede's remark, in paragraph fifteen of the *Epistola*, that he was often troubled by *rustici* wanting to debate eschatological matters with him is revealing.²⁶⁰ So too is his statement that he was asked to discuss prospective end-time dates when conversing with monastic brethren (*fratres*).²⁶¹ Despite the term's connotations with the rural peasantry,²⁶² Bede's use of the word *rustici* cannot be taken to imply that the beliefs attached to this group represent those of the wider Northumbrian populace in this period. The entire Plegwine episode, from the original allegations to Bede's response, has a clear monastic setting. In addition to the reference to *rustici* in paragraph fifteen, Bede labels his accusers as *rustici* in paragraph one of the *Epistola*.²⁶³ As the heresy allegation arose at a meal at which Bishop Wilfrid was present, the term is unlikely to refer to peasants in this instance. The remarks about *rustici* in paragraph fifteen should be read as a disdainful reference to the perceived educational abilities of those troubling Bede with their questions (the label carrying with it connotations of simplicity and a lack of sophistication). Despite Bede's disparaging comments, the *rustici* referred to in the *Epistola* cannot have been completely uneducated. A certain amount of instruction

²⁵⁹ See the discussion of *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, below pp. 225-232.

²⁶⁰ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, lines 261-3.

²⁶¹ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, lines 268-9.

²⁶² Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. 1879, *A Latin Dictionary*, p. 1608: '*Rustici*: country people, rustics'. Bede uses the term in this context in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.22. Here, Imma claims to be a poor peasant ('*rusticum ... pauperem*') when he is captured following a battle with an enemy army.

²⁶³ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 1, line 6.

would have been needed to achieve even the most rudimentary understanding of the concepts in question.

The beliefs of the less-educated brethren that Bede makes reference to in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* may well have been shared by, or even influenced by popular traditions circulating outside of the monastic environment, but it is impossible to gauge whether or not this is the case. The *Epistola* is evidence for ‘popular’ tradition, only in so far as it reveals beliefs that were expressed amongst Bede’s fellow monks. Nevertheless, the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* presents a fascinating insight into the traditions circulating in the monastic centres of early eighth-century Northumbria. The impression that Bede gives, that his encounters with contemporary eschatological speculation were regular and frequent, might well be enhanced by a touch of hyperbole. Even so, the evidence contained within the *Epistola* is suggestive of a dynamic environment in which oral and textual traditions overlapped, and in which eschatological topics were often debated. It is now necessary to probe deeper into the textual evidence for contemporary beliefs relating to chronology and the end of time in order to fully appreciate the intellectual climate that Bede was operating in. Specifically, the next chapter will analyse the texts that may well have been responsible for promoting the year 7000 as a prospective date for the end of time in Bede’s Northumbria.

Chapter 3: The *Laterculus Malalianus* and the works of Aldhelm

Introduction

In the commentary to her translated edition of *De temporum ratione*, Faith Wallis briefly discusses an obscure text known as the *Laterculus Malalianus*. Wallis suggests that *De temporibus* might have been composed as a response to the chronological framework proposed in this work.²⁶⁴ Though it is not entirely clear whether Bede knew the *Laterculus Malalianus* directly or not,²⁶⁵ he would certainly have disapproved of its chronological framework (which, as will become clear, was based upon a variation of the millennial week). As Wallis's commentary concerns the world chronicle of *De temporum ratione*, it does not proceed to consider the relationship between the *Laterculus Malalianus* and Bede's *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. The link that Wallis makes between this source and Bede's wider work on time and chronology is nevertheless a valuable one, and one that merits considerable development. This chapter will consider the chronological framework proposed by the *Laterculus Malalianus* in detail, and proceed to assess its relevance as a parallel source for the Plegwine controversy. It will also consider the reception of the *Laterculus*'s chronological framework in the works of Aldhelm. This group of source materials represents a significant body of relevant evidence relating to Anglo-Saxon concepts of chronology and eschatology which has largely been overlooked with regards to Bede. A full consideration of this literature will help to contextualise the contemporary resistance to *De temporibus*. It will also identify further textual sources, in addition to the Cologne Prologue, which ultimately lie behind Bede's dismissive remarks concerning contemporary eschatological beliefs in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.

²⁶⁴ Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 361-2.

²⁶⁵ See the discussion of this issue below, note 292.

The *Laterculus Malalianus*

In 1936 Bernhard Bischoff discovered a manuscript in Milan which contained several biblical commentaries in Latin. Bischoff identified these texts as products of the Canterbury school. The commentaries were posthumously published in 1994 in collaboration with Michael Lapidge.²⁶⁶ The commentaries reference the views of Archbishop Theodore and Abbot Hadrian and they were seemingly prepared under their supervision. All of the texts are attributed to anonymous authors. They reveal much about the high standard of education available at Canterbury in the late seventh century. In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede states that the Canterbury school produced a selection of pupils who knew Latin and Greek as well as their own language. Several of these pupils have been identified, such as John of Beverley and Otor of Whitby.²⁶⁷ Others known to have received a Canterbury education include Aldhelm of Malmesbury, Albinus (Hadrian's successor as abbot and an important source for Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*) and Tobias, bishop of Rochester.²⁶⁸

Jane Stevenson has carried out extensive research into a rarely-studied work which is known as the *Laterculus Malalianus*. Her work (which culminated in a published edition of the text with a facing page English translation) has persuasively

²⁶⁶ The edition contains parallel Latin and English versions of the commentaries, along with extensive introductions and accompanying notes: Bischoff, B. and Lapidge, M. 1994, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge). On the Canterbury school, see also: Brooks, N. 1984, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (Leicester), pp. 94-9; Lapidge, M. 1986, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', *Anglo-Saxon England* 15, 45-72.

²⁶⁷ John later became bishop of York, and Otor became bishop of Worcester (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.3; 4.23). On the pupils of the Canterbury school, see: Bischoff, B. and Lapidge, M. 1994, *Canterbury School*, pp. 267-8; Gretsche, M. and Genuss, H. 2005, 'Anglo-Saxon Glosses to a Theodorean Poem?' in K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (eds.), *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge* (Toronto), pp. 9-46, at pp. 34-5.

²⁶⁸ On Aldhelm's life and works, see below, pp. 81-82. Bede comments that as well as possessing proficiency in Latin, Albinus 'had no small knowledge of the Greek language', *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.20. The *Historia* records that Tobias knew Latin and Greek as well as his native tongue, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23.

argued for the *Laterculus Malalianus* to be considered alongside the exegetical works as another product of the Canterbury school of Theodore and Hadrian.²⁶⁹ The text was previously thought to be Roman in origin and had attracted little attention from scholars. Stevenson states that palaeographic evidence, an anti-Irish bias,²⁷⁰ and a similar exegetical method to the Canterbury school commentaries published by Bischoff and Lapidge are all suggestive of the *Laterculus's* Canterbury origins. She even goes so far as to suggest that Theodore himself was the author of the text.²⁷¹ Many scholars, including Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, have accepted Stevenson's arguments connecting the text with the Canterbury school.²⁷² However, whilst the evidence linking the text to Canterbury is convincing, the link to Theodore himself is not.²⁷³ After outlining a collection of circumstantial points in support of her idea, Stevenson suggests that the evidence 'seems to point straight to Theodore'.²⁷⁴ There is nothing that definitively ties Theodore to the text, and the absence of alternative

²⁶⁹ Stevenson, J. 1995, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the School of Archbishop Theodore* (Cambridge). '*Laterculus Malalianus*' is an editorial title bestowed upon the text by Mommsen, who produced an edition of the text in the late nineteenth century: Mommsen, T. *Chronica minora III*, MGH Auctores Antiquissimi 13, pp. 424-37.

²⁷⁰ Two references are made to the '*Scotti*': *Laterculus Malalianus*, 1, 4.

²⁷¹ Stevenson's reasons for attributing the *Laterculus* to Canterbury, and to Theodore in particular, are expounded at length in the 'date and origin' section of the introduction to her edition of the text, '*Laterculus Malalianus*', pp. 8-20. She continues to offer support for her argument throughout the textual commentary. A condensed summary of her argument is available: Stevenson, J. 1995, 'Theodore and the *Laterculus Malalianus*', in M. Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence* (Cambridge), pp. 204-21.

²⁷² Herren is critical of Stevenson's edition but states that the *Laterculus* 'has been convincingly assigned to the circle of Archbishop Theodore': Herren, M. 1998, 'Scholarly Contacts between the Irish and the Southern English in the Seventh Century', *Peritia* 12, 24-53. Lapidge states that there is an 'indisputable link' between the Canterbury school commentaries and the *Laterculus*: Bischoff, B. and Lapidge, M. 1994, *Canterbury School*, pp. 180-2. In contrast, note the savage appraisal of Stevenson's work offered by Winterbottom, M. 1996, (Review Article) 'J. Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the School of Archbishop Theodore* (1995)', *Notes and Queries* 43, 457-9.

²⁷³ This point of view is expressed in academic reviews of Stevenson's work. See Brooks, N. 1997, (Review Article) 'J. Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the School of Archbishop Theodore* (1995)', *The English Historical Review* 112, 1227-9. Brooks states that Theodore's authorship is 'possible but not proven'. Also see Pfaff, R. W. 1998, (Review Article) 'J. Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the School of Archbishop Theodore* (1995)', *Speculum* 73, 601. Pfaff considers Stevenson's theory 'preponderant', but adds 'the case is not decisively proved'.

²⁷⁴ Stevenson herself admits that the evidence is 'essentially circumstantial', Stevenson, J. 1995, '*Laterculus Malalianus*', pp. 8-20.

candidates known to history does not necessarily mean that none existed in the first place. A pupil or colleague of Theodore's connected with Canterbury could have been responsible for the *Laterculus*, or it could have been produced as a collaborative effort. Stevenson's championing of Theodore as the text's author is based upon a hunch that is feasible but ultimately unproven. Nevertheless, Stevenson makes an important breakthrough by establishing a general connection between the *Laterculus Malalianus* and the Canterbury school.

The *Laterculus Malalianus* is a work of historical exegesis focusing on the life of Christ. It is split into two distinct parts. After the author's preface, chapters two to eleven concern the life of Jesus. These chapters are based upon the author's translation (from Greek into Latin) of book ten of John Malalas's sixth-century chronicle *Chronographia*.²⁷⁵ The remainder of the text is an original prose composition. The author explores the spiritual significance of the events described in chapters two to eleven using a number of Greek sources and an exegetical method that is largely based upon the traditions of the school of Antioch. A debt to Antiochene techniques of biblical exegesis (focusing on historical and literal, rather than the allegorical meanings of scriptural passages) is one of the main points of similarity between the *Laterculus* and the Canterbury school commentaries.²⁷⁶

In placing Christ's life within its historical context, the *Laterculus* describes an unusual seven-part system of chronological division which is based upon Malalas's

²⁷⁵ Malalas's Byzantine world chronicle is available in a Greek edition, Thurn, I. *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 35 (Berlin, 2000). An English translation has also been produced, Jeffreys, E. 1986, *The Chronicle of John Malalas: a Translation* (Melbourne). A useful collection of essays on Malalas has been published: Jeffreys, E. M., Croke, B. and Scott, R. 1990, eds. *Studies in John Malalas* (Sydney). References to the book and chapter numbers of the *Chronographia* quoted in this study follow the divisions given in the translated edition of the text by Jeffreys.

²⁷⁶ Stevenson discusses the text's exegetical method, '*Laterculus Malalianus*', pp. 31-47. See also the parallels between the Canterbury commentaries and the *Laterculus* highlighted in Bischoff, B. and Lapidge, M. 1994, *Canterbury School*, pp. 180-2.

Chronographia. Malalas's chronological endeavours have been heavily criticised by modern scholars and he has often been dismissed as naive and inept.²⁷⁷ The medieval world was similarly unimpressed with his work. The *Laterculus* is the only surviving medieval text that adopted the obscure system of chronological categorisation put forth in the *Chronographia*.²⁷⁸ The *Chronographia* conflates two traditional methods of dividing universal history into periods. The text employs the concept of the 'world week', coupled with a tripartite division of time (though Malalas treats neither chronological framework conventionally). Malalas associates the days of the creation week with the idea (expressed in Psalm 90 and 2 Peter)²⁷⁹ that a day in the sight of the Lord is as a thousand years for mankind.²⁸⁰ As discussed above in chapter two, a longstanding tradition linked these two concepts resulting in a belief that can be termed the 'millennial week'. The *Chronographia* is unusual because it stresses that the world had already progressed into a seventh millennium of time, the year 6000 *annus mundi* having long since past,²⁸¹ (although it must be noted that on occasion Malalas's text contradicts itself in muddled conflicting passages).²⁸² Malalas's unusual interpretation

²⁷⁷ For example, the following comments are somewhat typical: Vasiliev, A. A. 1958, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324-1453*, vol. I (Madison), p. 183, 'confused in content'; Jones, A. H. M. 1964, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: a Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. I (Oxford), p. 267, 'childish narrative'. Note however, the positive comments of Baldwin, B. 1989, *Roman and Byzantine Papers* (Amsterdam), pp. 616-23.

²⁷⁸ 'All other writers who drew on Malalas's work ignore this element of it'. Stevenson, J. 1995, '*Laterculus Malalianus*', p. 25.

²⁷⁹ Psalms 90.4: 'For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by'. 2 Peter 3.8: 'With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day'.

²⁸⁰ Malalas explains the analogy in a typically muddled fashion, *Chronographia*, 10.2.

²⁸¹ Malalas was keen to stress that 'the sixth millennium had been passed', *Chronographia*, 18.8. Croke has suggested that an appreciation of contemporary millenarian thought is crucial to understanding this aspect of the *Chronographia*: Croke, B. 1990, 'Malalas, the Man and his Work', in E. M. Jeffreys, B. Croke and R. Scott (eds.), *Studies in John Malalas* (Sydney), pp. 1-25, pp. 18-19. See also, Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', p. 163.

²⁸² The most complete manuscript of the *Chronographia* (Oxford, Baroccianus Graecus 182) upon which the translation by Jeffreys is based records 5533 years from Adam to the Passion (book 10, chapter 2), a figure which is completely incompatible with those given in the same manuscript at 18.8. In contrast, the *Laterculus* (itself an important witness to the text of the *Chronographia*) dates the crucifixion at 6000 years since Adam. Malalas's chronological discrepancies are discussed at length by: Jeffreys, E. M. 1990, 'Malalas' Use of the Past', in G. W. Clarke, B. Croke, A. E. Nobbs and R. Mortley (eds.), *Reading the*

of the world-week is combined with an unconventional three-part method of division. The *Chronographia* describes Peleg, son of Eber, as a historical dividing point. Peleg is said to have lived at the mid-point between Adam and Christ.²⁸³ This effectively splits history into three epochs: the two historical eras either side of Peleg and a present era that began at the Passion.

The author of the *Laterculus Malalianus* adopted Malalas's conflation of these two chronological frameworks unreservedly. Malalas's *Chronographia* is troubled by internal discrepancies and contradictory dating passages but the *Laterculus* is more straightforward. The text presents a simplistic chronological format which is internally consistent. The *Laterculus* divides pre-Passion historical time into six one-thousand year ages. These ages are split in half by Peleg, who is said to come half way between Adam and Christ.²⁸⁴ The *Laterculus* states that 3000 years separate Adam and Peleg and a further 3000 are reckoned from Peleg until the Passion.²⁸⁵ The present day falls at an undetermined point within a seventh era of history. Chapters twenty-three and twenty-four reference the passing of six millennia and declare that 'it is now the sabbath'.²⁸⁶ The seventh age began at the Passion and will continue until the end of the world. Thus the *Laterculus* presents a system, based on that found in the *Chronographia*, of six ages of pre-Passion history but seven ages in total. Each of these seven ages occurs consecutively, with the sabbath age being an era of historical time

Past in Late Antiquity (Rushcutters Bay), pp. 121-46. See also, Gelzer, H. 1967, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie*, vol. II (New York), pp. 129-32.

²⁸³ The number of years between Adam and Peleg is also subject to an internal discrepancy. *Chronographia*, 10.2 gives 2533 years and states that Peleg lived halfway between Adam and Christ. Alternatively, 2.12 states that Peleg lived 3000 years after creation. The *Laterculus* repeats the latter figure, chapter 3.

²⁸⁴ *Laterculus Malalianus*, 3.

²⁸⁵ The text states that 2967 years elapsed between Peleg and the 42nd year of Augustus Caesar (the year of the birth of Jesus). Adding the traditional figure for Christ's lifetime of 33 years gives 'a full 6000 years' from Adam to the Passion. *Laterculus Malalianus*, 3-4.

²⁸⁶ *Laterculus Malalianus*, 23: 'Sabbatum igitur nunc est'.

like any of the previous six. A diagram of the unusual chronological scheme proposed by the author of the *Laterculus Malalianus* is reproduced as item three in appendix one, below.

The chronological framework outlined in item three forms an interesting comparison with item one (an illustration of the chronological system proposed by Bede in *De temporibus*). Manifold differences exist between the two schemes. Following the practice of Isidore of Seville, Bede fixed the Incarnation of Christ as the beginning of the present age of historical time. For Bede the Incarnation was the defining moment of universal history. In contrast, in the *Laterculus Malalianus* the present age begins with Christ's Passion. Also unusual in the *Laterculus Malalianus* is the use of Peleg as an implied splitting point between the third and fourth periods of history.²⁸⁷ The idea originates from the following reference in the book of Genesis: 'Two sons were born to Eber. One was named Peleg because in his time the earth was divided'.²⁸⁸ No such prominence is given to Peleg in Bede's *Chronica minora*, and one has to look hard to find any mention of Peleg in Bede's entire body of work.²⁸⁹

The perception of the present day as occurring in a seventh 'sabbath' era is another fundamental difference between the chronological framework promoted by the *Laterculus Malalianus* and Bede's six-age system. The *Laterculus's* seven historical periods are crudely defined. They are based upon a simple equation of historical periods and millennia which has no basis whatsoever in biblical chronology. This simplistic framework stands in sharp contrast to Bede's meticulous consideration of the Hebrew data in *De temporibus*. In associating the six historical periods with six millennia, the

²⁸⁷ *Laterculus Malalianus*, 3.

²⁸⁸ Genesis 10.25.

²⁸⁹ Bede's only significant comment about Peleg ('Faleg') is found in his commentary on Genesis 10.25: *In Genesim*, 3, lines 255-7. Bede offers a short statement about the meaning of Peleg's name: 'division'.

Laterculus Malalianus all but promotes speculation concerning when the end of time can be expected to occur. Each previous historical period is said to have lasted a thousand years, with the total number of years between Adam and Christ totalling a round 6000 years. The implications for the duration of the ‘sabbath age’, the final period of history, are clear. The *Laterculus* ends with a plea for the reader not to assume that the end of time will come in the year 7000,²⁹⁰ but the impact of this plea is somewhat undermined by the text’s explicit linking of historical periods and millennia. This simplistic method for reckoning the duration of each age could certainly have encouraged a medieval audience to associate the end of time with the year 7000, even if the text does contain a rather weak statement advising against it.

The simplistic chronological system promoted in the *Laterculus Malalianus* can be connected with Bede’s comments in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* regarding contemporary end-time speculation. In dismantling the allegation of heresy made against him, Bede makes reference to several alternative ideas that he had encountered, pouring scorn upon them all. Following a detailed discussion of the Cologne Prologue, Bede comments more generally on the speculation that was rife amongst his monastic contemporaries. Bede remarks that:

... every day I am asked by rustics how many years are left in the final millennium of the world, or learn from them that the final millennium is in progress.

He continues to complain that:

²⁹⁰ In the penultimate chapter (24) the *Laterculus* somewhat belatedly stresses that the hour and day of God’s coming is known to God alone. This message is also present in the second Canterbury school commentary on the Gospels. The commentary lists seven ‘unfathomables’ which are known only to God. The seventh and last of these is ‘the days of this earth (*dies saeculi*)’. *Commentarius in Evangelia secundus*, chapter 19 (Bischoff, B. and Lapidge, M. 1994, *Canterbury School*, pp. 400-1).

Certain of the less learned ones allege that we are speaking of 6000 years, and there are those that think this world will end at 7000 years because it unfolded in seven days.²⁹¹

The *Laterculus Malalianus* provides an interesting backdrop to Bede's comments in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. The chronological framework proposed by the *Laterculus Malalianus* can be linked to the first extract quoted above. The *Laterculus* implicitly encourages the belief that the present day falls within a final, seventh millennium of historical time. The *Laterculus Malalianus* can also be linked to Bede's remark in the second citation concerning those who think that the end of the world will come in the year 7000. Only a very slight corruption of the *Laterculus* is needed in order to reach this conclusion. After all, the text promotes a chronological framework which places the present day within the seventh of seven historical periods, each of the previous six having lasted exactly a thousand years.

The *Laterculus Malalianus* is a significant parallel source to the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. The chronological framework promoted in the *Laterculus* might ultimately lie behind Bede's warning against the association of the year 7000 with the end of time in the *Epistola*. It is difficult to speculate regarding the wider impact of this text in Anglo-Saxon England due to the limitations of surviving manuscript evidence.²⁹² It has recently been suggested that the *Laterculus Malalianus* was known to Bede himself, though caution must be exercised regarding this point as the evidence is not entirely

²⁹¹ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, lines 261-73: '... quoties a rusticis interrogor quot de ultimo milliaro saeculi restent anni. Atque contra ipsi ab illis sciscitari unde nouerunt quod nunc ultimum agatur milliarium ... quidam simpliciorum sex annorum millia nos praedicare autumant, nec defuere qui septem annorum millibus saeculi huius statum quia et septem diebus uoluitur terminandum esse putarent'. Translation cited from Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 413-4.

²⁹² The *Laterculus* is preserved in just two manuscripts: Stevenson, J. 1995, '*Laterculus Malalianus*', pp. 94-113.

conclusive.²⁹³ Nevertheless, it will become clear that the influence of the *Laterculus*'s seven-age system is discernible in the works of Aldhelm, suggesting that the text was known amongst educated churchmen in Anglo-Saxon England. It is now necessary to conduct a detailed examination of this evidence.

Aldhelm of Malmesbury

The unconventional system of chronological division disseminated by the *Laterculus Malalianus* finds some interesting analogues in the work of Aldhelm of Malmesbury. Aldhelm was an older contemporary of Bede's who died circa 709.²⁹⁴ He was a high-ranking ecclesiastical figure who has been described recently as a 'culturally engaged aristocrat'.²⁹⁵ Aldhelm served as abbot of Malmesbury for many years before becoming the first bishop of Sherborne in 705.²⁹⁶ Aldhelm was an incredibly learned scholar who produced a substantial body of work, and he was the first native Anglo-Saxon to leave an extensive collection of writings. This impressive catalogue of Latin work consists of numerous poetic texts, including the *Carmina ecclesiastica* (a collection of poems intended for the dedication of churches or altars) one hundred metrical riddles or '*Enigmata*', an octosyllabic poem describing a violent storm, and the *Carmen de virginitate* (a lengthy poem on virginity). These works are complemented by

²⁹³ Siemens, J. R. 2007, 'Christ's Restoration of Humankind in the *Laterculus Malalianus*, 14', *Heythrop Journal* 48, 18-28, at notes 20 and 33. Siemens's theory rests upon a comparison between the *Laterculus Malalianus* and Bede's interpretation of the infancy narrative from the Gospel of Luke. See further: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 362, note 218. On the subject of Bede's potential knowledge of the *Laterculus Malalianus*, Wallis points out that strong links existed between Theodore and Benedict Biscop, and that Bede had access to other texts associated with the Canterbury school.

²⁹⁴ The date of Aldhelm's birth is unknown and his writings do not provide any clues. Bede records that Aldhelm died four years after becoming bishop of Sherborne in 705, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.18.

²⁹⁵ Remley, P. G. 2005, 'Aldhelm as Old English Poet: *Exodus*, Asser, and the *Dicta Aelfredi*', in K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (eds.), *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge* (Cambridge), pp. 90-108, at p. 101.

²⁹⁶ A detailed account of Aldhelm's life and ecclesiastical career is given in the first volume of the recent revised edition of the prose *De virginitate*: Gwara, S. *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis prosa de virginitate*, CCSL 124 (Turnhout, 2001), pp. 19-46. See also the recent article by Michael Lapidge: Lapidge, M. 2007, 'The Career of Aldhelm', *Anglo-Saxon England* 36, 15-69.

two prose treatises on metre, numerous letters, and a prose counterpart to the *Carmen de virginitate*. There is no reason to believe that any major work of Aldhelm's has been lost with the exception, perhaps, of some vernacular verse compositions.²⁹⁷

Bede and Aldhelm were men of a similar intellectual standing, though their literary outputs are markedly different. Although Bede was responsible for a number of poetic works, these form a relatively small portion of his total corpus and they are dwarfed by his extensive contribution to scriptural exegesis.²⁹⁸ Aldhelm does not seem to have produced any biblical commentaries or had any interest in doing so. However, like Bede, he must also have had access to a substantial library as he was very well versed in ecclesiastical and secular literature. The extensive range of Aldhelm's reading can be gauged by looking at the wide selection of authorities cited in his various works. Aldhelm had access to many of the patristic texts that had a decisive influence on Bede's exegesis. Aldhelm was well acquainted with a variety of works by Gregory the Great and St Augustine, to name but two of the major patristic authorities that are particularly relevant with regards to Bede.

Although it is a valuable source, Aldhelm's body of work was rarely studied until the 1970s despite the existence of a comprehensive edition of his works by Rudolf Ehwald.²⁹⁹ A significant reason for this neglect is the notoriously difficult Latin style that Aldhelm adopted. Aldhelm's Latin has drawn barbed comments from some modern scholars, and it has been described as 'absurd', and 'irritating'.³⁰⁰ Perhaps most notable

²⁹⁷ Mayr-Harting, H. 1991, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 214; Orchard, A. 1994, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge), p. 5.

²⁹⁸ On Bede's poetic works, see: Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow).

²⁹⁹ Ehwald, R. *Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, MGH Auctores Antiquissimi 15 (Berlin, 1919).

³⁰⁰ The opinions quoted are those of Brown, T. J. 1975, 'An Historical Introduction to the Use of Classical Latin Authors in the British Isles From the 5th to the 11th Century', *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo* 22, 237-93, at 254, 257.

is the criticism of Charles Plummer, who bemoaned Aldhelm's 'puerile pomposity'.³⁰¹ Aldhelm's Latin is characterised by an often-eccentric word order, frequent alliteration,³⁰² and the inclusion of obscure loan words. The complexity of his style is best illustrated by reference to his letter to Heahfrith, in which fifteen out of sixteen consecutive words all begin with the letter 'p'.³⁰³ Such elaborate verbosity was deliberate, and Aldhelm was able to tone down his style when necessary.³⁰⁴

Scholarly interest in Aldhelm began to gather pace in the mid 1970s following the publication of important articles by Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom on Aldhelm's written style.³⁰⁵ A major breakthrough was made in 1979 when Lapidge and Michael Herren produced a translated edition of Aldhelm's prose works. A sister volume of Aldhelm's poetic works was produced by Lapidge in collaboration with James Rosier and Neil Wright in 1985.³⁰⁶ In the introduction to the 1979 volume, Lapidge bemoaned the inadequate amount of attention that Aldhelm had previously received.³⁰⁷ In 1979 the sum total of work in this field (excepting the afore-mentioned articles by Lapidge and Winterbottom) amounted to two outdated monographs,³⁰⁸ some

³⁰¹ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. II, pp. 312-13.

³⁰² For a detailed discussion of Aldhelm's use of alliteration in his Latin poetry, see: Orchard, A. 1994, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 43-54, 112-14.

³⁰³ For comment on this letter's elaborate style, see: James, M. R. 1907, 'Latin Writings in England to the Time of Alfred', in A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (eds.), *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. I (New York), pp. 65-87. On the identity of Heahfrith, see: Cook, A. S. 1927, 'Who Was the Ehfrið of Aldhelm's Letter', *Speculum* 2, 363-73.

³⁰⁴ For example, a contrast can be drawn with the simpler Latin style adopted in his correspondence with Sigegyth. The letter to Sigegyth is reproduced in Ehwald, R. *Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 497.

³⁰⁵ Lapidge, M. 1975, 'The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature', *Anglo-Saxon England* 4, 67-111; Winterbottom, M. 1977, 'Aldhelm's Prose Style and its Origins', *Anglo-Saxon England* 6, 39-76.

³⁰⁶ Lapidge, M. and Herren, M. W. 1979, trans. *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Cambridge); Lapidge, M. and Rosier, J. L. 1985, trans. *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works* (Cambridge). The two volumes are modestly presented as cribs to Ehwald's Latin text (*Prose Works*, p. 4; *Poetic Works*, p. 4) but they achieve far more than that with comprehensive notes and scholarly discussions of each work.

³⁰⁷ *Aldhelm: the Prose Works*, pp. 1-4.

³⁰⁸ Both monographs are now over a century old: Browne, G. F. 1903, *St. Aldhelm: His Life and Times* (London); Wildman, W. B. 1905, *Life of S. Ealdhelm: First Bishop of Sherborne* (London).

commemorative lectures,³⁰⁹ an inadequate biography,³¹⁰ and a section in Bolton's *History of Anglo-Latin Literature* which contains many mistakes.³¹¹ Aldhelm has received much more scholarly attention in the last three decades. A number of essays on Aldhelm feature in the recent volume dedicated to Michael Lapidge.³¹² The proceedings of a conference to mark the anniversary of the foundation of the See of Sherborne are soon due to be published.³¹³

Aldhelm's beliefs regarding the division of universal history into periods are a complex matter and his works contain a number of unusual scattered references. It is likely that Aldhelm would have been familiar with St Augustine's six-age model of history. Aldhelm was well acquainted with various works of Augustine's, including *De civitate Dei*.³¹⁴ Henry Mayr-Harting has demonstrated that Aldhelm was heavily influenced by Isidore of Seville.³¹⁵ As discussed earlier in this study, Isidore structured his *Chronica maiora* around Augustine's theoretical world-age doctrine and he incorporated an abridged world chronicle into his *Etymologiae*.³¹⁶ Aldhelm makes a small number of references to systems of chronological division throughout his works but they are inconsistent and erratic. Despite being familiar with some of the works that were drawn upon by Bede for the compilation of *De temporibus*, Aldhelm was not

³⁰⁹ James, M. R. 1931, *Two Ancient English Scholars: St. Aldhelm and William of Malmesbury* (Glasgow); Fowler, J. 1947, *Saint Aldhelm* (Sherborne).

³¹⁰ Duckett, E. S. 1947, *Anglo-Saxon Saints and Scholars* (New York), pp. 3-97.

³¹¹ Bolton, W. F. 1967, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, vol. I, pp. 68-100.

³¹² O'Brien O'Keefe, K. and Orchard, A. 2005, eds. *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge* (London). At pp. 68-89, this volume contains an important essay by Michael Herren ('Aldhelm the Theologian') which is the first major consideration of Aldhelm's theological beliefs.

³¹³ Barker, K. and Brooks, N. P. 2009, eds. *Aldhelm and Sherborne: Essays to Celebrate the Foundation of the Bishopric* (Oxford).

³¹⁴ *De civitate Dei* is referenced in chapters 9 and 58 of the prose *De virginitate*, and again in chapter 140 of the *Epistola ad Acircium* (as part of *De pedum regulis*).

³¹⁵ Mayr-Harting, H. 1991, *Coming of Christianity*, pp. 199-204. A full list of Aldhelm's citations of Augustine and Isidore can be found in Ehwald's *Index locorum: Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 544-6.

³¹⁶ See above, pp. 40-41.

exclusively influenced by the system of chronological division that Bede considered to be orthodox.

Aldhelm mentions ages of historical time in his *Epistola ad Acircium*, a huge work made up of a number of separate parts. After addressing ‘Acircius’ (who has been identified as Aldfrith, king of Northumbria)³¹⁷ Aldhelm offers an extensive discussion of the allegorical significance of the number seven. There follows a lengthy treatise on metre, commonly known as *De metris*, and one hundred ‘riddles’ or ‘mysteries’, known as the *Enigmata*. A second metrical treatise (*De pedum regulis*) and an epilogue addressed to Acircius conclude this vast composite work.³¹⁸ The reference to historical ages is found during the opening portion of the letter which discusses the symbolic significance of the number seven. It relates how the fall of Jericho portends the future destruction of the world:

This figure of future events, understood anagogically, is shown to
portend the terrible end of the collapsing universe and the final
conclusion of fleeting life, after the seven revolutions of the ages
(*septem saeculorum voluminibus*) have been completed.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ The *Epistola* makes it clear that Aldhelm and Aldfrith were related in some way and that Aldhelm stood as sponsor at the king’s baptism. Neil Wright’s essay ‘Aldhelm, Gildas, and Acircium’ comments upon the relationship between Aldhelm and the king and suggests an interesting hypothesis as to why Aldfrith was addressed using a *sobriquet*. The essay is published for the first time as chapter 14 in Wright, N. 1995, *History and Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval West: Studies in Intertextuality* (Aldershot). On Aldfrith’s life, see Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.26, 5.15, 5.19, and the article by Ireland, C. 1996, ‘Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Learning of a Sapiens’, in K. A. Klar, E. E. Sweetser and C. Thomas (eds.), *A Celtic Florilegium, Studies in Memory of Brendan O Hehir* (Lawrence), pp. 63-77. On the date of the *Epistola ad Acircium*, see note 340, below.

³¹⁸ The *Epistola ad Acircium* is printed in its entirety by Ehwald, R. *Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, pp. 61-204. Its various parts are available in translation but they are scattered throughout the two volumes produced by Lapidge and his collaborators. The first section (on the number seven) and the closing remarks to Acircius are found in *The Prose Works*, pp. 34-47. The *Enigmata* are in *The Poetic Works*, pp. 70-94. A small selection of passages from the metrical tracts are translated by Neil Wright in an appendix to *The Poetic Works*, pp. 191-219.

³¹⁹ *Epistola ad Acircium*, 2 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 70, lines 13-15; *Prose Works*, p. 41): ‘Quae rerum figura futurarum iuxta anagogen peractis septem saeculorum voluminibus horrendum ruituri mundi

This extract is important for reconstructing Aldhelm's views on chronology and eschatology. Aldhelm uses a plural form of '*saeculum*' as his word for 'ages'. His choice of noun suggests that he is not alluding to world ages in an Augustinian sense. Though '*saeculum*' can be translated as 'an indefinitely long period, an age',³²⁰ one would expect to find Augustine's preferred word '*aetas*' as the term for 'age', rather than '*saeculum*'.³²¹ Isidore's world chronicles reproduce the specific terminology pioneered by Augustine with each period referred to as an age of the world ('*aetas saeculi* or '*aetas mundi*'). Likewise, in *De temporibus* and throughout his authorial career thereafter, Bede reproduced the distinct Augustinian language associated with the world ages doctrine.³²² This specific terminology is absent in the extract from the *Epistola ad Acircium* reproduced above. In fact, Augustinian world-age terminology is entirely absent from Aldhelm's entire body of work (with one significant exception which will be considered in due course).

It is possible that ideas similar to those set forth in the *Laterculus Malalianus* lie behind Aldhelm's reference to 'the seven revolutions of the ages' in the *Epistola ad Acircium*. Aldhelm's phrase creates an image of seven consecutive ages of pre-apocalyptic time which seems to fit the division of universal history found in the *Laterculus*. If Jane Stevenson is correct about the *Laterculus Malalianus*'s Canterbury origins then there is a strong possibility that this text was a significant influence upon

terminum et ultimam fugacis vitae clausulam portendere manifestatur'. The siege of Jericho and its destruction is described in the book of Joshua.

³²⁰ Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. 1879, *A Latin Dictionary*, pp. 1613-14.

³²¹ Augustine chose this word deliberately because it facilitated his chosen parallel with the '*aetates*' of human life. In *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, the world ages are explained as corresponding directly to the ages of human life: *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.23-4. See also *De civitate Dei*, 16.43, where a similar parallel is made between the first three world ages and the early stages of the life cycle. See the comments of Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 356.

³²² On Bede's use of the specific world age terminology which he inherited from Augustine and Isidore, see the discussion above, pp. 37-37.

Aldhelm. Considering that Aldhelm studied at Canterbury, it is possible that he would have known of the *Laterculus*, or at least have been exposed to the ideas contained within it. Indeed, Aldhelm placed great importance upon his Canterbury education, praising it whilst downplaying the importance of his previous studies.³²³ Stevenson suggests a number of points of similarity between Aldhelm's works and the *Laterculus*. There is overlap in their knowledge of relatively rare Latin sources including Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae*.³²⁴ Aldhelm and the author of the *Laterculus* both have an interest in Sibylline prophecy and Aldhelm shares the *Laterculus's* anti-Irish sentiments.³²⁵ A shared knowledge of a seven-age system of temporal division is another similarity that can be added to Stevenson's list.

Michael Herren has discussed Aldhelm's letter to Heahfrith in a recent article.³²⁶ The letter describes Theodore as engaged in a heated debate with the Irish. Aldhelm describes Theodore as a 'wild boar', surrounded by Irish students. The letter proudly references Theodore's superiority over the Irish (who are disparagingly referred to as dogs). Aldhelm states that Theodore used his knowledge of 'obscure and acute syllogisms of chronography (*chronographiae opacis acutisque syllogismis*)' to win the debate.³²⁷ Herren suggests that the *Laterculus* may offer a hint as to the nature of the conflict. The *Laterculus* makes it clear that Irish scholars had a different perception of

³²³ See the letter to Leuthere, in which Aldhelm states that he has learned so much about methods of calculation that he regards his past labour of study as being 'of little value', (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 477; *Prose Works*, p. 153). Herren suggests that the previous study being referred to is Aldhelm's education at the hands of an Irish teacher, 'Scholarly Contacts', 36-7.

³²⁴ Stevenson also discusses the author of the *Laterculus* and Aldhelm's shared use of Caelius Sedulius and Proba. '*Laterculus Malalianus*', p. 8.

³²⁵ Aldhelm is critical of the Irish in his letter to Wihtfrith (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, pp. 479-80; *The Prose Works*, pp. 154-5) and again in a letter to Heahfrith (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, pp. 488-94; *The Prose Works*, pp. 160-4). On the connections between the *Laterculus Malalianus* and Sibylline prophecy, see: Stevenson, J. 1995, '*Laterculus Malalianus*', p. 18.

³²⁶ Herren, M. 1998, 'Scholarly Contacts', 24-53.

³²⁷ *Epistola ad Ehfriðum* (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 493; *Prose Works*, p. 163).

the age of the world and the dating of Christ's lifetime.³²⁸ Herren suggests that Aldhelm could be referring to these topics in his letter.³²⁹ A significant clue is offered by Aldhelm's use of the word '*chronographia*'. Ehwald had previously assumed that this was a reference to the insular Paschal controversy.³³⁰ Herren points out that Aldhelm's Latin is ambiguous and open to alternative semantic interpretation. He argues that the word could simply mean 'chronography' in a basic sense, suggesting that the unusual chronological framework preserved by the *Laterculus* may have been the cause of Theodore's battle with the Irish. To add further weight to Herren's idea, it is perhaps significant that '*Chronographia*' was the name of the chronicle by John Malalas upon which the *Laterculus* is based. If Herren is correct to interpret the letter to Heahfrith in this way, then the letter can be taken as first hand evidence of Aldhelm's adherence to the chronological teachings of Theodore. The reference offers another link between Aldhelm and the chronological traditions of the Canterbury school.

Further reasons to link Aldhelm with the *Laterculus*'s framework for history are provided by two references in which he associates the expected duration of the world with the number 7000. The destruction of Jericho was clearly an image that conjured up eschatological ideas in Aldhelm's mind. In the prose *De virginitate*, Aldhelm states:

The precepts of the early fathers decreed that the town of Jericho with its seven-fold circling of walls represented through allegory a symbol of the world with its seven thousand ages (*cum septenis*

³²⁸ Chapter 1 of the *Laterculus* is forceful in justifying its chronological system and it anticipates criticism from the *Scotti*. See also chapter 4 in which the author states that 'the Lord appeared in 6000 years, though the Irish do not wish to concur'. It is not known what the Irish stance on this issue was but it was evidently in conflict with the unusual theory presented in the *Laterculus*.

³²⁹ Herren, M. 1998, 'Scholarly Contacts', 33-5.

³³⁰ *Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 493, note 27. This interpretation was restated in the notes accompanying the translation of the letter to Heahfrith, *Prose Works*, p. 202, note 35.

*saeculorum milibus).*³³¹

Aldhelm follows this with a denunciation of ostentatious dress, which he considers unsuitable in ‘a world which is to be destroyed’. The reference to the seven thousand ages corresponds to a sentence from the opening section of the *Epistola ad Acircium*. Aldhelm begins his discussion of the allegorical significance of the number seven by discussing sevenfold intervals of time. This division of time came to be sacred when God created the world in the course of a single week. Aldhelm associates the expected duration of the world with the number 7000 for a second time:

The hoped-for rest of future promise and the perennial felicity of the blessed life, which shall be paid to each and every one according to the amount of his merits, is granted to the innocent and those free from the offence of sin only through a sevenfold increment of times, one thousand in number (*septena per temporum incrementa millenario numero*).³³²

Aldhelm offers a vision of universal history that splits time into seven eras, his use of the word ‘increments (*incrementa*)’ implying that the periods are to follow each other consecutively.³³³ The extract specifies that each era is to be associated with the number 1000. Aldhelm’s belief that the end of time will come after a ‘sevenfold increment of times, one thousand in number’ further ties him to the ideas set forth in the *Laterculus Malalianus*. Aldhelm’s comment echoes the *Laterculus*’s simplistic system of temporal

³³¹ *De virginitate prosa*, 55 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 314, lines 4-6; *Prose Works*, p. 124): ‘Per allegoriam vero oppidum Hiericho cum septiformi murorum obstaculo tipum mundi cum septenis saeculorum milibus designasse priscorum patrum decreta sanxerunt’.

³³² *Epistola ad Acircium*, 2 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 63, lines 3-6; *Prose Works*, p. 35): ‘... verum etiam optata futurorum requies promissorum et beatae perennis vitae felicitas, quae singulis quibusque meritorum emolumentis recompensabitur, non nisi septena per temporum incrementa millenario numero, sequestrata reproborum caterva, insontibus et piaculorum crimine carentibus tribuitur’.

³³³ ‘*Incrementum*: increase, augmentation, increment, addition’. Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. 1879, *A Latin Dictionary*, pp. 928-9.

division which is based upon seven historical periods of a thousand years each. The extract from the *Epistola ad Acircium* implies that Aldhelm considered ages and millennia to be linked. Seeing as the *Laterculus*'s loose method of reckoning is based upon this very same association, the similarities that it shares with the passage from Aldhelm's *Epistola* are clear to see.

The extracts from Aldhelm's works concerning chronological division that have been considered so far are best explained with reference to the *Laterculus Malalianus*. Aldhelm's reference to a seven-age system of temporal division and his association of historical eras and millennia are unusual concepts. The system implicit in the references from Aldhelm's work considered above stands in marked contrast to the traditional Augustine-Isidore framework that formed the basis for Bede's first world chronicle in *De temporibus*. The *Laterculus Malalianus* provides a satisfactory context for the appearance of such ideas in Aldhelm's work. Unfortunately it is extremely difficult to discern the precise nature of the relationship between the *Laterculus* and Aldhelm because a firm date cannot be established for the *Laterculus*. This makes it impossible to confirm whether Aldhelm would have known it in its complete form, or indeed whether he would have known it at all.³³⁴ The most likely scenario is that Aldhelm's works and the *Laterculus* both reflect the unusual chronological teachings of the Canterbury school. Though there is nothing that indisputably ties Aldhelm's works to the *Laterculus*, enough parallels are evident to suggest that a 'family resemblance'

³³⁴ The difficulties inherent in testing the two sources against each other are highlighted by their respective dating of Christ's ministry. Aldhelm states that it began in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar and that the ministry began 475 years (or 490 years according to the Hebrew calculations) after the twentieth year of the reign of the Persian ruler Artaxerxes: *Epistola ad Acircium*, 2 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 69, lines 19-24; *Prose Works*, p. 40). The *Laterculus* agrees with Aldhelm's dating of the ministry to the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (*Laterculus Malalianus*, 9, 25) but as the text does not mention Artaxerxes there is no opportunity for further comparison. The date relative to Tiberius Caesar ultimately derives from Luke 3.1, so its appearance in both the *Epistola ad Acircium* and the *Laterculus Malalianus* may well be of little significance.

exists between them, with the educative programme of Canterbury being the obvious point of connection.

The allusion to a seven-millennia temporal framework in Aldhelm's *Epistola ad Acircium* can be considered alongside Bede's comment in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* that certain of his less-learned contemporaries thought that 'this world will end at 7000 years because it unfolded in seven days'.³³⁵ Aldhelm's *Epistola ad Acircium* is an important point of reference for this notion. Aldhelm does not explicitly say that the world will end after 7000 years as the Latin terms used are relatively loose (he avoids the word '*annus*' and favours the non-specific '*temporum*'). Nevertheless, his comment that the end of time will come after a 'sevenfold increment of times, one thousand in number' inspires thought of a seven-millennia framework for universal time which carries with it an implied end-time date of the year 7000. In the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, Bede states that the association of the year 7000 with the end of the world is based upon an analogy with the creation week and it is worth noting that the original remark in the *Epistola ad Acircium* is presented in the exact same context. Aldhelm describes the allegorical significance of seven-fold increments of time, making a comparison between the seven '*incrementa temporum*' and the creation of the world in 'the sevenfold course of a single week'.³³⁶

The *Epistola ad Acircium* thus provides a fascinating link between Aldhelm and the alternative eschatological beliefs that were known to have circulated in Northumbria in the early-eighth century. Acircius has been identified as Aldfrith, king of Northumbria between the years 686 and 705.³³⁷ It is likely that Aldhelm's letter to

³³⁵ Bede, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, lines 270-3: '... nec defuere qui septem annorum millibus saeculi huius statum quia et septem diebus uoluitur terminandum esse putarent'.

³³⁶ *Epistola ad Acircium*, 2 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 63, lines 1-6; *Prose Works*, p. 35).

³³⁷ See page 85 and note 317, above.

Aldfrith would have been copied and circulated amongst the ecclesiastical communities of Northumbria, as the various portions of this vast work would have been of great interest for educational purposes. Though Aldfrith and Bishop Wilfrid enjoyed a turbulent relationship, there were periods in which they cooperated, presenting ample scope for the transmission of this text from the king's court to the various monastic communities associated with Wilfrid. It is likely that the *Epistola ad Acircium* would have been favourably received by Wilfridian monastic centres. Aldhelm is known to have pledged support for the controversial bishop's plight during at least one of Wilfrid's many disputes with the Anglo-Saxon Church.³³⁸ The links between Aldhelm, Aldfrith and Wilfrid are significant, considering that the heresy allegation directed at Bede is known to have originated in Wilfrid's presence.³³⁹ The dating of Aldhelm's works is a notoriously difficult exercise.³⁴⁰ The composite nature of the *Epistola ad Acircium* makes it particularly hard to assign even approximate *termini* to its numerous component parts. Nevertheless, the *terminus ante quem* presented by the death of Aldfrith in 705 places the completed version of the *Epistola ad Acircium* in the appropriate timeframe for its content to be related to the Plegwine controversy (circa 708).

The *Epistola ad Acircium* may well have encouraged the notion that the world would end in the year 7000, a concept which is twice referred to as a popular

³³⁸ See Aldhelm's letter to the Abbots of Wilfrid, which is edited by Ehwald, R. *Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, pp. 500-2 and translated in *The Prose Works*, pp. 168-70. It is not known which particular abbots received this letter. Likewise, it is not known which dispute it relates to. See the discussion in *The Prose Works*, pp. 150-1. Note that Scott Gwara is cautious about counting Wilfrid as one of Aldhelm's allies, Gwara, S. *Aldhelmi prosa de virginitate*, pp. 26-7.

³³⁹ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 17, lines 312-3.

³⁴⁰ Lapidge has re-evaluated the evidence relating to the chronological sequence of Aldhelm's works in an appendix to his recent article 'The Career of Aldhelm'. Lapidge suggests that the *Epistola ad Acircium* was probably compiled soon after Aldfrith's accession to the Northumbrian kingdom in 686: Lapidge, M. 2007, 'The Career of Aldhelm', 61, 67.

contemporary belief by Bede in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.³⁴¹ But if Aldhelm's letter to Aldfrith lent support to this idea, it is important to stress that this may have been entirely unintentional on his part. Further consideration of his work reveals that he was not particularly concerned with matters of chronology, and that the seven-millennia system alluded to in the *Epistola ad Acircium* was not the only influence upon his perception of universal time. Unlike Bede, Aldhelm was not concerned with chronological accuracy, and his works display a lack of historical sophistication. Aldhelm tends to date the lives of historical figures very loosely, often giving a regnal or imperial year but little other information. On the whole, Aldhelm tends not to place people and events within a historical context.

On one rare occasion when Aldhelm does reference an event's historical context, he actually contradicts the chronological framework of the *Laterculus*. A passage in the prose *De virginitate* suggests that Aldhelm was aware of the traditional Augustinian division of the world ages. In chapter fifty-four, Aldhelm describes the life of Melchizedek and begins with the following statement: '*Ast vero Melchizedek inchoante tertia saeculi aetate florens...*'³⁴² Lapidge translates this passage as follows: 'Melchizedek, however, flourished at the beginning of the world's age'.³⁴³ This appears to be a misprint as '*tertia*' is not accounted for in Lapidge's translation.³⁴⁴ '*Tertia*', the adjective meaning 'third', is corresponding to the ablative feminine noun '*aetate*'. '*Saeculi*' is the genitive singular of '*saeculum*', the same word used in the extracts above to mean 'ages' in its plural form. However in its singular form, an alternative

³⁴¹ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, 16.

³⁴² *De virginitate prosa*, 54 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 312, line 20).

³⁴³ *Aldhelm: the Prose Works*, p. 123.

³⁴⁴ '*Tertia*' appears to have been missed by the translator, or alternatively this may be a printing error made by the publisher. It should be noted that this is an unusual occurrence, as the translated texts published in *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* and its sister volume *The Poetic Works* are of a consistently high standard. This rare oversight is particularly understandable considering that the sentence in question is a unique instance of Aldhelm employing Augustinian world-age terminology.

translation of ‘*saeculum*’ is ‘the world’ (as demonstrated in Lapidge’s translation).³⁴⁵ A revised translation of Aldhelm’s Latin would read: ‘Melchizedek, however, flourished at the beginning of the third age of the world’. ‘*Aetas saeculi*’ is, of course, the Augustinian term for a world age.³⁴⁶ It should be noted that this is the only reference to an ‘*aetas saeculi*’ to appear in any of Aldhelm’s extant writings.

Closer consideration of this passage reveals that Aldhelm would not have placed Melchizedek in a third world age if his perception of universal time had been exclusively influenced by the *Laterculus Malalianus*. Though Aldhelm states that the details of Melchizedek’s birth are unknown,³⁴⁷ the Bible relates that Melchizedek lived in the same era as Abraham.³⁴⁸ Abraham is the traditional starting point for the third world age according to Augustine’s teachings.³⁴⁹ Aldhelm’s statement that Melchizedek lived at the start of the third age contradicts the *Laterculus*’s framework for history. The *Laterculus* does not define any of the ages in detail but the following information can be derived from it. The first age begins with Adam, the sixth ends with the Passion and Peleg divides the six ages in half.³⁵⁰ Peleg is thus implied to be the point at which the third age ends and the fourth begins. Peleg and Melchizedek both feature in the book of Genesis. The passage in the prose *De virginitate* references Melchizedek’s meeting with Abraham. In the book of Genesis this event occurs some

³⁴⁵ Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. 1879, *A Latin Dictionary*, p. 1613-14.

³⁴⁶ In Isidore’s world chronicle, the third age of the world is referred to in near-identical Latin as ‘*tertia aetas saeculi*’: Isidore of Seville, *Chronicon*, 33a.

³⁴⁷ Aldhelm quotes Hebrews 7.3: ‘Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he [Melchizedek] remains a priest forever’.

³⁴⁸ The interaction between Melchizedek and Abraham is recorded in Genesis 14.18-22. Jones, C. W. 1970, ‘Bede’s Commentary on Genesis’, contains a lengthy discussion of Bede’s treatment of Melchizedek at 177-83.

³⁴⁹ Augustine spells out the traditional division of the ages in various places throughout his works including *De catechizandis rudibus*, chapter 22.39. The third age runs ‘*ab Abraham usque ad David regem*’. See also, *De civitate Dei*, 22.30, line 133.

³⁵⁰ *Laterculus Malalianus*, 3.

time after the birth of Peleg.³⁵¹ Furthermore, the account of Abraham's ancestry given in Genesis 11 states that Peleg preceded Abraham by five generations.³⁵² Had Aldhelm been a strict adherent to the *Laterculus's* chronological framework, a reference to the interaction between Abraham and Melchizedek would have been placed within a fourth age (post-Peleg) rather than the third age given in the prose *De virginitate*. In contrast to the other references to chronological division discussed thus-far, the Melchizedek passage only makes sense when considered within the context of the traditional Augustinian world-age divisions.

The influence of different systems of chronological division are discernible at various points throughout Aldhelm's work. Herren has described Aldhelm's approach to scriptural study as 'tolerant and eclectic',³⁵³ and these words also adequately sum up Aldhelm's allusions to the division of universal time. Aldhelm's references to a seven-age system and his association of historical periods and millennia are best explained by cross-reference to the *Laterculus Malalianus*. But though the system of division proposed by the *Laterculus* had an influence upon Aldhelm's work (due to a shared connection with the educational programme of the seventh-century Canterbury school) the Melchizedek passage suggests that it did not do so exclusively. The symbolic image in question determined which framework was alluded to by Aldhelm, with different images eliciting different responses. For example, the influence of the *Laterculus's* seven-age system is clear in sentences concerning the seven-walled city of Jericho and sevenfold divisions of time. In contrast, Aldhelm placed Melchizedek's life within the context of a third Augustinian world age, presumably because of the connection

³⁵¹ On Peleg see Genesis 10.25 and 11.18-20. Melchizedek features in Genesis 14.18-22.

³⁵² Peleg was the father of Reu, who was the father of Serug. Serug was the father of Nahor, and Terah (Abraham's father) was Nahor's son. Genesis 11.10-26.

³⁵³ Herren, M. 1998, 'Scholarly Contacts', 33.

between Melchizedek and Abraham (the traditional marking point for the beginning of the third *aetas saeculi*). The various allusions to different systems of chronological division found within Aldhelm's work stand in sharp contrast to the precise chronological format followed by Bede. Bede operated within the Augustine-Isidore paradigm, consistently emulating the language and terminology associated with his predecessors. Aldhelm appears to have been aware of the traditional Augustinian framework, but he also alludes to the system of division propagated by the *Laterculus Malalianus*, a source which left no trace in Bede's writings except for an indirect criticism in his *Epistola ad Pleguinam* regarding its simplicity.³⁵⁴

Conclusion

An analysis of the *Laterculus Malalianus* and the works of Aldhelm has put the resistance that Bede met following the publication of *De temporibus* into a wider context. Bede's *Chronica minora* contributed to a complex intellectual landscape and it contradicted at least two established theoretical traditions. Modern scholarship is correct to emphasise that the *Chronica minora* was a radical revision of the Eusebius-Jerome (AM II) orthodoxy, but it is also clear that Bede's system was fundamentally different to the seven-era system propagated by the *Laterculus Malalianus*, a system associated with the intellectual milieu of the Canterbury school of Theodore and Hadrian. In considering Bede's dismissive reaction to the heresy allegation directed against him, it should not be assumed that the various chronological frameworks and eschatological sentiments criticised in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* were circulated amongst the uneducated. Some of the ideas referred to by Bede in the *Epistola* had a sound textual basis. Bede himself describes the alternative chronological framework

³⁵⁴ *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15.

that he had encountered in the Cologne Prologue in paragraph fifteen of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. The seven-period framework promoted by the *Laterculus Malalianus* also had strong textual support. The echoes of the *Laterculus's* chronological model evident in Aldhelm's works suggest that its system was known amongst some members of the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical elite. The extent of the *Laterculus Malalianus's* influence in popularising its eccentric chronological framework is not certain, but it seems likely that Aldhelm's eclectic allusions to a seven-millennia framework of universal time in the *Epistola ad Acircium* played some role in popularising the year 7000 as a prospective end-time date in early-medieval Northumbria. Though the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* does not directly refer to a specific text that associated the year 7000 with the end of the world, the analysis of the *Laterculus Malalianus* and the works of Aldhelm carried out in this chapter strongly suggests that such speculation had a degree of textual, as well as oral support.

Chapter 4: The expanded world ages scheme

Introduction

Bede's perception of the world ages analogy underwent significant development after 708, resulting in a much-expanded world ages framework that was far more sophisticated than the six-age model put forth in *De temporibus*. Bede expanded the scheme to include a seventh age of rest and an eighth age of eternity. The expanded world ages framework was first featured in the exegetical works composed shortly after the Plegwine controversy, and it ultimately became a key theme in *De temporum ratione*, the extensive survey of time-reckoning completed in 725.³⁵⁵ The extended model incorporates a vision for eschatological time into the world ages scheme, a topic that had not been covered in *De temporibus*. The Plegwine episode reveals that there was great confusion amongst Bede's contemporaries concerning several aspects of eschatological belief. Bede's expansion of the world ages model can be seen as an attempt to clarify this situation.

The fundamental importance of the world ages framework to Bede's perception of time, chronology and eschatology has long been appreciated in Bedan scholarship. Scholars dating back to Charles Plummer have highlighted the importance of this aspect of Bede's thought.³⁵⁶ Though the theme of the world ages in Bede's work has been discussed in a selection of secondary works, there is still great scope for advances to be made in this area. C.W. Jones gave an overview of the world ages doctrine in his article on *In Genesim* and Faith Wallis touched upon several important aspects of the theme in

³⁵⁵ On 725 as the date of completion, see note 32 above.

³⁵⁶ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, p. xli-xlii.

her commentary to the translated edition of *De temporum ratione*.³⁵⁷ Each of these works has a very specific purpose. Jones offers a general survey of a topic which recurs frequently in the Genesis commentary. Wallis comments upon how the theme manifests itself in *De temporum ratione*. These secondary accounts are primarily intended to aid the reader's comprehension of the Bedan works in question.

The only specific full-length treatment of the world ages theme in Bede's works was published in 1978. This oft-cited article by Paolo Siniscalco was published in the Italian journal *Romanobarbarica* and it remains the most comprehensive treatment of the topic to date.³⁵⁸ Siniscalco shows that the ages analogy operates on multiple symbolic levels in Bede's work and he discusses the scheme's principal analogies (with the creation week and ages of man) in close detail. Siniscalco's article is a useful introductory survey, but much work can be done to develop its findings with regards to a number of key issues. The most important of these relates to the development of the world ages doctrine over the course of Bede's lifetime. Siniscalco offers a short discussion of the development of Bede's thought and he notes that Bede's interest in the world ages increased in the years after 708.³⁵⁹ However, he does not consider the changing nature of the world ages framework relative to the progression of Bede's authorial career in any great detail. Several scholarly breakthroughs have been made in the three decades that have passed since Siniscalco compiled his article. In particular,

³⁵⁷ Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 191-8; Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 280 and pp. 353-75.

³⁵⁸ Siniscalco, P. 1978, 'Le età del mondo in Beda', *Romanobarbarica* 3, 297-331.

³⁵⁹ Siniscalco, P. 1978, 'Le età del mondo in Beda', 311-13. Siniscalco notes that the world ages and creation week analogy is developed after 708, but he does not consider the expanded world ages framework in this context. In his analysis of the period 703-725, Siniscalco lists several works together in a single footnote (number 30, at 311).

information regarding the chronology of Bede's works can be drawn upon in order to clarify the development of this aspect of Bede's eschatological thought.³⁶⁰

This chapter offers a detailed examination of the extended world ages framework which builds upon the work already done in this field by Siniscalco, Jones, Wallis and others. It will consider the dissemination of the expanded scheme in Bede's works, the sources that served to inspire it and its reception in the works of later writers. Close attention will be paid to the chronological sequence of Bedan texts that allude to seven or eight-age frameworks for eschatological time. This facilitates several insights: for example, on the dating of some of Bede's works (this subject is addressed in appendix two, below).³⁶¹ The following analysis of the development of the world ages model also has implications for the historiographical perception of Bede and his work. It will touch upon some of the major themes that run through this study as a whole, including the idea of the 'new Bede' and related questions concerning the notions of innovation and tradition in Bede's thought.

The seventh and eighth world ages: earliest references

In Lucae evangelium expositio was composed in the years that followed the Plegwine controversy of 708. Bede dedicated this lengthy work to Acca, bishop of Hexham, giving the commentary on Luke a *terminus post quem* of 710.³⁶² The prologue to *In primam partem Samuhelis* reveals that the commentary on Luke had already been

³⁶⁰ Siniscalco does not display a sophisticated appreciation of the chronology of Bede's writings. For example, see the inaccurate comments with regards to the composition of *In Genesim* at 312 (Siniscalco dates this text to circa 720). The dating of *In Genesim* is complex; it was composed in several stages. For two alternative theories, see the introduction to Jones's edition of *In Genesim*, CCSL 118A (Turnhout, 1967), pp. vi-x, and Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 40-53.

³⁶¹ See appendix 2: 'The expanded world ages scheme and the dating of Bede's works'.

³⁶² *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, prologue, lines 79-80. On the date of Wilfrid's death and Acca's accession, see above note 233.

completed.³⁶³ This establishes 716 as the *terminus ante quem* for the Gospel commentary, as the Samuel commentary can be securely dated relative to the commencement of Abbot Ceolfrith's journey to Rome.³⁶⁴ In a letter that precedes Bede's first commentary on Acts, Bede reveals that he had intended to complete a commentary on Luke, but that unspecified difficulties and the size of the task had delayed him.³⁶⁵ It is logical to assume that Bede would have worked on *In Lucae evangelium expositio* over several years. The commentary was completed at some point within the period 710-716, although the precise date of completion remains a matter for speculation.

In Lucae evangelium expositio is a valuable witness to a development in Bede's thought that can be attributed to this stage of his career. At some point after the Plegwine controversy, a greatly developed world ages scheme begins to appear in his exegetical works. This scheme builds upon the six-age framework from *De temporibus* which had been defended, justified and restated in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. The first explicit reference to the expanded scheme in the commentary on Luke is found in Bede's discussion of Luke 2.21. This verse relates that the circumcision of Jesus occurred on the eighth day after his birth. Bede's commentary on this passage includes the following statement:

For we ourselves after the six ages of this world (*sex huius saeculi aetates*) and the seventh which is going on concurrently in another life for souls in their sabbath, will rise as if in the eighth age

³⁶³ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, prologue, lines 34-47. Bede draws upon *In Lucae evangelium expositio* in the commentary itself, see *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2580-96.

³⁶⁴ The circumstances surrounding Ceolfirth's departure for Rome are discussed below, pp. 261-270.

³⁶⁵ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, preface, lines 6-14. The undefined annoyances that had delayed Bede's work on Luke may well be a reference to the Plegwine controversy (see below, p. 122).

(*octavo tempore*) truly circumcised.³⁶⁶

This reference explains the relationship between the six ages of history and the seventh and eighth ages. The seventh age is an age of rest, in which the souls of the righteous await the day of judgement. It runs parallel to historical time. The eighth age, which is here related to the circumcision of Jesus, is an age of eternity in which the just are to reign with God in a post-judgement kingdom of purity, free from evil and sin. This is a significant development of the six-age framework that had been proposed in *De temporibus*. The enlarged scheme moves beyond the purely historical dimension of time to include an eschatological vision of the future. It covers the fate of the soul after death both prior to and after the day of judgement. Item four of appendix one is an illustration of the expanded world ages scheme. This can be contrasted with item one which represents the basic six-age scheme put forth in *De temporibus* and the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.

Because the passage cited above concerns the childhood of Jesus, this reference occurs early on in Bede's commentary on Luke. The language used is tentative, with Bede referring to the eighth age using the non-specific term '*tempus*'.³⁶⁷ The use of *tempus* in the passage relating to the circumcision of Jesus may represent Bede's expanded world ages framework in a formative stage. Any uncertainty evident in the language cited here disappears later in the commentary. Bede explicitly refers to the eighth age as an *aetas saeculi* on at least two subsequent occasions. One instance of this appears in Bede's exegetical interpretation of the Transfiguration.³⁶⁸ In commenting

³⁶⁶ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 1, lines 1518-20: '... et ipsi post sex huius saeculi aetates et septimam sabbati animarum quae nunc interim in alia uita geritur quasi octauo tempore surgemus tunc uerissime circumcisi'. Cited in translation from: Mayr-Harting, H. 1991, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 45.

³⁶⁷ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 1, line 1520.

³⁶⁸ For a discussion of Bede's interpretation of this section of the Gospel of Luke, see: Hart-Hasler, J. N. 1993, 'Bede's Use of Patristic Sources: The Transfiguration', *Studia Patristica* 28, 197-204.

upon a scriptural reference to the number eight,³⁶⁹ Bede refers to the six ages of this world in which Christians are glad to work and suffer for the Lord, and the seventh age of rest which is going on concurrently in another life. Following this, Bede states that ‘we will rise again, as if in an eighth age (*octava aetate*)’.³⁷⁰ This passage formalises the notion that the eighth age is a legitimate part of the world ages scheme. Another example is found towards the end of the commentary in Bede’s interpretation of Luke 23.54. He makes clear references to the seventh and eighth ages using the phrases ‘*septima ... aetate*’ and ‘*octava ... aetate*’.³⁷¹ It is significant that Bede refers to the seventh and eighth ages using the same terminology that he is accustomed to use for the six historical ages. It is clear that the seventh and eighth *aetates* complement the six ages of history; they are component parts of a singular vision for world time.

In epistulas septem catholicas is a significant parallel source to the commentary on the Gospel of Luke. *In epistulas septem catholicas* is a compilation of short commentaries on the seven letters that appear immediately before Revelation in the New Testament Canon (that is the epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude). As a collection, it too can be dated to the period of Bede’s career that followed the Plegwine controversy, though the precise dates of the individual commentaries that make up this collection are difficult to resolve. The commentary on 1 John was sent to Bishop Acca with *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*; this must have occurred in 710 (the year in which

³⁶⁹ Luke 9.28: ‘About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray’.

³⁷⁰ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 3, lines 1498-501: ‘... et nos post sex huius saeculi aetates in quibus pro domino pati et laborare gaudemus et septimam quietis animarum quae interim in alia uita geritur quasi octaua aetate resurgemus’.

³⁷¹ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 6, lines 1840-7: ‘Vbi nostrae simul deuotionis praelucet exemplum quos in hac quidem sexta mundi aetate pro domino pati et uelut mundo crucifigi necesse est in septima uero aetate, id est cum leti quis debitum soluit, corpora quidem in tumultis animas autem secreta in pace cum domino manere et post bona oportet opera quiescere donec octaua tandem ueniente aetate etiam corpora ipsa resurrectione glorificata cum animabus simul incorruptionem aeternae hereditatis accipiant’.

Acca became bishop of Hexham) or later.³⁷² The preface to *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* does not refer to Bede's commentaries on the remaining six letters; it does not give the impression that Bede had already compiled such works and it does not suggest that he intended to do so in the future.³⁷³ Nevertheless, in its completed form, Bede's commentary on the seven Catholic Epistles was clearly intended to be a collection. It has its own short preface, and it was referred to as a single work in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.³⁷⁴ Why then, did Bede not refer to the tract on 1 John as part of a collection when he sent it to Acca with the commentary on Acts? Perhaps Bede did not yet regard the commentary on 1 John as a component part of a larger collection.

Such a hypothesis is plausible, and it must suffice until further work is carried out. Several decades ago, Laistner warned us not to assume that the individual parts of *In epistulas septem catholicas* were completed in canonical order, even though Bede ultimately chose to arrange them in this way.³⁷⁵ The only way to resolve the issue of the relative dates of the various tracts would be to carry out a detailed stylistic analysis, considering Bede's use of his source materials in each individual commentary. An inadequate critical edition of the text and the constraints of the present study make it

³⁷² On the date of *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, see below p. 122.

³⁷³ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, preface, lines 76-9. Bede states: 'I have also sent a very short explanation of the epistle of the most blessed Evangelist John. As an abbreviating summarizer I selected the major part of this from St Augustine's homilies, which are permeated with abundant sweetness. By my own labour I have added some things at the end'. Passage cited in translation from: Martin, L. T. 1989, trans. *Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 6.

³⁷⁴ The preface to *In epistulas septem catholicas* discusses the canonical order of the seven letters. It was clearly intended to be a preface to all seven tracts. For the reference in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, see Bede's biographical survey of his own works in 5.24. It is also worth noting that the seven tracts tend to feature together as a complete collection in medieval manuscripts of the work: see the list given in Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, pp. 30-7.

³⁷⁵ Laistner thought that the commentary on James (the first to feature in the collection) was written after the tract on 1 John: Laistner, M. L. W. 1933, 'Bede as a Classical and a Patristic Scholar'. Laistner's argument rests upon a comparison of Bede's use of Avitus in *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* and the commentary on James. At note 50, he states: '... we must assume, what is inherently probable, that Bede's expositions of the seven Catholic Epistles were composed at different times. When all had been written, he added a general preface, and issued them as a single work, although privileged friends like Acca had already seen the separate parts as they first appeared'. See also: *Hand-list*, pp. 30-1.

impractical to pursue such an analysis here.³⁷⁶ The significant point for the purposes of the present chapter is that the collection in its completed form must postdate 710 (the *terminus post quem* for the completion of the commentary on Acts). If the commentaries on the other six letters are assumed to be roughly contemporaneous with the commentary on 1 John, then the preface to *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* securely places the collection as a whole within the period of Bede's career that followed the Plegwine controversy.

The key part of *In epistulas septem catholicas*, so far as the present analysis is concerned, is Bede's commentary on the second epistle of Peter. Bede makes an explicit reference to the eight-age framework whilst commenting upon 2 Peter 2.5. This verse refers to the survival of Noah in the flood and it describes him as the 'eighth person'.³⁷⁷ Bede comments:

Yet he makes mention of the number eight for this reason, that he may secretly imply that the time of the flood denotes the critical moment of the final examination when, after all the condemned have been rejected, all the righteous receive the glory of everlasting life. For there are six ages of the present world. The seventh age is even now in progress in that life where the souls of the saints enjoy the happy sabbath, that is, eternal rest. The eighth age will come at the time of the resurrection of all and of the universal judgment.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ The Latin edition of *In epistulas septem catholicas* was edited by Dom David Hurst as part of CCSL volume 121 (Turnhout, 1983), pp. 181-342. Hurst's edition rarely offers sources and analogues beyond explicit biblical citations and allusions to scriptural passages. A volume approaching the standard of Roger Gryson's 2001 edition of Bede's commentary on Revelation, (CCSL 121A) would be required in order to carry out the project under discussion here.

³⁷⁷ 2 Peter 2.5: 'And He spared not the original world, but preserved Noah, the eighth person, the preacher of justice, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly'. The text cited here is taken from the Douay-Rheims edition. The New International Version reads differently in this instance. The Douay-Rheims offers a more accurate translation of the Vulgate text as it is preserved in Bede's commentary.

³⁷⁸ *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam II Petri*, 2, lines 89-96: 'Idcirco autem octauī numeri facit mentionem ut occulte insinuet quia tempora diluuii discrimen significant examinis ultimi quando

This excerpt can be taken alongside the extracts from *In Lucae evangelium expositio* cited above as a clear reference to the expanded world ages scheme. It presents another example of the expanded model appearing in an exegetical interpretation of the number eight. Like the references from the commentary on Luke, this interpretation appears in a work composed in the years that followed the Plegwine controversy. The motif of the six historical ages, the seventh age of rest and eighth age of eternity was to become a staple feature of Bede's scriptural commentaries from this stage of his authorial career, right through until the end of his life.

Sources for the expanded world ages doctrine: innovation and tradition

The expanded world ages scheme that features in the commentaries on Luke and 2 Peter represents a significant progression from the basic six-age model featured in *De temporibus* and the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, but how original was the eight-age system that Bede proposed? As outlined in chapter one above, St Augustine was a significant influence upon Bede's perception of the six ages of history. Augustine first proposed the well-known points of division for each age and he was also responsible for developing the specific terminology associated with the world-ages scheme. Augustine is also a significant reference point for Bede's conception of the seventh and eighth ages, though the precise relationship between Bede and his Augustinian source materials is a complex matter. Bede's thought is grounded in Augustinian tradition,³⁷⁹

damnatis omnibus reprobis omnes iusti gloriam uitae perpetis accipiunt. Sex etenim sunt saeculi praesentis aetates, septima etiam nunc agitur aetas in illa uita ubi animae sanctorum sabbato felici, id est requie, perfruuntur aeterna, octaua est uentura tempore resurrectionis omnium et uniuersalis iudicii'. Translation cited from: Hurst, D. 1985, trans. *The Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles of Bede the Venerable* (Kalamazoo), pp. 137-8.

³⁷⁹ Faith Wallis comments that Bede's conception of the seventh and eighth ages is 'deeply rooted' in an Augustinian model of time: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 368. Bede's debt to Augustine with regards to the seventh and eighth ages is also noted by DeGregorio, S. 2006, trans. *Ezra and Nehemiah*, p. 48, note 2 and Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 100-1, note 149.

but his conception of the expanded world ages model contains significant elements of innovation that can be attributed to him alone.

The notion of a seventh age running parallel to historical time ultimately derives from St Augustine, but this is one interpretation of many put forth in his works. Augustine adhered to the notion of a sabbatical millennium in the earliest part of his career.³⁸⁰ He came to reject this concept in favour of two alternative interpretations of the sabbath.³⁸¹ The first of these is an eternal sabbath which is to begin after the completion of the six historical ages. This corresponds to God's rest on the seventh day of the creation week and it is to be an eternal period of rest for the saints. In *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, Augustine alludes to the existence of a communal sabbath rest that is to follow the second coming of the Lord.³⁸² Similar interpretations feature in several of Augustine's works, including: *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, *De catechizandis rudibus* and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*.³⁸³ The notion of a sabbath rest that is to follow the six ages of history is a separate theoretical tradition to the parallel seventh age that features in Bede's expanded world ages scheme. Bede shows some familiarity with this notion, though it is significant that examples of this are limited to his earliest scriptural commentaries.³⁸⁴

The concept of a seventh age running parallel to historical time is another interpretation to feature in the works of Augustine that post-date his rejection of the

³⁸⁰ See the discussion above, p. 57 and note 213.

³⁸¹ On the varying interpretations of the seventh age present in Augustine's works, see Kleist, A. J. 2003, 'Influence of Bede's *De temporum ratione* on Ælfric', pp. 88-91 and his diagram (appendix 3), pp. 96-7.

³⁸² *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.23.41. Sears, E. 1986, *Ages of Man*, p. 57.

³⁸³ *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, 58.2; *De catechizandis rudibus*, 17.28; *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 92.1.

³⁸⁴ Bede refers to the notion of an eternal sabbath rest which is to follow the six *aetates saeculi* in his commentary on Revelation (widely considered to be his earliest biblical commentary). An example passage (*Expositio Apocalypseos*, 18, lines 1-6) is discussed below at p. 118. Compare *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 114-25, which also seems to hint at Bede's familiarity with the concept of a sabbath rest (though the allusion is much less clear than the example from *Expositio Apocalypseos* cited above).

sabbatical millennium. The parallel seventh age features most notably in *De civitate Dei*, a work which occupied Augustine throughout the latter stages of his authorial career.³⁸⁵ In the very last chapter of the final book of *De civitate Dei*, Augustine concludes his vast work with a discussion of the perpetual sabbath. Augustine considers the sabbath within the context of the world ages analogy, explaining that it should be thought of as a seventh world age:

The nature of this sabbath will appear to us more clearly if we count the ages as ‘days’ according to the periods of time which we see expressed in Scripture; for that sabbath will then be found to be the seventh of those ages. The first ‘day’ is the first age, extending from Adam to the flood ...³⁸⁶

The passage continues, offering a brief description of the six *aetates saeculi* and a conventional explanation of their points of division. Augustine then proceeds to explain the character of the seventh age:

The sixth age is now in being ... After this age, God will rest, as on the seventh day; and He will give us, who will be that seventh day, rest in Himself. It would, however, take too long diligently to discuss each of these ages here. Suffice it to say that the seventh day will be our sabbath, whose end will not be an evening, but the Lord’s Day.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Augustine worked on *De civitate Dei* for at least a decade, perhaps longer. The first of its twenty-two books was completed circa 412-413 CE. In the introduction to his translated edition of the text, R. W. Dyson suggests that *De civitate Dei* was completed in 426, though it should be noted that there is some disagreement as to when Augustine finished this monumental work: Dyson, R. W. 1998, trans. *City of God*, pp. xi-xii. Augustine’s death can be dated to 430 CE.

³⁸⁶ *De civitate Dei*, 22.30, lines 124-8: ‘Ipse etiam numerus aetatum, ueluti dierum, si secundum eos articulos temporis computetur, qui scripturis uidentur expressi, iste sabbatismus euidentius apparebit, quoniam septimus inuenitur; ut prima aetas tamquam primus dies sit ab Adam usque ad diluuium ...’.

³⁸⁷ *De civitate Dei* 22.30, lines 136-43: ‘Sexta nunc agitur ... Post hanc tamquam in die septimo requiescet Deus, cum eundem diem septimum, quod nos erimus, in se ipso Deo faciet requiescere. De istis porro aetatibus singulis nunc diligenter longum est disputare; haec tamen septima erit sabbatum

In the definition offered here, Augustine does not envisage the sabbath as being a post-judgement period of eternal rest. It is a period of rest for the righteous occurring prior to the day of judgement. Though the definition of the sabbath age cited above is neither precise nor detailed, the passage suggests that it is to be thought of as an age that runs parallel to historical time. The righteous are to enter the seventh age after death in order to rest and await the day of judgement. At this point, both historical time and the seventh age will end.

Augustine's beliefs regarding the sabbath rest were varied and complex. He can be associated with at least three separate conceptions of the sabbath: a thousand-year earthly kingdom, a perpetual sabbath that is to follow the day of judgement, and a seventh age of rest for the righteous that runs parallel to historical time. The influence of Augustine upon Bede's conception of the seventh world age is clear; Bede's parallel seventh age ultimately derives from the third of these Augustinian notions. In acknowledging that Bede based his seventh world age upon a passage from *De civitate Dei*, it should not be forgotten that in doing so, Bede had chosen this interpretation over others that he could alternatively have taken from Augustine's works. The notion of a period of rest for the righteous running parallel to historical time had been one of many interpretations of the sabbath for Augustine, but it became the orthodox interpretation of the seventh world age for Bede. Bede fixed the parallel sabbath as part of the expanded world ages model and promoted it with a regularity and consistency that it had not received in Augustine's works. Bede may also have left his own definitive imprint upon the Augustinian notion of a parallel seventh age. In works in which Bede considers the seventh age in detail, he describes it as beginning with the death of Abel,

nostrum, cuius finis non erit uespera, sed dominicus dies ...'. Cited in translation from: Dyson, R. W. 1998, trans. *City of God*, p. 1182.

the first martyr.³⁸⁸ Augustine does not refer to Abel in this context in the crucial passage of *De civitate Dei*, and it has recently been suggested that this detail is a Bedan innovation.³⁸⁹

The picture of Bede that is beginning to emerge is of a scholar operating within the Augustinian paradigm yet building something new. This is a useful approach that will serve us well in considering the traditional origins of the Bedan eighth age. There is some confusion surrounding the origins of the notion of an eighth *aetas saeculi* and the term is often used incorrectly in secondary scholarship. In his discussion of the world ages doctrine in Bede's works, C. W. Jones highlights the long patristic tradition that exists regarding the idea of an eternal octave.³⁹⁰ Several major exegetes before Bede had associated the number eight with eternity and resurrection.³⁹¹ This tradition has a very long heritage in patristic literature and it recurs frequently in association with Psalms 6 and 11.³⁹² Jones cites a commentary on the penitential Psalms which discusses various ideas about the octave. One of the notions put forth states that the octave is to follow 'this age of the living and the seventh age of the righteous sleepers'.³⁹³ This is very similar to the way in which the seventh and eighth ages are presented in Bede's expanded world ages scheme. Jones had followed Migne's attribution of this commentary on the penitential Psalms to Gregory the Great, and were this to be an accurate assignation, the text would certainly be a significant source with regards to

³⁸⁸ Abel's death is described in Genesis 4. Bede refers to this event as the beginning of the seventh *aetas saeculi* in *De temporum ratione*, 10, lines 49-52 and 67, lines 48-50; *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1207-10.

³⁸⁹ Kleist, A. J. 2003, 'Influence of Bede's *De temporum ratione* on Ælfric', p. 90, note 43.

³⁹⁰ Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 195-7.

³⁹¹ On the longstanding patristic tradition of associating the number eight with eternity and resurrection see Ladner, G. B. 1959, *The Idea of Reform*, pp. 225-30.

³⁹² In the Vulgate edition of the Psalter, the initial verses of Psalms 6 and 11 state that they were prescribed 'for the octave (*super octava, pro octava*)'.

³⁹³ Excerpt cited from Jones's translation of the source in question: 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 196.

Bede. However, the source in question actually post-dates Bede by several centuries; it was composed in the eleventh century by Eribert, bishop of Reggio.³⁹⁴

Jones is nevertheless correct to highlight the importance of patristic notions of the octave with regards to the development of Bede's eighth *aetas saeculi*. The longstanding association of the number eight with notions of resurrection and eternity is clearly a most relevant theoretical tradition. The most significant immediate source for Bede's concept of an eighth *aetas saeculi* is, once again, the final chapter of St Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. Following his brief recapitulation of the world ages and creation week analogy, Augustine proceeds to explain that unlike the six ages of history, the sabbath rest of the righteous is not expected to have an 'evening'. Rather, its end will be marked by:

... the Lord's day, as if an eternal octave, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal rest not only of the spirit, but of the body also. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise.³⁹⁵

It is important to note that Augustine does not explicitly mention an eighth age. Any such notion is only implicit in Augustine's Latin, deriving from the association of ages and days in the preceding discussion of the world ages analogy. The phrase used by Augustine is '*uelut octavus aeternus*'. This can be contrasted with the precise descriptions of an eighth world age in Bede's works (as seen, for example, in his

³⁹⁴ The commentary was published by Migne in PL volume 79 (cols. 549-658) as a genuine work of Gregory's. For the correct assignation of this source to Eribert of Reggio, see: Kuczynski, M. P. 1995, *Prophetic Song: the Psalms as Moral Discourse in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia), p. 253, note 5; Staley, L. 2007, 'The Penitential Psalms: Conversion and the Limits of Lordship', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, 221-69, at 261, note 4.

³⁹⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 22.30, lines 143-7: '*... dominicus dies uelut octavus aeternus, qui Christi resurrectione sacratus est, aeternam non solum spiritus, uerum etiam corporis requiem praefigurans. Ibi uacabimus et uidebimus, uidebimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus*'. Translation reproduced (with minor modifications) from: Dyson, R. W. 1998, trans. *City of God*, p. 1182.

commentaries on Luke and 2 Peter).³⁹⁶ Augustine's concept of an eighth day, or eternal octave, is clearly a significant influence upon the Bedan eighth age,³⁹⁷ yet the explicit styling of the eternal octave as an eighth *aetas saeculi* appears to be a Bedan innovation. It is therefore a little misleading to talk about the eighth world age as an Augustinian notion.³⁹⁸ To do so projects a misrepresentative degree of precision onto the Latin employed in the relevant passage of *De civitate Dei* and it anticipates a scholarly development not made until Bede formulated the eschatological dimension of the world ages doctrine several centuries later.

Bede's works represent an important stage in the development of the eschatological dimension of the world ages framework that ought not to be overlooked. Augustine had been imprecise with regards to the sabbath rest and vague about the octave. In contrast, Bede offers clear definitions of the seventh and eighth world ages. Bede's parallel seventh age derives from Augustine's teachings on the sabbath, but Bede fixed upon one particular concept that he would have come across in Augustine's works. With regards to the eighth world age, Bede clarified and developed a concept implicit in *De civitate Dei* and incorporated it into a clearly-defined world ages model. Bede then proceeded to promote the eschatological dimension of the expanded world ages framework with regularity and consistency in his exegetical works. Most notably, the expanded scheme became a significant feature of *De temporum ratione*, Bede's later treatise on time.³⁹⁹ Though it is important to acknowledge that the component parts of the expanded world ages doctrine owed a great deal to patristic tradition, the enlarged

³⁹⁶ See the examples cited above in notes 370, 371 and 378.

³⁹⁷ The immediate debt to *De civitate Dei* 22.30 seems particularly evident in related passages from Bede's commentary on Genesis. See Bede's exegesis of Genesis 2.2-3: *In Genesim*, 1, lines 976-1077.

³⁹⁸ Several secondary discussions refer to Augustine's eternal octave as an 'eighth age'. See, for example: Ladner, G. B. 1959, *The Idea of Reform*, p. 230; Sears, E. 1986, *Ages of Man*, p. 57; Kleist, A. J. 2003, 'Influence of Bede's *De temporum ratione* on Ælfric', p. 89.

³⁹⁹ *De temporum ratione*, 10, 66, 67, 71.

framework as it appears in Bede's works is a development for which credit is due to him alone.

Bede's expanded world ages doctrine offers a perfect illustration of the way in which the twin themes of innovation and tradition dynamically interact in his work. Bede operated within the Augustinian tradition, employing its language, concepts and terminology. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that Bede crafted the Augustinian tradition into something new. This analysis of the expanded world ages scheme indicates just how easy it is for historiographical misconceptions to arise in scholarly appraisals of Bede and his work. The ideas employed in the expanded framework are Augustinian at first sight, but only a detailed analysis reveals the full extent to which they are Bedan. Any simplistic appraisals of the relationship between Bede's thought and Augustine's should therefore be rejected, particularly those that style Bede's theology as a simple restatement of Augustinian tradition.⁴⁰⁰

Development of the expanded doctrine within the context of Bede's career

The expanded world ages doctrine is entirely absent from all Bedan works that are thought to have been written in the year 708 or earlier. Leaving aside the complexities that surround the dating of *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis* (these tracts are discussed in appendix two of this study) it is significant that the expanded scheme is absent from *De temporibus* and the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. Despite its description (and rejection) of several contemporary eschatological beliefs, the latter work only refers to the basic six-age scheme proposed in *De temporibus*.⁴⁰¹ Had Bede

⁴⁰⁰ This perspective is now less common than it once was. On the former tendency to see Bede's work as an unoriginal digest of the ideas of others, see the introduction to this study, above, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁰¹ When summarising his life's work in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24, Bede lists the letter to Plegwine as being 'about the six ages of the world (*de sex aetatibus saeculi*)'. As this description implies, Bede does not refer to a parallel seventh age or eighth age of eternity in the *Epistola*.

had a fully formed notion of the eschatological dimension of the world ages scheme by 708, one would expect him to have mentioned it here in the course of such a detailed discussion of contemporary misconceptions relating to eschatology. It is significant that a subsequent rejection of contemporary misconceptions about the end of time, in the mature work *De temporum ratione*, does draw upon elements of the expanded world ages scheme.⁴⁰² The seventh and eighth world ages do not appear in several other works that are commonly thought to have predated the letter to Plegwine, such as *De orthographia*,⁴⁰³ *De locis sanctis*⁴⁰⁴ and the first recension of Bede's metrical *Vita Cuthberti*.⁴⁰⁵ In fairness, it must be pointed out that the theme of eschatology was not germane to any of these works. One would not expect to have found references to the expanded scheme in any of them, even if they had been composed much later in Bede's career.

The same, however, cannot be said of *Expositio Apocalypseos*. Bede's commentary on Revelation contains a great deal of pertinent material relating to

⁴⁰² In chapter 67 of *De temporum ratione*, Bede offers a direct rejection of erroneous eschatological beliefs. In doing so he describes the seventh age of rest in another life which runs from Abel to the last judgement. This chapter echoes the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* in that it also addresses contemporary speculation linking the year 6000 *annus mundi* with the end of the world. Bede proceeds to dismiss the notion of a sabbatical millennium, a topic not tackled in the *Epistola*.

⁴⁰³ *De orthographia* is traditionally held to be one of Bede's earliest works (see below pp. 252-254).

⁴⁰⁴ *De locis sanctis* is essentially an abridged version of an earlier work by Adomnan of Iona. It is drawn upon several times in the *Nomina regionum atque locorum de actibus apostolorum* (a description of the place names featured in Acts which forms an appendix to Bede's *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*). In the introduction to the translated edition of this work, W. Trent Foley assigns it a date of 702 or 703, but does not qualify this statement: Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 1. Note, however, that in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.17, Bede states that *De locis sanctis* had been completed recently.

⁴⁰⁵ Bede wrote his metrical life of Cuthbert before its prose counterpart. The main indicators of a date for the verse work are two references to a young king (lines 522-5). This is almost certainly Osred. The favourable nature of these references suggest that the work was written near to the start of Osred's reign circa 705 (see further note 1002 below). Michael Lapidge has identified two separate recensions of the metrical *Vita Cuthberti*. The second recension was a revision made by Bede much later in his career. Both recensions contain the laudatory reference to Osred: Lapidge, M. 1989, 'Bede's Metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*', in G. Bonner, D. W. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (eds.), *St. Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge), pp. 77-93. On the two recensions, see further: Wright, N. 2005, 'The Metrical Art(s) of Bede', in K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (eds.), *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge* (Cambridge), pp. 149-70.

eschatological time and the world ages scheme. In compiling *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede was following in a long tradition of exegetical interpretations of Revelation,⁴⁰⁶ and he was heavily influenced by several source texts. The Augustinian orientation of Bede's interpretation of Revelation has long been appreciated, but studies of *Expositio Apocalypseos* have emphasised the true extent of Bede's debt to lesser-known commentators. In his groundbreaking Jarrow lecture of 1966, Gerald Bonner stressed that Bede's commentary on Revelation, like Augustine's own interpretation of this text, is ultimately indebted to the exegetical tradition defined by the Donatist scholar Tyconius.⁴⁰⁷ Much of Bede's commentary is derived from earlier works, and he must have had his main source materials close at hand whilst tackling this difficult part of the New Testament canon.⁴⁰⁸ The extent to which this is the case has recently become startlingly clear with the publication of the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina edition of *Expositio Apocalypseos*.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ For a general survey of early-Christian interpretations of the book of Revelation, see the following three works: Fredriksen, P. 1991, 'Apocalypse and Redemption'; Matter, E. A. 1992, 'The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis', in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca), pp. 38-50; Matter, E. A. 2002, 'Exegesis of the Apocalypse in the early Middle Ages', in M. Frassetto (ed.), *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the Millennium* (New York), pp. 29-40. For a survey of the later medieval tradition, see: Lobrichon, G. 2003, 'Stalking the Signs: the Apocalyptic Commentaries', in R. Landes, A. Gow and D. C. Van Meter (eds.), *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050* (New York), pp. 67-79.

⁴⁰⁷ Bonner, G. 1966, *Saint Bede in the Tradition of Western Apocalyptic Commentary*. Bonner explains the place of Bede's commentary within the wider tradition of western Christian thought. He includes an appendix which lists several Tyconian passages in Bede's commentary. Bonner's work on *Expositio Apocalypseos* has been developed by scholars such as Mackay and Gryson (see notes 408 and 409 below). The commentary on Revelation by Tyconius is now lost, but much of it is preserved in the works of later exegetes such as Primasius, Caesarius of Arles and Bede. On Tyconius's interpretation of Revelation, see Fredriksen, P. 1982, 'Tyconius and the End of the World', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 28, 59-75. On Augustine's debt to Tyconius, see note 428 below.

⁴⁰⁸ On Bede's use of his sources in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, see Mackay, T. W. 1997, 'Sources and Style in Bede's Commentary on the Apocalypse', *Studia Patristica* 30, 54-60 and Mackay, T. W. 1998, 'Augustine and Gregory the Great in Bede's Commentary on the Apocalypse', in J. Hawkes and S. Mill (eds.), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud), pp. 396-405. See also: Kelly, J. F. 1982, 'Bede and the Irish Exegetical Tradition on the Apocalypse', *Revue Bénédictine* 92, 393-406.

⁴⁰⁹ Gryson, R. *Beda's Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A (Turnhout, 2001). This volume gives relevant extracts from Bede's source materials on a facing page to the Latin text of *Expositio Apocalypseos*. Gryson's comprehensive edition builds upon work carried out by Hedley Sparks.

Expositio Apocalypseos is usually thought of as Bede's earliest biblical commentary.⁴¹⁰ The preface reveals that the work is dedicated to 'frater Eusebi'.⁴¹¹ Eusebius was a cognomen employed by Bede to refer to his friend and fellow monk Hwætberht.⁴¹² The reference to him as 'brother' places the work in the period of time before 716 (the year in which Hwætberht became abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow in succession to Ceolfrith). This range of dates can be narrowed further, as *Expositio Apocalypseos* is described as complete in the preface to *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*.⁴¹³ Bede's first commentary on Acts is commonly thought to have been completed in 710, or very shortly thereafter.⁴¹⁴ Even if the commentary on Revelation is assigned its latest permissible date, it could only have post-dated the Plegwine controversy by a year or two at most (and it may well have been written several years before 708). *Expositio Apocalypseos* thus preserves a record of Bede's eschatological thought in an early, formative stage of his career as an exegete.

The rich imagery of Revelation presents Bede with several opportunities to allude to the world ages doctrine. The commentary contains an extensive discussion of the twelve precious stones described in Revelation 21.⁴¹⁵ The deep red appearance of

⁴¹⁰ See the comments of Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, pp. 25-6 and Bonner, G. 1966, *Saint Bede in the Tradition of Western Apocalyptic Commentary*, p. 8.

⁴¹¹ Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, preface, line 3.

⁴¹² In the preface to book four of *In primam partem Samuhelis*, Bede explains that Hwætberht had won himself the name of Eusebius on account of his love and zeal for piety: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 12-20. Bede also refers to Hwætberht as Eusebius in the letter to Acca which prefixes *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*: preface, lines 6-10. Bede did not employ the cognomen in the preface to *De temporum ratione*. This work is dedicated to 'dilectissime abba meus Hwaetbercte' (preface, line 39).

⁴¹³ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, preface, lines 6-10. The preface to Bede's *In Lucae evangelium expositio* also makes it clear that the commentary on Revelation was complete (see the discussion of Bede's interpretation of the evangelist symbols in note 192 above).

⁴¹⁴ On the date of *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, see the discussion below, p. 122.

⁴¹⁵ Revelation 21.19-20: 'The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst'. Bede offers a lengthy discussion of this passage at *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 37, lines 97-379. This detailed consideration of the precious stones can be contrasted with the concise exegetical style adopted in the commentary as a whole (though an

sardius (or carnelian), the sixth stone listed, is said to signify the glory of martyrs. It is apt that this stone is listed sixth in sequence, as Bede considers it to be representative of the Lord's Incarnation in the sixth age of the world (*'sexta aetate saeculi'*) and His crucifixion on the sixth day.⁴¹⁶ Elsewhere, a reference to five months of torture in the Vulgate text of Revelation is turned into an analogy with the six *aetates saeculi* (by means of a reference to the number six in a commentary by Primasius, Bede's source for his interpretation of the pericope in question).⁴¹⁷

Expositio Apocalypseos contains several important allusions to the framework for eschatological time. The recurring pattern of sevenfold sequences employed by the scriptural text are interpreted in a consistent way in Bede's commentary. Each stage of the numerical sequence represents a stage in the struggles of the universal Church.⁴¹⁸ Bede's exegesis of the opening of the seven seals (Revelation 6-8) provides a typical example of this. The first seal is related to the primitive glory of the early Church. Seals two to four are equated with a threefold body that wages war against it (made up of the devil, false brethren and heretics). The fifth seal represents the glory of those who triumph in this war and seal six is equated with the trials of Antichrist's persecution that

extended discussion of the twelve tribes of Israel is offered in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 9, lines 56-166). On Bede's interpretation of the precious stones see: Kitson, P. 1983, 'Lapidary Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England; part II, Bede's *Explanatio Apocalypsis* and Related Works', *Anglo-Saxon England* 12, 73-123.

⁴¹⁶ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 37, lines 211-15: 'Merito sexto loco positus, cum Dominus noster et sexta aetate saeculi incarnatus, et sexta feria sit pro totius mundi salute crucifixus'.

⁴¹⁷ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 13, lines 42-4: 'Quod vero alia translatio sex menses continet, eidem sensui propter sex aetates saeculi congruit'. The pericope in question is Revelation 9.5: 'They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months'. Gryson points out that Bede's reference to the number six 'in another translation' must have come to him from the Apocalypse commentary by Primasius: Gryson, R. *Beda's Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, pp. 182 and 348. Primasius compiled his *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* in the mid-sixth century and he was heavily influenced by the now-lost commentary of Tyconius. Bede repeatedly draws upon Primasius throughout the course of *Expositio Apocalypseos*, as the collated index of citations and borrowings in Gryson's edition shows: CCSL 121A, pp. 598-603.

⁴¹⁸ The various interpretations of numerical sevenfold sequences are thus in line with the interpretative strategy of the commentary as a whole. Bede sees the book of Revelation as a symbolic representation of the wars and struggles of the universal Church. This is made immediately clear at the outset (see lines 1-3 of the preface) and Bede emphasises the point throughout the course of the commentary itself (for example, see chapter 5, lines 1-4).

are expected to occur in the future.⁴¹⁹ The seventh seal is related to the beginning of eternal rest.⁴²⁰ A very similar formula is applied in Bede's exegesis of the seven angels and seven trumpets that feature in subsequent chapters of Revelation. With regards to the seventh trumpet,⁴²¹ Bede offers a relatively rare example of an exegetical interpretation in this commentary which is not at least partly derived from one of his main source texts:

The six previous trumpets, compared to the ages of the present world (*saeculi praesentis aetatibus*), announced the diverse tumults of the wars of the Church. But only the seventh, announcing the eternal sabbath, indicates the victory and the command of the true king.⁴²²

The reference to six ages of this present world is entirely conventional and typically Bedan. However, the association of the seventh trumpet with an 'eternal sabbath' does not sit easily with the expanded world ages doctrine presented in the commentaries on Luke and 2 Peter. The seventh *aetas* is not expected to be eternal. Like the sixth age, it is to end at the day of judgement and be followed by an eighth age of eternity. In contrast, the passage cited above creates an image of an eternal sabbath rest that is to follow directly on from the six historical ages.⁴²³

The absence of any reference to the eschatological elements of the expanded world ages scheme is particularly noteworthy in Bede's interpretation of a series of

⁴¹⁹ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 7.

⁴²⁰ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 10, lines 77-92.

⁴²¹ Revelation 11.15.

⁴²² *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 18, lines 1-6: 'Sex tubae priores saeculi praesentis aetatibus comparatae varios bellorum ecclesiae denuntiavere concursus. Septima vero, sabbati aeterni nuntia, victoriam tantum et imperium veri regis indicat'. Gryson lists no sources or analogues for this particular passage.

⁴²³ The image created is close to the idea of a communal sabbath rest that is to follow the day of judgement. This is one of two conceptions of the sabbath to feature in Augustine's works that post-date his rejection of the sabbatical millennium. See the discussion above, p. 107.

references to thousand-year periods in Revelation 20.⁴²⁴ Bede's immediate sources for this portion of the commentary were the Apocalypse commentaries of Primasius and Tyconius.⁴²⁵ Augustine's consideration of Revelation in book twenty of *De civitate Dei* was also an important source text.⁴²⁶ Some passages in *Expositio Apocalypseos* indicate that Bede consulted *De civitate Dei* directly, though Mackay has demonstrated that on several occasions the influence of Augustine came to Bede indirectly through Primasius.⁴²⁷ Drawing upon the exegetical principals established by Tyconius,⁴²⁸ Augustine proposed two interpretations of the 1000 years for which Satan is bound (Revelation 20.2).⁴²⁹ In both cases the number 1000 has no literal significance; it is a perfect number symbolising totality. Augustine proposed that the 1000 years could be seen as a symbolic reference to the remainder of the current era,⁴³⁰ or it can be thought

⁴²⁴ The pericopes in question refer to Satan being bound for a thousand years (Revelation 20.2, 20.7) and a thousand-year period of rest for the righteous (Revelation 20.4-6).

⁴²⁵ The complex relationship between this portion of *Expositio Apocalypseos* and the work of Tyconius, Primasius and Augustine is outlined in the critical apparatus that accompanies the modern Latin edition of the text: Gryson, R. *Beda's Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, pp. 502-10.

⁴²⁶ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 20.7-17.

⁴²⁷ Note that Primasius drew heavily upon *De civitate Dei* for his own interpretation of Revelation 20 without acknowledging his source. Mackay stresses the importance of Primasius as a source text for Bede's commentary. He demonstrates that Bede occasionally cites Augustine directly, but elsewhere it is clear that he has taken citations of Augustine from Primasius: Mackay, T. W. 1998, 'Augustine and Gregory the Great in Bede's Commentary on the Apocalypse', especially pp. 400-1. See also Bonner, G. 1966, *Saint Bede in the Tradition of Western Apocalyptic Commentary*, p. 10.

⁴²⁸ Augustine's interpretation of Revelation was significantly influenced by both of Tyconius's exegetical works; the *Liber regularum* and his commentary on the Apocalypse. An edition containing the Latin text and English translation of the former work is available: Babcock, W. S. 1989, trans. *Tyconius: The Book of Rules* (Atlanta). On the influence of Tyconius upon Augustine's interpretation of Revelation, see: Steinhäuser, K. B. 1987, *The Apocalypse commentary of Tyconius: a History of its Reception and Influence* (Frankfurt am Main); Van Oort, J. 1991, *Jerusalem and Babylon: a Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden), pp. 254-74; Fredriksen, P. 1992, 'Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse', in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca), pp. 20-37.

⁴²⁹ Revelation, 20.2: 'He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years'.

⁴³⁰ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 20.7: 'Thus, using that figure of speech whereby a part is signified by the whole, John uses the expression 'a thousand years' to denote the last part of this millennium, or 'day', which remains before the end of the world'. See also *De civitate Dei*, 20.9, where Augustine's interpretation of the 1000 year reign of the righteous (Revelation 20.4-7) is similarly conceived.

of as being equivalent to the entire span of historical time since the creation of the world.⁴³¹

In his own interpretation of the thousand years of Satan's confinement, Bede continues in the exegetical tradition defined by Tyconius, Primasius and Augustine. Bede's commentary draws upon the first interpretation suggested by Augustine for this verse but not the second. Bede explains that the 1000 years of Satan's imprisonment is a part, symbolising a wider whole. It is equivalent to the time remaining in the present era, or sixth day (that is, the era in which Christ was born and suffered).⁴³² Bede's Latin stays close to that of his source text, which in this instance is the lost Apocalypse commentary by Tyconius.⁴³³ The significant point to observe here, is that Bede does not employ the alternative notion that was available to him from *De civitate Dei*. He passes over the idea that the thousand years of Satan's imprisonment can be equated with the entirety of historical time. Instead, Bede is satisfied to offer a single interpretation: the thousand-year period symbolically represents the time remaining in the present, sixth era. Bede offers similar interpretations of two subsequent references to thousand-year periods that follow in chapter twenty of Revelation.⁴³⁴ In each case, Bede closely follows the language of his source texts to state that these numerical references have no literal significance.⁴³⁵ As with Bede's commentary on the thousand years of Satan's

⁴³¹ *De civitate Dei*, 20.7: 'Alternatively, he may have intended the thousand years to represent the whole number of years during which this world has been in existence, signifying the fullness of time by a perfect number'. Dyson, R. W. 1998, trans. *City of God*, p. 980.

⁴³² *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 35, lines 17-19. The thousand years represents 'the remainder of the thousand years of the sixth day in which the Lord was born and suffered (*reliquias mille annorum sexti diei in quo natus est dominus et passus*)'. Compare Augustine's first interpretation in *De civitate Dei*, 20.7, as reproduced in note 430, above.

⁴³³ Gryson indicates this by reproducing an analogous passage from the apocalypse commentary by Caesarius of Arles. Like Bede's commentary, this source is also an important witness to the lost text of Tyconius. Gryson, R. *Beda's Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, p. 504.

⁴³⁴ See Bede's comments regarding the thousand year reign of the righteous (Revelation 20.4 and 20.6): *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 35, lines, 53-9 and 81-4.

⁴³⁵ Gryson identifies debts to Primasius and Tyconius: CCSL 121A, pp. 506 and 508.

imprisonment, neither passage makes so much as an implicit reference to the eschatological aspects of the expanded world ages scheme.

For the purposes of the present analysis, it is important to note that at no point in his interpretation of the verses that refer to thousand-year periods does Bede step outside the interpretative tradition dictated to him by his source texts. The passage relating to the seven trumpets, cited above, reveals that Bede was willing to insert an original reference to the six historical ages into his largely derivative commentary.⁴³⁶ Evidently, he was not prepared (or not yet able) to do the same for the seventh and eighth *aetates saeculi*. Bede's interpretation of the 1000 years of Satan's confinement offers an effective counter argument to millenarian notions, but it achieves this using doctrine that is entirely derived from the theoretical tradition connected with the Tyconian group of Apocalypse commentaries. This policy might be thought of as playing safe; entirely understandable considering the problematic nature of the references under consideration and Bede's inexperience as an exegete at this stage of his career.

However, the expanded world ages framework could have provided Bede with an extremely commanding theoretical position. In discussing the 1000 years of Satan's confinement, Bede passes over the alternative Augustinian notion that the number 1000 can symbolise the total duration of world time. Bede could have linked this idea with the seventh *aetas saeculi* and equated it with a period of rest for the righteous that runs parallel to historical time. Building the 1000 years into the expanded world ages scheme would have fulfilled the same purpose as the interpretation that Bede did choose; it would have removed any literal significance from the reference to a thousand-year

⁴³⁶ See the discussion of *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 18, lines 1-6, above p. 118.

period in the pericope. That Bede did not link the 1000 years with the seventh world age, coupled with the complete lack of any reference to a seventh or eighth *aetas saeculi* in the remainder of Bede's commentary on Revelation, suggests that the eschatological dimension of the scheme had not yet been formulated when Bede compiled this work. It is possible that Bede had not yet had reason to consider such issues in detail, or maybe the expanded scheme was a work in progress at this stage of his career. Perhaps a lack of confidence in his own abilities as an exegete, or concerns about the problematic nature of Revelation prevented Bede from pursuing an original exegetical interpretation of the verses in question.⁴³⁷

The eschatological elements of the expanded world ages scheme are also absent from Bede's first commentary on Acts. This work, in its final form, must postdate the consecration of Bishop Acca in 710 but it was probably completed relatively soon after this event. Bede's prefatory letter to Acca refers to 'demands of annoying matters of which you are very much aware' that had delayed Bede's work on the Gospel of Luke.⁴³⁸ Plummer suggested that this may have been an allusion to the political troubles in Northumbria that followed the death of Aldfrith.⁴³⁹ However, in light of the fact that Acca and Wilfrid were close companions, it seems logical to see Bede's comment as a reference to the Plegwine controversy.⁴⁴⁰ In succeeding to the bishopric of Hexham,

⁴³⁷ Bede's comments at the very end of *Expositio Apocalypseos* could well be relevant in this context. At chapter 38, line 101, Bede describes the finished project as 'so great and hazardous a labour (*tanto tamque periculoso labore*)'. This might suggest some apprehension on Bede's part about treating such a complex, and potentially problematic scriptural text. In *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, Bede expresses trepidation in answering Acca's query concerning the post-judgement fate of the damned. Bede concludes his answer to Acca's question by referring to the issue as a 'most hazardous question (*quaestione periculosissima*)', suggesting that he was particularly cautious when treating eschatological issues.

⁴³⁸ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, preface, lines 10-14: 'Quod quia facere necdum potui et operis uidelicet immensitate perterritus et obstrepentium causarum, quas tu melius nosti necessitate praepeditus, ne tamen tuae postulationis contemneretur auctoritas, quod interim potui feci'.

⁴³⁹ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, p. xxxiv, note 2.

⁴⁴⁰ This possibility is suggested in the introduction to Laistner's original edition of the text: Laistner, M. L. W. 1939, ed. *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et retractatio* (Cambridge, Massachusetts), pp. xiii-xvii.

Acca would have been well aware of the heresy allegation that had arisen in the final year of Wilfrid's life. Bede may have been working on Acts for several years prior to 710 (at which point the work was completed and sent to Acca to mark his elevation to the see of Hexham).⁴⁴¹ Bede's references to the world ages in *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* are similar to those found in the commentary on Revelation. He makes a clear reference to the historical dimension of the ages scheme, stating that the Lord came into the world in the sixth world age ('*sexta aetate saeculi*').⁴⁴² *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* contains no clear reference to the seventh or eighth ages and on one occasion, Bede's interpretation is reminiscent of the 'eternal sabbath' idea put forth in the commentary on the seven trumpets of Revelation 11.⁴⁴³

The first explanations of the expanded world ages scheme can therefore be assigned to the second stage of Bede's exegetical career, that is; works that were composed after *Expositio Apocalypseos* and *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*. Significantly, the works that contain the earliest references to the expanded scheme were all definitely composed after the Plegwine controversy. It is unclear which biblical commentary contains the first appearance of the eight-age scheme in Bede's work, owing to the uncertainty that surrounds the precise dates of the relevant texts. The tentative nature of the earliest reference to the eighth age in Bede's commentary on Luke could be taken as evidence that this theory was a work in progress when that

⁴⁴¹ Laistner advanced this theory based upon a chronological error in the commentary (at *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 13, lines 42-53). The error is absent from *De temporibus*, leading Laistner to suspect that this part of the *Expositio* was composed before 703: Laistner, M. L. W. *Expositio et retractatio*, pp. xiii-xvii.

⁴⁴² *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 10, lines 31-4: 'Sexta hora Petrus inter medias preces esurit, salutem utique mundi quem dominus sexta aetate saeculi quaerere et saluare uenerat; quod et ipse uoluit indicare cum eadem diei hora super Samaritanae puteum sitiebat'.

⁴⁴³ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 114-25. This passage is a commentary on Acts 1.12: 'Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a sabbath day's walk from the city'. For the interpretation of the seventh trumpet (*Expositio Apocalypseos*, 18, lines 1-6) see above p. 118.

particular passage was written.⁴⁴⁴ However, there is no direct evidence to confirm that the relevant section of the Gospel commentary predates the tract on 2 Peter.

It is also possible that the extended discussion of the world ages that features in book one of *In Genesim* might constitute the first instance of the expanded scheme appearing in Bede's work.⁴⁴⁵ This mini-treatise considers the creation week and ages of the world analogy in close detail, and it concludes with an explanation of the parallel seventh age and the eighth age of eternity. *In Genesim* was composed in several stages. Dating the various component parts of this text is a complex issue which has been the subject of much debate (this topic is addressed in appendix two, below). For now it will suffice to note that the work that Bede did in compiling the mini-treatise on the world ages for the early part of *In Genesim* might provide a suitable context for the development of the extended framework. Though this hypothesis is possible, it is more likely that the relevant part of the Genesis commentary is roughly contemporaneous with *In primam partem Samuhelis*, and thus falls at the end of the period of Bede's career that is under discussion here.⁴⁴⁶

Whichever text contains the first reference to the expanded eight-age framework, it is clear that the Plegwine controversy provides a definitive splitting point in Bede's authorial career with regards to the development of his eschatological thought. No work known to predate the letter to Plegwine contains an allusion to the expanded world ages scheme. *Expositio Apocalypseos* is a pertinent example, along with the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* itself, of a work in which Bede might have alluded to

⁴⁴⁴ The tentative Latin employed by Bede in book 1 of *In Lucae evangelium expositio* (lines 1518-20) can be contrasted with specific references to the seventh and eighth *aetates saeculi* which occur later in the commentary. See the discussion above, pp. 101-103.

⁴⁴⁵ *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1093-224.

⁴⁴⁶ In addition to appendix 2, see the discussion of the parallels between *In primam partem Samuhelis* and book 1 of *In Genesim*, in chapter 10 below, pp. 295-297.

the eight-age scheme whilst discussing his expectations for eschatological time. The fact that he did not do so suggests that the eschatological aspects of the world ages doctrine were not formulated until after these works were completed.

The expanded world ages scheme: context and purpose

In developing the world ages scheme in the years following the Plegwine controversy, Bede was attempting to clarify his position regarding the eschatological dimension of time and establish a new orthodoxy grounded in the Augustinian tradition. Such clarification was necessary in light of the continuing misinterpretation of crucial scriptural passages and associated eschatological concepts by his contemporaries. The expanded world ages scheme offered a response to a variety of problematic theoretical traditions. For example, the eight-age scheme presented a temporal framework that could be used to counter the idea that the present day falls within a seventh era of historical time. Significant here is the seven-age system of chronological division proposed in the *Laterculus Malalianus*.⁴⁴⁷ The text's assertion that the present was occurring in a sabbath age of history was completely undermined by Bede's teachings on the seventh and eighth world ages.⁴⁴⁸

Bede's vision of a seventh age running parallel to historical time is a powerful theoretical notion. It could be drawn upon in refutation of the sabbatical millennium, a concept that anticipates a thousand-year period of rest for mankind on earth.⁴⁴⁹ Bede's expanded chronological framework offered an innovative solution to this longstanding theological problem. According to Bede, the sabbath rest was not to be an age of earthly

⁴⁴⁷ As demonstrated in chapter 3 of the present study, the *Laterculus Malalianus* was likely to have been circulating in Bede's Northumbria due to its association with the prestigious Canterbury school. For discussion, see above pp. 73-81.

⁴⁴⁸ *Laterculus Malalianus*, 23: 'Sabbatum igitur nunc est ...'.

⁴⁴⁹ For further discussion of the sabbatical millennium, see above pp. 56-58.

rest that would occur in the future. Instead it was occurring already, as a period of rest for the righteous running parallel to historical time. Christians are to look forward to an eighth age, an eternal period of bliss with the Lord that will not begin until after the day of judgement. With the expanded world ages scheme, millenarian conceptions of the sabbath could now be countered by reference to the parallel seventh age. Bede employs the expanded framework in precisely this way in *De temporum ratione*, chapter sixty-seven.⁴⁵⁰

It is difficult to resolve whether or not chapter sixty-seven of *De temporum ratione* can be taken as evidence for contemporary belief in the sabbatical millennium in Bede's lifetime. Richard Landes suggests that it can. In commenting upon *De temporum ratione*, Landes states that: 'One could not ask for less ambiguous testimony to the survival of the most dangerous kind of sabbatical millenarianism in the early eighth century'.⁴⁵¹ Landes's confidence on this matter may not be entirely justified. Bede uses a series of past-tense verbs to discuss the sabbatical millennium in *De temporum ratione*.⁴⁵² Rather than responding to an eighth-century issue, perhaps Bede was contributing to the centuries-old debate on this matter (Bede would have been intimately familiar with Augustine's refutation of the sabbatical millennium in *De civitate Dei*).⁴⁵³ Whether this was a contemporary issue or not, it is significant that the expanded world ages scheme provided an effective solution to this longstanding problem. This could well have been a significant motivation behind the development of the eschatological dimension of the world ages model in the first place.

⁴⁵⁰ *De temporum ratione*, 67. After describing erroneous beliefs relating to the sabbath, Bede clearly outlines the parallel seventh world age in refutation of the sabbatical millennium. For further discussion, see above, pp. 56-58.

⁴⁵¹ Landes, R. 1988, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', pp. 176-7.

⁴⁵² *De temporum ratione*, 67, lines 34-52. In contrast, Bede refers to the millennial week as if it is a current contemporary issue; lines 23-34. For further discussion, see pp. 56-58, above.

⁴⁵³ Augustine discusses the sabbatical millennium in *De civitate Dei*, 20.7.

As well as offering a response to contemporary and patristic confusion concerning the sabbath, Bede's expanded scheme should also be considered as part of a continued campaign to undermine the heresy allegation that he was subjected to in 708. Once Bede had developed the eschatological dimension of the scheme, he was able to promote it within his works as a reaffirmation of his own orthodoxy. Each reference to the eight-age model further emphasised the difference between Bede's advanced understanding of time and the ill-informed opinions of the 'lewd rustics' who had questioned the *Chronica minora* in 708.⁴⁵⁴ This is particularly evident in *De temporum ratione*. The preface addresses issues that were highlighted in the Plegwine controversy, and this led C. W. Jones to suggest that the text as a whole should be thought of as an extended defence of Bede's orthodoxy.⁴⁵⁵ The idea advanced by Jones, that the text should primarily be thought of as a response to the Plegwine episode, has rightly been disputed by Faith Wallis.⁴⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Bede certainly used *De temporum ratione* as a vehicle to promote the expanded world ages framework,⁴⁵⁷ and he took the opportunity to respond to the heresy accusation which had arisen several years before. The issues of 708 lie behind several chapters in the main body of *De temporum ratione*, particularly the world chronicle of chapter sixty-six.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁴ Bede refers to his accusers as 'lewd rustics (*lascivientibus rusticis*)' in *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 1, line 6. See also, a second reference to '*rustici*' in paragraph 15, line 262.

⁴⁵⁵ Jones, C. W. 1976, 'Bede's Place in Medieval Schools', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the 13th Century of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London), pp. 261-85, at p. 268. See also: Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 194-5.

⁴⁵⁶ See the comments of Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. xxx-xxxi and 253-4. Wallis disputes Jones's theory on the grounds that *De temporum ratione* offers a great deal more than a discussion of eschatological time.

⁴⁵⁷ Elements of the expanded world ages scheme are discussed in chapters 10, 66, 67, and 71.

⁴⁵⁸ The *Chronica maiora* contains several references to the chronological discrepancies that exist between the Septuagint and Hebrew data. Also relevant with regards to the Plegwine controversy is chapter 67, where Bede once again addresses some of the contemporary misconceptions concerning the end of time which he had dealt with in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.

Acca, Hexham and the dissemination of the expanded world ages scheme

The letter from Acca of Hexham to Bede that is preserved in the prologue to *In Lucae evangelium expositio* reveals that the commentary had been composed at the bishop's behest.⁴⁵⁹ Bede's reference, in the preface to *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, to 'annoying matters' that had delayed his work on the Gospel of Luke ought to be taken as an allusion to the Plegwine controversy.⁴⁶⁰ At certain points in the commentary on Luke, Bede's interpretation seems to be connected with the heresy allegation that he had been subjected to a few years earlier.⁴⁶¹ Bede's commentary on Luke 17.23 offers a pertinent example.⁴⁶² Bede rebukes those who wish to try and calculate prospective dates for the end of the world and he damningly likens those who pursue such calculations to the heretics and antichrists that will appear at the end of time.⁴⁶³ At this point of his career, in the aftermath of the Plegwine controversy, Bede was keen to confirm his orthodoxy as a Christian scholar. As well as offering direct denunciations of apocalyptic speculation in the course of *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, Bede also includes several references to the eight-age scheme in his interpretation of the Gospel text. It is significant that such references appear in a work dedicated to Acca. Hexham might well have been the source of the heresy allegation that sparked the Plegwine

⁴⁵⁹ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, prologue, lines 1-5. On the two letters that make up the prologue to Bede's commentary on Luke (the first from Acca to Bede, followed by Bede's response) see further note 192 above.

⁴⁶⁰ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, preface, lines 10-14. See the discussion of this matter above, p. 122.

⁴⁶¹ For example, Bede explores issues of Old Testament chronology at *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 1, lines 2796-815. For further comment on this passage, which concerns the generation of Cainan and the calculation of the second *aetas saeculi*, see note 239 above.

⁴⁶² Luke 17.23: 'Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them'.

⁴⁶³ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 5, lines 811-22: 'Quamuis haec sententia non solum ad tempus sed etiam ad personam possit intellegi et ad tempus quidem quia extitere non nulli qui curricula computantes aetatum certum se consummationis saeculi annum diem et horam dicerent inuenisse contra auctoritatem domini dicentis, non est uestrum nosse tempora uel momenta, ad personam uero quia multi contra ecclesiam uenire multi uenturi sunt heretici qui se christos asseuerent quorum primus simon magus extremus autem ille maior ceteris est antichristus. Si qui ergo dixerint, ecce hic ecce illic, id est in hac uel illa persona uel hora uenire uel uenturum esse regnum dei, non sunt sequendi qui altiora se quaerere et infanda dicere non timent'.

controversy.⁴⁶⁴ Whilst this fact is not entirely secure (the anonymous accuser might also have been associated with an alternative monastic centre such as Ripon) it is certain that the allegation was made in the presence of Wilfrid, Acca's close companion and predecessor as bishop of Hexham.⁴⁶⁵ Following Wilfrid's death, it would be Acca's opinion on issues relating to chronology and eschatology that mattered most so far as Bede was concerned. Acca now had a vital role to play in endorsing Bede's works as legitimate. From Hexham, Bede could expect that his texts would be circulated amongst the Wilfridian monks that had formerly challenged the chronological framework of *De temporibus*.

In total, nine of Bede's works are dedicated to Acca and several of these texts contain references to the expanded world ages scheme.⁴⁶⁶ The appearance of the eight-age scheme in Bede's commentary on 2 Peter has already been noted.⁴⁶⁷ This work is part of the collection *In epistulas septem catholicas*, a compilation of short tracts that is known to have been associated with Acca.⁴⁶⁸ *In Genesim* is addressed to 'the most beloved and most reverend bishop Acca (*dilectissimo ac reuerendissimo antistiti Acca*)'.⁴⁶⁹ In addition to the mini-treatise on the world ages and creation week analogy considered above,⁴⁷⁰ *In Genesim* contains several explanations of the expanded world

⁴⁶⁴ See the discussion of this issue in chapter 2, above pp. 50-52.

⁴⁶⁵ The *Epistola ad Pleguinam* reveals that the accusation against Bede was originally raised in Wilfrid's presence, paragraph 17, lines 312-3.

⁴⁶⁶ The full list of Bedan works dedicated to Acca is as follows: *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, *De mansionibus filiorum Israel*, *De eo quod Isaiiah ait*, *In Marci euangelium expositio*, *In Genesim*, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, and *De die iudicii*. The forms of address employed to address Acca in each of these works are collated in a table in appendix 3, below, p. 352. *De templo* can almost certainly be added to this list, see below note 481.

⁴⁶⁷ See above, pp. 105-106.

⁴⁶⁸ One of the component parts of the collection (*In epistolam I Iohannis*) was sent to Acca at the same time as *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*. The preface to *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* makes this clear in lines 76-9.

⁴⁶⁹ *In Genesim*, preface, line 1.

⁴⁷⁰ *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1093-224. For discussion, see above p. 124.

ages scheme.⁴⁷¹ Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel was completed circa 716 and dedicated to Acca.⁴⁷² This commentary contains several explanations of the eschatological aspects of the expanded world ages framework. An example of this is found in Bede's interpretation of 1 Samuel 16.10 (a reference to David being the eighth son of Jesse). Bede interprets this verse by referring to the parallel seventh age and the eighth-age of eternity to come.⁴⁷³ The very last passage of the final book of *In primam partem Samuhelis* makes reference to the seventh *aetas saeculi*, giving Bede's framework for eschatological time a degree of prominence within this commentary.⁴⁷⁴

In Marci euangelium expositio and *In Ezram et Neemiam* are also dedicated to Acca.⁴⁷⁵ Both of these commentaries refer to the eschatological aspects of the expanded world ages scheme. Bede twice refers to the sabbath rest of souls in the seventh *aetas saeculi* in book three of *In Ezram et Neemiam*.⁴⁷⁶ In the commentary on Mark, Bede refers to the seventh and eighth world ages in his interpretation of the Transfiguration, much as he had done in the earlier commentary on Luke.⁴⁷⁷ Bede compares the account given in the Gospel of Mark, that Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain 'after six days', to the corresponding pericope in the Gospel of Luke (which mentions a

⁴⁷¹ For example, see the following two passages, in which Bede outlines the six ages of this world, the seventh age of rest in another life and the eighth age of eternity to come: *In Genesim*, 4, lines 408-11; 4, lines 1553-8.

⁴⁷² Acca is named as the text's dedicatee: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, prologue, line 36. Though they do not refer to him by name, references to the recipient's episcopal status in the prologues to books 3 and 4 indicate that the entire work was dedicated to Acca (book 3, line 8; book 4, line 19). For a full consideration of the circumstances surrounding the composition of *In primam partem Samuhelis*, see chapter 9 of this study, pp. 261-272.

⁴⁷³ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 155-7: 'Sic etiam post sex huius saeculi aetates et septimam quae nunc illa in uita geritur sabbati animarum quasi octaua aetas nostrae resurrectionis aduentura speratur'.

⁴⁷⁴ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2563-82.

⁴⁷⁵ *In Marci euangelium expositio* is addressed to 'Acca, most beloved of bishops (*dilectissime antistitum acca*)', prologue, line 40. Bede addresses Acca as 'most reverend Bishop Acca (*reuerendissime antistes acca*)' in the prologue to *In Ezram et Neemiam*, line 10.

⁴⁷⁶ *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 951-5; 3, lines 1986-91.

⁴⁷⁷ *In Marci euangelium expositio*, 3, lines 1-38. Compare *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, 3, lines 1490-513 (this passage is considered above, see p.102 and note 370).

period of ‘about eight days’).⁴⁷⁸ In his interpretation of these verses, Bede explains that following the six ages of this world and the seventh age, which is occurring now in another life, we will rise again in the eighth age.⁴⁷⁹ Bede also mentions the eschatological elements of the eight-age scheme in *De templo*, his allegorical treatise on the construction of Solomon’s Temple.⁴⁸⁰ Though Bede does not name Acca as the dedicatee of this work, he is widely assumed to be the bishop addressed in its prologue.⁴⁸¹

When considered together, the number of references to the expanded world ages scheme that appear in works associated with Acca is striking. Perhaps it is no surprise that the scheme appears frequently in texts dedicated to Bede’s bishop, as more of his works were dedicated to Acca than anyone else. Nevertheless, the weight of evidence is substantial. It seems as though Bede was engaged in a campaign to promote the expanded world ages scheme in works directed towards the Hexham community. It is particularly revealing that the three earliest datable works to contain references to the seventh and eighth ages, that is the commentaries on Luke, 2 Peter and the earliest part of *In Genesim*, are all associated with Acca in some way. In these texts, Bede was attempting to reassert his eschatological orthodoxy in light of the Plegwine controversy. Subsequent references to the eight-age scheme in mature commentaries also connected

⁴⁷⁸ Mark 9.2; Luke 9.28.

⁴⁷⁹ *In Marci evangelium expositio*, 3, lines 12-15: ‘... et nos post sex huius saeculi aetates in quibus pro domino pati et laborare gaudemus ac septimam sabbatissimi animarum quae interim in alia uita geritur octaua profecto aetate resurgemus’.

⁴⁸⁰ *De templo*, 1, lines 245-51; 1, lines 807-11.

⁴⁸¹ It has often been assumed that Acca was the text’s dedicatee. For example, see Jennifer O’ Reilly’s introduction to the translated edition of *De templo*: Connolly, S. 1995, trans. *Bede: on the Temple* (Liverpool), p. xxxi (see also footnote 20, pp. 2-3). The dedicatee is addressed as ‘most beloved of bishops (*dilectissime antistitum*)’, *De templo*, prologue, line 49. This is similar to the other forms of address used by Bede to address Acca in his exegetical works, and it corresponds exactly to the form used in *In Marci evangelium expositio* (see note 475, above). One of the manuscripts used to reconstruct the critical edition of *De templo* names Acca in the rubric that precedes the prologue. This manuscript, Munich, Staatsbibliothek 6318, dates from the eleventh-century (Hurst, D. *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Exegetica*, CCSL 119A (Turnhout, 1969), pp. 142-3). The prefatory letter is addressed to Nothelm in three late manuscripts of *De templo*: Bolton, W. F. 1967, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, vol. I, pp. 121-2.

with Acca (*In primam partem Samuhelis, In Ezram et Neemiam, In Marci evangelium expositio, De templo* and the later parts of *In Genesim*) can be thought of as a programme of reinforcement and legitimisation. Bede took several opportunities to build his vision for eschatological time into these commentaries and it became common for him to refer to the expanded world ages scheme in exegetical interpretations of scriptural sixes, sevens and eights. Bede mentioned the eight-age scheme so often that in time, its orthodoxy could hardly have been questioned by anybody who had regular access to his work.

It is important to stress that the expanded framework was not just put forth in works connected with Acca. The scheme became a crucial aspect of Bede's thought and it was restated in several different areas of his wider body of work. The seventh and eighth ages are outlined in detail in *De temporum ratione*, confirming the central importance that these concepts came to have in Bede's overall vision of time. *De temporum ratione* is not dedicated to Acca. Instead, the preface addresses Abbot Hwætberht.⁴⁸² Likewise, no obvious link exists between Acca and Bede's collection of fifty Gospel homilies. Bede offers a full explanation of the eschatological dimension of the world ages framework in several of his sermons.⁴⁸³ The homilies in question can be seen as an attempt to popularise the extended world ages framework amongst Bede's contemporaries by introducing it into aspects of everyday monastic life.⁴⁸⁴ The

⁴⁸² *De temporum ratione*, preface, line 39.

⁴⁸³ See the following three passages, each of which offers a full explanation of the eight-age framework: *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, book 1, number 11, lines 147-66; 1.23, lines 224-7; 2.19, lines 89-92.

⁴⁸⁴ A monastic setting is implied throughout the collection of homilies. The sermons frequently acknowledge and address the audience using terms such as 'my dear brothers'. Homily 2.16 demonstrates an awareness of the audience's needs. Bede explains that he must keep his comments brief to avoid prolonging the sermon and it seems as if he has an ideal length in mind: *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.16, lines 271-6. These points imply that the sermons were written to be preached (as opposed being theological tracts that employ the homiletic format as a literary device). Note though, that Bonner has suggested that it is an 'open question' as to whether or not they were delivered in the form that we now have them. Bonner highlights the possibility that the Latin sermons are based on 'conferences delivered

explanations of the seventh and eighth world ages that feature in Bede's homilies were intended to be heard by monastic brethren of all ages and intellects.

Bede composed a lengthy hymn that explores the analogy between the world ages and the days of the creation week known as the *Hymnus de opere sex dierum primordialium et de sex aetatibus mundi*.⁴⁸⁵ Bede is known to have composed a collection of hymns (he refers to 'a book of hymns in various metres and rhythms' in the *Historia ecclesiastica*).⁴⁸⁶ The modern edition of Bede's hymns is beset with problems.⁴⁸⁷ The edition cannot be thought of as an accurate representation of the work that Bede referred to in the *Historia*.⁴⁸⁸ Scholars are faced with several obstacles in trying to recreate the contents of Bede's *Liber hymnorum*, not least the fact that liturgical sources tend to preserve their content anonymously.⁴⁸⁹ Two collections of Bedan hymns survive. A Flemish scholar, George Cassander, printed a large collection of Latin hymns in 1556, eleven of which were attributed to Bede.⁴⁹⁰ Extracts from eight of the hymns printed by Cassander appear anonymously in a medieval anthology of

in English in the course of divine worship at Jarrow': Bonner, G. 1999, 'Bede: Scholar and Spiritual Teacher', in J. Hawkes and S. Mill (eds.), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud), pp. 365-70, at p. 369.

⁴⁸⁵ The *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi* is printed as hymn 1 in the CCSL edition of Bede's *opera rhythmica*; Fraipont, J. *Bedae Venerabilis Opera rhythmica*, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), pp. 407-11.

⁴⁸⁶ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24: 'Librum hymnorum diverso metro sive rythmo'.

⁴⁸⁷ Fraipont's edition of Bede's *opera rhythmica* has been heavily criticised since its publication over fifty years ago. The complaints began almost immediately, with Walther Bulst's scathing comments appearing in 1959, just four years after the CCSL volume was published: Bulst, W. 1959, 'Bedae Opera Rhythmica?' *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 89, 83-91.

⁴⁸⁸ Fraipont's edition bears the subtitle 'Book of hymns, rhythms, and various prayers' (*Liber hymnorum, rhythmici, variae preces*), but Bede's words in the *Historia* cannot refer to the hymns included in Fraipont's edition alone. Only metrical hymns are present in Fraipont's edition. It contains no *rhythmici* (as defined by Bede himself in his discussion of rhythmic verse in *De arte metrica*, 24). See Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet*, p. 9. Furthermore, Bulst suggests that hymns 4 and 5 of Fraipont's edition should not be associated with Bede on metrical grounds: 'Bedae Opera Rhythmica?', 88-9. See further the comments of Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 74 and p. 126 note 32.

⁴⁸⁹ The following discussion draws upon Lapidge's excellent analysis in *Bede the Poet*, pp. 5-12.

⁴⁹⁰ Cassander, G. 1556, *Hymni ecclesiastici, praesertim qui Ambrosiani dicuntur: multis in locis recogniti, et multorum hymnorum accessione locupletati* (Cologne). Cassander's collection contains hymns 1, 2, 6, 7, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 (following the numbers used by Fraipont). Cassander's 1556 edition is held by Cambridge University Library.

devotional readings entitled *De laude Dei*.⁴⁹¹ This collection is associated with Alcuin,⁴⁹² and it is thought to have been compiled during his time in York.⁴⁹³ If this is indeed the case, this indicates that the items contained within the *De laude Dei* collection were extant in Northumbria in the late eighth century, which in turn lends credibility to Cassander's collection and the lost manuscript upon which it was based.⁴⁹⁴

There is little reason to doubt Bede's authorship of the *Hymnus de opere sex dierum primordialium et de sex aetatibus mundi*. It features in Cassander's printed edition, three of its stanzas are preserved in *De laude Dei*, and it also has an independent manuscript tradition confirming Bede as its author.⁴⁹⁵ George Hardin Brown has cast doubt over five of the stanzas that are included in the published Latin edition of the *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi*.⁴⁹⁶ This leaves a twenty-eight stanza hymn, in which Bede fully explores the world ages and creation week analogy. The

⁴⁹¹ The collection, entitled '*De laude Dei et de confessione orationibusque sanctorum collecti*' has never been published. Short extracts of between one and three stanzas are excerpted from the eight hymns in question (numbers 1, 11, 9, 12, 6, 7, 8 and 10).

⁴⁹² A link to Alcuin is suggested by the rubric of the later of the two extant manuscripts, Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek Misc. Patr. 17 (B II.10). The rubric (fol. 133 verso) states that *De laude Dei* is a collection 'by Alcuin the deacon (*ab Alchonio levita*)'. The other manuscript, a ninth-century copy of the collection, does not mention Alcuin: El Escorial, Real Biblioteca b. IV. 17, fols. 93-108.

⁴⁹³ Donald Bullough considered *De laude Dei* to be a collection of materials from Alcuin's York years; he drew heavily upon *De laude Dei* in his reconstruction of the York liturgy in the eighth century. His *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (published posthumously) does not discuss the evidence at length, but states: 'the overall impression given by its contents is, none the less, that we have here a personal reflection of the public worship and private study of Alcuin's York years'. Bullough, D. 2003, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden), p. 177. Lapidge also endorses the link between the collection and Alcuin. He cites *De laude Dei* as evidence that its Bedan hymns were circulating in Northumbria by 790 at the latest: *Bede the Poet*, p. 8.

⁴⁹⁴ As Cassander's Bedan material is apparently unrelated to the transmission of *De laude Dei*, the eight hymns that feature in both collections can safely be attributed to Bede. Lapidge suggests that this overlap should encourage us to accept the three hymns printed by Cassander which are absent from *De laude Dei* (Fraipont's numbers 2, 3 and 13).

⁴⁹⁵ The hymn survives in Cologne, Dombibliothek 106 and Vienna, Nationalbibliothek 1743. The table of contents in the Cologne manuscript (fol. 6) preserves the hymn as the work of '*Bede presbyteri*,' and it is followed by the poem in memory of Æthelthryth from *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.20. On the Cologne manuscript, see: Jones, L. W. 1929, 'Cologne MS 106: a Book of Hildebald', *Speculum* 4, 27-61.

⁴⁹⁶ The stanzas in question are numbers 29-33. See Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 75, who describes these verses as 'metrically defective and anticlimactic'. Hymn 1 should thus end with the appeal to the holy trinity in stanza 28.

hymn treats the eschatological aspects of the world ages scheme in full, and Bede's depiction of the seventh and eighth ages is entirely in line with the theoretical conception of them in his exegetical works.⁴⁹⁷

Of the eleven Bedan hymns held to be genuine, the *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi* is the only one not overtly associated with an identifiable feast of the liturgical year.⁴⁹⁸ This raises the question of where, if at all, this hymn would fit into the liturgical cycle. There can be little doubt that Bede intended the other ten hymns to be sung by a congregation or choir. They frequently employ verbs in the third person plural form and constructions using the reflexive pronoun 'nos'.⁴⁹⁹ Similar constructions are evident in the *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi*, indicating that it too was meant to be sung collectively.⁵⁰⁰ The celebration of Easter might provide a suitable context for the performance of this hymn, as the latter part of the hymn describes the death of Jesus, His resurrection and ascension into heaven.⁵⁰¹ It is also possible that the *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi* was composed in order to serve as a teaching device. In any case, the hymn offers a convenient means by which the key points concerning the world ages doctrine could be easily learnt and internalised through frequent repetition.

⁴⁹⁷ Stanzas 17 and 18 outline the relationship between the seventh day of creation and the seventh *aetas saeculi*. The eighth age is celebrated in stanzas 19-21. See also, stanzas 24-8.

⁴⁹⁸ Hymn 6 is for Ascension Day and 7 is for Pentecost. The other nine that are thought to be genuine are each associated with a feast day connected with a Saint (or Saints). These are: the Holy Innocents (hymn 2), St Agnes (hymn 3), John the Baptist (hymns 8 and 10), Ss Peter and Paul (hymn 9), the Virgin Mary (hymn 11) and St Andrew (12 and 13). The hymns make it clear that they were intended to be sung on the feast day in question. For example, see the second stanza of hymn 7, *In die sancto pentecostes*.

⁴⁹⁹ Examples which suggest that the hymn in question was to be sung by a group, include: hymn 2, stanza 1, line 2 ('dicamus'); hymn 6, 1, 1 ('canamus') 10, 3 ('feramus') 11, 1 ('nos', 'precamur') 31, 1 ('nobis') 32, 1; hymn 7, 1, 3 ('nos') 1, 4 ('canamus') 3, 2 ('nos') 7, 4 ('nostra pectora') hymn 8, 11, 3 ('nobis'); hymn 9, 1, 2 ('canamus') 1, 3 ('vacemus') 20, 2 ('corda nostra') 21, 1 ('precamur') 21, 2 ('dicimus') 21, 3 ('nos') 22, 3-4 ('noster chorus ... canorus') 23, 2 ('nos') 23, 4 ('vacemus'); hymn 11, 1, 1-2 ('vocibus ... nostris mentibus') 2, 2 ('nostrae salutis') 2, 3 ('nobis') 3, 4 ('nostris ... laudibus') 16, 2 ('reddimus') 17, 2 ('dicimus'); hymn 12, 1, 2 ('canamus') 12, 2 ('nobis'); hymn 13, 18, 1 ('nobis').

⁵⁰⁰ Such constructions are evident in the final five stanzas: *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi*, stanzas 24-8. Here the hymn uses the reflexive pronoun 'nos' (stanza 24, line 2; 26, 4; 28, 1) and Bede employs verbs in the third person plural form: 'intrabimus' (stanza 25, line 1); 'scandemus' (27, 3).

⁵⁰¹ *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi*, stanzas 21-4.

The whole collection of Bedan hymns, as it has come down to us, may tentatively be linked to Acca, bishop of Hexham. A discussion of this link offers a most fitting way to conclude this analysis of the dissemination of the world ages scheme in Bede's works. Hymns twelve and thirteen both concern Saint Andrew the Apostle.⁵⁰² The absence of significant amounts of overlapping content suggests that they were originally conceived of as a pair, with hymn twelve being devoted to Andrew's life and thirteen focusing upon his death. The main church at Hexham had been constructed in the 670's by Bishop Wilfrid and it was dedicated to St Andrew.⁵⁰³ Is it possible that the St Andrew hymns, along with the *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi*, formed part of a wider collection composed primarily for the Hexham community?

Notes written by the sixteenth-century scholar John Leland reveal that Bede wrote at least one verse composition that can be directly connected with Hexham. Leland's notes describe a collection of poems that was compiled by Milred (bishop of Worcester from 745-775).⁵⁰⁴ By the sixteenth century, a codex containing a copy of Milred's collection was present in Malmesbury, where it was consulted by Leland.⁵⁰⁵ Leland listed the contents of the manuscript that he found in Malmesbury and partially transcribed some of the items preserved in it. It contained a number of short poems,

⁵⁰² Hymn 12 recaps the principal events of Andrew's life, describing his missionary work, imprisonment, torture and crucifixion. In contrast, the first seven stanzas of hymn 13 are written from the point of view of Andrew, who is addressing words of praise directly to the cross. This stylistic device is paralleled in Old English vernacular poetry such as *The Dream of the Rood* (see the comments of Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 75). Hymn 13 undertakes a stylistic shift in stanza 8, describing Andrew's suffering on the cross and his subsequent passage into heaven.

⁵⁰³ Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 22.

⁵⁰⁴ A copy of Leland's work, the *Collectanea*, is in the Bodleian Library. It was reprinted in an edition by Hearne, T. 1770, ed. *Joannis Lelandi Antiquarii de rebus britannicis collectanea*, (London). The information regarding Milred's collection is found in vol. III, pp. 114-18. That the collection consulted by Leland was compiled by Milred is confirmed by item 1. Item 1 is a prefatory poem by 'antistes Milredus' describing his collection of epigrams.

⁵⁰⁵ On Leland and his activities in Malmesbury, see Carley, J. P. and Petitmengin, P. 2004, '*Tantus et tam rarus thesaurus*: John Leland's Letter to Beatus Rhenanus and the Lost Manuscript of Tertullian's works from Malmesbury', *Anglo-Saxon England* 33, 195-223.

some of which are attributed to Bede or connected with him in some way.⁵⁰⁶ The material in this collection was examined in an important article in the *English Historical Review* by Michael Lapidge.⁵⁰⁷ In many cases, Leland recorded just a title for the items in the codex, though for some poems he also preserved selected lines from the poems themselves. Items six, seven and eight in the collection (following the numbering system employed by Lapidge) were all apparently Bedan epigrams, but Leland recorded only brief descriptive titles for each one. Item eight was a dedicatory epigram intended for a church that was built by Bishop Wilfrid and completed by his successor Acca.⁵⁰⁸ This must be the church of St Mary at Hexham.⁵⁰⁹ The collection contained two further dedicatory compositions which were not overtly connected with any particular foundation, though Lapidge has suggested that these poems might also have been intended for churches in the Hexham area.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁶ Milred's collection of epigrams evidently contained a number of interesting sources connected with important ecclesiastical figures from the Anglo-Saxon period. Leland's notes attest to the existence of poems by Aldhelm, Ceolfrith, and Milred himself. It also contained epitaphs of Archbishops Berhtwald and Tatwine, Abbess Bugga and Bede.

⁵⁰⁷ Lapidge, M. 1975, 'Some Remnants of Bede's Lost *Liber Epigrammatum*', *English Historical Review* 90, 798-820. This article is reprinted in Lapidge, M. 1996, *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600-899* (London), pp. 357-79, along with updated additional notes at pp. 510-12. Lapidge reconstructs Milred's compendium from Leland's notes in order to make the contents of the collection accessible to a wider scholarly audience. At the time of his writing in 1975, it was believed that no manuscript containing Milred's compendium was extant. It has since come to light that a fragment, known as the Urbana leaf, preserves two poems plus marginal annotations in Leland's distinctive handwriting. This bifolium (Urbana, University of Illinois Library 128) is a remnant of the original manuscript consulted by Leland. David Dumville has dated the principal script preserved in the Urbana leaf (Phase III Anglo-Saxon Square miniscule) to the mid-tenth century: Dumville, D. N. 1994, 'English Square Miniscule: the Mid-Century Phases', *Anglo-Saxon England* 23, 133-64, at 148-9. Thus, the manuscript consulted by Leland was not the original collection compiled by and owned by Milred, but rather a tenth century copy. For further discussion of Milred's collection, see: Sims-Williams, P. 1982, 'Milred of Worcester's Collection of Latin Epigrams and its Continental Counterparts', *Anglo-Saxon England* 10, 21-38.

⁵⁰⁸ The poem is recorded in Leland's notes as: 'Versus ... in porticu ecclesiae S. Mariae, ab Wilfrido episcopo constructa in quibus mentionem facit Accae episcopi'.

⁵⁰⁹ According to chapter 56 of the *Vita Wilfridi*, Wilfrid was inspired to build the church of St Mary following a vision of St Michael (whose orders he relayed to Acca upon waking).

⁵¹⁰ Lapidge, M. 1975, 'Bede's Lost *Liber Epigrammatum*', 803-4. The poems in question are items 6 and 7 in the collection. Item 6 is a dedicatory epigram to St Michael. Lapidge suggests that this might have been intended for the oratory of St Michael which is mentioned as being near Hexham in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.2. Lapidge observes that no other church or oratory is known to have been dedicated to Michael in Northumbria in this period. Item 7 concerns St Mary, and Lapidge proposes two possible destinations for this epigram. It might, like item 8, have been composed for the church of St Mary at

The lost Bedan poetry witnessed in Leland's notes offers a tantalising glimpse of Bede's association with Hexham. It presents evidence that Bede composed verse works for the Hexham community. In addition to the pair of hymns for St Andrew, it should be noted that hymn number eleven concerns St Mary. Like item eight of the lost collection of poetic works, this hymn could also have been intended for use at the church of St Mary at Hexham.⁵¹¹ There is no way to confirm this proposed link between the Bedan collection of hymns and the Hexham community, but it is intriguing to consider this highly-speculative suggestion. What better way would there have been for Bede to promote his framework for eschatological time than to compose a collection of hymns, one of which includes a full explanation of the seventh and eighth world ages, and send it to a Wilfridian monastic community to be internalised by its members?

Conclusion

The findings of the present chapter can be summarised as follows. Following the Plegwine controversy, Bede developed his vision for eschatological time considerably, basing his conception of the seventh and eighth ages upon ideas derived from *De civitate Dei*. Bede took steps to clarify his eschatological doctrine for two principal reasons. First, he wanted to clear up contemporary and patristic confusion concerning the sabbath rest and the end of time. Also, Bede wished to confirm his own orthodoxy in order to distance himself from the allegation that he had been subjected to in 708. The dissemination of the eight-age framework can be split into two main stages for ease

Hexham. Alternatively, it might have been intended for the church dedicated to Mary at St Peter's monastery, Monkwearmouth (see Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 9, 17 and the anonymous *Vita Ceolfredi*, 25).

⁵¹¹ Note though that hymn 9, *In Natali SS Petri et Pauli*, commemorates the dedicatees of the twin foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow where Bede himself was priest. This hymn is one of Bede's most adventurous, employing a flamboyant acrostic structure based upon the letters of the Latin alphabet.

of reference. Firstly, there is a stage of development and promotion, directed principally towards Hexham, which occurred in the period circa 710-716. This period sees the earliest references to the expanded world ages scheme appear in works associated with Bishop Acca. This initial stage was sustained by means of a longer-term campaign of reinforcement, during which Bede continued to make frequent references to the eight-age scheme in a wide variety of contexts.

The analysis of the extended world ages framework carried out in this chapter has made important contributions to several key areas of Bedan scholarship. Bede's perception of chronological time developed significantly over the course of his lifetime, and it is clear that the Plegwine controversy was a pivotal moment in Bede's career. A similar methodology will be employed in subsequent chapters of this study to reconstruct the relationship between Bede's eschatological perspective and other significant events of his lifetime. The findings of the present chapter can be used to provide clues regarding the dating *termini* of certain Bedan works (appendix two considers a selection of texts, including *In Genesim* and *De schematibus et tropis*, in light of references that they contain to the framework for eschatological time). A complex relationship exists between Bede's eight-age model and the similar concepts outlined in his source materials. Here, as elsewhere, Bede's thought can be characterised as a process of innovation within a tradition. Whilst the Augustinian orientation of Bede's parallel seventh age and eighth age of eternity must not be denied, Bede clarified these concepts to provide a much-developed (and much-needed) framework for eschatological time.

The significance of Bede's role in developing the eschatological aspects of the world ages model should not be underestimated with regards to the later-medieval

Christian tradition. A definitive 'Bedan scheme' can be identified, which distinguishes his world ages model, with its advanced vision for eschatological time, from that of earlier authorities such as Augustine and Isidore.⁵¹² Bede's seventh and eighth ages became an orthodox line of interpretation for many medieval writers in the years after his death. Scholars that were influenced by Bede's teachings on the seventh and eighth world ages include, but are by no means limited to: Ælfric,⁵¹³ Hrabanus Maurus⁵¹⁴ and St Bonaventure.⁵¹⁵ That such figures were directly influenced by Bede says a great deal about his status a scholarly authority in the later Middle Ages, both in Anglo-Saxon England and continental Europe.

The world ages analogy is a theme that has run throughout the first four chapters of this study. The ages framework was a crucial aspect of Bede's thought. It influenced his perception of the past, the present and the future. The ages model defined the way in which the eschatological events of the future would fit into the wider pattern of universal time. It is now necessary to conclude this discussion of the world ages, and proceed to consider more specific points of eschatological detail. In doing so, the fundamental importance of the world ages scheme ought not to be forgotten; each

⁵¹² This idea has been noted in secondary scholarship. Tristram describes a specific 'Bedasche Schema', with regards to chronology and the world ages. The Bedan scheme is clearly distinguished from the 'Augustinisch-Isidorisches Schema'. Tristram, H. L. C. 1985, *Sex aetates mundi*, pp. 35-41. See also, Kleist, A. J. 2003, 'Influence of Bede's *De temporum ratione* on Ælfric', p. 90, note 43.

⁵¹³ Ælfric's debt to Bede is particularly evident at the conclusion of his *Libellus de veteri testamento et novo*. Here, Ælfric describes a seventh age (Abel to judgement day) and a post-judgement eighth age of eternity. This scheme is also outlined in Ælfric's *De sex etatibus huius seculi*. On the relationship between Bede and Ælfric, see Kleist, A. J. 2003, 'Influence of Bede's *De temporum ratione* on Ælfric'.

⁵¹⁴ Hrabanus Maurus refers to an eighth world age, ('*octaua aetate / octaua aetate saeculi*'). See, for example: *In honorem sanctae crucis*, 2, (prose version) 21 (D 21), line 46; *Expositio in Matthaeum*, 8, lines 1-10. The impact of Bede upon Hrabanus Maurus's representation of the world ages doctrine is considered below, p. 256. See further: Archambault, P. 1966, 'The Ages of Man and the Ages of the World', 208; Sears, E. 1986, *Ages of Man*, p. 63.

⁵¹⁵ Bonaventure describes a seventh age of repose, though it is slightly different from the Bedan seventh age (for Bonaventure, the seventh age began with Christ's Passion and it runs concurrently with the sixth age). The eighth age is associated with eternity and resurrection: Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, 15.18. See Emmerson, R. K. 1981, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, p. 57.

aspect of Bede's eschatological thought must be appreciated within the wider context of this important theoretical model.

Chapter 5: The end-time sequence

Introduction

The world ages model dictates that each *aetas* is to follow a regular pattern. Every age has a bright beginning, a zenith and a troubled decline in much the same way as each day must have a morning, noon and evening.⁵¹⁶ In *De Temporum Ratione*, Bede succinctly sums up the pattern that each previous world age has followed, stating that: 'while each [age] began with some element of joy, they ended in many shadows of trouble and constriction'.⁵¹⁷ Bede had a precise impression of how he expected the sixth world age to end. The term 'end-time sequence' offers a convenient way to refer to the pre-determined pattern of events that are expected to usher in the day of judgement. The events of the end-time sequence are expected to occur in the future, when the sixth age will enter its own period of decline and draw to a troubled close. The component parts of the sequence will be the final events of regular time and its completion will bring about the end of the world. It is made up of the following key elements: the conversion of the Jews, the return of Enoch and Elijah, the time of Antichrist's persecution and a subsequent 'trial of patience' prior to the final judgement. Once the sequence has run its course, the day of judgement is to initiate a transition to eternal time.

The following analysis of the end-time sequence must be set within an important context. Bede was keen to emphasise that only God knows when the world is going to

⁵¹⁶ This pattern is explicitly laid out in *De temporum ratione*, chapter 10 ('the week of the world-ages').

⁵¹⁷ *De temporum ratione*, 71, lines 15-20: 'Quia sicut et supra meminimus, cunctae huius saeculi aetates sex, in quibus iusti domino cooperante bonis operibus insistunt, ita sunt superna ordinatione dispositae ut in primordiis suis singulae aliquid laetarum rerum habentes non parvis erumnarum tenebris praessurarum que consummantur'. Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 247.

end. Bede often reiterates this point in his works (the following series of examples represents a very small sample). *De temporibus* ends with a reminder that the remainder of the sixth *aetas* is known only to God,⁵¹⁸ and this lesson features prominently in Bede's earliest scriptural commentaries.⁵¹⁹ Bede emphasises the point in a Gospel homily, stating that: 'the time of the universal judgement is uncertain for everyone'.⁵²⁰ In his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Bede suggests that calculations and predictions concerning the end of time are futile and heretical.⁵²¹ Bede strongly re-emphasises the point in chapter sixty-eight of *De temporum ratione*, borrowing a long passage from Augustine to outline the ideal Christian mentality towards the day of judgement.⁵²² The message is again emphasised in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*,⁵²³ a work that can be dated to 5 November 734.⁵²⁴ In proceeding to reconstruct Bede's vision of the end-time sequence, it is important to remember that he never wavered from his conviction that humans must not indulge in speculation about when the end of time is expected to occur.

Signs and portents

The term 'signs and portents' is used here to refer to a group of irregular or unusual natural phenomena that assumed eschatological significance in Bede's mind. Typical examples include: earthquakes, comets, and adverse meteorological conditions

⁵¹⁸ *De temporibus*, 22, line 80.

⁵¹⁹ For the expression of this message in an early exegetical work, see Bede's commentary on Acts 1.7, *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 68-73.

⁵²⁰ *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.24, lines 44-5: 'Verum quia incertum est omnibus tempus uniuersalis iudicii'.

⁵²¹ *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, 5, lines 810-22. For further comment on this passage see p. 128 above.

⁵²² The majority of chapter 68 of *De temporum ratione* is made up of a long citation from Augustine, *Epistola* 199. The chapter explains the attitude of three servants to the return of their master. The third servant, who watches vigilantly whilst waiting attentively, is held up as an ideal type because he does not presume to predict when his master will come.

⁵²³ Near the beginning of the *Epistola*, Bede advises Ecgbert to consider the fate of his soul at the day of judgement, the time of which is unknown: *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 2.

⁵²⁴ On the date of the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, see the discussion in note 772 below.

such as storms or droughts. It is important to stress at the outset that signs and portents cannot be considered to be an explicit part of the end-time sequence. They are not assigned a clear position in Bede's vision of the framework for end-time events in the same way as, say, the conversion of the Jews or the return of Antichrist. Nevertheless, portentous natural phenomena had eschatological connotations for Bede, and the topic merits discussion here.

If Bede is measured against the standards of the period in which he was writing, there can be little doubt that he had an extremely advanced understanding of the natural world.⁵²⁵ *De temporum ratione* is an impressive achievement by the standards of any age. The text makes significant contributions to many diverse fields of scientific understanding and it offers insight into areas far beyond the scope of its two most significant topics; computus and chronology. Certain chapters of *De temporum ratione* suggest that Bede was actively engaged in conducting his own scientific research. One chapter proposes an innovative tidal theory based upon Bede's own experience of the North Sea coast.⁵²⁶ Another passage describes an experiment involving hanging-lamps that explains the relative positions of the sun and moon in the sky.⁵²⁷

De natura rerum also offers a significant insight into Bede's perception of science and nature. The fifty-one chapters of this short tract are thematically organised

⁵²⁵ Scholars who have considered Bede's place within the history of medieval science have emphasised the sophisticated nature of his thought, and they have been quick to highlight his wide range of accomplishments in this field. For a survey of Bede's achievements as a scientist, see: Eckenrode, T. R. 1971, 'Venerable Bede as Scientist', *American Benedictine Review* 22, 486-507 and Stevens, W. M. 1985, *Bede's Scientific Achievement*. Bede's understanding of science and nature has recently been re-evaluated in an insightful essay by Faith Wallis: Wallis, F. 2006, '*Si naturam quaeras*: Re-framing Bede's Science', in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown), pp. 65-100.

⁵²⁶ *De temporum ratione*, 29. Bede's research into tidal theory has been described as 'perhaps his greatest [scientific] breakthrough', Eckenrode, T. R. 1976, 'The Growth of a Scientific Mind: Bede's Early and Late Scientific Writings', *Downside Review* 96, 197-212, at 200. See also: Eckenrode, T. R. 1974, 'Venerable Bede's Theory of Ocean Tides', *American Benedictine Review* 25, 56-74; Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 307-12; Stevens, W. M. 1985, *Bede's Scientific Achievement*, pp. 10-18.

⁵²⁷ *De temporum ratione*, 26. See the comments of Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 304-6 and Eckenrode, T. R. 1976, 'Bede's Early and Late Scientific Writings', 203.

around the four elements.⁵²⁸ For the most part, *De natura rerum* is a thoughtfully organised compilation of passages drawn from earlier authorities.⁵²⁹ It offered a clear and concise alternative to existing educational texts such as the anonymous Irish tract *De ordine creaturarum* and Isidore's *De natura rerum*.⁵³⁰ A significant amount of content is derived from the latter work (Isidore's tract served as the immediate model for Bede's *De natura rerum*). Much of Bede's work is adapted from book two of Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*,⁵³¹ but passages are also taken from works by other writers, such as Augustine and Ambrose.⁵³² Many passages are quoted in the exact language of Bede's source and some manuscripts contain annotations that identify the source being used in a particular passage.⁵³³ Despite the text's highly derivative nature,

⁵²⁸ On the structure of *De natura rerum* see, Wallis, F. 2006, 'Re-framing Bede's Science', p. 73. Wallis points out that the structural scheme followed in this work is a convention of the natural history genre; it is found in other works such as Pliny's *Historia naturalis*.

⁵²⁹ For example, the account of solar and lunar eclipses in chapter 22 is a structured synthesis of extracts from Pliny's *Historia naturalis*. Bede carefully rearranges passages from Pliny to construct a simple and concise explanation. Jones' critical edition of the text indicates borrowings from chapters 7, 8 and 10 of book 2 of the *Historia naturalis*: Jones, C. W. *De natura rerum liber*, CCSL 123A, pp. 214-5.

⁵³⁰ Thacker, A. 2006, 'Ordering of Understanding', p. 48, note 42. On *De ordine creaturarum*, see: Smyth, M. 2004, 'The Date and Origin of *Liber de ordine creaturarum*', *Peritia* 17-18, 1-39.

⁵³¹ Bede did not have access to a complete text of Pliny. Laistner has suggested that Bede's knowledge of the *Historia naturalis* was limited to a small number of its 37 books: Laistner, M. L. W. 1933, 'Bede as a Classical and a Patristic Scholar'. A codex, written in eighth-century Northumbrian miniscule, preserving an incomplete version of Pliny's *Historia naturalis* (books 2-6) is extant. The manuscript in question is Leiden, Bibliothek der Rijksuniversiteit Voss.Lat.F.4, fols. 4-33. Blair, P. H. 1970, *World of Bede*, p. 264. It has been suggested that this may have been the Pliny codex used by Bede: Stevens, W. M. 1985, *Bede's Scientific Achievement*, p. 23, note 12. On the knowledge and use of Pliny in Anglo-Saxon England see Ogilvy, J. D. A. 1967, *Books Known to the English, 597-1066* (Cambridge), pp. 222-3.

⁵³² An index of the citations and borrowings found in all of Bede's '*opera didascalica*' (including *De natura rerum*) can be found in CCSL volume 123C, at pp. 713-803.

⁵³³ The manuscripts in question are identified by Jones, C. W. *De natura rerum liber*, CCSL 123A, p. 184. See also, the table indicating the distribution of source marks in 15 separate manuscripts on p. 187. Bede is known to have used source marks to identify borrowings in his two Gospel commentaries, but Jones doubted whether the annotations preserved in manuscripts of *De natura rerum* originated with Bede himself. On the source marks used in the commentaries on Luke and Mark, see: Laistner, M. L. W. 1933, 'Source Marks in Bede Manuscripts', *Journal of Theological Studies* 34, 350-4; Stansbury, M. 1999, 'Source-marks in Bede's Biblical Commentaries', in J. Hawkes and S. Mill (eds.), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud), pp. 383-9.

Bede often endeavours to indicate the origin of the ideas that he is reproducing,⁵³⁴ and he occasionally offers original explanations of his own.⁵³⁵

Bede's introductory survey of the natural world offers an insight into his perception of irregular natural phenomena such as comets, earthquakes and adverse weather conditions. Chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine of *De natura rerum* concern storms. Bede explains a variety of natural factors that are thought to cause thunder and lightening.⁵³⁶ In chapter forty-nine, earthquakes are said to be caused by trapped internal winds rushing through caves, shaking the sponge-like earth with a terrible roar.⁵³⁷ Bede was aware that thunder, lightening and earthquakes had natural causes, even if his explanations of these causes might seem simplistic to the modern reader. More sophisticated passages are found in *De temporum ratione*. In chapter eighteen, Bede gives a thorough explanation of the scientific causes of a lunar eclipse. As with the examples cited from *De natura rerum*, the explanation of the lunar eclipse in *De temporum ratione* demonstrates an awareness that such occurrences are the result of natural factors. Like earthquakes or storms, an eclipse of the moon can be explained in purely rational terms.

⁵³⁴ This is evident in chapter 14, where after reproducing a large extract on the planets verbatim from Pliny, Bede offers a single sentence in his own words: 'And if you wish to know more regarding these things read Pliny the Elder from whom we have selected these words (*De quibus si plenius scire veils, lege Plinium Secundum ex quo et ista nos excerpsimus*)', *De natura rerum*, 14, lines 20-1. This comment follows a reproduction of a number of lines (20 in the modern CCSL edition of *De natura rerum*) from *Historia naturalis*, 2.13. Another example of Bede explicitly citing his source is found in chapter 26. Bede credits Clemens as the source of his information on winds. The information actually derives from pseudo-Clemens; it came to Bede via Isidore. Jones, C. W. *De natura rerum liber*, CCSL 123A, p. 217.

⁵³⁵ For example, see chapter 21: 'Evidence of the course of the moon through the signs (*Argumentum de cursu lunae per signa*)'. Jones suggests no immediate source for this complex chapter on the moon's movements and it appears to be an original composition of Bede's: Jones, C. W. *De natura rerum liber*, CCSL 123A, p. 213.

⁵³⁶ Thunder is said to be caused by winds escaping from clouds, *De natura rerum* 28. Lightening is a spark caused by clouds colliding, *De natura rerum*, 29. For comment, see Eckenrode, T. R. 1976, 'Bede's Early and Late Scientific Writings', 209 and Blair, P. H. 1970, *World of Bede*, p. 262.

⁵³⁷ *De natura rerum*, 49, lines 2-3: 'Terrae motum uento fieri dicunt, eius uisceribus insta spongiae cauernosis incluso, qui hanc horribili fremore percurrens ...'.

Another important aspect of Bede's perception of the natural world must be strongly emphasised here. Bede views science and nature in an exclusively Christian context.⁵³⁸ Bede appreciates that irregular events such as storms and earthquakes have natural causes, but this point must be balanced with the belief that such events are ultimately controlled by God.⁵³⁹ Chapter twenty-four of *De natura rerum* offers a series of observations about comets.⁵⁴⁰ These observations are set in context by the opening lines of the chapter, which explicitly state that comets portend change. A series of possible changes are listed. Comets might precede the advent of pestilence, war or raging winds, or they might herald a change in secular power.⁵⁴¹ This passage aligns well with episodes from the *Historia ecclesiastica*, where Bede weaves the appearance of portentous comets into his account of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people. In the *Historia*, the appearance of a comet indicates that a significant change is imminent.⁵⁴² The portentous significance of comets is an essential part of Bede's perception of their role within the natural world. As the director of nature, God is ultimately responsible for employing them as signs of imminent change.

A subsequent chapter of *De natura rerum* concerns the topic of pestilence. Pestilence has natural causes; it is produced either by dry air or by excess showers.

⁵³⁸ Wallis emphasises the Christian orientation of Bede's perception of the natural world throughout her recent article, Wallis, F. 2006, 'Re-framing Bede's Science'. See also: Thacker, A. 2006, 'Ordering of Understanding', p. 48.

⁵³⁹ Bede phrased this notion succinctly in his commentary on Acts, remarking that; 'everywhere, creation offers obedient service to its creator'. *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 88-9: 'Vbique creatura suo creatori praestat obsequium'.

⁵⁴⁰ *De natura rerum*, 24, lines 4-10. These lines are taken directly from Pliny's *Historia naturalis*.

⁵⁴¹ *De natura rerum*, 24, lines 1-4: 'Cometae sunt stellae flammis crinitae, repente nascentes, regni mutationem aut pestilentiam aut bella, uel uentos aestusue, portendentes'. Bede's comments on the portentous significance of comets draw upon Isidore's *De natura rerum*.

⁵⁴² In *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.12, Bede describes a famous comet that appeared in the year 678. Bede juxtaposes his description of the comet with an account of the dispute between King Ecgrith and Bishop Wilfrid. The comet is said to have appeared in August and remained visible for 3 months. A comparable episode is found in book 3, chapter 27, where an eclipse of the sun is immediately followed by a devastating pestilence. This eclipse, which Bede dates to the year 664, is also mentioned in the *Chronica maiora: De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 1870-1 (*sub anno* 4622).

Such meteorological phenomena should be labelled as ‘signs’ (*signa*) or ‘portents’ (*prodigia*) when they occur out of season. The appearance of pestilence in the world is said to be linked to human behaviour as a punishment for corruption.⁵⁴³ In Bede’s mind, dry air or frequent showers are natural causes of pestilence, but the pestilence is ultimately sent by God, the director of the natural world, as a punishment for human sin. The belief expressed in *De natura rerum*, that unseasonable adverse weather conditions can be taken as an explicit sign of imminent pestilence, is an important notion that can be developed further. In his commentary on Ezra, Bede discusses a verse that describes an assembled crowd of people trembling in unusually heavy rain.⁵⁴⁴ Bede interprets this scriptural episode as an apt lesson for the present day.⁵⁴⁵ His comments reveal important information about the way signs and portents ought to be perceived:

This was done as a lesson for those who, even when the elements are stirred up and weather deteriorates into violent winds, floods of rain, heavy snowstorms, parching drought or even the death of men and animals, and when the Judge himself threatens the force of his anger through open signs, do not at all seek to correct their behaviour so as to placate that Judge and escape the destruction

⁵⁴³ *De natura rerum*, 37: ‘Pestilentia nascitur aere uel siccitatis uel pluviarum intemperantia pro meritis hominum corrupto, qui spirando uel edendo perceptus luem mortemque generat. Vnde saepius omne tempus aestatis in procellas turbinesque brumales uerti conspiciamus. Sed haec cum suo tempore uenerint, tempestates; cum uero alias, prodigia uel signa dicuntur’. On this chapter, see the comments of Wallis, F. 2006, ‘Re-framing Bede’s Science’, p. 96 and McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and Bede*, pp. 27-8.

⁵⁴⁴ Ezra 10.9: ‘Within the three days, all the men of Judah and Benjamin had gathered in Jerusalem. And on the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the people were sitting in the square before the house of God, greatly distressed by the occasion and because of the rain’.

⁵⁴⁵ This line of interpretation is employed frequently throughout *In Ezram et Neemiam*. Many passages from the Old Testament text are said to offer explicit messages for the present day. The proliferation of such passages suggests that *In Ezram et Neemiam* was intended to stimulate the reform of the contemporary Anglo-Saxon Church. This notion has been discussed in several works by Scott DeGregorio. See in particular: DeGregorio, S. 2002, ‘Nostrorum socordiam temporum’: the Reforming Impulse of Bede’s Later Exegesis’, *Early Medieval Europe* 11, 107-22; DeGregorio, S. 2004, ‘Bede’s *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church’, *Speculum* 79, 1-25.

hanging over them, but instead merely busy themselves to find some means to avoid or overcome the adverse conditions raging outside on account of their sins.⁵⁴⁶

The passage lists several things that can be interpreted as ‘open signs’ from God: violent winds, heavy rain or snow, drought and large-scale death. Just as unseasonable weather may presage pestilence, the occurrences listed in the passage from *In Ezram et Neemiam* can be sent by God as a threat of imminent destruction.

In the passage from *In Ezram et Neemiam* cited above, Bede suggests that signs and portents should inspire people to regulate their behaviour in the present. In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede explores this spiritual lesson in his portrayal of St Chad. Chad is commended for always being mindful of the fate of his soul and for anxiously awaiting the day of judgement.⁵⁴⁷ Windy conditions would inspire Chad to invoke the mercy of the Lord. Intense winds or electrical storms were met with constant prayer. Chad is said to have met questions relating to his behaviour with the following response, which again demonstrates the belief that nature is subordinate to divine command:

The Lord moves the air, raises the winds, hurls lightening, and thunders forth from heaven so as to rouse the inhabitants of the world to fear Him, to call them to remember the future judgement

⁵⁴⁶ *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 2, lines 1796-803: ‘Hoc propter eos qui turbatis licet elementis et uel uentorum fragore uel inundantia pluuiarum uel niuium acerbis uel ardore siccitatis uel etiam exitio hominum siue animalium desuper ingrauescente atque ipso iudice per aperta indicia uim suae irae minitante nihil omnino de correctione morum qua iudicem placent plagam que impendentem euadant inquirunt sed tantum seduli pertractant qua arte aduersa quae exterius propter peccata desaeuiunt aut euitent aut superent’. Passage cited in translation from: DeGregorio, S. 2006, trans. *Ezra and Nehemiah*, p. 146.

⁵⁴⁷ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.3: ‘Nor is it any wonder that he joyfully beheld the day of his death or rather the day of the Lord, whose coming he had always anxiously awaited. For in addition to all his merits of temperance, humility, zeal in teaching, prayers, and voluntary poverty and other virtues too, he was greatly filled with the fear of the Lord and mindful of his last end in all he did’.

in order that He may scatter their pride and confound their boldness by bringing to their minds that dread time when He will come in the clouds in great power and majesty, to judge the living and the dead, while the heavens and the earth are aflame.⁵⁴⁸

Chad is presented as an ideal type; an example for Bede's audience to follow. The episode reveals a great deal about how Bede expected his audience to react to irregular natural phenomena. Though the appearance of severe storms or high winds does not necessarily mean that the end of time is imminent, signs such as these have an important eschatological significance; they are overt signs from God, sent to remind humans of the final judgement.

Portentous meteorological conditions such as thunder, lightening or high winds serve as effective reminders of the final judgement because according to scriptural prophecy, such things are expected to occur at the end of time. In his short tract *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, Bede employs a passage from the Gospel of Mark to this effect whilst discussing the future judgement.⁵⁴⁹ The passage from Mark lists a series of images that are associated with judgement day, such as the darkening of the sun and moon and stars falling from the sky.⁵⁵⁰ Later in the same tract, whilst commenting upon statements from the book of Isaiah,⁵⁵¹ Bede interprets the jarring of the earth mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy as an allusion to a literal earthquake which is expected to occur at the very

⁵⁴⁸ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.3: 'Mouet enim aera Dominus, uentos excitat, iaculatur fulgora, de caelo intonat, ut terrigenas ad timendum se suscitet, ut corda eorum in memoriam futuri iudicii reuocet, ut superbiam eorum dissipet et conturbet audaciam, reducto ad mentem tremendo illo tempore, quando ipse caelis ac terris ardentibus uenturus est in nubibus, in potestate magna et maiestate, ad iudicandos uiuos et mortuos'. Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 342-5. Bede's source for this story about Chad was a monk named Trumberht.

⁵⁴⁹ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 704.

⁵⁵⁰ Mark 13.24-6: 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light. The stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken'.

⁵⁵¹ Isaiah 24.18-19: 'The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken'.

end of time.⁵⁵² In *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede suggests that in the last days, greater signs (*signa*) are going to be seen than ever before.⁵⁵³ Similar sentiments are expressed in Gregory the Great's letter to King Æthelberht of Kent, reproduced by Bede in book one of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. The letter lists a series of menacing changes that are expected to intensify as the end of the world draws near:

As the end of the world approaches, many things threaten which have never happened before; these are changes in the sky and terrors from the heavens, unseasonable tempests, wars, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in diverse places.⁵⁵⁴

The letter proceeds to state that such changes are 'signs of the end of the world (*signa de fine saeculi*)'. Gregory suggests that these signs should encourage Æthelberht to consider his conduct in the present so as not to jeopardise the fate of his soul, a message not dissimilar to that promoted in the St Chad narrative.

A graphic description of the signs that are expected to precede the day of judgement is found in the verse work *De die iudicii*. There has been some debate concerning the date and authorship of this poem, and these issues are fully addressed in appendix three of this study. The findings of appendix three can be summarised as follows: the poem is a genuine Bedan composition that was probably written near to the end of his lifetime. *De die iudicii*, like many of Bede's works, is dedicated to Acca of Hexham. The poem is an attempt to encourage Acca to contemplate the spiritual

⁵⁵² *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 706: 'Potest enim et de ipso terrae elemento dictum accipi, quod tempore novissimo penitus a pristino statu commovendum sit'.

⁵⁵³ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 29, lines 1-7. Here Bede is commenting upon Revelation 16.18: 'Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake'.

⁵⁵⁴ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.32: 'Adpropinquante autem eodem mundi termino, multa iminent, quae antea non fuerunt, uidelicet inmutationes aeris, terroresque de caelo, et contra ordinationem temporum tempestates, bella, fames, pestilentiae, terraemotus per loca'. Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 113-5. For further discussion of Gregory the Great's letter to King Æthelberht see below, pp. 246-247.

rewards of the afterlife in order to alleviate the troubles that he was encountering in the present. This aim is realised through skilfully-crafted verse and stylistic elegance (*De die iudicii* is written in dactylic hexameter verse, a poetic style commended by Bede as ‘higher and more beautiful than all the rest’).⁵⁵⁵ The freedom afforded to Bede by the poetic format results in some passages of graphic detail. The poem lists nine signs that are expected to precede the return of the Lord as judge of the world. These irregular occurrences will affect the earth, sea and sky:

Remember what signs will precede Him: suddenly the earth will tremble and the mountains crumble down; the hills will melt and the sea confound men’s minds with its terrible roar; the sky will be covered sorrowfully with black shadows; the stars will fall and the sun grow dark in the crimson east; the pale moon will not uncover her nightly lamp, and signs threatening death will come from the sky.⁵⁵⁶

These images are inspired by biblical prophecies, such as those referred to above from the book of Isaiah and the Gospel of Matthew. This excerpt from *De die iudicii* aligns well with Bede’s comments in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*. In both works, Bede relates that he expects an earthquake, comets and the darkening of the sun and moon to be amongst the events that will occur immediately prior to the final judgement.

Though not a formal part of the end-time sequence, irregular natural phenomena had significant eschatological connotations for Bede. At the end of time, several

⁵⁵⁵ *De arte metrica*, 10, lines 2-4: ‘Metrum dactylicum exametrum ... ceteris omnibus pulchrius celsiusque est’.

⁵⁵⁶ *De die iudicii*, lines 50-6: ‘Praecurrunt ilium uel qualia signa: repente / Terra tremet montesque ruent collesque liquescent, / Et mare terribili confundet murmure mentes, / Tristius et caelum tenebris obducitur atris, / Astra cadunt rutilo et titan tenebrescit in ortu, / Pallida nocturnam nec praestat luna lucernam, / De caelo uenient et signa minantia mortem’. Translation cited from: Calder, D. G. and Allen, M. J. B. 1976, trans. *Sources and Analogues of Old English poetry: the Major Latin Texts in Translation* (Cambridge), p. 210.

portentous events of unprecedented intensity are expected to precede the day of judgement. However, the appearance of unseasonable storms or comets in the present day cannot be taken as a sign that the end of time is imminent. Such events are not imbued with any significance regarding the progression of end-time sequence. In the present, portents are sent by God to inspire repentance. The appearance of a comet does not give humans licence to speculate about the year, date or time of the day of judgement. It should, however, inspire a good Christian to consider the fate of their soul, repent of their sins and regulate their present conduct, just as St Chad is said to have done in the account of his life given in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

The conversion of the Jews

In chapter sixty-nine of *De temporum ratione*, Bede states that the future conversion of the Jews will be one of two certain indicators that the day of judgement is approaching (the other is the time of Antichrist).⁵⁵⁷ For Bede, the conversion of the Jews will be significant for two reasons: it will be the final phase of salvation history and the first stage of the end-time sequence. During this period, many Jews are to be reconciled to the teachings of the Catholic Church, completing a sequence of events that has been pre-determined by God. Specifically, the Jews are to be converted by the Old-Testament prophets Enoch and Elijah. The prophets are expected to convert large numbers of Jews before the advent of Antichrist's persecution. Bede's beliefs regarding Enoch and Elijah and the time of Antichrist are to be the subject of detailed investigation later in the present chapter. For now, it is necessary to consider Bede's thoughts regarding the eschatological role of the Jews in full.

⁵⁵⁷ *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 2-5: 'Duo sane certissima necdum instantis diei iudicii habemus indicia, fidem uidelicet israheliticae gentis et regnum persecutionem que antichristi, quam uidelicet persecutionem trium semis annorum futurum fides ecclesiae tenet'.

Bede's attitude towards the Jews has received detailed analysis in a recent monograph by Andrew Scheil.⁵⁵⁸ Bede's views owe much to the interpretative tradition set forth by St Augustine.⁵⁵⁹ The Jews stimulated positive and negative emotional responses in Bede's mind. An episode from Bede's short commentary on the Cantic of Habakkuk presents a suitable example of the negative sentiments that are frequently expressed in Bede's exegetical works.⁵⁶⁰ Bede interprets the barren fig tree of Habakkuk 3.17 as an allegorical reference to the Jewish people.⁵⁶¹ Like a tree that formerly bore fruit, the Jews were once a glorious nation who enjoyed God's favour. But, Bede suggests, by refusing to acknowledge Jesus as the messiah, the Jews are now in a state of sterility much like the barren tree.⁵⁶² Bede regularly expresses dismay regarding the Jewish rejection of Jesus. In Bede's mind, the Jews had stubbornly refused to acknowledge Christ, choosing instead to wait for Antichrist.⁵⁶³ In his commentary on Revelation, Bede refers to the humiliation of the Jews (*'humiliatio Iudaeorum'*).⁵⁶⁴ This humiliation is expected to occur at the end of the world, during the time of Antichrist's persecution. Bede composed some extremely resentful passages about the Jews, but these must be balanced against the positive sentiments expressed

⁵⁵⁸ Scheil, A. P. 2004, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor), see chapters 1-2. Bede's attitude towards the Jews is also considered in the introduction to Calvin Kendall's translated edition of *In Genesim*: Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 22-7.

⁵⁵⁹ Augustine's role in defining Christian perceptions of the Jews in the early Middle Ages is emphasised in the introduction to Scheil's study: *Footsteps of Israel*, pp. 10-11. See further: Fredriksen, P. 2008, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York).

⁵⁶⁰ The Cantic of Habakkuk was sung in the monastic liturgy every Friday, as Bede makes clear at *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*, lines 3-5. Little is known about the date of Bede's commentary on Habakkuk, save that it was completed before the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

⁵⁶¹ Habakkuk 3.17-18: 'Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour'.

⁵⁶² *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*, lines 670-727.

⁵⁶³ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 17, lines 5-9. See also: *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 1, lines 978-81; *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam Iacobi*, 4, lines 88-9, *In epistolam II Iohannis*, lines 55-8.

⁵⁶⁴ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 4, lines 208-12: 'Et licet Ecclesia semper exerceatur adversis, potest tamen hic hora tentationis et humiliatio Iudaeorum sub tempore Antichristi significari, ut sicut in sequentibus in sexto saepius ordine, sic et hic in sexto angelo novissima persecutio designetur'. On this passage, see the comments of Scheil, A. P. 2004, *Footsteps of Israel*, pp. 56-7.

throughout his corpus. Bede had a deep respect for the Jews of the Old Testament and he revered them as an ancient people of God.⁵⁶⁵ Bede regularly expresses hope for the eschatological reunification of the Jews and the Catholic Church. Of course, such sentiments are expressed from a resolutely Christian perspective; any positive comments that he makes about the future reconciliation of the Jews and the Church involve the Jews belatedly recognising Christ as the messiah. From Bede's perspective, the Jews will finally see the error of their ways and back down from their present position of stubbornness.⁵⁶⁶

In Bede's view, the fate of the Gentiles was inextricably connected with that of the Jewish people. He often styles the Jews and the Gentiles as two nations connected by God. An appropriate example of this is found in *De templo*, where a fishing analogy is employed to demonstrate that the Jews and the Gentiles share a single fate. Bede brings a citation from the Gospel of John into his exposition of a pericope from 1 Kings.⁵⁶⁷ The Gospel passage describes an episode in which the apostles are fishing whilst Jesus looks on from the shore.⁵⁶⁸ The disciples return from the sea with a plentiful catch. Bede comments:

For the disciples indeed drag the net full of large fish for two hundred cubits to the Lord, who is already on the shore showing the effects of his resurrection, when holy preachers entrust the word of faith to both Jews and Gentiles and drag the elect of both

⁵⁶⁵ Scheil, A. P. 2004, *Footsteps of Israel*, pp. 68-74.

⁵⁶⁶ For example, see Bede's commentary on Tobit 11.13-18. Tobit's lack of sight is likened to a state of spiritual blindness which, in Bede's mind, is characteristic of the Jews of his era. When Tobit is subsequently cured of his blindness, Bede allegorically relates this to the future Jewish acceptance of Jesus; something that Bede foresees happening at the end of time. In *Tobiam*, 11, lines 36-82.

⁵⁶⁷ Bede is commenting upon the 200 pomegranates mentioned in 1 Kings 7.20.

⁵⁶⁸ The passage in question is John 21.8 (the following citation is taken from the Douay-Rheims translation, as the New International Version contains significant differences to the Vulgate text cited by Bede): 'But the other disciples came in the ship, for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits, dragging the net with fishes'.

peoples from the waves of this present world ⁵⁶⁹ and lead them to
the glory of peace and immortality to come.⁵⁷⁰

The fates of the Jews and Gentiles are connected; the elect from both nations are expected to enjoy peace and immortality together. A similar passage can be found in *In Ezram et Neemiam*, where Bede again expresses hope that the Jews and the Gentiles will rejoice together in heaven.⁵⁷¹ In his exegetical works, Bede often underlines the connection between the Jews and the Gentiles by employing the metaphor of Christ as a cornerstone (*'lapis angularis'*). Because Jesus arose amongst the Jews and reached out to the Gentile nations, Christ links the Gentiles to the ancient Jews of the Old Testament just as a cornerstone connects two walls.⁵⁷²

In Bede's mind, a predetermined pattern of salvation history was being realised as time progressed through the ages from creation to the day of judgement. This redemptory model is outlined in several of Bede's exegetical works, and it is particularly prominent in his commentary on the book of Tobit. Tobit is usually included amongst the historical books of the Old Testament in editions of the Vulgate, and it was considered to be canonical by Bede and his contemporaries.⁵⁷³ Bede's

⁵⁶⁹ This reference to the 'waves of this present world' is reminiscent of the final passage of *De temporum ratione*. Bede describes *De temporum ratione* as a 'little book concerning the fleeting and wave-tossed course of time (*libellus de volubili ac fluctivago temporum lapsu*)'. *De temporum ratione*, 71, lines 91-3.

⁵⁷⁰ *De templo*, 2, lines 576-82: 'Per ducentos etenim cubitos rete plenum magnis piscibus discipuli ad dominum trahunt effectum suae resurrectionis iam in litore monstrantem cum sancti praedicatores et iudaeis et gentibus uerbum fidei committunt atque utriusque populi electos a fluctibus saeculi praesentis extractos ad futurae gloriam pacis et immortalitatis perducunt'. Translation: Connolly, S. 1995, trans. *Bede: on the Temple*, p. 83.

⁵⁷¹ *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1782-6. Bede interprets the reference to two choirs in Nehemiah 12.40 as an allusion to a unified heavenly choir made up of Jews and Gentiles. That the two peoples referred to by Bede should be taken as an explicit reference to the Jews and Gentiles is made clear earlier in book 3 (lines 1641-3).

⁵⁷² *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 1348-58. The metaphor of Christ as a cornerstone that connects the Jews and Gentiles is employed frequently throughout Bede's works: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 2188-93; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.3, lines 158-66; *In Tobiam*, 9, lines 71-6; *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Petri*, 2, lines 164-8; *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 4, lines 15-26.

⁵⁷³ The book of Tobit is recognised as part of the biblical canon by the present-day Catholic Church. Modern protestant Bibles tend to include Tobit amongst the apocryphal works of the Old Testament.

commentary contains no obvious indications of its date of composition, though it is usually assigned to the latter stages of Bede's authorial career.⁵⁷⁴ Approximately seventy manuscripts of *In Tobiam* survive from the Middle Ages, making it one of Bede's most popular exegetical commentaries.⁵⁷⁵ This medieval popularity is reflected by a curiosity of modern Bede scholarship; at the time of writing, *In Tobiam* has the distinction of being the only Bedan commentary to have been published in a full English translated edition more than once.⁵⁷⁶

The book of Tobit relates the story of a man named Tobit and his son Tobias.⁵⁷⁷ In Bede's commentary, several significant episodes from the biblical narrative are considered to be symbolic allusions to the role that the Jews are expected to play in the divine plan for salvation.⁵⁷⁸ Bede interprets Tobit's blindness and his subsequent recovery of sight as an allegory for salvation history.⁵⁷⁹ Tobias's return to his father is said to prefigure the return of Jews to the Lord's favour.⁵⁸⁰ Bede's interpretation of the debt of Gabelus, one of the key episodes in the Tobit narrative, offers another significant example. In the first chapter of the biblical text, Tobit lends Gabelus the sum

⁵⁷⁴ *In Tobiam* must predate the *Historia ecclesiastica* on account of its inclusion in the list of works given in book 5, chapter 24 where it is described as follows: 'On the Book of the blessed father Tobias, an allegorical explanation concerning Christ and the Church'. Modern scholarship has tended to see Bede's commentary on Tobit as a late-career work. Laistner suggested that the work might belong to the period 729-731 on the basis of perceived parallels with *De templo* (though he was unable to offer conclusive evidence in support of this theory). Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, p. 78. The preface to Hurst's Latin edition of *In Tobiam* estimates that the work was written between 720 and 730.

⁵⁷⁵ Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, pp. 78-82.

⁵⁷⁶ An edition of *In Tobiam*, translated by William Trent Foley, is included in a collection of Bede's shorter works: Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, pp. 53-79. Bede's commentary on Tobit also features alongside *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae* in a translated edition by Seán Connolly: Connolly, S. 1997, trans. *Bede: on Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk* (Dublin).

⁵⁷⁷ Following the practice established by Jerome in the Vulgate translation of the text, Bede uses the Latin 'Tobias' to refer to both men (indeed, Bede found great allegorical significance in the shared name). Modern English Bibles often assign the name Tobit to the father but refer to his son as Tobias. This custom will be followed here in order to avoid confusion.

⁵⁷⁸ In addition to the examples cited in notes 579 and 580 below, see: *In Tobiam*, 5, lines 1-21; 10, lines 19-40; 13, lines 1-8.

⁵⁷⁹ *In Tobiam*, 11, lines 36-82. For comment, see note 566, above.

⁵⁸⁰ *In Tobiam*, 11, lines 21-31.

of ten silver talents.⁵⁸¹ Bede likens this event to the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles. After explaining that the Gentiles received the word of God from the ancient Israelites, Bede states that this debt is to be repaid in the future:

Surely they [the Gentiles] will repay the moneylender at the end of the world (*in fine saeculi*) when they welcome the believing Jews into the unity of the church and entrust Christ's sacraments and open Scripture's mysteries to those who are to be saved.⁵⁸²

Just as Gabelus repaid his debt to Tobit, the Gentiles are expected to settle their debt with the Jews at the end of time by receiving them back into the Church.

In other exegetical works, several different biblical episodes inspire Bede to comment on the role that the Jews are expected to play in the divine plan for salvation. In *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, Bede suggests that the elevation of a twelfth apostle to replace Judas is allegorically representative of the eschatological fate of the Jews.⁵⁸³ Matthias restored the apostles to a state of perfection (which is symbolised by the number twelve) just as the conversion of the Jews is expected to restore the Church to a perfect state at the end of the world (*'in fine mundi'*).⁵⁸⁴ God's plan for redemption is referred to regularly throughout *In primam partem Samuhelis*, where episodes such as the loss and recovery of the ark of the covenant and David's marriage to Michal are seen as allegories for the divine plan.⁵⁸⁵ In the latter example, the alliance of David and Michal foreshadows the reunification of the Jews and the Church at the end of the

⁵⁸¹ Tobit 1.17. Gabelus repays the loan in chapter 9, verse 6.

⁵⁸² *In Tobiam*, 1, lines 50-5: '... reddunt uero faeneratori cum credentes in fine saeculi Iudaeos in unitatem ecclesiae recipiunt eis que saluandis Christi sacramenta committunt et scripturarum quoque reserant archana'. Compare *In Tobiam*, 11, lines 80-2. Translation adapted from: Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 59.

⁵⁸³ The elevation of Matthias to become Judas's replacement as apostle is recounted in Acts 1.23-6.

⁵⁸⁴ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 171-88.

⁵⁸⁵ The return of the ark in chapter 6 of 1 Samuel inspires a sustained commentary on the salvation history theme: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1639-2039. This section of *In primam partem Samuhelis* is discussed in chapter 9 below, see pp. 274-275.

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world (*'in fine mundi'*).⁵⁸⁶ A similar line of interpretation is employed to explain Christ's return to Israel after Herod's death in a sermon written for the feast of the Holy Innocents. The return of Jesus is said to foreshadow the end of the world (*'finem saeculi'*) when the Jews are expected to receive the faith from Enoch and Elijah.⁵⁸⁷

Each of the examples cited above share a common vision of the divine plan for salvation. A three-part pattern of redemption is consistently expressed across Bede's collected body of works. In Bede's mind, this pattern proceeds as follows: the Jews were the original chosen people of God, their rejection of Jesus led to the transfer of God's favour to the Gentile nations, and the Gentiles will accept the Jews back into the Church at the end of time.⁵⁸⁸ As a key component part of God's plan for salvation, Bede expected the Jews to have an important role to play in the closing acts of time. As well as being the final phase of a long-established divine plan, the conversion of the Jews constitutes the opening stage of the sequence of eschatological events that are to usher in the day of judgement. Bede expected the large-scale Jewish acceptance of Christ to be realised through a period of preaching by Enoch and Elijah. It is now necessary to consider the role of these prophets more closely.

Enoch and Elijah

The expected return of Enoch and Elijah is outlined in chapter sixty-nine of *De temporum ratione*.⁵⁸⁹ This chapter offers a concise account of their role in the end-time sequence, and it contains a number of significant points of detail. Bede states that the

⁵⁸⁶ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 1579-85.

⁵⁸⁷ *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.10, lines 89-92.

⁵⁸⁸ For a concise explanation of the three-part plan for salvation, see *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.8, lines 195-201. On this passage, see the comments of Scheil, A. P. 2004, *Footsteps of Israel*, pp. 58-9.

⁵⁸⁹ *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 5-10: 'Sed ne haec inprovisa ueniens omnes passim quos inparatos inuenerit, inuoluat, enoch et heliam maximos prophetas et doctores ante huius exortum uenturos in mundum, qui israheliticam plebem ad fidei conuertant gratiam atque ad pressuram tanti turbinis in parte electorum insuperabilem reddant'.

two prophets will come into the world prior to the arrival of Antichrist, to prepare everybody for the persecution that is to follow. The return of Enoch and Elijah serves as a warning that Antichrist's entry into the world is imminent. Enoch and Elijah will preach for three and a half years and then become the first two martyrs of the final persecution.⁵⁹⁰ The clear expression of this doctrine in *De temporum ratione* is worthy of note. The prophets are assigned a specific role in Bede's vision of the end-time sequence and they are to fulfil this role in a clearly defined period of time, shortly before the day of judgement.

The idea that Enoch and Elijah are to return to the earth prior to the end of time has its origins in pre-Christian Judaism.⁵⁹¹ This notion was adopted into the Christian tradition, and it features in a variety of apocryphal texts including the so-called 'Gospel of Nicodemus'.⁵⁹² A long series of Christian theologians associated Enoch and Elijah with the 'two witnesses' mentioned in the book of Revelation.⁵⁹³ Revelation 11 states

⁵⁹⁰ *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 10-17: 'Qui cum ipsi primo tres semis annos praedicauerint, et sicut de uno eorum Helia propheta malachias praedixit, conuerterint corda patrum in filios, id est, antiquorum fidem dilectionem que sanctorum in eorum qui tunc uicturi sunt mente plantauerint, tunc excandescens illa horrenda persecutio ipsos [Enoch et Heliam] inprimis martyrii uirtute coronet, dein ceteros fideles corripiens uel martyres christi gloriosissimos uel damnatos apostatas faciat'.

⁵⁹¹ Bauckham, R. J. 1976, 'The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95, 447-58.

⁵⁹² The 'Gospel of Nicodemus' is made up of two separate parts. The first, the 'Acts of Pilate', gives an account of Christ's trial, death and resurrection. The second section concerns Christ's descent into hell: Livingstone, E. A. 2000, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford), p. 452. The reference to Enoch and Elijah is found in the second part of the text. A translated edition is available in: James, M. R. 1924, trans. *The Apocryphal New Testament, being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses* (Oxford). The 'Gospel of Nicodemus' is a vital source for the legend of the harrowing of hell, a theme that became prominent in the Anglo-Saxon vernacular poetic tradition. Christ's descent into hell is an oft-discussed theme in Bede's works: *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 2, lines 183-6; *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Petri*, 3, lines 211-25; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 2, lines 1968-76; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.7, lines 224-8. For discussion: Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 183; Martin, L. T. 1989, trans. *Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 41.

⁵⁹³ Several surveys of the exegetical tradition are available. See the classic study by Bousset, W. 1896, trans. A. H. Keane, *The Antichrist legend: a chapter in Christian and Jewish folklore* (London), pp. 203-17. More recently, see the article by Bauckham cited in note 591 above and the following essay by Black: Black, M. 1978, 'The 'Two Witnesses' of Rev. 11:3f in Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Tradition', in E. Bammel, C. K. Barrett and W. D. Davies. (eds.), *Donum gentilicium: New Testament Studies in Honour of David Daube* (Oxford), pp. 226-38. For a discussion of the Enoch and Elijah tradition in later centuries, see Petersen, R. L. 1993, *Preaching in the Last Days: the Theme of 'Two Witnesses' in the*

that two unnamed witnesses are to preach for 1260 days before being overpowered and killed.⁵⁹⁴ Enoch and Elijah could be identified as the two witnesses mentioned in the prophecy because Scripture does not record the death of either man. The second book of Kings states that Elijah was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire,⁵⁹⁵ and allusions to this episode are made in 1 Maccabees and Ecclesiasticus.⁵⁹⁶ The book of Genesis relates that Enoch was taken up to heaven by God,⁵⁹⁷ and a verse from the epistle to the Hebrews suggests that Enoch was transferred into heaven without suffering bodily death.⁵⁹⁸ Bede comments on Elijah's direct translation to the heavenly kingdom in the short tract *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*,⁵⁹⁹ and a lengthy discussion of both prophets features in Bede's homily for Ascension Day.⁶⁰⁰

Elijah's position as one of the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11 is endorsed by an eschatological prophecy from the book of Malachi which includes the following statement:

I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful
day of the Lord comes He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (New York). Petersen's monograph contains a discussion of the two witnesses tradition in the early-Christian and medieval periods at pp. 8-58.

⁵⁹⁴ Revelation 11.3-7: 'And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them'.

⁵⁹⁵ 2 Kings 2.11: 'As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind'.

⁵⁹⁶ 1 Maccabees 2.58; Ecclesiasticus 48.9-13.

⁵⁹⁷ Genesis 5.24: 'Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away'.

⁵⁹⁸ Hebrews 11.5: 'By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away'.

⁵⁹⁹ *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, 28, lines 12-29. For further comment on this text, see note 1164.

⁶⁰⁰ *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.15, lines 245-325. The homily discusses a variety of biblical prophets including: Amos, Isaiah, Enoch and Elijah. Bede considers Enoch and Elijah's spiritual significance but does not refer to their eschatological roles. Compare the long citation from Augustine which features in book 1 of Bede's commentary on Genesis: *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1703-13.

children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I
will come and strike the land with a curse.⁶⁰¹

In the Christian tradition, these verses were taken to mean that Elijah would be the precursor of Christ's second coming, just as John the Baptist was the forerunner of his birth (such an interpretation features in two of Bede's homilies).⁶⁰² The identification of Enoch as the second witness of Revelation 11 was not so clear cut. Other Old Testament figures such as Moses and Jeremiah were also identified as the second witness by various Christian theologians.⁶⁰³

Bede's thought concerning the two witnesses was not always as clearly defined as it appears in chapter sixty-nine of *De temporum ratione*. The development of this aspect of his eschatological thought can be traced back through the Bedan corpus, starting with *Expositio Apocalypseos*. Bede interprets Revelation 11.3-13 as an allegory for Judaeo-Gentile relations.⁶⁰⁴ For the most part, Bede's approach to these verses follows the interpretative tradition set forth by Tyconius and Primasius.⁶⁰⁵ The witnesses of Revelation 11 are given a 'corporate identity' in Bede's commentary; they are considered to be symbolic allusions to the Jews and the Gentiles.⁶⁰⁶ However, Primasius and Tyconius do not influence every aspect of Bede's commentary on this section of Revelation. After his exposition of Revelation 11.13, Bede introduces a specific point of detail into his analysis. He states that: 'Certain people understand the

⁶⁰¹ Malachi 4.5-6.

⁶⁰² *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.19, lines 296-301; 2.23, lines 32-47.

⁶⁰³ Holder suggests that the author of Revelation probably had Elijah and Moses in mind when he made the prophetic reference to the two witnesses in chapter 11: Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 163, note 12. In his commentary on Revelation 11, Victorinus of Pettau remarks that many identify the two witnesses as Elijah and Moses, but he sees the pericope as a reference to Elijah and Jeremiah. Kovacs, J. L., Rowland, C. and Callow, R. 2004, *Revelation: the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Oxford), p. 127.

⁶⁰⁴ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, chapter 17.

⁶⁰⁵ This is evident in the CCSL edition of the text, which reproduces passages from Bede's source texts on a facing page: Gryson, R. *Bedae Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, pp. 366-81.

⁶⁰⁶ Petersen, R. L. 1993, *Two Witnesses*, pp. 28-9.

two prophets to be Enoch and Elijah (*Quidam duos prophetas Enoch et Eliam interpretantur*). Bede adds that the prophets are to preach for a period of three and half years to confirm the hearts of the faithful against Antichrist.⁶⁰⁷ After their death, Antichrist will rage for a further three and a half years.⁶⁰⁸ Bede's use of the non-specific term '*quidam*' to introduce the information about Enoch and Elijah is a clear sign that he is stepping outside the interpretative tradition of his source texts. Bede does not qualify his use of '*quidam*'; he offers no indication of the source that inspired him to identify the two witnesses in this way.⁶⁰⁹

Bede's use of '*quidam*' as a prefix to this statement from *Expositio Apocalypseos* conveys a sense of uncertainty that is not paralleled in *De temporum ratione* (where the return of the two prophets is presented as a clear point of doctrinal orthodoxy). A contradictory reference from the commentary on Revelation confirms that Bede's imprecise language is a result of uncertainty on his part. In commenting upon Revelation 3.10, Bede expresses his belief that many Jews are to be converted to Christ at the end of time. Bede adds that Elijah is expected to return to preach to the

⁶⁰⁷ The figure of three and a half years cited by Bede derives directly from Revelation 11.3: 'And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth'. This verse is cited in Bede's discussion of Enoch and Elijah in *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 24-6, and again in *In Genesim*, 2, lines 832-42. Note that in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede does not mention the role that Enoch and Elijah are expected to play in the conversion of the Jews. This would become a significant aspect of Bede's vision of their eschatological role in his later works.

⁶⁰⁸ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 17, lines 132-7: 'Quidam duos prophetas Enoch et Eliam interpretantur, qui, tribus semis annis praedicantes, contra mox secuturam Antichristi perfidiam fidelium corda confirment, illis que occisis, tantumdem temporis saevitiam ejusdem grassaturam, et, reinstaurato demum certamine, a sanctis, qui latebrarum praesidio velut mortui credebantur, esse superandam'. On the scriptural basis for the expected length of Antichrist's persecution see below, pp. 170-171.

⁶⁰⁹ Gryson's edition of *Expositio Apocalypseos* notes the unconventional nature of this reference. His notes suggest that Bede's identification of the two witnesses as Enoch and Elijah is not taken from Victorinus, Tyconius nor any of their followers (on Victorinus of Pettau's interpretation of the two witnesses, see note 603 above). Though its content is not derived from any of the regular source texts employed throughout *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Gryson notes that this passage is written in the linguistic style of Primasius: Gryson, R. *Beda's Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, p. 378.

Jews, but he fails to mention the eschatological role of Enoch.⁶¹⁰ An analogous passage can be found in book twenty of Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. Augustine states that Elijah is to return to earth prior to the day of judgement in order to convert the Jews.⁶¹¹ Like Bede's commentary on Revelation 3.10, Augustine does not assign any eschatological role to Enoch. The two passages from *Expositio Apocalypseos* stand in opposition to each other. On the one hand, Bede has Enoch and Elijah returning together, but earlier in the same commentary he states that Elijah will return alone.

The contradictory references from *Expositio Apocalypseos* should be taken as evidence of Bede's initial uncertainty on this matter. Such confusion is understandable considering Bede's relative inexperience as an exegete at this stage of his authorial career.⁶¹² The uncertainty regarding the return of Enoch and Elijah demonstrated in *Expositio Apocalypseos* does not persist throughout Bede's other exegetical works. At some point after he had finished his commentary on Revelation it seems that Bede tightened up his vision for this particular stage of the end-time sequence. Bede outlines the future return of Enoch and Elijah in *De VIII Quaestionibus*.⁶¹³ This work is a compendium of responses to a series of questions that concern specific points of

⁶¹⁰ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 4, lines 212-15: 'In qua quidam Iudaeorum male decipiendi et decepturi, alii autem Heliae magni prophetae monitis legem spiritaliter intellecturi, et ecclesiae membris incorporati, creduntur hostem fortiter esse victuri'.

⁶¹¹ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 20.29. Augustine's chapter is based upon the prophetic material concerning Elijah outlined in Malachi 4.

⁶¹² *Expositio Apocalypseos* is widely considered to be Bede's earliest exegetical work. On the date of this commentary, see above p. 116.

⁶¹³ *De VIII quaestionibus* is not listed in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24; it might well be a posthumous compendium of Bedan material (see note 1259, below). The edition of *De VIII quaestionibus* published in PL 93, cols. 455-62, is beset with problems. This edition includes responses to 8 questions that are thought to be genuine, alongside 7 that are considered spurious. Lehmann established the authenticity of the 8 Bedan compositions (the first 8 responses printed in the PL edition): Lehmann, P. 1919, 'Wert und Echtheit einer Beda abgesprochenen Schrift', *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 4, 3-21. See further, the comments of Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Handlist*, pp. 155-8. A full study of this oft-neglected text has been published by Michael Gorman: Gorman, M. 1999, 'Bede's *VIII Quaestiones* and Carolingian Biblical Scholarship', *Revue Bénédictine* 109, 32-74. Gorman's article contains a revised critical edition of the Latin text in an appendix (at 62-74). The Latin citations and references reproduced in the present study are taken from Gorman's edition.

scriptural interpretation.⁶¹⁴ Bede's response to question eight concerns an episode from 2 Samuel in which David recovers the ark of the covenant.⁶¹⁵ As in the commentary on 1 Samuel, the fate of the ark has allegorical significance with regards to the divine plan for salvation.⁶¹⁶ David's recovery of the ark is said to prefigure the eschatological reconciliation of the Jews and the Gentiles which is to be realised through the preaching of Enoch and Elijah.⁶¹⁷ The eschatological return of Enoch and Elijah is outlined in Bede's commentaries on Genesis and 1 Samuel, as well as his homily for the feast of the Holy Innocents.⁶¹⁸ In fact, the passage from *Expositio Apocalypseos* cited above, where Bede alludes to the return of Elijah alone, is the only variation to be found throughout Bede's entire corpus.

One significant issue relating to the two witnesses theme remains to be considered. It is clear that the doctrine did not come to Bede from St Augustine, nor was it transmitted to him by the textual sources that dominated his exegetical approach to Revelation (Tyconius, Primasius, Victorinus). Where then, did Bede derive this idea from? The eschatological return of Enoch and Elijah was a popular notion amongst Christian writers by the eighth century. The idea features in the work of John of Damascus, a theologian far-removed from Bede in geographical terms.⁶¹⁹ The two

⁶¹⁴ Like *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, this work belongs to the ancient literary genre of the *quaestio*. The question and answer format followed in these works is particularly well suited to the task of clarifying difficult passages of literature. Many Christian writers before Bede employed this format, such as: Eusebius, Augustine, Jerome and Isidore. Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, pp. 83-4.

⁶¹⁵ Bede's response relates to the events recounted in 2 Samuel 6.1-23.

⁶¹⁶ On the allegorical significance that Bede attaches to the loss and recovery of the ark of the covenant in *In primam partem Samuhelis*, see above p. 157 and below pp. 274-275.

⁶¹⁷ *De VIII quaestionibus*, 8, lines 368-73: 'Tandem rediens David arcam in civitatem David inducit, quia dominus Enoch et Elia praedicantibus, convertet corda patrum in filios. Boves et arietes immolans, id est eos qui aream domini tritulant, et ovium eius ducatum gerunt martyrii sanguine coronans'.

⁶¹⁸ *In Genesim*, 2, lines 832-42; *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1786-92 and 3, lines 2917-20; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.10, lines 89-105.

⁶¹⁹ John of Damascus (or John Damascene) was near-contemporary of Bede's who died in the year 749. John lived his entire life under Muslim rule. Like Bede, John was a monk and a considerable theological authority. His tract *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* contains a reference to the eschatological return of

prophets feature heavily in Ambrosius Autpertus's *Expositio in Apocalypsin*, a verse by verse commentary on Revelation that was composed within a few decades of Bede's death.⁶²⁰ A significant analogue for Bede's belief in the return of Enoch and Elijah is found in the *Carmen de Virginitate*, a poetic celebration of virginity by the Anglo-Saxon poet Aldhelm. Of these near-contemporary writers, Aldhelm is by far the most important so far as Bede is concerned. The *Carmen de Virginitate* relates how Enoch and Elijah will carry God's banners into the war '*contra Antichristum*'.⁶²¹ The war against Antichrist is not a major theme in Aldhelm's works as a whole; this passage preserves his only noteworthy reference to the Antichrist.⁶²² Nevertheless, this short extract represents a significant analogue to Bede's vision of the two witnesses tradition. It is not inconceivable that Bede's eschatological thought could have been directly influenced by Aldhelm,⁶²³ but it seems unlikely in this instance. The similar ideas that

Enoch and Elijah in book 4, chapter 26. See the translated edition by: Salmond, S. D. F. 1899, trans. *John of Damascus: Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (Oxford). For further information, see: Farmer, D. H. 1997, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford), p. 268.

⁶²⁰ Ambrosius Autpertus was born in Provence in the early eighth century and he later became Abbot of San Vincenzo (a monastery in southern Italy). He died in the year 784. Kibler, W. W. and Zinn, G. A. 1995, eds. *Medieval France: an Encyclopedia* (London), p. 29. Enoch and Elijah feature prominently in his influential commentary on Revelation. In particular, see his treatment of Revelation 11 in *Expositio in Apocalypsin*, book 5.

⁶²¹ *Carmen de virginitate*, lines 277-82 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 364-5; *Poetic Works*, p. 109).

⁶²² Aldhelm only uses the word '*antichristus*' on two other occasions throughout his entire corpus. In the *Epistola ad Acircium*, he describes Abimelech, the Old-Testament king, as 'a most base and foul antichrist'. *Epistola ad Acircium*, 2 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 68, line 7; *Prose Works*, p. 39). Here Aldhelm is speaking in general terms and he is not referring specifically to the Antichrist. The other use of the word '*antichristus*' is found in *De pedum regulis* during Aldhelm's discussion of metrical feet. The '*bacchius*' (a foot consisting of one short syllable, followed by two long syllables) is described as the opposite of the '*antibacchius*', in the same way that Antichrist is the antithesis of Christ: *Epistola ad Acircium*, 124 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 171, line 11).

⁶²³ Aldhelm can be seen to have exerted a small amount of influence over Bede's eschatological thought. Andy Orchard demonstrates that *De die iudicii* draws directly upon eschatological material from Aldhelm's *Carmina ecclesiastica*. In Aldhelm's poetic celebration of the twelve apostles in *Carmen ecclesiasticum* 4, Bede offers a short account of the life of Simon 'the Zealot'. This poem, number 11 in the series, features 6 lines of eschatologically-themed verse. This section of the poem is one of the earliest extant examples of eschatological imagery in continuous lines of Latin by a native Anglo-Saxon. Orchard demonstrates that Bede had first-hand knowledge of some sections of the *Carmina ecclesiastica*. A convincing parallel is suggested between the 8th line of Aldhelm's poem for Simon the Zealot ('*mundi moles montes collesque liquescant*') and *De die iudicii*, line 51 ('*terra tremet montes que ruens colles que liquescant*'). Orchard, A. 1994, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, p. 257, note 56 and p. 287.

appear in Bede's exegetical commentaries and Aldhelm's verse are likely to derive from a shared knowledge of a theological source.

The notion that Enoch and Elijah will return to the earth at the end of time, expressed in the works of Bede and Aldhelm, is preceded by a long and complex exegetical tradition. This tradition can be traced back through Christian history to exegetes such as Hippolytus of Rome and Tertullian.⁶²⁴ Hippolytus identified Enoch and Elijah as the two witnesses of Revelation 11. In his tract *De antichristo*, Hippolytus explains that the prophets will return to earth and suffer martyrdom for refusing to glorify Antichrist.⁶²⁵ A similar, though slightly different expression of the two witnesses tradition is found in the works of Tertullian. Tertullian anticipates the return of Enoch and Elijah in his lengthy discussion of the soul, *De anima*. Like Hippolytus, Tertullian explains that Enoch and Elijah will return to be martyred in the final persecution. However, Tertullian suggests that their deaths are expected to destroy Antichrist, a detail that is not found in the works of Hippolytus. Tertullian states that Enoch and Elijah are 'reserved to die, in order that they may destroy Antichrist with their blood (*morituri reseruantur, ut antichristum sanguine suo extinguant*)'.⁶²⁶

Following the expression of the two prophets doctrine in the works of Hippolytus and Tertullian, the idea that Enoch and Elijah would return to the earth at the end of time became widely diffused throughout Christian literature. Arthur Holder suggests that the notion might have come to Bede from Cassiodorus, an exegete whose

⁶²⁴ Hippolytus of Rome died a martyr in the year 235. He was an important theological authority in the late-second and early-third centuries. Farmer, D. H. 1997, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, pp. 238-9. Tertullian, a near-contemporary of Hippolytus, was also a prominent theologian. On his life and works, see: Dunn, G. D. 2004, *Tertullian* (London).

⁶²⁵ Hippolytus, *De antichristo*, 47. See Bauckham, R. J. 1976, 'The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah', 452.

⁶²⁶ Tertullian, *De anime*, 50. See Kovacs, J. L., Rowland, C. and Callow, R. 2004, *Revelation*, p. 127 and Bauckham, R. J. 1976, 'The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah', 456.

works were well known in Anglo-Saxon England.⁶²⁷ Holder cites two passages from Cassiodorus's *Expositio Psalmorum* as examples of the doctrine's clear expression in a source that Bede knew well.⁶²⁸ However, a close reading of the passages mentioned by Holder suggests that Cassiodorus is not the immediate source for Bede's belief in the eschatological return of Enoch and Elijah. In his commentary on Psalm 103, Cassiodorus mentions the eschatological return of the two prophets, commenting upon the role that they are expected to play in the future conversion of the Jews.⁶²⁹ In the concluding passage to his exposition of Psalm 51, Cassiodorus sees allegorical significance in its position in the scriptural canon. It is apt that this Psalm follows immediately after Psalm 50. Together, Psalms 50 and 51⁶³⁰ expose Antichrist and prevent him from spreading fear amongst the faithful, just as Enoch and Elijah are expected to do in the future.⁶³¹ A significant difference exists between Cassiodorus's interpretation and Bede's vision for this stage of the end-time sequence. Bede has Enoch and Elijah returning to be martyred by Antichrist (this is consistently expressed across *Expositio Apocalypseos*, *De temporum ratione* and the other Bedan works considered above). In Cassiodorus's commentary on Psalm 51, the prophets are expected to destroy Antichrist rather than suffer death in his persecution. This is a significant change in emphasis, and suggests that the two exegetes were heirs to separate theological traditions. The doctrine expressed in *Expositio Psalmorum* is

⁶²⁷ Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 163, note 12.

⁶²⁸ On Bede's knowledge of Cassiodorus's *Expositio Psalmorum*, see below, note 1078.

⁶²⁹ Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, 103, lines 259-80. The Psalm in question is number 104 in the New International Version of the Bible.

⁶³⁰ Please note that the Psalms numbered 50 and 51 in Cassiodorus's commentary are assigned the numbers 51 and 52 in the New International Version of the Bible.

⁶³¹ Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, 51, lines 228-36: 'Meminisse quoque nos congruit secundum hunc esse psalmum, qui antichristi prophetauit aduentum, mirabili sibi dispositione coniunctum. Nam sicut per eliam et enoch, duobus est uiris sanctissimis in fine saeculi destruendus, ita et per hos geminos psalmos, ne occultus terreat antichristus, indicatur. Vnde conuenienter post quinquagesimum hic psalmus est positus, quoniam filius iniquitatis, de quo loquitur, terminum remissionis excedens, nullam ueniam habere cognoscitur'.

similar to the tradition associated with Tertullian. In contrast, Bede's belief that Enoch and Elijah would suffer martyrdom at the hands of Antichrist is closer to the interpretation suggested in Hippolytus's *De Antichristo*.

Gregory the Great is a more likely immediate source for Bede's doctrine concerning the eschatological return of Enoch and Elijah. In his lengthy commentary on the book of Job, Gregory expresses the belief that Enoch and Elijah will return to be exposed to the savage persecution of Antichrist whilst still in their mortal flesh.⁶³² Gregory suggests that the two prophets are to be killed by Antichrist, an idea that corresponds with the vision of the end-time sequence projected in Bede's works. The eschatological return of Enoch and Elijah is also referred to in one of Gregory's homilies on Ezekiel.⁶³³ Bede was intimately familiar with many of Gregory's works, including the *Moralia in Iob* and the homilies on Ezekiel, from a very early stage of his exegetical career.⁶³⁴ Gregory might also have inspired the reference to Enoch and Elijah in Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate*.⁶³⁵ Like Bede, Aldhelm was intimately familiar with the *Moralia in Iob*.⁶³⁶ In light of Gregory the Great's considerable popularity in

⁶³² Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 14.23.27, lines 6-12: 'Tunc uero contra eum certamen iustitiae et nouissimi electi habere narratur et primi, quia scilicet et hi qui in fine mundi electi reperiuntur in morte carnis prosternendi sunt, et illi etiam qui a prioribus mundi partibus processerunt; enoch scilicet et elias, ad medium reuocabuntur et crudelitatis eius saeuitiam in sua adhuc mortali carne passuri sunt'.

⁶³³ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, 1.12, lines 106-16.

⁶³⁴ The index of citations and borrowings in Gryson's edition of *Expositio Apocalypseos* shows that Bede used the *Moralia* and the *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam* throughout his commentary on Revelation: Gryson, R. *Bedae Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, pp. 596-7.

⁶³⁵ The notes that accompany the translated edition of Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate* suggest Gregory's *Moralia* as a possible source: Lapidge, M. and Rosier, J. L. 1985, trans. *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works*, p. 257, note 9.

⁶³⁶ Aldhelm cites a passage from the *Moralia in Iob* in chapter 13 of the prose *De virginitate*, and Gregory features prominently throughout the list of Aldhelmian patristic citations offered by Ehwald (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, pp. 542-5). Michael Herren suggests that Gregory was an important influence upon Aldhelm's theological thought: 'His most admired authors were Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory (about whose individual influence a great deal more can be said than is possible here)'. Herren, M. W. 2005, 'Aldhelm the Theologian', in K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (eds.), *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge* (Toronto), pp. 68-89, at p. 84. Furthermore, note that Aldhelm's conception of the active and contemplative lives, as expressed in chapter 14 of the prose *De virginitate*, seems heavily indebted to Gregory's doctrine (on which see Markus, R. A. 1997, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge), pp. 17-23).

Anglo-Saxon England, his work seems to be a plausible source for the appearance of this theological concept in Aldhelm's poetry and Bede's exegetical works.

This chapter has already determined that Augustine was the defining influence over Bede's perception of salvation history as a whole, but it is interesting that Bede steps outside the Augustinian tradition with regards to a specific point of detail within the framework that he inherited. Augustine believed that the conversion of the Jews would be achieved by Elijah alone. In contrast, Bede thought that the culmination of the Augustinian salvation history model, the large-scale Jewish acceptance of Christ, would be achieved by two prophets rather than one. After an initial period of uncertainty, Bede promoted the eschatological return of Enoch and Elijah with consistency throughout the remainder of his exegetical career. Evidently, Bede's vision of the end-time sequence was drawn from more than one source. The clearly-defined sequence set forth in *De temporum ratione* offers a coherent framework of eschatological events, but the component parts of that framework were taken from a variety of theological influences and moulded together by Bede.

Antichrist

In chapter sixty-nine of *De temporum ratione*, the persecution of Antichrist is said to be the second certain indication that the day of judgement is approaching (the first, as demonstrated above, is the conversion of the Jews).⁶³⁷ The time of Antichrist is expected to be a period of immense distress for the Church. It represents the evening of the sixth world age, in which the world will experience a sharp and troubled decline. Bede's works contain a great deal of information about the character of Antichrist, the nature of his persecution and the expected course of his destruction. Passages from his

⁶³⁷ *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 2-5.

Old-Testament and New-Testament exegesis can be allied with the discussion of Antichrist offered in *De temporum ratione* in order to reconstruct Bede's expectations for this stage of the end-time sequence. A search of the Bedan texts included in the CETEDOC database of Christian Latin Texts returns over a hundred hits for the various grammatical constructions of the Latin term '*antichristus*'. Many of these must be discounted, as Bede often emulates the language of the New Testament to use the term as a synonym for 'heretic'.⁶³⁸ Nevertheless, a large number of significant passages remain. Relevant material can be found in several works, including: Bede's commentaries on Luke, Mark, the Catholic Epistles, Genesis and 1 Samuel. Significant content is also presented in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, *De VIII Quaestionibus* and a selection of Bede's Gospel homilies. These passages are often inspired by scriptural references to wicked men and their deeds. Biblical figures such as Doeg the Edomite, Barabbas or Simon Magus inspire Bede to discuss points of eschatological doctrine.⁶³⁹ Such men are considered to be precursors of Antichrist, and their actions should inspire Christians to consider the horrific persecution that is to occur in the future, shortly before the day of judgement.

Bede expected the time of Antichrist to last for three and a half years. It will follow on from the three and a half year period of Enoch and Elijah's preaching,⁶⁴⁰ and it will begin when the prophets are made the first martyrs of the final persecution. The

⁶³⁸ In his commentary on the first epistle of John, Bede explains that the letter often employs the term 'antichrist' as an alternative word for 'heretic'. See 1 John 2.18 and Bede's comments: *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Iohannis*, 2, lines 226-31. Bede uses the term '*antichristus*' in this sense regularly throughout his works, for example: *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.9, lines 222-7; *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 6, lines 77-81; *In Marci evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 51-5.

⁶³⁹ Doeg the Edomite, a servant of King Saul, is referred to as a precursor of Antichrist in Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel. The relevant passages are considered in chapter 9, below pp. 280-282. Barabbas, the prisoner who was spared by Pilate in place of Jesus, is likened to Antichrist in *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 6, lines 1428-31. Elsewhere in this commentary, Bede identifies the sorcerer Simon Magus as a precursor of Antichrist: *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 5, lines 811-9. Compare: *In Marci evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 205-8.

⁶⁴⁰ Enoch and Elijah's period of preaching is expected to last 1260 days, see above note 607.

belief that the persecution will last for this specifically-defined period of time derives from Scripture. Revelation 13.5 predicts that the Church will face opposition for a period of forty-two months.⁶⁴¹ The same figure is cited in Revelation 11.2.⁶⁴² Bede cites both of these verses in support of his discussion of Antichrist in chapter sixty-nine of *De temporum ratione*.⁶⁴³ He also alludes to the following verse from the prophecy of Daniel: 'From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days'.⁶⁴⁴ In *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede interprets this ambiguous pericope as a reference to a period of miracles and prophecies that is expected to occur prior to the final persecution.⁶⁴⁵ However, in *De temporum ratione*, Bede cites the figure mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel as an alternative way of reckoning the duration of the time of Antichrist.⁶⁴⁶

The severity of Antichrist's persecution is often emphasised throughout Bede's works. In his commentary on Genesis, Bede states that the tribulations that are to define the closing stages of the sixth age will be so great that even the elect may be induced into error, if this is possible.⁶⁴⁷ The persecution that the Church is to suffer at the end of time will be the worst that it has ever experienced. This notion has a scriptural basis. In *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, Bede cites the following verse from the Gospel of Matthew,

⁶⁴¹ Revelation 13.5: 'The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months'.

⁶⁴² Revelation 11.2: 'But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months'.

⁶⁴³ *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 19-21 and 39-40.

⁶⁴⁴ Daniel 12.11.

⁶⁴⁵ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 17, lines 25-33. This passage is a commentary on Revelation 11.3: 'And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth'. This verse provides the scriptural basis for the eschatological return of Enoch and Elijah immediately prior to the final persecution (see note 607 above) but Bede does not mention the two prophets here. He notes a discrepancy with the 1290 days cited in Daniel 12.11 without offering further comment.

⁶⁴⁶ *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 50-1.

⁶⁴⁷ In *Genesim*, 1, lines 1195-9: 'Adueniet autem multo tenebrosior ceteris, cum, apparente homine peccati, filio iniquitatis qui extollitur et eleuatur super omne quod dicitur deus aut quod colitur. Tanta fuerit tribulatio ut in errorem inducantur si fieri potest, etiam electi'. Here, Bede's language is reminiscent of Matthew 24.24 (this analogue is not cited in the notes to Jones's Latin volume or Kendall's translated edition of *In Genesim*).

which is taken from an eschatological prophecy that Jesus delivered to the apostles on Mount Olivet: 'For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equalled again'.⁶⁴⁸ Those who have formerly persecuted the Church, such as Nero and Domitian, will be emulated and surpassed by the horrific actions of Antichrist:

For when we have learned that this sort of slaughter of souls was inflicted upon Christians by the ancient persecutors of the Church (that is, by the members of the devil), who can doubt that the same thing must be inflicted many times over when Satan himself, the leader and source of all evil, will raise his own head up out of the abyss in order to persecute the Church?⁶⁴⁹

Bede did not doubt that the elect would suffer real, physical violence in the final persecution. This is made clear in Bede's commentary on 1 John, where he explains that the Church will be struck by swords as well as heretical doctrine.⁶⁵⁰ Like Enoch and Elijah, many of the elect are expected to suffer death at the hands of Antichrist. But despite suffering great violence, the collective body of the elect will not be overcome. In *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede draws upon St Augustine to suggest that the final persecution is necessary in order to prove the patience of the holy city.⁶⁵¹

Bede's works offer a number of significant details regarding the nature and character of Antichrist. Bede's homily for Palm Sunday explains that Antichrist and the devil are separate entities. Antichrist will call himself the son of God, but he will

⁶⁴⁸ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 705. The verse cited is Matthew 24.21.

⁶⁴⁹ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 706: 'Cum enim hujusmodi animarum necem a priscis Ecclesiae persecutoribus, membris videlicet diaboli, Christianis illatam noverimus, quis dubitet eandem multo amplius inferendam, ubi ipse malorum omnium dux et origo Satanas suum de abyso ad persequendam Ecclesiam caput extulerit?' Cited in translation from: Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 45.

⁶⁵⁰ *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam I Iohannis*, 2, lines 233-8.

⁶⁵¹ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 35, lines 30-8. Bede cites Augustine by name and reproduces an excerpt from *De civitate Dei*, 20.8.

actually be the most wicked person of all, an associate (*'comes'*) of the devil.⁶⁵² In *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede draws upon St Jerome's commentary on Daniel to explain that Antichrist will have a human form but he will possess the power of Satan. Bede includes the following statement, which is taken verbatim from Jerome, in his commentary on Revelation 13.17: 'We may not think him to be either a devil or a demon, as is the opinion of some, but one from among men, in whom Satan is going to dwell completely and corporeally'.⁶⁵³ St Jerome is an important influence upon Bede's eschatological thought and he is the dominant influence upon Bede's perception of Antichrist. Later in this chapter it will become evident that Jerome's commentary on Daniel is an important source for another aspect of the Bedan end-time sequence, the post-Antichrist 'trial of patience'.

Jerome's notion that Antichrist is to be a human imbued with the devil's power is expressed once more in *De temporum ratione*. Here, Bede describes Antichrist as 'a man of savage mind, begotten from the turbulent stock of the impious (*hominem sevissimi ingenii de tumultuosa impiorum stirpe progenitum*)'.⁶⁵⁴ This imprecise allusion to Antichrist's heritage can be pursued further. In his commentary on 1 Samuel, Bede describes Antichrist as a 'son of the devil (*filium diaboli*)'.⁶⁵⁵ Elsewhere, Bede explains that this is to be understood in a purely metaphorical sense. In his commentary on Luke, after referring to a verse from the Gospel of John which states

⁶⁵² *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.3, lines 153-6: 'Veniet antichristus in nomine suo qui cum sit homo omnium nequissimus et diabolo comite plenus dignatur se filium dei cognominare aduersatus et eleuatus supra omne quod dicitur deus aut quod colitur'.

⁶⁵³ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 22, lines 79-81: '...ne eum putemus, juxta quorundam opinionem, vel diabolum esse vel daemonem, sed unum de hominibus, in quo totus Satanas habitaturus est corporaliter'. Bede's statement is taken from Jerome, *In Daniele*, 2.7.8, lines 601-4. For further comment, see: McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and Bede*, p. 137.

⁶⁵⁴ *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 33-8.

⁶⁵⁵ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1272-81.

‘you are of your father the devil’,⁶⁵⁶ Bede explains: ‘Antichrist is called the son of the devil, not because he is to be born of him, but because he is to imitate him like the rest of the sinners’.⁶⁵⁷ In *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede is more specific about Antichrist’s heritage. He suggests that Antichrist is to be a descendant of Dan (the Old Testament figure who was the son of Jacob and head of an ancient tribe of Israelites). Bede explains that Dan is omitted from the list of tribes given in Revelation 7.5-8 for precisely this reason, citing a verse from Genesis in support of his statement.⁶⁵⁸ Gryson identifies Primasius as the source for the appearance of this idea in Bede.⁶⁵⁹ The connection between Antichrist and Dan appears uniquely in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, and it appears that Bede distanced himself from this idea in subsequent works. In his commentary on Genesis, Bede speaks positively of Dan’s descendants and he does not mention a link to Antichrist.⁶⁶⁰ Another opportunity to connect Dan with Antichrist is passed over in *In primam partem Samuhelis*.⁶⁶¹

There is to be just one Antichrist, a singular figure who will lead the persecution against the elect, but Bede does not expect him to act alone. Antichrist will recruit large numbers of people to join his cause. In his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Bede suggests that Antichrist will use miracles to seduce the faithful and deceive people into following him.⁶⁶² Antichrist is expected to receive a significant amount of support from

⁶⁵⁶ John 8.44 (the text cited above is taken from the Douay-Rheims translation).

⁶⁵⁷ In *Lucae evangelium expositio*, 6, lines 1431-33: ‘Filius autem diaboli antichristus non ab ipso nascendo sed sicut ceteri peccatores illum imitando uocatur’.

⁶⁵⁸ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 9, lines 56-60: ‘... et Dan praetermisit, ex quo dicitur Antichristus esse nasciturus, sicut scriptum est: Fiat Dan coluber in via, cerastes in semita, mordens ungulas equi, ut cadat ascensor ejus’. The verse cited is Genesis 49.17.

⁶⁵⁹ Gryson, R. *Bedaes Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, p. 312.

⁶⁶⁰ In *Genesim*, 2, lines 1617-33.

⁶⁶¹ See Bede’s commentary on 1 Samuel 3.20 ‘And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord’: In *primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1144-89.

⁶⁶² In *Marci evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 178-88. Compare Bede’s comments on the miracles of Antichrist in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 22, lines 31-44, and see the discussion by McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and Bede*, pp. 136-9.

within the Church. In *De VIII Quaestionibus*, Bede explains that at the end of the world (*in mundi fine*) many people will follow Christ in profession but Antichrist in deed.⁶⁶³ This comment is inspired by a scriptural reference to Michal, the daughter of Saul.⁶⁶⁴ In 2 Samuel, Michal is absent from the celebrations that accompany the ark of the covenant's return to Jerusalem. Instead she watches from a window and privately feels contempt for David, her husband.⁶⁶⁵ Michal is seen as a figure for the false brethren that are expected to arise from within the church at the end of time. Bede warns the reader that those who are followers of Christ in name but secretly oppose the Church will be subjected to eternal damnation.⁶⁶⁶

Once the three and a half year period of persecution is complete, the tribulations will end when Antichrist is defeated and killed. Some exegetes, such as Cassiodorus, believed that Antichrist would be destroyed by Enoch and Elijah but Bede did not subscribe to this view.⁶⁶⁷ Just as Bede was not entirely clear on Antichrist's heritage, he offers contradictory passages regarding who is to be responsible for slaying him. In *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede suggests that Antichrist will be killed by the archangel Michael,⁶⁶⁸ a point that is reinforced in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*.⁶⁶⁹ In the latter work,

⁶⁶³ *De VIII quaestionibus*, 8, lines 380-2: 'Quin etiam e speculis David humiliatum despicit, quia credentibus in mundi fine Iudaeis, erunt nonnulli qui Christum professione, sed opere sequantur Antichristum'.

⁶⁶⁴ Elsewhere in Bede's exegesis, Michal is employed as a positive type; her marriage to David is said to represent the eschatological reunification of the Jews and Gentiles (see above, p. 157).

⁶⁶⁵ 2 Samuel 6.16: 'As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart'.

⁶⁶⁶ *De VIII quaestionibus*, 8, lines 385-7: '...quia qui Christo fidetenus serviunt non illius regno coronandi, sed persecutorum eius quos imitavere, sunt anathemate damnandi'. Bede expresses similar sentiments in his commentary on 1 Samuel 12.14-15; *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1337-58. This passage is considered in detail in chapter 9 below, pp. 275-276.

⁶⁶⁷ On Cassiodorus's doctrine concerning the return of Enoch and Elijah, see above, p. 167.

⁶⁶⁸ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 20, lines 2-8: 'Quem [Michahelem] et Daniel in novissima gravissima que pressura in auxilium dixit Ecclesiae venturum, unde ab eo putant Antichristum esse perimendum'.

⁶⁶⁹ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 707. Bauckham suggests that the belief that the archangel Michael will slay Antichrist was adopted into the Christian tradition from Judaism; Bauckham, R. J. 1976, 'The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah', 457.

Bede explains that this notion derives directly from Gregory the Great.⁶⁷⁰ However, Arthur Holder points out that Gregory himself offers a conflicting vision for the demise of Antichrist in his *Moralia in Iob*.⁶⁷¹ In the *Moralia*, Gregory suggests that Antichrist will be killed by Christ.⁶⁷² This alternative notion is also promoted in Bede's works. Elsewhere in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede relates that the Lord will slay Antichrist with his breath, and a similar passage can be found in the commentary on Genesis.⁶⁷³ Bede had an opportunity to offer a definitive word on Antichrist's destruction in chapter sixty-nine of *De temporum ratione*, but he was unwilling to choose one option over the other. Bede leaves both possibilities open, remarking that Antichrist will be struck down by either the archangel Michael or the Lord Himself.⁶⁷⁴

The trial of patience

Following the death of Antichrist, one final stage of the Bedan end-time sequence remains before the day of judgement. The last judgement will not occur immediately after the end of the final persecution. Rather, the Lord's coming is expected to be delayed. Bede interprets this delay as a final test for the elect. Following the conventions established in Jerome's commentary on Daniel, this delay is often referred to in Bede's works as a 'test of the patience of the saints (*sanctorum patientiae probatio*)'. The trial of patience features in three of Bede's most significant eschatological works: *Expositio Apocalypseos*, *De eo quod Isaiah ait* and *De temporum*

⁶⁷⁰ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 2.34, lines 199-212. Gregory derived the idea from Revelation 12.7-8: 'And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven'.

⁶⁷¹ Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 47, note 5.

⁶⁷² Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 32.15.27, lines 135-47.

⁶⁷³ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 35, lines 122-5; *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1212-17.

⁶⁷⁴ *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 40-3.

ratione. It is necessary to consider the nature of this pre-judgement delay before concluding the present analysis of the end-time sequence.

Throughout his commentary on Revelation, Bede follows a regular pattern in order to interpret the various sevenfold sequences outlined in the scriptural text (such as the seven seals, seven trumpets, seven angels and so on).⁶⁷⁵ The sixth stage of a numerical sequence often represents the tribulations of Antichrist. The seventh stage is frequently related to a period of eternal rest that follows the end of the final persecution. On one occasion, Bede inserts a discussion of the pre-judgement trial of patience into his exposition of the seventh stage of a prophetic sequence. Bede relates the opening of the seventh seal to the period of time that will follow the death of Antichrist. Bede's explanation is prompted by Revelation 8.1: 'When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour'. This prophetic reference to a period of silence inspires the following comment:

It is believed that after the death of Antichrist, there will be a small amount of rest in the Church, which Daniel foretold as follows: 'Blessed is he who waits and comes to 1335 days'.⁶⁷⁶

The verse cited by Bede is Daniel 12.12. In the Bible, this verse is immediately preceded by a prophetic reference to a period of 1290 days.⁶⁷⁷ Bede explains the forty-five day discrepancy between the two passages from Daniel as follows:

And it is thus interpreted by the blessed Jerome: 'Blessed, he says, is he who, after Antichrist has been killed, waits for forty-five days

⁶⁷⁵ On Bede's approach to the sevenfold sequences of Revelation, see further pp. 117-118, above.

⁶⁷⁶ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 10, lines 78-81: 'Post interitum Antichristi requies aliquantula futura creditur in Ecclesia, de qua Daniel ita praedixit: 'Beatus qui exspectat et pervenit ad dies mille trecentos triginta quinque''.

⁶⁷⁷ Daniel 12.11: 'From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days'.

beyond the 1290 days (that is, three and a half years) in which the Lord and Saviour will come in His majesty. Now, why there should be a silence of forty-five days after the death of Antichrist is divine knowledge, unless perhaps we should say: the postponing of the kingdom of the saints is a test of patience'.⁶⁷⁸

Bede's explanation is taken almost word for word from Jerome's commentary on Daniel.⁶⁷⁹ On the two other occasions when Bede discusses the post-Antichrist trial of patience, in *De eo quod Isaiah ait* and *De temporum ratione*, Bede again draws upon Jerome directly, citing the same passage from *In Danielelem* that is incorporated into the excerpt reproduced above.⁶⁸⁰

Bede's comments regarding the pre-judgement delay in *De eo quod Isaiah ait* are very close to the ideas set forth in *Expositio Apocalypseos*.⁶⁸¹ The explanation offered in chapter sixty-nine of *De temporum ratione* is very similar to the expositions from *Expositio Apocalypseos* and *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, but in this instance, Bede frames the citation from Jerome in an important context that is not found in the two earlier tracts. Bede seems to have become aware that his previous statements

⁶⁷⁸ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 10, lines 81-8: 'Quod beatus Hieronymus sic exponit: 'Beatus, inquit, qui, interfecto Antichristo, supra mille ducentos nonaginta dies, id est, tres semis annos, dies quadraginta quinque praestolatur, quibus est Dominus atque Salvator in sua majestate venturus. Quare autem post interfectionem Antichristi quadragesimum quintum dierum silentium sit, divinae scientiae est, nisi forte dicamus: dilatio regni sanctorum patientiae probatio est'.

⁶⁷⁹ The passage that Bede cites from Jerome is taken from *In Danielelem*, 4.12.12, lines 671-7. Bede makes some slight adjustments to his source text, inserting a few extra words to clarify Jerome's statement. This is evident in Gryson's edition of *Expositio Apocalypseos* (which reproduces the relevant passage from Jerome on a facing page). Gryson, R. *Bedaes Presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A, p. 328. Bede's dependency upon Jerome in this passage contradicts a statement made by Wallis in the commentary to her translated edition of *De temporum ratione*. Commenting upon Bede's use of Jerome in *De temporum ratione*, 69, Wallis states that Bede did not draw upon the commentary on Daniel in *Expositio Apocalypseos*: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 370. That *In Danielelem* was a source text for *Expositio Apocalypseos* has long been established: Bonner, G. 1966, *Saint Bede in the Tradition of Western Apocalyptic Commentary*, p. 10. Bede also takes information about Antichrist from *In Danielelem* at other points in *Expositio Apocalypseos* (see chapter 22, lines 79-81 and 31, lines 42-4).

⁶⁸⁰ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 708; *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 53-8.

⁶⁸¹ Bede highlights the 45-day discrepancy between the two figures mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel and explains that this period of time represents a pre-judgement trial of patience: *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 708.

concerning the trial of patience were open to misinterpretation. The comments offered in *Expositio Apocalypseos* and *De eo quod Isaiah ait* can be seen to imply that once Antichrist has been defeated, humans can speculate regarding the arrival of the day of judgement by counting forward forty-five days. Such a view was unacceptable to Bede. Humans are not privy to such information and it is the exclusive privilege of God to know when the final judgement will occur. *De temporum ratione* represents Bede's definitive word on the trial of patience and he outlines the expected course of the final stage of the end-time sequence with care. Bede states that humans should not speculate about the arrival of judgement day, even after the defeat of Antichrist. The usual citation from Jerome's commentary on Daniel is preceded by the following caveat, which is not paralleled in Bede's earlier discussions of this theme:

When that son of perdition will have been struck down either by the Lord himself or by the archangel Michael, as some teach, and damned with an eternal verdict, it is not to be believed that the day of judgement will arrive immediately. Otherwise, the men of that age would be able to know the time of the judgement, if it followed immediately upon the three and a half years after the beginning of Antichrist's persecution. Everyone is allowed to know that the day of judgement will not come before that persecution is completed; but it is granted to no one to know how long after the end of that persecution it will come.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸² *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 40-50: 'Percusso autem illo perditionis filio siue ab ipso domino siue a michahele archangelo, ut quidam docent, et aeterna ultione damnato, non continuo dies iudicii secuturus esse credendus est. Alioquin scire possent homines illius cui tempus iudicii, si post tres semis annos inchoate persecutionis antichristi confestim sequeretur. Nunc autem quia ante consummatum tempus persecutionis illius dies iudicii non ueniat, scire omnibus licet; post quantum uero tempus consummatae eiusdem persecutionis uenturus sit, nemini prorsus scire conceditur'. Translation cited from: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 243.

Bede makes it clear that no literal significance should be assigned to the forty-five day discrepancy between the two figures mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel. The forty-five days should be thought of as a trial of patience, sent as a final test for the elect, but only God knows how long this period will last.

Conclusion

The end-time sequence is a clearly defined series of events that is expected to take mankind right up to the cusp of the day of judgement (a diagram of the sequence is reproduced in appendix one). Signs and portents can be considered generalised indicators of the end. They are sent by God to prepare mankind for the final judgement, but they cannot be considered an explicit part of the end-time sequence. Once initiated, the end-time sequence will see the irreversible progression of the world towards the end of time. It is to begin with the conversion of the Jews, which will be realised through the preaching of Enoch and Elijah. These Old Testament prophets are expected to return to earth and preach for a period of three and a half years. They will convert large numbers of Jews to Christ, fulfilling the divine plan for salvation that has been predetermined by God. Enoch and Elijah will strengthen the faith of the elect, ahead of the final persecution. Antichrist's persecution will also last for three and a half years, during which time the Church will be subjected to tribulations more horrific than ever before. The conversion of the Jews and the time of Antichrist indicate that the day of judgement is approaching, though they do not give mankind licence to speculate on its date or time. The day of judgement is not expected to follow immediately after death of Antichrist. Instead, the elect are to be subjected to a trial of patience. This notion is inspired by the forty-five day discrepancy suggested in the prophecy of Daniel, but the trial will last for an indeterminate amount of time.

The reconstruction of the end-time sequence carried out in this chapter has revealed that this aspect of Bede's eschatological thought is reasonably consistent throughout the course of his works. The main variations are to be found in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede's earliest major work of exegesis. This work contains comments upon every stage of the end-time sequence, but Bede contradicts himself on certain points of detail. The commentary offers contradictory statements regarding who is expected to kill Antichrist. It is also contains a passage suggesting that Elijah is to return alone before the final persecution. *Expositio Apocalypseos* also contains a reference, unique within Bede's corpus, that Antichrist is expected to descend from the ancient tribe of Dan. In later exegetical works, these points of uncertainty are tightened up and the contradictory statements are resolved. Bede drops the idea that Antichrist is to be connected with Dan, and he fixes upon the idea that two prophets will return, rather than one.⁶⁸³ The definitive Bedan statement on the end-time sequence is found in chapter sixty nine of *De temporum ratione*, where its component parts are drawn together and a singular vision for the last days is presented as clear, orthodox doctrine. *De temporum ratione* preserves Bede's vision for the end-time sequence at a mature stage of his authorial career, and his ideas are expressed with clarity and certainty.

The findings of this chapter can be compared with the conclusions that were drawn from the analysis of the expanded world ages framework in chapter four of this study. In chapter four, it was demonstrated that an important aspect of Bede's eschatological thought underwent significant development in the years after 708, in response to the heresy allegation directed at him by an unnamed associate of Bishop Wilfrid. The findings of the current chapter offer an interesting contrast. Though Bede's

⁶⁸³ Note though, that Bede remained unsure whether Antichrist would be slain by the archangel Michael or the Lord. See *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 40-3 and the comments above, p. 176.

thoughts concerning the end-time sequence developed over time, they were not subjected to major revision like the world ages doctrine. The developments that were made with regards to the end-time sequence were relatively minor and involved clarification of points of detail rather than a major overhaul. Bede's basic understanding of the framework for the last days did not change significantly. Rather, the changes that he made to the end-time sequence over the course of his authorial career involved the resolution of contradictory ideas and the clarification of his eschatological vision. After the initial uncertainty evident in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede developed clear beliefs regarding what was to happen at the end of time that remained consistent throughout the remainder of his lifetime.

Bede's vision for the end-time sequence ultimately derives from Scripture, with the prophecy of Daniel and the book of Revelation being of paramount importance. Bede's interpretations of these biblical prophecies are significantly influenced by a variety of patristic traditions. Three major writers, Augustine, Gregory the Great and Jerome are particularly important. Bede's vision for the eschatological role of the Jews derives from Augustine, and his commanding influence over Bede's perception of the framework for salvation history must be acknowledged. Though the overall picture is defined by an Augustinian framework, many of the component parts of the end-time sequence are taken over from other sources. Bede rejected Augustine's doctrine regarding the eschatological return of Elijah alone, preferring to look forward to the return of Elijah and Enoch together. This detail almost certainly derives from Gregory the Great. Other aspects of the end-time sequence were directly transmitted to Bede from Jerome. Jerome's commentary on Daniel is a crucial source for Bede's perception of Antichrist. Furthermore, the final stage of the Bedan end-time sequence, the delay

between the death of Antichrist and the day of judgement, is wholly taken over from Jerome. The explanations of this 'trial of patience' in three of Bede's eschatologically-themed works all draw upon the same lengthy citation from Jerome's *In Daniele*.

It is clear that the component parts of the Bedan end-time sequence are heavily influenced by patristic interpretations of Scripture, but it is necessary to again emphasise the elements of originality that are evident in Bede's eschatological thought. Though aspects of Bede's thought are adopted from Augustine, Jerome and Gregory, none of these authorities dominate Bede's vision to the exclusion of the others. The component parts of the end-time sequence are drawn from various sources, but the resulting vision of the last days promoted in Bede's works is unique to him alone. The clear and concise expression of the end-time sequence in *De temporum ratione* was a significant innovation in itself. Bede took the unprecedented step of building a framework for the last days into his wide-ranging survey of computus and chronology. In doing so, he transmitted an unambiguous framework for eschatological time to subsequent generations of medieval scholars in a single chapter that is easy to comprehend.

Chapter 6: The day of judgement

Introduction

After every stage of the end-time sequence has been accomplished and the trial of patience is over, the day of judgement is expected to occur. God will judge mankind and assign a fate to each individual human whether they are dead or alive. This event will initiate a transition from regular time to a state of eternity. The final judgement is the moment at which the sixth age of historical time and the seventh age of rest will end. In Christianity, time ultimately progresses forward in anticipation of this, the world's final act.

The day of judgement is a major theme in Bede's works. It is the one aspect of Bede's eschatological thought that can legitimately be said to feature prominently in each of the genres of writing to which he made a significant contribution: exegesis, poetry, history, computus, hagiography and educational literature. The present chapter will reconstruct Bede's vision of the final judgement. The keen focus on the chronology of Bede's writings that has been maintained throughout this study so far will be relaxed. Instead, this chapter will offer a broad thematic survey of Bede's beliefs relating to the day of judgement by collating passages from a wide selection of his works. By consulting the widest possible range of source materials, this chapter will reveal the prominence that the judgement day theme is afforded across the entire spectrum of Bedan works. Several different elements of this extensive topic will be considered. The initial focus will be upon certain key details: the universality of judgement, the aerial location of the physical act of judgement and the sudden and instantaneous nature of God's advent. The chapter will then proceed to consider the images that inspired Bede

to refer to the final judgement in his works, before ending with an analysis of his use of the judgement day theme as a spiritual lesson and didactic tool.

Equality and universality of God's judgement

At the end of the world, all humans will be equal in the eyes of the Lord and everyone will be subjected to the same process of judgement. Everybody will receive a fair trial, and they will be assigned a fate that is based entirely upon their deeds in life.⁶⁸⁴ *De die iudicii* contains a graphic depiction of the final judgement, and it stresses that no one will receive special treatment because of their earthly status or wealth:

All will stand there together: the proud man and the pauper, the strong man, the beggar and the rich man will all fear the same authority.⁶⁸⁵

The poem offers a vision of the last judgement that foresees all of humanity assembled before God, with the righteous and the condemned seated on separate benches.⁶⁸⁶ No one will be spared from facing the all-knowing Lord:

All men alike will be forced to go there: those who are, have been, or will be in the future; and everyone's every secret will be universally revealed.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁴ *De VIII quaestionibus*, 6, lines 238-41: '... so in the recompense of merits each one will receive according to that one's own work, and however one is in deed, that is also how one will appear in countenance at the judgement; it will not matter at all what someone might have prefigured, but what that person will have done'. Cited in translation from: Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 158.

⁶⁸⁵ *De die iudicii*, lines 80-1: 'Stabit uterque simul tumidus pauperque potensque / Et miser et diues, simili ditione timebunt'. Calder, D. G. and Allen, M. J. B. 1976, trans. *Sources and Analogues of Old English poetry*, p. 210.

⁶⁸⁶ *De die iudicii*, line 10.

⁶⁸⁷ *De die iudicii*, lines 66-8: 'Atque omnes pariter homines cogentur adesse, / Qui sunt, qui fuerant, fuerint uel quique futuri, / Cunctaque cunctorum cunctis arcana patebunt'. Calder, D. G. and Allen, M. J. B. 1976, trans. *Sources and Analogues of Old English poetry*, p. 210.

The message of these verses, that nothing can be hidden from God, is emphasised throughout the poem and it also features prominently in other Bedan texts.⁶⁸⁸ In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede relates the story of a condemned man from the kingdom of Mercia. The man recounts a visionary experience in which he is presented with two books that contain all of his good and bad deeds. Even his slightest thoughts have been recorded to be examined by the great Judge.⁶⁸⁹

In his commentary on 1 Samuel, Bede states that the last judgement will affect everybody from all regions of the earth.⁶⁹⁰ Those who are alive at the advent of the day of judgement will be judged along with those who have died throughout the course of historical time. This notion is expressed in Bede's hymn for Ascension Day, one of the most widely circulated Bedan hymns⁶⁹¹ (the enduring popularity of this hymn may, in some part, be due to its connection with Bede's day of death).⁶⁹² The hymn for Ascension Day contains two stanzas that reference the future judgement. Stanza seventeen contains dialogue spoken by angels to the apostles assembled on Mount Olivet. The angels tell the crowd that 'the Judge of all is come at the end of the

⁶⁸⁸ For example, in his commentary on the epistle of James, Bede explains that all of our deeds are known to God: *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam Iacobi*, 5, lines 99-103.

⁶⁸⁹ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.13.

⁶⁹⁰ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 572-8.

⁶⁹¹ The most widely circulated hymn was Bede's hymn in memory of Æthelthryth. This enjoyed an extremely wide circulation because of its inclusion in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.20. Bede's hymn for Ascension Day was incorporated into the 'New Frankish Hymnal': Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet*, pp. 10-12. It is also found in the 'Durham hymnal' in an abbreviated nine-stanza form (made up of stanzas 1, 2, 14, 15, 16, 17, [17a,] 30 and 31 following the numbering offered in Fraipont's edition). See: Milfull, I. B. 1996, *The Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a Study and Edition of the 'Durham Hymnal'* (Cambridge), pp. 294-7 (hymn number 73). The same nine stanzas are printed as an anonymous entry in Walpole, A. S. 1966, *Early Latin Hymns* (Hildesheim), pp. 371-3 (number 117). It is easy to appreciate why the shorter version of the hymn became popular. By cutting the thirty-two stanzas down to nine it avoids the repetition of the longer version whilst losing little of its meaning.

⁶⁹² The *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* records Bede's death as occurring during the liturgical feast of the Ascension in 735 (Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 580-7). Ascension Day fell on Thursday 26th May in 735 (Cheney, C. R. and Jones, M. 2000, eds. *A Handbook of Dates for Students of British History* (Cambridge), p. 208). The *epistola* makes it clear that Bede actually died on the Wednesday evening, 25th May. As the feast-day began with the previous evening's vespers (see *De temporum ratione*, 5 and 43) Bede's death occurred during Ascension Day as defined liturgically, though not on the day itself as defined by the calendar.

world'.⁶⁹³ Later in the same hymn, in stanza twenty-eight, Bede describes how after crossing the heavens, the 'eternal son sat at the right hand of the Father'.⁶⁹⁴ The following stanza states:

From there the powerful one is to come in glory to judge the
living, together with the dead, with a fair examination on account
of their actions.⁶⁹⁵

The final judgement will be a universal event; it will involve humans from all regions of the world and from every era of historical time without exception.

Location of the final judgement

Bede's works often promote the idea that the final judgement will occur above the earth, in the portion of the sky that is presently occupied by clouds. In the account of St Chad offered in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, a speech is attributed to Chad that refers to the future coming of the Lord. Chad's speech expresses the belief that God 'is going to come in the clouds in great power and majesty, to judge the living and the dead'.⁶⁹⁶ In chapter twenty-five of *De natura rerum* Bede makes reference to the day of judgement in his discussion of the world's atmosphere. 'Aer' is described as the seemingly void space below the moon which accommodates clouds and storms. Significantly, the passage states that *aer* is also the place where: 'after the aerial powers

⁶⁹³ Hymn 6, stanza 17, lines 3-4: 'Venturus ... saeculi / In fine iudex omnium'.

⁶⁹⁴ Hymn 6, stanza 28, lines 3-4: 'Ad dexteram sedit Patris / Consempiternus Filius'.

⁶⁹⁵ Hymn 6, stanza 29, lines 1-4: 'Venturus inde in gloria / Vivos simul cum mortuis / Diiudicare pro actibus / Iusto potens examine'.

⁶⁹⁶ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.3: '...uenturus est in nubibus, in potestate magna et maiestate, ad iudicandos uiuos et mortuos'. Bede's account of St Chad is considered in more detail above, pp. 148-149. Compare *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 88-91, where Bede suggests that God will be accompanied by clouds at the final judgement.

have been cast down from the heavenly seat, the condemned then await with torment the harsher day of judgement'.⁶⁹⁷

The aerial location of the day of judgement is also attested to in Bede's homiletic writings. In a homily written to be preached during Lent, Bede states that Moses and Elijah represent all of mankind. Scripture records the death and burial of Moses.⁶⁹⁸ Accordingly, he signifies those who have died prior to the day of judgement. Elijah, on the other hand, was assumed into heaven without suffering bodily death.⁶⁹⁹ He represents the people who are going to be alive at the advent of the final judgement. At the end of time the two Old Testament figures (and, by implication, the sections of humanity that they represent) will rise to meet God in the sky:

At one and the same moment, both of them, having been caught up in clouds to meet the Lord into the air (*in aera*), will be led into eternal life, as soon as the judgement is brought to completion.⁷⁰⁰

This passage draws upon the first epistle to the Thessalonians, a text that contains a vivid description of the final judgement.⁷⁰¹ Bede alludes to the same passage from 1 Thessalonians in another of his sermons, stating once again that the last judgement will

⁶⁹⁷ *De natura rerum*, 25, lines 4-5: 'Vbi etiam potestates aereae superna sede deturbatae cum tormento diem iudicii durius tunc damnandae praestolantur'.

⁶⁹⁸ The death of Moses is recorded in Deuteronomy 34.

⁶⁹⁹ 2 Kings 2.11; 1 Maccabees 2.58; Ecclesiasticus 48.9-13. See the discussion of Elijah in chapter 5, above p. 160.

⁷⁰⁰ *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.24, lines 155-8: 'Qui utrique pariter in uno eodem que momento rapti in nubibus obuiam domino in aera mox peracto iudicio ad uitam inducuntur aeternam'. Translation adapted from: Martin, L. T. and Hurst, D. 1991, trans. *Bede: Homilies on the Gospels, Book One Advent to Lent* (Kalamazoo), pp. 239-40.

⁷⁰¹ Bede derives his statement about mankind being taken up into the air from 1 Thessalonians 4.16-17 (cited here from the Douay-Rheims translation): 'For the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with commandment and with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead who are in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ, into the air (*in aera*), and so shall we be always with the Lord'.

take place in the air (*in aere*).⁷⁰² The judgement day theme is afforded a degree of prominence throughout Bede's collection of Gospel homilies.⁷⁰³ Presumably, the details concerning the day of judgement that are scattered throughout the collection reflect ideas that Bede had been exposed to himself in the preaching of others (such as Hwætberht, Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith).

As with so many aspects of Bede's eschatological thought, his definitive statement on this matter is found in *De temporum ratione*. Bede states that the Lord will descend from the heavens to the air where he will be met by the righteous. Bede includes a lengthy citation from 1 Thessalonians, confirming that this passage of biblical literature is the dominant influence upon his perception of where the physical act of judgement is expected to occur. The pericope cited by Bede offers a clear depiction of the Lord's descent from heaven:

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.⁷⁰⁴

Bede proceeds to consider whether the reprobate will also be raised up to meet the Lord or whether this is the exclusive privilege of the righteous. Though the excerpt from *De natura rerum* cited above suggests that the condemned will await God's judgement in

⁷⁰² *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.24, lines 316-22: 'Dimittit enim peracto resurrectionis munere dominus electos suos in aeterna tabernacula laetantes non eos utique ulterius a sua praesentia remouens sed a discrimine iudicii quod in aere futurum apostolo dicente nouimus in habitationem patriae caelestis immittens ut pro suis quisque meritis promissam regni sedem percipiat'.

⁷⁰³ The judgement day theme features prominently in the following homilies (though note that this is by no means a complete list): *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.24, 2.3, 2.7, 2.12, 2.13 and 2.24. The theme is often employed didactically in order to inspire a spirit of repentance in Bede's audience. For a full analysis of the didactic use of the judgement day theme in Bede's works, see below pp. 199-206.

⁷⁰⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4.16-17. This pericope is inserted into Bede's account of the day of judgement at *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 50-4.

the *aer*, Bede is less certain about this detail in *De temporum ratione*. The reprobate may be unable to rise up to meet the Lord because they are weighed down by their sins, and it is possible that they will await the Judge's verdict on earth surrounded by fire. In any case, the righteous will not remain in the *aer* with the Lord once the judgement is complete, even if the passage from 1 Thessalonians might seem to imply this.⁷⁰⁵ Rather, the elect will continue onwards with the Lord and accompany him to wherever he is going.⁷⁰⁶

The sudden and instantaneous nature of the day of judgement

The advent of the day of judgement will be sudden and unexpected. Bede often emphasises the suddenness of the future judgement by employing the metaphor of the Lord as a thief. This image derives from the New Testament, and it stresses the fact that the Lord's coming cannot be predicted.⁷⁰⁷ The final judgement could happen at any time, whether in the morning, evening or night. Chapter seventy of *De temporum ratione* opens with a reference to the thief metaphor.⁷⁰⁸ The lesson recurs frequently throughout a variety of Bedan works, including *Expositio Apocalypseos*.⁷⁰⁹ A notable example is found in *De arte metrica*, a metrical handbook designed to serve as an introduction to the study of Latin verse.⁷¹⁰ Whilst discussing rhythmic verse in chapter twenty-four, Bede quotes four lines of a poem which he describes as 'an alphabetical hymn on judgement day (*hymnum de die iudicii per alphabetum*)'. These four lines can be translated as follows:

⁷⁰⁵ After explaining that the righteous are to 'meet the Lord in the air', 1 Thessalonians 4.17 adds the statement: 'And so we will be with the Lord forever'.

⁷⁰⁶ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 78-85.

⁷⁰⁷ Mark 13.32-6. See also 2 Peter 3.10 and 1 Thessalonians 5.2.

⁷⁰⁸ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 2-4.

⁷⁰⁹ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 4, lines 173-4; 12, lines 80-2; 28, lines 41-2.

⁷¹⁰ For a discussion of the date of *De arte metrica* and its sister tract *De schematibus et tropis* and introductory information about both texts, see appendix 2, below pp. 337-343.

The great day of the Lord will appear suddenly, like a thief in the
obscurity of the night, falling upon those who are unprepared.⁷¹¹

The lines cited by Bede are evidently the first stanza of an abecedary (a poem in which each line or, in this case stanza, begins with successive letters of the alphabet). The poem in question is commonly referred to by its opening line '*Apparebit repentina*'.⁷¹² Bede does not comment upon its authorship in *De arte metrica* and it is possible, though by no means certain, that these verses were composed by Bede himself.⁷¹³ Regardless of whether or not this is the case, the inclusion of the thief metaphor in Bede's metrical tract is worthy of note. It gives an illuminating insight into Bede's teaching, and it also serves as a reminder that eschatological themes permeate a wide variety of Bedan works.

The message encapsulated in these verses, that the day of the Lord will come suddenly and unexpectedly, are important points of eschatological doctrine that lead us to another significant notion: the day of judgement is to be an instantaneous occurrence. Bede stresses this point in chapter seventy of *De temporum ratione*, stating that

⁷¹¹ *De arte metrica*, 24, lines 26-31: '*Apparebit repentina / dies magna domini, / fur obscura uelut nocte / inprovisos occupans*'. These verses closely echo the language of the pericopes cited in note 707, above.

⁷¹² A complete version of the poem is reproduced as item number 120 in Walpole, A. S. 1966, *Early Latin Hymns*, pp. 380-4. On the authorship of this poem, Walpole states: 'It has sometimes been ascribed to Hilary, who is known to have used the alphabetical contrivance, but there is no particular evidence to guide our judgement to him'. *Apparebit repentina* was an important source for Cynewulf's *Christ* poems and a forerunner to the *Dies irae*.

⁷¹³ Bede's authorship has been tentatively suggested by Michael Lapidge: Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet*, p. 9, and note 67, p. 26. In *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24, Bede states that he composed 'A book of hymns in various metres and rhythms (*Librum hymnorum diverso metro sive rythmo*)'. No rhythmical hymns have ever been convincingly assigned to Bede; the surviving compositions that we have are all metrical. The fact that Bede used the abecedary format in at least two of his metrical hymns (a celebration of virginity dedicated to Æthelthryth in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.20 and a hymn *In Natali SS Petri et Pauli*) adds support to Lapidge's suggestion. However, as Lapidge himself points out, it is impossible to confirm or deny this theory because we have no rhythmical Bedan verse to compare *Apparebit repentina* with. It is worth noting that *Apparebit repentina* is one of four anonymous rhythmical Latin hymns to feature in the *De laude Dei* anthology of liturgical materials. This collection contains extracts from a number of metrical hymns which are preserved anonymously but have convincingly been assigned to Bede's canon (see chapter 4, above p. 134).

judgement is expected to occur ‘in the twinkling of an eye’.⁷¹⁴ This statement seems rather innocuous at first glance, but another of Bede’s works reveals that it is a significant aspect of his judgement-day doctrine. The concept of an instantaneous day of judgement faced opposition from an alternative tradition that was circulating in Bede’s lifetime. The second epistle of Peter contains the following statement: ‘with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day’.⁷¹⁵ This verse, along with an analogous passage from Psalm 90,⁷¹⁶ was frequently employed as the basis for eschatological speculation throughout Christian history (these verses inspired theoretical traditions such as the millennial week).⁷¹⁷ Bede’s commentary on 2 Peter does not address the issue of the millennial week. Instead he tackles a separate, yet equally-problematic eschatological theory:

Certain persons (*Quidam*) consider that this statement [2 Peter 3.8] must be understood to mean that the day of judgement will have the same length as the space of a thousand years.⁷¹⁸

Bede does not name the persons associated with this idea,⁷¹⁹ but he proceeds to offer a comprehensive refutation of their doctrine, dismantling the problematic eschatological tradition on a number of levels. Bede states that times which appear long and short to

⁷¹⁴ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 47-8. The phrase ‘in the twinkling of an eye (*in ictu oculi*)’ is taken from 1 Corinthians 15.52.

⁷¹⁵ 2 Peter 3.8.

⁷¹⁶ Psalms 90.4: ‘For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by’.

⁷¹⁷ See chapter 2, above pp. 56-59, for a discussion of these verses and the eschatological traditions that they inspired.

⁷¹⁸ *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam II Petri*, 3, lines 55-7: ‘Quidam hanc sententiam ita intellegendam putant quasi dies iudicii tantam habeat longitudinem quantam mille annorum spatium’. Translation cited from: Hurst, D. 1985, trans. *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, p. 148.

⁷¹⁹ Neither the CCSL nor translated edition of *In epistulas septem catholicas* identify the source of the thousand-year judgement day doctrine. Likewise, I have been unable to trace a specific source for the appearance of this notion in Bede’s commentary. The idea could well be associated with the heretical doctrine addressed in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, on which see chapter 2, above. Alternatively, it could be connected to the notion, associated with Origen, that all souls would eventually be saved in the post-judgement afterlife. Bede tackled this belief in *De eo quod Isaiah ait* (see below, pp. 225-232).

humans are of equal length in the eyes of the Lord.⁷²⁰ He proceeds to explain that the epistle's reference to a thousand years should be interpreted as a symbolic allusion to the entire span of world time.⁷²¹

Significant information about the nature of the contested eschatological tradition can be found in Bede's commentary on the next pericope, 2 Peter 3.9.⁷²² The tradition anticipates a thousand-year period of judgement on earth to allow sinners to cleanse their souls. Bede strongly refutes this idea, saying that it is an insult to think that the righteous ought to wait for a thousand years whilst the less perfect are cleansed of sin.⁷²³ Rather, the day of judgement is expected to be instantaneous. Bede uses the phrase that he was to employ once more in *De temporum ratione*, stating that the righteous will receive their bodies 'in the twinkling of an eye'.⁷²⁴ Bede's commentary on 2 Peter gives the impression that the thousand-year judgement day was a real eschatological tradition with a strong theoretical basis. His rejection of this tradition in *In epistulas septem catholicas* can be aligned with the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.⁷²⁵ Both sources reveal Bede the eschatological theologian at work, correcting problematic contemporary theories and clarifying orthodox methods of interpretation. For Bede, eschatological orthodoxy was dependent upon a close reading of the relevant biblical passages. In his commentary on 2 Peter, Bede makes it clear that the alternative

⁷²⁰ *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Petri*, 3, lines 57-65.

⁷²¹ *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Petri*, 3, lines 66-73.

⁷²² 2 Peter 3.9: 'The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance'.

⁷²³ *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Petri*, 3, lines 98-109.

⁷²⁴ *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Petri*, 3, line 105. Compare *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 47-8 and note 714, above.

⁷²⁵ Bede's rejection of the thousand-year judgement day doctrine in *In epistulas septem catholicas* bears a number of similarities with the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. In both works, Bede emphasises his intellectual superiority by using long and complex Latin sentences. That said, in both cases, Bede offers a straightforward refutation of the errant beliefs in question which is based, first and foremost, upon a correct reading of Scripture.

tradition is based upon a misinterpretation of the Scriptures, just like the ill-informed theories challenged in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.

Judgement day imagery: fire and flood

Fire, flames and fervent heat are amongst the most significant images associated with the final judgement in Bede's works. At the end of the world, the earth will be engulfed in flames and it will be destroyed by an avenging blaze. The connection between the day of judgement and a large-scale fire derives directly from Scripture. In chapter seventy of *De temporum ratione*, Bede cites passages from 2 Peter and Psalm 50 that describe a huge conflagration which is expected to consume the earth at the end of time.⁷²⁶ Bede offers a graphic depiction of this world-wide blaze in *De die iudicii*:

The air will be filled with avenging flames; and fire, its reins broken, will rule everywhere. Where the air now spreads its empty lap, the fiery flame will pour its terrible thunder and hurry to avenge the fierce causes of crimes. Then avenging heat will not care to spare anyone, unless he comes there cleansed of every stain.⁷²⁷

The notion expressed in these verses, that the fire is sent by God at the advent of the day of judgement to purge the world of its sins, is an important point of eschatological doctrine.⁷²⁸ Bede discusses the purgatorial fire in *De temporum ratione*, but he is

⁷²⁶ Bede draws upon 2 Peter 3.10 and 3.5-7 at *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 4-10. Psalm 50.3 is cited in lines 69-70.

⁷²⁷ *De die iudicii*, lines 72-8: 'Insuper impletur flammis ulticibus aer, / Ignis ubique suis ruptis regnabit habenis; / Et quo nunc aer gremium diffundit inane, / Ignea tunc sonitus perfundet flamma feroces, / Festinans scelerum saeuas ulciscere causas. / Nec uindex ardor cuiquam tunc parcere curat, / Sordibus ablutus ueniat nisi ab omnibus illuc'. Excerpt cited in translation from: Calder, D. G. and Allen, M. J. B. 1976, trans. *Sources and Analogues of Old English poetry*, p. 210.

⁷²⁸ Bede's notion of a purgatorial fire may well have been influenced by 1 Corinthians 3.12-15: 'If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward'.

unclear about whether or not the flames will affect the righteous. An excerpt from Augustine's *De civitate Dei* suggests that the avenging blaze might cleanse the elect from some of their less serious sins and a passage from one of Gregory's homilies seems to support this view.⁷²⁹ Bede cites an episode from the prophecy of Daniel which suggests that the elect may survive the fire unharmed,⁷³⁰ but he ultimately leaves the issue unresolved. Instead, Bede inserts an important message into his chapter. He states that it is more important to present oneself chaste before God at the final judgement 'than debate where or how that judgement will take place'.⁷³¹

The notion of a world-wide fire is an important aspect of Bede's eschatological vision. The expiatory nature of this fire is emphasised in *De temporum ratione* and *De die iudicii*, and this calls to mind an episode from the *Historia ecclesiastica* where a similar idea is expressed in a different context. In book three, chapter nineteen, Bede recounts a vision of Fursa, an Irish missionary-'pilgrim' in the kingdom of the East Angles during the reign of King Sigeberht.⁷³² Bede's account of this vision is based upon an anonymous hagiographical text which is preserved in a number of medieval manuscripts.⁷³³ In the *Historia*, Fursa is subjected to an out of body experience in

⁷²⁹ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 63-75. Bede draws upon: Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 20.26; Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.1.

⁷³⁰ Bede alludes to the three young men who were thrown into a blazing furnace on the orders of Nebuchadnezzar. The men survived the ordeal unharmed: Daniel 3.8-26.

⁷³¹ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 75-7: 'Verum in his omnibus utilius est cuique castum se districti iudicis praebere conspectibus quam de iudicii illius modo loco ue discutere'.

⁷³² On Fursa, who is also commonly referred to as 'Furse' (Bede refers to him as 'Furseus' in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.19), see: Farmer, D. H. 1997, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, p. 197 and Herren, M. 1998, 'Scholarly Contacts', 26-7. 'Fursa' is employed here, in line with the conventions established in the online Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England database.

⁷³³ This text is commonly referred to as the *Vita prima Fursey*, or the *Transitus beati Fursey*. It was written in the seventh century, probably at Peronne (the place where Fursa was buried following his death in northern France, circa 650). Nine manuscripts of the *Vita prima* survive. A translated edition of the text, based upon the earliest extant manuscript (British Library, Harley 5041, fols. 79-98) has been produced by an ecumenical group known as the Fursey Pilgrims: Rackham, O. 2007, trans. *Transitus Beati Fursey: a translation of the 8th century manuscript, Life of Saint Fursey* (Norwich). For an introduction to the *Vita prima* and an overview of the various accounts of Fursa's life that were written in later centuries, see: Brown, M. 2001, *The Life of St. Fursey: What we Know, Why it Matters* (Norwich).

which he is taken up by angels to look back upon the earth. He is shown four fires that are set to consume the world. The fires represent falsehood, covetousness, discord and injustice.⁷³⁴ Fursa is told that everybody will be subjected to a fair assessment. Each person will be burned only by the fire associated with the sin (or sins) that they have committed. Though parallels have been suggested between this chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica* and Bede's *De die iudicii*,⁷³⁵ it is important to note that Fursa's vision is not strictly eschatological; Fursa is given a preview of a pre-judgement afterlife.⁷³⁶ This raises a number of issues regarding Bede's doctrine on afterlife penance that are not the immediate concern of this study.⁷³⁷ An interesting comparison can nevertheless be drawn between the four fires of punishment in the Fursa chapter and the Bedan notion of a purgatorial fire that is set to engulf the world at the final judgement. In both cases, sins are expected to be punished through exposure to extreme heat. Bede's use of a non-theological source in this chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica* is also worth noting here. Bede endorses the anonymous account of Fursa's life that he draws upon in the *Historia*, suggesting that his audience will benefit spiritually from its account of the holy man's deeds and visionary experiences. This endorsement of the anonymous text

⁷³⁴ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.19. It has been suggested that the four fires of Fursa's vision inspired an episode in Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*: Harley, M. P. 1987, 'The Reeve's 'Four Gleedes' and St. Fursey's Vision of the Four Fires of the Afterlife', *Medium aevum* 56, 85-9.

⁷³⁵ Graham Caie suggests that similarities exist between *De die iudicii* and the vision of Fursa in the introduction to his edition of the Old English poem *Judgment Day II*. Caie also suggests that aspects of the vision of Drythelm (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.12) are paralleled in *De die iudicii*: Caie, G. D. 2000, trans. *The Old English Poem Judgment Day II: a Critical Edition with Editions of De die iudicii and the Hatton 113 Homily, De domes daege* (Cambridge), pp. 33-4.

⁷³⁶ Note, however, that the *Vita prima* does contain some eschatological material as well as the preview of the pre-judgement afterlife that is incorporated into the *Historia ecclesiastica*. See chapter 12 (following the chapter divisions set forth in Rackham's translated edition of the text cited in note 733 above). Bede's account of Fursa's vision of the four fires is based upon chapter 8 of the *Vita prima*.

⁷³⁷ The vision of Fursa has often been seen as a significant source with regards to the development of medieval perceptions of the afterlife. Several discussions of this complex topic are available. In particular, see: Smyth, M. 2003, 'The Origins of Purgatory through the Lens of Seventh-Century Irish Eschatology', *Traditio* 58, 91-132, and Dunn, M. 2007, *The Vision of St Fursey and the Development of Purgatory* (Norwich). It would be an interesting exercise to assess whether the vision of afterlife penance prescribed in the vision of Fursa corresponds with Bede's own teachings on the matter, but such a task is beyond the scope of the present study.

serves as a useful reminder that Bede's thought was influenced by non-patristic sources, in addition to authorities such as Gregory the Great, Augustine and Jerome.

The final judgement is frequently connected with fire throughout Bede's exegetical works. Bede associates God's judgement with fervent heat in his commentary on the epistle of James.⁷³⁸ In *Expositio Apocalypseos* Bede refers to the fires of last judgement that are expected to punish the devil and his associates.⁷³⁹ A countless number of comparable examples could be drawn from Bede's extensive body of work. Scriptural references to water also inspire Bede to pursue judgement-themed exegetical interpretations.⁷⁴⁰ In imitation of the New Testament, Bede often links the great flood described in the book of Genesis with the fire that will occur at the last judgement.⁷⁴¹ Along with the fire that was sent to destroy Sodom,⁷⁴² the deluge that God sent to destroy the world in the time of Noah is a precursor for the eschatological destruction of the world. The fire and flood theme finds significant expression in Bede's commentary on Genesis. The making of Noah's ark and the advent of the flood is said to be a multiform mystical allegory, but Bede gives prominence to an eschatological interpretation. First and foremost, the sudden arrival of the flood signifies the unexpected hour of the last judgement.⁷⁴³ The flood came once the ark was full with

⁷³⁸ *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam Iacobi*, 1, lines 115-6. See also: *In epistolam Iacobi*, 4, lines 46-8; 5, lines 6-12.

⁷³⁹ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 27, lines 90-102.

⁷⁴⁰ Water and fire are both said to represent judgement in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 5, lines 17-20. Elsewhere, water is associated with the eternal punishment of the condemned: *De tabernaculo*, 1, lines 1364-73; 2, lines 952-6.

⁷⁴¹ The connection between the flood of Genesis 6-8 and the last judgement derives from the Gospel of Luke. Whilst talking of the coming of the kingdom of God, the Gospel of Luke records Jesus as saying: 'Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all' (Luke 17.26-7). Compare 2 Peter 5-9.

⁷⁴² Like the flood, the fire that destroyed Sodom is connected to the last judgement in the Gospel of Luke and Peter's second epistle: Luke 17.28-9; 2 Peter 6-9. Bede employs the fire of Sodom and the flood as symbolic types for the final judgement in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 31, lines 75-8. Compare *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam II Petri*, 2, lines 137-42.

⁷⁴³ *In Genesim*, 2, lines 1060-6.

animals, and likewise, once the number of the elect is complete, the end of the world will arrive. Those outside the Church will perish but the Lord will save the elect, just as Noah saved the various species of animals.⁷⁴⁴

This connection between the great deluge and the fire of the final judgement leads us to an issue addressed by Bede in chapter seventy of *De temporum ratione*. Bede discusses the physical extent of the destruction that will be wrought by the avenging blaze, an issue that is also considered in *De tabernaculo* and the commentary on 2 Peter.⁷⁴⁵ Bede draws upon Augustine to suggest that the great blaze is expected to destroy the same parts of heaven that were formerly destroyed in the flood.⁷⁴⁶ This will not involve the total destruction of the existing heavenly regions; only those parts that were affected by the deluge will be consumed in the fire. Bede is keen to emphasise the fact that the ‘new heavens’⁷⁴⁷ that will appear at the end of the world will not actually be new. Rather, they will be renewed versions of the existing heavenly regions which are unaffected by the fire.⁷⁴⁸ For Bede, the flood is an appropriate precursor of the end of the world but the connection between the fire of the last judgement and the Old Testament flood extends beyond a mere metaphorical comparison. The physical extent of the damage to the heavenly regions formerly experienced in the time of Noah will be replicated at the end of time.

⁷⁴⁴ *In Genesim*, 2, lines 1074-81. Compare *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Petri*, 3, lines 240-66, where Bede comments upon the eight souls that were saved in the flood (1 Peter 3.20-1; 2 Peter 2.5) in similar terms.

⁷⁴⁵ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 4-45; *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 1195-207; *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Petri*, 3, lines 38-48 and 110-25. In her discussion of *De temporum ratione*, 70, Wallis remarks that Bede’s consideration of this matter is a ‘curious, even eccentric digression’: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 370-3.

⁷⁴⁶ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 4-26. Wallis highlights the influence of Augustine in her translated edition of *De temporum ratione*, citing parallel passages from *De Genesi ad litteram* and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 244, 370-3.

⁷⁴⁷ Revelation 21.1: ‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away’.

⁷⁴⁸ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 31-8.

Didactic employment of the judgement day theme

Bede's comment, in *De temporum ratione* chapter seventy, that it is more important to present oneself chaste before the Judge than debate where or how the final judgement will take place has already been considered above.⁷⁴⁹ This important statement, with its emphasis on salvation, is a useful starting point for an analysis of the judgement day theme in Bede's works. No matter what one believes about the course of the future judgement, preparing for it thoroughly is the most important thing that a Christian can do during the course of their life on earth. Keeping this important message in mind, we can proceed to consider the ways in which Bede's judgement day doctrine is employed to instruct or admonish his audience. Three major themes emerge and each of these didactic aims shall be considered in turn. The first two are encapsulated in the poetic work, *De die iudicii*. They are: the use of eschatological ideas to strengthen faith in times of adversity and the employment of judgement day imagery to inspire repentance. A third notion will also be considered: the use of eschatological rhetoric to encourage reform. This is demonstrated in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, Bede's polemical letter to Ecgbert of York.

Following its lengthy exposition of the judgement day theme, *De die iudicii* contains a twelve-line epilogue.⁷⁵⁰ The epilogue is a crucially important portion of the poem. It enables Bede to be identified as the poem's author and Acca, his close friend and colleague, as its primary recipient (the significance of the epilogue in relation to these issues is explored in full in appendix three). The first four lines of the epilogue frame the rest of the poem in an important context. Bede addresses his close friend with a direct question:

⁷⁴⁹ *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 75-7.

⁷⁵⁰ *De die iudicii*, lines 152-64.

What, I ask, can we consider harsh in this world, when it permits
us to live with the heavenly throngs, to rejoice always on the
blessed thrones of those above and to bless the Lord Christ
forever?⁷⁵¹

These verses are poignant because the poem was probably composed during a time of great personal distress for Acca.⁷⁵² The verse work was written to divert Acca's mind from the harsh realities of the world. The message is clear: whatever ignominies are being suffered in the present, this life must not be considered cruel because it allows the eternal rewards of the next life to be achieved. By focusing on the day of judgement and the rewards that he will receive in the future, Acca can raise his mind beyond his worldly troubles and alleviate his present worries.

This notion, that eschatological material can be used to offer comfort to those suffering adversity, is replicated in other Bedan works. It is given a degree of prominence in *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*. Throughout this short commentary, Bede emphasises the way in which Habakkuk copes with adversity by focusing upon the rewards of the post-judgement heavenly kingdom.⁷⁵³ Bede's commentary on the canticle of Habakkuk was dedicated to an unknown female, who is addressed as 'most beloved sister and virgin of Christ (*dilectissima soror et virgo Christi*)' in its closing lines.⁷⁵⁴ The commentary can be aligned with *De die iudicii*.

⁷⁵¹ *De die iudicii*, lines 152-5: 'Quid, rogo, quid durum saeclo censetur in isto, / Utque illas inter liceat habitare cohortes, / Sedibus et superum semper gaudere beatis / Ac Dominum benedicere saecula per omnia Christum?'. Passage cited in translation from: Calder, D. G. and Allen, M. J. B. 1976, trans. *Sources and Analogues of Old English poetry*, p. 212.

⁷⁵² Appendix 3 proposes the theory that *De die iudicii* was written after Acca's deposition as bishop of Hexham in 731, see pp. 349-355 below.

⁷⁵³ This theme runs throughout the course of *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*, but in particular, see lines 609-63.

⁷⁵⁴ *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*, lines 770-1. A similar form of address is used at the start of this work, lines 1-2. The commentary on the canticle of Habakkuk is the only Bedan work to be explicitly dedicated to a female. Her identity is not known. Ward speculates that the *soror Christi* was 'presumably

Both works are dedicated to an individual recipient and both advocate the use of eschatological ideas to cope with present-day adversity. Acca and the unnamed *soror Christi* receive the same spiritual lesson. This lesson features in other works, such as the commentary on 1 Samuel,⁷⁵⁵ and it also features in Bede's homiletic writings. In a homily that explores the subject of the Transfiguration of Jesus, Bede encourages those who are suffering oppression to await their rewards from the just Judge patiently.⁷⁵⁶ The Transfiguration offered selected disciples a preview of the eternal kingdom. Bede suggests that this event occurred to inspire people to consider the rewards of the afterlife. This, in turn, should help Christians to tolerate present adversities more easily.⁷⁵⁷

A second major didactic use of the judgement day theme is evident in Bede's works, and again *De die iudicii* provides an appropriate starting point. The main body of the poem is designed to inspire a spirit of repentance in the reader. Bede employs a first-person perspective and he frequently addresses himself with challenging rhetorical questions.⁷⁵⁸ This self-challenging tone persists throughout the poem, as Bede urges himself to improve his earthly conduct and repent of his sins. The biblical precedent of the penitent thief is cited as an example of the forgiveness that God bestows upon those who are willing to repent.⁷⁵⁹ The advent of the last judgement is described in graphic

abbess of one of the northern convents, perhaps Whitby or Coldingham, with whom Bede had corresponded to obtain material which he included in the *Ecclesiastical History*'. Ward, B. 1990, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 77. For further comment, see the introductory essay by Diarmuid Scully in the translated edition of *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae: Bede: on Tobit and Habakkuk*, p. 19.

⁷⁵⁵ See Bede's commentary on Saul's message to the besieged people of Jabes Galaad, 1 Samuel 11.9. Bede suggests that Saul's words are a lesson for anyone suffering persecution; deliverance will be granted when the day of judgement arrives. *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1199-206.

⁷⁵⁶ *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.24. Bede's homily is based upon Matthew 16.27-17.29. Parallel accounts of the Transfiguration feature in the other synoptic Gospels (Mark 9.2-8, Luke 9.28-36).

⁷⁵⁷ *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.24, lines 26-51.

⁷⁵⁸ For example, see *De die iudicii*, lines 33-4: 'I ask you, my spirit, why are you so slow to reveal yourself completely to the Doctor? My tongue, why are you silent when there is still time for forgiveness?'. Further examples are found in lines 27-8, 39-41 and 87.

⁷⁵⁹ *De die iudicii*, lines 27-32.

detail, and Bede offers a clear vision of the fates of the eternal afterlife.⁷⁶⁰ The overriding message of the poem is encapsulated in the following lines:

Do not scorn the times of forgiveness you have for certain.
Remember how great the torments are that await the wicked and
how the high-throned, fearful Judge will come from the heights of
heaven to give everyone his due.⁷⁶¹

The poem conveys a clear spiritual lesson. Life on earth offers just one chance to secure salvation in the post-judgement afterlife. The terrors of the final judgement should inspire repentance and good conduct.

Bede employs eschatological doctrine to encourage his readership to repent throughout a wide range of works.⁷⁶² In addition to the extended exploration of this theme in *De die iudicii*, it is possible to draw upon a wide variety of examples from almost every genre of literature preserved in Bede's canon. The passage in the *Historia abbatum* discussed at the very outset of this study, where Bede describes the apocalypse paintings at Monkwearmouth that were brought back from Rome by Benedict Biscop, presents a suitable example.⁷⁶³ These visual representations of the last judgement inspired those who saw them to examine their conscience with due severity. An analogous passage is found in *De natura rerum*. In his description of mount Etna, Bede states that in Sicily the long-lasting fire of Etna continues 'as an example of the fires of

⁷⁶⁰ *De die iudicii*, lines 57-86 (day of judgement); 87-151 (post-judgement afterlife fates). The depiction of the post-judgement afterlife offered in *De die iudicii* is considered in chapter 7, below.

⁷⁶¹ *De die iudicii*, lines 46-9: 'Spernere tu noli ueniae tibi tempora certa. / Quanta malis maneat etiam tormenta memento / Vel quam celsithronus metuendus ab arce polorum / Adueniet iudex mercedem reddere cunctis'. Translation from: Calder, D. G. and Allen, M. J. B. 1976, trans. *Sources and Analogues of Old English poetry*, pp. 209-10.

⁷⁶² This has been noted by Graham Caie: 'Much of Bede's eschatological work is devoted to instilling a penitential mood in his readers'. Caie, G. D. 2000, trans. *Judgement Day II*, p. 34.

⁷⁶³ *Historia abbatum*, 6.

hell'.⁷⁶⁴ Though Bede can never have seen the imposing Sicilian mountain, it is interesting that, following Isidore, he considered Etna to be a physical reminder of the fate that awaits sinners in the afterlife.⁷⁶⁵ Like the apocalypse paintings on the north wall of St Peter's Church, Etna acts as a visual stimulus. It inspires those who look upon it to consider the fate of their soul after death.

Employing eschatological material to inspire repentance is one of Bede's favourite spiritual lessons. Several examples of its expression are found in Bede's exegetical works. In *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, Bede suggests that Christians ought to live each day of their lives as if the final judgement is due to arrive tomorrow. They should use the possibility of an imminent judgement to guard themselves against sin.⁷⁶⁶ Comparable sentiments recur frequently throughout *In epistulas septem catholicas*. Bede instructs his reader to focus upon eternal life, or consider the heavenly judgement, in order to regulate their conduct in the present day.⁷⁶⁷ The *Historia ecclesiastica*, like *De die iudicii*, was translated into Old-English and circulated for the purpose of spiritual edification in the late Anglo-Saxon period.⁷⁶⁸ Its strong didactic tone is unmistakable. A great many of its episodes draw upon eschatological material to inspire feelings of repentance in its audience. Several relevant passages have already

⁷⁶⁴ *De natura rerum*, 50, lines 6-7: 'Inde montis Aetnae ad exemplum gehennae ignium tam diutinum durat incendium'.

⁷⁶⁵ Bede's chapter is based upon chapter 47 of Isidore's *De natura rerum*, but Bede's account of Etna is significantly less moralising than Isidore's. Isidore comments on the eternal nature of hell and its perpetual fires, and he develops the comparison with Etna over a number of lines. In contrast, Bede retains the message that Etna's volcanic eruptions foreshadow the punishments of hell without exploring the analogy in depth. For a comparison of the chapters on Etna by Bede and Isidore, see: Browne, G. F. 1919, *The Venerable Bede: his Life and Writings* (London), pp. 225-6.

⁷⁶⁶ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 69-73. Bede's statement is taken verbatim from Jerome's commentary on Matthew.

⁷⁶⁷ For example, see the following passages from Bede's commentary on 1 Peter: *In epistolam I Petri*, 3, lines 48-68 (focus on eternal life); 4, lines 34-7 (fear the heavenly judgement).

⁷⁶⁸ A vernacular version of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, widely referred to as the 'Old English Bede', was produced in the late ninth or early tenth century. This edition is not a straight translation of Bede's Latin. Many significant episodes (such as the accounts of St Hild and the Synod of Whitby) are omitted from the vernacular version.

been discussed in the course of this study, such as the account of St Chad, Gregory the Great's letter to King Æthelberht and the vision of a condemned man from Mercia.⁷⁶⁹ An interesting parallel can be drawn between the didactic intentions of the *Historia* and the reported actions of one of its most famous subjects, Cædmon the illiterate cowherd blessed with a gift for poetry.⁷⁷⁰ Like Bede, Cædmon used eschatological themes for the spiritual instruction of his audience. Cædmon 'sought to turn his hearers away from delight in sin and arouse in them the love and practice of good works'. He achieved this by converting whatever he learned from the Bible into vernacular verse. Bede reports that Cædmon composed poetry on a number of different Christian topics including 'the terrors of future judgement, the horrors of the pains of hell, and the joys of the heavenly kingdom'.⁷⁷¹

The *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* was written in November 734, just a few months before Bede's death in the following year.⁷⁷² Bede adopts a polemical tone,⁷⁷³ and he directs a number of concerns about the state of the contemporary Northumbrian church and kingdom to Ecgbert, bishop of York.⁷⁷⁴ Bede's letter suggests a number of

⁷⁶⁹ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.32; 4.3; 5.13.

⁷⁷⁰ Cædmon became a monk in the monastery at Whitby after his talents were recognised by the abbess, St Hild. Bede preserves a Latin paraphrase of one of Cædmon's poems in praise of God which is known as 'Cædmon's hymn'. Two early manuscripts of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, the 'St Petersburg Bede' and the 'Moore Bede', preserve versions of the hymn in Old English. Lapidge, M., Blair, J., Keynes, S. and Scragg, D. 1999, eds. *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford), p. 81. A collaborative volume of essays has recently been published on Cædmon's hymn: Frantzen, A. J. and Hines, J. 2008, eds. *Cædmon's Hymn and Material Culture in the World of Bede* (Morgantown).

⁷⁷¹ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.24. Crépin notes that parallels exist between Bede's account of Cædmon and *De die iudicii*: Crépin, A. 1976, 'Bede and the Vernacular', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the 13th Century of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London), pp. 170-92, at p. 182.

⁷⁷² The final line of the earliest manuscript of the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* states that it was 'written on the 5th November in the third indiction (*Scripta Nonas Nouembris, indictione tertia*)'. Since Ecgbert's episcopate commenced in 732 and Bede died in 735, the letter can be safely assigned to 5 November 734. See: Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. II, p. 388; McClure, J. and Collins, R. 1999, eds. *The Ecclesiastical History of the English people* (Oxford), p. 429.

⁷⁷³ The *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* has inspired comparisons between Bede and Gildas; Bolton, W. F. 1967, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, vol. I, p. 183. In the introduction to the translated edition of *De templo*, Jennifer O' Reilly likens Bede's tone to that of an Old Testament prophet, *Bede: on the Temple*, p. xli.

⁷⁷⁴ Ecgbert became bishop of York in 732. He was elevated to archbishop when archiepiscopal status was restored to York in 735. Ecgbert was the brother of Eadberht, king of Northumbria from 737-758.

significant changes, and the reformist agenda of this tract has been emphasised in contemporary scholarship.⁷⁷⁵ The driving impulse behind the *Epistola* is a concern for the collective salvation of the Northumbrian people; the reforms proposed in Bede's letter are ultimately aimed at achieving this goal. Ecgberht must act now for the sake of the kingdom's spiritual well-being. The rhetoric employed in Bede's letter is framed in an important eschatological context which adds force and gravity to his call for large-scale reform. This aspect of the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* has never been given due prominence in scholarly discussions, and it can briefly be considered here.

The day of judgement looms large throughout Bede's letter to Ecgbert. Bede invokes eschatological imagery in the letter's second paragraph, and he continues to make reference to the judgement day theme thereafter. The *Epistola* places a heavy stress upon Ecgbert's responsibilities as a teacher and leading figure in the Church. One of his responsibilities involves representing his flock at the day of judgement.⁷⁷⁶ The bishop is urged to consider the eschatological fate of the Northumbrian people.⁷⁷⁷ Throughout the course of the letter, Bede draws upon the parable of the talents from Mathew 25, a significant eschatological passage.⁷⁷⁸ The parable relates the tale of two servants, a good servant and a wicked, lazy one. Ecgbert is urged to emulate the good servant, or else face the consequences at judgement day:

⁷⁷⁵ Scott DeGregorio has aligned the criticisms of the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* with a reforming impulse that is evident in Bede's later works, especially his commentaries on the Old Testament. See: DeGregorio, S. 2002, 'Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis'; DeGregorio, S. 2004, 'In Ezram et Neemiam and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church'.

⁷⁷⁶ The notion that ecclesiastical leaders were required to represent their flocks before God at the day of judgement is prominent in the writings of Gregory the Great. For example, see Gregory's comments concerning the apostles at *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.17, lines 389-405.

⁷⁷⁷ *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 14: 'Take care, I beg you, in case when the same Prince of the Apostles and other leaders of the flocks of the faithful offer to Christ on the Day of Judgment the great achievement of their pastoral care, a group of your sheep deserve to be set amongst the goats on the left hand of the Judge and to go with curses into eternal torment'. Passage cited in translation from: McClure, J. and Collins, R. 1999, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 353.

⁷⁷⁸ Matthew 25.14-30. This scriptural passage is invoked at the very beginning of the letter (paragraph 2) and it is referred to again in paragraph 6. The passage cited in note 777 above strongly echoes another part of Matthew 25 (verses 31-46).

But if anyone, may it never happen, receives the office of bishop and does not take care to keep himself free from evil by living well, and does not ensure that the people under his authority are corrected by instruction and punishment, what will happen to him at the hour of the coming of the Lord, the time of which is unknown to him, is made clear in the Gospel; where He says to the useless servant: ‘Throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’.⁷⁷⁹

Bede was not alone in employing the judgement day theme for didactic reasons in written correspondence with a powerful contemporary figure. Aldhelm does something similar in the final section of his letter to King Aldfrith.⁷⁸⁰

Conclusion

The day of judgement is a topic that permeates an extremely wide range of Bede’s works. In reconstructing his vision for the final judgement, this chapter has drawn upon poetic works, exegetical commentaries, homiletic writings and educational tracts. The central importance of this theme to the *Historia ecclesiastica* and *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* has also been established. Clearly, this was a significant subject which occupied a prominent position in Bede’s mind. In keeping with the findings of the analysis of the end-time sequence carried out in chapter five of this study, it is clear that Scripture is the predominant influence upon Bede’s perception of the eschatological

⁷⁷⁹ *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 2: ‘Si quis vero, quod absit, gradu episcopatus accepto, nec seipsum a malis actibus bene vivendo, nec subditam sibi plebem castigando, vel admonendo corrigere curat: quid huic veniente Domino, hora qua non sperat, eventurum sit, evangelica manifeste sententia declarat, qua dicitur ad inutilem servum: Eiicite in tenebras exteriores, ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium’. Translation: McClure, J. and Collins, R. 1999, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 343-4.

⁷⁸⁰ Aldhelm concludes his letter with some final thoughts for the king to consider. Aldhelm addresses Aldfrith as follows: ‘In all your works, reflect on the last things, and you shall not sin unto eternity’. *Epistola ad Acircium*, 142 (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, p. 203, lines 28-9; *Aldhelm: the Prose Works*, p. 47).

events of the future. The literature of the New Testament is particularly important with regards to Bede's vision of the day of judgement. Passages from the Gospels and the Petrine and Pauline epistles provide significant details that are replicated in the accounts of the future judgement scattered throughout Bede's corpus. 1 Thessalonians is regularly cited to justify the conviction that the physical act of God's judgement will take place in the air.⁷⁸¹ A statement that God will come 'in the twinkling of an eye' in 1 Corinthians is often cited by Bede to explain the sudden and instantaneous nature of the Lord's advent.⁷⁸² Also, Bede frequently employs the metaphor of the Lord as a thief. This is a prominent New Testament image which features in 2 Peter, 1 Thessalonians and the Gospel of Matthew.⁷⁸³

This chapter has considered the practical application of Bede's eschatological thought by analysing his use of eschatological rhetoric for didactic purposes. The judgement day theme is employed in a variety of forms to achieve a number of different outcomes. The theme has multiple layers and levels and it can be used in a positive or negative manner. The terrors of the last judgement can inspire people to repent of their sins. Alternatively, the post-judgement rewards of the heavenly kingdom can help people to cope with present-day persecution. Perhaps the most forceful and significant expression of the judgement day theme for didactic purposes is found in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*. The letter is couched in eschatological rhetoric which adds additional force to Bede's call for reform. Bede is keen to stress the bishop's responsibilities with regards to the eschatological fate of his flock. If Ecgbert fails in his task, then his soul, and the souls of his congregation will be in jeopardy at the advent of the final judgement.

⁷⁸¹ 1 Thessalonians 4.16-17.

⁷⁸² 1 Corinthians 15.52.

⁷⁸³ 2 Peter 3.10; 1 Thessalonians 5; Mark 13.32-6.

Chapter 7: The post-judgement afterlife

Introduction

After the day of judgement has been completed, the righteous are expected to enjoy an eighth age of perennial bliss with the Lord, but the condemned will suffer eternal punishment in hell. The present chapter will offer a reconstruction of Bede's vision for the post-judgement afterlife. It will consider the fates that the elect and the damned are to be faced with once God has passed judgement upon the world. It is important to stress the eternal nature of these fates at the outset of this investigation. *De temporum ratione* progresses forwards in anticipation of a transition to eternity which is realised in its final chapter. Bede explains that the world will no longer be governed by time after the day of judgement has passed. The final chapter of *De temporum ratione* looks beyond the end of the world to an afterlife in which the regular temporal cycles of days, months and years will cease to exist.⁷⁸⁴ Elsewhere, Bede explains that God, the creator of the world, was eternal before the ages.⁷⁸⁵ The elect will no longer be bound by the constraints of time, once they are able to enjoy their heavenly reward with Him.

The present analysis will draw upon a wide range of Bedan works. The exegetical tract *De eo quod Isaiah ait* and the issues that it covers will be considered in full. Bede's poetic works hold particular importance, as these texts contain vivid details concerning the rewards and punishments of the post-judgement afterlife that are rarely replicated elsewhere. The verse work *De die iudicii* will be considered again, but lesser-

⁷⁸⁴ *De temporum ratione*, 71. In his commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah, Bede styles the post-judgement kingdom of heaven as existing in an everlasting day. He is keen to emphasise the unique nature of this day; it exists outside of the constraints of passing time. In *Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1800-4. See also: *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 709.

⁷⁸⁵ See Bede's commentary on Genesis 1.1: *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1-6. The notion that God exists outside of time is also stressed in a number of Bede's homilies: *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.7, 1.8, 2.16, 2.18, 2.25.

known poetic compositions will be drawn upon as well. This chapter will also discuss the significant contributions that Bede made to two important and longstanding patristic debates concerning the nature of the post-judgement afterlife. It will become evident that Bede's thought on such matters is heavily influenced by two of his most revered Church fathers, Gregory the Great and St Jerome.

The post-judgement kingdom of heaven

In *De templo*, Bede explains that specific details concerning the heavenly kingdom are shrouded in a degree of mystery. Scriptural previews of heaven (such as those contained in the Gospels) can be used as a guide, but the precise make up of the heavenly homeland is known only to those who have gained entrance to it.⁷⁸⁶ Keeping this warning in mind, it is possible to reconstruct the essential aspects of Bede's vision for the eternal kingdom of heaven. This is a huge topic which is touched upon so frequently throughout Bede's canon of works that it is difficult to do it full justice here. It is therefore necessary to focus attention upon a selection of recurring themes. *De temporum ratione* offers a convenient starting point. In chapter seventy-one, Bede describes the transition of the world from regular time to eternity. Much of the chapter concerns the process of transition. In passing into the eighth age from the seventh, the deceased elect will enjoy uninterrupted bliss. Unlike the other world ages, the seventh age will not end in shadows of trouble and constriction.⁷⁸⁷ Bede offers a brief description of the eternal rewards that the elect are expected to experience with God. Two important points of detail emerge: the absence of night in the eternal kingdom of

⁷⁸⁶ *De templo*, 2, lines 530-41. Elsewhere, Bede explains that even the disciples who experienced the Transfiguration of Jesus were not able to comprehend the full majesty of the heavenly kingdom due to their mortality; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.24, lines 55-61.

⁷⁸⁷ *De temporum ratione*, 71, lines 2-56. See also *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1203-24.

heaven,⁷⁸⁸ and the immortal nature of the resurrected bodies of the elect.⁷⁸⁹ The second of these details is a particularly significant piece of eschatological doctrine that is often emphasised by Bede. In addition to *De temporum ratione*, references to the restoration of the righteous to their incorrupt bodies feature prominently in Bede's exegetical works and homiletic writings.⁷⁹⁰

Bede believed that the incorrupt bodies of the righteous would be physical, corporeal entities free from all mortality and corruption. Bede's conviction on this matter positions him against the doctrine of Eutychius, a sixth-century theologian whose teachings on the nature of the resurrected body came to be considered heretical.⁷⁹¹ Towards the end of his life, Eutychius proposed that after the general resurrection, the body will no longer be a physical entity; it will be intangible and finer than wind or air.⁷⁹² Eutychius was bishop of Constantinople, and his views on the resurrected body were strongly opposed by Gregory the Great. Gregory encountered this heretical doctrine before he was elected pope, whilst visiting Constantinople as a papal legate.⁷⁹³ Gregory successfully contested Eutychius's doctrine, gaining the support of Pope Tiberius II after a long theological debate. Bede includes an account of the dispute with Eutychius in his biography of Gregory the Great in the *Historia*

⁷⁸⁸ *De temporum ratione*, 71, lines 66-73. The idea that the heavenly kingdom will be permanently illuminated features prominently in other Bedan works: *De tabernaculo*, 1, lines 1327-32; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1029-31 (citing Revelation 21.25); *De eo quod Isaias ait*, col. 708; *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 37, lines 410-12; *De die iudicii*, line 128.

⁷⁸⁹ *De temporum ratione*, 71, lines 2-8.

⁷⁹⁰ The following sample is not a complete list: *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Petri*, 3, lines 270-84; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1572-81; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.18, lines 94-6.

⁷⁹¹ Eutychius was Patriarch of Constantinople. He enjoyed two periods of office before his death in 582. He is not to be confused with Eutyches, who was condemned as a heresiarch in the fifth century for his monophysitic views on the nature of Christ.

⁷⁹² The book which contained Eutychius's teachings on this matter was burned, but Gregory recorded the heretical doctrine in his *Moralia in Iob*, 14.56.72-4. On Eutychius's doctrine, see: Grillmeier, A. and Hainthaler, T. 1996, eds. *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. II (London), p. 141.

⁷⁹³ Gregory served as a papal representative in Constantinople for approximately five years. For an overview of the conflict between Gregory and Eutychius, see: Markus, R. A. 1997, *Gregory and his World*, p. 11. As Markus observes, the nature of the resurrected body had been a much-debated subject in Constantinople for some time before Gregory's arrival in the city.

ecclesiastica. The *Historia* records the orthodox belief, established by Gregory, that the body is to be resurrected as a full corporeal entity.⁷⁹⁴ Much later in the same chapter, Bede subtly reinforces the correct Catholic doctrine concerning this issue by describing Gregory's death and burial in the following manner: 'His body was buried in the church of St. Peter the Apostle, before the sanctuary, on 12th March; and in that body he will one day rise again in glory together with the other pastors of the Church'.⁷⁹⁵ The account of the debate between Eutychius and Gregory the Great, and Bede's subsequent reinforcement of the Gregorian position, demonstrate that the *Historia ecclesiastica* could be used to put across points of orthodox eschatological doctrine. Such issues are not confined to Bede's exegetical commentaries and homiletic writings.

In *De die iudicii*, Bede offers an extended description of the post-judgement kingdom of heaven and the rewards that the righteous can expect to enjoy. Once again, Bede states that the elect are to be restored to incorrupt bodies. Mankind will experience a state of 'eternal life, glory, praise, tranquillity, honour and sweet concord'.⁷⁹⁶ The righteous will enjoy eternal rest and there will no longer be the need for any labour. Nor will there be any negative emotional states, such as grief, anguish, sadness or sorrow.⁷⁹⁷ Poverty and need will be abolished, meaning that human virtues such as generosity and patience will no longer be required.⁷⁹⁸ Afflictions that affect

⁷⁹⁴ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.1: 'For the catholic faith maintains that our body, while it is indeed exalted by the glory of immortality and made subtle by the effectual working of the spirit, is palpable by the reality of its nature as was our Lord's body'. Bede adds that the heresy associated with Eutychius was suppressed by Gregory with such success that no one has tried to revive it since.

⁷⁹⁵ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.1: 'Sepultus vero est corpore in ecclesia beati Petri apostoli ante secretarium die quarto iduum Martiarum, quandoque in ipso cum ceteris sanctae ecclesiae pastoribus resurrecturus in gloria'. Translation cited from: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 131-3.

⁷⁹⁶ *De die iudicii*, lines 136-7: '... uita perennis, / Gloria, laus, requies, honor et concordia dulcis'.

⁷⁹⁷ *De die iudicii*, lines 130-4.

⁷⁹⁸ Bede lists poverty ('*paupertas*') and need ('*egestas*') as being amongst the negative aspects of the present world that are to be abolished in the future kingdom of heaven: *De die iudicii*, line 134. In *De templo*, Bede explains that there will be no need for generosity, good works or patience in the eternal

mortal humans, including old age, fevers, diseases, injuries and weariness will cease to exist (this assumes added significance when one considers that *De die iudicii* was probably composed in a period of extreme old age, shortly before Bede's death).⁷⁹⁹ Other aspects of human mortality will also cease, such as hunger, thirst and the need for sleep.⁸⁰⁰ There will be no adverse weather in the kingdom of heaven, with frosts, snow and hail being amongst the conditions that are expected to disappear⁸⁰¹ (again the poem makes one think of Bede's own circumstances, in this case the cold winter conditions that he must have experienced in his geographical location near to the North Sea Coast).

Bede makes an enormous number of references to the eternal kingdom of heaven throughout his exegetical works. A number of his commentaries contain extended discussions of this theme, and it worth highlighting a selection of them here. Bede's commentary on the final two chapters of Revelation offers a sustained vision of the future kingdom of heaven.⁸⁰² Another significant discussion of this theme is offered towards the end of *In Ezram et Neemiam*. The biblical narrative, which describes the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, inspires a lengthy allegorical interpretation. The dedication has two-fold significance. It represents the actions of the righteous in the present day whilst they prepare themselves for the future contemplation of God. The dedication also symbolises the future realisation of this ambition in the post-judgement kingdom of heaven. This approach is sustained over several pages of the modern Latin

afterlife because the labours of this world will have ceased. Also, faith will no longer be required because the divine rewards of heaven will have been revealed to the righteous: *De templo*, 1, lines 1743-52.

⁷⁹⁹ *De die iudicii*, lines 129, 131-2. For a full discussion of the circumstances surrounding the composition of *De die iudicii* and prospective dating *termini* for this work, see appendix 3 below.

⁸⁰⁰ *De die iudicii*, line 130. In his commentary on Genesis, Bede explains that the righteous will no longer need to seek nourishment from food after their resurrection: *In Genesim*, 1, lines 907-42. The same point is made in *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.9, lines 171-89.

⁸⁰¹ *De die iudicii*, line 133.

⁸⁰² See Bede's commentary on books 21 and 22 of Revelation: *Expositio Apocalypseos*, chapters 36-8.

edition of the text, with eschatological and present-day interpretations sitting side by side in Bede's commentary.⁸⁰³ Bede often relates biblical accounts of the dedication of a sacred building or artefact to the eschatological dedication of God's heavenly kingdom. This is a persistent theme in *De templo*, Bede's allegorical commentary on the Temple of Solomon.⁸⁰⁴ *De templo* contains sustained and vivid descriptions of the future repose that the righteous will enjoy with God.

Bede consistently looks forward to a singular kingdom of heaven. Within this kingdom, the elect will experience a variety of rewards. In imitation of the language of John's Gospel, heaven is often styled as 'one house with many mansions'.⁸⁰⁵ The multiform nature of the future kingdom of heaven is emphasised throughout Bede's later works of Old Testament exegesis, particularly *In Ezram et Neemiam*, *De templo* and *De tabernaculo*. In *De tabernaculo*, Bede explains that glory is promised to each member of the elect, but this glory will be relative to each person's individual merits.⁸⁰⁶ This aspect of Bede's vision for the future kingdom of heaven corresponds to the description of eternal hell offered in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*. Hell and heaven are opposite concepts. Just as there is one heaven, there will also be one hell; the damned will all fall into the same pit. Within hell, it is believed that similar sinners will be

⁸⁰³ *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1554-840. This section of Bede's commentary offers an interpretation of the events recounted in Nehemiah 12.27-43.

⁸⁰⁴ The Temple is employed as an allegory for the eternal kingdom of heaven in many of Bede's exegetical works. This sentiment is expressed with particular clarity in *De templo* and its companion text *De tabernaculo*. The Tabernacle is said to represent the Church in its present state on earth. The Temple is allegorically related to the future repose of the Church with God. The present Church, like the Tabernacle (a mobile shrine), is temporary, but the Temple (a fixed construction) will be permanent. The relationship between the Temple, Tabernacle and the Church is outlined in *De templo*, 1, lines 1-53 and *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 1-69. The allegorical relationships outlined here are cited often throughout both commentaries, but it must be noted that this is not a rigid scheme. The Temple and Tabernacle are given many layers of interpretation in either commentary and Bede's interpretations are fluid and flexible.

⁸⁰⁵ John 14.2.

⁸⁰⁶ *De tabernaculo*, 1, lines 678-80: 'For although there are many mansions in the Father's house on account of the diversity of merits, there is nevertheless one kingdom of heaven into which all the elect are received'. Translation from: Holder, A. G. 1994, trans. *Bede: on the Tabernacle*, p. 22. See also: *De tabernaculo*, 1, lines 734-46; *De templo*, 1, 1634-42; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1773-8.

punished together, in much the same way as the righteous will be grouped into a variety of heavenly ‘mansions’ based upon their conduct in life.⁸⁰⁷

In heaven, God will always be present and he will eternally cherish, fulfil and honour all members of the elect. Once they have been granted access to the kingdom of heaven, the elect are expected to enjoy face to face contact with God. This point of detail is often emphasised by Bede. It recurs throughout a wide range of Bede’s Old Testament and New Testament exegetical works and it is also emphasised in his homiletic writings.⁸⁰⁸ The notion that the righteous will be able to see the Lord in the post-judgement kingdom of heaven is encapsulated in the following verse from the Psalms: ‘the God of gods shall be seen in Sion (*videbitur Deus deorum in Sion*)’.⁸⁰⁹ This is one of Bede’s most frequently cited biblical verses. The ability to comprehend God will be an exclusive privilege of the righteous. It is a just reward for the faith that they have shown throughout their life on earth. In contrast, the wicked will not be able to see God; they will be will condemned to hell at the day of judgement without seeing the glorified majesty of the Lord.⁸¹⁰ There will be no need for teachers, books or learning once the righteous experience face to face contact with the Lord. The Scriptures will no longer be required, as divine knowledge will be imparted to the faithful directly from God.⁸¹¹ The miracle of languages, which was formerly bestowed

⁸⁰⁷ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 707: ‘Surely it accords with the decree of the strict Judge that those who have fought against the Church with a like mind should undergo a like penalty for their contending against God’. Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 48. A full discussion of Bede’s perception of the eternal punishments of hell can be found below, pp. 220-225.

⁸⁰⁸ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 709; *De templo*, 2, lines 311-16; *In Cantica canticorum*, 1, lines 536-8 and 8, lines 174-87; *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 1030-7; *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1217-24; *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 37, lines 452-6; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.17, lines 351-64.

⁸⁰⁹ Psalms 84.8, cited here from the Vulgate edition and Douay-Rheims translation (in each case, the passage in question is numbered as verse 7 of Psalm 83).

⁸¹⁰ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 103-8. The notion that seeing God is a special privilege, reserved for the elect, is expressed in a number of Bede’s homilies, for example: *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.24 and 2.17.

⁸¹¹ *De tabernaculo*, 1, lines 920-9 and 3, lines 88-93; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.17, lines 129-39.

upon the apostles by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost,⁸¹² is expected to be repeated in heaven.⁸¹³ The righteous will exist in a state of perfect harmony with God. The Lord's promise to the faithful will be completely fulfilled, and there will no longer be any need for faith or self restraint because all temptation and adversity will have ceased.⁸¹⁴

Poetic visions of the eternal kingdom of heaven

Though *De die iudicii* offers the most complete depiction of the post-judgement heavenly kingdom in Bede's poetic corpus, relevant content can also be found elsewhere. A series of short verse compositions are attributed to Bede in Fraipont's Corpus Christianorum Series Latina edition of Bede's '*Opera rhythmica*'.⁸¹⁵ Bede offers visions of the future kingdom of heaven in three of these texts, and he often associates the eternal kingdom with sweet music and sacred songs. The verse works in question carry the received titles *Oratio ad Deum*, *De psalmo lxxxiii* and *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*. Each of these poetic sources shall be considered in turn.

Oratio ad Deum is a twenty-six-line verse prayer which has attracted relatively little interest from Bede scholars.⁸¹⁶ Just two manuscript copies of the prayer are known to exist. An incomplete version of it is found in a collection known as the 'Royal Prayer Book', where lines seven to twenty-six are preserved anonymously and without a

⁸¹² Acts 2.1-12.

⁸¹³ *De templo*, 1, lines 827-30.

⁸¹⁴ *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1025-9.

⁸¹⁵ Fraipont, J. *Beda's Venerabilis Opera rhythmica*, CCSL 122, pp. 445-51. On Fraipont's edition, which is beset with multiple problems, see above, notes 487 and 488.

⁸¹⁶ The poem was discovered and first published by Meyer, W. 1912, 'Beda's Oratio ad Deum', *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse*, 228-35. Laistner was optimistic about the prayer's authenticity: Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, p. 130. *Oratio ad Deum* is not considered in Lapidge's discussion of Bede's poetic activities. Brown offers a single sentence on this source; he states that it is 'a twenty-six line prayer in elegiac couplets'. Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 76; Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet*.

title.⁸¹⁷ *Oratio ad Deum* is also preserved in the so-called ‘Fleury Prayer Book’, a compilation written in Bavaria in the first half of the ninth century.⁸¹⁸ The Fleury Prayer Book preserves the poem as ‘a prayer of Bede the priest (*Oratio Bedae presbyteri*)’.⁸¹⁹ A series of thematic and stylistic parallels exist between this work and *De die iudicii*. Like Bede’s judgement day poem, *Oratio ad Deum* contains an expression of the author’s faith in God alongside a great deal of eschatological content.⁸²⁰ The poet calls upon God’s aid, which is required during a time of spiritual crisis and an ongoing struggle against sins of the flesh. As in the epilogue to *De die iudicii*, there is perhaps a sense that the author is nearing death.⁸²¹ Linguistic resonance is evident between *Oratio ad Deum* and *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, another verse work that has been assigned to Bede’s poetic corpus.⁸²² The final lines of *Oratio ad Deum* express hope that the person praying be deemed worthy to enter heaven to enjoy the

⁸¹⁷ The manuscript that contains the Royal Prayer Book is London, British Library Royal 2. A. xx. A printed edition is available in the appendix to Kuypers, A. B. 1902, ed. *The Prayer Book of Aedelwald the Bishop, Commonly Called the Book of Cerne* (Cambridge), pp. 201-25 (Bede’s prayer is found on pp. 217-18). On the inclusion of Bede’s prayer in the Royal Prayer Book, see: Sims-Williams, P. 1990, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800* (Cambridge), pp. 280-1. A number of items were added to the Royal Prayer Book in the tenth century, but Bede’s prayer forms part of the original collection which has been dated to the late-eighth or early-ninth century: Gneuss, H. 2001, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: a List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe), number 450, p. 79.

⁸¹⁸ Sims-Williams, P. 1990, *Religion and Literature*, p. 276. The Fleury Prayer Book is preserved in Orléans, Bibliothèque municipale 184 (161). An edition of the Fleury Prayer Book has been printed in volume 101 of the PL series, columns 1383-416.

⁸¹⁹ This title also heads Fraipont’s edition: *Beda Venerabilis Opera rhythmica*, CCSL 122, pp. 445-6.

⁸²⁰ The prayer describes a struggle between God and Satan, in which God is urged to fight and emerge victorious. The imagery employed alludes to the final battle of mankind described in the book of Revelation. For example, line 12 describes God piercing a ‘wild serpent’ (*chelydrum*) with a two-edged sword. The use of imagery associated with a ferocious battle continues with a reference to the sound made by a ‘fierce and hostile battle trumpet’ (*hostica salpax truxque*) in lines 15-16.

⁸²¹ *Oratio ad Deum*, lines 7-10: ‘Me similem cineri uentoque umbraeque memento! /graminis utque decor sic mea uita fugit / sed tua perpetuo pietas quae fulget ab aeuo / eripiat semper fraudis ab ore tuum’. Compare *De die iudicii*, lines 161-3.

⁸²² *Oratio ad Deum* begins by greeting God, ‘the single hope of eternal life on earth (*aeternae mundo spes unica uitae*)’. This form of address is echoed in *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, a metrical adaptation of Psalm 41 (Bede’s authorship of this source is discussed below, p. 219). In line 31 of the *Soliloquium*, God is referred to as ‘the single hope of [eternal] life’ (*spes unica vitae*). The recurrence of the construction ‘*spes unica vitae*’ may suggest that these compositions are the work of one author.

glorious music of the sacred choir.⁸²³ The very last line of the prayer advances the image of David, the Old Testament king, singing angelic songs in heaven.⁸²⁴

The emphasis placed upon sacred music in the final lines of *Oratio ad Deum* is paralleled elsewhere. Bede composed metrical adaptations of Psalms 41, 83 and 112.⁸²⁵ These compositions bear no indication of their date, and it is not clear how they fit into Bede's canon of works.⁸²⁶ Two of the three metrical psalms contain important eschatological content, but the adaptation of Psalm 112 does not.⁸²⁷ A strong manuscript tradition exists to connect Bede with the authorship of this source, which is known as *Carmen de psalmo cxii*.⁸²⁸ The two other metrical Psalm adaptations contain pertinent material. These works both explore the idea of the soul departing the body to see God in heaven.⁸²⁹ They can be considered thematically homogenous with *De die iudicii* and Bede's 'death song' (a short vernacular poem preserved in the *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae*).⁸³⁰

⁸²³ *Oratio ad Deum*, lines 22-26.

⁸²⁴ *Oratio ad Deum*, line 26.

⁸²⁵ On the metrical adaptations of Psalms 41 (42) and 112 (113) and their manuscript histories, see the study by Lehmann, P. 1913, 'Die Erstveröffentlichung von Bedas Psalmengedichten', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 34, 89-92.

⁸²⁶ These verse compositions may have been part of Bede's *Liber epigrammatum*. Alternatively, they could have been intended for congregational singing and thus formed part of the *Liber hymnorum*, or they may not have belonged to either collection. Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet*, pp. 4-5 and 21, note 27.

⁸²⁷ The Psalm in question is number 113 in some versions of the Bible, including the New International Version. The language, chapter divisions and numbering conventions of the New International Version are usually followed in this study. However, for the sake of convenience, the Psalms that Bede's verse adaptations are based upon are hereafter referred to by the number quoted in the poems' received titles.

⁸²⁸ Fraipont's edition of this work is based upon 5 manuscripts, including the eleventh-century Bamberg codex: Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek Misc. Patr. 17 (B II.10). This manuscript contains a complete version of *Carmen de psalmo cxii* which is attributed to Bede by a marginal annotation. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek CLM 4547 and St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 869 both preserve the poem under the title '*Carmen venerabilis Bedae presbyteri de psalmo cxxii*' (the extra 'x' is a scribal error). The poem is also preserved in St Gallen Stiftsbibliothek 265 and Munich, Staatsbibliothek 19451. The latter was not used by Fraipont, but see: Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, p. 124. Nine lines of *Carmen de psalmo cxii* are merged with a verse composition by Juvencus to form an anonymous prayer in the ninth century 'Book of Cerne'. Sims-Williams, P. 1990, *Religion and Literature*, p. 333.

⁸²⁹ Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet*, pp. 3-4.

⁸³⁰ On the *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* and Bede's 'death song' see below, note 1280.

De psalmo lxxxiii, Bede's metrical adaptation of Psalm 83, is preserved in a solitary manuscript. It appears alongside *Oratio ad Deum* in the Royal Prayer Book.⁸³¹ The manuscript preserves *De psalmo lxxxiii* anonymously, but the case for Bede's authorship of this source is strengthened by similarities in form to his two other metrical Psalm adaptations. The straightforward Latin of Psalm 83 is embellished in the metrical paraphrase.⁸³² Psalm 83 seems to have been an important influence upon Bede's conception of eternity (in the final chapter of *De temporum ratione*, Bede cites three verses from this Psalm to supplement his discussion of the post-judgement kingdom of heaven).⁸³³ *De psalmo lxxxiii* describes the author's desire to enter heaven and enjoy an idyllic state of perpetual happiness. After line fourteen, the poem departs from its source to contrast the transitory nature of life on earth and eternal life with the Lord.⁸³⁴

De psalmo lxxxiii is somewhat one-dimensional. It contains no exploration of the concept of hell, focusing instead upon joyful themes and optimistic images. In contrast, both fates are examined in another metrical Psalm adaptation known as *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*.⁸³⁵ With the exception of *De die iudicii*, *Soliloquium de psalmo xli* contains the most significant eschatological content to be found in a Bedan poetic work. This source is reasonably well attested to in terms of manuscript survival. Fraipont's edition is based upon four manuscripts, though he acknowledges the

⁸³¹ Kuypers, A. B. 1902, ed. *Book of Cerne*, p. 218. The codex is missing leaves before and after the folio that preserves *De psalmo lxxxiii* and *Oratio ad Deum*. *Oratio ad Deum* (lines 7-26) and *De psalmo lxxxiii* are found on fol. 39. The lost leaves that originally preceded fol. 39 might have contained the missing lines from *Oratio ad Deum* along with other Bedan compositions. Sims-Williams, P. 1990, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 280-1.

⁸³² For example, the latter part of verse 8 'The God of gods shall be seen in Sion' (*videbitur Deus deorum in Sion*), becomes: 'And you will be seen in Sion by the pious, O nourishing God of gods, filling the lofty walls of Jerusalem with your sunshine (*Cerneris inque Sion castis, Deus alme deorum, / celsa tuo Solymae moenia sole replens*'). *De psalmo lxxxiii*, lines 9-10.

⁸³³ *De temporum ratione*, 71, lines 74-5, 85-6 and 87-8.

⁸³⁴ *De psalmo lxxxiii*, lines 15-20. These lines are not directly based upon Psalm 83, which ends in modern editions of the Bible with words of praise for God and an exhortation for people to trust in Him.

⁸³⁵ For a discussion of the images of hell set forth in *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, see below p. 223.

existence of two more versions of the text.⁸³⁶ The transmission of *Soliloquium de psalmo xli* appears to have been connected with *Carmen de psalmo cxii* (they appear together on three separate occasions).⁸³⁷ This source is often preserved under Bede's name, and there is little reason to doubt his authorship. At forty-six lines long, *Soliloquium de psalmo xli* is considerably longer than the two other metrical Psalm adaptations.

As the title suggests, *Soliloquium de psalmo xli* is written from a first person perspective.⁸³⁸ It offers a deeply personal examination of the poet's conscience. In this regard, *Soliloquium de psalmo xli* can be considered thematically comparable to *De die iudicii*. In lines forty-one and forty-two of the *Soliloquium*, Bede addresses himself with the following question: 'But I ask, O trembling soul, what have you changed in anxiety and sorrowful utterances altered by senseless gain?'⁸³⁹ A similar question is asked of Bede's 'wounded groaning mind'.⁸⁴⁰ Comparable passages are found in *De die iudicii*, where Bede uses similar constructions to address his own flesh and tongue with searching questions.⁸⁴¹ The *Soliloquium* stresses the need to keep faith during a testing time, and it emphasises the importance of prayer.⁸⁴² As in *De die iudicii*, Bede contrasts the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell. In a particularly striking passage, Bede anticipates the moment, in the future kingdom of heaven, when he will be allowed into the presence of Christ and permitted 'to pluck a harp with a golden pick and sing

⁸³⁶ Fraipont, J. *Beda Venerabilis Opera rhythmica*, CCSL 122, p. 447.

⁸³⁷ The three manuscripts that preserve *Soliloquium de psalmo xli* and *Carmen de psalmo cxii* together are: Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek Misc. Patr. 17 (B II.10), Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek CLM 4547 and St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 265.

⁸³⁸ '*Soliloquium*' is a word formed by St Augustine from *solus* and *loquor*, meaning 'a talking to oneself'. Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. 1879, *A Latin Dictionary*, p. 1719.

⁸³⁹ *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, lines 41-2: 'Sed rogo, quid tristes, anima o tremebunda, loquelas / Versas et stupido uariaris in anxia quaestu?'.

⁸⁴⁰ *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, lines 15-16: 'Quare ergo maestus, mens o gemebunda, querelas / Voluis et anxiferis turbaris saucia curis?'.

⁸⁴¹ *De die iudicii*, lines 27-8, 33-4, 39-41 and 87. See above, note 758.

⁸⁴² *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, lines 6-10 and 45-6.

perpetual songs of joy and praise'.⁸⁴³ Once again, it is clear that music plays an integral part in Bede's vision of the heavenly kingdom.

The post-judgement punishments of hell

Bede's frequent allusions to the kingdom of heaven can be contrasted with his comparatively rare descriptions of the terrors of hell. Bede is far more likely to stress the beauty of heavenly rest with God than give graphic depictions of eternal torture. *De temporum ratione* offers a case in point. The final chapter of this text, chapter seventy-one, constructs an image of the elect enjoying eternal repose with God. It presents an entirely optimistic vision of eternity which makes no mention of the fate of the damned. Generally speaking, this policy is replicated throughout Bede's collected body of work. On the occasions where Bede does refer to the fate of the damned, he tends not to elaborate on this issue, providing little detail beyond a generalised allusion to their fate.⁸⁴⁴ Vivid descriptions of the eternal fate of the damned are not common in Bede's exegetical works. It is not easy to find passages to correspond to the extended accounts of the heavenly kingdom that are found in the works considered above, such as *De templo*, *De tabernaculo* and *In Ezram et Neemiam*. That said, Bede does construct a detailed vision of the eternal punishments of the wicked in *De die iudicii*. The details offered in *De die iudicii* can be supplemented by other Bedan works, particularly *Soliloquium de psalmo xli* and *De eo quod Isaiah ait*.

⁸⁴³ *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, lines 13-14. 'Carmina laetitiae laudisque sonare perennis / Iam liceat fuluoque lyram percurrere plectro'.

⁸⁴⁴ A typical example of this can be found in *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.4. At lines 265-8, Bede makes a very brief allusion to the eschatological fate of the damned: 'But whoever rejoices in giving priority to earthly over heavenly riches will undoubtedly be sent away by the Lord, empty of all blessedness, at the time of the final separation, and so they will be punished along with the devil with the penalty of everlasting misery'. Martin, L. T. and Hurst, D. 1991, trans. *Bede: Homilies, Book One*, p. 39. Following this statement, the homily turns to discuss other themes; Bede fails to offer a significant description of the post-judgement punishments that are to be experienced by the condemned.

Before commencing a discussion of these sources, it is first necessary to consider the *Historia ecclesiastica*. This text contains a great deal of material relating to hell, damnation and the punishment of sinners. One episode offers a particularly vivid description of these topics. The vision of Drythelm, like the vision of Fursa considered in chapter six above, concerns a pre-judgement afterlife. Though the focus of the present analysis is on the eschatological fate of the damned, the Drythelm episode merits brief consideration here. The vision of Drythelm features in book five, the final book of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. The Drythelm chapter and the two chapters that follow immediately after it all describe visionary experiences.⁸⁴⁵ These three chapters have clear didactic intentions,⁸⁴⁶ and they were often circulated independently of the rest of the *Historia* in the centuries after Bede's death.⁸⁴⁷ The visionary experiences recounted in these chapters have much in common, though each has a slightly different emphasis. Cumulatively, the passages serve to promote the message that punishment for sin is inescapable regardless of age, gender or status.⁸⁴⁸

Drythelm is a Northumbrian man who returns from death to issue a spiritual warning. Drythelm is given a tour of the afterlife which ultimately inspires him to repent. The horrors of hell are described in great detail, and the vision relates the joys

⁸⁴⁵ The vision of Drythelm is recounted in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.12. 5.13 is an account of a Mercian man whose unholy behaviour causes him to enter hell and suffer everlasting torment. 5.14 relates the experiences of a monk-craftsman whom Bede knew personally (the man's ignoble life and refusal to repent leads to his entry into hell).

⁸⁴⁶ The didactic intentions of the Drythelm chapter are clear: Bede states that this miracle occurred 'in order to arouse the living from spiritual death'. On the didactic intentions of the vision recounted in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.13, see above p. 204. Bede tells us that the episode related in 5.14 'spread far and wide and roused many people to do penance for their sins without delay'. Wallace-Hadrill states that 5.14 shows that 'the need for confession and penance is as urgent as it ever was'. Wallace-Hadrill, J. M. 1988, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People. A Historical Commentary* (Oxford), p. 187.

⁸⁴⁷ Three manuscripts preserve 5.12-14 together, without the remainder of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Laistner lists ten manuscripts that contain the vision of Drythelm alone. Six survive of the Mercian man's vision (5.13) and one manuscript of 5.14 is extant: *Hand-list*, pp. 107-9.

⁸⁴⁸ Drythelm is a man with a family, and the episode also mentions the punishments being suffered by a clerk, a woman and a layman. The Mercian man of 5.13 is layman with military rank who is employed in the service of King Cenred. 5.14 recounts the visions of a monk-craftsman.

that are to be expected in the kingdom of heaven. The vision makes it clear that the afterlife preview offered to Drythelm is of an interim state; those who are seen by Drythelm are said to be awaiting the day of judgement.⁸⁴⁹ The vision offers a four-part model of the afterlife which is made up of two heavens and two hells.⁸⁵⁰ This raises issues relating to Bede's beliefs on afterlife penance and the structure of the interim state that is expected to follow bodily death. These issues are not the immediate concern of this study, and this is not an appropriate place to discuss them in detail.⁸⁵¹ However, the key themes that are promoted in Drythelm's vision of the punishments of the afterlife merit brief consideration here. The predominant image emphasised in Drythelm's vision of hell is fire. In a pre-stage of punishment, the souls of the wicked are tossed between icy snow and raging fire.⁸⁵² Hell is styled as a fiery noisome pit from which it is impossible to escape. Those who fall into the fiery pit will remain there

⁸⁴⁹ Bede makes this clear in the course of *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.12. Following his preview of the afterlife, Drythelm is informed about what he has seen by his guide. The guide explains that Drythelm has seen souls that are awaiting the day of judgement (for details, see the text cited in note 850 below).

⁸⁵⁰ Drythelm's vision describes the existence of four afterlife stages: heaven, hell, a pre-heaven and a pre-hell. The pre-hell contains deathbed confessors who can be helped by the prayers of the living. These souls are ultimately expected to be saved: 'because they did repent and confess ... they will all come to the kingdom of heaven on judgement day'. The pre-heaven contains those not yet deemed worthy enough to gain direct access to God: 'nevertheless all of them at the day of judgement will enter into the presence of Christ and the joys of the heavenly kingdom'. Drythelm does not receive a preview of the actual heaven or hell, but he is told that these places house those who are perfect enough to enter heaven or those who are already condemned at the time of their bodily death. Extracts cited in translation from: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 256-7.

⁸⁵¹ For a full and detailed discussion of the vision of Drythelm and the significance that Bede's chapter had in the development of Anglo-Saxon notions of an 'interim paradise', see: Kabir, A. J. 2001, *Paradise, Death, and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge), chapter 4, pp. 77-109. Kabir traces the textual influences upon Bede's chapter, and she stresses that Bede's account of Drythelm's vision was a crucial stage in the development of Anglo-Saxon perceptions of the afterlife. Similar themes are discussed by Marilyn Dunn, in her 'St Fursa Lecture'. Dunn, M. 2007, *Vision of Fursey and the Development of Purgatory*. Dunn focuses upon the vision of Drythelm at pp. 10-11.

⁸⁵² *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.12: 'When the wretched souls could no longer endure the fierceness of the terrific heat, they leapt into the midst of the deadly cold; and when they could find no respite there, they jumped back only to burn once again in the midst of the unquenchable flames'. It later emerges that the souls being tortured in the pre-stage of punishment are deathbed confessors (see above, note 850). Colgrave notes that extremes of temperature are a common feature in medieval perceptions of hell, and he suggests a parallel with Felix's *Vita Guthlaci*: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 490-1. See also: Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. II, p. 296.

eternally.⁸⁵³ The persistent fire imagery, and the stress placed upon the eternal nature of the punishments of hell, are aspects of the vision of Dryhthelm paralleled elsewhere in Bede's corpus. Both concepts are prominent in the small selection of Bedan works that describe the post-judgement fate of the damned.

The description of the eternal punishments of hell offered in *De die iudicii* features a great deal of fire imagery. After describing the advent of the day of judgement, Bede asks himself a searching rhetorical question: 'Why aren't you afraid of the fiery torments which evil demons have long prepared for you, and which exceed the perceptions and descriptions of any man alive?'⁸⁵⁴ An extended consideration of these unspeakable 'fiery torments' ensues, and some parallels can be drawn with the punishments of the pre-judgement afterlife outlined in the vision of Dryhthelm.⁸⁵⁵ The poem describes 'regions of eternal hell filled with black fires' and 'icy colds mingled with burning flames'.⁸⁵⁶ The extreme heat will make eyes weep and the bitter cold will cause great gnashing of teeth.⁸⁵⁷ Fire belches out of the mouths of the condemned, and their flesh is gnawed at by worms with fiery teeth.⁸⁵⁸ *De die iudicii* proposes the notion that sinners will be subjected to extreme physical torture and they will experience unprecedented pain.⁸⁵⁹ This aspect of the vision of hell offered in *De die iudicii* is paralleled in *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*. The metrical adaptation of Psalm 41 describes

⁸⁵³ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24. Dryhthelm describes the mouth of hell as follows: 'There suddenly appeared before us masses of noisome flame, constantly rising up as if from a great pit and falling into it again'. Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 254. The guide later explains to Dryhthelm that anyone who falls into the pit will remain there for all eternity.

⁸⁵⁴ *De die iudicii*, lines 90-2: 'Ignea tu tibimet cur non tormenta timebis, / Daemonibus dudum fuerant quae parata malignis, / Quae superant sensus cunctorum et dicta uiuorum'. Translation: Calder, D. G. and Allen, M. J. B. 1976, trans. *Sources and Analogues of Old English poetry*, pp. 210-11.

⁸⁵⁵ See the comments of Caie, G. D. 2000, trans. *Judgement Day II*, pp. 33-4.

⁸⁵⁶ *De die iudicii*, lines 94-5: 'Ignibus aeternae nigris loca plena gehennae, / frigora mixta simul feruentibus algida flammis'.

⁸⁵⁷ *De die iudicii*, lines 96-7.

⁸⁵⁸ *De die iudicii*, lines 104-5.

⁸⁵⁹ *De die iudicii*, lines 112-13.

mental anguish inflicted by the ‘dire enemy’ and furious physical punishments caused by a whip and chains.⁸⁶⁰

The vision of the post-judgement hell offered in *De die iudicii* is skilfully constructed. A series of opposing images feature in the descriptions of heaven and hell, with contrasting ideas appearing in corresponding passages of comparable length. A five-line list of sufferings complements a five-line description of heavenly rewards for the righteous.⁸⁶¹ Hell and heaven are direct opposites. Bede likens the post-judgement kingdom of heaven to an everlasting day, characterised by perpetual light and a resplendent vision of the glorified Lord. In contrast, hell is described as being shrouded in darkness.⁸⁶² The emphasis that Bede places upon the comprehension of divine knowledge in the kingdom of heaven can be contrasted with the large-scale confusion that defines Bede’s vision of hell. In heaven, the elect are united through the mutual comprehension of language. In hell, no voices are heard and the mind exists in a state of perpetual torment.⁸⁶³ Sacred music is a crucial aspect of Bede’s perception of heaven, but the predominant sounds to be heard in hell are weeping, groaning and the gnashing of teeth.⁸⁶⁴

The poetic format employed in *De die iudicii* and, to a lesser extent, *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, affords Bede the freedom to construct a detailed vision of the post-judgement fate of the condemned. As noted above, extended considerations of this topic do not tend to feature in Bede’s theological works. The one significant exception to this is the exegetical tract *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, which contains a thorough discussion of

⁸⁶⁰ *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, lines 33-40.

⁸⁶¹ *De die iudicii*, lines 93-7; 124-8. See the comments of Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 76. Similarly, the three-line list of earthly pleasures (lines 118-20) is mirrored by three lines describing the joyful nature of heaven (lines 135-7).

⁸⁶² *De die iudicii*, lines 98-9, 107-9.

⁸⁶³ *De die iudicii*, lines 100-1.

⁸⁶⁴ *De die iudicii*, lines 97, 100.

the eschatological fate of the damned. Like *De die iudicii*, this work anticipates an eternal kingdom of hell which is characterised by darkness and fire.⁸⁶⁵ In *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, Bede seeks to justify his belief that the punishments assigned to the condemned at the day of judgement will be irreversible. This is an important theological issue, and a key aspect of Bede's perception of the fate that awaits sinners in the afterlife. This source and the issues that it covers are worthy of detailed consideration.

The irreversible nature of the post-judgement fate of the damned

The list of writings appended to the *Historia ecclesiastica* refers to a book of letters (*librum epistularum*). One of these letters is described as being: 'On the words of Isaiah, 'And they shall be shut up in the prison and after many days shall they be visited''.⁸⁶⁶ The letter in question is commonly referred to as *De eo quod Isaiah ait*. This work survives in a single medieval manuscript and it has traditionally inspired little comment from Bede scholars.⁸⁶⁷ *De eo quod Isaiah ait* was written in response to a question posed by Acca which arose from the bishop's study of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. Bede received two questions from Acca (his response to the other query resulted in the short work *De mansionibus filiorum Israel*).⁸⁶⁸ The opening lines of *De mansionibus filiorum Israel* reveal that *In primam partem Samuhelis* was unfinished when Bede received these questions, and it is interesting to note that Bede sent sections of the Samuel commentary to his bishop before the whole four-book version of the

⁸⁶⁵ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, cols. 707-8.

⁸⁶⁶ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24: '... de eo quod ait Isaias 'et claudentur ibi in carcerem et post multos dies visitabuntur'.

⁸⁶⁷ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale lat. 2840, the manuscript that preserves *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, dates from the late-ninth or early-tenth century. No CCSL edition of this tract has yet been produced; it can be accessed in PL 94, cols. 702-10. A translated version of *De eo quod Isaiah ait* features in Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, pp. 39-52. Holder offers an useful overview of the tract and the circumstances surrounding its composition in the introduction to his translated edition (pp. 35-8). Otherwise, *De eo quod Isaiah ait* is rarely commented upon in secondary scholarship.

⁸⁶⁸ *De mansionibus filiorum Israel* is printed alongside *De eo quod Isaiah ait* in PL 94, cols. 699-702.

work was complete. *De eo quod Isaiah ait* concerns Bede's interpretation of a passage from the prophetic book of Isaiah (a pericope he had cited whilst discussing a verse from 1 Samuel in book three of *In primam partem Samuhelis*).⁸⁶⁹

In *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, Bede takes care to ensure that his interpretation of the passage from Isaiah is accurate, employing caution due to the eschatological nature of Acca's enquiry. Bede describes the issue raised by Acca as 'a most hazardous question (*de quaestione periculosissima*)'.⁸⁷⁰ The approximate date of Bede's tract can be established with a degree of certainty. Book three of the Samuel commentary was completed shortly before Abbot Ceolfrith departed for Rome. *De eo quod Isaiah ait* must be roughly contemporaneous with this event which occurred on the fourth of June, 716.⁸⁷¹ The circumstances surrounding the departure of Ceolfrith, and the impact that this had upon the eschatological content of *In primam partem Samuhelis* will be considered in chapter nine below. For now it will suffice to note that *De eo quod Isaiah ait* falls comfortably into the period of Bede's career that followed the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. This phase is defined by a desire to avoid controversy, in light of the problems experienced in 708.⁸⁷² At this stage of his career, Bede was also seeking to establish the orthodoxy of his expanded world ages framework by promoting it in his

⁸⁶⁹ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 998-1013. These lines form part of Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel 17.49.

⁸⁷⁰ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 709. Compare Bede's comments at the end of *Expositio Apocalypseos* (see above, note 437).

⁸⁷¹ On the date of Ceolfrith's departure, see below note 997.

⁸⁷² In the preface to *De mansionibus filiorum Israel*, Bede states that he is wary of falling into heresy in the course of *De eo quod Isaiah ait*. Bede explains that he will exercise caution due to the eschatological nature of Acca's question: 'But since the second [question] pertains to faith regarding things to come, we must take care not to run into the pit of a most impious heresy'. *De mansionibus filiorum Israel*, col. 699 (Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 29). This cautious tone is also evident in *De eo quod Isaiah ait* itself (see above, note 870). In contrast, Bede found Acca's other question easier to answer, and he seems to have produced *De mansionibus filiorum Israel* relatively quickly (see the final paragraph of *De mansionibus filiorum Israel*, col. 702).

exegetical works.⁸⁷³ His attempt, in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, to clarify a key point of eschatological doctrine can be considered a component part of a wider campaign to clarify Northumbrian perceptions of time and eschatology, a task that occupied Bede throughout the post-Plegwine phase of his career.⁸⁷⁴ Acca's query, and Bede's response to that query, reveal that confusion continued to abound on such matters, even amongst educated members of the ecclesiastical elite.

The exact question posed by Acca has not been preserved, but its general gist can be established from Bede's response in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*. The prophetic book of Isaiah is an important source for Bede's eschatological thought, and he frequently employs verses from it in support of exegetical interpretations.⁸⁷⁵ Bede had cited a passage from Isaiah when commenting upon the death of Goliath from the stone of David's sling (1 Samuel 17.49). Bede used the passage from Isaiah to suggest that the post-judgement punishment of the devil and the damned is to be unending and irreversible. Acca evidently raised doubts about this interpretation, and Bede set about justifying his position in a letter of response. The problematic passage which lies at the heart of this issue is found in Isaiah 24, where it forms part of a prophetic depiction of the eschatological devastation of the earth:

They will be gathered together as in the gathering of one bundle
into the pit, and they will be shut up there in prison: and after
many days they will be visited. And the moon will blush, and the

⁸⁷³ On Bede's attempts to establish the orthodoxy of his expanded world ages framework in the post-Plegwine phase of his career, see chapter 4, above.

⁸⁷⁴ Bede's refutation, in his commentary on 2 Peter, of the notion of a thousand-year judgement day can also be assigned to this period of his career. On the date of Bede's collection of commentaries on the seven Catholic Epistles, see above pp. 103-105. On Bede's rejection of contemporary belief in a thousand-year judgement day, see pp. 192-194.

⁸⁷⁵ The *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* suggests an interesting link between Bede and the book of Isaiah. Cuthbert relates that Bede spoke words inspired by this prophetic book, shortly before his death. See: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 580-7.

sun will be ashamed, when the Lord of hosts will reign in mount Sion, and in Jerusalem, and will be glorified in the sight of his ancients.⁸⁷⁶

In *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, Bede firmly opposes any interpretation of these verses that gives the devil and his fallen angels reason to hope that they will eventually be reconciled to the Lord. Such an interpretation had been proposed by Origen, an influential yet controversial Christian theologian.⁸⁷⁷ Origen had proposed that after the day of judgement, forgiveness would eventually be extended to the devil and his followers. Passages such as the one cited above from Isaiah 24 might be seen to imply such a notion (in this case, the reference to the visit to the prison can be seen to imply that the condemned might receive respite from their punishment). Bede must have had the teachings of Origen in mind when commenting on this matter in *In primam partem Samuhelis*, though he does not cite Origen or any of his followers by name.⁸⁷⁸ Similarly, Bede does not make any direct references to Origen in the course of *De eo quod Isaiah ait*. Bede discusses this issue in other exegetical works, and he explicitly connects it with Origen on more than one occasion.⁸⁷⁹

In his letter to Acca, Bede conducts a detailed analysis of the contentious issue. He offers a thorough discussion of the verses from Isaiah and he considers a selection of analogous scriptural passages. As with his other discussions of contentious issues that relate to eschatological matters (such as the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* and the commentary on 2 Peter) the foundation of Bede's argument is based upon a correct interpretation of Scripture. Bede considers the contentious verses within the wider

⁸⁷⁶ Isaiah 24.22-3. The biblical text cited above is taken from the Douay-Rheims translation.

⁸⁷⁷ Origen of Alexandria was active in the first half of the third century. For an introduction to his life and works, see: Trigg, J. W. 1998, *Origen* (London).

⁸⁷⁸ Bede outlines Origen's position on this issue, but he refers to those who follow Origen's teachings by using the non-specific pronoun 'eos': *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 998-1013.

⁸⁷⁹ *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum*, 3, lines 46-61; *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 2, lines 19-28.

context of Isaiah 24. He suggests that some of the verses in Isaiah 24 refer to the time prior to judgement, but some aspects of the prophecy concern the day of judgement itself. This distinction is not made in Scripture, where the details are woven together into a single prophetic vision.⁸⁸⁰ Two verses from Isaiah 24 are interpreted as allusions to the time of Antichrist.⁸⁸¹ Bede explains that the visitation referred to in the disputed passage is not expected to be a post-judgement occurrence. Following the defeat of Antichrist and the cessation of his persecution, Antichrist and his ministers will be gathered together in a prison of hellish punishments. The visitation refers to their resurrection at the final judgement, where their souls will be restored to their bodies like everybody else's. This affords them a temporary reprieve from the punishments of hell (though, of course, they are to be cast back down into the infernal regions once the process of judgement is complete). After they are condemned to their eternal fate, the condemned will be afforded no respite of any kind.⁸⁸²

Origen's position on the post-judgement salvation of the damned was fiercely contested by Jerome in his commentary on Isaiah. Bede draws upon this source heavily throughout *De eo quod Isaiah ait*.⁸⁸³ Despite his use of Jerome, many elements of Bede's argument are extremely creative and several innovative lines of interpretation are advanced. Near to the end of the letter, Bede explains that the visitation described in Isaiah 24 must refer to a pre-judgement period because the prophecy states that it will

⁸⁸⁰ This line of argument is advanced throughout *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, but in particular see col. 709.

⁸⁸¹ Isaiah 24.17-18 (cited from the Douay-Rheims translation): 'Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O thou inhabitant of the earth. And it will come to pass, that he that will flee from the noise of the fear, will fall into the pit: and he that will rid himself out of the pit, will be taken in the snare'. Bede relates these verses to the time of Antichrist in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, cols. 705-6.

⁸⁸² *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 708.

⁸⁸³ On Bede's use of Jerome in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, see the comments of Holder in his translated edition of this work: Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, pp. 36-7 and p. 40, note 4.

occur ‘after many days’.⁸⁸⁴ At the very beginning of the present chapter, it was noted that the absence of time is one of the defining characteristics of Bede’s vision for the post-judgement world. Once judgement has been passed, the regular temporal cycles will cease to exist. Thus, it follows that the reference to ‘many days’ in Isaiah 24 must describe a pre-judgement state where the world is still governed by the rhythms of time. After the day of judgement, the ‘Lord will be with the saints in eternal light, and the impious, with their hands and feet bound, will be sent into outer darkness’.⁸⁸⁵

The discussion of the post-judgement afterlife in *De eo quod Isaiah ait* offers an insight into an important aspect of Bede’s eschatological thought. Bede’s belief that the punishments assigned by God at the final judgement are irreversible placed him in line with the orthodox teachings of the Catholic Church. This issue crops up sporadically in Bede’s other exegetical works, though it is never discussed in the same amount of detail as in *De eo quod Isaiah ait*. In book two of *In Genesim*, Bede employs the image of a door that is shut forever to emphasise the idea that there will be no respite for the condemned in the eternal afterlife.⁸⁸⁶ Book two of *In Genesim* was probably composed relatively soon after *In primam partem Samuhelis* and *De eo quod Isaiah ait*.⁸⁸⁷ Other allusions to this theme can be found in Bede’s commentary on Proverbs, and the issue is also raised in the *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum*.⁸⁸⁸ Both of these commentaries

⁸⁸⁴ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 708.

⁸⁸⁵ *De eo quod Isaiah ait*, col. 708: ‘Sed et hoc notandum in eo quod scriptum est, ‘Et post multos dies visitabuntur’, quia ipsa multorum dierum appellatio congruentius hujus saeculi temporibus assignetur, quae alterna dierum ac noctium vicissitudine multiplicantur, quam futuri, ubi cessantibus horarum discursibus, sanctis erit Dominus in lucem sempiternam, et impii, ligatis manibus ac pedibus, exteriores mittentur in tenebras’. Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 50.

⁸⁸⁶ *In Genesim*, 2, lines 1595-601.

⁸⁸⁷ Calvin Kendall has recently proposed new dating *termini* for each book of *In Genesim*. Kendall proposes circa 720 for the completion of book 2: Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 45-53. For a discussion of Kendall’s proposed dates in light of the findings of chapter 4 of this study, see appendix 2 (below pp. 335-337).

⁸⁸⁸ *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 2, lines 19-28; *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum*, 3, lines 46-61.

are thought to have been composed in the mature phase of Bede's authorial career.⁸⁸⁹ In the *Retractatio*, Bede makes several improvements and corrections to his first commentary on Acts.⁸⁹⁰ Bede offers an explicit criticism of Origen's teachings in the *Retractatio*, but the matter had been overlooked entirely in *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*. Bede was sensitive to this issue after his correspondence with Acca circa 716, but the topic does not leave any trace in exegetical works that are known to have pre-dated Bede's work on book three of *In primam partem Samuhelis*.

De eo quod Isaiah ait reveals a great deal about Bede's status as a scholarly authority in his own lifetime and it offers further support for the recently-devised notion of the 'new Bede'. Acca was the principal patron of Bede's writings and his immediate superior in the Church hierarchy. Arthur Holder stresses the delicate nature of Bede's task, which is described as being: 'to expose his own bishop as having so misconstrued his words as to have attributed to Bede himself the heretical notion that he was in fact attempting to refute'.⁸⁹¹ By the year 716, Bede was in a position to confidently complete this perilous task and firmly correct Acca's misinterpretation of Isaiah 24. The fact that Acca raised this issue with Bede in the first place shows that the bishop considered Bede to be an authority on points of eschatological doctrine. *De eo quod*

⁸⁸⁹ Thacker considers *In proueria Salomonis* to be part of a group of 'mature works' composed after the completion of *In primam partem Samuhelis* (the other works in this group are *In Cantica canticorum*, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, *De tabernaculo* and *De templo*). These commentaries all offer extensive discussions of the salvation history theme and they all focus upon parts of the Old Testament canon. Thacker, A. 2006, 'Ordering of Understanding', pp. 54-60. In the introduction to the modern Latin edition of *In proueria Salomonis*, Hurst proposes that that the text was composed circa 720-730 (see the preface to CCSL volume 119B, p. v). The preface to *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum* states that many years had elapsed since Bede produced the *Expositio*. Laistner thought that the *Retractatio* was a late work (circa 725-731) on account of its 'great maturity of style': Laistner, M. L. W. 1939, ed. *Expositio et retractatio*, pp. xiii-xvii. This view is endorsed by Roger Ray, who sees the *Retractatio* and *Historia ecclesiastica* as concurrent projects: Ray, R. D. 1982, 'What do we know about Bede's Commentaries', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 49, 5-20, at 19.

⁸⁹⁰ By returning to reconsider the interpretations set forth in his first commentary on Acts, Bede was emulating the practice of St Augustine. Commenting upon the *Retractatio*, Roger Ray states that Bede 'became the first Christian writer after Augustine to have the courage of second thoughts'. Ray, R. D. 2006, 'Who Did Bede Think He Was?', pp. 19-20.

⁸⁹¹ Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 36.

Isaiah ait offers a reminder that Bede was actively engaged in the disputes and conflicts of the contemporary Church. It documents Bede at work as an eschatological theologian, confidently adding original interpretations to a centuries-old patristic controversy.

Conclusion

It may be helpful to conclude this reconstruction of Bede's perception of the post-judgement afterlife by re-emphasizing the main themes. After the day of judgement, Bede expects the world to undergo an enormous transformation. The cycles of regular time are to cease once God has bestowed his judgement upon the world. Bede offers a clear depiction of the eternal rewards that the elect will experience in the kingdom of heaven. This topic recurs frequently throughout a wide range of exegetical and non-exegetical works. Key aspects of Bede's vision for the eternal repose of the righteous include: the revelation of divine knowledge, an emphasis on face to face contact with the Lord, and the prevalence of sacred music in the heavenly kingdom. There is to be one heaven, though it will be 'a house of many mansions'.⁸⁹² Visions of the post-judgement fate of the damned are far less common in Bede's works, but *De die iudicii* offers a number of significant points of detail. Hell is to be an exact opposite of heaven, where the condemned will suffer extreme torment and anguish. The fates assigned by God at the day of judgement are fixed for all eternity. The elect will enjoy perennial rest with the Lord, but the damned will receive no relief from their torture.

The reconstruction of the post-judgement world carried out in this chapter has again highlighted the importance of patristic authorities upon Bede's thought. Bede's doctrine on the nature of the resurrected body draws upon Gregory the Great's

⁸⁹² John 14.2.

teachings on this issue, as found in his effort to correct the views of Eutychius, bishop of Constantinople. Bede employs Jerome's commentary on Isaiah in *De eo quod Isaiah ait* to endorse the position that Jerome had taken against Origen's teachings on the post-judgement salvation of the damned. Jerome and Gregory can be considered alongside St Augustine as significant influences upon Bede's eschatological thought. That said, it is important to acknowledge that a variety of alternative traditions existed in early-eighth-century Northumbria. This chapter has considered two well-known episodes from the *Historia ecclesiastica*, both of which serve to highlight the influence of non-theological sources upon Bede's thought. It is certain that the vision of Fursa was based upon a contemporary written source, as Bede refers to it in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. It is also possible that the vision of Dryhthelm was based upon a written source, though Bede is less specific in this instance.⁸⁹³ These visions, as they are transmitted in the *Historia*, cannot strictly be termed eschatological. Nevertheless, they raise important issues that are closely linked to eschatological concepts. Each episode should remind us that Bede was not exclusively influenced by the works of the Church fathers that were contained within his monastic library.

⁸⁹³ On the anonymous source that Bede used for his account of St Fursa (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.19) see note 733, above. Bede tells us, in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.12, that his information about Dryhthelm's vision came to him via a monk named Hæmgils. Bede refers to his source as a *relatio* rather than a *narratio*, which probably implies that his chapter was based upon a written, rather than an oral account of Dryhthelm's vision (see McClure, J. and Collins, R. 1999, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 415).

Chapter 8: Bede's eschatological perspective and Gregory the Great

Introduction

Bede repeatedly had cause to remind his readership that the hour, time and date of the end of the world are details known only to God. The early chapters of this study demonstrate that Bede was vehemently opposed to overt apocalyptic speculation of any kind. Humans ought not presume to assign prospective dates to the end of the sixth world age; only God is privy to such knowledge of when the world is going to end. This is certainly a crucial aspect of Bede's eschatological thought, but it is only a single element of a more complex picture. Chapters five, six and seven of this study demonstrate that Bede was very interested in the eschatological dimension of time. He had a precise impression of the sequence of events that would facilitate the world's transition from its present form to a post-judgement state of eternity. Once begun, an irreversible sequence of eschatological events will culminate in the day of judgement and the destruction of the whole world. The cumulative impression of Bede's eschatological thought created by this study thus-far can therefore be summarised as follows: mankind may not presume to predict when the world is going to end, but we have a precise impression of what is expected to happen when it does.

Keeping these conclusions in mind, it is now necessary to seek answers for the following questions: in Bede's mind, where does the present day fall within the wider context of universal history? Are the events of the end-time sequence close or distant? Chapters eight, nine and ten of the present study concern Bede's 'eschatological perspective'. This term covers the issue of where Bede perceived his own era to be in relation to the end of time. This topic requires careful and detailed analysis. The principles of the 'weak thesis', devised by scholars as a means of approaching the study

of apocalyptic belief circa 1000 AD, offer useful analytical tools for the task ahead.⁸⁹⁴ The study of Bede's eschatological perspective does not involve dates and times or numbers and figures. Apocalyptic predictions and prospective end-time dates are absent from his work; such ideas were futile and heretical so far as Bede was concerned. Rather, Bede's eschatological perspective is a complex and variable concept that ebbs and flows over the course of his authorial career. At times, Bede's works transmit a sense that the eschatological events of the future are not an immediate concern. Elsewhere, Bede gives us the impression that he perceived the beginning of the end time sequence to be close at hand. By employing a flexible approach to Bede's works it is possible to trace the subtle developments in his thought.

Though no extended study of this subject has ever been carried out before, a small selection of scholars have touched upon the issue of Bede's perceived proximity to the end of time. As with so many areas of Bedan scholarship, modern critical opinion on this issue can be seen to begin with Charles Plummer. Commenting upon Gregory the Great's letter to King Æthelberht, Plummer draws parallels between Gregory's use of the phrase '*adpropinquante ... mundi termino*' and references from Bede's commentaries on Luke and 1 Samuel.⁸⁹⁵ Plummer appears to take these references at face value, and they are cited in support of both men's belief in the approaching end of the world. Similar sentiments are expressed in Gerald Bonner's Jarrow Lecture of 1966. Bonner styles Bede's eschatological perspective as a combination of elements from his two most significant patristic influences:

⁸⁹⁴ On the 'weak thesis', see the introduction to this study, above pp. 8-9.

⁸⁹⁵ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. II, p. 62. The letter to Æthelberht is reproduced by Bede in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.32. The analogous passages cited by Plummer are: *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 1909-14; *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2043-8. On the passage from *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, see pp. 319-322, below. The reference from *In primam partem Samuhelis* is discussed at pp. 288-289.

Bede himself shared Gregory's belief regarding the imminence of the second coming, and while he accepted St. Augustine's view that one cannot determine the day and the hour, he was quite certain that the end of time was close at hand.⁸⁹⁶

Again, these comments are offered in the course of a discussion of Gregory's letter to Æthelberht. The notion that Bede was conscious of the approaching end of the world has also featured in the works of other scholars, notably Henry Mayr-Harting's monograph *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* and Bernard P. Robinson's 1994 survey of Bede's activities as an exegete.⁸⁹⁷

The notion that Bede considered the end of time to be close at hand has the backing of a number of significant Bede scholars, but the views referred to above are all brief comments made in passing, rather than the product of sustained analysis. Jan Davidse addresses this issue in the course of his 1982 article 'The Sense of History in the Works of the Venerable Bede'.⁸⁹⁸ The article as a whole focuses upon the connection between Bede and Augustine, and this emphasis comes through strongly in the discussion of Bede's perception of the relationship between present and eschatological time. Davidse stresses Augustine's influence over Bede's frequent statements that the end of time is known only to God, though he is sympathetic to the idea that Bede perceived his own era to be occurring towards the end of the sixth world

⁸⁹⁶ Bonner, G. 1966, *Saint Bede in the Tradition of Western Apocalyptic Commentary*, p. 5. Bonner cites the passage from *In primam partem Samuhelis* that had formerly been highlighted by Plummer. Also, see p. 11 where Bonner states that 'Bede, following his master Gregory the Great, had constantly in mind the thought of death and of the last judgement'.

⁸⁹⁷ Mayr-Harting, H. 1991, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 45: 'Behind all this lay Bede's sense of the movement of History towards the end of this world and the everlasting life of the next. ... The world was then in its last age, the end might come at any time, and although the time could not be exactly calculated, there were indeed many signs that it was actually approaching'. Robinson, B. P. 1994, 'The Venerable Bede as Exegete', *Downside Review* 112, 201-26, at 224, note 41: 'Bede ... does seem to have taken the end of the world to be imminent'. Robinson refers the reader to the passage from *In primam partem Samuhelis* cited by Plummer and Bonner (see notes 895 and 896 above).

⁸⁹⁸ Davidse, J. 1982, 'Sense of History', 662-70.

age. Davidse suggests that Bede detected 'Antichristian tendencies' in the present Church and saw eschatological significance in the events of his own era, such as the spread of the Church to all nations. That said, his position is less emphatic than that put forth by Plummer, Bonner, Mayr-Harting and Robinson. At no point does Davidse suggest that Bede perceived the commencement of eschatological time to be imminent.

This position is taken one stage further by William D. McCready in his 1994 monograph *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*.⁸⁹⁹ McCready utterly rejects the idea that Bede thought that the end of time was close at hand. In discussing the significance that the troubles experienced by the contemporary Church had in Bede's mind, McCready argues:

.... these problems do not produce a sense of impending doom, nor do they tempt him to think that the end is quickly approaching and that judgement is imminent. The idea never seriously occurs to him.⁹⁰⁰

McCready considers the relationship between Bede and Gregory the Great, but he concludes that the two men's perspectives are fundamentally different. In contrast, Robert Markus has emphasised the connection that exists between the eschatological perspectives of Bede and Gregory.⁹⁰¹ Bede's perspective cannot be seen as an exact replica of Gregory's, Markus argues, but strong similarities are evident in their perceptions of the present day. Markus also suggests that Bede's perception of the present became drawn into an eschatological perspective in the latter stages of his

⁸⁹⁹ McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and Bede*, pp. 89-104.

⁹⁰⁰ McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and Bede*, p. 104.

⁹⁰¹ Markus, R. A. 2004, 'Gregory and Bede: the Making of the Western Apocalyptic Tradition', *Gregorio Magno nel XIV centenario della morte, Atti dei convegni Lincei* 209, 247-56.

life.⁹⁰² McCready does not employ such a flexible analytical approach. He argues that Bede's perception of the relationship between present and eschatological time is largely consistent throughout the course of his career.⁹⁰³

There is thus a lack of consensus amongst those who have had reason to discuss the issue of Bede's eschatological perspective and a full analysis of this issue is a desirable project. It is clear though, that the relationship between Bede and the two most significant influences upon his eschatological thought as a whole, Gregory the Great and Augustine, lies at the core of this matter. The impact that Augustine's refutation of millenarianism had upon Bede's eschatological thought has been discussed in previous chapters of the present study. In order to set this investigation of Bede's eschatological perspective within an appropriate context, it is now necessary to turn our attention to Gregory the Great.

Gregory the Great and the end of time

Bedan scholars have long been aware of the importance of the relationship between Bede and Gregory the Great.⁹⁰⁴ They have commented on Bede's 'affectionate reverence'⁹⁰⁵ for Gregory, and described him as 'soaked in Gregory's thoughts and ideals'.⁹⁰⁶ Gregorian scholarship gives a high degree of prominence to eschatological themes. The study of Gregory's conception of the last things has a long history, and it

⁹⁰² Markus, R. A. 2004, 'Gregory and Bede', 254: 'What is clear is that during the years he was working on his *Ecclesiastical history*, Bede's sense of a permanent conflict within the Church and in history was sharpened. The history of his own times is being remorselessly drawn into Bede's eschatological perspective'. These comments echo sentiments expressed in Markus's Jarrow lecture: Markus, R. A. 1975, *Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical Historiography* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow), p. 14.

⁹⁰³ McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and Bede*, p. 98.

⁹⁰⁴ On the relationship between Bede and Gregory, see: Meyvaert, P. 1964, *Bede and Gregory the Great* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow). For a more recent assessment, see: DeGregorio, S. 1999, 'The Venerable Bede on Prayer and Contemplation', *Traditio* 54, 1-39, especially 3-15.

⁹⁰⁵ Jones, P. F. 1928, 'The Gregorian Mission and English Education', *Speculum* 3, 335-48. The phrase quoted is from 336.

⁹⁰⁶ Thacker, A. 1992, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester), pp. 137-70. The quotation is from p. 153.

has now become a clearly defined field of research in its own right.⁹⁰⁷ F. H. Dudden's biography of 1905 was the first major work to highlight such themes.⁹⁰⁸ Claude Dagens produced a pioneering study of Gregory's mindset in the late 1970's. He demonstrates the importance of personal experience in shaping Gregory's work, and it is significant that Dagens devotes three entire chapters of his book to 'eschatologie'.⁹⁰⁹ Jeffrey Richards's *Consul of God* contains a chapter on Gregory's world-view which makes apocalyptic thought a prominent theme.⁹¹⁰ Both Robert Markus and Carole Straw give eschatology a high degree of prominence in their surveys of Gregory's thought.⁹¹¹

A large number of Gregory's works have survived. The most striking example of the wealth of information at our disposal is the *Registrum epistularum*, which contains over eight hundred and fifty letters covering the fourteen years of Gregory's pontificate.⁹¹² The survival of such a great number of documents is due to Gregory's influence over medieval monasticism. The *Registrum* was originally made up of fourteen papyrus volumes. All of the original volumes have been lost, but much of the *Registrum* has been reconstructed from later collections of copied excerpts.⁹¹³ Three main collections have survived, each of which are reliable copies preserved in monastic

⁹⁰⁷ Key articles are listed under the heading 'eschatology' in the bibliography by Godding, R. 1990, *Bibliografia di Gregorio Magno (1890-1989)* (Rome).

⁹⁰⁸ Dudden, F. H. 1905, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought* (London). Dudden refers to eschatology (or as he describes it, 'Gregory's doctrine of the last things') throughout, but see especially vol. II, pp. 430-7. Dudden's two highly regarded volumes remained standard textbooks for students of Gregory for much of the twentieth century.

⁹⁰⁹ Dagens, C. 1977, *Saint Grégoire le Grand. Culture et Expérience Chrétiennes* (Paris), pp. 345-430.

⁹¹⁰ Richards, J. 1980, *Consul of God: the Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London), pp. 51-70. Richards argues that Gregory saw life on earth as a 'holding operation' before the coming apocalypse.

⁹¹¹ Straw, C. 1988, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (London), pp. 1-2, 14-15, 25-6, 69 and 185. Markus, R. A. 1997, *Gregory and his World*, contains an entire chapter on eschatology at pp. 51-67.

⁹¹² The *Registrum* has been published in two volumes, edited by Norberg, D. *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum*, CCSL 140, 140A (Turnhout, 1982). Please note that throughout this chapter, references to the *Registrum* follow the numbers used in Norberg's volumes. The numbering of the letters in Norberg's edition occasionally differs from that of the nineteenth-century edition by Ewald and Hartmann for the MGH series.

⁹¹³ Norberg, D. L. 1982, *Critical and Exegetical Notes on the Letters of St. Gregory the Great* (Stockholm), p. 3. This pamphlet, prepared by Norberg to accompany his CCSL edition of the *Registrum*, contains useful discussion of stylistic and linguistic issues in the collection.

libraries dating from Carolingian times.⁹¹⁴ The *Registrum* is a unique survival for the period in which it was written. Almost all of the registry volumes of the papal chancery up to the end of the twelfth century have disappeared with only fragments surviving.⁹¹⁵ Gregory's was the first pontificate from which official papal letters have been preserved in any substantial number. With the exception of Gregory VII, sizeable collections of letters do not survive until the accession of Innocent III in 1199.⁹¹⁶ Gregory also wrote two major collections of homilies, a commentary on the book of Job, a guide to pastoral care for bishops and the *Dialogi* (a compilation of miracle stories). The sheer number of sources available to us means that Gregory can occasionally contradict himself. In fact, those who have studied Gregory's mindset have utilised oppositional theory, demonstrating that conflicting ideologies helped to define his outlook.⁹¹⁷ Eschatology is an area in which Gregory's thought seems relatively consistent. It is a theme that he keeps returning to and it is scattered throughout almost every work that he produced (though in contrast to Bede, Gregory does not address eschatological issues at length in any one particular work).⁹¹⁸

Gregory became pope in the year 590. By this point, Rome had been in a serious state of decline for some time. In the second half of the sixth century, Italy experienced

⁹¹⁴ Straw, C. 1996, *Gregory the Great, Authors of the Middle Ages 12* (Aldershot), pp. 47-9.

⁹¹⁵ Eleventh and twelfth-century manuscripts contain copies of a selection of the letters of John VIII (872-82). We also have fragments of the papal *Regesta* of Gelasius I (492-6), Pelagius I (556-61), Leo IV (847-55), Stephen V (885-91), Alexander II (1061-73), Urban II (1088-99), Adrian IV (1154-9), Alexander III (1159-81), and Lucius III (1181-5).

⁹¹⁶ A sample of 381 letters from the register of Gregory VII (1073-85), are preserved in a manuscript in the Vatican archives.

⁹¹⁷ For example, see the following studies: Dagens, C. 1977, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*; Richards, J. 1980, *Consul of God*; Markus, R. A. 1985, 'The Sacred and the Secular: From Augustine to Gregory the Great', *Journal of Theological Studies* 36, 84-96; Straw, C. 1988, *Perfection*; Markus, R. A. 1997, *Gregory and his World*. Between them, these works highlight a number of contradictory forces operating in Gregory's works such as: the conflicting desires for the active and contemplative lives, the clashing influences of *Christianitas* and *Romanitas*, and the longing for and fearing of death.

⁹¹⁸ A contrast can be made with *De temporum ratione*, chapters 67-71.

a series of social and economic problems.⁹¹⁹ High taxes and low economic productivity were accompanied by a dramatic decline in the level of population,⁹²⁰ and Rome became flooded with refugees.⁹²¹ In 589 the Tiber burst its banks and devastated much of the city. Plague followed, accounting for the lives of many, including Gregory's predecessor Pope Pelagius II. The Lombards threatened Rome throughout the latter half of the sixth century and Gregory twice saved Rome from being sacked.⁹²² In a homily on Luke 10, Gregory describes a ravaged world being punished for its sins. He complains that: 'Cities have been laid waste, fortified places overthrown, churches and monasteries destroyed, fields reduced to wasteland'.⁹²³ Similar sentiments recur frequently in entries from the *Registrum epistularum* that were composed in the early 590's.⁹²⁴ A famous sermon, preached at the time of Gregory's elevation to the papacy, describes the perilous state of Rome in graphic detail.⁹²⁵

Gregory often frames the disastrous events of the present day within an eschatological context. This is particularly evident in his collection of forty Gospel

⁹¹⁹ On the social and economic problems inherent in Italian society at this time see: Brown, T. S. 1984, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554-800* (Rome), pp. 1-20. See also: McNally, R. E. 1978, 'Gregory the Great (590-604) and his Declining World', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 16, 7-26; Markus, R. A. 1981, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31, 21-36.

⁹²⁰ Population figures are the result of educated guesswork but most scholars agree on a sharp decline: Jones, A. H. M. 1964, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 1040-5; Brown, T. S. 1984, *Gentlemen and Officers*, pp. 5-7.

⁹²¹ A letter of March 595 describes escaped female captives who had fled to Rome in search of aid. There were too many for the city to cope with, meaning many were forced to live a life of destitution and poverty: Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistularum*, 5.30.

⁹²² The Lombards attacked in 592 shortly after Gregory's elevation to the papacy. Gregory finally concluded a brief peace with the Lombard leader Agilulf in 598.

⁹²³ *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.17, lines 365-7: 'Ecce depopulatae urbes, euersa castra, ecclesiae ac monasteria destructa, in solitudine agri redacti sunt'. Hurst, D. 1990, trans. *Gregory the Great: Forty Gospel Homilies* (Kalamazoo), p. 147.

⁹²⁴ For example, see: *Registrum epistularum*, 5.36.

⁹²⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum libri X*, 10.1: 'I see my entire flock being struck down by the sword of the wrath of God as one after another they are visited by sudden destruction. ... They are being hustled off in droves. Homes are left empty, parents are forced to attend the funerals of their children, their heirs march before them to the grave'. Gregory the Great's words were reported to Gregory of Tours by one of his deacons who was present when the sermon was preached. Translated passage cited from: Thorpe, L. 1982, trans. *Gregory of Tours: The History of the Franks* (London), p. 545.

homilies. These homilies were first preached in Rome in the year 593.⁹²⁶ Eschatology and the day of judgement are prominent themes throughout, as Gregory stresses the need to focus on the heavenly kingdom in order to deal with the turmoil of the present. The eschatological prophecy recorded in Luke 21 seems to have resonated particularly strongly with Gregory. Luke 21 is an account of the Olivet discourse. It describes a series of signs of the end of the age that were preached to the disciples by Jesus on Mount Olivet. Parallel accounts of the Olivet discourse are given in each of the three synoptic Gospels.⁹²⁷ In a sermon on Luke 21.25-33, Gregory tells his audience that many of the signs described in the Olivet discourse are happening all around them:

We see some of these things coming to pass and the rest are soon to follow. We see nation rising against nation and the distress that follows on the earth, more now than we have read about in books.⁹²⁸

Gregory styles the tumultuous events of the present day as the fulfilment of the eschatological prophecy preached by Jesus. The homily continues:

Earthquakes have destroyed countless cities ... we have suffered pestilence without relief; we do not yet clearly see the signs in the sun and moon and stars, but from the change in the air now we

⁹²⁶ The *Homiliae in Evangelia* are edited by Étaix, R. *Homiliae in Evangelia*, CCSL 141 (Turnhout, 1999). All references to this text in the present study follow the numbering of the CCSL edition. Along with the *Dialogi*, the *Homiliae in Evangelia* can be considered Gregory's most accessible work. The homilies survive in 2 volumes, each containing 20 sermons. Gregory dictated the first 20 to a notary, who then read them on his behalf during mass. This was due to Gregory's ill health, but it also gave him the stylistic advantage of having more control over the text. The second 20 were preached by Gregory himself, and written down by others as he spoke. Straw, C. 1996, *Gregory the Great*, pp. 53-4.

⁹²⁷ Matthew 24; Luke 21; Mark 13.

⁹²⁸ *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.1, lines 13-16: 'Ex quibus profecto omnibus alia iam facta cernimus, alia e proximo uentura formidamus. Nam gentem super gentem exurgere earum que pressuram terris insistere plus iam in nostris tribulationibus quam in codicibus legimus'. Translation cited from: Hurst, D. 1990, trans. *Forty Gospel Homilies*, p. 15.

gather that these too are not far off.⁹²⁹

In Gregory's view, the events predicted in the Olivet discourse were starting to be realised in the present day. Even those that were yet to occur could be thought of as close. Such interpretations are not limited to Gregory's Gospel homilies; many comparable examples can be found in his collection of sermons on Ezekiel (this collection also dates from the early 590s).⁹³⁰

Many of the entries in the *Registrum epistularum* make strong allusions to the impending destruction of the world. The detailed nature of this collection allows Gregory's eschatological rhetoric to be placed within the context of the specific events of his lifetime. A clear link exists between the intensity of Gregory's eschatological thought and periods of turmoil or stress. Numerous examples could be cited in order to demonstrate this, but one significant episode will suffice. In the 590's, Gregory was involved in a series of conflicts with John, bishop of Constantinople. Gregory was offended by John's use of the title 'Ecumenical Patriarch'.⁹³¹ The issue had been troubling Gregory for some time before events came to a head in the summer of 595. In Gregory's view, John was displaying an offensive amount of pride by elevating himself

⁹²⁹ *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.1, lines 16-21: 'Quod terraemotus urbes innumeras subruat ... Pestilentias sine cessatione patimur. Signa uero in sole et luna et stellis adhuc aperte minime uidimus, sed quia et haec non longe sint ex ipsa iam aeris immutatione colligimus'. Cited in translation from: Hurst, D. 1990, trans. *Forty Gospel Homilies*, p. 15.

⁹³⁰ In a particularly noteworthy example, Gregory styles the present turmoil in Rome as the fulfilment of a prophecy recorded in Ezekiel 24 (Rome is equated with the 'bloody city' upon which God inflicts vengeance in the Old Testament narrative). The situation described by Gregory is bleak: 'Our cities are destroyed, our buildings are gutted; the countryside is depopulated. The land has become a veritable wilderness'. Gregory continues: 'We see the present condition of Rome which at one time was mistress of the world. Now she is exhausted in a manifold number of ways by enormous sorrows, by the depression of its citizens, by the oppression of its enemies, by a succession of disasters; and we see that in it are fulfilled the words that long ago the prophet Ezekiel spoke against the city of Samaria: 'Set on the pot, set it on, pour water in also ... put in it the pieces of flesh ... boil it ... seethe also its bones'', *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, 2.6.22, lines 524-39. Cited in translation from: McNally, R. E. 1978, 'Gregory the Great and his Declining World', 19.

⁹³¹ Markus discusses this controversy in 'Gregory the Great's Europe', and again in *Gregory and his World*, pp. 91-3. See also: Richards, J. 1980, *Consul of God*, pp. 217-27.

above other Church leaders.⁹³² In a letter to Bishop John, Gregory refers to the day of judgement, asking John how he will justify his pride when called to render an account of himself at the end of time.⁹³³ John is urged to make amends before judgement day arrives and it is too late to repent. Gregory refers to the end-time signs listed in the Olivet discourse:

Pestilence and sword rage through the world; nations rise up against nations; the earth is shaken; the city, with its inhabitants, is absorbed in the gaping earth. All the things that have been foretold are happening.⁹³⁴

Once again, Gregory is interpreting the tumultuous events of the present day as the realisation of an eschatological prophecy from the New Testament. Other letters from this period are also laden with eschatological imagery.⁹³⁵ For example, Gregory describes John's assumed title as 'that name of blasphemy (*nomen istud blasphemiae*)'.⁹³⁶ Gregory is symbolically linking John's title with the 'blasphemous name' given to the seven-headed beast in Revelation 13.⁹³⁷ The Ecumenical Patriarch episode had acute eschatological significance for Gregory. Carole Straw has suggested

⁹³² In a letter to the Emperor Maurice from June 595, Gregory argues that John's use of the title 'Ecumenical Patriarch' is derogatory towards all other members of the Universal Church. *Registrum epistularum*, 5.37. A similar argument is used in another of Gregory's letters which was sent to John himself, *Registrum epistularum*, 5.44, lines 37-45. It is interesting to note that Gregory's stance on this issue later won him the admiration of the protestant reformer John Calvin: Little, L. K. 1963, 'Calvin's Appreciation of Gregory the Great', *The Harvard Theological Review* 56, 145-57.

⁹³³ *Registrum epistularum*, 5.44, lines 50-5, and again in lines 172-4.

⁹³⁴ *Registrum epistularum*, 5.44, lines 117-20: 'Pestilentia et gladius per mundum saeuit, gentes insurgunt gentibus, terrae concutitur orbis, urbes cum habitatoribus suis terra dehiscite sorbentur. Omnia quae praedicta sunt fiunt'.

⁹³⁵ The 'apocalyptic mood' of the early summer months of 595 has been noted: Markus, R. A. 1981, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', 32.

⁹³⁶ *Registrum epistularum*, 5.37, line 75.

⁹³⁷ Revelation 13:1. The biblical passage in question describes a beast with seven heads and ten horns. Upon each head is written 'a blasphemous name' (*nomina blasphemiae*). The connection between Gregory's letter and Revelation 13 is made by Markus, R. A. 1997, *Gregory and his World*, p. 93.

that Gregory viewed conflicts such as this as pre-emptory stages in the Church's apocalyptic struggle with Satan and Antichrist.⁹³⁸

The homilies and letters considered thus-far contain several passages expressing Gregory's belief in the imminent end of the world. Similar sentiments feature in a variety of other works. For example, the letter that is preserved as a preface to the *Moralia in Iob* describes how evils are multiplying 'now that the end of the world is at hand'.⁹³⁹ In book three of the *Dialogi*,⁹⁴⁰ Gregory refers to the destruction caused by the Lombard wars and remarks: 'I do not know what is happening elsewhere, but in this land of ours the world is not merely announcing its end, it is pointing directly to it'.⁹⁴¹ Countless other examples to this effect could be cited from Gregory's extensive body of work.

How though, should statements such as these be interpreted? Robert Markus has examined this issue in a recent essay 'Living Within Sight of the End'. Markus demonstrates that Gregory's more urgent eschatological passages need to be set within an appropriate context in order to appreciate the intentions that lie behind them. Gregory, like Bede, adheres strictly to Augustine's view that humans cannot know the

⁹³⁸ Straw, C. 1988, *Perfection*, pp. 14-15. McCready suggests that the Ecumenical Patriarch controversy and the arrival of Antichrist were linked in Gregory's mind: McCready, W. D. 1989, *Signs of Sanctity: Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great* (Toronto), p. 30.

⁹³⁹ *Moralia in Iob*, preface (*epistola ad Leandrum*), paragraph 1, lines 27-8. The standard Latin edition of the *Moralia* is the three-volume version, edited by: Adriaen, M. *Sancti Gregorii Magni Moralia in Iob*, CCSL 143, 143A, 143B (Turnhout, 1979-85).

⁹⁴⁰ The *Dialogi* have been published in 3 volumes of the Sources Chrétiennes series. They are edited by A. de Vogüé and translated (into French) by P. Antin: *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, Sources Chrétiennes 251, 260, 265 (Paris, 1978-80). On the *Dialogi* see: Auerbach, E. 1965, trans. R. Manheim, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* (London), pp. 96-103; Petersen, J. M. 1984, *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background* (Toronto). Francis Clark has questioned the authenticity of the *Dialogi*: Clark, F. 1987, *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues* (Leiden). Clark maintains that the text is a seventh-century forgery, but his thesis has been rejected by most scholars (see in particular, Meyvaert, P. 1988, 'The Enigma of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*: a Response to Francis Clark', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39, 355-81).

⁹⁴¹ *Dialogi*, 3.38.3, lines 34-7: 'Et quid in aliis mundi partibus agatur ignoro, nam hac in terra, in qua uiuimus, finem suum mundus non iam nuntiat, sed ostendit'. Passage cited in translation from: Zimmerman, O. J. 1959, trans. *Dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great* (New York), p. 187.

time or date of the world's end.⁹⁴² Nevertheless, Gregory repeatedly preaches that the end of the world is close at hand and his conviction on this matter appears to be genuine. One might think that these two notions are in conflict with each other, but in fact they are component parts of an important theoretical dynamic. Gregory's proclamations of imminency are often balanced with a message of indefinite postponement. His eschatological statements ultimately aim to banish spiritual complacency in the present day.⁹⁴³ Markus cites the letter to Æthelberht as an illustrative example. The king is warned of the approaching end of the world, but he is urged to repent in the meantime. Because the time of judgement can never be known to humans, Æthelberht must not delay his repentance. The end of time could occur at any point in the near future, and the signs that it is approaching are all around us:

Besides, we would wish your Majesty to know that the end of the world is at hand, as we learn from the words of Almighty God in the Holy Scriptures; and the kingdom of the saints which knows no end is near. As the end of the world approaches, many things threaten which have never happened before; these are changes in the sky and terrors from the heavens, unseasonable tempests, wars, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in various places. Not all these

⁹⁴² Markus, R. A. 2001, 'Living Within Sight of the End', pp. 31-2.

⁹⁴³ Markus, R. A. 2001, 'Living Within Sight of the End', p. 33: 'Gregory regularly combines the urgency of imminence with indefinite postponement. What he wants to banish is what he calls *securitas*, which I would like to take the liberty to translate as 'complacency'; this is the point of the temporal separation he makes between the signs and the end'.

⁹⁴⁴ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.32; Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistularum*, 11.37, lines 43-56: 'Praeterea scire uestram gloriam uolumus quia, sicut in scriptura sacra ex uerbis Domini omnipotentis agnoscimus, praesentis mundi iam terminus iuxta est, et sanctorum regnum uenturum est, quod nullo unquam poterit fine terminari. Adpropinquante autem eodem mundi termino, multa imminet, quae antea non fuerunt, uidelicet inmutationes aeris, terroresque de caelo, et contra ordinationem temporum tempestates, bella, fames, pestilentiae, terraemotus per loca: quae tamen non omnia nostris diebus uentura sunt, sed post nostros dies omnia subsequenter. Vos itaque, siqua ex his euenire in terra uestra cognoscitis, nullo modo uestrum animum perturbetis; quia idcirco haec signa de fine saeculi praemittuntur, ut de animabus nostris debeamus esse solliciti, de mortis hora suspecti, et uenturo Iudici in bonis actibus inueniamur esse praeparati'. Excerpt cited in translation from: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 110-15.

things will come about in our days, but they will all follow after our days. So if you see any of these things happening in your land, do not be troubled in mind; for these signs of the end of the world are sent in advance to make us heedful about our souls, watching for the hour of death, so that when the Judge comes we may, through our good works, be found prepared.⁹⁴⁴

Parallels can be drawn between Gregory's letter to Æthelberht and the homilies and letters cited above. Once again, Gregory draws upon the signs listed in the synoptic accounts of the Olivet discourse to add force to his didactic message.⁹⁴⁵

Markus's model of imminency combined with indefinite postponement is helpful. By framing his homilies, letters or exegetical writings in the rhetoric of eschatological imminency, Gregory adds considerable urgency to his calls for spiritual reform. If Gregory's works are approached with Markus's theory in mind, then the link between the sharpening of Gregory's eschatological perspective and times of crisis seems entirely logical. In times of turmoil, the need for reform becomes most urgent. Thus, the perilous state of Rome in the early 590's inspired Gregory to preach explicit statements of the imminent end in his homilies in order to encourage much-needed spiritual reform. The sentiments expressed by Gregory in the letter to Æthelberht concerning the approaching end of the world were first linked to Bede's own outlook by Plummer over a century ago, but how valid is this connection? The relationship between Gregory and Bede must now be considered in close detail.

Gregory, Bede and the decrepit state of the present era

The world ages doctrine forms a key link between the eschatological perspectives of Bede and Gregory the Great. Though this aspect of Bede's thought was

⁹⁴⁵ Compare Gregory's list of threatening portents with the signs of the end of the age listed in Luke 21.11, Matthew 24.7 and Mark 13.8.

greatly indebted to the traditions established by St Augustine,⁹⁴⁶ it is possible to discern the influence of Gregory in the Bedan world ages scheme. In Augustine's view, each world age can be seen to demonstrate the tendencies of a corresponding stage of the human life-cycle. The relationship between the world ages and the ages of man is outlined in the following table:

<i>Prima aetas</i>	<i>infantia</i> (infancy)
<i>Secunda aetas</i>	<i>pueritia</i> (childhood)
<i>Tertia aetas</i>	<i>adolescentia</i> (adolescence)
<i>Quarta aetas</i>	<i>juventus</i> (youth, i.e. young adulthood)
<i>Quinta aetas</i>	<i>gravitas</i> (maturity)
<i>Sexta aetas</i>	<i>senectus</i> (old age)

Augustine on the world ages and ages of man analogy

The terms cited in the table above are taken from the account of the analogy offered in *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*.⁹⁴⁷ Except for a slight variation with regards to the fifth world age in the early work *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*,⁹⁴⁸ Augustine used these terms consistently when equating the six stages of the human life-cycle with each historical era. Bede had an intimate knowledge of many of Augustine's works and the ages of man and world ages analogy would have been transmitted to him in the format displayed in the table above.

In its received form, the world ages doctrine equated the each of the six historical eras with states of *infantia*, *pueritia*, *adolescentia*, *iuentus*, *gravitas* and

⁹⁴⁶ On the important role that Augustine played in defining this theoretical tradition, see above pp. 28-30.

⁹⁴⁷ *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*, 58.3. See also: *De civitate Dei*, 16.43.

⁹⁴⁸ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, 1.23.39. Here, Augustine associates the fifth world age with a stage of late manhood, using the term '*senioris aetas*'. The terms assigned to the other five ages match those reproduced in the table above.

senectus respectively. This scheme appears in Julian of Toledo's seventh-century tract *De comprobatione aetatis sextae*.⁹⁴⁹ Unlike Julian, Bede did not reproduce Augustine's terminology verbatim. Bede first discussed the world ages in *De temporibus*, the introductory survey of time completed in 703.⁹⁵⁰ Augustine was the predominant influence over Bede's perception of the structure of universal history, and the six-fold method of chronological periodisation expounded in *De temporibus* ultimately derives from the bishop of Hippo.⁹⁵¹ However, Bede's discussion of the world ages and ages of man analogy in chapter sixteen of *De temporibus* contains two significant modifications to the Augustinian scheme:

<i>Prima aetas</i>	<i>infantia</i> (infancy)
<i>Secunda aetas</i>	<i>pueritia</i> (childhood)
<i>Tertia aetas</i>	<i>adolescentia</i> (adolescence)
<i>Quarta aetas</i>	<i>juventus</i> (youth, i.e. young adulthood)
<i>Quinta aetas</i>	<i>senectus</i> (old age)
<i>Sexta aetas</i>	<i>decrepitus</i> (extreme old age)

Bede on the world ages and ages of man analogy

Bede's first four ages are identical to those set forth in *De Civitate Dei* and *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII* (indeed, he draws upon the language of *De civitate Dei* to

⁹⁴⁹ Julian of Toledo, *De comprobatione aetatis sextae*, 3, lines 5-9: 'Secundum hos igitur sex dierum rationes et numeros sex quoque aetates in unoquoque homine praenoscentur, in quibus uita ipsa perficitur, id est, infantia, pueritia, adolescentia, iuuentus, grauitas et senectus'. Augustine's terms were also reproduced by Alcuin: *Commentaria in sancti Iohannis Euangelium*, col. 792: 'Nam sexta aetas senectus est, quoniam prima est infantia, secunda pueritia, tertia adolescentia, quarta iuuentus, quinta grauitas'.

⁹⁵⁰ On the date of completion of *De temporibus*, see above pp. 23-24.

⁹⁵¹ Note though, that Isidore of Seville also played an important role in the transmission of the world ages doctrine. Isidore made the significant and influential step of basing his world chronicles upon the six-age framework. This precedent was repeated in Bede's *Chronica minora* (*De temporibus*, 17-22). For further discussion, see above pp. 40-41.

construct his explanation).⁹⁵² Bede steps outside the Augustinian framework for ages five and six. The term ‘*senectus*’, which Augustine used to define the final era of historical time, becomes equated with the fifth *aetas saeculi* in Bede’s model.⁹⁵³ ‘*Gravitas*’, Augustine’s term for the fifth world age, is absent. The sixth age is likened to extreme old age (‘*aetas decrepita*’).⁹⁵⁴ Bede thus implies that the world in the present era, the sixth *aetas saeculi*, is feeble, infirm and frail.⁹⁵⁵ In the revised analogy, ‘*senectus*’ is not considered to be an adequate label for the current temporal era. In Bede’s view, the world was experiencing a state of decline that is one stage further on from that implied by the Augustinian model.

Bede reconsidered the ages of man and world ages analogy in the mature work, *De temporum ratione*. Here, the scheme set forth in *De temporibus* is reproduced without significant alteration. The sixth age is once again styled as an era of extreme old age and decrepitude.⁹⁵⁶ The redefined world ages and ages of man analogy offers an important link between Bede and Gregory the Great. In Gregory’s view, the world was tired, worn out and destitute. A series of barbarian attacks, natural disasters and plague epidemics had ravaged Rome and the wider Christian world. Bede’s association of the present *aetas saeculi* with a decrepit stage of the human life-cycle seems very close to Gregory’s perception of the era in which he lived. It appears that Bede modified

⁹⁵² Bede’s dependency on *De civitate Dei*, 16.43 is evident in the list of citations given in the CCSL edition of *De temporibus*: Jones, C. W. *De temporibus liber*, CCSL 123C, p. 600-1.

⁹⁵³ *De temporibus*, 16, lines 16-20: ‘Quinta deinde usque ad adventum salvatoris in carnem generationibus et ipsa XIII, porro annis DLXXXVIII extenta, in qua ut gravi senectute fessa, malis crebrioribus plebs Hebraea quassatur’.

⁹⁵⁴ *De temporibus*, 16, lines 20-2: ‘Sexta, quae nunc agitur, nulla generationum uel temporum serie certa sed, ut aetas decrepita ipsa, totius saeculi morte finienda’.

⁹⁵⁵ ‘*Decrepitus*: very old, decrepit’. Lewis, C. T. and Short, C. 1879, *A Latin Dictionary*, p. 523.

⁹⁵⁶ *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 41-3: ‘Sexta, que nunc agitur, aetas, nulla generationum uel temporum serie certa, sed ut aetas decrepita ipsa totius saeculi morte consumenda’. See also: *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 4, lines 73-5.

Augustine's theoretical model, despite its distinguished heritage, to incorporate a Gregorian perspective of the present world into a redefined world ages scheme.

This link can be confirmed by returning to Gregory's interpretation of the parable of the workers in vineyard. In one of his Gospel homilies, Gregory relates the five hours of the parable (the first, third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours at which men were hired for work) to five points of temporal division.⁹⁵⁷ The five-fold scheme proposed by Gregory is not dissimilar to the six-part world ages model. Like Augustine, Gregory saw a symbolic connection between each historical period and the stages of the human life-cycle. The table below summarises the relationship between the hours of the parable, the historical periods that are defined by these hours and the stages of human life:

1st hour - 3rd hour	Adam - Noah	<i>pueritia</i> (childhood)
3rd hour - 6th hour	Noah - Abraham	<i>adolescentia</i> (adolescence)
6th hour - 9th hour	Abraham - Moses	<i>iuventus</i> (youth)
9th hour - 11th hour	Moses - Incarnation	<i>senectus</i> (old age)
11th hour - End of the Day	Incarnation - End of World	<i>decrepita</i> (extreme old age)

Gregory the Great: Historical periods and the stages of the human life-cycle

Gregory's interpretation of the parable of the workers in the vineyard was known to Bede from an early stage of his authorial career.⁹⁵⁸ If the Gregorian scheme is considered alongside Bede's reworked world ages analogy, then two important parallels are evident. In both instances, the last but one historical period in each scheme is

⁹⁵⁷ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.19. For further discussion of the five-part system of chronological division proposed in Gregory's homily on the parable of the workers in the vineyard, see above pp. 33-35.

⁹⁵⁸ Bede draws upon Gregory's interpretation in his commentary on 1 John, and he alludes to it again in his first commentary on Acts: *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Iohannis*, 2, lines 214-26; *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 3, lines 1-7. See also: *De orthographia*, lines 1095-8.

characterised as a stage of *senectus*.⁹⁵⁹ Thus, Bede's fifth *aetas saeculi* displays the same tendencies as the fourth period in Gregory's five-part scheme. Most importantly, it should be noted that Gregory's fifth period is associated with the adjective '*decrepitus*', an appropriate label to describe an ever-declining world.⁹⁶⁰ Like the sixth *aetas saeculi*, the period running from the eleventh hour to the end of the day of work corresponds to a historical era which began at the Incarnation of Christ. In both schemes, the present and final era of historical time is characterised in an identical manner as feeble, decrepit and close to death.

Terms of old age in *De orthographia*

Bede's association of the sixth world age with the term '*aetas decrepita*' is significant for the connection that it offers with Gregory the Great's perception of the present. A passage from *De orthographia* shows that Bede was aware of the implications inherent in this term. *De orthographia* is a reference work on the subject of Latin grammar.⁹⁶¹ It is made up of a series of alphabetically-grouped entries.⁹⁶² Topics covered include: commonly confused words,⁹⁶³ Latin alternatives for Greek words,⁹⁶⁴

⁹⁵⁹ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.19, lines 48-50: 'Nona autem senectus intelligitur, in qua uelut sol ab alto axe descendit, quia aetas a calore iuuentutis deficit'.

⁹⁶⁰ Gregory offers two adjectives, '*decrepitus*' and '*veteranus*' to describe the final period in his five-part scheme: *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.19, lines 50-1: 'Vndecima uero hora est ea aetas quae decrepita uel ueterana dicitur'. *Decrepitus* is used again a few lines later (line 55) when Gregory summarises the five stages of human life at which we might be called to work in God's vineyard: 'Quia ergo ad uitam bonam alius in pueritia, alius in adolescentia, alius in iuuentute, alius in senectute, alius in decrepita aetate perducitur, quasi diuersis horis operarii ad uineam uocantur'.

⁹⁶¹ In *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24, Bede describes *De orthographia* as 'a book about orthography, arranged according to the order of the alphabet (*Librum de orthographia alphabeti ordine distinctum*)'. The standard Latin edition is: Jones, C. W. *De orthographia*, CCSL 123A (Turnhout, 1975), pp. 1-57.

⁹⁶² The text is structured alphabetically, but in contrast to modern convention, the words commented upon are only organised in relation to their first letter. Thus, all words beginning with 'a' are grouped together in a section, but they are not listed in any particular order within that section.

⁹⁶³ For example, see the entries that explain the difference between *acervus* and *acerbus* (line 116); *avenae*, *habenae* (lines 121-2); *clipeum*, *clupeum* (line 227); *rubor*, *robur*, *robor* (line 981).

⁹⁶⁴ For example see: *byrsa*, *corium* (line 146); *dialogos*, *disputatio* (line 341); *drama*, *fabula* (line 342); *omelia*, *sermo vel colloquium* (line 787); *stachys*, *spica* (line 1080).

and the subtle differences that exist when using particular words in certain contexts.⁹⁶⁵ *De orthographia* also contains entries concerning irregularities in verb usage,⁹⁶⁶ commonly misspelled words,⁹⁶⁷ and issues regarding the gender of various nouns.⁹⁶⁸ In comparison to Bede's other grammatical tracts (*De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis*), *De orthographia* was not circulated widely in the years following Bede's death.⁹⁶⁹ This work has not tended to receive much attention from contemporary scholars, and it must rate as one of Bede's least studied texts. *De orthographia* has often been dismissed as a simplistic compendium of extracts from earlier authorities.⁹⁷⁰ However, Anna Carlotta Dionisotti has offered a fresh reappraisal of *De orthographia*, showing it to be a carefully gathered synthesis of earlier works, rather than a thoughtlessly compiled notebook.⁹⁷¹

In the course of her discussion of *De orthographia*, Dionisotti calls into question the traditional assumption that this text was one of Bede's earliest compositions. The work has no preface, and the case for an early date rests upon its derivative style and perceived 'immaturity' (these ideas have a long heritage, having been suggested by

⁹⁶⁵ For example, the noun *onus* is used to describe a load carried by an animal, but *sarcina* describes a load carried by a human (line 796). Distinctions are also drawn between the natural colour *caerulus* and the manufactured *caeruleus* (lines 229-30); the adjective *maestus*, which relates to inner sadness, and *tristis*, which refers to one's outwardly appearance (line 704).

⁹⁶⁶ See the entries concerning: *audeo* (line 42); *adiuvo* (line 43); *gaudeo* (line 486).

⁹⁶⁷ For example, *camelus* is to be written with one *l* (line 273). Other examples of entries that contain simple spelling conventions are: *absconditus* (line 109); *apud, caput* (line 140); *Belzebub, Belial* (line 145); *cuspis* (line 202); *dolium* (line 327); *excubiae, exuviae* (line 417); *merula* (line 701).

⁹⁶⁸ See: *curriculum* (lines 194-6); *clipeus* (lines 197-9); *caseus* (line 200).

⁹⁶⁹ The most accurate and up to date list of manuscripts is found in appendix 2 of Dionisotti, A. C. 1982, 'On Bede, Grammars, and Greek', *Revue Bénédictine* 92, 111-41, at 137-9. Dionisotti also lists manuscripts of Alcuin's *De orthographia* and Alcuin-Bede confections. Alcuin's work is essentially a digest of Bede's, and the two works were frequently confused.

⁹⁷⁰ The opinion of C. W. Jones, the editor of the Latin edition of *De orthographia*, is representative of the traditional perception of this work. *De orthographia* is seen as 'a teacher's notebook accumulated at random and somewhat capriciously'. See the preface to *Beda opera didascalica*, CCSL 123A, p. x.

⁹⁷¹ Dionisotti suggests that *De orthographia* is a reference work designed for the monastic library or scriptorium, to aid those engaged in studying or copying Christian Latin literature: Dionisotti, A. C. 1982, 'Bede, Grammars, and Greek'.

Laistner and repeated many times thereafter).⁹⁷² Dionisotti suggests that *De orthographia* was written after Bede's first commentary on Acts.⁹⁷³ Her theory is attractive because it is based upon critical comparison between *De orthographia* and Bede's exegetical works, rather than a generalised impression of the text's 'maturity'. Such an approach may offer another clue regarding the order in which Bede's works were composed. An uncritical citation from Julian of Eclanum, an author that Bede became vehemently opposed to, suggests that *De orthographia* was composed before *In Cantica canticorum*.⁹⁷⁴ This reference might have further implications for the date of *De orthographia*, but further work needs to be done to determine the precise time at which Bede's attitude towards Julian changed.⁹⁷⁵ For now the exact date of composition remains unclear, but the possibility that entries were added to *De orthographia* over a number of years ought to be considered. Perhaps Bede gradually built up a composite reference work over the course of his career as a teacher.

One particular section of *De orthographia* is important for the purposes of the present study. Bede's entry on the term '*senecta*' reads as follows:

⁹⁷² Laistner thought that *De orthographia* was an early work, perhaps even Bede's first book: Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, p. 137. This view was subsequently reiterated many times: Blair, P. H. 1970, *World of Bede*, p. 248; Lagorio, V. M. 1975, 'An Unreported Manuscript of Bede's *De orthographia* in Codex Vaticanus Reginensis Latinus 1587', *Manuscripta* 19, 98-106 at 98.

⁹⁷³ A comment that Bede makes regarding the name 'Stephen' in the first commentary on Acts was later corrected in the *Retractatio*. The information given in *De orthographia* (line 1082) matches the *Retractatio*, rather than the *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*. Dionisotti suggests that this indicates that *De orthographia* was compiled after the *Expositio*: Dionisotti, A. C. 1982, 'Bede, Grammars, and Greek', 121-9. Her theory is endorsed by Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, pp. 35-6.

⁹⁷⁴ *De orthographia*, lines 52-3: 'Julian said, 'Solomon surpassed all mortals in wisdom' (*Anteibat sapientia Salomon cunctis mortalibus, Iulianus ait*). Bede appears to be quoting from Julian of Eclanum's commentary on the Song of Songs, a work that is no longer extant. Bede came to distrust Julian after discovering that his texts were tainted with the Pelagian heresy. An entire book of Bede's own commentary on the Song of Songs is an extended refutation of Julian's interpretation of the Old Testament text.

⁹⁷⁵ A reference in *In epistulas septem catholicas* may well suggest that the shift happened relatively early in Bede's career. Bede condemns Julian as a follower of Pelagius in his commentary on 1 John, a tract which was sent to Acca at the same time as *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* (circa 710): *In epistolam I Iohannis*, 3, lines 118-20.

Senecta and *Senium* are two nouns of old age. They are distinguished by the Greeks, amongst whom another noun *gravitas* holds after youth, another for oldest age coming after *gravitas*. For a *presbyter* is called mature and a *geron* is aged. Because in truth the difference between these two nouns is lost in the Latin language; concerning old age (*de senectute*) both *senecta* and *senium* are placed. These things are from Augustine. But Gregory says: ‘The eleventh [hour] is the age which is called *decrepita* or *veterana*, and so the Greeks call people who are very old not *gerontas* but *presbyteros* so as to indicate that those who are very advanced in age are called more than old men (*senes*)’.⁹⁷⁶

The citation of Gregory is drawn from the homily on the parable of the workers in the vineyard and the material from Augustine comes from *Enarrationes in Psalmos*.⁹⁷⁷ The ideas taken from Gregory and Augustine conflict, to a degree, over their interpretation of the correct Greek term for extreme old age. But the important thing, so far as the present investigation is concerned, is that Augustine and Gregory concur regarding the limitations of the Latin terms in question. Both men agree that the Greek language is able to convey a sense of extreme old age that is not implied by the Latin nouns *senecta* and *senium*, or associated words such as *senex* and *senectus*. The text cited from Gregory makes it clear that the adjectives *decrepita* and *veterana* are to be associated with a state of old age beyond that conveyed by *senex*, the standard Latin term for an old man.

⁹⁷⁶ *De orthographia*, lines 1089-98: ‘Senecta et senium duo nomina senectutis sunt et discernuntur a Graecis, apud quos aliud nomen habet gravitas post inventutem, aliud post ipsam gravitatem veniens ultima aetas. Nam presbyter dicitur gravis, et geron senex. Quia vero in latina lingua duorum istorum nominum distinctio deficit, de senectute ambo sunt posita, senecta et senium. Haec Augustinus. At Gregorius: ‘Undecima vero’, inquit, ‘est aetas quae decrepita vel veterana dicitur, unde Graeci valde seniores non gerontas, sed presbyteros appellant, ut plusquam senes esse insinuent quos provectiores vocant’.

⁹⁷⁷ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 70.2.4; Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 1.19.

Gregory's homily on the parable of the workers in the vineyard was a significant influence upon Bede's redefined world ages and ages of man analogy. The excerpt from *De orthographia* cited above links Bede's term for the sixth world age to a Gregorian perception of the present. Not only does it offer further evidence that Bede knew Gregory's homily first hand, the passage from *De orthographia* also suggests that Bede was fully aware of the implications inherent in his choice of terminology. By associating the sixth age with the term *aetas decrepita*, Bede was drawing upon the language of Gregory's homily to describe the present era as worn out, frail and close to death. This sense of extreme old age could not adequately be conveyed by the term *senectus*, the standard Augustinian label for the sixth world age.

Conclusion

An important link exists between the eschatological perspectives of Bede and Gregory the Great. The explanation of the world ages and ages of man analogy set forth in *De temporibus* can be considered a conflation of the schemes outlined in Augustine's *De civitate Dei* and Gregory's homily on the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Bede's modification of the analogy represents a significant stage in the development of this important theoretical tradition, yet it has drawn little comment in secondary scholarship.⁹⁷⁸ The analogy features in *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*, two works that enjoyed wide circulation in the centuries following Bede's death. The popularity of these tracts ensured that the modified analogy was diffused widely throughout the Middle Ages. Bede's influence is discernible, for example, in Hrabanus Maurus's tract *De computo*. Drawing closely upon chapter sixty-six of *De temporum*

⁹⁷⁸ Burrow notes Bede's revisions to the Augustinian scheme without offering any further comment on the matter. Instead, Burrow emphasises the similarities between the schemes presented by Bede and Augustine: Burrow, J. A. 1986, *Ages of Man*, p. 83-4.

ratione, Hrabanus likens the sixth age to a state of extreme old age (*aetas decrepita*).⁹⁷⁹

With this in mind, it is possible to consider Bede's importance to the intellectual heritage of the early Middle Ages. His works represent a crucial stage in the transmission of ideas from late antiquity to the medieval period. That said, it would be a mistake to assume that Bede engaged in the process of transmission passively, or uncritically. This chapter has shown that Bede was willing to make significant alterations to an established theoretical model at a relatively early stage of his authorial career. Bede was not a passive figure, content to restate the thoughts of a bygone age. Rather, he was involved in a dynamic process in which he moulded the intellectual traditions of the past to make them relevant to the age in which he lived.

⁹⁷⁹ Hrabanus Maurus, *De computo*, 96, lines 54-6: 'Sexta, quae nunc agitur aetas, nulla generationum uel temporum serie certa sed, ut aetas decrepita ipsa, totius seculi morte consumenda'. Compare *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 41-3.

Chapter 9: Bede's eschatological perspective in times of crisis

Introduction: Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel

The analysis of Gregory the Great's eschatological thought carried out in the previous chapter revealed that Gregory's eschatological perspective became sharper during times of crisis. In order to ascertain whether or not Bede's works demonstrate similar tendencies, the present chapter will focus upon one text, *In primam partem Samuhelis*. An investigation of this source will help to resolve the contradictory assertions that have been made about Bede's eschatological perspective by the small group of scholars who have commented upon this aspect of his eschatological thought.⁹⁸⁰ By considering Bede's eschatological perspective as a variable factor, the intensity of which was subject to change according to time and circumstance, this investigation will demonstrate the value of the 'weak thesis' recently adopted by scholars interested in medieval apocalyptic belief.

In primam partem Samuhelis is a verse by verse commentary upon the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel.⁹⁸¹ It covers the interaction between Samuel, Saul and David, up to Saul's death during a defeat inflicted upon him by the Philistines in the battle of Gilboa.⁹⁸² In the preface to book one of the commentary, Bede explains that he is to interpret 1 Samuel according to its allegorical sense (*allegoricum sensum*), a

⁹⁸⁰ The small amount of secondary literature which considers Bede's perceived proximity to the end of time is discussed, above, pp. 235-238.

⁹⁸¹ In some editions of the Bible, the two books of Samuel are listed as 1 and 2 Kings. Where this is the case, the following two books (1 and 2 Kings in most modern editions) are referred to as 3 and 4 Kings respectively. This practice originated in the Septuagint. It was followed by the Vulgate, and also by some Roman Catholic translations such as the Douay-Rheims edition. See: Browning, W. R. F. 1996, *Oxford Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 218.

⁹⁸² In *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24, the work is referred to in the following manner: 'On the first book of Samuel, up to the death of Saul: four books (*In primam partem Samuhelis, id est usque ad mortem Saulis, libros IV*)'.

method which ‘refreshes us ... by castigating, instructing and consoling’.⁹⁸³ The commentary has been criticised for the high degree of allegorical interpretation employed throughout its four books.⁹⁸⁴ It has been suggested that Bede’s medieval audience found his allegorising ‘excessive’ and this has been cited as a reason for the relative unpopularity of the commentary in the Middle Ages.⁹⁸⁵ Though a copy of *In primam partem Samuhelis* was requested by the Anglo-Saxon missionary Lull, his interest in the work does not appear to have been shared by many.⁹⁸⁶ Less than ten manuscripts of the work are known to have survived and there are surprisingly few references to the text in medieval library catalogues.⁹⁸⁷

The issue of the text’s unpopularity is addressed by George Hardin Brown in his contribution to the recent *Innovation and Tradition* volume of essays. Brown refers to Bede’s commentary on 1 Samuel as ‘the least known and cited of all his major works’ and he suggests that the work was largely neglected, not because of its allegorical nature, but because manuscripts of the commentary did not make it to the necessary ecclesiastical centres in the Carolingian period.⁹⁸⁸ Brown’s suggestion is persuasive, though one cannot help but think that the complex nature of the commentary must also have played some part in its wider neglect.⁹⁸⁹ The lack of medieval interest in Bede’s

⁹⁸³ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, prologue, lines 32-4: ‘... qui nos ... castigando erudiendo consolando reficiat’.

⁹⁸⁴ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, p. cxlviii, note 1.

⁹⁸⁵ Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, p. 65: ‘To judge by the very small number of extant MSS, it would seem as if even medieval scholars found his allegorizing excessive’.

⁹⁸⁶ Lull’s letter to Æthelberht, Archbishop of York is translated as item 188 in Whitelock, D. 1979, *English Historical Documents, c. 500-1042*, vol. 1 (London), pp. 834-5.

⁹⁸⁷ Eight manuscripts are listed by Laistner: *Hand-list*, pp. 65-6. On the small number of references to the Samuel commentary in medieval library catalogues, see: Brown, G. H. 2006, ‘Bede’s Neglected Commentary on Samuel’, in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown), pp. 121-42, at pp. 123-4.

⁹⁸⁸ As a result, the Samuel commentary failed to become incorporated into the exegetical anthologies, such as the *Glossa ordinaria*, that became hugely influential in defining later-medieval exegesis. Brown, G. H. 2006, ‘Bede’s Neglected Commentary on Samuel’, pp. 139-42.

⁹⁸⁹ *In primam partem Samuhelis* is a complex work that demands intensive study from its readership. The commentary constructs sophisticated interpretations which are sustained over a number of chapters. In

commentary on 1 Samuel is mirrored in modern scholarship. *In primam partem Samuhelis* was the first Bedan commentary to receive a modern Corpus Christianorum Series Latina edition,⁹⁹⁰ yet a limited number of academic studies of this text are available. Aside from two further studies by George Hardin Brown,⁹⁹¹ and important work by Alan Thacker,⁹⁹² just a handful of secondary articles consider the Samuel commentary in significant detail.⁹⁹³

Compiling a full length commentary on 1 Samuel was an ambitious project which required Bede to form his own interpretations of a biblical text that was not particularly well served by the Church fathers. By tackling a text that had traditionally been overlooked, Bede was building upon the policy followed in his innovative compilation of commentaries on the seven Catholic Epistles. It is difficult to determine the extent of Bede's debt to the source texts that he did have access to, due to the limited nature of the modern Latin edition of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. The edition lists few sources and analogues, except for scriptural passages and direct citations. One suspects that many more analogous passages exist than are listed in the volume's short

contrast to Bede's earlier, New Testament exegesis (*Expositio Apocalypseos*, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*) it could not easily be used as a reference work for individual verses.

⁹⁹⁰ *In primam partem Samuhelis* featured in the first CCSL volume of Bede's *Opera exegetica*: Hurst, D. *Beda's Venerabilis Opera exegetica*, CCSL 119 (Turnhout, 1962). The only CCSL volume of Bedan works to precede number 119 was volume 122, a joint edition of Bede's *Opera rhythmica* and *Opera homiletica* published in 1955.

⁹⁹¹ In addition to the article cited above in note 987, see: Brown, G. H. 2005, 'Bede's Commentary on 1 Samuel', in C. Leonardi and G. Orlandi (eds.), *Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages* (Florence), pp. 77-90; Brown, G. H. 2005, 'Le commentaire problématique de Bède sur le premier Livre de Samuel', in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (eds.), *Bède le Vénérable: entre tradition et postérité / The Venerable Bede: Tradition and Posterity* (Lille), pp. 87-96.

⁹⁹² Many insightful comments upon *In primam partem Samuhelis* feature in Thacker's 2006 essay, 'Ordering of Understanding'. See also: Thacker, A. 2009, 'Bede, the Britons and the book of Samuel', in S. Baxter, C. E. Karkov, J. L. Nelson and D. Pelteret (eds.), *Early Medieval Studies in memory of Patrick Wormald* (Farnham), pp. 129-47.

⁹⁹³ Meyvaert's study of *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones* offers useful comment on the Samuel commentary: Meyvaert, P. 1997, 'In the Footsteps of the Fathers': the Date of Bede's *Thirty Questions on the Book of Kings* to Nothelm', in W. E. Klingshirn and M. Vessey (eds.), *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honour of R.A. Markus* (Ann Arbor), pp. 267-86. The following essays by Roger Ray, which examine Bede's attitude towards classical scholarship, discuss passages from *In primam partem Samuhelis*: Ray, R. D. 1987, 'Bede and Cicero', 2-7; Ray, R. D. 1997, *Bede, Rhetoric and the Creation of Christian Latin Culture* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow).

index.⁹⁹⁴ Adalbert de Vogüé has shown that Bede used Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (particularly book seventeen) in the Samuel commentary, a dependency which is not cited in the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina edition.⁹⁹⁵ Similarly, there are several passages where one suspects an undetected debt to Gregory the Great.⁹⁹⁶ An updated study of the sources drawn upon by Bede in compiling *In primam partem Samuhelis*, utilising technological resources that were not available to the volume's editor in 1962, would be a worthwhile and most welcome scholarly breakthrough.

The year 716

Before proceeding to consider the eschatological content of *In primam partem Samuhelis*, it is first necessary to explore the historical events of the period in which it was composed. In the prologue to book four of the commentary, Bede explains that the departure of Abbot Ceolfrith has prompted a delay in the text's composition. Ceolfrith's departure can be dated to the fourth of June, 716.⁹⁹⁷ It is rare to have such detailed information about the composition of one of Bede's works (in fact, of the remainder of Bede's entire canon only the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* is also associated with a specific day, month and year of composition).⁹⁹⁸ There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that 716 was a particularly eventful year. The departure of Ceolfrith had a significant

⁹⁹⁴ Hurst, D. *Beda's Venerabilis Opera exegetica*, CCSL 119, pp. 339-41.

⁹⁹⁵ De Vogüé, A. 1986, 'Les plus anciens exégètes du Premier Livre des Rois: Origène, Augustin et leurs épigones', *Sacris Erudiri* 29, 5-12. See Meyvaert, P. 1997, 'The Date of Bede's *Thirty Questions on Kings*', pp. 269-70, notes 9 and 10.

⁹⁹⁶ See the commentary on 1 Samuel 7.2 where Bede discusses the difference between the active and contemplative lives, a prominent Gregorian theme: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1978-94.

⁹⁹⁷ Chapter 17 of the *Historia abbatum* states that Ceolfrith left Wearmouth-Jarrow on the day before the nones of June, a Thursday ('*pridie nonas Junias, Quinta feria*'). Chapter 23 records the date of Ceolfrith's death later that year on the twenty-fifth of September 716. Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. II, p. 367. Note that there is a mistake in the translated edition of the *Historia abbatum*, which states that Ceolfrith left on the morning of the fifth of June: Farmer, D. H. and Webb, J. F. 1998, trans. *Age of Bede*, p. 205. The correct date (the fourth of June) is given in the translation of chapter 23, p. 210. The chronological framework of Ceolfrith's departure recorded in the *Historia abbatum* corroborates that given in the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi*, chapters 23-5.

⁹⁹⁸ The *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* is dated to 'the Nones of November, in the third indiction'. This must have been the year 734 (see above, note 772).

impact upon the Wearmouth-Jarrow community, especially upon Bede himself. This was also a time of great political change, both within the Kingdom of Northumbria and beyond its borders.

In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede twice refers to 716 as the year in which King Osred was killed.⁹⁹⁹ Osred became king in 705 whilst still a boy, which, as Barbara Yorke points out, was an unusual occurrence in early Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁰⁰⁰ Osred ruled Northumbria for approximately eleven years, having been installed as king shortly after the death of King Aldfrith, his father, by a political faction which included Bishop Wilfrid.¹⁰⁰¹ Bede had originally held high hopes for Osred's reign. In the preface to the metrical *Vita Cuthberti*, he refers to the young king as 'a new Josiah' (a laudatory comparison to the Old-Testament king who was eight years old at his accession).¹⁰⁰² However, the boy-king does not seem to have lived up to expectations as he grew older. A letter written by Boniface to Æthelbald of Mercia is highly critical of Osred's character, highlighting him as an example not to be followed.¹⁰⁰³ Osred belonged to a family which claimed descent from King Ida of Bernicia through Æthelfrith.¹⁰⁰⁴ Since

⁹⁹⁹ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.22; 5.24.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Osred's rule is the only certain minority recorded in the period before 900: Yorke, B. 1990, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo Saxon England* (London), pp. 86-7. Bede states that Osred was approximately 8 years of age on his accession to the throne: *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.18.

¹⁰⁰¹ Following the death of Aldfrith, chapter 59 of the *Vita Wilfridi* records a two-month period of rule by Eadwulf (of whom no further details are known). According to the *Vita Wilfridi*, an offer of Wilfrid's support was rejected by Eadwulf. Wilfrid was instrumental in establishing Osred on the throne and the young king became the bishop's adopted son. This episode is not recorded in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede does not mention Eadwulf at all; he implies that Osred was the immediate successor of Aldfrith (book 5, chapter 18).

¹⁰⁰² 2 Kings 22.1. The *Vita Cuthberti metrica* contains an allusion to Osred in verses 552-5: '... and as a glorious new Josiah he rules our world, more mature in faith and spirit than years (*Utque novus Iosia fideque animoque magis quam / Annis maturus, nostrum regit inclitus orbem*)'.

¹⁰⁰³ Writing in 746 or 747, Boniface describes Osred as 'driven by the spirit of wantonness, fornicating, and in his frenzy debauching throughout the nunneries virgins consecrated to God'. Tangl, M. *S. Bonifatii et Lulli Epistolae*, MGH Epistolae Selectae 1 (Berlin, 1916), p. 153, number 73 (translated in Whitelock, D. 1979, *English Historical Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 820-1, number 177). An extremely negative appraisal of Osred's character is also offered by Æthelwulf in the early ninth-century poem *De abbatibus*.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See the chart which outlines the succession of the eighth-century Northumbrian kings in Rollason, D. W. 2003, *Northumbria, 500-1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge), p. 193. See also: Stancliffe, C. 2005, *Bede and the Britons* (Whithorn Lecture; Stranraer), pp. 30-2.

the reign of Oswald (634-642) the house of Æthelfrith had retained an almost exclusive hold upon the kingship of Northumbria. The Anglian genealogies reveal that Osred's successor Cenred also claimed descent from Ida, but via a distant collateral line.¹⁰⁰⁵ Osred's death thus heralded the end of a long period of dominance of the Northumbrian throne by descendants of Æthelfrith. The throne was subsequently contested by various factions, none of whom were able to establish dominance comparable to that formerly achieved by Æthelfrith's descendants.

The fact that Cenred's reign was short suggests that this was a period of political instability. Cenred was succeeded in 718 by Osric, who may, like Osred, have been a son of Aldfrith.¹⁰⁰⁶ Whether or not Cenred is implicated in Osred's death is unclear. The *Historia ecclesiastica* states that Osred was killed, but Bede does not reveal whether this was due to defeat in battle or internal treachery.¹⁰⁰⁷ A later account suggests that Osred was overthrown by Cenred, but there is no evidence to confirm this.¹⁰⁰⁸ The location of Osred's death is also unclear. Recensions 'D' and 'E' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* contain the tantalisingly vague statement that Osred was slain 'south of the border'.¹⁰⁰⁹ Recently, historians have tended to interpret this as a reference

¹⁰⁰⁵ Cenred's father Cuthwine and his grandfather Leodwald, were alleged descendants of Ida. Rollason, D. W. 2004, 'Osred I (696x8-716)', in H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XLII (Oxford), pp. 60-1. On the Anglian genealogies, see: Dumville, D. 1976, 'The Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies and Regnal Lists', *Anglo-Saxon England* 5, 23-50.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Osric ruled from 718-729 but Bede gives very little information about his life: *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23, 5.24. Twelfth-century sources record that Osric was another of Aldfrith's sons (and therefore Osred's brother) but it is impossible to fully substantiate this claim. Craig, D. J. 2004, 'Osric (d. 729)', in H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XLII, p. 62.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Two brief references are made to Osred's death in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. See 5.22: 'Siquidem anno ab incarnatione Domini DCCXVI, quo Osredo occiso'. Also 5.24: 'Anno DCCXVI Osred rex Nordanhymbrorum interfectus'.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Writing in the twelfth century, William of Malmesbury implicated Cenred in a conspiracy to overthrow Osred: *Gesta regum Anglorum*, 53. This is probably conjecture on William's part.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ('D', 'E') s.a. 716. Whitelock, D., Douglas, D. C. and Tucker, S. I. 1961, trans. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Revised Translation* (London), p. 26.

to the border that Northumbria shared with the Picts.¹⁰¹⁰ Conflict between the kingdom of Northumbria and the Picts is known to have continued during Osred's reign and this is a plausible scenario to explain his demise.¹⁰¹¹

Nevertheless, it is possible that Osred was killed south of the border that Northumbria shared with Mercia. Mercia also experienced a change in kingship in the year 716 with Æthelbald, an extremely aggressive ruler, acceding to the throne.¹⁰¹² David Kirby describes this as 'a striking coincidence,' and he points out that Æthelbald's accession in Mercia, like that of Cenred in Northumbria, marked a break in the dynastic dominance of a kingdom by a single royal line.¹⁰¹³ It is unwise to speculate as to what Bede's opinion would have been towards the political changes in Northumbria and Mercia, though it is interesting to approach *In primam partem Samuhelis* with the unstable contemporary landscape in mind, especially considering that the conduct of a king is such a central theme in the biblical text being commented on. Whether this situation came about by accident or by design, it is intriguing that Bede was commenting upon 1 Samuel during a phase of Northumbrian history in which

¹⁰¹⁰ Higham, N. 1993, *The Kingdom of Northumbria, AD 350-1100* (Stroud), pp. 141-5; Rollason, D. W. 2004, 'Osred I'; Thacker, A. 2009, 'Bede, the Britons and the book of Samuel', p. 145.

¹⁰¹¹ Manuscripts 'D' and 'E' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* record that in 710 the ealdorman Beorhtfrith fought against the Picts between the river Avon and the river Carron. Whitelock, D. et al. 1961, trans. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 26. See also *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24.

¹⁰¹² Æthelbald became king of Mercia in 716 and soon began to exert influence beyond the borders of his kingdom. He assumed control over shipping tolls in London and extended his authority far and wide. Bede's statement in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23 is a striking testimony to the power that Æthelbald came to achieve: 'all these kingdoms and the other southern kingdoms which reach right up to the Humber, together with their various kings are subject to Æthelbald, king of Mercia (*Et hae omnes prouinciae ceteraeque australes ad confinium usque Humbrae fluminis cum suis quaeque regibus Merciorum regi Aedilbaldo subiectae sunt*)'. The Ismere diploma of 736, in which Æthelbald is styled 'king not only of the Mercians but also of all the provinces which are called by the general name South English (*rex non solum Marcersium sed et omnium provinciarum quae generale nomine Sutangli dicuntur*)' suggests that the assessment of Æthelbald's status in the *Historia* was not an exaggeration. The Ismere diploma is Sawyer number (S) 89. Sawyer, P. H. 1968, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (London). On Æthelbald's activities in London, see charters: S 86; S 87; S 88; S 91; S 98; S 103a and the comments of Kelly, S. 1992, 'Trading Privileges from Eighth-century England', *Early Medieval Europe* 1, 3-28.

¹⁰¹³ Kirby, D. P. 2000, *The Earliest English Kings* (London), p. 110. Æthelbald's accession broke several decades of dominance of the Mercian throne by King Penda and his descendants.

the contemporary change of king must have resonated with the biblical account of Saul's demise and David's accession.

Bede's perception of the ecclesiastical climate during the period of time in which he was working on 1 Samuel is more certain. *In primam partem Samuhelis* is littered with unfavourable comments about contemporary ecclesiastical malaise. At the very beginning of the work, Bede alludes to the present as a time of sin and he refers to the world's ever-increasing troubles.¹⁰¹⁴ Bede's exegetical interpretation of 1 Samuel frequently highlights problems that exist in the present, such as the prevalence of lazy teachers, or the hypocrisy characteristic of many members of the Church.¹⁰¹⁵ Contemporary faithlessness is a strong theme throughout the commentary, and Bede is particularly concerned about the prevalence of false brethren. The concerns about false brethren expressed within the Samuel commentary align well with the criticisms made retrospectively in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*.¹⁰¹⁶ In the letter to Ecgbert, Bede states that many of the problems which were besetting the kingdom in 734 had originated in Osred's reign.¹⁰¹⁷ Bede is highly critical of the false monasteries established by leading nobles and servants of the king, and the letter suggests that ecclesiastical standards had declined within Northumbria since the death of Aldfrith.

Ceolfrith's departure occurred amidst this climate of political instability and monastic decline. Having been appointed as the first abbot of Jarrow, Ceolfrith had assumed control of Monkwearmouth following the death of Benedict Biscop and

¹⁰¹⁴ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, prologue, lines 23-8.

¹⁰¹⁵ On Lazy teachers, see Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel 14.31-2: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 2250-75. On the self-interest of contemporary churchmen, see Bede's comments on 1 Samuel 2.13-14, where the selfishness of Eli's corrupt sons is interpreted as an allegory of the present Church: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 634-7.

¹⁰¹⁶ Similar concerns are evident in *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*. Israel being deprived of its arms makers and skilled workers (2 Kings 24.12) is interpreted as allegorically representing the negligence of the present era and the abundance of false brethren in the Church: *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, 30.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 13.

continued to preside over both foundations for almost three decades.¹⁰¹⁸ Ceolfrith had been a living embodiment of the unity of the twin foundations during his abbacy,¹⁰¹⁹ and it is hardly surprising that his departure for Rome was considered to be a major event by the members of the Wearmouth-Jarrow community (Bede deemed it significant enough to warrant an entry in the *Chronica maiora*).¹⁰²⁰ Ceolfrith's anonymous biographer offers a detailed account of Ceolfrith's final days at Wearmouth-Jarrow.¹⁰²¹ The anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* is considered to be earlier than Bede's own account in chapters sixteen to eighteen of the *Historia abbatum* (it is thought that Bede used the anonymous work in compiling these chapters).¹⁰²² Though the *Historia abbatum* and *Vita Ceolfridi* disagree on a few points of detail, the chronological frameworks proposed in either work largely complement each other. The texts also offer similar accounts of the motives behind Ceolfrith's departure and they give comparable insights into the reaction of the Wearmouth-Jarrow community.

It is tempting to suspect that the political upheaval in Northumbria in 716 and the departure of Ceolfrith were connected in some way (and indeed, many historians have been inclined to do so).¹⁰²³ As a longstanding abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow and a

¹⁰¹⁸ Ceolfrith's accession to the dual abbacy is commonly dated to 689. Lapidge, M., et al. 1999, *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 92.

¹⁰¹⁹ Goffart, W. 1988, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 278, note 197.

¹⁰²⁰ *De temporum ratione*, 66, s.a. 4671. The *Chronica maiora* draws upon chapters 32, 36, and 37 of the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* but there is no apparent dependency on Bede's own *Historia abbatum*: Levison, W. 1935, 'Bede as Historian', pp. 111-51, p. 129, note 1. See also: Whitelock, D. 1976, 'Bede his Teachers and Friends', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the 13th Century of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London), pp. 19-39, p. 35, note 7.

¹⁰²¹ Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 21-31. Ceolfrith's departure receives close attention in the *Vita Ceolfridi*. Goffart states that 56% of this text is concerned with the events surrounding Ceolfrith's departure for Rome and his final journey. Goffart, W. 1988, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 277, note 195.

¹⁰²² Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, p. xlvi, vol. II, pp. 358-9. McClure's suggestion that Bede was the author of the *Vita Ceolfridi* has not gained widespread acceptance (see McClure, J. 1984, 'Bede and the Life of Ceolfrid', *Peritia* 3, 71-84).

¹⁰²³ For example see: Goffart, W. 1988, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 274, 279-80; Wood, I. N. 1995, *Abbot Ceolfrid*, p. 12; Thacker, A. 2009, 'Bede, the Britons, and the Book of Samuel', p. 146.

man of noble birth,¹⁰²⁴ Ceolfrith would certainly have been affected by significant political changes in the kingdom. The *Historia abbatum* gives the impression that Ceolfrith was heavily involved in Northumbrian politics and it reveals that he was in the habit of exchanging monetary gifts with members of the local nobility.¹⁰²⁵ The date of Osred's death is unknown, though the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* reference to it occurring south of the border suggests that it may have happened in the 'campaigning season'.¹⁰²⁶ This could imply a date relatively soon before or shortly after the date on which Ceolfrith left Wearmouth-Jarrow to begin his journey to Rome (the fourth of June). The degree to which Ceolfrith's journey to Rome was pre-planned is an interconnected issue. The impression created in the *Historia abbatum* and the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* is that Ceolfrith was in a hurry to leave, further strengthening the likelihood that his decision to do so was in some way related to the political manoeuvrings of 716. Though the contemporary accounts refer to Ceolfrith's long-held desire to return to Rome before his death, they stress that the monastic community was shocked when he unexpectedly announced that he was leaving. The considerable preparation and planning necessary for such a journey is said to have been done in

¹⁰²⁴ Chapter 2 of the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* reveals that Ceolfrith was 'born of noble and religious parents (*nobilibus ... ac religiosis editus parentibus*)' and that his brother Cynefrith had ruled over the monastery of Gilling. Alan Thacker has recently pointed out that the names of Ceolfrith and his brother bear an alliterative resemblance to the names of the dynastic faction which achieved power in 716 (i.e. Cenred and his brother Ceolwulf). Thacker, A. 2006, 'Ordering of Understanding', pp. 39-40.

¹⁰²⁵ *Historia abbatum*, 17. Bede's account contains the interesting detail that Ceolfrith insisted upon leaving without seeing any members of the local nobility (*viris principalibus*), all of whom are said to have held him in high esteem. It is unclear what significance, if any, should be attached to this. It may be that the motives given by Bede (that Ceolfrith wished to make haste because he sensed that death was imminent, and he did not wish to accept a monetary gift which he could not repay) are accurate. Nevertheless, Bede's comment confirms that Ceolfrith regularly mixed with and exchanged gifts with the local nobility. Compare: Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 22.

¹⁰²⁶ On 'campaigning seasons', see: Wood, S. 1983, 'Bede's Northumbrian Dates Again', *The English Historical Review* 98, 280-96. At 295, Wood points out that of the five seventh-century Northumbrian kings that we have obituary details for, Oswy (who died in bed) died in February, but those who fell in battle or due to treachery died in May, August or October.

secret, with Ceolfrith hiding his intentions from the community until just three days before he left.¹⁰²⁷

Bede and the anonymous author both stress that Ceolfrith's departure caused widespread sorrow amongst the monks of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow.¹⁰²⁸ In a poignant chapter, the anonymous biographer describes the moment at which Ceolfrith left Monkwearmouth after giving his final sermon. Deacons carried lighted candles and a gold cross, whilst sad songs chanted by the monks created a funereal atmosphere as Ceolfrith boarded a ship to cross the River Wear and begin his journey to Rome.¹⁰²⁹ Plummer praised the literary quality of the anonymous account, preferring it to the version in Bede's *Historia abbatum*.¹⁰³⁰ It is fair to say that the anonymous writers' account of Ceolfrith's departure has a greater impact upon the reader. This is probably because the *Historia abbatum* was written some time after the event (in contrast to the *Vita Ceolfridi*, which one suspects was composed soon after news of Ceolfrith's death reached Wearmouth-Jarrow in late 716 or early 717).¹⁰³¹

A more personal record of the impact that Ceolfrith's departure had upon Bede is offered in the prologue to book four of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. It is worth reproducing these important words, in which Bede addresses Bishop Acca, in full:

¹⁰²⁷ Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 16-17. Compare: Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 22-3. In his recent Jarrow lecture, Richard Morris proposes that a journey to Rome from Wearmouth-Jarrow had been planned for some time. Morris suggests that Ceolfrith made a last minute decision to join it. Morris, R. K. 2004, *Journeys from Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow), pp. 19-23.

¹⁰²⁸ Both accounts are littered with words associated with grief and distress. See Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 23-8 and *Historia abbatum*, 17-19 for multiple uses of words such as 'dolor', 'gemitus', 'singultus' and 'luctus'. The letter sent by Ceolfrith's successor Hwætberht to Pope Gregory II refers to the community's 'intense sorrow, groaning, grief and tears (... *maximo nostro dolore, gemitu, luctu, ac prosecutione lacrimarum*)'. Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 30; Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 19.

¹⁰²⁹ Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 26. Compare: Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 17.

¹⁰³⁰ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. II, p. 367.

¹⁰³¹ The *terminus ante quem* for the date of the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* is 725 (it was used by Bede in the *Chronica maiora*). The work was probably composed shortly after news of Ceolfrith's death (which occurred on the twenty-fifth of September 716) reached Wearmouth-Jarrow. Some of the monks who had accompanied Ceolfrith returned to Wearmouth-Jarrow immediately after he had been buried: Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 37.

Having completed the third book of the commentary on Samuel, I thought that I would rest a while, and, after recovering in that way my delight in study and writing, proceed to take in hand the fourth. But that rest, if sudden anguish of mind can be called rest, has turned out much longer than I had intended owing to the sudden change of circumstances brought about by the departure of my most reverend abbot; who, after long devotion to the care of his monastery, suddenly determined to go to Rome, and to breathe his last breath amid the localities sanctified by the bodies of the blessed apostles and martyrs of Christ, thus causing no little consternation to those committed to his charge, the greater because it was unexpected. But just as God, when He removed the aged Moses, appointed Joshua to the leadership, and ordained Eleazar to the priesthood in place of his father Aaron, so in the place of the aged Ceolfred, who was hastening to the sacred threshold of the apostles, He ordained the younger Hwætberht, who by his love and zeal for piety had long won for himself the name of Eusebius; and after election by the brethren, confirmed that appointment by His blessing conferred by thy ministry, dearest bishop. And now with the return of quieter times there returns to me the leisure and delight for searching out the wondrous things of Holy Scripture carefully and with my whole soul.¹⁰³²

¹⁰³² Bede, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1-22: 'Tertio in beatum Samuelem completo uolumine, putabam me aliquandiu reparata per quietem meditandi uel scribendi uoluptate, sic demum ad inchoationem quarti manum esse missurum. Uerum haec eadem mihi quies, si tamen quies dicenda est inopinata mentis anxietas, prolixior multo quam decreueram, noua circumstantium rerum mutatione prouenit, maxime discessu abbatis mei reuerendissimi, qui post longam monasterialis curae obseruantiam, subitus Romam adire, atque inter loca beatorum apostolorum ac martyrum Christi corporibus sacra, extremum senex halitum reddere disponendo, non parua commissorum sibi animos, et eo maiore, quo improuisa conturbatione stupefecit. Sed qui Moysi longaeuo ab humanis rebus tollendo Iesum Naue in ducatum, qui Eleazarum in sacerdotium Aaron patri substituit, ipse prouecto aetate Ceolfrido, ad beatorum apostolorum limina sancta properanti, Huertbertum iuuenem, cui amor studiumque pietatis iam olim Eusebii cognomen indidit, ad regendas sacerdotio ducatuque spirituali fidelium animas abbatis uice substituit. Eiusdemque substitutionis gradum post electionem fraternam sua per tuum, dilectissime Antistes, officium benedictione confirmauit. Redeunte temporum statu tranquilliore, redit et mihi otium pariter ac delectatio mirabilia scripturae sanctae tota anima, solerti intentione scrutandi'. Text and translation cited from: Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, pp. xv-xvi.

This passage offers a rare insight into Bede's personal character and it confirms that the departure of Ceolfrith caused him considerable sorrow. Ceolfrith had been abbot for Bede's entire adult life and his prosperous abbacy had provided conditions in which Bede had been able to flourish.¹⁰³³ In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede attests to the important role that Ceolfrith played in his education and his elevation to the priesthood.¹⁰³⁴ With the exception of Walter Goffart, most historians have been keen to stress that Bede felt a strong personal attachment to Ceolfrith, something certainly suggested by the reference to his 'sudden anguish of mind (*inopinata mentis anxietas*)' in the text cited above.¹⁰³⁵

One final significant event from the year 716 remains to be considered. Following missionary work by an English priest named Ecgberht, the first observance of the Roman Easter on Iona occurred in this year.¹⁰³⁶ Ceolfrith's departure could well have been connected with this event; perhaps he set off to Rome to deliver news of this important milestone to the Pope. After many years of resistance, the adoption of Roman ecclesiastical customs on Iona would have seemed like a momentous occurrence to Bede. As well as referring to it in three separate chapters of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede mentions Ecgberht's achievement in the *Chronica maiora*.¹⁰³⁷ The *Chronica maiora* is structured around an *annus mundi* system of dating, but the importance of Ecgberht's missionary work is underlined by a rare reference to an *annus domini*.¹⁰³⁸

¹⁰³³ Ceolfrith became joint abbot of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow in 689, when Bede was approximately 15 years old.

¹⁰³⁴ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24.

¹⁰³⁵ Goffart, W. 1988, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 278, note 200. A more traditional appraisal of the warmth that Bede felt for Ceolfrith is offered by Blair, P. H. 1970, *World of Bede*, p. 193.

¹⁰³⁶ The Ecgberht in question died in 729 and should not be confused with Ecgberht, bishop of York, who was the recipient of Bede's *Epistola* in 734.

¹⁰³⁷ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.4; 5.22; 5.23; *De temporum ratione*, 66, s.a. 4670.

¹⁰³⁸ The only other event to be explicitly dated relative to the Incarnation in the *Chronica maiora* is the composition of Dionysius's paschal tables: *De temporum ratione*, 66, s.a. 4518.

Ecgberht's success would have resonated strongly with Bede as he worked on *In primam partem Samuhelis* in 716. Much of the commentary is concerned with salvation history, particularly the reciprocal relationship between the Jews and Gentiles. The relationship between the monks of Iona and the English nation can be thought of in a similar context. The English owed a great debt to the missionary endeavours that originated from Iona in the seventh century (Northumbrian ecclesiastics would have been acutely aware of this debt).¹⁰³⁹ In 716, the English Church was able to bring Iona into harmony with the established traditions of the Catholic Church. The mutually beneficial nature of this relationship was not lost on Bede:

It is clear that this happened by a wonderful dispensation of divine mercy, since that race had willingly and ungrudgingly taken pains to communicate its own knowledge and understanding of God to the English nation; and now, through the English nation, they are brought to a more perfect way of life in matters wherein they were lacking.¹⁰⁴⁰

From Bede's perspective, Ecgberht had returned knowledge and understanding to an ecclesiastical community that had formerly undertaken important missionary work amongst the English. The conformity of Iona to Roman custom represented an important milestone in salvation history and it had important eschatological

¹⁰³⁹ On the Northumbrian debt to the Irish, see: Hughes, K. 1971, 'Evidence for Contacts Between the Churches of the Irish and the English from the Synod of Whitby to the Viking Age', in P. Clemoes, and K. Hughes (eds.), *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (Cambridge), pp. 49-67; Bieler, L. 1976, 'Ireland's Contribution to the Culture of Northumbria', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the 13th Century of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London), pp. 210-28; Bonner, G. 1979, 'Ireland and Rome: The Double Inheritance of Northumbria', in M. H. King and W. M. Stevens (eds.), *Saints, Scholars, and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones*, vol. I (Collegeville), pp. 101-16.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.22: 'Quod mira diuinae constat factum dispensatione pietatis, ut quoniam gens illa quam nouerat scientiam diuinae cognitionis libenter ac sine inuidia populis Anglorum communicare curauit, ipsa quoque postmodum per gentem Anglorum in eis quae minus habuerat ad perfectam vivendi normam perueniret'. Translation cited from: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 554-5.

connotations. Through Ecgberht's missionary endeavours, the observance of Catholic ecclesiastical custom had reached a new north-western frontier. The universal church had progressed one stage further in the divine plan for true faith to spread to the ends of the earth. The observance of the Roman Easter on Iona in 716 represented an act of union that could be seen to foreshadow the eschatological reconciliation of the Jews and Gentiles.

Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel must be considered in relation to the political and ecclesiastical events of the year 716. Of all of the changes happening in Northumbria at this time, the departure of Abbot Ceolfrith appears to have had a particularly strong impact upon Bede. Bede's 'sudden anguish of mind', experienced immediately prior to the composition of book four of the commentary, must be kept in mind when studying the latter portions of this text. Political turmoil, ecclesiastical controversy and the spreading of the church to the ends of the earth are all factors that had a decisive impact upon the sharpening of Gregory the Great's eschatological perspective. It is now necessary to consider whether or not the same can be said about Bede.

Eschatological thought in Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel: books 1-2

Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel is divided into four books of roughly equal length, each containing an interpretation of seven, eight or nine chapters of the Old Testament text.¹⁰⁴¹ It is generally assumed that Bede produced his scriptural commentaries by working forwards through the biblical text chapter by chapter. In the case of *In primam partem Samuhelis* this method was almost certainly followed; the

¹⁰⁴¹ Book 1 of Bede's commentary covers chapters 1-7 of 1 Samuel. Book 2 deals with chapters 8-15, book 3 concerns 16-23 and chapters 23 to 31 are dealt with in book 4. For a brief summary of the major theme of each book, see: Brown, G. H. 2006, 'Bede's Neglected Commentary on Samuel', p. 127.

four prologues strongly suggest that each of the four books were composed in consecutive order.¹⁰⁴² The structure of *In primam partem Samuhelis* must have been carefully planned. Passages from 1 Samuel are grouped together to form distinct thematic units.¹⁰⁴³ The overarching subject which unifies Bede's interpretation of a group of verses is always set out in a short introductory passage immediately before the first verse of a thematic unit.¹⁰⁴⁴ The thematic units employed throughout *In primam partem Samuhelis* represent a stylistic development from Bede's earlier exegetical works.¹⁰⁴⁵ Bede uses sustained metaphors to interpret large sections of interrelated biblical text. This results in a succession of complex allegorical interpretations which often extend over several pages of the modern Latin edition. The exposition of any individual verse must be considered within the wider context of its thematic unit, otherwise it can be extremely difficult to interpret Bede's intended meaning correctly.

The commentary on 1 Samuel contains a substantial amount of eschatological material. All familiar aspects of Bede's eschatological thought are present, such as the world ages framework, the time of Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews and the day of judgement. The eschatological interpretations in the Samuel commentary were not inspired by an eschatological source text; the book of 1 Samuel does not contain any

¹⁰⁴² The prologue to book 4, which describes the interruption in study, makes it clear that book 3 was already finished: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1-28. Similarly, the prologue to book 3 summarises the topics which had already been discussed in books 1 and 2: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 1-25.

¹⁰⁴³ For example, Bede groups each of the 15 verses of 1 Samuel, chapter 11 together to offer sustained allegorical commentary upon the subject of heresy. 1 Samuel 11 relates Saul's victory over the Ammonites. For Bede, Nahash the Ammonite's attack represents the heretics who perennially wage war against the Church. Accordingly, Saul's victory demonstrates that the Church will always emerge triumphant in its struggle: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1050-276.

¹⁰⁴⁴ For example, see the summary passage that introduces Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel 11: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, 1050-4.

¹⁰⁴⁵ The vast majority of *Expositio Apocalypseos* is made up of short comments upon individual verses, with the interpretation of one not necessarily being interdependent on the next. The notable exceptions to this are the lengthy discussions of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 7.5-8) and the precious stones (Revelation 21.19-20). This stylistic format, known as '*commaticum*', is also employed in *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*.

overtly eschatological material, aside from a solitary reference to the Lord's judgement. This passage, which Bede duly interprets as an allusion to the final judgement of mankind, features in a prophetic prayer attributed to Hannah (Samuel's mother).¹⁰⁴⁶ Though caution must be exercised concerning the extent to which *In primam partem Samuhelis* draws upon earlier authorities (there is a great amount of research still to be done on this topic) it seems that Bede had relatively few patristic sources at his disposal when compiling this text.¹⁰⁴⁷ Where the commentary contains an eschatological interpretation, it can usually be assumed that this reflects Bede's own perspective on the biblical text, as opposed to an idea derived from an earlier source.

The most striking examples of eschatological material in books one and two of the Samuel commentary are found in Bede's comments regarding the loss and recovery of the ark (1 Samuel 4-6). Commenting upon 1 Samuel 4.21, Bede states that Israel's loss of the ark to the Philistines represents God's preordained pattern for salvation:

The glory of faith has been transferred from Israel to the Gentiles,
from the Synagogue to the Church. But at the end of the world (*in fine mundi*) it will be returned to Israel.¹⁰⁴⁸

This comment follows an interpretation of the Hebrew name Ichabod, meaning 'woe to glory' or 'fallen from glory'. These terms are said to be appropriate labels for the Jews of the present day.¹⁰⁴⁹ When the ark is returned to Israel in chapter six, Bede takes up the theme of salvation in earnest, making it the unifying concept that links his

¹⁰⁴⁶ 1 Samuel 2.10: 'Those who oppose the Lord will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed'. Bede interprets this passage as a reference to the last judgement, but he is keen to stress that it can also be related to the present day, in which the Lord thunders to destroy the stubbornness of the corrupt: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 565-71.

¹⁰⁴⁷ See the discussion above, pp. 260-261.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1448-50: 'Translata est autem gloria fidei de israhel ad gentes de sinagoga ad ecclesiam sed in fine mundi reuertetur ad israhel'.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1446-8.

interpretation of several consecutive verses.¹⁰⁵⁰ The introductory preface to this thematic section reads as follows:

This reading figuratively shows that the faith of the Gospel, which is now celebrated amongst the Gentile nations, is going to be returned to the remnants of Israel who are to be saved at the end of the world (*in fine mundi*).¹⁰⁵¹

This section of Bede's commentary touches upon many standard aspects of his eschatological thought. Bede's exposition of 1 Samuel 6.14 ('and there was a great stone, and they cut in pieces the wood of the cart, and laid the cows upon it a holocaust to the Lord') offers a suitable example. This verse can be interpreted as a general reference to martyrdom. The pieces of wood are said to represent the persecution of the church, the sacrificed cows symbolise martyrs such as Stephen, James, and countless others from throughout history.¹⁰⁵² Bede also offers an eschatological reading of this verse, interpreting it as an allegory for Antichrist's persecution. The two cows represent the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who are going to reveal the grace of faith to the Jews and suffer death at the hands of Antichrist in the final battle of mankind.¹⁰⁵³ Likewise, the words spoken by the messengers of Beth Shemesh upon returning the ark are equated with dialogue to be spoken by the Jews when they are reconciled to the faith at the end of the world (*in fine mundi*).¹⁰⁵⁴

Following two references to Antichrist in the exposition of the return of the ark, Bede does not refer to Antichrist again until deep into book two of the commentary.

¹⁰⁵⁰ The thematic section spans Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel 6.2 to 7.1: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1639-2039.

¹⁰⁵¹ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1641-3: 'Haec lectio typice docet fidem euangelii quae nunc in gentibus celebratur ad saluandas in fine mundi reliquias israhel esse reuersuram'. On the phrase 'remnants of Israel', see note 1062 below.

¹⁰⁵² *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1781-6.

¹⁰⁵³ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1786-92.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1960-7.

Commenting upon a warning issued by Samuel to the people of Israel, Bede cites words spoken by Jesus in the Gospel of John and delivers a powerful moral message to the reader concerning the conduct of a king and his people.¹⁰⁵⁵ They, like Jesus, must keep the Lord's commandments and observe His warnings. If not, he who behaves like Antichrist will share in his fate, eternal perdition.¹⁰⁵⁶ Bede's commentary on Samuel's speech is formed in long, elaborate sentences. It can be interpreted as a comment upon the present-day situation in the Northumbrian kingdom.¹⁰⁵⁷ Bede suggests that Samuel's words do not just refer to those who will serve Antichrist at the end of the world. Samuel's message is equally applicable to those committing evil deeds in the present.¹⁰⁵⁸ Bede restates the pericope from 1 Samuel and interjects his own comment, in order to drive home his moral message:

*If you fear the Lord and serve him, then both you, and the king who reigns over you, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, will be followers of the Lord God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king Antichrist, for then you will have him as a king, will perish together.*¹⁰⁵⁹

Where books one and two of the Samuel commentary are concerned, these references to Antichrist must be considered exceptional. There is relatively little eschatological material in the earlier parts of *In primam partem Samuhelis*, and the passages that do allude to eschatological themes tend to be isolated. The only significant exception to

¹⁰⁵⁵ Bede cites an excerpt from John 15.10. *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1343-4.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1337-49.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Compare *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1279-84 and the comments of Thacker, A. 2009, 'Bede, the Britons and the book of Samuel', p. 140.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, lines 1349-53.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1354-8: '*Si timueritis dominum et seruieritis ei, eritis uos et rex qui imperat uobis, id est dominus iesus christus, sequentes dominum deum patrem eiusdem dei et domini nostri iesu christi, Quod si perseueraueritis in malitia et uos et rex uester antichristus, tunc enim illum habebitis regem, pariter peribitis*'.

this is the interpretation of the return of the ark in book one (on no other occasion in the commentary's first two books does eschatological material serve as the unifying concept for one of the text's thematic units). Bede makes infrequent references to Antichrist and occasional allusions to judgement day,¹⁰⁶⁰ but on the whole the eschatological content of books one and two is unremarkable.

Eschatological thought in Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel: books 3-4

A gradual sharpening of Bede's eschatological perspective is evident throughout book three of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. Several interpretations explore the judgement day theme (the passage that prompted Acca's question and Bede's response in *De eo quod Isaiah ait* being a noteworthy example).¹⁰⁶¹ Elsewhere in book three, Bede refers to the 'remnants of Israel (*reliquiae Israhel*)', expressing hope that the Jews will be reunited with the Church at the end of time.¹⁰⁶² Several successive references to the end of time create the impression that eschatological ideas were becoming more and more prominent in Bede's mind as his work on book three progressed. For example, Bede refers to the three-fold enemy (heathens, heretics and Jews) which will continue to threaten the Church 'until the end of the present age (*usque ad terminum saeculi praesentis*)'.¹⁰⁶³ Comparable references are made using constructions such as '*usque ad huius saeculi terminum*,' '*usque ad finem saeculi*,' '*usque in finem saeculi*' and '*usque*

¹⁰⁶⁰ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 566-9; 2, lines 226-30; 484-91; 1204-6.

¹⁰⁶¹ The interpretation that inspired Acca's question is *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 998-1013. Several other passages in book 3 concern the judgement day theme: lines 1284-7; 1580-5; 1891-6.

¹⁰⁶² See *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2701-9 and lines 2887-92. Compare *In primam partem Samuhelis*, book 1, lines 1641-3 and 1690-7. The term 'remnants of Israel' ultimately derives from Isaiah 10.21-2. The theme of the 'remnant' in Latin Christian exegesis has been the subject of a recent study by Megier, E. 2008, 'Jewish Converts in the Early Church and Latin Christian Exegetes of Isaiah, c. 400-1150', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 59, 1-28.

¹⁰⁶³ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 515-8.

ad complenda tempora'.¹⁰⁶⁴ These allusions to the end of the world are accompanied by frequent citations from prophetic books of the Bible. Towards the end of book three, Bede draws upon end-time prophecies from Old Testament texts such as Hosea and Isaiah.¹⁰⁶⁵

The gradual sharpening of Bede's eschatological perspective that occurs throughout the course of book three is fully realised in an eschatological flourish at the very end of the book. The interpretation of the final thematic section of book three is a sustained eschatological analysis of 1 Samuel 22.6-23. This thematic unit, from line 2905 to the end of the book, concerns the divine plan for salvation. In the short preface to this group of verses, Bede states that this section of text figuratively represents the return of the Jews to the faith at the end of time and the tribulations of Antichrist.¹⁰⁶⁶ This line of interpretation is immediately evident in Bede's exposition of the first verse of the thematic section ('now Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered').¹⁰⁶⁷ Bede comments:

Near the end of the world (*circa finem mundi*), after a long denial, the treacherous and impious Jews are going to hear that Jesus Christ is to be praised, believed and acknowledged amongst themselves.¹⁰⁶⁸

¹⁰⁶⁴ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 647-8 ('*usque ad huius saeculi terminum*'); 755 ('*usque ad finem saeculi*'); 1984 ('*usque in finem saeculi*'); 2882-3 ('*usque ad complenda tempora*'). See also Bede's reference to the world enduring to its end through six ages, lines 495-6.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Bede cites a long passage from Hosea in his interpretation of 1 Samuel 22.5: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2885-904. Isaiah 2.3 is drawn upon for the interpretation of 1 Samuel 22.3: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2877-8.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2908-14: 'Haec lectio typice signat reuersa in fine saeculi ad fidem iudaea quid pressurarum sit a suis passura contribulibus quid pro eiusdem fidei etiam inter antichristi tribulationes constantia sit a domino immo etiam cum domino perpetuae nactura mercedis'.

¹⁰⁶⁷ 1 Samuel 22.6.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2914-7: 'Audituri sunt circa finem mundi infideles et impii iudaei post longam negationem praedicari credi et confiteri iesum christum inter se'.

The passage continues, making reference to Antichrist's persecution and the role that Enoch and Elijah will play in preaching to the Jews.¹⁰⁶⁹ The eschatological dimension of the divine plan for salvation becomes the driving force behind Bede's interpretation of a series of consecutive verses from chapter twenty-two of 1 Samuel. From line 2905 to the end of book three, eschatological ideas dominate Bede's exposition of 1 Samuel in a way not paralleled in the earlier parts of the text.

The results of a search performed with the CETEDOC database provide a convenient way to demonstrate the new-found intensity of eschatological material in this part of Bede's commentary. The table below shows how often Bede uses various grammatical constructions of the term '*Antichristus*' in the final part of book three (from line 2905 to the end of the book). This figure is compared with the number of references to Antichrist in books one, two and the remainder of book three:

Commentary Section	' <i>Antichristus</i> ' references ¹⁰⁷⁰	Number of lines (CCSL vol. 119)	Frequency of Antichrist references
Whole of Book 1	2	2336 lines	1 every 1168 lines
Whole of Book 2	3	2883 lines	1 every 961 lines
Book 3 – up to line 2905	0	2905 lines	0 in 2905 lines
Book 3 lines 2905 –3158 (end)	6	253 lines	1 every 42 lines

Antichrist references in Bede's *In primam partem Samuhelis*, books 1-3

There are a number of potential problems in using computer-generated data such as this to illustrate textual patterns (for example, Antichrist could be alluded to indirectly using words other than '*Antichristus*'). Nevertheless, the general impression created by the

¹⁰⁶⁹ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2917-20: 'Nec dubium est quin ubi praedicantibus enoch et helia ceteris que qui tunc futuri sunt uerbi ministris saluator apparuerit cordi iudaeorum non mora etiam antichristi sit persecutio secutura'.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Figures based upon a computerised search performed with the CETEDOC Library of Christian Latin Texts, version 6 (2005) using the search term 'antichrist*'.

data presented in the table above is valid, and it provides an accurate representation of the density of eschatological material at the end of book three relative to the earlier parts of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. References to Antichrist increase considerably in the final 250 lines of book three. In the whole of books one to three before line 2905, Bede had made just five Antichrist references in over 8000 lines of text, a reference approximately once every 1600 lines of the modern Corpus Christianorum Series Latina edition. There is a considerable change in emphasis in the final 253 lines of book three, with Bede making an ‘*Antichristus*’ reference once every forty-two lines.

The section of text from line 2905 to the end of book three contains Bede’s commentary upon the actions of Doeg the Edomite, one of Saul’s chief servants. Fleeing from Saul, David goes to Nob to meet with Ahimelech the high priest of Israel, a meeting at which Doeg is present.¹⁰⁷¹ In chapter twenty-two of 1 Samuel, Doeg reveals what he had witnessed in Nob and accuses Ahimelech of disloyalty to Saul. Saul subsequently seeks vengeance against Ahimelech and his company of priests, ordering Doeg to slaughter eighty-five men. Drawing upon Jerome’s *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, Bede explains that the name ‘Doeg’ means ‘movement (*motus*)’ or ‘troubled (*sollicitus*)’ and that ‘Edomite’ means ‘blood-stained (*sanguineus*)’.¹⁰⁷² This is an apt name, as Doeg’s actions signify persecution and the shedding of innocent blood.¹⁰⁷³ Earlier in book three of the Samuel commentary, Bede had referred to Doeg as a type for Judas, his betrayal of David representing Judas’s betrayal of the Lord.¹⁰⁷⁴ Now, at the end of book three, Doeg the Edomite assumes eschatological significance. The slaying of the eighty-five priests is seen to represent

¹⁰⁷¹ 1 Samuel 21.7.

¹⁰⁷² *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2967-8; Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, 35, line 12.

¹⁰⁷³ See Bede’s commentary on 1 Samuel 22.9-10: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2970-7.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2471-5; 2599-619.

the slaughter which is to follow in the time of Antichrist, the eighty-five priests being symbolic of those who are going to die in the final persecution:

The eighty-five men slaughtered on that day undoubtedly signify the brave, who will come out of the great tribulation and wash their robes in the blood of the lamb having been made perfect through works and the spiritual observation of the gospel and law together.¹⁰⁷⁵

Here Bede makes a clear allusion to Revelation 7.14: ‘these are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’. The eschatological interpretation of this section of 1 Samuel continues. Abiathar is the only survivor of Doeg’s savage attack and his name is aptly translated to mean ‘remaining father (*pater superfluus*)’.¹⁰⁷⁶ Abiathar represents ‘every confessor of Christ who is able to survive that most savage persecution’.¹⁰⁷⁷

It is striking that the final section of book three offers a sustained eschatological interpretation of the scriptural text under examination. The preface to book four of *In primam partem Samuhelis* reveals that Bede must have been working on this part of the commentary immediately prior to the break in study caused by the departure of Ceolfrith for Rome. It is important to acknowledge that Bede was not the first exegete to attach eschatological significance to Doeg the Edomite and his actions. Cassiodorus suggests that Doeg was a precursor of Antichrist in *Expositio Psalmorum*, a source

¹⁰⁷⁵ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 3070-4: ‘Octoginta quinque viri trucidati in die illo significant eos qui venient de tribulatione magna et lavabunt stolas suas in sanguine agni fortes nimirum operibus, et evangelii pariter ac legis spiritali observatione perfectos’.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 3110-2; Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, 34, line 21.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 3106-10: ‘... omnes qui persecutioni illi saeuissimae superesse potuerint christi confessores exprimit’.

which was known to Bede in its entirety.¹⁰⁷⁸ Though no analogous passages from *Expositio Psalmorum* are listed in the index of sources in the modern Latin edition of *In primam partem Samuhelis*, Cassiodorus's work would have been a useful point of reference for Bede whilst he was working on 1 Samuel.¹⁰⁷⁹ It is possible that Bede's eschatological interpretation of the Doeg material was to some extent inspired by Cassiodorus's commentary on Psalm 51.¹⁰⁸⁰ However, the two interpretations differ considerably in terms of force and emphasis, suggesting that the increase in eschatological material which is evident towards the end of book three of the Samuel commentary cannot be explained by patristic tradition alone.¹⁰⁸¹

Bede's sharpened eschatological perspective is sustained in the early part of book four, the section of the text which was composed immediately after the break in study. Lawrence T. Martin has described Bede's exegetical method as one of 'concordance exegesis'. That is, Bede cites relevant scriptural passages to support the interpretation of whatever pericope he is commenting on, with appropriate passages

¹⁰⁷⁸ Cassiodorus's text is listed in Laistner's catalogue of works known to Bede: Laistner, M. L. W. 1935, 'Library of the Venerable Bede', pp. 237-66. An abbreviated version of *Expositio Psalmorum* circulated in early-medieval Northumbria, but Bede had access to a complete version of the text: Bailey, R. N. 1983, 'Bede's Text of Cassiodorus' Commentary on the Psalms', *Journal of Theological Studies* 34, 189-93. See also: Meyvaert, P. 1996, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the *Codex Amiatinus*', 831, and Meyvaert, P. 1997, 'The Date of Bede's *Thirty Questions on Kings*', p. 268. Bede refers to *Expositio Psalmorum* in *De Tabernaculo*, 2, lines 1563-70 and *De Templo*, 2, lines 28-40.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Many of the Psalms were believed to have been written by David. As such, they contain parallel material relevant to 1 Samuel. Bede regularly offers comment upon the Psalms throughout the course of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. For example, see Bede's exposition of 1 Samuel 24.21-3, which draws heavily upon Psalm 57: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 724-93.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Psalm 51 (52 in the New International Version) concerns the actions of Doeg the Edomite. It is entitled 'when Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him 'David has gone to the house of Ahimelech'. For Cassiodorus's exposition of this Psalm, consult the edition by Adriaen, M. *Expositio Psalmorum*, CCSL 97, 98 (Turnhout, 1958).

¹⁰⁸¹ Cassiodorus employs Doeg as a straightforward type for and precursor of Antichrist: *Expositio Psalmorum*, 51. Bede's commentary on 1 Samuel 22.6-23 constructs a more complex analogy. Bede links Doeg's betrayal of Saul to Judas's betrayal of Jesus and the betrayal of the Church by false brethren. The focus on false brethren gives Bede's commentary a forceful relevance for the present. Bede seamlessly links present-day ecclesiastical problems to the events of the past and eschatological events of the future.

being drawn from an extensive matrix of memorised biblical citations.¹⁰⁸² Many of the citations employed by Bede in his exposition of chapter twenty-three of 1 Samuel are from eschatological sections of the Bible, indicating that eschatological scriptural passages were at the forefront of his mind whilst he was working on this section of the commentary. For example, Bede draws upon the following verse from the Gospel of Matthew twice in quick succession: ‘And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world’.¹⁰⁸³ Bede also draws upon prophetic parts of the Old Testament, citing verses from the Psalms and the book of Isaiah.¹⁰⁸⁴

The sections of the Samuel commentary composed immediately before and immediately after the break in study display great awareness of the threats facing the Church. This theme runs through all four books of *In primam partem Samuhelis*, but as Alan Thacker points out, the themes of treachery and betrayal are presented ‘with particular stridency and urgency’ in these parts of the commentary.¹⁰⁸⁵ Bede attests to the considerable damage caused by internal treachery at the end of book three, and again at the beginning of book four.¹⁰⁸⁶ Thacker highlights a particularly forceful passage early in book four which concerns David’s departure from Keilah (1 Samuel 23.13). Fearing that he would be betrayed into the hands of Saul, David fled after saving Keilah from Philistine occupation. The threat faced by David is related to the threat posed by false brethren, something that was evidently causing Bede considerable

¹⁰⁸² See Martin’s comments in the introduction to his translated edition of Bede’s commentary on Acts: Martin, L. T. 1989, trans. *Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, pp. xxix-xxx. Martin derives the phrase ‘concordance exegesis’ from Jean Leclercq.

¹⁰⁸³ Matthew 28.20. In *primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 216-7; 266. The citation of Matthew 28.20 used above follows the Douay-Rheims translation.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Bede draws upon Psalm 96 in his exposition of 1 Samuel 23.15; Isaiah 2.2 is cited in the commentary on 1 Samuel 23.25-6. In *primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, 235-6; 382-3.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Thacker, A. 2009, ‘Bede, the Britons and the book of Samuel’, p. 141.

¹⁰⁸⁶ In *primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2977-9; 4, lines 279-98.

distress.¹⁰⁸⁷ Thacker interprets Bede's words as a comment on the prevalence of false brethren in the present day, but the passage in question can also be read in an eschatological context.¹⁰⁸⁸

Soon after the passage that concerns David's departure from Keilah, Bede constructs a striking eschatological interpretation of 1 Samuel 23.26-8. These verses relate how Saul pursued David in the Desert of Maon, eventually tracking him down and encircling him. Saul was forced to spare David when he left to repel an attack by the Philistines, and as a result, the place where these events occurred assumed the name 'rock of division'. Bede's commentary on this section of text relates the threat faced by David to the threats faced by the present Church, the condition of which is said to be worsening day by day.¹⁰⁸⁹ Bede comments:

... for the most part I have seen that precisely now the times are approaching which were once foretold, in which with iniquity abounding, the charity of many is growing cold.¹⁰⁹⁰

Bede is alluding to an eschatological prophecy from the Olivet discourse which is recorded in chapter twenty-four of the Gospel of Matthew: 'and because iniquity will

¹⁰⁸⁷ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 170-80: 'Vae autem animae illi uae ciuitati quam sermo Dei relinquens hue illucque uagatur incertus ubi cuiusue pectore sedem requiemque capessat, Vulpes, inquiens, habent foueas et uolucres caeli nidos, filius autem hominis non habet ubi caput reclinet, et hoc est quod alibi dicit, Verum tamen filius hominis ueniens putas inueniet fidem. in terra? Sane notandum quod haec generaliter ad omne tempus ecclesiae cui numquam falsi fratres desunt sed specialiter ad nouissima tempora quibus amplius abundabunt possunt typice referri quorum levitate ac perfidiae ipsum etiam nomen Ceilae convenit'.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Thacker translates '*novissima tempora*' as 'the most recent times' ('Bede, the Britons and the book of Samuel', pp. 141-2). Alternatively, in relation to time, the superlative form '*novissima*' can be translated as 'final', or 'very last', allowing this passage to be read in an eschatological context. Rendering '*novissima tempora*' as 'very last times', would fit the future tense of the verb *abundabunt* (line 179). An eschatological reading of this passage would also align well with several other occasions in Bede's exegetical works where Luke 18.8 (the second verse cited by Bede in this extract) is employed in an eschatological context. In his Jarrow Lecture, Markus suggests that this passage can be interpreted eschatologically: Markus, R. A. 1975, *Bede and Ecclesiastical Historiography*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 406-10.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 426-8: '... maxima in parte uiderim iam iamque instare tempora quae olim praedicta sunt in quibus abundante iniquitate refrigescat caritas multorum'.

abound, the charity of many will grow cold'.¹⁰⁹¹ The first-person verb ('*viderim*') adds force and emphasis to Bede's statement.¹⁰⁹² In Bede's view, the increase of wickedness and lack of charity in the present can be equated with the signs of the end of the age that were foretold in the New Testament.

William D. McCready comments upon this passage, describing it as 'one of the most eschatologically charged of Bede's statements', but McCready ultimately sees it as expressing a sentiment rarely paralleled in Bede's wider body of work. McCready plays down the importance of this passage. He suggests that in other exegetical works, Bede states that worse sins will occur in the future.¹⁰⁹³ Certainly, Bede's comments do not suggest that he thought that the end time sequence had already begun. Earlier in his interpretation of the same group of verses, Bede makes a clear distinction between 'things done in modern times' and 'things to be done in the future under Antichrist'.¹⁰⁹⁴ However, the significance of the adaptation of the prophecy from Matthew should not be underestimated; it will become clear, in the final chapter of the present study, that this passage is by no means a one off. The notion expressed here, that the signs of the end of the age are beginning to be realised in the present day, represents a blurring of the boundary between present time and the eschatological events of the future. As such, this passage conveys a sense that the start of the end time sequence is close and moving ever closer. Bede gives us the impression that the world is in an extremely advanced state of decline.

¹⁰⁹¹ Matthew 24.12: 'et quoniam abundabit iniquitas refrigescet caritas multorum'.

¹⁰⁹² Two further first person verbs ('*prosecutus sum*', '*crediderim*') are employed in the text which introduces the passage cited above: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 424-6. This use of a first-person perspective represents a relatively rare stylistic shift. The overwhelming majority of Bede's interpretations throughout his exegetical works are carried out using third-person verbs.

¹⁰⁹³ McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and Bede*, pp. 98-9.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 406-10: 'Verum haec siue modernis temporibus acta seu futuris sub antichristo crediderimus agenda uideat lector nec sine lacrimis rem lacrimis dignam contempletur quantum ecclesiae status ad peiora cotidie uel ut mitius dicam ad infirmiora gerenda deuoluatur'.

After the passage which features the adaptation of the prophecy from Matthew, the near-continuous series of eschatological interpretations relents as Bede relates the events of chapter twenty-four of 1 Samuel to events from Jesus' life and the apostolic era. The change of theme marks the end of a body of eschatological material which dominates Bede's exegetical response to chapters twenty-two and twenty-three of 1 Samuel. Taken together, the end of book three and beginning of book four form a remarkable section of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. The density of eschatological material in this section of the commentary stands in marked contrast to books one and two. Eschatological ideas are not entirely absent from the earlier part of *In primam partem Samuhelis*, but there is a significant change in emphasis in the sections of the commentary composed either side of the break in study. In the earlier books, on the occasions where Bede does use eschatological material there is little sense that the ideas referred to (such as the time of Antichrist and the conversion of the Jews) are anything other than distant future events. In contrast, the eschatological interpretations at the end of book three and beginning of book four are presented with a sense of urgency that is absent from the earlier parts of the commentary. Bede's comments here, particularly in his adaptation of the prophecy from the Gospel of Matthew, create a sense that the start of the end-time sequence is drawing ever closer. It is significant that such sentiments are expressed in the sections of text which were composed shortly before and after the break in study caused by the tumultuous events of June 716. Either side of the break, Bede becomes more likely to draw upon prophetic pericopes to support his exposition, he becomes more inclined to interpret the events of 1 Samuel as being allegorically representative of the events of the end-time sequence, and he interprets the decline of

the contemporary world as a sign that an eschatological prophecy from the New Testament is starting to bear fruit.

Conclusion: Bede, Gregory and the Olivet discourse

A general link between Bede and Gregory the Great has been established in the course of the analysis of *In primam partem Samuhelis* carried out in this chapter. Both men display a similar tendency to view the present day in an eschatological context during periods of intense personal crisis. This connection can be pursued further. Parallels can be drawn between the eschatological sentiments expressed in book four of the Samuel commentary and the passages from Gregory's works considered in chapter eight of this study. In his adaptation of the prophecy from Matthew's Gospel, Bede suggests that an eschatological prophecy spoken by Jesus is beginning to be realised in the present day. As demonstrated in chapter eight, Gregory often frames the events of the present in a similar context. Bede's use of Matthew 24 is similar to Gregory's use of Luke 21 (a parallel account of the same prophecy delivered to the disciples by Jesus on Mount Olivet). In his homilies, letters and exegetical works, Gregory frequently interprets contemporary famine, earthquakes or portentous signs as a realisation of the events predicted by Jesus. In book four of the Samuel commentary, Bede suggests that the abundance of iniquity and lack of charity in the present should be interpreted in the same way.

It is interesting to note that the sharpened eschatological perspective evident at the end of book three and beginning of book four occasionally recurs throughout the remainder of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. The prophecy from Matthew is cited again in the short introduction to Bede's commentary on chapter twenty-nine of 1 Samuel:

This reading, in which the Philistine leaders eject David from their camp undoubtedly signifies that time concerning which the Lord said ‘and because iniquity will abound, the charity of many will grow cold’.¹⁰⁹⁵

It soon becomes clear that Bede considered the present era in which he lived and the time alluded to in the prophecy of Jesus to be one and the same. 1 Samuel 29.11 (‘and the Philistines went up to Jezreel’) represents the increasing opposition to the Church and the rise of evil in the present:

We see and hear that the mysteries of this reading are being fulfilled today throughout innumerable places by many people chasing the Lord from their heart and oppressing His elect. But, with the end of the world approaching (*appropinquante mundi termino*) we do not dispute, with trembling expectation about to be fulfilled, that we are more and more afraid of the multiplying accumulation of evil things.¹⁰⁹⁶

This passage conveys the sense that the world is advancing further and further into a decrepit state, and similar sentiments are expressed at other points in book four.¹⁰⁹⁷ This explicit reference to the approaching end of the world is striking. That Bede’s language in this passage employs a construction frequently used by Gregory the Great has long since been noted by Plummer.¹⁰⁹⁸ Significant here is the phrase ‘*appropinquante mundi termino*’. This phrase is unmistakably Gregorian, so much so that Robert Markus

¹⁰⁹⁵ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1955-8: ‘Haec lectio in qua principes philisthiim dauid e suis castris eiciunt illud nimirum tempus signat de quo dominus ait: et quoniam abundabit iniquitas refrigescet caritas multorum’.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2043-8: ‘Huius mysteria lectionis et hodie multis dominum de suo corde fugantibus electosque eius prementibus innumera per loca compleri uidemus et audimus; sed appropinquante mundi termino crescentibus malorum cumulis magis magisque complenda quia non ambigimus tremula expectatione formidamus’.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1270-81; 2319-38.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. II, p. 62.

employs it in his biography of Gregory as the title for a chapter on his subject's eschatological thought.¹⁰⁹⁹ There can be little doubt that in book four of *In primam partem Samuhelis*, in terms of his eschatological perspective, Bede's debt to Gregory is fully realised.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Markus, R. A. 1997, *Gregory and his World*. Chapter 4 is entitled '*Appropinquante mundi termino*: the world in its old age'.

Chapter 10: Bede's eschatological perspective: the wider context

Introduction

The latter parts of book four of *In primam partem Samuhelis* suggest that Bede retained the sharpened sense of the end which he developed during the troubled period of summer 716, even after the immediate crisis period had passed. This raises another significant question that can be addressed here, in the final chapter of this study: was Bede's eschatological perspective more developed in his later works than his earlier ones? This chapter will set the eschatological material of the Samuel commentary within a wider context and further consider the changing nature of Bede's perceived proximity to the end of time. This will facilitate additional reflection on the relationship between the eschatological perspectives of Bede and Gregory the Great. It will also allow us to review the notion, proposed by McCready, that the acute eschatological material found in book four of the Samuel commentary is rarely replicated in Bede's wider body of work.

Bede's early eschatological perspective: Acts and Revelation

Expositio Apocalypseos and *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* can be considered to be two of Bede's earliest major works. The former was almost certainly Bede's first significant exegetical work, and it was definitely finished before 710.¹¹⁰⁰ Bede's first commentary on Acts was completed and sent to Acca circa 710, but he may have been working on it for some time prior to that date.¹¹⁰¹ As demonstrated in chapter four of this study, these commentaries adopt a similar theoretical position with regards to the world ages doctrine; both are notable for the absence of the expanded world ages

¹¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the date of *Expositio Apocalypseos*, see above p. 116.

¹¹⁰¹ On the date of *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, see above pp. 122-123.

framework and neither discusses the concept of an eighth *aetas saeculi*. The commentaries on Acts and Revelation share another important parallel. The scriptural texts being commented upon both contain significant eschatological content, yet Bede does not convey a sense that he considered the day of judgement to be close at hand.

The prophetic eschatological events outlined in the book of Revelation are repeatedly said to be imminent in the scriptural text. These urgent eschatological statements are often overlooked in Bede's commentary. Two methods are employed in order to achieve this. In some cases, Bede suppresses the sense of eschatological urgency by avoiding the verse in question. Elsewhere he neutralises the message of the scriptural passage by focusing his exegetical response upon a different aspect of the pericope. Bede's treatment of Revelation 1.3 offers an example of the former method. The verse reads as follows: 'Blessed is he who reads and hears the words of this prophecy: and keeps those things which are written in it. For the time is near'.¹¹⁰² Bede reproduces the earlier part of this passage in his commentary but he omits the statement of eschatological imminency from the lemma, replacing it with '*et cetera*'. Bede draws upon Primasius to state that teachers and hearers are blessed because those who keep the word of God can expect to enjoy everlasting rewards.¹¹⁰³ He offers no comment on the omitted phrase: '*tempus enim prope est*'. A similar approach is taken with regards to Revelation 14.7. On this occasion, the statement of eschatological imminency is reproduced in the lemma. Bede interprets the early part of this verse ('fear the Lord, and give him honour') but he does not offer any significant comment on the subsequent

¹¹⁰² Revelation 1.3: 'Beatus qui legit, et audit verba prophetiae hujus, et servat ea, quae in ea scripta sunt: tempus enim prope est'. The English text cited above is based upon the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate Latin. Archaic constructions have been modernised where necessary. This policy is followed in the citation of subsequent verses from Revelation in the current section of the present study (from this page, up to p. 293).

¹¹⁰³ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 1, lines 21-3.

statement: ‘because the hour of his judgment has come (*quia venit hora iudicii ejus*)’.¹¹⁰⁴ Such omissions might be thought to be the result of coincidence, but further analysis of *Expositio Apocalypseos* reveals that acute eschatological statements such as this are routinely overlooked in Bede’s commentary. In some cases, Bede excludes entire verses. For example, he comments on Revelation 2.15 and 2.17 but neglects to treat 2.16: ‘In like manner do penance. If not, I will come to you soon (*venio tibi cito*)’. Likewise, Bede omits two further statements that the Lord is to come quickly or soon: Revelation 22.12 (*‘ecce venio cito’*) and 22.7 (*‘ecce venio velociter’*). Though it is wise to exercise caution when constructing arguments from silence, it seems as though Bede made a conscious decision to systematically overlook some of the more explicit statements of eschatological urgency that he encountered in the book of Revelation.

On certain occasions, Bede does tackle verses that convey a sense of imminency, but in such cases he often neutralises this aspect of the scriptural text. Bede plays down any sense that the Lord’s coming is near, close or imminent. For example, consider Bede’s interpretation of Revelation 22.20: ‘He that gives testimony of these things says; ‘surely I come quickly’. Amen, come Lord Jesus’.¹¹⁰⁵ Bede’s commentary makes a general statement about the future return of Christ. The sense that this might be due soon, conveyed in the book of Revelation, is overlooked in Bede’s analysis:

The same Christ gives testimony, who announces to the Church that He is coming. The Church devoutly responds, in the manner of the Song of Songs: ‘*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus Christ*’. This the Church cries daily, praying: ‘*Thy kingdom come*’. And in the Psalm: ‘*I will sing, and have understanding in the perfect way,*

¹¹⁰⁴ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 24, lines 14-18.

¹¹⁰⁵ Revelation 22.20: ‘Dicit qui testimonium perhibet istorum etiam venio cito amen veni Domine Iesu’.

when you will come to me'.¹¹⁰⁶

Similar methods are employed elsewhere in *Expositio Apocalypseos*. In Bede's commentary on Revelation 3.11 (which contains the statement '*venio cito*')¹¹⁰⁷ Bede makes a subtle change to the language of the pericope, replacing *venio* with the verb *auxilior*. Bede's interpretation focuses on the aid that God will offer to Christians in the present.¹¹⁰⁸ The sense of urgency conveyed in the pericope is absent from Bede's commentary. Bede offers a similarly generalised interpretation of Revelation 1.1. This introductory verse describes the eschatological events that are to be outlined in the remainder of the prophetic scriptural text as 'the things which must shortly come to pass (*quae oportet fieri cito*)'.¹¹⁰⁹ Again, Bede's comment serves to neutralise the message of imminency conveyed in the book of Revelation.¹¹¹⁰

The book of Acts does not contain comparable statements that the end of the world is near, but it does contain a selection of significant eschatological passages. Bede's response to these passages aligns well with the policy followed in *Expositio Apocalypseos*. Though there is no need to suppress or neutralise explicit statements of the imminent end, Bede's exegetical response conveys little sense that he considered the day of judgement to be near. The most pertinent example of this is Bede's relatively

¹¹⁰⁶ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 38, lines 85-91: 'Idem Christus testimonium perhibet, qui se ecclesiae venturum annuntiat. Cui more Cantici canticorum ecclesia devote respondet: 'Amen, veni, Domine Jesu Christe'. Quae cotidie clamat orans: 'Adveniat regnum tuum'. Et in psalmo: 'Psallam et intellegam in via immaculata, quando venies ad me''. The pericopes cited are Matthew 6.10 and Psalm 101.1-2.

¹¹⁰⁷ Revelation 3.11: 'I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown (*venio cito tene quod habes ut nemo accipiat coronam tuam*)'.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 4, lines 216-21: 'Ne tolerando lassescas. Cito enim auxiliabor, ne forte, te deficiente, alius tibi decretam accipiat mercedem. Sic sanctorum numerum, qui apud Deum fixus est, impossibile est zizaniorum crescentium perfidia breviari. Si enim corona alteri tradatur amissa, non vacat locus ejus qui quod tenebat amisit'.

¹¹⁰⁹ Revelation 1.1: 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass (*apocalypsis Iesu Christi quam dedit illi Deus palam facere servis suis quae oportet fieri cito*)'.

¹¹¹⁰ *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 1, lines 7-8. The 'things which must shortly come to pass' are interpreted as things which are to happen to the Church in the present time ('*Id est, quae in praesenti tempore sunt Ecclesiae ventura*'). Bede ignores the element of imminency conveyed in the pericope.

mild response to the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2.17-21). In the book of Acts, Peter repeats the prophecy of Joel when addressing an assembled crowd of Jews. The prophecy proceeds as follows:

In the last days, God says; I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.¹¹¹¹

These prophetic verses bear similarities with the eschatological prophecies recorded in the synoptic accounts of the Olivet discourse.¹¹¹² Bede's response to them in *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* reveals a great deal about his eschatological perspective in the earliest years of his exegetical career. The 'wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below' are related to events from the life of Jesus (the appearance of a new star at His birth, the dimming of the sun at His crucifixion and an earthquake that occurred at His moment of death).¹¹¹³ The changes in the sun and moon are interpreted in a dual manner. They are related to occurrences of the past that coincided with the Lord's Passion. The signs are also expected to be seen in the future before the day of judgement.¹¹¹⁴ Bede's short comment conveys no sense that these signs can be seen in

¹¹¹¹ Acts 2.17-21 (compare Joel 2.28-32).

¹¹¹² Matthew 24; Luke 21; Mark 13.

¹¹¹³ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 2, lines 120-7.

¹¹¹⁴ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 2, lines 139-44.

the present and there is no reason to suspect that he expected them to be accomplished in the near future.

On other occasions, Bede offers mild interpretations of significant events from the Acts narrative that could have leant themselves to an eschatological theme, such as the death of Judas or the actions of Simon Magus.¹¹¹⁵ One might perhaps have expected the death of Judas to prompt a discussion of the fate of sinners in the post-judgement afterlife. Similarly, the actions of Simon Magus might have lead to a warning about the proliferation of false brethren in the final stages of the sixth world age. Simon Magus is allegorically compared to Antichrist in other, later, Bedan commentaries but there is no such comparison here.¹¹¹⁶ Instead, the explanations of these passages are rather mild, and they can be considered representative of the eschatological material in *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* as a whole.¹¹¹⁷

Bede's eschatological perspective: the mid-career works

The general lack of a sense of eschatological urgency in *Expositio Apocalypseos* and *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* can be contrasted with the acute awareness of the approaching end of the world evident in books three and four of *In primam partem Samuhelis*. This aspect of Bede's eschatological thought seems to have developed considerably in the years that separate the commentaries on Acts and Revelation from Bede's work on 1 Samuel. Evidence from other texts can be cited in order to suggest that the sentiments expressed in *In primam partem Samuhelis* ought not to be considered unique. Bede's commentary on Genesis was composed in several stages. The date of each of the commentary's four books has been the subject of speculation

¹¹¹⁵ The death of Judas is recorded in Acts 1.18-19. Simon Magus features in Acts 8.9-25.

¹¹¹⁶ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 5, lines 811-9; *In Marci evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 205-8.

¹¹¹⁷ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 1, lines 189-209 (Judas); 8, lines 8-46 (Magus).

amongst Bede scholars. Calvin Kendall has recently attempted to redefine the dates for each component part of *In Genesim*.¹¹¹⁸ The present study's second appendix offers provisional support for Kendall's revised dating *termini*. Particularly important here is Kendall's suggestion that book one of the commentary, which contains a lengthy discussion of the world ages analogy, post-dates Acca's elevation to the bishopric of Hexham.¹¹¹⁹ Appendix two demonstrates that this assertion is likely to be correct because Bede describes the extended eight-age analogy which was not developed until the middle, post Plegwine, phase of his authorial career.

A striking resonance is evident between eschatological sentiments expressed in book one of *In Genesim* and the material from book four of *In primam partem Samuhelis* considered in chapter nine. The following passage offers a pertinent example. Bede explains that each of the five previous world ages experienced a period of decline in its final stages. Regarding the sixth age and sixth day, Bede comments:

Even now we see the evening of this day approaching, when, *with iniquity abounding everywhere, the charity of many grows cold*. Its advent, moreover, will be darker by far than the others, when, with the appearance of the man of sin, the son of iniquity, who is lifted up and raised over all because he is called God, or because he is worshipped, the tribulation will be so great that even the elect may be induced into error, if that can happen. And the hour of universal judgement will immediately follow, about which it is written, *But yet the Son of man, when he comes, will he find, do you think, faith on earth?*¹¹²⁰

¹¹¹⁸ Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 40-53.

¹¹¹⁹ For further discussion of the date of book 1 of *In Genesim*, see appendix 2 below, pp. 335-337.

¹¹²⁰ *In Genesim*, 1, lines 1193-202: 'Cuius diei uesperam iam nunc adpropinquare cernimus, cum, abundante per omnia iniquitate refrigescit caritas multorum. Adueniet autem multo tenebrosior ceteris, cum, apparente homine peccati, filio iniquitatis qui extollitur et eleuatur super omne quod dicitur deus aut quod colitur. Tanta fuerit tribulatio ut in errorem inducantur si fieri potest, etiam electi. Subsequente

This passage cites the same prophecy from Matthew 24 that is drawn upon in the excerpts from book four of the Samuel commentary considered above. Once again, Bede explicitly states that the lack of charity in the present is a sign that the final stages of the sixth age are approaching. It is clear that the eschatological events alluded to (the return of Antichrist and the day of judgement) have not yet begun. There is an acute sense, however, that their advent is close and getting ever closer.

Similar sentiments recur at other points in Bede's commentary on Genesis. In book two, Bede offers the following comment on the state of the present world:

For now also it is a comfort to the good, when they see in the spreading disasters of the world the day of judgement approaching, at which time, after the community of the depraved has been destroyed, they themselves may possess a new kingdom of the age to come with the Lord.¹¹²¹

The notion expressed here, that present disasters indicate the approaching end of the world, would not be out of place in one of Gregory the Great's sermons or letters (compare, for example, the letter to King Æthelberht reproduced in the *Historia ecclesiastica*). Similar passages are found elsewhere in book two of *In Genesim*. In discussing the meaning of the name Noah (which is said to mean 'rest'), Bede refers to the approaching end of the world using the Gregorian phrase '*adpropinquante mundi*

statim hora uniuersalis iudicii de qua scriptum est, *verumtamen filius hominis ueniens, putas, inueniet fidem in terra?*' Translation: Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, p. 104. The pericopes cited by Bede in this passage (indicated by the use of italic text) are Matthew 24.12 and Luke 18.8.

¹¹²¹ *In Genesim*, 2, lines 899-903: 'Nam et hoc tempore consolatio bonorum est, cum uiderint crebrescentibus mundi ruinis adpropinquare diem iudicii, in quo, consumpta uniuersitate prauorum, ipsi cum domino noua futuri seculi regna possideant'. Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, p. 167.

termino'.¹¹²² On separate occasions in book four of *In Genesim* (which seems to have been composed relatively late in Bede's authorial career) Bede suggests that the time of Antichrist and the day of judgement are close at hand.¹¹²³

The commentary on Genesis reveals a great deal about Bede's eschatological perspective. It demonstrates that the sharpened awareness of the approaching end of the world evident in the commentary on 1 Samuel recurs at other stages in Bede's authorial career. The eschatological sentiments expressed in *In primam partem Samuhelis* as a result of the crisis period of 716 should not be considered unique. It is certain that *In Genesim* was composed in several stages over the course of Bede's exegetical career. Accordingly, this work can be taken as evidence that his eschatological perspective sharpened on a number of different occasions in the years after 710. A clear distinction can be made between Bede's early eschatological perspective (evident in the commentaries on Acts and Revelation) and the sentiments expressed in his 'mid-career works' (*In primam partem Samuhelis* and the earlier parts of *In Genesim*). The commentary on Luke can also be assigned to the latter group.¹¹²⁴ In the former stage, Bede takes discernable steps to suppress or neutralise explicit statements of the imminent end of the world that he encountered in Scripture. In contrast, the mid-career works see a distinct shift in Bede's mindset. Rather than suppress biblical statements of imminency, Bede occasionally injects a sense of eschatological urgency into his interpretations of passages where such a response is by no means obvious. Bede is no

¹¹²² *In Genesim*, 2, lines 908-11: '.... iuxta sensum uero spiritalem, eadem est requies quae et consolatio sanctorum intueri uidelicet adpropinquante mundi termino et interitum impiorum et suorum adesse tempus praemiorum'. See also *In Genesim*, 2, lines 1359-62.

¹¹²³ *In Genesim*, 4, lines 1075-85 (nearness of the last judgement); lines 1481-4 9 (old age of the world and impending arrival of Antichrist). Kendall estimates provisional dating *termini* of 722-725 for the composition of book 4 of *In Genesim*: Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, p. 53.

¹¹²⁴ *In Lucae evangelium expositio* was compiled after 710 but before 716 (for discussion, see above pp. 100-101). Bede comments upon the nearness of the approaching end of the world at *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 1909-14. On this passage, see below pp. 319-322.

longer seeking to make eschatological verses innocuous. In the middle phase of his career, he often interprets innocuous verses eschatologically.

In epistulas septem catholicas, a collection of short commentaries on seven letters from the New Testament, does not fit easily into either group. The collection, in its complete form, must post-date 710, but it is hard to establish dates for the component parts of this composite work.¹¹²⁵ Many of the scriptural letters under examination contain explicit statements of eschatological imminency. Bede responds to these statements in a variety of ways in different parts of the collection. This should encourage us to consider *In epistulas septem catholicas* as a transitional work, the component parts of which were written at a stage of Bede's career when his eschatological perspective was undergoing significant development. In his commentary on the epistle of James, Bede passes over James 5.8: 'You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near'. Bede offers no comment on this verse, even though he treats the two verses either side of it.¹¹²⁶ In his discussion of the first epistle of Peter, Bede's commentary serves to take the edge off statements of eschatological urgency such as 'the end of all things is near'.¹¹²⁷ These examples align well with the policy of neutralisation or suppression of acute eschatological material followed in *Expositio Apocalypseos*. On the other hand, Bede does tackle some of the more explicit statements of imminency that are offered, for example, in the first epistle of John. In his treatment of 1 John 4.3 ('This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world') Bede suggests that the day of judgement

¹¹²⁵ On the date of Bede's collection of commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, see above pp. 103-105.

¹¹²⁶ Bede treats James 5.7 and 5.9: *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam Iacobi*, 5, lines 79-103.

¹¹²⁷ 1 Peter 4.7. Bede's interpretation stresses that God's judgement can occur at any time, but it focuses upon the life of a Christian in the present. Peter's words are related to the ubiquitous possibility of a human's mortal death. Bede's commentary thus serves to neutralise the sense of eschatological urgency conveyed in the pericope. *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Petri*, 4, lines 62-77.

is drawing near and he relates the spirit of Antichrist mentioned in the pericope to the proliferation of heresy in the present world.¹¹²⁸ In this example, Bede's eschatological perspective seems much closer to the sentiments expressed in the mid-career works *In Genesim*, *In primam partem Samuhelis* and *In Lucae evangelium expositio*.

Bede's eschatological perspective and the allegorical method

The changes in Bede's eschatological perspective that occur in the middle phase of his authorial career coincide with significant developments in his exegetical method. *Expositio Apocalypseos* and *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* are both written in a straightforward and uncomplicated manner. For the most part, the interpretations constructed in these works are relatively concise. In contrast, the commentaries on Genesis and 1 Samuel are written with a greater degree of stylistic freedom. These commentaries contain elaborate responses to the scriptural text under examination. Interpretations in *In Genesim* and *In primam partem Samuhelis* are often sustained over several paragraphs, and an analysis of several consecutive verses can be linked by an overarching theme. It is significant that the commentaries on Genesis and 1 Samuel are both heavily allegorical in nature.¹¹²⁹ The transition from a relatively concise style to a more allegorical method of interpretation corresponds to the sharpening of Bede's eschatological perspective. These parallel developments in Bede's thought should not be thought of as purely coincidental.

¹¹²⁸ *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam I Iohannis*, 4, lines 45-9. Compare Bede's interpretation of 1 John 2.18 ('Dear children, this is the last hour, and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come; this is how we know it is the last hour'): *In epistolam I Iohannis*, 2, lines 214-38.

¹¹²⁹ Bede states his intention to pursue an allegorical method of interpretation at the beginning of the commentary on 1 Samuel: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, prologue, lines 32-4. On Bede's use of allegory in the commentary on Genesis, see: Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 8-14.

Bede offers a detailed discussion of the allegorical sense of scriptural interpretation in the grammatical treatise *De schematibus et tropis*.¹¹³⁰ This introductory tract, designed for students, contains descriptions of the various figures of speech that might be encountered in Christian literature. *De schematibus et tropis* covers seventeen ‘schemes’ and thirteen ‘tropes’ (schemes are changes in the order of words, tropes are changes in the meaning of words).¹¹³¹ Bede states an intention to use only Christian material in the first paragraph of *De schematibus et tropis*.¹¹³² The tract draws exclusively upon citations from Christian sources, the vast majority of which are taken from the Bible itself.¹¹³³ The text’s two-book format was probably suggested to Bede by two consecutive chapters of Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae*, but unlike Bede, Isidore had predominantly used classical sources.¹¹³⁴ *De schematibus et tropis* thus marks a progression from earlier works in the same field, being the first text to frame the study of rhetorical devices in an exclusively Christian context.¹¹³⁵

Scholars have commented on the exegetical orientation of *De schematibus et tropis*. It has been described as ‘an introduction to exegesis by means of a study of the

¹¹³⁰ The date of composition of *De schematibus et tropis* and its sister tract *De arte metrica* are considered in appendix 2 of the present study.

¹¹³¹ In *De schematibus et tropis*, 1, lines 4-10, a distinction is drawn between schemes and tropes regarding the function that each figure of speech performs. Schemes only serve to enhance the beauty of literature, and are therefore artificial. Tropes (such as *hyperbole* and *onomatopoeia*) enhance a work, but they also reveal hidden layers of meaning in doing so.

¹¹³² *De schematibus et tropis*, 1, lines 11-19.

¹¹³³ *De schematibus et tropis* uses a small number of extra-biblical citations. The section on ‘*homoeoteleuton*’ anonymously cites a verse by the Christian poet Sedulius. It also draws an example from Gregory the Great’s *Moralia* which is credited to its author: *De schematibus et tropis*, 1, lines 121-8. In his discussion of the trope ‘*tnesis*’ (the separation of a word into parts by interjecting a word or phrase into its middle) Bede states that it is difficult to find an example of this device in Scripture. He instead quotes a verse of unknown origin which is also cited in Julian of Toledo’s *De Vitiis et Figuris*: ‘In Jeru, which David’s offspring founded, [-Salem] (*Hiero quem genuit solymis, dauitica proles*)’. *De schematibus et tropis*, 2, line 124.

¹¹³⁴ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 1.36-7. The idea that *De schematibus et tropis* is based upon these chapters by Isidore is suggested by Blair, P. H. 1970, *World of Bede*, p. 250.

¹¹³⁵ Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 33.

literary devices used in Scripture'.¹¹³⁶ The work is designed to aid those engaged in exegetical study by explaining the nuances of the Bible and the several layers of meaning that it contains. The second part of the treatise, the section on tropes, is particularly important for its extensive section on allegory. Allegory is defined as 'a trope which means something other than what is said'.¹¹³⁷ Bede comments upon the seven most common varieties of allegory: *ironia*, *antifrasis*, *enigma*, *charientismos*, *paroemia*, *sarcasmos* and *astismos*. He then proceeds to explain that the Bible employs two main types of allegory, verbal and historical. There follows a discussion of four different senses of allegorical interpretation: literal, typological, tropological and anagogical.¹¹³⁸ Illustrative examples of each different sense of interpretation are offered by Bede in order to clarify the meaning of each term. In explaining how each sense can express verbal or historical allegory, Bede touches upon a number of key eschatological concepts.

Bede twice refers to the anagogical sense as 'a sense leading the mind to higher things'.¹¹³⁹ The two examples that Bede employs to illustrate this both concern the rewards reserved for the elect in the kingdom of heaven. To explain the anagogical sense of a verbal allegory, Bede cites a verse from the Gospel of Matthew. This verse can be taken as an allusion to the post-judgment fate of the elect:

¹¹³⁶ The quotation used above is from King, M. H. 1979, '*Grammatica mystica*: a Study of Bede's Grammatical Curriculum', in M. H. King and W. M. Stevens (eds.), *Saints, Scholars, and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones*, vol. I (Collegeville), pp. 145-59, p. 150. Irvine sees *De schematibus et tropis* in a similar light to King; he stresses its exegetical purpose and orientation. Irvine, M. 1986, 'Bede the Grammarian and the Scope of Grammatical Studies in Eighth-Century Northumbria', *Anglo-Saxon England* 15, 15-43, at 36-8.

¹¹³⁷ *De schematibus et tropis*, 2, line 177: 'allegoria est tropus quo aliud significatur quam dicitur'.

¹¹³⁸ Bede describes the four senses as follows: 'Item allegoria uerbi siue operis aliquando historicam rem, aliquando typicam, aliquando tropologicam, id est, moralem rationem, aliquando anagogen, hoc est, sensum ad superiora ducentem figurate denuntiat'. *De schematibus et tropis*, 2, lines 236-9. This description of four senses of scriptural interpretation has received a great deal of attention from scholars interested in Bede's exegetical method. See, in particular, the discussion by Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 135-51.

¹¹³⁹ *De schematibus et tropis*, 2, lines 253-4: '...hoc est, ad superiora ducentem sensum exprimit'. See also *De schematibus et tropis*, 2, lines 238-9.

Verbal allegory points to the same joys of heavenly life, as in ‘Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together,’ because it is certain that not only the souls which are now raised to heaven, but also, after the glory of the final resurrection has been accomplished, the bodies of the just will be brought together in the place where the body of the Mediator of God and men is.¹¹⁴⁰

This passage expresses the belief that the elect will receive their resurrected bodies in order to enjoy the kingdom of heaven with God (as demonstrated in chapter seven above, this is a significant aspect of Bede’s eschatological thought). Elsewhere, in his explanation of the anagogical sense of a historical allegory, Bede refers to the post-judgement fate of the elect once again. The verse cited is said to prefigure ‘the sabbath of the blessedness to come, which is reserved in the end of time for the elect’.¹¹⁴¹ Bede proceeds to make an interesting allusion to the six world ages (this aspect of the passage is discussed further in appendix two, below). For now, it will suffice to note that Bede’s explanation of the anagogical sense again inspires thoughts of the end of time and the post-judgement afterlife.

Further elements of Bede’s explanation of the senses of allegorical interpretation are connected to important themes from the present study. Bede’s description of the tropological sense (which conveys a moral lesson relevant to the life of a Christian in the present) draws upon a verse from the Gospel of Luke: ‘Let your loins be girt and

¹¹⁴⁰ *De schematibus et tropis*, 2, lines 257-62: ‘Allegoria uerbi eadem uitae caelestis gaudia demonstrat, ut: ‘ubicumque fuerit corpus, illuc congregabuntur aquilae’, quia ubi mediator dei et hominum est corpore, ibi nimirum et nunc subleuatae ad caelos animae et, celebrata gloria resurrectionis, colliguntur etiam corpora iustorum’. Translation cited from: Kendall, C. B. 1991, trans. *Libri II de arte metrica et de schematibus et tropis: the Art of Poetry and Rhetoric* (Saarbrücken), p. 205. The verse cited by Bede is Matthew 24.28.

¹¹⁴¹ *De schematibus et tropis*, 2, lines 254-7: ‘... ‘septimus ab adam enoch translatus de mundo’, sabbatum futurae beatitudinis, quae post opera bona saeculi huius, quod sex aetatibus peragitur, electis in fine seruatur, figurate praesignat’. The verse cited by Bede is a conflation of Jude 1.14 and Hebrews 11.5.

lamps burning'.¹¹⁴² Bede does not elaborate on the significance of the message that can be gleaned from this verse, beyond remarking that it signifies 'perfection of morals'.¹¹⁴³ Cross-analysis with Bede's other works reveals that this passage from Luke's Gospel had eschatological significance in Bede's mind. A key analogue is found in *De temporum ratione*, chapter sixty-seven. Here, Bede draws upon the same verse in explaining an ideal eschatological mentality to the reader. Like servants awaiting the return of their master from a wedding feast, a good Christian ought to watch patiently for the day of judgement (details of which are unknown to mortal men).¹¹⁴⁴ This notion is developed in the next chapter of *De temporum ratione*, where a similar analogy is employed to explain that the Lord's coming should be waited for patiently, yet keenly hoped for all the same.¹¹⁴⁵

The verse from Luke's Gospel cited in Bede's discussion of the tropological sense should be aligned with the verse used to illustrate the anagogical sense of a verbal allegory already considered above. Bede draws upon Matthew 24.28: 'Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together'. This verse is taken from the account of the Olivet discourse recorded in the Gospel of Matthew (it is found amongst the signs of the end of the age foretold by Jesus). The analysis of Bede's eschatological perspective constructed thus-far has had frequent cause to reflect on the significance of the Olivet discourse with regards to Bede's perception of the present. The account given in Matthew 24 seems to have resonated especially strongly with Bede, and its appearance in this section of *De schematibus et tropis* is worthy of note. It is significant that Bede draws upon two verses with strong eschatological connotations

¹¹⁴² Luke 12.35 (the citation above is drawn from the Douay-Rheims translation).

¹¹⁴³ *De schematibus et tropis*, 2, lines 251-3: 'Allegoria uerbi eandem morum perfectionem, ut: 'sint lumbi uestri praecincti et lucernae ardentes''.

¹¹⁴⁴ *De temporum ratione*, 67, lines 52-60.

¹¹⁴⁵ *De temporum ratione*, 68.

in order to illustrate the various forms of biblical allegory. Bede's use of such verses in *De schematibus et tropis* suggests that allegory and eschatology were connected in his mind. This link can be thrown into even sharper relief if the purpose of *De schematibus et tropis* is reconsidered. This is an educational tract, designed to help the reader understand the schemes and tropes employed in the Bible. It would be an ideal reference tool for those wishing to embark upon their own exegetical works. Bede's explanation of allegory seeks to convey the basic essence of each of the four senses of interpretation. In explaining the various types of allegory to the reader, Bede makes allusions to the post-judgement afterlife, the world ages scheme and the ideal Christian mentality with regards to the day of judgement. The eschatological orientation of these examples is significant. Evidently, Bede thought such concepts to be fundamentally important aspects of the allegorical method.

Bede's eschatological perspective in old age

It has been noted that works composed in the latter part of Bede's lifetime give considerable prominence to eschatological themes. In a study of *De templo* and *De tabernaculo*, Arthur Holder comments upon the significance of two topics: personal death and the death of the world.¹¹⁴⁶ Alan Thacker's contribution to the *Innovation and Tradition* collection demonstrates an awareness of the eschatological context of works composed in the latter stages of Bede's authorial career. Thacker suggests that Bede embarked upon a structured programme of work in the later years of his life. In Thacker's view, Bede's mature commentaries on the Old Testament share intersecting

¹¹⁴⁶ Holder, A. G. 1991, 'Mysteries of Salvation', 161: 'Everything that Bede wrote about life in Christ was predicated upon his anticipation of two inevitable and yet unpredictable events: the impending death of each individual person, and the return of Christ that will signal the end of this world and bring history to its denouement. He thought of himself and his fellow Christians as marking time in the last few minutes before sunset, but even so his eyes were turned toward the horizon in the east, confidently awaiting the dawn'.

themes and concerns, one of which is an interest in the eschatological dimension of the divine plan for salvation.¹¹⁴⁷ In his 1975 Jarrow lecture, Robert Markus advanced the opinion that Bede's perception of the present became drawn into an eschatological perspective as he grew older.¹¹⁴⁸

Taking the views of these scholars as a starting point, it is now necessary to consider the nature of Bede's eschatological perspective in the final years of his life. It is possible to chart a number of significant developments in Bede's thought. These developments become particularly prominent in his later works of Old Testament exegesis, but important analogues can also be found in other late-career texts such as the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Many significant notions are evident in *De tabernaculo*, and this text will form the immediate focus of the forthcoming analysis of Bede's later eschatological thought. Before proceeding to consider this text in close detail, it is necessary to make some introductory observations about Bede in the 720's and 730's. Bede would have been in his early forties during the turbulent period of events that interrupted the composition of his commentary on 1 Samuel in June 716. Bede was sixty-one or sixty-two years old when he died in the year 735. Though a contemporary account records that Bede experienced a short period of sickness before his death, there is no reason to suspect that he was repeatedly plagued by illness in the same manner as Gregory the Great had been in the latter stages of his life.¹¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, monastic

¹¹⁴⁷ Thacker, A. 2006, 'Ordering of Understanding', pp. 54-5: 'Behind them [the mature Old Testament commentaries] lies an eschatological concern for the process by which ultimately the world would arrive at that day when all its peoples had received the message of salvation and the last judgement could be inaugurated'.

¹¹⁴⁸ Markus, R. A. 1975, *Bede and Ecclesiastical Historiography*, p. 14. See further note 902, above.

¹¹⁴⁹ The *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* states that Bede was taken ill two weeks prior to his death during which time he suffered from repeated attacks of breathlessness. Letters composed in old age suggest that Bede was rather frail in the final years of his lifetime, but they do not suggest that he suffered from continuous bouts of sickness. The *Epistola ad Egbertum* records that Bede had been unable to deliver his message to Egbert in person, having been unable to travel due to the state of his general health. The letter reveals that Bede had been well enough to spend a period of time studying in York the

life in north-east England would have been a physically demanding experience during this stage of Bede's lifetime, particularly in the harsh winter months.

De tabernaculo is a verse by verse commentary on Exodus 24.12 to 30.31. Its precise date of composition is not known, but it is traditionally held to be one of Bede's 'mature' exegetical works. Holder has suggested approximate dating termini of 721 to 725, and this seems to be a reasonable estimate.¹¹⁵⁰ *De tabernaculo* is often considered to be a component part of an exegetical trilogy, along with *De templo* and *In Ezram et Neemiam*. The latter two texts are also thought to have been completed in the later years of Bede's authorial career (though there is some disagreement regarding the date of *In Ezram et Neemiam*).¹¹⁵¹ *De templo*, *In Ezram et Neemiam* and *De tabernaculo* are all composed in a heavily allegorical style.¹¹⁵² These commentaries all treat parts of the Old Testament canon, they each concern sacred architecture, and there is a strong degree of thematic resonance across each of the three works.

previous year (circa 733). In a letter to Albinus, written shortly after the completion of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede requests that Albinus pray for him on account of his frailty (*fragilitas*) but no specific illness is specified. Gregory's state of persistent ill health is well documented. He often describes himself as suffering from intense periods of sickness in the letters preserved in the *Registrum epistularum*.

¹¹⁵⁰ Holder, A. G. 1994, trans. *Bede: on the Tabernacle*, p. xvi; Holder, A. G. 1989, 'New Treasures and Old in Bede's *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo*', *Revue Bénédictine* 99, 237-49, at 237. Holder points out that *De tabernaculo* must have been completed before *De templo* and the commentary on Mark because Bede refers to it in both of these works.

¹¹⁵¹ *De templo* can certainly be assigned to the latter stages of Bede's career. It is described as being recently completed in the *Epistula ad Albinum* (a letter composed after 731). It is unclear exactly how much time had elapsed between the completion of *De templo* and the composition of Bede's letter, owing to the use of the non-specific term '*nuper*'. Holder estimates dating *termini* of circa 729-731: Holder, A. G. 1989, 'New Treasures and Old in *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo*', 236-7. The date of Bede's commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah is less certain. DeGregorio has argued for a late (post-725) date of completion: DeGregorio, S. 2006, trans. *Ezra and Nehemiah*, pp. xxxvi-xlii. Alternative, earlier, dating *termini* have been proposed by Paul Meyvaert: Meyvaert, P. 1997, 'The Date of Bede's *Thirty Questions on the Book of Kings*', pp. 280-2; Meyvaert, P. 2005, 'The Date of Bede's *In Ezram* and His Image of Ezra in the *Codex Amiatinus*', *Speculum* 80, 1087-133.

¹¹⁵² *De templo* is explicitly described as an allegorical commentary in its prologue, lines 55-9 (see also, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24 and the *Epistula ad Albinum*). On the exegetical approach pursued in *De tabernaculo*, see Holder, A. G. 1994, trans. *Bede: on the Tabernacle*, pp. xvii-xxi. On Bede's use of allegory in the commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah, see DeGregorio, S. 2006, trans. *Ezra and Nehemiah*, pp. xxv-xxxvi.

A passage in *De tabernaculo* concerning the divisions of universal history has important implications for the present study. Bede's exegetical interpretation of the golden lampstand (Exodus 25.31-6) has already been considered in chapter one above, but it is necessary to briefly reconsider it here.¹¹⁵³ Bede relates the six branches of the lampstand to six historical periods. Just as three branches extend on each side of the lampstand, three distinct eras occur either side of the Incarnation of Jesus. The exact phrase employed to describe the periods is 'divisions of time (*temporum differentiae*)'.¹¹⁵⁴ These temporal periods are defined in the following terms:

For there were righteous persons before the law, as there were under the law, and as there were in the time of the prophets; likewise, after the Lord's ascension the primitive Church was gathered from Israel, now it is gathered from the Gentiles, and at the end of the world it will be gathered from the remnants of Israel.¹¹⁵⁵

Together, the three post-Incarnation periods correspond to the sixth world age (though Bede does not explain this in his discussion of the golden lampstand). In this passage, the familiar model for salvation history is transformed into a means by which to differentiate separate stages in the present era. Bede frequently had cause to reflect upon the various stages of the divine plan for salvation, but never before had he styled these stages as distinct periods within a specific scheme of temporal division. As noted in chapter one of this study, Bede did not intend for the six-part scheme outlined in *De*

¹¹⁵³ On the six-part scheme outlined in *De tabernaculo*, see pp. 35-37. A diagram of this scheme is reproduced in appendix 1 (item 2).

¹¹⁵⁴ *De tabernaculo*, 1, line 1112.

¹¹⁵⁵ *De tabernaculo*, 1, lines 1114-18: 'Fuerunt etenim iusti ante legem fuerunt sub lege fuerunt temporibus prophetarum, item post ascensionem dominicam congregata est ecclesia primitiua de israhel congregatur nunc de gentibus congreganda est in fine mundi de reliquiis israhel'. Excerpt cited in translation from: Holder, A. G. 1994, trans. *Bede: on the Tabernacle*, p. 36.

tabernaculo to have anything more than symbolic significance. It was not employed as an organising principle for a world chronicle in the same way as the world ages framework. The appearance of this scheme in a mature work reflects a general desire to define the progress of the present era in more specific terms than was previously deemed necessary. The lampstand passage demonstrates Bede's growing interest in establishing the place of the present day within the wider framework of universal time.

In a sense, the six-part scheme of temporal division outlined in *De tabernaculo* unifies Bede's mature eschatological perspective with his long held views on the pattern of salvation history. Where though, did Bede consider his own era to be in relation to the six-part scheme? In Bede's vision of the divine plan for salvation, the final phase of historical time is expected to begin with the large-scale conversion of the Jews. The conversion of the Jews by Enoch and Elijah will initiate the series of eschatological events of the end-time sequence (time of Antichrist, trial of patience, day of judgement). In the three-part division of the post-Incarnation era outlined in the exegetical interpretation of the golden lampstand, this is clearly defined as a future event; the church will be drawn from the 'remnants of Israel' at the end of time. As the Church is currently in phase two of the three post-Incarnation stages (the era of Gentile conversion), the large-scale conversion of the Jews is, by implication, held to be a future occurrence. This aspect of Bede's eschatological thought remained consistent throughout the course of his lifetime. At no point does Bede state that he considers the end-time sequence to have begun even in the most urgent passages from *In primam partem Samuhelis* or *In Genesim*. The final persecution looms large over certain parts of these works but in Bede's view, the time of Antichrist had yet to commence.

In his mid-career works, Bede effectively moves the present day into a holding-stage immediately prior to the start of the end-time sequence. Within the context of the three post-Incarnation periods of the lampstand scheme, the present day can be thought of as being at the very end of phase two. The era of Gentile conversion is drawing to a close and some aspects of phase three are becoming manifest in the present, but the world is yet to enter its very last stage. This perception of the present is replicated in Bede's later exegetical works, but for the most part it is expressed in a more subtle manner than in the commentaries on Genesis and 1 Samuel. Two significant developments in Bede's thought become evident in the mature commentaries. Both of these developments can be illustrated by reference, in the first instance, to *De tabernaculo*. Firstly, Bede suggests that some Jews are starting to return to the Church in the present day. Also, Bede gives the impression that the process of Gentile conversion is nearing completion. Both notions merit close consideration here.

In his commentary on Exodus 26.22-3, Bede constructs an extended eschatological interpretation of the western side of the Tabernacle.¹¹⁵⁶ After citing material from Josephus, Bede proceeds to interpret these verses 'according to the allegorical sense'.¹¹⁵⁷ Two walls meet at the western side of the Tabernacle. This is said to designate the completion of the Holy Church, which is perfected at the end of the world through the meeting of two peoples (the Jews and Gentiles). Bede adds:

For it is not plausible ... that now, however grievously the people of the Jews may be damned on account of faithlessness, there are not some among them, even if only a very few, who live in exile among Christians and come to salvation every day by

¹¹⁵⁶ *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 900-89.

¹¹⁵⁷ *De tabernaculo*, 2, line 915: 'Verum iuxta allegoriae sensus... '.

believing.¹¹⁵⁸

Bede anticipates doubt on behalf of the audience regarding his assertion that a small number of Jews are converting to the Church in the present day. He immediately offers clarification of his message, explaining that the spiritual teachers and interpreters of both testaments are to remain in the Holy Church until the end of the world.¹¹⁵⁹

Comparable sentiments are expressed in *De templo*, the sister work to *De tabernaculo*. Bede relates the two cherubim described in 1 Kings 6.23-28 to the Old and New Testaments. The cherubim are said to have touched different walls of the Temple, and the two walls represent the Jews and Gentiles.¹¹⁶⁰ Bede explains that the Old Testament was written for the ancient people of God (the Jews who lived before the Incarnation) but the New Testament was written for those who arrived at the faith after the birth of Jesus.¹¹⁶¹ Bede proceeds to comment upon the progression of salvation history:

For even though the primitive Church bloomed mainly from Jewish soil and one may believe that all Israel is to be saved near the end of the world, nevertheless the majority of believers of this age are drawn from the Gentiles to receive the mysteries of the Gospel.¹¹⁶²

¹¹⁵⁸ *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 920-5: 'Neque enim credibile est ... nunc quamuis grauitur damnato ob perfidiam populo iudaeorum non esse aliquos ex illis tametsi paucissimos qui inter christianos exulantes cotidie credendo ad salutem perueniant'. Holder, A. G. 1994, trans. *Bede: on the Tabernacle*, pp. 72-3.

¹¹⁵⁹ *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 925-9.

¹¹⁶⁰ 1 Kings 6.27: 'He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the Temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room'.

¹¹⁶¹ *De templo*, 1, lines 1428-34.

¹¹⁶² *De templo*, 1, lines 1434-7: 'Nam etsi primitiua ecclesia maxime de iudaeis effloruit et omnis israhel circa finem saeculi saluandus esse credatur, plurimi tamen fidelium huius temporis de gentibus congregantur ad euangelii suscipienda sacramenta'. Connolly, S. 1995, trans. *Bede: on the Temple*, p. 52.

Once again, Bede makes it clear that the large-scale conversion of the Jews is to occur in the future, but it is interesting to note that the pattern for salvation history is expressed in relatively fluid terms. In the present age, the Christian faith is observed amongst the Gentile nations but not exclusively so. Only most (*'plurimi'*) believers in the present age are of Gentile descent. Bede's comment allows room for the existence of Jewish converts to Christ (such as those alluded to in the interpretation of the western side of the Tabernacle).

References to the existence of converted Jews in the present are found in two further exegetical works: *In Tobiam*¹¹⁶³ and *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*.¹¹⁶⁴ In the commentary on Tobit, Bede refers to present-day Jews who have converted to Christ on an individual basis.¹¹⁶⁵ This aligns well with the sentiments expressed in *De templo* and *De tabernaculo*. Responding to a question in *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, Bede comments:

What follows, 'And it will come to pass that whoever remains in your house will come to have prayers said for him, and will offer a silver coin and a roll of bread', is being partially fulfilled in the present age and will be completely fulfilled at the world's end. For some Jews, if only a few of the common stock as well as the priestly, now flee daily to the Church for refuge, but when the whole number of the Gentiles has entered, then all Israel will be saved.¹¹⁶⁶

¹¹⁶³ Bede's short commentary on the book of Tobit contains no obvious clues regarding its date of composition, but it is usually thought of as a mature work. See note 574, above.

¹¹⁶⁴ *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones* is a collection of answers, written in response to 30 questions posed to Bede by Nothelm. It is thought that this work dates to the period of time in which Bede was working on books 1 and 2 of the Samuel commentary. For discussion, see: Meyvaert, P. 1997, 'The Date of Bede's *Thirty Questions on Kings*'.

¹¹⁶⁵ *In Tobiam*, 10, lines 1-6.

¹¹⁶⁶ *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, 1, lines 40-6: 'Quod vero subditur, 'Futurum est autem, ut quicumque remanserit in domo tua, veniat ut oretur pro eo, et offerat nummum argenteum et tortam panis', et in praesenti tempore aliquantulum solet impleri, et in fine mundi perfecte complebitur. Nam etsi

Bede is keen to stress that the small number of Jews fleeing to the Church in the present era should be distinguished from the large-scale conversion expected at the end of time. Nevertheless, the emergence of individual Jewish converts suggests that, in Bede's mind, the distinction between the final two phases of salvation history is starting to become blurred.

The passage from *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones* cited above highlights another important aspect of the divine plan for salvation. Bede suggests that the Jews will not re-enter the Church on a large scale until 'the whole number of the Gentiles has entered'. Passages from Bede's mature exegetical works can be cited in order to suggest that, in the later years of his life, Bede perceived the process of Gentile conversion to be nearing completion. *De tabernaculo* again provides a convenient starting point. Bede often remarks that the Church has spread far and wide throughout the entire world.¹¹⁶⁷ Such sentiments are expressed in Bede's interpretation of the boards of the Tabernacle:

The boards of the Tabernacle, then, designate the apostles and their successors, through whose word the Church has been expanded throughout the world. For the width of the boards is the expansion of the faith and the sacraments, which formerly lay hidden among the one Israelite people but through their ministry came [to fill] the wideness of the whole world.¹¹⁶⁸

pauci, tamen aliqui cotidie ex Iudaeorum non tantum plebeia, sed et sacerdotali stirpe ad ecclesiam confugiunt; et cum intraverit plenitudo gentium tunc omnis Israhel salvus fiet'. Trent Foley, W. and Holder, A. G. 1999, trans. *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany*, p. 93. Bede's comment relates to 1 Samuel 2.36.

¹¹⁶⁷ For example: *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 1606-8.

¹¹⁶⁸ *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 701-6: 'Tabulae ergo tabernaculi apostolos eorum que successores per quorum sermonem ecclesia per orbem dilatata est designant. Latitudo etenim tabularum dilatatio est fidei et sacramentorum quae prius in una israhelitica plebe latebat sed horum ministerio ad totius orbis amplitudinem peruenit'. Translation: Holder, A. G. 1994, trans. *Bede: on the Tabernacle*, p. 66.

Elsewhere in *De tabernaculo*, Bede states that the Gospel is now preached ‘in all regions of the world (*in cunctis mundi finibus*)’.¹¹⁶⁹ Similar passages are found throughout the other works from Bede’s exegetical trilogy, *De templo* and *In Ezram et Neemiam*.¹¹⁷⁰ Such remarks suggest that, by the mature stage of his authorial career, Bede considered the second phase of God’s divine plan for the post-Incarnation world to be drawing to a close. So far as the conversion of the Gentiles is concerned, there was very little left to be achieved.

Non-exegetical works composed at this point in Bede’s career offer interesting parallel content. The *Chronica maiora* provides a detailed record of the process of Gentile conversion. Its account of the sixth age charts the gradual spread of Christianity amongst the Gentile nations. The Anglo-Saxons eventually enter the Church in the course of its expansion to the outer limits of the known world. Similar overtones have been detected in Bede’s martyrology,¹¹⁷¹ a text that is thought to have been compiled at some point after 725.¹¹⁷² The martyrology serves to synchronise Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical custom with that of the wider Catholic Church by including martyrs from the recent past alongside saints from previous centuries of Christian history. The wide geographical range of saints covered aligns well with the sentiment, expressed in

¹¹⁶⁹ *De tabernaculo*, 1, lines 429-32.

¹¹⁷⁰ *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 670-82; 2, lines 756-60. *De templo*, 1, lines 901-10; 1, 1003-8; 2, lines 1006-15. See also: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 16-25; 1, lines 1460-5.

¹¹⁷¹ Bede’s martyrology is a much neglected work. A new CCSL edition is currently being prepared. In the meantime, the most convenient way to access this work is through the translated edition by Lifshitz, F. 2000, ‘Bede’s Martyrologium: Translation and Historical Introduction’, in T. Head (ed.), *Medieval Hagiography: an Anthology* (New York), pp. 169-98. In the introduction to this edition (at p. 173) Lifshitz comments: ‘The Church was approaching the periphery of the world, and the martyrology was a liturgical monument to the final stage of history’.

¹¹⁷² The martyrology repeats material from the *Chronica maiora*, suggesting a date of composition post-725. The work must have been completed before the *Historia ecclesiastica*, as it is listed in Bede’s autobiographical list of works in 5.24. See further: Lifshitz, F. 2000, ‘Bede’s Martyrologium’, p. 172; Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, pp. 72-3.

exegetical works of a comparable date, that the church had now spread throughout the entire world.

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons appears to have had special eschatological connotations in Bede's mind because of their remote geographical location. The notion that the islands of Britain and Ireland were situated at the end of the world (in geographical terms) is a common classical and patristic topos. Significantly, it features strongly in the works of Gregory the Great.¹¹⁷³ Gregory's Rome-centred perception of the geographical location of Britain was internalised by the Anglo-Saxons and expressed in a variety of formats. King Cædwalla's epitaph, inscribed upon his tomb in St Peter's Church in Rome, styled Britain as being situated at the 'earth's remotest end'.¹¹⁷⁴ Likewise, Bede thought that Britain was situated at the northern and western limits of the world¹¹⁷⁵ (the holy sites around Jerusalem were located at its centre).¹¹⁷⁶ In his commentary on the Song of Songs, Bede expresses the belief that he is situated at the end of the world in both a spatial and a temporal context. The date of this commentary is uncertain (no preface or epilogue is extant) but many of its

¹¹⁷³ In letter of July 598 Gregory tells Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria, of the early successes that Augustine of Canterbury and his companions have enjoyed. Gregory describes the English nation (*gens Anglorum*) as being 'situated in the far corner of the world' (*in mundi angulo posita*). *Registrum epistularum*, 8.29, lines 20-5. Later in the same letter, in line 27, Gregory describes the *Angli* as the 'nation at the end of the world' (*gentem in finem mundi*). Compare: *Moralia in Iob*, 27.11.21, lines 59-80. Here Gregory describes the island of Britain as one of 'the extremities of the earth' (*terminos mundi*) that God has brought the faith to through His preachers.

¹¹⁷⁴ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.7.

¹¹⁷⁵ Bede's perception of the geographical location of Britain was strongly influenced by Pliny and Isidore. In chapter 47 of *De natura rerum*, Bede gives the impression that the island of Britain is located in the extreme north of the world. Only inhospitable regions lie in a more northerly latitude band. Similarly, in discussing the sun in *De natura rerum*, 19, Bede implies that he perceived the island of Britain to be at the western extreme of the inhabited earth. Ethiopia represented the opposite extreme. In his commentary on the Canticle of Habakkuk, Bede identifies Ethiopia as being located at the ends of the earth ('*in finibus mundi*'): *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*, lines 313-6 (compare *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.21, lines 221-5). For further discussion of these themes, see: Scully, D. 1997, 'Introduction', in S. Connolly (ed.), *Bede: on Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk* (Dublin), pp. 17-38, at pp. 34-5; O'Reilly, J. L. 2005, 'Islands and Idols at the Ends of the Earth: Exegesis and Conversion in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*', in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (eds.), *Bède le Vénérable: entre tradition et postérité / The Venerable Bede: Tradition and Posterity* (Lille), pp. 119-45.

¹¹⁷⁶ See Bede's discussion of Golgotha: *De locis sanctis*, 2, lines 75-84.

interpretations align well with Bede's mid and late-career exegetical works.¹¹⁷⁷ In his commentary on Song of Songs 4.16, Bede remarks that God 'has even nourished us, placed at the furthest end of both the world and the age (... *etiam nos in ultimo fine et mundi et saeculi positos ... satiauerit*).¹¹⁷⁸ Again, we are left with the impression that the process of Gentile conversion is nearing completion. In Bede's mind, the Church had now spread to its furthest possible north-westerly extreme.

All of this has implications for the *Historia ecclesiastica*, another of Bede's late-career works (completed circa 731). Bede's account of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons should be considered within the wider context of the divine plan for salvation in the post-Incarnation era. A great deal could be said about the eschatological context of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Here, it will suffice to offer brief comment upon the way in which the text ought to be perceived today. The *Historia* offers a detailed account of the Church's expansion into a remote corner of western Europe. It charts the conversion of a Gentile nation that is located, in the mind of its author, at the farthest edge of the known world. The *Historia ecclesiastica* is frequently hailed as the beginnings of English history, and Bede is often credited with illustrious titles such as 'first English historian'.¹¹⁷⁹ The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons did not represent the beginnings of history in Bede's mind. Rather, the events described within the *Historia* fall towards the end of the sixth world age. More specifically, Bede's narrative can be set within the final throes of the age of Gentile conversion; a time when world was declining towards

¹¹⁷⁷ The commentary conveys the sense that the present world is in an advanced state of decline. Such a notion sits well with Bede's mid to late-career works. For example, Bede comments that the palm tree (Song of Songs 7.7-8) represents the constancy of faith during the fluctuating state of the fading present age: *In Cantica canticorum*, 5, lines 458-64. The commentary also demonstrates an awareness of the growing threat that the Saracens posed to Christendom in the latter stages of Bede's lifetime (see *In Cantica canticorum*, 1, lines 214-34). These sentiments align well with comments made in book 4 of *In Genesim* (see the discussion of this theme by Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 26-7).

¹¹⁷⁸ *In Cantica canticorum*, 4, lines 1035-7. On this passage, see the comments of Davidse, J. 1982, 'Sense of History', 664-5.

¹¹⁷⁹ Farmer, D. H. 1997, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, p. 45.

a period of horrific persecution and universal destruction. The events of the end-time sequence loom large over the latter stages of the *Historia ecclesiastica* and the comets described in its penultimate chapter offer a particularly strong eschatological warning.¹¹⁸⁰ The text is aimed at a society in which spiritual complacency was perceived to be rife. It conveys a strong didactic message to the reader; repent of your sins and reform. The *Historia* is a handbook of good examples for future generations to emulate and bad examples for them to avoid. Such lessons were intended to offer guidance for Christians as the world came to a testing close and the events of the end-time sequence drew near.

Conclusion

Chapters eight, nine and ten of this study have demonstrated the value of adopting a subtle approach to the study of eschatological thought in the medieval world. A detailed approach, adhering to the principles of the ‘weak thesis’, has revealed that Bede’s eschatological perspective changed considerably throughout the course of his lifetime. This aspect of Bede’s eschatological thought was heavily influenced by contemporary circumstances. This is particularly evident in *In primam partem*

¹¹⁸⁰ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23: ‘In the year of our Lord 729 two comets appeared around the sun, striking great terror into all beholders. One of them preceded the sun as it rose in the morning and the other followed it as it set at night, seeming to portend dire disaster to east and west alike. One comet was the forerunner of the day and the other of the night, to indicate that mankind was threatened by calamities by both day and night. They had fiery torch-like trains which faced northwards as if poised to start a fire. They appeared in the month of January and remained for almost a fortnight’. Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 557. These comets are often interpreted as ominous portentous signs that are subsequently fulfilled by the Saracens in Gaul (a reference to the destruction wrought by the Saracens follows shortly after the text cited above). This passage can also be read in an eschatological context. As highlighted in chapter 5 above (pp. 142-152) comets carried strong eschatological connotations for Bede, just as they had done for Gregory the Great. Bede’s comment that the comets ‘indicate that mankind was threatened by calamities by both day and night’ could be an allusion to the omnipresent threat of God’s judgement which hangs over the final part of the sixth world age. Likewise, the description of the comets as portending ‘dire disaster to east and west alike’ suggests that they will cause total devastation on a world-wide scale. Finally, the comets had fiery torch like trains and appeared ‘poised to start a fire’. This could be an allusion to the purgatorial fire that is expected to precede the last judgement, or perhaps it is intended to make the reader think of the fires of Antichrist’s persecution.

Samuhelis. As Bede's eschatological perspective can be seen to undergo significant changes in the course of one commentary, it would be unwise to make overarching generalisations about his perceived proximity to the end of time. The main developments in Bede's eschatological perspective can be summarised as follows. Bede's earliest exegetical works demonstrate a tendency to downplay the eschatological material that he encountered in Acts and Revelation. This policy is abandoned in the middle phase of his career, when Bede becomes more inclined to seek eschatological significance in the scriptural texts that he was commenting on. As Bede's exegetical technique develops to become more allegorical, his eschatological perspective develops to become more acute. The crisis period of 716 inspired Bede to view the events of the present day as the realisation of an eschatological prophecy from the New Testament, and books three and four of the commentary on 1 Samuel are notable for their strong eschatological tone. Parallels can be drawn with works of comparable date such as *In Lucae evangelium expositio* and the early parts of *In Genesim*.

The developments in Bede's eschatological perspective that occur in the middle phase of his authorial career are retained in the later years of his life, though on the whole they are expressed in a more subtle form. Bede's later exegetical works tend not to express sharp eschatological sentiments in the same manner as the mid-career commentaries,¹¹⁸¹ but the late-career works are notable for a number of significant theoretical developments. In *De tabernaculo*, Bede outlines a new scheme of temporal division that defines the progress of the present, post-Incarnation era in more specific terms than had previously been necessary. Bede's later works convey a sense that the world was on the verge of entering the final stage of this scheme (the era of large-scale

¹¹⁸¹ Notable exceptions feature in book 4 of *In Genesim*, which Kendall assigns to the latter stages of Bede's authorial career (see note 1123, above).

Jewish conversion). Bede talks of individual Jewish converts to Christ, a theme that is absent from his earliest exegetical commentaries. The conversion of the Gentile world is considered to be almost complete, and the acceptance of Christianity amongst the Anglo-Saxons represents one of the final acts of the penultimate phase of the divine plan for salvation.

The relationship between Bede's eschatological perspective and the thought of Gregory the Great has been a prominent theme in the previous three chapters of the present study, and it is now possible to offer some concluding thoughts on this matter. Several clear links are evident between the two men's eschatological thought. Bede considered the present era to be tired and worn out with age. He incorporated the Gregorian term for the post-Incarnation period into a revised world ages analogy, comparing the sixth world age to a state of *aetas decrepita*. Like Gregory the Great before him, Bede's awareness of the approaching end of the world became more acute during a period of intense personal crisis. In the middle and later phases of his career, Bede often viewed contemporary ecclesiastical and societal decline as a sign that an eschatological prophecy was starting to become realised in the present day. Bede's use of Matthew 24 can be compared to Gregory's repeated use of Luke 21 (a parallel account of the Olivet discourse).

However, the similarities between the eschatological perspectives of Bede and Gregory must not be overstressed. Robert Markus has recently suggested that Bede was less likely to offer explicit statements of eschatological imminency than Gregory.¹¹⁸² This is a fair assessment of the relationship between the two exegetes. The differences between their perspectives can be explained by examining an excerpt from Bede's

¹¹⁸² Markus, R. A. 2004, 'Gregory and Bede', 250-3.

commentary on Luke. Commenting on the ‘hour of dining’ mentioned in Luke 14.17, Bede remarks:

What is the hour of dining unless it is the end of the world, in which we no doubt are, as Paul once gave witness, saying: ‘We, upon whom the ends of the ages have come’.¹¹⁸³ So it is now the hour of dining, and we are being called. As we see that the end of the age has come near, we have all the less reason to excuse ourselves from God’s banquet.¹¹⁸⁴

As McCready has observed, Bede’s interpretation of this verse is verbally inspired by Gregory the Great’s homily on the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14.16-24).¹¹⁸⁵ In fact, Bede’s commentary on several consecutive verses during this part of *In Lucae evangelium expositio* is derived verbatim from Gregory.¹¹⁸⁶ There is nothing in the Gospel verse to suggest an eschatological reading, but Bede, like Gregory before him, brings one into his interpretation. The sentiments expressed here can be considered typical of the middle phase of Bede’s authorial career.

When Bede’s interpretation of Luke 14.17 is read alongside the Gregorian original, the fundamental difference between the two men’s thought becomes manifest. Bede reproduces several consecutive lines of Gregory’s homily in his interpretation, but he omits one significant comment. Immediately after the passage cited in the translated excerpt above, Gregory includes an urgent statement in his interpretation of the hour of dining. He remarks: ‘As we reflect that there is no time remaining, we must dread to

¹¹⁸³ 1 Corinthians 10.11.

¹¹⁸⁴ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 1909-14: ‘Quid hora caenae nisi finis est mundi in quo nimirum nos sumus sicut iamdudum paulus testatur dicens ‘nos in quos fines saeculorum deuenerunt’. Si ergo iam hora caenae est cum uocamur, tanto minus debemus excusare a conuiuio dei quanto propinquasse iam cernimus finem saeculi’.

¹¹⁸⁵ McCready, W. D. 1994, *Miracles and Bede*, p. 92.

¹¹⁸⁶ Bede’s commentary on Luke 14.16-24 is taken (in abbreviated form) from Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 2.36: *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 1902-2023.

lose the time at hand'.¹¹⁸⁷ This statement is excluded from *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, even though Bede resumes his interpretation of Luke 14.17 with further material drawn verbatim from Gregory's homily. In fact, Bede resumes with Gregory's very next line (an explanation of why the meal mentioned in the pericope is referred to as dinner rather than lunch).¹¹⁸⁸ The omission of Gregory's comment that 'there is no time remaining' gives Bede's interpretation an entirely different emphasis. Bede retains the sense that the world is nearing the end of its life-span, but he ultimately takes the edge off Gregory's statement of eschatological imminency. Bede could agree that he was living in the world's final period, but he was not prepared to repeat the explicit assertion that 'there is no time remaining'.

As a noted expert in chronology, such clear statements that the end was close must have seemed less compelling to Bede, writing over a hundred years after Gregory's death, than they had to Gregory at the time of composition. Bede had studied Gregory's writings closely, but when restating the words of his great spiritual mentor, Bede engaged in some discreet omissions of passages that might be thought to have been disproved by the passage of time. The interpretation of Luke 14.17 offers an appropriate summary of Bede's eschatological perspective as a whole. Bede's eschatological thought was verbally and theoretically inspired by Gregory the Great, but on reflection, Bede's sense of the approaching end of the world must be considered less acute than that expressed in Gregory's works. Bede derived many significant aspects of his eschatological thought from Gregory but he did not repeat the Gregorian position without modifying it first. The Gregorian orientation of Bede's thought cannot be

¹¹⁸⁷ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 2.36, lines 44-6: 'Quo enim pensamus quia nihil est quod restat, eo debemus pertimescere ne tempus gratiae quod praesto est pereat'. Translation cited from: Hurst, D. 1990, trans. *Forty Gospel Homilies*, p. 314.

¹¹⁸⁸ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 1914-16; *Homiliae in Evangelia*, 2.36, lines 46-8.

denied, but it is clear that Bede moulded the traditions that he inherited into an eschatological perspective unique to him alone.

Conclusion

By adopting eschatology as an overarching theme, this study has sought to offer an original insight into Bede's activities as a scholar. Several interconnected aspects of this theme have been considered. Some of the more important conclusions to be drawn from this study concern Bede's perception of himself as a scholarly authority, the development of Bede's thought over time and his interaction with the theoretical traditions of the past. An analysis of Bede's eschatological thought has also facilitated a reappraisal of some of the major events and controversies of Bede's lifetime. It is now possible to draw the major issues covered in the previous ten chapters of this study together, in order to offer some concluding thoughts.

The heresy allegation of 708 ought to be regarded as a major event in Bede's life and career. The Plegwine controversy had an impact upon the development of several significant aspects of Bede's eschatological thought. It is not possible to be absolutely precise regarding the time at which Bede's thought in these areas evolved, owing to the relatively loose dating *termini* that must be assigned to several of Bede's exegetical commentaries. Nevertheless, works composed before or relatively soon after the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* can be distinguished from Bede's mid and late-career works. *Expositio Apocalypseos* and *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* feature in the earlier group. In the years in which Bede was compiling these works, his thought had not yet undergone the series of significant developments that came to define his later eschatological thought. The first of these developments, as demonstrated in chapters one to four of the present study, was the expansion of the world ages doctrine. Bede's mid-career works propose an eight-age framework which is absent from *De temporibus*, *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, *Expositio Apocalypseos* and the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.

In the aftermath of the Plegwine controversy, Bede made significant alterations to an established theoretical tradition and he created a new temporal framework. The development of the expanded world ages scheme can be seen to coincide with the general sharpening of Bede's eschatological perspective. The first works to display an awareness of the approaching end of the world are also the first to contain the expanded world ages scheme. By the time Bede came to work on 1 Samuel circa 716, his eschatological perspective had been subjected to a complete overhaul.

It is interesting to note that two significant variations in Bede's eschatological thought occur exclusively in *Expositio Apocalypseos*. Bede explains that Antichrist is to be a descendant of the ancient tribe of Dan and he envisages the return of Elijah alone, prior to the final persecution. In subsequent works, composed after the Plegwine controversy, Bede tightened up his doctrine regarding such details and he eliminated any scope for uncertainty or confusion (the link between Antichrist and Dan was dropped and Bede consistently expressed the belief that Elijah will return with Enoch). The controversy of 708 can thus be established as a watershed moment in Bede's life and authorial career. In its aftermath, many areas of Bede's eschatological thought were subjected to major modification or development. Significant changes are evident across each of the three main themes covered in the present study: the world ages doctrine, Bede's eschatological vision and Bede's eschatological perspective. In the post-Plegwine phase of his career, Bede sought to establish a new framework for world time, he became more sympathetic to eschatological interpretations of the Scriptures, and he clarified the component parts of his vision for the end-time sequence.

Throughout the course of the present study, the notion of the new Bede, outlined in the recent *Innovation and Tradition* volume of essays, has been endorsed and

developed. Bede should be thought of as a commanding and authoritative scholarly presence. As the outstanding eschatological theologian of his day, Bede could address his immediate superiors in the ecclesiastical hierarchy without trepidation.¹¹⁸⁹ Along with Bishop Acca and Abbot Hwætberht, Bede was a member of a dynamic scholarly community; these men shared a keen interest in eschatological themes, topics and issues.¹¹⁹⁰ Bede was at the forefront of this group of high-status Northumbrian intellectuals. As the composer of several major exegetical and non-exegetical works concerning time and chronology, Bede helped to define the eschatological beliefs of his contemporaries.

Bede's work as an eschatological scholar deserves to be recognised as an outstanding achievement. Over the course of his career, Bede wove together the diverse eschatological material that is scattered throughout the Scriptures to construct a master narrative of the end-times. A variety of biblical passages contributed significantly to Bede's eschatological vision, not least: the synoptic accounts of the Olivet discourse (particularly Matthew 24), and the books of Revelation, Isaiah and Daniel. Bede brought these diverse prophetic source texts together to form a single, synthesised vision for the last days. After initially displaying signs of uncertainty in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede's eschatological thought developed over the course of his career as an exegete. The final five chapters of *De temporum ratione* can be regarded as the culmination of his lifetime of work as an eschatological scholar. These chapters are written in an authoritative manner; they are the work of a scholar who had spent a great

¹¹⁸⁹ The *Epistola ad Pleguinam* was composed to be read before Bishop Wilfrid and *De eo quod Isaiah ait* was addressed directly to Bishop Acca.

¹¹⁹⁰ Several of Bede's exegetical commentaries are addressed to Acca. So, also, is the poetic exploration of the judgement day theme *De die iudicii*. Abbot Hwætberht can be connected with Bede's eschatological thought on at least two significant occasions (*De temporum ratione* and *Expositio Apocalypseos* are dedicated to him).

deal of time contemplating problems of an eschatological nature. This mini-treatise sets out Bede's definitive master narrative for the end of time. By doing this, Bede was attempting to remove any scope for ambiguity or uncertainty regarding the last days. Bede transmitted his eschatological vision to his contemporaries and subsequent generations of scholars in the hope that they would not experience the problems and controversies that could arise from the misinterpretation of eschatological scriptural passages.

In addition to the prophetic literature of the Bible, non-biblical sources were also important influences upon eschatological perceptions in Bede's society. The *Epistola ad Pleguinam* suggests that end-time speculation was rife amongst Bede's contemporaries, and it attests to the circulation of texts such as the Cologne Prologue. Chapter three of this study revealed that links exist between the beliefs challenged in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* and other texts circulating in Anglo-Saxon England, such as the *Laterculus Malalianus* and the works of Aldhelm. Clearly, Bede was engaged in a challenging and stimulating intellectual environment in which points of eschatological doctrine were considered important.

Three theologians can be regarded as the most significant patristic influences upon Bede's eschatological thought: Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great. Scholars are not generally inclined to emphasise the connection between Bede and Jerome, but his commentaries on Daniel and Isaiah served as important sources for Bede's beliefs regarding Antichrist, the trial of patience and the post-judgement fate of the damned. Jerome's influence over these aspects of Bede's eschatological thought is not representative of his impact upon Bede's theological work as a whole. Bede had great respect for Jerome as a translator of sacred Scripture, and he frequently employed

the *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum* as a reference tool. However, Bede's overall exegetical approach does not appear to have been profoundly influenced by Jerome in the same way that it was shaped by Gregory and Augustine.

In terms of patristic orientation, Bede's theological works are usually considered to have been defined by Augustine and Gregory the Great. These two exegetes have emerged as the most significant patristic influences upon Bede's eschatological thought, but they exerted influence in very different ways. Alan Thacker has discussed the relationship between Bede, Gregory and Augustine in a recent Jarrow lecture. Thacker concludes that Augustine was the predominant influence upon Bede's exegetical approach, but he demonstrates that Bede shared a spiritual affinity with Gregory.¹¹⁹¹ A similar picture has emerged over the course of the previous ten chapters of the present study. Augustine was responsible for determining Bede's overall approach to time, chronology and eschatology. The foundations of Bede's understanding of these topics were derived from him. Within the Augustinian framework of understanding, Bede's eschatological thought was profoundly influenced by a Gregorian perspective. The world ages doctrine presents an appropriate illustration of this. Bede derived his overall theoretical approach to the reckoning of time from Augustine, but his perception of the present age was influenced by Gregory the Great. Bede adapted the Augustinian world ages scheme to incorporate a Gregorian view of the present era into a modified theoretical model. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of Bede's eschatological perspective carried out in chapters eight to ten of the present study. Augustine's refutation of millenarianism had a profound influence upon Bede, and Bede drew upon Augustine to discourage contemporary end-time speculation. Within

¹¹⁹¹ Thacker, A. 2005, *Bede and Augustine: History and Figure in Sacred Text* (Jarrow Lecture; Jarrow).

this Augustinian paradigm, Bede's perception of the present, particularly in his mid and late-career works, owed much to an emotional connection with Gregory the Great.

The theoretical framework of Bede's eschatological thought was defined by Augustine, but much of the detail within that framework was influenced by Gregory the Great. In making such a conclusion, it must not be forgotten that the resulting synthesis is definitively Bedan. This study has raised many areas in which Bede's eschatological thought displays significant elements of originality (most notable in this regard are the multiform modifications that Bede made to the world ages model). Bede owed a great debt to the theoretical traditions that he inherited from the Church fathers, but he was not a passive transmitter of the ideas of others.

The previous ten chapters of the present study have offered an insight into the important role that eschatological traditions played in the intellectual landscape of the Middle Ages. Eschatological ideas could be used to add force and urgency to a didactic message (such traits are evident in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* and several of Bede's exegetical works). This study has also demonstrated the value of considering a medieval text within the context of its author's fluctuating eschatological concerns. Contemporary circumstances could have a profound impact upon the eschatological content of a text composed in the early Middle Ages (this is particularly evident in the discussion of *In primam partem Samuhelis* carried out in chapter nine). Bede engaged in a two way process of interaction with eschatological ideas throughout the course of his lifetime. Eschatological concerns influenced his outlook on life, but the events of his life also had a significant impact upon his eschatological outlook.

Epilogue

An excerpt from Bede's *Historia abbatum* presented a convenient starting point for the present study. This passage can now be reconsidered in order to bring this investigation into Bede's eschatological thought to an appropriate close. Bede describes three sets of pictures that Benedict Biscop brought back from Rome for display in St Peter's Church, Monkwearmouth. Pictures of the Virgin Mary and each of the twelve apostles were fixed around the central arch of the church. Bede explains that the south wall of St Peter's was adorned with a separate series of Gospel images. On the north wall, a third group of pictures, based upon the book of Revelation, could be seen.¹¹⁹² Bede's description of the apocalypse paintings at St Peter's highlights some of the main themes discussed in the present study.

The presence of these images is indicative of the fundamental importance that eschatological thought had in the belief-system of a Christian living in the age of Bede. Bede comments that the paintings delivered a message to 'all who entered the church, even those who could not read'.¹¹⁹³ The apocalypse pictures in St Peter's Church conveyed a simple didactic lesson to everybody: the prospect of the day of judgement should inspire a good Christian to live a better life. This message was expressed in a written form throughout several of Bede's works, but the paintings ensured that the same lesson was also delivered to the illiterate. The paintings would not have been employed solely as a means by which to educate those who were unable to read. Bede does not offer a detailed description of the images depicted upon each individual wall panel, but it is likely that considerable thought was put into the layout of these

¹¹⁹² *Historia abbatum*, chapter 6.

¹¹⁹³ Compare Bede's comments in *De templo*, 2, lines 809-43. Here, Bede endorses the use of pictures as a means of communicating messages to the illiterate.

pictures.¹¹⁹⁴ The pictures from Revelation on the north wall were placed directly opposite a series images from the Gospel narratives on the south wall. Such an arrangement was probably intended to highlight allegorical relationships between scenes from the biblical past and the eschatological events of the future. For Bede, the apocalypse paintings would have communicated a message of great hope. Though they offered a constant reminder that the future destruction of the world was inevitable, the pictures depicted a series of events through which the world would be transformed from its current condition to an everlasting state of heavenly bliss.

It seems appropriate to conclude the present study by pointing out that the physical layout of St Peter's Church corresponds to Bede's own perception of the relationship between present and eschatological time. Sitting between the north and south walls of St Peter's, the congregation would have seen events from the life of Jesus depicted on their right. On their left side they would have been faced with a series of images from the book of Revelation. Bede's perception of the present era was similarly framed by the Incarnation and the apocalypse (the start and end points for the sixth age of the world). Bede defined his own life in reference to these parameters. They enabled him to comprehend the present world within the wider context of universal time.

¹¹⁹⁴ Later in the *Historia abbatum*, Bede describes the images that adorned the wall of St Paul's Church, Jarrow (these pictures were brought back from another of Benedict Biscop's journeys to Rome). Bede explains that pictures of Old Testament and New Testament events were carefully aligned in order to reveal allegorical relationships: *Historia abbatum*, 9.

Appendix 1: Systems of chronological division diagrams

Item 1: The six world ages (*De temporibus, Epistola ad Pleguinam*)

1 st Age Adam–Noah	2 nd Age Noah– Abraham	3 rd Age Abraham - David	4 th Age David - Babylonian Captivity	5 th Age Captivity - Incarnation of Christ.	6 th Age Christ - Day of Judgement
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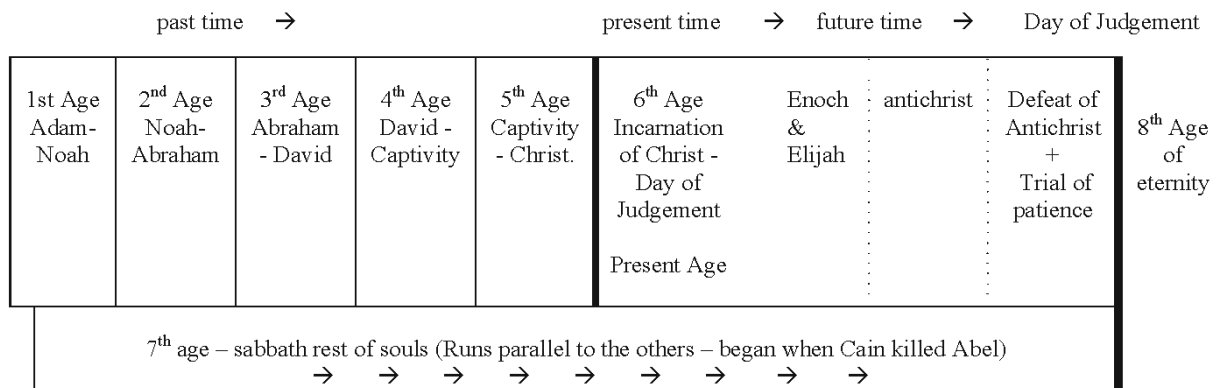
Item 2: Alternative six-part scheme (*De tabernaculo*)

Incarnation of Christ					
before the law	under the law	time of the prophets	Church gathered from Israel	Church gathered from the Gentiles	Church gathered from the remnants of Israel

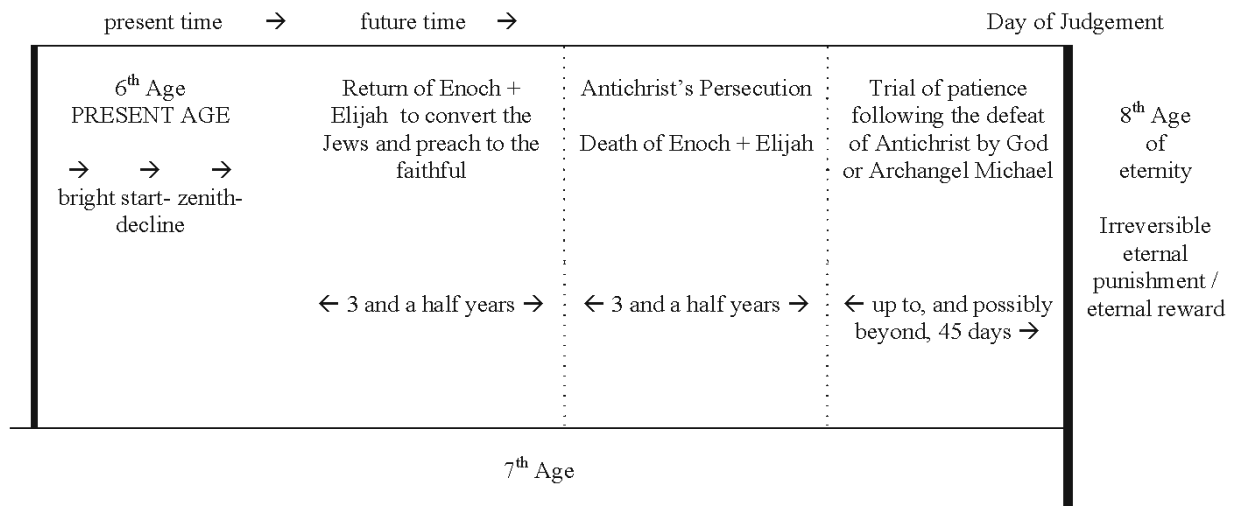
Item 3: Seven-part scheme (*Laterculus Malalianus*)

Peleg				Passion		
1 st Age	2 nd Age	3 rd Age	4 th Age Melchizedek (implied)	5 th Age	6 th Age	7 th Age PRESENT AGE
(3000 years since creation)				(6000 years since creation, 3000 years since Peleg)		

Item 4: The expanded world ages framework



Item 5: The Bedan end-time sequence



Appendix 2: The expanded world ages scheme and the dating of Bede's works

Introduction

In his article of 1970, 'Some Introductory Remarks on Bede's Commentary on Genesis', Charles W. Jones suggested that the appearance and non-appearance of the eight-fold world ages scheme might provide clues about the chronological sequence of Bede's works.¹¹⁹⁵ In light of the extended discussion of the world ages theme carried out in chapter four of this study, it is now possible to develop Jones's idea with confidence. The conclusions reached in chapter four can be summarised as follows. Bede's authorial career can be divided into two phases based upon his perception of the framework of eschatological time. The Plegwine controversy of 708 presents a splitting point for the two phases. The second phase is defined by references to the eight-age model. This expanded model is absent from earlier 'phase one' works such as *De temporibus*, *Expositio Apocalypseos* and the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*. The absence of any reference to the seventh or eighth ages in these three works is telling. Each of them concerns the subject of time (and the latter two focus specifically upon eschatological time). The first datable references to the eight-age scheme appear in the post-Plegwine phase of Bede's career. References to it start to appear in works that post-date the completion of *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* (circa 710). After this point, Bede often refers to a seventh age of rest for the righteous that runs parallel to historical time and an eighth age of eternity to come. Bede continued to promote this temporal framework throughout the remainder of his authorial career. This appendix will consider a small

¹¹⁹⁵ Jones, C. W. 1970, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', 195, note 226.

sample of works in light of the conclusions reached in chapter four in order to resolve a variety of dating issues in Bedan scholarship.

Hymns and homilies

Any work which contains a clear reference to a parallel seventh age running from Abel to judgement day or a post-judgement eighth age of eternity can be assigned to the post-Plegwine period of Bede's authorial career. The *Hymnus de opere sex dierum primordialium et de sex aetatibus mundi* can therefore be assigned a *terminus post quem* of 708.¹¹⁹⁶ Similarly, the homilies that make direct references to the eschatological elements of the expanded world ages scheme must also have been composed in the years after the Plegwine controversy.¹¹⁹⁷ This does not provide a *terminus post quem* for the date of the whole collection of homilies, just a selection of homilies within that collection. For example, Bede's sermon on the wedding feast at Cana discusses the six historical ages in detail, but it would be unwise to definitively assign it to the post-Plegwine period of Bede's life because it is unspecific with regards to the eschatological aspects of the ages framework.¹¹⁹⁸ It is likely that Bede composed his Gospel homilies over the course of his authorial career before arranging them in a two-book volume at some point before 731.¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹⁶ The hymn must have been completed before Bede's death in 735, but if it was part of the lost *Liber hymnorum* mentioned in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24, then this can be further refined to 731. So far as I am aware, no published academic work has attempted to assign dating *termini* to any of the eleven Bedan hymns that are held to be genuine.

¹¹⁹⁷ The homilies in question are: 1.11, 1.23 and 2.19. On the references that Bede makes to the expanded world ages scheme in these homilies, see note 483 above.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.14 contains a lengthy treatment of the six historical ages. In discussing the six stone water jars of the pericope (John 2.1-11) Bede offers an extensive outline of each of the six world ages (lines 134-223). The homily covers well-known biblical events and figures from each age: Cain and Abel; Noah and the flood; Abraham and Isaac; David and Saul; Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity; Christ. The homily considers the circumcision of Jesus on the eighth day, and relates it to a post-judgement kingdom but it does not make an explicit reference to the seventh or eighth *aetates saeculi*.

¹¹⁹⁹ Bede's reference to '*Omiliarum evangelii libros II*' in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24 reveals that the homilies must have been arranged into a two-book collection before 731.

In Genesim

The separation of Bede's eschatological thought into two distinct phases has significant implications for the date of the various component parts of *In Genesim*. Two separate versions of *In Genesim* were issued by Bede at different stages of his career.¹²⁰⁰ The first version of the commentary was arranged into two books (commonly referred to as 1a and 1b) and it was sent to Bishop Acca with a prefatory letter. The letter states Bede's intention to resume his work on Genesis at a later date.¹²⁰¹ Section 1a concludes with a lengthy discussion of the world ages and creation week analogy. Section 1b is a commentary on Genesis 2-3 which draws heavily upon Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*.¹²⁰² A four-book commentary on Genesis (up to and including Genesis 21.10) was issued later in Bede's career.¹²⁰³ In the full edition of *In Genesim*, the two books of the first edition (1a and 1b) were combined to form a single book (book one). Contrasting theories regarding the composition of the component parts of book one have been advanced by the text's editors, Charles W. Jones and Calvin Kendall. Jones, who edited the Latin edition of the text, thought that section 1a was composed first and issued independently of 1b. Jones tentatively offered prospective dates of 703-709 for the composition of this part of *In Genesim*. Jones

¹²⁰⁰ The following discussion draws upon the introduction to Kendall's translated edition of *In Genesim*: Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 40-5.

¹²⁰¹ *In Genesim*, preface, lines 35-45. Bede states his intention to return to his explication of the Genesis narrative after he has considered the book of Ezra.

¹²⁰² Section 1b begins with Bede's interpretation of Genesis 2.4. In the introduction to the Latin edition of *In Genesim*, Jones considered it to be a *collectaneum* of excerpts from Augustine that was compiled at haste: Jones, C. W. *In Genesim*, CCSL 118A, pp. vii-viii. Kendall disagrees with Jones's assessment: *Bede: on Genesis*, p. 41.

¹²⁰³ Bede describes his commentary on Genesis in the following manner in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24: 'Four books on the beginning of Genesis up to the birth of Isaac and the banishment of Ishmael (*In principium Genesis usque ad nativitatem Isaac et eiectionem Ismahelis, libros IIII*)'.

spoke of a second recension (1a and 1b together) and a third recension (the issuing of the complete four-book commentary).¹²⁰⁴

In the introduction to the recent translated edition of *In Genesim*, Calvin Kendall rejects the three-recension model proposed by Jones.¹²⁰⁵ Kendall suggests that manuscripts containing section 1a alone are abridged versions of Jones's second recension (1a and 1b together) rather than a separate work issued by Bede. Kendall points out that the prefatory epistle to Acca, which was clearly designed to complement a combined edition of 1a and 1b, prefixes manuscripts of all three versions of *In Genesim* including those that contain 1a alone. As Acca was already bishop when this letter was composed, 1a must therefore have been written after Acca's elevation in 710. Kendall proceeds to revise Jones's model for the composition of this text, and he suggests a new set of proposed dates for Bede's work on each section of *In Genesim*.¹²⁰⁶ This is not an appropriate place to consider Kendall's proposals in great detail, but it will suffice to say that the findings of chapter four of this study entirely support Kendall's revised *termini*. Jones's theory that section 1a was composed in the period 703-709 must be incorrect. Section 1a presents a vision for eschatological time that had not yet been developed by this stage of Bede's authorial career. Bede offers a full discussion of the parallel seventh age and the eighth age of eternity, theoretical constructs which do not appear in Bede's exegetical works until after the first

¹²⁰⁴ Jones, C. W. *In Genesim*, CCSL 118A, pp. vi-x.

¹²⁰⁵ Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 40-5.

¹²⁰⁶ Kendall tentatively proposes that the shorter version of *In Genesim* (1a and 1b) was composed circa 717-718. He suggests circa 720 for book 2 (of the full, four-book version of *In Genesim*) and circa 722-725 for books 3 and 4. Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, pp. 45-53.

commentary on Acts (circa 710). Kendall's revised dates of circa 717-718 for book one of *In Genesim* (that is, sections 1a and 1b together) seem far more convincing.¹²⁰⁷

De schematibus et tropis

De schematibus et tropis is closely connected with a sister tract, *De arte metrica*. These texts are usually considered together as two parts of a singular project (Bede's description of them in the *Historia ecclesiastica* indicates that he thought of them as such).¹²⁰⁸ *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis* have been published together in recent critical and translated editions.¹²⁰⁹ Likewise, the works often appeared together in medieval manuscripts.¹²¹⁰ There has been considerable debate but little agreement regarding the date of composition of *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis*. The works are dedicated to Cuthbert (*Chutberte*), who had evidently been a pupil of Bede's for some time.¹²¹¹ Bede addresses his pupil as 'most beloved son and fellow-deacon Cuthbert (*dulcissime fili et conlevita Chutberte*)'.¹²¹² For many years, the word 'conlevita' was taken to mean that Bede and Cuthbert were

¹²⁰⁷ Further support for Kendall's dates is offered elsewhere in this study. See chapter 10, pp. 295-297, for a discussion of the parallels between Bede's comments concerning the sixth *aetas saeculi* in book 1 of *In Genesim* and book 4 of *In primam partem Samuhelis*.

¹²⁰⁸ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24: 'A book on the art of metre, and to this is added another small book on figures of speech or tropes, that is concerning the figures and modes of speech with which the holy Scriptures are adorned (*Item librum de metrica arte, et huic adiectum alium de schematibus sive tropis libellum, hoc est de figuris modisque locutionum, quibus Scriptura sancta contexta est*)'. The final lines of *De arte metrica* also make it clear that *De schematibus et tropis* and *De arte metrica* were designed to complement each other: *De arte metrica*, 25, lines 31-4.

¹²⁰⁹ Kendall, C. B. *De arte metrica et De schematibus et tropis*, CCSL 123A (Turnhout, 1975), pp. 60-171; Kendall, C. B. 1991, trans. *Art of Poetry and Rhetoric*. Another translation of *De schematibus et tropis* is also available: Tanenhaus, G. H. 1962, 'Bede's *De schematibus et tropis* - a Translation', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 48, 237-53.

¹²¹⁰ A detailed list of manuscripts and a discussion of the transmission of these tracts is provided by Kendall, C. B. *De arte metrica et De schematibus*, CCSL 123A, pp. 60-76. Laistner's hand-list divides the manuscripts that were known to him into codices containing both treatises and manuscripts that preserve each work on its own: Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, pp. 131-6.

¹²¹¹ Bede reveals that he had given Cuthbert instruction in 'divine letters and ecclesiastical law (*divinis litteris statutisque ecclesiasticis*)'. *De arte metrica*, 25, lines 29-30. *De arte metrica* has no preface, but Bede addresses Cuthbert directly in the final paragraph. Bede informs Cuthbert that both *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis* have been composed to aid his education: *De arte metrica*, 25, lines 26-36.

¹²¹² *De arte metrica*, 25, line 26.

both deacons when Bede composed *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis*. This would date both works to the years of Bede's diaconate, giving them a *terminus ante quem* of 703.¹²¹³ The case for an early date was proposed by Plummer,¹²¹⁴ and it was later endorsed by Kendall in the introduction to his Corpus Christianorum Series Latina edition of the texts published in 1975.¹²¹⁵

However, the same Corpus Christianorum volume contained a general introduction to Bede's *opera didascalica* in which C. W. Jones expressed scepticism regarding the orthodox method of dating *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis*.¹²¹⁶ Jones's ideas were built upon by Martin Irvine in a concluding note to his 1986 article 'Bede the Grammarian and the Scope of Grammatical Studies in Eighth-Century Northumbria'. Irvine thought that the works presupposed a great deal of reading and research on Bede's part, and he highlighted similarities between *De schematibus et tropis* and Bede's exegetical works. Irvine also pointed out that ecclesiastical ranks are cumulative, and though Cuthbert must have been a deacon at the time of composition, Bede was not necessarily a deacon himself.¹²¹⁷ Another challenge came in 1998 with Arthur Holder's essay '(Un)Dating Bede's *De Arte Metrica*'.¹²¹⁸ Holder focused on the term '*conlevita*' and convincingly argued that Bede's use of the term had no bearing on his own status. Rather, lowering oneself to the status of the addressee is a conventional form of address found throughout Christian literature (it is

¹²¹³ Bede was ordained to the priesthood aged 30, an event which is usually considered to have occurred in the year 703. See *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24 and note 73 above.

¹²¹⁴ Plummer, C. 1896, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, vol. I, p. cxlv.

¹²¹⁵ Kendall, C. B. *De arte metrica et De schematibus et tropis*, CCSL 123A, p. 74. See also: Davis, R. 1933, 'Bede's Early Reading', *Speculum* 8, 179-95, at 184-94; Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, pp. 131-2; Laistner, M. L. W. 1957, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe* (London), pp. 157-8; Blair, P. H. 1970, *World of Bede*, pp. 249-50.

¹²¹⁶ Jones, C. W. *Beda opera didascalica*, CCSL 123A, pp. x-xi, note 6.

¹²¹⁷ Irvine, M. 1986, 'Bede the Grammarian', 41-3.

¹²¹⁸ Holder, A. G. 1999, '(Un)Dating Bede's *De Arte Metrica*', in J. Hawkes and S. Mill (eds.), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud), pp. 390-5. See also: Holder, A. G. 1989, 'Allegory and History in Bede's Interpretation of Sacred Architecture', *American Benedictine Review* 40, 115-31 at note 7, 117-8.

often used in the *Epistulae* of St Augustine).¹²¹⁹ Following Holder's essay, two attempts have been made to re-date these works. A theory that the works post-dated Bede's first commentary on Acts has been proposed, though it is not based upon a sound methodology.¹²²⁰ An essay by Neil Wright, which considers the relationship between *De arte metrica* and Bede's poetic works, is more sophisticated, but Wright acknowledges that his findings are not completely conclusive.¹²²¹ As no scholarly consensus has currently been reached, the dates of *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis* must be considered uncertain. The findings of chapter four of this study allow the issue to be approached from a new angle.

Bede makes two allusions to the world ages analogy in his extensive discussion of allegory in book two of *De schematibus et tropis*.¹²²² Bede explains that an allegorical interpretation can be either verbal or historical and it can be expressed in one of four senses (literal, typological, tropological or anagogical). Regarding the literal sense of historical allegory, Bede comments:

¹²¹⁹ Holder cites comparable examples from works contemporary with Bede. For example, Bishop Acca addresses Bede as '*consacerdos*' in the letter prefixed to Bede's *In Lucae euangelium expositio*. Holder, A. G. 1999, '(Un)Dating Bede's *De Arte Metrica*', pp. 394-5.

¹²²⁰ Franklin, C. V. 2000, 'The Date of Composition of Bede's *De schematibus et tropis* and *De arte metrica*', *Revue Bénédictine* 110, 199-203. Franklin's theory is based upon a passage in *De schematibus et tropis* concerning syllepsis, in which Bede comments upon Psalm 2.2 and refers the reader to Acts 4.26-7. Bede did not comment upon this pericope in his first commentary on Acts, though he did in the commentary on Luke and the *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum*. Franklin cites Bede's silence on Acts 4.26-7 in the *Expositio Actuum apostolorum* as evidence that it was composed before *De schematibus et tropis*. She convincingly demonstrates that the passage in *De schematibus et tropis* is a silent correction of Cassiodorus. However, Bede's silence regarding Acts 4.26-7 in the *Expositio* need not necessarily have any implication for the date of *De schematibus et tropis*. The interpretation put forth by Franklin is possible, but there are many other reasons why Bede may have overlooked this passage in the *Expositio*.

¹²²¹ Wright, N. 2005, 'The Metrical Art(s) of Bede'. Wright studies two recensions of the metrical *Vita Cuthberti*. He attempts to detect developments in Bede's technique as a hexameter poet that may help assign a date to *De arte metrica*. He also considers Bede's use of 'golden symmetry' in the *Vita* in light of his remarks in *De arte metrica*. Wright does not discount the possibility of an early date (circa 701-702) for *De arte metrica*, but he concedes that 'absolute certainty is impossible', p. 168.

¹²²² *De schematibus et tropis*, 2.12. For further discussion of this passage, see above pp. 301-305.

History is literally prefigured by historical events, when the creation of the first six or seven days is compared to the same number of ages of this world.¹²²³

Though this excerpt does not allude to the eschatological dimension of the world ages scheme, it is important to note that the relationship between ages and days is expressed in an imprecise manner. Bede's reference to '*sex siue septem dierum*' clashes with the precise references to the world ages analogy that are common in Bedan works written after 708. Bede proceeds to offer the reader an example of a historical allegory expressing an anagogical sense:

'Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was translated from the earth'.¹²²⁴
This trope prefigures the sabbath of the blessedness to come, which is reserved in the end of time (*in fine*) for the elect after [they have accomplished] the good works of this world which is completed in six ages.¹²²⁵

This mention of an eschatological sabbath rest seems incompatible with the references to a seventh world age running parallel to historical time which feature in Bede's post-Plegwine works. The excerpt cited above creates an image of a post-judgement period of sabbath rest that is to follow the six ages of history. This passage from *De schematibus et tropis* can be aligned with similar allusions from Bede's earliest biblical commentary *Expositio Apocalypseos*.¹²²⁶

¹²²³ *De schematibus et tropis*, 2.12, lines 239-41: 'Per historiam namque historia figuratur, cum factura primorum sex siue septem dierum totidem saeculi huius comparatur aetatibus'. Excerpt cited in translation from: Kendall, C. B. 1991, trans. *Art of Poetry and Rhetoric*, pp.203-5.

¹²²⁴ The line cited by Bede is a conflation of Jude 1.14 and Hebrews 11.5.

¹²²⁵ *De schematibus et tropis*, 2.12, lines 254-7: '... 'Septimus ab Adam Enoch translatus de mundo', sabbatum futurae beatitudinis, quae post opera bona saeculi huius, quod sex aetatibus peragitur, electis in fine seruatur, figurate praesignat'. Kendall, C. B. 1991, trans. *Art of Poetry and Rhetoric*, p. 205.

¹²²⁶ On the allusions to the framework for eschatological time in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, see above pp. 117-122.

A passage concerning Enoch from another Bedan work offers an appropriate point of comparison. In book two of *In Genesim*, Bede comments upon Genesis 5.24 ('Enoch walked with God, then he was no more because God took him away'). Bede's interpretation of this verse contains the following statement:

Enoch, who was translated from the world in the seventh generation, signifies the true rest of the chosen ones, which after the labours of this life, those who pass away in the six ages receive eternally.¹²²⁷

This interpretation of Enoch's translation from the earth is entirely compatible with the expanded world ages framework. The period of rest envisaged here is open to the righteous who die in the course of the six historical ages. This aligns well with the notion of a parallel seventh world age, even though Bede does not directly refer to this concept in his exegetical interpretation. The allusion to an eschatological sabbath rest that features in the explanation of allegory in *De schematibus et tropis* would therefore suggest that that work, and its sister tract *De arte metrica*, were composed in the first phase of Bede's authorial career. The general tendency for Bedan scholars to identify these two tracts as early works is probably correct. It seems likely that these texts were composed before Bede had developed the eschatological dimension of the world ages doctrine.

However, further research on *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis* would be required in order to confirm this theory beyond reasonable doubt.¹²²⁸ Bede's works should not be assigned definitive dating *termini* based upon the absence of clear

¹²²⁷ *In Genesim*, 2, lines 845-51: '... Enoch, in septima generatione translatus de mundo, ueram demonstrat requiem electorum, quam post huius uitae labores qui sex aetatibus transeunt sine fine percipiunt'. Translated excerpt from: Kendall, C. B. 2007, trans. *Bede: on Genesis*, p. 167.

¹²²⁸ Such an investigation could focus on the sources employed in *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis* compared to those used in other Bedan works. The methodology employed by Wright in 'The Metrical Art(s) of Bede' (see note 1221) could also be pursued in order to furnish further clues.

references to the eschatological elements of the eight-age scheme. Allusions to the framework for eschatological time that do not correspond to the expanded world ages framework should only be taken as indicators to be used in conjunction with other evidence. A reference from *De temporum ratione* offers a case in point. The *Chronica maiora* includes an entry on Enoch. In commenting upon Enoch's withdrawal from the world in the seventh generation after Adam, Bede refers to the world ages analogy:

And rightly in the seventh generation did God withdraw Enoch, whose name means 'dedication', from the company of mortal men, because the city of the elect, labouring on behalf of God in the six ages of this world, anticipates the splendour of dedication in the seventh [age] of the coming sabbath (*in septima [aetate] sabbati futuri*).¹²²⁹

In a sense, the entry on Enoch in the *Chronica maiora* is a conflation of the passages from *In Genesim* and *De schematibus et tropis* cited above. The *Chronica* styles the period of rest for the righteous as a seventh *aetas saeculi* and the interpretation offered is compatible with the concept of a parallel seventh age.¹²³⁰ But in referring to a 'coming' sabbath, the description of Enoch in the *Chronica* bears some resemblance to the discussion of the anagogical sense of historical allegory offered in *De schematibus et tropis*. The resemblance between the Enoch passages in *De schematibus et tropis* and the *Chronica maiora* should serve as a note of caution. The allusion to an eschatological sabbath rest in *De schematibus et tropis* can be cited in support of an

¹²²⁹ *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 107-11 (*sub anno* 687): 'Et bene in septima generatione enoch, qui interpretatur dedicatio, tulit a mortalibus deus, quia ciuitas electorum in sex huius seculi pro deo laborans aetatibus in septima [aetate] sabbati futuri gloriam dedicationis exspectat'. Passage cited in translation from: Wallis, F. 1999, trans. *Reckoning of Time*, p. 161.

¹²³⁰ The 'coming' sabbath that the *Chronica* alludes to must be considered 'future', in the sense that a human's experience of it is to occur in the future. Each individual member of the righteous will achieve this period of rest once they pass away from their life in the six world ages. The sabbath is considered to be in the future, in that it follows an individual's death.

early date for the tract, but it does not offer conclusive proof of this fact. After all, the Enoch reference in the *Chronica* reveals that a comparable allusion to a ‘coming’ sabbath could be made in a Bedan work that was composed long after the expanded world ages scheme was fully formulated.

Conclusion

The findings of chapter four of this study can help to refine the dates of certain Bedan works though caution must be exercised when applying them. Clear references to the seventh or eighth ages can be taken as evidence that a work was composed in the post-Plegwine phase of Bede’s career. With regards to certain hymns and homilies, this helps to establish dating *termini* where no previous clues had been available. In the case of *In Genesim*, the findings of chapter four of this study lend credence to Kendall’s recent revision of Jones’s model for the composition of this text. In contrast, the absence of the expanded world ages framework from any given text cannot be employed as conclusive evidence regarding its date, as illustrated by the case of *De schematibus et tropis*. Though an imprecise allusion to the framework for eschatological time might be indicative of a work’s early date, further evidence must be taken into account before making a definitive judgement.

Appendix 3: On the date and authorship of the Latin poem *De die iudicii*

Introduction

De die iudicii is a lengthy exploration of the judgement day theme consisting of one hundred and sixty-three lines of Latin verse.¹²³¹ The poem has attracted attention in recent scholarship, primarily because it is an important source for the Old English poem *Judgement Day II*. Though it is usually now accepted as a genuine Bedan composition, a degree of uncertainty has persisted regarding the authorship of *De die iudicii*. The poem is often overlooked by the main body of Bedan scholarship, but its eschatological subject matter makes it an extremely valuable source. *De die iudicii* offers an extensive consideration of the judgement day theme and it contains vivid descriptions of heaven and hell. It forms an invaluable companion to Bede's other treatments of eschatological topics such as *Expositio Apocalypseos* and the final chapters of *De temporum ratione*. The poem is written from a first-person perspective and it offers a deeply personal insight that is not replicated in any other Bedan text.¹²³² A full consideration of the authorship and date of *De die iudicii* is necessary to justify the use that has been made of the poem in chapters five, six and seven of the present study. The reasons for attributing this work to Bede are therefore set out here. This analysis also allows for a

¹²³¹ The poem is available in Fraipont's edition, *Bedae Venerabilis Opera rhythmica*, CCSL 122, pp. 439-44, on which see the comments of Whitbread, L. 1959, 'MS CCCC 201: A Note on its Character and Provenance', *Philological Quarterly* 38, 106-12, at 111, note 17. Fraipont's version can now be compared with an edition published in an appendix to: Caie, G. D. 2000, trans. *Judgement Day II*, pp. 129-33. Caie bases his edition upon a mid-tenth century manuscript which varies from Fraipont's text on a number of occasions. This manuscript (London, British Library Cotton Domitian A. i) is chosen on the grounds that it offers the most suitable text for comparison with the Old English poem *Judgement Day II*. For Caie's comments on the London manuscript see pp. 36-9. A convenient translation of *De die iudicii*, based upon Fraipont's Latin, is available: Calder, D. G. and Allen, M. J. B. 1976, trans. *Sources and Analogues of Old English poetry*, pp. 208-12.

¹²³² The nearest comparable work is Bede's *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, a metrical Psalm adaptation that shares many similarities with *De die iudicii*. See the discussion of this source above, pp. 218-220.

reassessment of how the poem should be fitted into the chronological sequence of Bede's works.

Authorship of *De die iudicii*

De die iudicii survives in approximately forty manuscripts, ranging in date from the ninth to the fifteenth century.¹²³³ Despite the fact that the majority of these manuscripts make reference to Bede, the poem has also been associated with Alcuin of York. The tradition of wrongfully ascribing the poem to Alcuin arose because a manuscript in Vienna contains a version of *De Die Iudicii* which happens to follow a poem which is itself questionably attributed to him. An edition of *De Die Iudicii* based upon this dubious manuscript helped to perpetuate the uncertainty.¹²³⁴ The link to Alcuin is based upon an unlikely interpretation of the poem's position in a single manuscript and it has been rightfully dismissed by Leslie Whitbread.¹²³⁵ For the most part, scholars that have had reason to comment on the poem have accepted it as a genuine Bedan composition. Laistner thought the assignation to Bede to be 'indisputable'.¹²³⁶ This position has been supported by Whitbread and, more recently, Graham Caie.¹²³⁷ George Hardin Brown has highlighted stylistic and thematic parallels with Bede's other works and remarked: 'the competent hexameters, poetic but

¹²³³ On the manuscripts of *De die iudicii*, see note 1241, below.

¹²³⁴ Whitbread, L. 1967, 'After Bede: the Influence and Dissemination of his Doomsday Verses', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen: mit Literaturblatt und Bibliographie* 204, 250-63, at 251-2.

¹²³⁵ *De die Iudicii* occurs anonymously in fols. 1-2 of Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 89 (it happens to follow a poem which is itself questionably attributed to Alcuin). See: Whitbread, L. 1944, 'A Study of Bede's *Versus De die Iudicii*', *Philological Quarterly* 23, 193-221, at 198-200.

¹²³⁶ Laistner, M. L. W. and King, H. H. 1943, *Hand-list*, p. 127.

¹²³⁷ Whitbread, L. 1967, 'After Bede', 251; Caie, G. D. 1992, 'From iudicium' to 'dom': Two Old English Versions of Bede's *De Die Iudicii*', in R. North and T. Hofstra (eds.), *Latin Culture and Medieval Germanic Europe* (Groningen), pp. 43-54, p. 44.

restrained diction, and clean style point to Bede as author'.¹²³⁸ In his 1993 Jarrow lecture, Michael Lapidge treated *De die iudicii* as one of Bede's poetic works, though he allowed himself some concern that the work had metrical faults that were uncharacteristic of Bede's other verse compositions.¹²³⁹

In the absence of a definitive full-length stylistic analysis of Bede's poetic works, other forms of evidence must be considered in order to determine the author of *De die iudicii*. There is an overwhelming body of evidence in favour of Bede. The rubric to the Old-English poem *Judgement Day II*, which is in effect a paraphrase and Old-English translation of *De die iudicii*, clearly states that it is based upon a Latin poem by Bede.¹²⁴⁰ Furthermore, a strong tradition of assigning *De die iudicii* to Bede exists in medieval manuscripts of the poem. Bede is cited as the author of *De die iudicii* in approximately three quarters of the extant manuscripts; over thirty of these preserve a dedication to Bede, typically under a title such as '*versus Bedae presbiteri de die iudicii*'.¹²⁴¹

That the received title of the poem is identical to the title of the penultimate chapter of *De temporum ratione* might be taken as another indication of Bede's authorship of this source (chapter seventy of *De temporum ratione* bears the title '*De die iudicii*').¹²⁴² A connection between this chapter and the poem is evident in at least

¹²³⁸ Brown notes that the poem's theme concurs with Bede's other eschatological work, such as *De temporum ratione* and the vision of Drythelm (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.12). Brown, G. H. 1987, *Bede the Venerable*, pp. 75-6. Further stylistic parallels are proposed by Whitbread, L. 1967, 'After Bede', 252-4.

¹²³⁹ Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet*, p. 21, note 33. Lapidge's reservations are echoed by Mechthild Gretsch: Gretsch, M. 1999, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge), p. 79, note 134.

¹²⁴⁰ Caie, G. D. 2000, trans. *Judgement Day II*, p. 32. *Judgement Day II* is preserved in a single eleventh-century manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201).

¹²⁴¹ See the detailed list of 39 manuscripts in: Whitbread, L. 1966, 'The Old English Poem 'Judgment Day II' and its Latin Sources', *Philological Quarterly* 45, 635-56, at 651-6. Whitbread identified another version of the Latin poem, described as a 'neat but careless and imperfect late copy', in London, British Library Harley 3685, fols. 19v-21v. This can be added to the list published in 1966. Whitbread, L. 1972, 'Bede's Verses on Doomsday: a Supplementary Note', *Philological Quarterly* 51, 485-6.

¹²⁴² *De temporum ratione*, 70, line 1.

one extant manuscript. A codex, now held in the Vatican Library, preserves an edition of the judgement day poem which is incorporated into the main text of *De temporum ratione*.¹²⁴³ One hundred and fifty-four verses of *De die iudicii* are inserted after the prose discussion of judgement day in chapter seventy, but before chapter seventy-one (which concerns ‘the seventh age and the eighth age of the world to come’).¹²⁴⁴ The connection that this manuscript makes between *De die iudicii* and the prose description of judgement day in *De temporum ratione* seems fitting. Though it is not certain that Bede intended *De die iudicii* to be a poetic counterpart to chapter seventy of *De temporum ratione*, this theory is an attractive possibility. A parallel can be drawn with another of Bede’s verse compositions, the *Hymnus de opere sex dierum primordialium et de sex aetatibus mundi*.¹²⁴⁵ This hymn can be thought of as a metrical counterpart to chapter ten of *De temporum ratione* (which bears the title ‘the week of the world ages’).¹²⁴⁶ Chapter ten offers a detailed explanation of the analogy between the world ages and creation week in prose. The *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi* explores the same analogy in verse. These two texts reproduce a great deal of overlapping content, and they proceed through the ages and days in near-identical structural formats.

The closing lines of *De die iudicii* reveal that the poem was composed for Acca.¹²⁴⁷ Bede’s authorship is seemingly confirmed by this reference which is preserved in several early manuscripts. Whitbread demonstrates that manuscripts of ‘northern’ provenance retain the epilogue to Acca, whilst those copied on the continent

¹²⁴³ Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Reg. lat. 123. The poem is found on fols. 72-3. See: Whitbread, L. 1966, ‘Latin Sources’, 652 (the manuscript in question is item 12 in Whitbread’s list).

¹²⁴⁴ *De temporum ratione*, 71, line 1: ‘De septima et VIII aetate seculi futuri’.

¹²⁴⁵ For further discussion of the *Hymnus de sex aetatibus mundi*, see above pp. 133-135.

¹²⁴⁶ *De temporum ratione*, 10, line 1: ‘De hebdomada aetatum saeculi’.

¹²⁴⁷ The epilogue to Acca is found in: *De die iudicii*, lines 156-63.

tend to omit this localised reference.¹²⁴⁸ This study has offered several insights into Bede's long-lasting association with Acca of Hexham. Here, it will suffice to note that many of Bede's works were dedicated to Acca or written in response to a request from him. It is likely that Acca would have been a grateful recipient of *De die iudicii*. Many of Bede's works indicate that Acca had a keen interest in eschatology. In the prefatory letter to his first commentary on Acts, Bede reveals that a copy of *Expositio Apocalypseos* had been transcribed in order to be sent to Acca.¹²⁴⁹ *De eo quod Isaiah ait* was written in response to a question that Bede had received from his bishop. This work, which contains extensive exposition of eschatological doctrine relating to the post-judgement fate of the damned, is evidence that Bede and Acca enjoyed a stimulating intellectual friendship. It also shows that the two men discussed eschatological matters in their correspondence. Acca is linked to the themes of death and judgement on three occasions in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Acca is named as the source for an episode in which a vision forewarns a boy of his death.¹²⁵⁰ Elsewhere, Acca is recorded as conversing about 'the judgements of heaven' with Bishop Wilfrid.¹²⁵¹ Acca also supplied Bede with material for an episode in which a sick Irish scholar faces 'everlasting death and the torments of hell'.¹²⁵² The Irishman repents, is cured, and devotes the remainder of his life to faithful service of the Lord in order to be deemed fit to enter the eternal kingdom. This notion, that repentance will bring spiritual reward, is not dissimilar to the message promoted by *De die iudicii* itself.

¹²⁴⁸ Whitbread, L. 1967, 'After Bede', 252-3 and 257-62.

¹²⁴⁹ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, preface, lines 6-10.

¹²⁵⁰ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.14.

¹²⁵¹ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.19.

¹²⁵² *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.13.

Date of *De die iudicii*

Having identified Bede as the author of *De die iudicii*, it is now necessary to consider the evidence relating to the poem's date of composition. This matter has received very little attention in secondary scholarship. In an article entitled 'After Bede: the Influence and Dissemination of his Doomsday Verses', Leslie Whitbread estimates that the poem was written between the years 716 and 731. The former date is suggested because all but two of the Bedan works dedicated to Acca were composed after 716.¹²⁵³ The latter date is proposed on the basis of the poem's position in the *Historia regum* (a twelfth-century historical compilation doubtfully attributed to Symeon of Durham).¹²⁵⁴ *De die iudicii* is inserted into the *Historia regum* before the entry that records the accession of Archbishop Tatwine in 731.¹²⁵⁵ Though neither of these dates is particularly convincing, no significant attempt has been made to review them since Whitbread's article was first published in 1967.¹²⁵⁶

Despite the fact that the poem is not cited in Bede's autobiographical list of works in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Whitbread rejects the possibility that *De die iudicii* could have been composed after the *Historia* was completed (circa 731) but before Bede's death in 735.¹²⁵⁷ Whitbread dismisses this possibility too readily. The *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* states that Bede continued writing up to the day of his death in May 735.¹²⁵⁸ It is possible that *De die iudicii* was composed during a period of old age

¹²⁵³ Whitbread, L. 1967, 'After Bede', 254-5.

¹²⁵⁴ On the *Historia regum* see: Blair, P. H. 1963, 'Some Observations on the 'Historia Regum' attributed to Symeon of Durham', in N. K. Chadwick (ed.), *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border* (Cambridge), pp. 63-118; Lapidge, M. 1982, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Early Sections of the *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham', *Anglo-Saxon England* 10, 97-122.

¹²⁵⁵ Whitbread, L. 1967, 'After Bede', 255-6.

¹²⁵⁶ Whitbread's dates are endorsed in: Caie, G. D. 2000, trans. *Judgement Day II*, pp. 32-3.

¹²⁵⁷ Whitbread, L. 1967, 'After Bede', 254-5.

¹²⁵⁸ Cuthbert's letter records that Bede continued to work upon two texts in his last days by dictating passages to a scribe. The first work was a revision of a tract by Isidore of Seville, and the other a vernacular translation of John's Gospel (works that have regretfully not survived). See the *Epistola*

and illness that followed the completion of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Though there are other reasonable explanations for its absence from the catalogue of Bedan works given in the *Historia*, this would present a convincing reason for the poem's omission from the list (which is, after all, an near-comprehensive summary of the products of Bede's authorial career).¹²⁵⁹ This issue rests upon whether Bede considered *De die iudicii* to be a standalone work in its own right or a component part of the *Liber epigrammatum*, a collection which is included in Bede's autobiographical list of works. As Lapidge has pointed out, there is no way of resolving the issue of whether or not *De die iudicii* formed part of the now-lost collection of Bedan epigrams.¹²⁶⁰

Significant information concerning the poem's date of composition is presented in its epilogue. The closing address to Acca gives the reader the impression that Bede could have been close to death at the time of writing. Bede urges Acca to 'live happy in God and say farewell to the kind brothers (*Vive Deo felix et dic vale fratribus almis*)'.¹²⁶¹ This strongly implies that Bede did not expect to see Acca again. Further support for this notion is found in the next two lines of the poem. Bede describes himself as 'anxious and fearful (*trepidi et pavid*)' and he asks to be remembered in Acca's prayers to Christ.¹²⁶² The sense of finality in this closing address is unparalleled in the numerous surviving examples of communication between Bede and Acca that

Cuthberti de obitu Beda, printed in Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 580-7.

¹²⁵⁹ *De locis sanctis* and *De VIII quaestionibus* are genuine Bedan works absent from the list given in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24. The former work is absent, even though the inclusion of extracts from this work in the *Historia* confirms that it was written before 731. *De VIII quaestionibus* is a compendium of Bedan excerpts that could have been arranged at some point after 731 (it has been suggested that this work was compiled posthumously). Meyvaert, P. 1997, 'The Date of Bede's *Thirty Questions on the Book of Kings*', p. 277 note 33. See also notes 613 and 614, above.

¹²⁶⁰ Lapidge, M. 1993, *Bede the Poet*, pp. 4-5. Note Bede's statement that the *Liber epigrammatum* contained 'heroic' verse: 'Librum epigrammatum heroico metro sive elegiaco' (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24). Elsewhere, Bede describes dactylic hexameter verse (the form followed in *De die iudicii*) as heroic: 'Metrum dactylicum exametrum, quod heroicum vocatur...'. *De arte metrica*, 10, line 2.

¹²⁶¹ *De die iudicii*, line 161.

¹²⁶² *De die iudicii*, lines 162-3.

have been preserved. It is extremely common for Bede to implore Acca to pray for him, but he does not request that Acca offer farewell messages on his behalf anywhere other than the epilogue to *De die iudicii*. The epilogue reads like a farewell message from Bede to his long-standing patron and it is suggestive of a date of composition relatively close to the year of Bede's death, 735.

Whitbread states that the epilogue represents 'conventional humility, in keeping with the tone of the main poem'.¹²⁶³ Bede does indeed address Acca with polite humility, but it is curious that he fails to acknowledge Acca's episcopal status. This point of detail is not commented upon by Whitbread, nor is it raised in any other scholarly discussion of the poem's authorship or date. As bishop of Hexham, Acca had jurisdiction over the monastery at Jarrow but the penultimate line of the poem refers simply to 'Father Acca (*acca pater*)'.¹²⁶⁴ The epilogue contains an alternative form of address: 'dearest brother (*charissime frater*)'.¹²⁶⁵ Acca is not addressed as 'bishop' in any extant version of the poem itself.¹²⁶⁶ The absence of an acknowledgement of Acca's episcopal status seems odd, especially considering that Bede follows ecclesiastical protocol in every other dedication to Acca throughout his entire corpus. On the nine other occasions when Acca is addressed in Bede's prefaces or prologues, his status as a bishop is explicitly acknowledged without exception (using a form of

¹²⁶³ Whitbread, L. 1967, 'After Bede', 255.

¹²⁶⁴ *De die iudicii*, line 162.

¹²⁶⁵ *De die iudicii*, line 156. Some manuscripts, such as London, British Library Cotton Domitian A. i (as edited by Caie, G. D. 2000, trans. *Judgement Day II*, pp. 129-33) have the variant '*charissime pastor*'.

¹²⁶⁶ The only mention of Acca as 'bishop' in connection with *De die iudicii* is found in the introductory rubric preserved in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 139. Here the poem has been incorporated into the *Historia regum*. In section 26, the prose rubric that introduces the poem states: 'It is pleasing to write in this place the verses which he [Bede] likewise composed on the day of judgement for Bishop Acca (*versus quoque quos de die iudicii composuit [Beda] ad episcopum Accam, hoc in loco libet caraxare*)'. Arnold, T. *Symeonis monachi opera omnia: Vol. 2, Historia regum*, *Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores* 75 (London, 1885), p. 23. The mention of Acca as *episcopus* is likely to be an assumption made by the compiler of the *Historia regum*; it cannot be taken as sound evidence that Acca was actually bishop when he received Bede's poem.

episcopus or *antistes*). The forms of address used by Bede in relation to Acca of Hexham are outlined in the following table (figure 1):

Work	Reference	Forms of address used by Bede
<i>Expositio Actuum apostolorum</i>	preface, lines 1-2	Domino in Christo desiderantissimo et uere beatissimo Accan episcopo ...
<i>In Lucae euangelium expositio</i>	prologue, lines 79-80	Domino beatissimo et nimium desiderantissimo Accae episcopo ...
<i>In primam partem Samuhelis</i>	prologue, lines 34-6	... dilectissime ac desiderantissime omnium qui in terris morantur antistitum Acca ...
<i>De mansionibus filiorum Israel</i>	col. 699 (PL 94)	Domino in Christo dilectissimo et cum omni semper honorificentia nominando antistiti Accae ...
<i>De eo quod Isaiah ait</i>	col. 702 (PL 94)	Domino beatissimo et intima semper charitate venerando, sancto antistiti Accae ...
<i>In Marci euangelium expositio</i>	prologue, line 40	... dilectissime antistitum Acca ...
<i>In Genesim</i>	preface, line 1	Dilectissimo ac reuerendissimo antistiti Acca ...
<i>In Ezram et Neemiam</i>	prologue, line 10	... reuerendissime antistes Acca ...
<i>De templo</i>	prologue, line 49	... dilectissime antistitum ... ¹²⁶⁷
<i>De die iudicii</i>	line 156, line 162	... charissime frater ... / ... acca pater ...

Figure 1: Forms of address used by Bede when addressing Acca of Hexham

The reference that Bede makes to Acca in the preface to *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum* can also be added to the list above. This work is not dedicated to Acca, but the preface states that it offers a reconsideration of passages from Bede's first commentary on Acts, which had been written many years before at the request of 'the venerable Bishop Acca (*uenerabilis episcopi Accae*)'.¹²⁶⁸ Also, Bede mentions Acca's episcopal status in the *Historia abbatum*¹²⁶⁹ and several chapters of the *Historia ecclesiastica*.¹²⁷⁰

¹²⁶⁷ Though Acca is not named, he is almost certainly the 'most beloved of bishops' addressed in line 49 of the prologue to *De templo* (see above, note 481).

¹²⁶⁸ *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum*, preface, line 10.

¹²⁶⁹ *Historia abbatum*, 20.

¹²⁷⁰ *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.13; 4.14; 5.20; 5.23. The only exception is 5.19, where Acca is referred to as a priest during a recapitulation of Bishop Wilfrid's life and career. The period of time in question

Figure 1 demonstrates that the forms of address used in *De die iudicii* are unprecedented exceptions to Bede's normal procedure. An explanation for this can be found in the political circumstances of Northumbria in the early 730's. Acca outlived Bede (he did not die until after 735)¹²⁷¹ but his successor as bishop of Hexham was consecrated in 735 whilst Acca was still alive.¹²⁷² Acca is described as the current bishop of Hexham in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, but the continuations to the *Historia* preserved by the 'Moore manuscript'¹²⁷³ record the following information under an entry for 731: 'King Ceolwulf was captured and tonsured and then restored to his kingdom; Bishop Acca was driven from his see.'¹²⁷⁴ Whether these two events were related to each other or not is unclear, but it is possible that Acca's removal was connected to the political troubles surrounding King Ceolwulf.¹²⁷⁵ Whatever the reason for Acca's expulsion, unlike Ceolwulf he was not reinstated. The phrase 'driven from his see' could imply a period of temporary exile, but Acca's movements after he was deposed are not known.¹²⁷⁶ The fact that Acca was buried at Hexham suggests that he

(Wilfrid's period of illness in Gaul) occurred prior to Acca's elevation to the bishopric of Hexham, explaining the reference to Acca's priestly status.

¹²⁷¹ Two traditions exist regarding the date of Acca's death. The 'E' recension, or Peterborough manuscript, of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud 636) has 737. Whitelock, D. et al. 1961, trans. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 29. The *Historia regum* records Acca's death under the year 740. Arnold, T. *Symeonis monachi opera omnia: Vol. 2*, section 36, pp. 32-3.

¹²⁷² Frithuberht was consecrated as bishop by Archbishop Ecgberht in 735. This is recorded by the annalistic continuations that survive in a group of late-medieval manuscripts of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. See: Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 572-7.

¹²⁷³ The Moore manuscript is Cambridge, University Library Kk. 5.16. Its name is derived from its former owner Bishop John Moore. A facsimile edition has been published: Blair, P. H. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1959, eds. *The Moore Bede: Cambridge University Library MS Kk. 5. 16* (Copenhagen).

¹²⁷⁴ 'Anno DCCXXXI Ceoluulf rex captus et adtonsus et remissus in regnum; Acca episcopus de sua sede fugatus'. Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 572-3.

¹²⁷⁵ This hypothesis is endorsed by David Kirby: 'It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Acca's expulsion in some way and to some extent was connected to the attempted deposition of King Ceolwulf at the same time'. Kirby, D. P. 1974, 'Northumbria in the Time of Wilfrid', in D. P. Kirby (ed.), *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham* (Newcastle upon Tyne), pp. 1-34, p. 24.

¹²⁷⁶ Hexham tradition, in the form of two late martyrologies, claims that Acca became bishop of Whithorn: Farmer, D. H. 1997, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, p. 2. This tradition is mentioned by Prior Richard of Hexham in chapter 15 of his 'short chronicle'. This twelfth-century composition is reproduced in: Raine, J. 1864, *The Priory of Hexham: its Chroniclers, Endowments, and Annals* (Durham). See pp. 34-5 for the reference to Acca and Whithorn (*Candida Casa*). It is possible that Acca was exiled to

returned at some point before his death to spend his final days there.¹²⁷⁷ The political machinations of the early 730's provide a suitable context for the unusual form of address employed by Bede in *De die iudicii*. The uncharacteristic absence of an acknowledgement of Acca's status as bishop fits the circumstances of this troublesome period well. The term '*pater*' avoids the thorny issue of Acca's contested episcopal rank, whilst still carrying a sense of the recipient's superior status as a long-standing patron of Bede's scholarly endeavours.

Bede intended for *De die iudicii* to offer comfort to Acca of Hexham during a time of crisis. The poem may well have been composed after Acca's deposition (or during the period of political troubles that lead up to it) in 731. A late date for the poem allows it to be considered alongside the preface to *De templo*. In a letter that prefixes this late exegetical work, Bede implores a bishop, widely thought to be Acca,¹²⁷⁸ to follow the example of John during his imprisonment on the island of Patmos. As in *De die iudicii*, the recipient is urged not to dwell on the bitter experiences of the world. Instead, they should focus on eternal rewards in order to overcome their present worries.¹²⁷⁹ A late date of composition would concur with the testimony of the *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* that Bede's eschatological thought intensified as he neared

Whithorn, but it seems unlikely that he became bishop there. Pehthelm, who was credited as Bede's source of information for *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.13 and 5.18, is listed as the present bishop of Whithorn in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23. Frithuwald was subsequently consecrated in 735 and enjoyed almost 30 years as bishop. It seems improbable that following his expulsion from Hexham in 731, the elderly Acca would be appointed to the bishopric of Whithorn in place of Pehthelm (a highly-experienced ecclesiastical figure) only to be replaced once again in 735 by Frithuwald.

¹²⁷⁷ The *Historia regum* states that Acca was buried outside the Saxon church at Hexham, with two crosses carved from stone marking his grave. He was translated to a shrine inside the church over 300 years after his death: Arnold, T. *Symeonis monachi opera omnia: Vol. 2*, section 36, pp. 32-3. On the stone crosses, see: Swanton, M. J. 1970, 'Bishop Acca and the Cross at Hexham', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 48, 157-68; Cramp, R. 1974, 'Early Northumbrian Sculpture at Hexham', in D. P. Kirby (ed.), *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham* (Newcastle upon Tyne), pp. 115-40.

¹²⁷⁸ See notes 481 and 1267.

¹²⁷⁹ *De templo*, prologue, lines 49-74.

death.¹²⁸⁰ A late (post-731) and near death-bed date for *De die iudicii* could also explain the metrical imperfections raised in Lapidge's Jarrow lecture.¹²⁸¹

Conclusion

De die iudicii can be assigned to Bede's catalogue of works on the basis of the overwhelming support for his authorship offered by the manuscript tradition and the epilogue to Acca. Alternative dating *termini* to those suggested by Whitbread can be proposed on the basis of Bede's unusual method of addressing Acca in the poem's final lines. The *terminus ante quem* for the composition of *De die iudicii* must be extended to the year 735, the year of Bede's death, in order to reflect the possibility that Acca was no longer bishop when he received the poem. The absence of any acknowledgement of Acca's episcopal status is unprecedented in Bede's works. The alternative forms of address used in the epilogue fit the political circumstances of the period 731-735. This period offers an appropriate context for the composition of Bede's poem, and the revised dating *termini* proposed here provide a convincing reason for the omission of the poem from Bede's autobiographical list of works in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

¹²⁸⁰ The letter describes Bede repeating the lesson that the soul can be enhanced through thinking of the last hour. Similar sentiments are expressed in *Bede's Death Song*, a vernacular poem recited frequently by Bede in his final days. The *Death Song* emphasises the need to consider the fate of the soul after death in order to achieve wisdom in life. See the *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* in Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R. A. B. 1969, eds. *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 580-7.

¹²⁸¹ See above, note 1239.

Appendix 4: Bede's works in approximate order of date

Introduction

The following tables set out the author's thoughts regarding the chronological sequence of Bede's works. The information below is based upon the research of others combined with ideas developed in the course of the present thesis. The dates suggested here represent dates of completion for each work listed (so far as these are possible to establish). There is significant room for manoeuvre in many cases; the reader is urged to bear in mind the possibility that Bede may have worked upon some texts over a number of years (this is certainly true, for example, of the commentary on Genesis). As the date of one text is often dependant on the *termini* of another, new research could alter the sequence proposed below considerably. Accordingly, the dating *termini* suggested in these tables are subject to change; the tables are ever-evolving documents that will need to be revised in light of new research.

Bede's works are divided into four main categories, based upon 3 major points of division. The first group of works were composed before, or very soon after, 710. In this year, Acca became bishop of Hexham. The next group contains works composed after 710 but before the completion of *De temporum ratione* in 725. Section 3 groups together texts composed in the period after 725. The final table contains works of uncertain date (in most cases, the only information known about the date of these texts is that they were completed before the *Historia ecclesiastica*).

The dedicatees of Bede's works are listed in the second column of each table, where applicable. This information can often help to refine the dating *termini* for each text, but it is also interesting for the insight that it offers into Bede's network of scholarly contacts. The diverse nature of this list is worthy of note. Every level of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is represented from deacon to archbishop. One work is dedicated to a female, and the *Historia ecclesiastica* is dedicated to a king. The information set out in the tables below probably represents a relatively small sample of what must have been an extensive network of contacts.

Further information regarding the works cited below can be found in the bibliography of secondary works and translated editions that follows this appendix (see: pp. 369-392, below).

Section 1: works composed before 710 (or shortly thereafter)

These works either precede the accession of Acca to the bishopric of Hexham or they were sent to him very soon after his elevation following the death of Wilfrid on 24 April 710. Texts composed in this period contain no allusions to the eschatological elements of the expanded world ages scheme (parallel seventh age, eighth age of eternity).

Bede's collection of commentaries on the seven Catholic Epistles is included in this section to align it with two of Bede's other New Testament commentaries (*Expositio Apocalypseos*, *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*). The fact that the tract on 1 John was sent to Acca with Bede's first commentary on Acts places that part of the collection firmly within the period of Bede's career that is under consideration here. However, the dates of each individual commentary within this collection are not known. The reader is encouraged to consider *In epistulas septem catholicas* as a transition work which bridges the time periods covered in Sections 1 and 2.

Please note that *De arte metrica*, *De schematibus et tropis* and *De orthographia* are all traditionally thought to belong to this group, but they are included in section 4 below due to a lack of conclusive evidence and the absence of a consensus in secondary scholarship.

Work	Dedicated to	Dating information	Notes
<i>De locis sanctis</i>		Before 710 < <i>Nomina regionum atque locorum</i>	Digest of an earlier tract by Adomnan of Iona. <i>Nomina</i> draws freely upon <i>DLS</i>
<i>De temporibus</i>		703	May have been reissued c. 709 (see footnote 72, above)
<i>De natura rerum</i>		c. 703 Contemporaneous with <i>De Temporibus</i>	Prefatory quatrain intended for <i>De temporibus</i> and <i>De natura rerum</i> together
<i>Vita metrica Cuthberti</i>	John the priest (Wearmouth-Jarrow brethren requested it)	1 st Rec. 705 - 707 (praise for Osred) 2 nd Rec. < Prose <i>VCth</i>	On the two recensions, see: Lapidge (1989)
<i>Expositio Apocalypseos</i>	Brother Eusebius (Hwætberht, became abbot of W-J in 716)	Before 710 < <i>Exp Acts</i> < <i>In Lucam</i>	Almost certainly Bede's first biblical commentary
<i>Epistola ad Pleguinam</i>	Dearest brother Plegwine	708 (5 years after <i>De temporibus</i>)	Plegwine connected to Bishop Wilfrid (Hexham / Ripon?)
<i>Expositio actuum apostolorum (et Nomina regionum)</i>	Lord Bishop Acca (of Hexham)	Completed: c. 710 (or shortly thereafter)	Some parts written before 703: Laistner (1939), pp. xiii-xvii
<i>In epistulas septem catholicas</i>		c. 710 (<i>In epistolam I Iohannis</i> only)	<i>I John</i> sent to Acca with <i>Exp Acts</i> / dates of other tracts unknown (written over time)

Key: c. = circa < = before > = after

Section 2: works composed between 710 and 725

These texts belong to the period of Acca's episcopate that preceded the completion of *De temporum ratione* in 725. Many of these works contain explicit references to the eschatological elements of the expanded world ages scheme.

The commentaries on the Tabernacle and Genesis could arguably be placed in section 3 below. Both works are included here on the basis of estimated dates proposed in recent scholarship. The commentary on Mark might also be later than 725; it is included here to align it with the works that Bede refers to in the course of that commentary (*In Lucae evangelium expositio*, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, *De tabernaculo*).

Work	Dedicated to	Dating information	Notes
<i>In Lucae euangelium expositio</i>	Lord Bishop Acca	710 - 716 > <i>Exp Ap</i> < <i>In Sam</i>	Acca requested that Bede compose a commentary on Luke
<i>De mansionibus filiorum Israel</i>	Lord Bishop Acca	c. 716 < <i>Isaiah ait</i> < <i>In Sam</i> book 4	Response to Acca - written whilst Bede was working on <i>In Sam</i>
<i>De eo quod Isaiah ait</i>	Lord Bishop Acca	c. 716 > <i>De Mansionibus</i>	Response to Acca - question received with <i>De mansionibus</i>
<i>In primam partem Samuhelis</i>	Bishop Acca	Completed in late 716 (or early 717)	Short break between books 3 and 4 due to the departure of Abbot Ceolfriht for Rome
<i>Epistula ad Helmuualdum</i>	Helmwald, brother in Christ	< 725 Material incorporated into <i>DTR</i> 38-9	Helmwald's role and location unknown (overseas monastery may be implied)
<i>Vita Sancti Cuthberti prosaica</i>	Eadfrith, bishop of Lindisfarne and the monks of Lindisfarne	c. 720 > Metrical <i>Vita Cuth</i> < <i>DTR</i>	Said to have been completed 'recently' in <i>DTR</i> 66
<i>De tabernaculo</i>		c. 721 - 725 ? < <i>De Templo</i> < <i>In Marc</i>	Dates estimated by Holder (1994), p. xvi. Trilogy of mature works (<i>Templo</i> , <i>Ezra</i>)
<i>In Genesim</i> (complete four-book edition)	Bishop Acca	Composed over time. Book 4 completed c. 722 - 725 ?	See Kendall (2007), pp. 40-53 for estimated dates of each book. Also, see: Appendix 2.
<i>In Marci euangelium expositio</i>	Bishop Acca	716 - 731 > <i>In Sam</i> , <i>De Tab</i> and <i>In Luc</i>	Reproduces content from <i>Luke</i> (written 'many years ago'). Mentions <i>De Tab</i> and <i>In Sam</i>

Key: c. = circa < = before > = after

Section 3: works composed between 725 and 735

These works were finished in the period of Bede's career that followed the completion of *De temporum ratione* in 725.

The date of *In Ezram et Neemiam* has been the subject of considerable debate between Scott DeGregorio and Paul Meyvaert. DeGregorio's dates are followed here. A reference to *De temporum ratione* in book 3 of *In Ezram et Neemiam* suggests that the final three-book commentary cannot have been finished until after 725, even if parts of the text were composed much earlier than that.

Work	Dedicated to	Dating information	Notes
<i>De temporum ratione</i>	Abbot Hwætberht (Monkwearmouth-Jarrow)	Completed: 725 (chapter 11 written in 722)	Requested by Bede's students to supplement / replace <i>De temporibus</i>
<i>Historia abbatum</i>		716 - 731 (records Ceolfrith's departure)	After 725 ? (<i>DTR</i> 66 draws upon the anonymous <i>Vita Ceolfridi</i> rather than the <i>HA</i>)
<i>Epistula ad Wicthedum</i>	Brother Wicthed, priest (monastery unknown, but Bede had visited it)	725 - 731 > <i>DTR</i> < <i>HE</i>	Answers questions that have arisen from Wicthed's study of <i>DTR</i> : Wallis (1999), p. 417
<i>Martyrologium</i>		725 ? - 731 See: Lifshitz (2000) p. 172	Companion work to <i>HE</i> . Some parallel content with <i>HE</i> and <i>DTR</i> 66
<i>Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum</i>		c. 725 ? - 731 > <i>Exp Acts</i> < <i>HE</i>	Dating <i>termini</i> from Laistner (1939), pp. xiii-xvii. Written 'many years' after <i>Exp Acts</i>
<i>In Ezram et Neemiam</i>	Bishop Acca (Bede responded to Acca's request)	725 - 731 > <i>DTR</i> < <i>HE</i>	Dating from: DeGregorio <i>on Ezra</i> (2006). For alternative <i>termini</i> , see: Meyvaert (2005)
<i>De templo</i>	Most beloved of bishops (almost certainly Acca)	c. 729 ? - 731 > <i>De Tab</i> < <i>HE</i> , <i>Ep Alb</i>	Said to have been completed 'recently' in <i>Ep Alb</i> . Imprecise allusion to 'present troubles'
<i>Historia Ecclesiastica gentis anglorum</i>	Ceolwulf, king of Northumbria 729 - 737 (deposed + restored: 731)	Bede associated this work with the year 731 (<i>HE</i> 5.23)	<i>HE</i> revised after Ceolwulf read it. Final version could be as late as 733: Kirby (1978)
<i>Epistula ad Albinum</i>	Albinus, abbot of the monastery of SS Peter and Paul, Canterbury	731 - c. 734 (death of Albinus) > <i>Templo</i> > <i>HE</i>	Letter accompanied copies of <i>De templo</i> and <i>HE</i> . Albinus 'principal authority' for <i>HE</i>
<i>Epistola ad Ecgbertum</i>	Ecgbert, bishop of York from 732 (later elevated to archbishop in 735)	November 5 th , 734	For the date of the <i>Ep Ecg</i> , see: Plummer II, p. 388
<i>De die iudicii</i>	Father Acca, Brother Acca	c. 734 / 735 Written after Acca's deposition in 731	Composed shortly before Bede's death (May 735). See: Appendix 3

Key: c. = circa < = before > = after

Section 4: date uncertain

Most of these works are assigned to the period before 731 on the basis of their inclusion in Bede's list of works in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24. This *terminus* is reliant upon the date of completion of this chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede associated the *Historia* with the year 731, but parts of it may have been revised and additions may have been made after this date. The absolute *terminus ante quem* for all of these works is 735 (the year of Bede's death).

The entry for 'Metrical Psalm adaptations and Prayers' includes the following list of items, which may or may not have been part of the now-lost *Liber epigrammatum: Oratio ad Deum, Soliloquium de psalmo xli, Carmen de psalmo cxii, De psalmo lxxxiii, Fragmenta*.

Work	Dedicated to	Dating information	Notes
<i>De orthographia</i>		Before 731	Traditionally held to be early. For discussion, see above pp. 253-254 and Dionisotti (1982)
<i>De arte metrica</i>	Beloved son and fellow deacon Cuthbert	Before 731	For discussion see Appendix 2
<i>De schematibus et tropis</i>	See <i>DAM</i>	Before 731	Designed to complement <i>DAM</i> . See Appendix 2
<i>Vita Sancti Felicis</i>		Before 731	Prose <i>Vita</i> (adapted from a verse work by Paulinus of Nola)
<i>Collectaneum</i>		Before 731	Collection of excerpts from the works of St Augustine on the Pauline Epistles
<i>In Regum librum XXX quaestiones</i>	Brother Nothelm (became archbishop of Canterbury in 735)	Before 731	See Meyvaert (1997) for discussion
<i>Homiliarum euangelii libri II</i>		Issued as a collection before 731, composed over time?	Homilies 1.11, 1.23 and 2.19 written after 708 (see Appendix 2, p. 334)
<i>Hymni</i>		Before 731. Number 1 is > 708 (see Appendix 2, p. 334)	Numbers 1-3 and 6-13 are genuine Bedan compositions. See: Lapidge (1993)
<i>Capitula Lectionum</i> (chapter summaries)		On Pentateuch / NT etc < 731. Others (Isaiah etc) unknown.	For discussion, see: Meyvaert (1995)
<i>Expositio in canticum Abacuc prophetae</i>	Dearly beloved sister and virgin of Christ (location and identity unknown)	Before 731	
<i>In Cantica canticorum</i>		Before 731	

<i>In proueria Salomonis</i>		Before 731	
<i>In Tobiam</i>		Before 731	
<i>Vita Sancti Anastasio</i>		Before 731	Translated from an anonymous Greek-language <i>Life of St Anastasius</i>
<i>Liber epigrammatum</i>		Before 731	Now lost. For discussion, see: Lapidge 'Remnants' (1975) and Lapidge (1993)
<i>De octo quaestionum liber</i>	Nothelm (late mss. only). Q2 mentions Cuthwine, bishop of the East Angles	Unknown - but Q2 is > 716 (Cuthwine accession)	Not listed in <i>HE</i> 5.24. Meyvaert (1997), p. 277: a posthumous compendium?
Metrical Psalm adaptations and Prayers		Dates not known	Could have been part of the lost <i>Liber epigrammatum</i> ? For discussion see: Lapidge (1993)

Key: c. = circa < = before > = after

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