AN EXAMINATION OF THE DEBATE AT

THE SYNOD OF WHITBY,

664 A. D.

By

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PREFACE

Sancto Bedae et historiae magnae eius humiles gratias
agere volo, cui sum obligatus magnopere. Etiam uxori
amanti mea et pueris meis carissimis volo gratias agere pro
amore, subsidio, et distrahentibus dulcibus eorum.
Postremo, magistris meis, Doctori Homer Knight, principi
emerito muneris historiae, et Doctori Neil Hackett,
magistro antiquitatis memoriae, et Doctori Kyle Yates,
magistro religionibus, maximas gratias meas.

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.S.C.	Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.
B.L.T.W.	H. Thompson, Bede, His Life, Times, and Writings.
C.M.H.	Cambridge Medieval History.
C.H.R.	Catholic Historical Review.
D.E.B.	Gildas, De Excidio Britanniae.
H.E.	Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum.
N.C.E.	New Catholic Encyclopedia.
V.W.	Aeddius Stephanus, Vita Wilfrithi.

All dates given in the body of the text, unless otherwise noted, are A.D.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It was early autumn in Northumbria in the year of
Grace, 664, when the clergy of Northumbria, in obedience to
royal summons, gathered at the English abbey of
Streanæshaelh.[1] This convocation, now generally known as
the Synod of Whitby, was called by King Oswiu to resolve
the growing religious dissention in his kingdom due to the
observance of conflicting dates for Easter by rival forms
of Christianity.[2] At the Synod, each tradition presented
the merits of their respective methods of computing the
Paschal date. After listening to both presentations, Oswiu
decided against the Celtic tradition he had previously
followed and in favor of the Latin. As a result of his
command, all those who remained loyal to the Celtic method
had to leave Northumbria.

This relatively minor Synod holds far greater signifi-
cance than the shift of date of Easter by a week in 664.
Although only the Easter question was discussed at the
Synod, this Synod had direct bearing on the subsequent sur-
vival of the Celtic church as a distinct and autonomous
tradition. Inasmuch as Oswiu had endorsed the Latin church,
the Celtic church was left with the options of conforming

under a Latin bishop or departing from Northumbria. Either course, conformity or isolation, meant an end to the growth of the Celtic church and the eventual loss of its identity as it was surrounded and absorbed by the larger Latin church. Thus, Oswiu's decision had a major effect on the course of development of the English church.

Yet, as profound as the impact of Oswiu's shift of allegiance was, a survey of secondary historical writers reveals no consensus on Oswiu's motive for calling the Synod, the importance of the Synod, or the decisive incident within the Synod. In the survey, two views on Oswiu's decision are widely held. The first viewpoint is that Oswiu attended the Synod with a decision already made.

> It is quite possible that Oswy had already made up his mind ... before he summoned the Synod of Whitby.[3]

Since the decision was made prior to the Synod, in this view, the Synod has little or no actual importance save as a camouflage for his actual motives in the policy change. With the time of Oswiu's decision thus obscured, the range of potential influences on his decision is greatly increased. Almost any factor within his reign of twenty-two years could have possibly spurred him to the decision.

> Historians have generally suspected . . . that political difficulties determined his /Oswiu's/ decision.[4]

Further, the complete political, social, and economic aspects of seventh century Northumbria are not thoroughly documented. This lack of evidence allows considerable

latitude to the historian in his selection of causes. There
are advocates for several broad issues of the seventh cen-
tury which may have affected Oswiu's judgment such as: uni-
fication of the English church, economic dependency on the
Continent, and military or political security.

The second viewpoint on the Synod follows the account
of Bede and holds that Oswiu summoned the Synod without a
clear decision beforehand. In following extant accounts,
this view assumes that the Synod was called more due to his
personal doubt than state policy.

> It was not so much consideration of policy which
> moved Oswy and his advisers to summon the confer-
> ence as an uneasy feeling...that they might be
> failing to insure their entrance to heaven.[5]

This viewpoint greatly enhances the role of the Synod. If
Oswiu called the Synod because of his personal doubt and
closed the Synod with his unequivocal statement of convic-
tion, the decisive moment must lay between these two points.
Further, it logically follows that a close examination of
the debate would reveal the point during the Synod at which
Oswiu's doubt was converted into conviction and subsequent-
ly, the decisive element in the debate.

The purpose of this research is to examine in detail
the Synod arguments to determine the decisive statement
which prompted Oswiu's startling conversion to the Latin
church. This approach is obviously based on the latter of
the two viewpoints regarding the Synod of Whitby, and the
reasons dictating the choice of this approach are discussed
later in the research.

Naturally, any attempt to investigate causes of behavior and personal motives can be only conditionally successful since without an authentic statement of intent by the subject, there is an element of doubt. However, absolute certainty about any personal motivation is not a feasible goal in research. Even with genuine statement of intent, there remains the possibility that the subject had a neurotic self-deception, or ulterior motives, or was a pathological liar. However, a thorough investigation of the circumstances of a decision and a close study of the individual's personal history does allow realistic conclusions.

This research intends therefore to establish with reasonable probability that Oswiu was convinced during the Synod by statements of the Latin spokesman claiming the authority of Saint Peter as keeper of the Keys of Heaven. This purpose is accomplished by an examination of the development of the Celtic church, the conflict between the Celtic and Latin churches, the situation within Northumbria leading to the Synod, the personal history of the monarch, and lastly, an examination of the arguments presented at the Synod of Whitby.

Sources of information for the Synod, its period, and its background are varied. From the Roman period the _Agricola_ of Tacitus is the most reliable and relevant work, bearing as it does on the society of Britain and its government by the Roman general Agricola in the first century. For the obscure period of the end of Roman rule and the

Anglo-Saxon invasions, there is one contemporary account,
that of Gildas, c. 541, in his De Excidio Britanniae. How-
ever, as the monk attested, the writing was never intended
as a firm history, but rather a bitter epistle of reproach
to the Celtic people, which only incidently contained his-
torical references.[6] Still, from the latter fourth to mid-
fifth century Gildas was including material within living
memory and in the absence of more definitive history, is
extremely valuable.

There are two contemporary resources for information
on the Synod. The first is Vita Beati Wilfrithi Pontificis
by Eddius Stephanus, a religious companion of Wilfrid at
the Abbey of Ripon. Written in 720, it was a biography of
Wilfrid, who as the Latin spokesman, played a major role in
the Synod. Since this was a hagiographic work, the Synod
received only perfunctory treatment. The second resource
and by far the most valuable is the Historia Ecclesiastica
Gentis Anglorum written by Saint Bede in 731.[7] The interest
of Bede in the Easter controversy was demonstrated in his
earlier work, De Temporum Ratione, which bore directly on
the method of calculating dates of the Church year.[8] Since
the Synod hinged on this issue and was a turning point in
the ecclesiastical history of England, it was a major ele-
ment in Bede's Historia. He included a full background not
only of the Northumbrian struggle, but of the general ten-
sion between the Latin and Celtic missions throughout Eng-
land from the arrival of Saint Augustine of Canterbury. On

the Synod proper, Bede included a thorough description of
the persons attending, the respective arguments, and the
final outcome.

Bede's rendition of the Synod debate was selected for
two reasons. First, Bede had recorded essentially the same
points of discussion as had Stephanus in the earlier work.
This confirmed the accuracy of Bede's account. Second,
since Bede had written as a historian at greater length and
without Stephanus's hagiographic tendencies toward stereo-
typing and dramatics, the Historia is regarded as the clear-
er choice.[9]

While it may be felt that Bede as a Latin advocate
could not have represented the Celtic case fairly, Bede's
sense of history is attested in several ways.[10] In his own
writings Bede expressed a desire for truth and an awareness
of what constituted history:

> I humbly beg the reader, if he finds anything other
> than the truth set down in what I have written,
> not to impute it to me. For, in accordance with
> principles of true history, I have simply sought
> to commit to writing what I have collected from
> common report, for the instruction of posterity.[11]

Further, Bede, himself, cannot be counted as strictly a
Latin. He was a product of the co-mingling of the two tra-
ditions living as he did in a church of Latin structure,
but which retained the fervor of Celtic antecedents. For
all of his distaste for the Celtic Easter, Bede was sympa-
thetic to the ways of Celtic monasticism and obviously ad-
mired the quality of its members. Lastly, as this research
will show, the impact of the Celtic argument was

demonstrably forceful, even for its transmission through the
hands of a Latin monk. Thus, the <u>Historia</u> is assumed
sufficiently reliable to serve for a basis for this research.

Therefore, with these resources available, it is possible to achieve the objective set for this research. This is to determine the cause of Oswiu's conversion at the Synod of Whitby.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Frank M. Stenton, <u>Anglo-Saxon England</u> (Oxford, 1943), p. 129.

[2] <u>H.E.</u>, iii, 25, p. 183.

[3] Charles Oman, <u>England Before the Norman Conquest</u> (London, 1924), p. 290.

[4] D. P. Kirby, <u>The Making of Early England</u> (New York, 1967), p. 47.

[5] R. H. Hodgbin, <u>A History of the Anglo-Saxons, Vol. I</u> (Oxford, 1935), p. 295.

[6] Henry Marsh, <u>Dark Age Britain</u> (Hamden, Connecticut, 1970), pp. 21-2.

[7] The Bede, 673-735, is accorded the titles of Venerable or Saint dependent on the Protestant or Catholic sympathies of the authority consulted. "already in 936 a church council at Aachen referred to him as 'the venerable,' i.e. worthy of honor, but it was not till 1899 that Pope Leo XIII gave him formal recognition as a doctor of the Church." D. Atwater, <u>The Penguin Dictionary of Saints</u> (Baltimore, 1965), p. 61.

[8] Wilhelm Levison, "Bede as Historian," <u>Bede, His Life, Times, and Writings</u>, ed. Hamilton Thompson (New York, 1966), pp. 117-23.

[9] Ibid., pp. 111-51.

[10] Ibid., pp. 146-7.

[11] <u>H.E.</u>, praefatio, p. 8.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THE CELTIC CHURCH

The term Celtic church as used here refers to the
quasi-independent Christian rite that existed throughout
Ireland and parts of Britain during the fifth and sixth
centuries. The Celtic church was distinctive not only in
liturgy, since there was no uniformity among the continental
churches at this period, but also in its form of church
government and certain minor practices. One such practice
was the Celtic church's method of computing the date of
Easter. It must be stressed that the Celtic church was
orthodox and in technical communion with the Latin church.
This meant that the distinctions between the churches were
neither heretical nor schismatic during that period. The
nearest modern parallel to this situation is found within
the Roman Catholic Church and the relation between various
national rites within it such as the Latin rite and the
Ruthenian rite.

The Celtic church was the product of two phases of
development. The initial phase, c. 100-450, covered the
entry of Christianity into the British Isles, the ensuing
conversion of a portion of the native populus, and the
creation of a self-perpetuating church structure. In the

British Isles this initial conversion occurred in two stages
due to the division of the Isles by the border of the Roman
Empire. Christianity entered Roman Britain with relative
ease while its penetration of tribal Ireland required
greater time. The second phase of development was the iso-
lation of the Celtic church, c. 450-600, due to the collapse
of the Roman Empire and large scale migrations on the
Continent, which disrupted communication.

The advent of Christianity in the British Isles occur-
red in the second century. It is possible to dismiss imme-
diately the medieval assertions of origins due to the
Emperor Tiberius[1] or Joseph of Arimathea[2] in the first cen-
tury. The assertion about Tiberius is in conflict with
reliable known histories such as De Vita Caesarum by
Suetonius. The second assertion is of late medieval origin.
Thus there is no evidence to support a first century date.
Evidence found in the Annales Cambriae, c. 500, suggests
that a bishopric was founded in Eboracum, present York, in
151,[3] and Patristic sources mention Christianity in remote
parts of Britain by 208.[4] Less firmly dated, but still in-
formative, are the first British martyrdoms. These are
generally regarded by authorities as early to middle third
century during the reign of either Decius or Valerian.[5]
Evidence, therefore, supports the entry of Christianity in-
to Britiain during the second century and documents its
spread thereafter.

The character of the Christian missions changed in the

second century. The conversion of the Britons occurred
after the systematic missionary efforts of the Apostolic
Age. No longer were disciples continuing the work of
Peter and Paul. In founding diverse churches and personal-
ly supervising their activities, these apostles had created
a network of interdependent congregations acknowledging a
common head.[6] This was a basis of organization for church
government. In contrast a slow permeation spread Christi-
anity along the trade routes across Gaul and into Britain.
The first conversions of native Britons were the result of
contact with congregations of foreign Christians residing
in Britain.[7] This was the way the conversion of St. Alban,
who was the British proto-martyr, occurred. Alban, out of
humane instincts, had hidden a foreign priest during a
period of persecution. Impressed by the priest and his
ascetic way of life, Alban converted.[8] This undisciplined
mode of propagation of the new religion, while spreading
emotional commitment, did not promote any uniformity of
practice. As a result diversity was widespread into the
sixth century.[9] The Celtic church government in Britain
followed the typical episcopal pattern, as shown by the
existence of three dioceses in 314 when the bishops of York,
London, and Lincoln attended the Council of Arles. Although
heresy was known among the British,[10] the Celtic church re-
mained orthodox.[11] Thus, Christianity as it developed in
Britain conformed to standards of organization and theology
seen elsewhere.

The entry of Christianity into Ireland was less documented, and the exact date of its first appearance is largely supposition. Since Ireland lay outside of the Roman dominions, little was known of it in ancient times. Agricola, Roman governor of Britain, 78-85, believed that a crossing of the Irish Sea would have been beneficial to the Roman occupation of Britain, as recorded by Tacitus:

> I have often heard my father-in-law /Agricola/ say that with one legion and a fair contingent of irregulars Ireland could be overpowered and held, and that the occupation would be useful with regard to Britain also; for so Roman troops would be everywhere and liberty would sink, so to speak, below the horizon.[12]

But the expedition was never made and Ireland remained independent. As a result, the entry of Christianity occurred due to commercial activity, since neither Roman troops nor civil officials entered that country. Although there is disagreement over the amount of trade that crossed the Irish Sea, the route was apparently well established.[13] Contact with the Roman Empire is supported by archeological evidence. British merchants knew the harbors well, as reported by Tacitus: "we are better informed, thanks to trade of merchants, about the approaches to the island /Ireland/ and its harbours."[14] Such contact was sufficient to provide a crossing for Christianity.

Christianity was established in Ireland prior to the fourth century. The earliest notice of an Irish church occurred when the interest of the continental churches was aroused by the appearance of Pelagius. Pelagius, c. 360-

420, was a monk from the British Isles, reputedly Irish, who, appalled by moral laxity in Rome, began emphasizing greater personal responsibility for Christian salvation. He opposed the doctrine of Augustine of Hippo that human will was corrupt and intrinsically evil. In opposition to Augustine's belief that salvation was a gratuitous, irresistable predestined grace of God, Pelagius held that the salvific grace had to be available to all men based upon their moral responsibility. This meant that salvation was the proper exercise of human will to embrace the salvific grace and reject sin. Otherwise, in the view of Pelagius, salvation and damnation were directly and solely due to the intervention of God, who forced grace upon a few undeserving souls, while damning the remainder for sins committed because they lacked necessary grace to resist evil.[15] These beliefs sparked a controversy with Augustine of Hippo who led the African church in opposition through the first quarter of the fifth century. Due to Augustine's efforts, Pelagius was forced into exile and his views declared heretical. The heated exchange spurred Pope Celestine I to dispatch the Gallic bishop of Auxerre, Germanus, to Britain,[16] c. 429, to combat the heresy. The same pope, in 431, commissioned Palladius, deacon at Auxerre, as a bishop to the Christians in Ireland, probably to insure orthodox leadership.[17]

In 432, a second bishop went to northern Ireland and his missionary work earned him the title of Apostle of the

Irish. This was Saint Patrick, who typified the dependence of the embryonic Irish church on its British and Gallic antecedents. Patrick was British, but had been carried away to Ireland in his youth as a captive. After six years of slavery, he escaped and returned to Britain. However, he felt impelled to return and save the Irish pagans who he heard in visions calling out to him, "and thus did they cry out as with one mouth: 'We ask thee, boy, come and walk among us once more.'"[18] Patrick sought consecration in Gaul, possibly at Auxerre, and he returned to Ireland.[19] Thus, as a Briton educated by the Gallic church, Patrick brought Christianity into Ireland during the fifth century adding the distinctive practices of the British and Gallic churches to the common Christian creed of the church in Ireland.

The second major phase in the formation of the Celtic church was the insular period. This phase resulted from the collapse of Roman order throughout Europe. In a sense, the Irish raid which carried away Patrick was symptomatic of the Empire's failing defenses. In Gaul, the disintegration of order began in 405, when the frontier was stripped of garrisons for use in Italy. This allowed a number of tribes to cross the border and ravage the province of Gaul. A series of migrations began across the province which continued until the establishment of a Frankish kingdom. While there was considerable violence in the collapse of Roman defense, the bulk of the native Gallic population survived the

invasions. However, the frail urban culture nurtured by Rome in the West was dealt a mortal blow.[20] The province was broken into small ethnic kingdoms, which disrupted trade routes and ended the mobility necessary for urban existence. With the destruction of civil order and trade centers, travel became hazardous. All but a fraction of the communication and commerce that passed through Gaul ground to a halt. Both the British and Irish church after this date maintained only erratic and occasional contact with the major Christian churches.

Yet more significant for the Celtic church than the collapse of Gaul was the complete destruction of British society, which left the new Irish church as the surviving center of Celtic Christianity. In Britain throughout the latter half of the fifth century, abortive bids for the imperial throne sapped its garrisons. The most successful attempt was that of Maximus in 383. He achieved the title of Western Emperor for five years, but in doing so, he permanently stripped Hadrian's Wall of its garrison.[21] Faced with northern invasions, the British appealed for support; in 397 Stilicho responded and stemmed the advance of the Picts and the Irish.[22] In a general reorganization of British defenses, Stilicho established a number of native tribes as feoderati, or allies who were to garrison and defend the borders. He also built a series of forts on the Saxon Shore which faced Germany. In 402 Stilicho was forced to call away another of the British legions to defend Italy.[23]

A new usurper, Constantine, gained the support of the remaining troopes and in 407 he took the legions to the Continent.[24] After his defeat, the Britons sought the return of Roman government but were advised by the Emperor Honorius in 410 to take control into their own hands.[25] There was a second appeal, which cannot be accurately dated. Apparently aid was dispatched by a provincial commander in Gaul,[26] since there is no record of further military aid from Rome. C. 444 native defenses suffered a major defeat since the Britons sent another appeal to Aetius, consul in 446:

> 'To Aetius, thrice consul, come the groans of the Britons. ...The barbarians drive us to the sea: the sea throws us back on the barbarians; thus two modes of death await us: we are either slain or drown.[27]

The consul, facing the advance of the Huns, had to refuse and advised the Britons to defend themselves.

British military defenses developed from the feoderati, or allied client-states, of Stilicho. Each kingdom was under the rule of tribal leaders, and a number of these banded together under the leadership of a warchief or high-king. Gildas, writing c. 547, recorded that Vortigern was the high-king in the mid-fifth century, and had summoned the Saxons into Britain:

> Then all the councillors, together with that proud tyrant Gurthrigern /Vortigern/, the British king, were so blinded, that, as a protection to their country, they sealed their doom by inviting among them...the fierce and impious Saxons,...to repel the invasions of the northern nations.[28]

Vortigern, c. 446-470, had intended for the Saxons to serve as feoderati, in imitation of Roman methods; however, the

Saxons were a deadly ally. Gildas recalled that they came
"like wolves into the sheepfold."[29] In violation of the
treaty, the Saxons turned on their allies and ravaged the
Celtic lands.

> all the husbandmen routed, together with their
> bishops, priests, and people, whilest the sword
> gleamed and the flames crackled around them on
> every side. Lamentable to behold, in the midst
> of the streets lay the tops of lofty towers tumbled
> to the ground, stones of high walls, holy altars,
> fragments of human bodies, covered with livid
> clots of coagulated blood...and with no chance
> of being buried save in the ruins of the houses,
> or in the ravening bellies of wild beasts and
> birds.[30]

The Saxon inroads swept across the southwestern part of Eng-
land and up the basins of the Thames and Umber Rivers. A
new coalition showing strong Roman influences, organized a
defense around the Severn estuary, in present Somerset.
Ambrosius Aurelianus, a Roman descendent, was able to rally
Celtic strength and hold the invasions.[31] The second leader
of this coalition, called by Nennius a dux rather than a
king, won a series of battles which reversed to some extent
the Saxon advances. This was probably the Celtic folk-hero
Arthur, to whom is attributed the decisive victory at Badon
Hill, c. 490-517. This victory confined the Saxons to their
coastal holdings for approximately a generation.[32] In this
period, internal strife within the coalition developed into
civil war. The Annales Cambriae note that in 537 Arthur
was slain in the Battle of Camlann, and Celtic resistance
deteriorated. The Battle of Dyrnham in 577 broke the
Celtic front. The West Saxons swept across Somerset to the

Irish Sea and cut off Cornwall from Wales.[33] The Saxon ad-
vance had driven the Celts out of the lowlands and into the
mountains of Wales and Cumbria. In the advance, the British
population had been exterminated and with it the British
church.

By the middle of the sixth century contact with the
Continent had become sporadic, and Britain was locked in a
death struggle with the seaborne invasions of the Angles and
Saxons. Since Christianity had reached Ireland only in the
fourth century, the ensuing isolation led to several promi-
nent developments. First, Christianity had adapted to a
radically different social environment. Christianity was a
product of Roman culture. The language of the Empire, Latin,
became its liturgical language; the intellectual achieve-
ments of late antiquity were the basis of the Patristic
writings; and even the political structure of the church
was modelled on that of the Empire.[34] Therefore, the
Christian clergy were organized in a ranked hierarchy just
as the consuls, prefects, and governors of the civil admin-
istration had been. Indeed, certain jurisdictional terms
such as prefecture and diocese became congruent for ecclesi-
astical usage. Due to Roman control and three centuries of
intimate contact with Christian centers the continental pat-
terns of church government had been established in Britain.
Ireland, which was to be the surviving heartland of the
Celtic church, was a different matter.

Irish society, as Patrick found it in 432, was markedly

different from Roman. The urban centers, which were the hubs
of the Empire and the focus of social, economic, communica-
tive and political activity, did not exist in the folk soci-
ety of Ireland. The nexus of Irish society was kinship,
which ascribed both an individual's status and his social
role. The entire society was regulated by a pervasive and
meticulous custom that defined each phase of society and its
relationship to others. All major aspects of Celtic life
returned to these related features of kinship and custom.[35]
The central element of Irish society was the clan. It drew
its existence from consanguineal and affineal kinship ties.
The clan was the chief enforcer of custom. Even the history
was preserved by oral tradition, which was closely bound to
the geneological lore of each clan. Land tenure was held in
common by the clan. Further, the government of Ireland as a
whole was based on the shifting interrelationships of clans.
Such a complex of social traits is known as a chiefdom.[36]

Celtic society posed unusual problems for the estab-
lishment of a church structure. In the absence of a power-
ful exterior influence to impose conventional social modes
on Celtic society such as happened in Britain, Christianity
of necessity adapted to the Irish environmental patterns for
survival. Patrick, in the fifth century, had established
dioceses on the continental pattern; however, these dioceses
rapidly changed in character during the succeeding period.
Christianity in the Roman Empire had been urban-oriented.
In Ireland due to the lack of cities, each bishop became

associated with an influential chief's seat of government.[37]
In Irish society the relative rank of chieftains to whom the
bishops became associated was not stable. Such a tie be-
tween the court of a minor chief and the church accomplished
according to continental patterns meant that the bishop
shared the fluctuating rank of the chief. The hierarchical
authority of Christian clergy had depended to a large extent
on the size and rank of their urban seats. Land necessary
for the economic base of the church could not be alienated
from the clan. As a result, churches that received grants
came to be regarded as a cult center for that clan. This
injected aspects of clan control into church organization.
This fluid state of society hampered any development of an
all-embracing national church structure in Ireland.
Further, since the church was buttressed by the clan's au-
thority and it existed on clan lands, church jurisdiction
became clan-based so that an immigrant owed loyalty only to
the bishop in the region of his birth. Conventional urban
institutions of the continental church were threatened in
Celtic society.

A model for church organization based on kinship devel-
oped from the monastic communities. A monastery on clan
lands would draw its membership from that clan, its leader-
ship would come from the chief family, and would serve as
the clan cult center. Also, the authority of the abbot-
bishop was modelled on that of a patriarchy, which was well
suited for acceptance in a chiefdom. The loyalty of a clan

to its monastery, the monks to an abbot, and secondary
monastic foundations to the motherhouse were modelled on
kinship. So well did this fit Irish society that such
monastic foundations, known as monastic _paruchiae_, spread
widely. Without geographic limits to restrict their growth,
the _paruchiae_ easily outstripped the territorial dioceses
in influence and wealth.[38] So predominant was the develop-
ing position of the major abbot that in some cases the epis-
copal office became subordinate to its paternal authority.[39]
In some respects, the monasteries substituted for urban
centers in Celtic society fulfilling such needed functions
as preserving literacy and arts, which were usually urban-
based, and serving as trade and communication centers.
Celtic Christianity was rooted in a society alien to that
of Rome, and the Celtic church bore its mark.

The monastic heart of the Celtic church still was
founded on the Pachomian model of monasticism that had come
out of Egypt in the fourth century.[40] This form was
disciplinarian, yet more austere, than the Benedictine re-
forms which had replaced it on the Continent. Being less
structured, Pachomian monasticism was based on the charis-
matic influence of its abbot. The anchorite tendencies of
its proponents were in contrast to the more communal ap-
proach of the Rule of Saint Benedict. This continental
style of monasticism frowned on extremes in individual
asceticism of members. As a widely accepted social

institution, continental monasticism embraced a wider percentage of the population and had compromised the rigors of asceticism to meet the common capacities of human nature. It stressed the social relationships and roles of members of the community. While the spectacular piety of Pachomian undoubtedly was inspiring, it had been too rare to serve as a basis for a continuing institution on the Continent. Yet, its loose structure and great fervor meshed well with Celtic society and had survived.

The organization of Celtic church government followed this same individualistic pattern. The major paruchiae, their abbots, and Celtic bishops had supervised and exerted little control over each other. The Celtic church had never developed a metropolitan bishop. There was a general loyalty to the Papacy and the See of Armagh as the see of Saint Patrick. This loyalty was never translated into any authority. As a result there was considerable conflict on occasion between church groups, and lay exploitation of church property was common.[41] The outcome of such a rudimentary organization and such an inherently reactionary tradition was that the Celtic church lacked both the initiative and the means to modernize. Upon the arrival of the Latin missions, which the Celtic clergy viewed as prideful and unworthy, it re-entrenched itself in its own past.[42]

Other distinctions had sprung up simply because the Celtic church had missed the controversies which had spurred development in the Mediterranean churches during the fifth

and sixth centuries. Saint Augustine of Canterbury, on his
arrival in Kent in 597, was confronted with Christian prac-
tices two hundred years behind his own. The Celtic church
had some awareness of the Arian conflict and possibly had
participated in the Council of Nicaea in 325. The other
major Christological controversies of the Nestorians,
Monophysites, and the Monothelites were unknown in the Celt-
ic church. The Celtic church had preserved the ancient
creed, which was orthodox but also ambiguous. The creed
taught by the continental churches was in general respect
identical with that of the Celtic church, but on these
particular issues it was more specific and definitive due
to its refinement by conflict. The Celtic church had never
faced these questions and thus had developed no stance; a
resurgent heresy, banished in the Mediterranean, might have
ruptured their orthodoxy, which was based in preservation,
not definition. Therefore, unlike the progressive churches
of the Mediterranean the Celtic church saw the role of the
church as one of preservation.

The differences in the two churches were based not in
doctrine, but in practice. An obvious distinction was the
method of tonsure, since the Celtic clergy shaved the front
of the head from ear to ear leaving the back long, while the
Latin priests shaved only the crown.[43] Saint Augustine of
Canterbury listed two points of difference which he demand-
ed be brought into conformity: the method of baptism and
the dating of Easter.[44] The Celtic form of baptism was not

specified, but the Easter controversy had a long history.

The problem of dating Easter was an inheritance from the Jewish lunar calendar. Easter is the most ancient Christian observance and was determined by the Jewish calendar, coinciding as it had originally with Passover. With the decline of the number of Jewish Christians during the first century and the rapid spread of Christianity among the Gentiles, problems appeared. Since the majority of the converts followed the Julian solar calendar, the Jewish calendar became obscure. A further innovation in the second century occurred with the Roman practice of reserving the Easter observance for the Sunday after Passover. This practice became widespread, but the problem of reconciling the lunar calendar with the more widely used solar calendar remained. This complex mathematical and astronomical problem resulted in various proposed methods of calculation with varying degrees of accuracy. Generally, most churchmen desired to establish a set cycle so that Easter would reoccur in a set pattern after a set interval of years.

In the third century, an eighty-four year cycle was approved in Rome, while Alexandria followed the nineteen year cycle developed by Anatolius. Britain participated in the Council of Arles in 314, which approved the Roman method. At Rome in 468 a compromise was attempted between the old Roman cycle of eighty-four years and the Alexandrian method, which used the 532-year cycle proposed by Victorius. The compromise failed. Ultimately Rome settled on a variation

of the Alexandrian cycle developed by Dionysius Exiguus.[45]
However, the last Celtic contact with the continental
churches was recorded in the _Annales Cambriae_ in 455 and the
Celtic church retained the older method of the eighty-four
year cycle.

Conflicting dates of Easter in the Celtic and Latin
churches posed only a nominal problem as long as it involved
only an occasional Celtic missionary on the Continent.[46]
The Irish were active missionaries in the north of Britain
among the Irish colonists and the native Picts. Ninian, an
Irish monk, had worked among the southern Picts in the fifth
century. Columba, or Columcille, who died in 597, founded
the great monastery at Iona, which became the motherhouse
for the evangelism of the northern Picts.[47] Among the
daughter houses of Iona was Lindisfarne in Northumbria,
which later became the seat of the Celtic church in the
North.[48] Thus, the Celtic church at the end of the sixth
century embraced all of Ireland and Wales, the Briton popu-
lation in Cornwall and Cumbria, and the converted parts of
Pictland. Its influence was felt throughout the Anglo-Saxon
heptarchy. The Celtic church had preserved archaic forms
and tenets which were coupled with unique forms of church
government. When Augustine landed at Kent, he carried Papal
letters giving him authority over all the bishops of the
Britons.[49] It was only a matter of time before the Celtic
church and the Latin missions came into general conflict.[50]
The question of Easter became a matter of survival to the
Celtic church.

FOOTNOTES

¹D.E.B., viii.

²H. Marsh, Dark Age Britain (Hamden, Connecticut, 1970), p. 25.

³Ibid., p. 52.

⁴Tertullian, "Liber Adversus Judaeos," vii, in Patrologia Latina,II, ed. J. Migne (Paris, 1844-65), pp. 610-1.

⁵J. Godfrey, The Church in Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge, 1962), pp.12-3, takes issue with the date of 303 drawn from Gildas, xi-xii, and finds evidence for a date of c. 249; Warren, C.M.H.,II,p. 497, also holds the reigns of Decius or Valerian as more probable.

⁶Romans 16: 17-20; I Corinthians 11.

⁷Warren, C.M.H., II, p. 497.

⁸D.E.B., xi.

⁹Liturgical differences were still extant in 595 as observed by Augustine in his journey from Rome to Britain. Such differences were generally tolerated unless there were indications of heresy. H.E., i, 27; H.E., i, 30; and H.E., ii, 19. However, in Britain, the animosity of the conflict had led by Bede's time to the assumption that the recalcitrant Celtic adherents were heretical. H.E., ii, 2.

¹⁰Warren, C.M.H., p. 498; D.E.B., xii.

¹¹Warren, C.M.H., p. 500.

¹²Tacitus, Agricola, xxiv, 3.

¹³There is disagreement on the extent of trade that passed between the Roman Empire and Ireland. K. Hughes, The Church in Early Irish Society (Ithaca, New York, 1966), takes the negative viewpoint, on any great amount of commerce because Irish society showed no evidence of Roman influence. However, B. Lehane, The Quest of Three Abbots

(New York, 1968), finds the evidence supports an established trade route across the Irish Sea. M. and L. dePaor, Early Christian Ireland (New York, 1958), state that beekeeping and the use of the water mill were imported from Roman Britain. This would indicate a fairly regular intercourse since the use of a water mill would require some prior knowledge of its mode of operation. Further, a hive of bees was not an extremely likely object to be borne away in a raid.

[14] Tacitus, Agricola, xxiv, 1-2.

[15] "Predestination," in N.C.E. (New York, 1967), XI, pp. 714-7.

[16] H.E., i, 17, p. 34.

[17] H.E., i, 13, p. 28.

[18] Patrick, Confessions, xxiii.

[19] Ibid., x-lxii; Nennius, History of the Britons, 1-lvi.

[20] M. Manitius, C.M.H., I, p. 266.

[21] D.E.B., xiii; H.E., i, 9; G. Durant, Britain: Rome's Most Northerly Province (London, 1969), pp. 157-9.

[22] Durant, pp. 160-1; D.E.B., xv; H.E., i, 12, p. 26.

[23] Durant, pp. 161-2.

[24] H.E., i, 11, p. 24.

[25] Durant, p. 165.

[26] H.E., ii, 12, p. 27; D.E.B., xvii.

[27] D.E.B., xx.

[28] D.E.B., xxiii.

[29] Ibid.

[30] D.E.B., xxiv.

[31] D.E.B., xxv; L. Alcock, Was This Camelot? Excavations at Cadbury Castle, 1966-70 (New York, 1972), pp. 11-23.

[32] Nennius, 1; D.E.B., xxvi.

[33] A.S.C., A.D. 577.

[34] W. Walker, _A History of the Christian Church_ (New York, 1959), p. 82.

[35] K. Hughes, pp. 10-16.

[36] Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society," in _American Journal of Sociology_, LIII (January, 1947), pp. 293-308.

[37] Elman Service, _Profiles in Ethnology_ (New York, 1961), pp. 496-8.

[38] Hughes, p. 68.

[39] Ibid., pp. 39-90.

[40] _H.E._, iii, 4, p. 134; dePaor, p. 50; Hughes, p. 63.

[41] W. Walker, p. 126.

[42] Hughes, p. 69.

[43] _H.E._, ii, 2, p. 83.

[44] B. Colgrave, ed., "Footnote," in _H.E._, p. 139.

[45] _H.E._, ii, 2, pp. 82-3.

[46] J. Ford, "Easter Controversy," _N.C.E._, (New York, 1967), V, pp. 8-9.

[47] B. Colgrave, ed., "Footnote," in _H.E._, p. 147.

[48] _H.E._, iii, 4, p. 133.

[49] _H.E._, i, 29, p. 64.

[50] _H.E._, ii, 2, pp. 81-2.

CHAPTER III

THE KING

King Oswiu as the ruler of Northumbria had summoned the
Synod and officiated over the debate. It was apparently
Oswiu alone that rendered judgment.[1] His role in the Synod
was, therefore, fundamental. He must be considered in order
to comprehend fully both the arguments and his surprising
decision.

The kings of both Diera and Bernicia, which in union
comprised Northumbria, traced their ancestry from Woden.

> A.D. 547. This year Ida began his reign; from
> which first arose the royal kindred of the Nor-
> thumbrians. Ida was the son of Eoppa, Eoppa of
> Esa, Esa of Ingwy, Ingwy of Angenwit, Angenwit
> of Alloc, Alloc of Bennoc, Bennoc of Brand,
> Brand of Balday, Balday of Woden.[2]

In 588 Aella, king of Diera, died and was succeeded by
Aethelric of Bernicia, the grandfather of Oswiu, who joined
the two realms under his rule. His son Aethelfrith assumed
the joint throne in 593 and married Acha of Diera, daughter
of Aella. However, Aella's heir Edwin was still alive and
a threat to the stability of the union. Attempts to ar-
range Edwin's death failed, and on his majority, Edwin
marched north from East Anglia and overthrew Aethelfrith,
whose sons Eanfrith, Oswald, and Oswiu fled north into
exile. Edwin of Diera ruled both realms from 617 to 633.

In his reign, Christianity was introduced due to Edwin's
marriage to Aethelburg, a Christian princess of Kent.
Upon his death the kingdom divided again, Diera going to
his nephew Osric and Bernicia returning to the elder son of
Aethelfrith, Eanfrith.

Osric of Diera and Eanfrith of Bernicia were both
pagans and were slain within the year by Caedwalla, king of
the Britons. The crowns of both kingdoms passed to Oswald,
since he was related to both lines. Oswald reigned until
642. Upon his death, Northumbria again split. Deira
went to Oswine, the son of Osric, and Oswiu of Bernicia
assumed his brother's throne.

> A.D. 642. This year Oswald, king of the Nor-
> thumbrians, was slain by Penda, king of the
> Southumbrians /Mercians/, at Mirfield on the
> fifth day of August; ... The same year in
> which Oswald was slain, Oswy /Oswiu/ his
> brother succeeded to the government of the
> Northumbrians, and reigned two less than
> thirty years.[3]

It was not, however, until 651 that Oswiu gained control of
Diera through the assassination of Oswine.

> He /Oswine/ went with one faithful thegn named
> Tondhere and hid in the home of a gesith named
> Hunwold, whom he believed to be his friend ....
> The gesith betrayed him to Oswiu who caused him
> to be foully murdered, together with his thegn.[4]

With Northumbria under his control, Oswiu challenged the
might of Mercia, whose king Penda had slain the four
previous kings of Northumbria.

> The battle was joined and the heathen were put
> to flight or destroyed; of the thirty royal
> ealdormen who had come to Penda's help nearly
> all were killed.[5]

31

<blockquote>
A.D. 655. Penda was slain at Wingfield, and
thirty royal personages with him, some of whom
were kings.[6]
</blockquote>

This victory gave Oswiu the position of high king, or
bretwalda, which consisted of nominal suzereignty over all
the English. To solidify his claim to the throne, Oswiu
previously had married Eanflæd, daughter of Edwin, and
from 655 to 670 he ruled over not only Northumbria but all
England. From his exile of 617, Oswiu had come a great way
to become bretwalda in 655. His background included his
education at Iona, his conversion to Christianity, the
murder of his rival in Diera, and several major military
victories. All of these came as a part of Oswiu to the
Synod.

Since the significance of the Synod and the debate
depend on the assumption that King Oswiu had not made his
decision prior to the meeting, some evidence of Oswiu's
uncertainty is necessary. First, Oswiu was able to enforce
any decision which he made concerning the affairs of the
church in Northumbria. This was amply demonstrated at the
Synod when he approved the Latin minority and by flat de-
cree forced compliance. Secondary sources, regardless of
attitudes concerning the Synod, are in agreement on this
point. Further, beginning with the relationship between
the Kentish king and St. Augustine, the English church was
submissive to the will of the monarch.[7] This tradition of
royal control in church government while on occasion caus-
ing conflict, was generally accepted. Considering both

Oswiu's power to coerce the obedience of the Northumbrian
church and the tradition of royal interference, Oswiu had
little reason to engage in such an elaborate subterfuge, if
it was one, to disguise his real motives. If he had truly
made his decision as firmly as averred, he had only to de-
cree the fact and it would have been law throughout North-
umbria; yet, rather than immediate action, Oswiu summoned
the Synod. This action can be explained in that the growing
dispute, even within his own household, had shaken his nat-
ural faith in the Celtic rite, but had not given him any
confidence in the opposing Latin rite either. Such doubt
would explain his need to call the Synod, since he had no
need to resort to it if his convictions had remained Celtic.
His failure to change the religious orientation by his own
power indicates no conviction, either religious or political,
however, regarding the Latins. Oswiu was undecided and
wanted justification, then, before he acted.

Examination of other suggested motives for Oswiu's de-
cision for the Latin church do not support a prior decision.
In consideration of the general quality of the English
church, the establishment of the Latin church was beneficial.
Through broad contacts on the Continent, the Latin church
was able to import skilled masons for architectural improve-
ment, great numbers of books for learning, and churchmen of
great ability such as Theodore of Tarsus, who as Archbishop
of Canterbury from 669 to 690 unified the English church.[8]
However, as impressive as Latin achievements were at the

beginning of the eighth century, they were uncertain in 664 when Oswiu rendered his decision. Even if Oswiu had guessed at the possibility, it is unlikely that it would have loomed larger in his decision than his own pressing interests in Northumbria's stability or his own personal salvation.

Militarily, Oswiu had already achieved overlordship of the English with his victory at Wingfield in 655.[9] Of the kingdoms surrounding Northumbria, the Picts, the Dal-riata Irish, and the Cumbria British followed the Celtic church, and defeated Mercia to the south was largely pagan. The Latin church was established only on the southern coast in Wessex and Kent. The change of his religion, while it might have increased Oswiu's influence in the south, alienated his closest neighbors. Religion had also proven a weak bond as seen in 633 when Cædwalla, a Christian, had allied with pagan Mercia against the Christian king of Northumbria.[10] Therefore, no military security was to be gained by Oswiu's conversion.

The political situation in seventh century Northumbria, like the military, does not suggest any decisive pressure upon Oswiu to convert to the Latin rite. Northumbria's political organization was still based upon the dynastic principle and was administered as an adjunct to the royal household and estates. In such a context, the Latin rite had little to excite interest. While it could offer educated and literate clergy to assist in administration, there is no evidence that it advocated a change in disposition of the crown, role

of the monarch, or the fealty of nobles to the king.[11] In
the conversion of the English, the Latin rite did not intro-
duce unique reforms or radical advancements in the mode of
Anglo-Saxon government. In a society like the Anglo-Saxon
due to indistinct and ambiguous higher institutions, such
contacts were usually made in the manner of dynastic mar-
riages as that of Bertha of France to Aethelbert of Kent
c. 580.[12] This tied statecraft to the well-defined social
institution of marriage. A clearer indication of a desire
for communication with the Continent would have been seen in
a marriage with a Continental or at least southern English
wife; however, Oswiu married a woman of Dieran royalty show-
ing a greater interest in Northumbrian internal affairs
than with national politics. Nor is there reason to suppose
that the dispute on the Paschal date supposed any partisan
split in the sense of an impending civil conflict. If a
strong pro-Latin faction had existed headed by his heir ap-
parent, Oswiu, as discussed previously, had no need to plot
such a devious course to placate it. The meeting was reli-
gious in aspect, and both speakers were clerics. The dis-
tinctions in dating were complex and of limited interest to
a layman. Finally, Oswiu's decision was readily accepted
without violence indicating general submissiveness to what-
ever course Oswiu chose to follow religiously.[13]

Further, the exact political, and for that matter soc-
ial, role of an institution independent of royal authority
and based upon a celibate clergy was difficult to integrate

with Anglo-Saxon society. Once, the king had been reckoned
a descendent of the gods, sacrosanct and an intermediary be-
tween man and gods, but Christianity had ended this. Since
the church assumed the role of intercessor, what relation
did it have to the king, who could neither be descendent,
or in-law to the institution? The development of a
singularly established church and sacerdotal kingship would
solve this at a later date, but at the time of Oswiu, a
political role for the church was undeveloped.[14] Finally,
politics were conducted in a brutally simple manner in this
period as shown by the manner in which Oswiu eliminated the
Deiran king to achieve the union of Deira and Bernicia, mur-
der.[15] Thus, the Latin rite presented no outstanding polit-
ical utility for Oswiu in 664. It is, therefore, improbable
that it played any decisive role in his final decision.

Lastly, a brief study of economics of the seventh cen-
tury does not support it as a factor in Oswiu's decision.
The economic ties which existed with the Continent indicate
little to be gained by closer religious ties. Anglo-Saxon
society at this period, c. 650-700, while advanced beyond
the simple tribal arrangement, was not yet genuinely a na-
tion-state. Such intermediate societies generally lack a
market economy with a distinct merchantile class that would
have stimulated Oswiu's interest in trade contacts with the
Continent.[16] Indeed, considering rudimentary development
of class structure in such societies and lack of knowledge
of economic principles for the period, there was probably

not a clear understanding of what posture was most economically in their own interest. Further, archeological and historical evidence shows that if Oswiu had been truly interested in economic benefits, logically, he would have shown an interest in Islam to establish contacts with the thriving Moslem states, rather than with Latin Europe, which was suffering a depressed economic condition due to loss of its trade routes in the Mediterranean.[17]

Such elements taken together indicate that Oswiu was quite secure in his position without the limited support that the Latin church could offer. In addition, as Wilfrid was to prove in Northumbria, Latin clergy were less amenable to the tradition of royal intervention in ecclesiastical affairs.[18] Lastly, neither of the two contemporary records, Stephanus and Bede, give any inference that Oswiu had made his decision prior. But it is quite the reverse in Bede. Based upon such evidence, a prior decision by Oswiu was improbable, and the major influence of the discussed factors could not be demonstrated sufficiently to warrant deviation from the proven sources. In fact, there is very little, excepting modern conjecture, to show that anything but a religious motive spurred Oswiu to call the Synod or that his decision was in anyway inevitable, irresistible, or irrevocable.

FOOTNOTES

[1]H.E., iii, 25, p. 189; F. S. Betten, "The So-Called Council of Whitby," C.H.R., XIII (1927-8), p. 627.

[2]A.S.C., A.D. 547.

[3]Ibid., A.D. 642.

[4]H.E., iii, 14, p. 155.

[5]H.E., iii, 24, p. 178.

[6]A.S.C., A.D. 655.

[7]C. Oman, England Before the Norman Conquest (London, 1924), p. 654.

[8]M. Deanesly, The Pre-Conquest Church in England (New York, 1961), pp. 104-22.

[9]A.S.C., A.D. 655.

[10]H.E., ii, 20, p. 124.

[11]N. Cantor, The English (New York, 1967), pp. 56-8.

[12]Deanesly, p. 49.

[13]H.E., iii, 25, p. 189.

[14]Cantor, p. 58.

[15]H.E., iii, 14, p. 155.

[16]Elman Service, Profiles in Ethnology (New York, 1961), pp. 499-500.

[17]Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe (New York, 1937), p. 2-12.

[18]V.W., xxiv, xlv.

CHAPTER IV

THE SYNOD

The immediate cause of the Synod was the division in
Northumbria that occurred due to the competition of the
Latin and Celtic churches. There had been a general Celtic
influence throughout Northumbria, as it was bounded on the
north and west by Picts and Britons, who followed the Celtic
usage. Also, the few surviving remnants of British Christi-
anity such as the scattered shrines, were all associated
with the Celtic church. However, King Edwin had been con-
verted to Christianity in 627 by his Kentish wife's chaplain,
the Latin priest Paulinus.[1] As a foreign courtier, Paulinus
had considerable influence with the king, but also as a
courtier he was opposed by others at the court. This hos-
tility became evident on the death of his patron, and in the
pagan reaction which followed, Paulinus and Queen Aethelburg,
fled with her children back to Kent. Representing the Latin
church, Paulinus left only his deacon at York.[2]

After the interregnum, Oswald called upon the Celtic
church he had known during his exile to re-establish Christi-
anity in Northumbria. In answer, the monastery of Iona dis-
patched the bishop Aidan who founded a monastery on the is-
land of Lindisfarne to serve as his seat. It was common

Celtic practice to establish the bishop's principal monas-
tery at a rather remote rural location rather than estab-
lishing it at the court as in Bamburgh in Northumbria.
Since the Celtic influence was located rurally instead of
at the court, it had a more popular appeal and was less in-
clined to share dynastic disasters.[3] Aidan's influence was
widespread and he was venerated deeply even after the Latin
victory. Except for the Latin deacon at York, the Celtic
church became the established church in Northumbria. Numer-
ous royal grants were made to produce a series of abbeys and
monasteries which became the basis of church structure in
Northumbria.[4]

Latin influence returned when Oswiu took Eanflæd, the
daughter of Edwin, as his queen. From her position as
queen, Eanflæd became the patroness of a revived Latin party
in the court. Her chaplain was a Latin priest, Romanus, and
she selected a Latin sympathizer as tutor to Prince Alhfrith.
To this tutor name Wilfrid, she granted lands for the monas-
tery of Ripon. The result was that Oswiu, who had united
Northumbria and achieved recognition as bretwalda, was fac-
ing dissention within his own realm and in his own home.

The opposition between the Celtic and Latin churches in
Northumbria had several causes. Foremost, the conflict was
a reflection of the hostile relations between the Celtic
church and the See of Canterbury. This hostility resulted
from cultural misunderstandings amply shown in the initial
conferences of Augustine with the Celtic bishops. Seven

Celtic bishops and a delegation of their learned men sought
advice from an anchorite on how they should regard the Latin
archbishop.

> He answered, 'If he is a man of God follow him....
> If this Augustine is meek'and lowly of heart, it
> is to be supposed that he bears the yoke of
> Christ...; but if he is harsh and proud, it fol-
> lows he is not from God and we have no need to
> regard his words.'[5]

Even at this, the Celtic clergy inquired for a sure method
of testing Augustine. The hermit replied in a way which re-
vealed a great deal about Celtic values.

> He said, 'Contrive that he and his followers arrive
> first at the meeting place and, if he rises on
> your approach, you will know that he is a ser-
> vant of Christ and will listen to him obedi-
> ently; but if he dispises you and is not will-
> ing to rise in your presence...you should
> dispise him in return.' They did as he had
> said. Now it happened that Augustine remain-
> ed seated while they were coming in; when they
> saw this, they forthwith became enraged, setting
> him down as a proud man.[6]

Augustine as the papally appointed superior of these back-
woods bishops could not rise according to Latin custom with-
out demeaning his authority. Thus the misunderstanding be-
gan with the Celtic adherents seeing the Latins as proud and
unworthy and the Latins, in turn, believing the Celtic cler-
gy to live "simplicitate rustica."[7] as Wilfrid charged. The
tension continued, especially in Northumbria where there was
close association between the Celtic and Latin churches in
the same country. The exchanges became still more impas-
sioned due to factors of personality, as when the Latin,
Ronan, admonished the abbot Finian on the Easter question
and the discussion became bitter and acrimonious.

However, as divisive as the question was in the realm,
the existence of the rivals in the same court disrupted the
royal household. The varying reckonings of Easter had sev-
eral times seen the king and thegns feasting in celebration
of Easter as the Queen and her attendants kept fast for Palm
Sunday. Nor was a week the largest interval of conflict.
In 577 the holyday had been kept on March 21, April 18, or
April 25, depending on whether one used the Alexandrian,
Victorian, or Celtic reckoning.[8] Such an interval would
have seen Lent being kept at court by one group or another
for seventy days. This would have been penance beyond even
what a Celtic sympathizer such as Oswiu could have tolerated.
Since both churches demanded a rigorous and austere observ-
ance of Lent with fasts and abstinence from meat, it meant
king and queen could not eat the same food nor eat in the
same room nor have food from the same kitchen.[9] Multiply
this by the number in each party and the royal household was
in chaos. Oswiu decided to have the matter settled once and
for all and issued his call to a synod so that civil not
religious authority borought the issue to resolution.

In issuing the call, Oswiu was utilizing a form of
church government known and respected by both churches. The
Celtic church had seen regular convocations of clergy for
various pronouncements such as that which banished Colum-
cille.[10] To the Latin church, it was in the tradition of
regional councils and synods such as the African Synod of
Carthage in 416, which condemned the teaching of Pelagius.

However, it is clear from the format that royal authority, not ecclesiastical, was the motivation and enforcer of this Synod. As much as the Latin bishops might urge English kings to the imitation of Constantine in the use of royal powers for the defense and advancement of the church,[11] the rise of the corresponding element of royal control in church affairs was never their intent.[12] This was especially true in England, which was governed as a unit from Canterbury, but in fact which was broken into almost a dozen kingdoms. Nonetheless, royal authority at Whitby made the appellation of synod something of a misnomer.[13] The gathering was more properly a royal witan, a consultation between a lord and his nobles on any major question. This was similar to that of Edwin before his conversion, in which he posed the question of his conversion and received the advice of his nobles.[14] This seriously altered the character of the gathering, for it was no longer a matter of developing a consensus of episcopal views for a definitive statement, but rather a program of salesmanship to sell the monarch on each church. This placed further significance on the arguments presented before Oswiu.

The clergy of both churches were represented at Whitby. The Celtic delegation was larger and led by the abbot-bishop of Lindisfarne, Colman, who because of the lapse of the Latin archbishopric in 633 was metropolitan of Northumbria.[15] A second Celtic bishop, Cedd, was there visiting from his see in East Anglia. The abbey of Streanæshealh under its

abbess Hild was Celtic, and a number of her monks and nuns were in attendance. Also there was a retinue of the bishops which Bede described as "clericis suis de Scotia."[16] Lastly, since the king, even as arbiter, had kept the Celtic Easter, Oswiu rightly was considered a Celtic sympathizer.

Representing the Latin church was the exiled Frankish bishop of Wessex, Agilbert, who was the only Latin bishop and the ranking member present. He appointed Wilfrid, abbot of Ripon, as the Latin spokesman because of his fluency in English.[17] Still others in the Latin party were James, the Latin deacon of York and survivor from Edwin's reign, and Romanus, the queen's chaplain. Also present were the royal patrons of the Latin church in Northumbria, Queen Eanflæd and co-reigning monarch Alhfrith. From Bede's choice of terms, apparently there were a large number of laymen also in attendance.[18] Thus, the gathered Synod began arguments before the king to resolve the Easter question.

FOOTNOTES

[1]H.E., ii, 13, pp. 111-3.

[2]H.E., ii, 20, p. 126.

[3]H.E., iii, 3, pp. 131-3.

[4]Ibid., pp. 132-3.

[5]H.E., ii, 2, p. 82.

[6]Ibid.

[7]H.E., iii, 25, p. 187.

[8]K. Hughes, The Church in Early Irish Society (Ithaca, New York, 1966), p. 103-4.

[9]W.J. Shea, "Lent," in N.C.E. (New York, 1967), IX, pp. 634-5.

[10]A. Anderson, Introduction to Adomnan's Life of Columba (New York, 1961), pp. 74-5.

[11]N. Cantor, The English (New York, 1967), p. 56.

[12]V.W., xxiv. This was demonstrated by Wilfrid's voluntary exile in protest of the interference of King Ecgfrith.

[13]F.S. Betten, "The So-Called Council of Whitby," C.H.R., XIII (1927-8), p. 627.

[14]Ibid.

[15]V.W., x.

[16]H.E., iii, 25, p. 183.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Betten, p. 628.

CHAPTER V

THE DEBATE

The spoken arguments of Colman and Wilfrid were the de-
termining factors in the final judgment of Oswiu. While the
debate was recorded at length in the primary resource for
the Synod, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Peo-
ple, an abbreviated version is sufficient to acquaint the
reader with the essential points of each presentation.
Oswiu opened the debate with a declaration of his purpose in
calling the Synod.

> First King Oswiu began by declaring that it was
> fitting that those who serve one God should ob-
> serve one rule of life and not differ in the
> celebration of the heavenly sacraments, seeing
> that they all hoped for one kingdom in heaven;
> they ought to inquire to which was the truer
> tradition and then all follow it together.[1]

Colman began the Celtic argument with an appeal to the con-
servatism of the Celtic church; the method of calculating
Easter was that of his superiors, and all their fathers,
meaning the Celtic saints, and it was the method established
by Saint John, the Evangelist. Thus, Colman described an
esteemed tradition.

Wilfrid opened with a description of the widespread
acceptance of the practice of the Latin method. It was the
practice of the Universal Church and he enumerated all the

lands and nations of Christendom following this method. He
ended with a stinging rebuke of the obstinacy of a remote
few.

The Celtic rebuttal reiterated its loyalty to the Jo-
hannine tradition, reminding all that to call them foolish
reflected upon the author of their tradition who was the
disciple loved by the Lord. Wilfrid's rebuttal was a tech-
nical explanation of the tradition of Saint John. First, it
represented, he averred, a dispensation to the Jewish ele-
ment, but was no longer defensible.

> he /John/ literally observed the decrees of the
> Mosaic law when the Church was still Jewish in
> many respects, at a time when the apostles were
> unable to bring to a sudden end the entire ob-
> servance of that law... They feared, of course,
> that they might make a stumbling-block for the
> Jewish proselytes dispersed among the Gentiles...
> But in these days when the light of the Gospel
> is spreading throughout the world, it is not
> necessary, it is not even lawful...[2]

Second, the method used by John in keeping Easter was Quar-
todecimian, which kept Easter on any day of the week on
which the fourteenth day of the Jewish month, Nisan, occur-
red. The Quartodecimian method had been outlawed by church
council and was not the method observed by the Celtic
church. Third, the tradition of keeping Easter only on Sun-
day was attributed to Peter, not John. Although the Celtic
church kept Easter on Sunday, in other respects they despised
the Petrine tradition since they did not adhere to the nine-
teen year cycle. Fourth, all the Johannine churches except
the Celtic had accepted the true method. Fifth, the Latin
method had been confirmed by the Council of Nicaea. Lastly,

it was shown by Wilfrid that the Celtic church followed no
tradition.

Colman then appealed to Anatolius as an exponent of
their tradition. To that, Colman added Saint Columba and
his saintly successors with their sanctity and miracles as
justification of the Celtic tradition. Again, he affirmed
his loyalty to the customs of these saints. Wilfrid respond-
ed by denying that they followed the Anatolian method. Since
they were unaware of his nineteen year cycle, they did not
adhere to the Anatolian tradition. Wilfrid then added a re-
mark that not all who worked wonders were necessarily of the
Lord. He hastened to add that the Celtic holy men were ig-
norant of, and therefore, blameless for, their error.

> So I will not deny that those who in rude sim-
> plicity loved God with pious intent, were in-
> deed servants of God and beloved by him. Nor
> do I think that this observance of Easter did
> much harm to them while no one had come to show
> them a more perfect rule to follow.

Wilfrid continued that the Celtic saints would have repented
and conformed if they had been shown their error. It was a
certainty that those who in full knowledge refused the de-
crees of the Universal Church were committing sin.

The last point Wilfrid made was that even if Columba
was a saint, he was still less than Saint Peter who had been
ordained by Christ as the foundation of his Church and the
keeper of the keys of heaven. At this point the king inter-
vened with questions to Colman to verify the Latin statement.
First, he asked Colman if both he and all of the Celtic
church accepted the validity of the quotation and they

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affirmed that they did. Second, he inquired whether Columba
had equal authority. Colman replied that he did not. And
last, he asked both Colman and Wilfrid if the quote was ad-
dressed primarily to Peter and if it granted him the keys
of Heaven. They both agreed. The king then asserted that
on the basis of Peter's ability to prevent him from enter-
ing heaven he would approve the Latin rite, thereby ending
the discussion.

FOOTNOTES

[1] <u>H.E.</u>, iii, 25, pp. 183-4.

[2] Ibid., p. 185.

[3] Ibid., p. 187.

CHAPTER VI

THE EXAMINATION OF THE ARGUMENTS

A series of examinations were made of both arguments
presented at the Synod. The object was to determine at
what point Oswiu had reached his decision and the statement
which induced his decision. The first examination was a
statistical study of length and strength of the contending
arguments. To define strength, an analysis of word use was
utilized, which correlated word denotation with frequency
to produce a statistical comparison. A second examination
was made of the complete arguments in context, so that the
reaction of the spokesmen and the monarch were evaluated a-
gainst each specific statement. Finally, there was an e-
valuation of the completed findings, which were then corre-
lated with facts known about King Oswiu. The result was the
determination of the decisive point in the argument.

The first examination of the Synod debates was for
length of statement. A surprising discrepancy in length
was discovered between the two arguments. If all other fac-
tors of comparison were equal, it was reasonable to expect
arguments of relatively equal length. Neither church, con-
sidering the importance of the Synod, logically could have
allowed a disproportionate length of time for the rival's

argument. Yet, the Latin discourse was six times the length of the Celtic argument without Celtic protest. This implies an intervening factor, outside the argument itself, which caused the discrepancy. This factor is considered later when the results of the other examinations have clarified this point.

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF LENGTH OF ARGUMENT

	# of words in opening	in rebuttal	in closing	total in text
Celtic	74	40	123	237
Latin	130	716	524	1370

The second statistical test used to determine strength by word denotation and frequency was content analysis.[1] This analysis is used to determine such points as authorship and attitude in a text. This is done by selected characteristics for which a text may be analyzed, such as the use of words that denote emotion: love, hate, passion, etc.

For determination of strength in the Synod arguments, a series of eight characteristics were selected each of which showed some aspect of strength in speaking, for

example, "authority-theme." (see Table II) Whereupon, all words defined in the Harvard III Psychosociological Dictionary as indicating authority, its recognition, or its exercise were sorted under the "tag" of authority-theme. This function is much like that of a thesaurus, which groups synonyms under generic headings.[2] By such a technique, unconscious methods of style as word choice and their frequency, the occurrence of words in specified categories, and general mood of a statement can be determined. Once an entire statement has been sorted, it is necessary to consult the text to affirm that the usage of each word in context did not alter its individual meaning. An example of this is an authority term which used in reference to an opponent would indicate no authority for the speaker. The raw scores represent the gross number of words per tag found in the text. For comparison an index is employed to convert raw scores into percentages, which indicate the percentage of the total text that comes under that specific characteristic.[3] When both arguments are completely sorted for the same characteristics, the percentage scores are compared to give a mathematical statement of the relative strength of the arguments on that characteristic.

It is possible to analyze such documents for other stylistic elements, such as sentence type and structure. This was not attempted for one very important reason: the computer program used for this analysis exists only in English. It is considered reasonable to proceed with the word

TABLE II

DEFINITION OF TAGS

Tag	Meaning	Examples
authority-theme	words connoting the existence and exercise of authority	chief, rule
good	synonyms for good	perfect, correct
overstate	emphatic or exaggerated words, connotes a defensive style	always, most
religious	words dealing with religious topics	bishop, god
sign-accept	words implying interpersonal acceptance	follow, praise
sign-potency	words connoting varying degrees of strength	chief, keep
sign-strong	words connoting strength or capacity for action	keep, saint
values	interpretation in terms of culturally defined virtues and goals	foolishness, sin

analysis for a number of reasons. First, the greatest
change in the meaning of a text occurring in translation are
those which are not analyzed by the program such as word
order, sentence structure, etc. As an example, there are
142 instances of the definite article, which does not exist
in Latin; however, by the same token, the inclusion of the
definite article in English did not change the meaning of a
single word, nor was the article included in any of the se-
lected characteristics. Secondly, the analysis deals only
with the broadest generic definitions and not the subtle
connotations, which are often distorted in translation.
Thirdly, the result is stated as a mathematical ratio. The
process of translation, when both texts are translated by
the same person, may be viewed as having an equal effect on
both texts. Thereby, the exact score for any characteristic
in each text may vary to some degree, but the ratio between
them will remain constant.

The Synod arguments were analyzed in this manner. The
two sets of percentages, representing the relative strength
of the Latin and Celtic arguments in the eight categories,
were correlated. It was expected that the Latin, since it
was the victor in the debate, would show obvious superiority.
However, in all eight categories the Celtic argument was
stronger, which substantially damages any claim of outright
superiority of the Latin argument as a reason for the Latin
victory. (see Table III).

Inasmuch as the Latin church was approved at Whitby,

TABLE III

COMPARISON OF STRENGTH OF CONCEPTS

CONCEPT NAME	LATIN (1370)		CELTIC (237)	
	RAW SCORE	INDEX OF STRENGTH	RAW SCORE	INDEX OF STRENGTH
authority-theme	65	4.74	15	6.33
good	6	0.44	2	0.84
overstate	45	3.28	8	3.38
religious	71	5.18	21	8.86
sign-accept	10	0.73	5	2.11
sign-potency	13	0.95	6	2.53
sign-strong	9	0.66	3	1.27
values	9	0.66	5	2.11

this is a further discrepancy. However, it must be kept in mind, that any form of measurement has limitations. Content analysis is a quantitative measurement, rather han qualitative. This means that the decisive factor had to be a qualitative distinction that was raised at the Synod.

The second phase of the examination was the study of each argument in the context in which Bede recorded it. Such context included details of narrative and the arrangement of each statement of the debate. The order was a vital element since in debate the opening statement directly influences succeeding statements. To some extent, the success or failure of a statement could be determined by the reactions shown to each point as it was spoken. Also, each argument was spoken and heard in a cultural milieu. It was necessary to consider the cultural background of each statement to clearly comprehend its meaning for the speaker and the listener. The last consideration in this phase of examination was the reaction of King Oswiu and his own statements in closing the Synod.

Oswiu had set the tone of the Synod as an inquiry into the "verior traditis,"[4] and he asked Colman to begin. Colman's speech expressed very simply the Celtic concept of the Church:

> The method of keeping Easter which I observe I
> received from my superiors who sent me here as
> bishop; it was in this way that all our fathers,
> men beloved of God, are known to have celebrated
> it. Nor should this seem contemptible or blame-
> worthy seeing that the blessed evangelist, John,
> the disciple whom the Lord especially loved, is
> said to have celebrated it thus...[5]

The consistent thread throughout his statement was a series
of antecedents, which transmitted validity from Christ to
Colman's own time. This Celtic tradition had come to Colman
from his superiors at Iona, and to them from the Celtic fa-
thers, who were beloved of God, and to the fathers from
Saint John, who was the beloved disciple of the Lord. This
bore a striking resemblance to oral geneologies such as
those seen in the <u>Anglo-Saxon Chronicles</u>. This view of a
valid tradition as an inheritance conformed well with the
kinship principle of Celtic culture. This concept fostered
a conservative role for the church as the repository of true
tradition. In Colman's statement there was no hint of for-
mal church structure, nor any indication of the traits which
accompany institutional development, such as bureaucracy,
hierarchy, and discipline.

Wilfrid's opening statement also alluded to a concept
of the Church. But, this was a much different concept.
Wilfrid's concept of the Church formed the core of his
position throughout the debate.

> The Easter we keep is the same as we have seen
> universally celebrated in Rome where the apostles
> St. Peter and St. Paul lived, taught, suffered,
> and were buried.... We also learned that it was
> observed at one and the same time in Africa, Asia,
> Egypt, Greece, and throughout the world wherever
> the Church of Christ is scattered, amid various
> nations and languages.[8]

Wilfrid completed his opening statement with a deliberate
insult to the Celtic church.

> The only exceptions are these men and their ac-
> complices in obstinacy, I mean the Picts and the
> Britons, who in these, the two remotest islands

of the Ocean, and only in some parts of them,
foolishly attempt to fight against the whole
world.[7]

Wilfrid was stressing the Universality of the Church as he
enumerated the many lands following the Latin method. The
insult was meant to denigrate those who refused to conform.

Colman's rebuttal responded only to the insult.

I wonder that you are willing to call our efforts
foolish, seeing that we follow the example of that
Apostle who was reckoned worthy to recline on the
breast of the Lord: for all the world acknowledges
his wisdom.[8]

Colman did not respond in any fashion to the concept of the
Universal Church, resistance to which in Wilfrid's eyes was
the source of foolishness. Colman, however, using kinship
as the basis of association assumed that Wilfrid was refer-
ring to Saint John as foolish.

Wilfrid in rebuttal denied that the Celtic church kept
the Easter used by John. He explained at length the reasons
for John's tradition.

He literally observed the decrees of the Mosaic
law when the Church was still Jewish in many
respects,....But in these days when the light
of the Gospel is spreading throughout the world,
it is not necessary, it is not even lawful...[9]

Then, Wilfrid again returned to the theme of the Universal
Church.

All the successors of Saint John in Asia since
his death and also the whole church throughout
the world have followed this observance. That
this is the true Easter and that this alone must
be celebrated by the faithful was not newly de-
creed but confirmed afresh by the Council of
Nicaea as the history of the Church informs us.[10]

In the last portion of his rebuttal, Wilfrid explained the

tradition of Saint Peter showing that the Celtic church con-
formed to no true tradition.

> So I have said, in your celebration of the great-
> est of the festivals, you agree neither with John
> or Peter, neither with the law nor the Gospel.[11]

After an explanation of the complexities of the lunar cycles,

Wilfrid again returned to the Church as his theme. He main-

tained that the Jewish practices of John had been tolerated

once, but were now unlawful. In Wilfrid's view the Church

had the authority to suppress even a tradition founded by

Saint John. Even an apostolic tradition could be reversed

by the decision of the Universal Church. In speaking of the

Council of Nicaea, Wilfrid touched on such a theme since the

Council was the legislative body of the Universal Church.

Colman began his closing statement with further asso-

ciations with the Celtic heritage.

> Did Anatolius, a man who was holy and highly
> spoken of in the history of the Church to which
> you appeal judge contrary to the law and Gospel
> when he wrote that Easter whould be celebrated
> between the fourteenth and the twentieth day of
> the moon.[12]

Colman had associated an influential patron with the Celtic

method. Further, if Anatolius was "highly spoken of in the

history of the /Latin/ Church,"[13] but had also endorsed the

method of Paschal dating used by the Celtic church, there

was a contradiction in the authorities of the Latin church.

In closing, Colman summed up the Celtic church again as a

tradition, which was verified by the sanctity of its members

and the favor of God shown in their miracles.

> Or must we believe that our most reverend father
> Columba and his successors, men beloved of God,
> who celebrated Easter in the same way, judged
> and acted contrary to the holy scriptures, seeing
> that there were many of them to whose holiness
> the heavenly signs and the miracles they performed
> bore witness? And as I have no doubt that they
> were saints, I shall never cease to follow their
> way of life, their customs, and their teaching.[14]

Wilfrid in his closing statement responded to the references

to both Anatolius and the Celtic saints.

> It is true that Anatolius was a most holy and
> learned man, worthy of all praise; but what
> have you to do with him since you do not ob-
> serve his precepts? He followed a correct rule
> in celebrating Easter, basing it on a cycle of
> nineteen years, of which you are either unaware
> or, if you do know of it, you despise it, even
> though it is observed by the whole Church of
> Christ.... So far as your father Columba and
> his followers are concerned, whose holiness you
> claim to imitate and whose rule and precepts
> (confirmed by heavenly signs) you claim to follow,
> I might perhaps point out that at the judgement,
> many will say to the Lord that they prophesied
> in His name and cast out devils and did many works
> but the Lord will answere that He never knew them.[15]

Wilfrid denied that Anatolius had confirmed the Celtic meth-

od. The second point was another slur cast by Wilfrid at

the Celtic fathers. Considering the obvious veneration of

the assembly for their forebearers, it was an extremely poor

choice. Stephanus, Wilfrid's biographer, deleted this point

from Wilfrid's Synod speech. This was probably because he

felt it reflected badly on Wilfrid's reputation as a saint.

Bede, writing less to flatter Wilfrid and more to record an

accurate history, included it even though in Bede's time ad-

miration was still great for such Celtic adherents as Aidan

and Columba.[16]

Wilfrid completed his argument with a final statement on the Church.

> But, once having heard the decrees of the apos-
> tolic see or rather of the universal church,
> if you refuse to follow them, confirmed as they
> are by holy Scriptures, then without doubt you
> are committing sin. For though your fathers were
> holy men, do you think that a handful of people
> in one corner of the remotest of islands is to
> be preferred to the universal church which is
> spread throughout the world? And even if that
> Columba of yours--yes, and ours too, if he
> belonged to Christ--was a holy man of mighty
> works, is he to be preferred to the most blessed
> chief of the apostles, to whom the Lord said,
> 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build
> my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail
> against it, and I will give unto thee the keys
> of the kingdom of heaven'?[17]

Wilfrid had pointed out that it was sinful to resist the Universal Church. He again compared the small numbers of the Celtic church with the multitude of the Universal Church. Wilfrid's last statement elaborated further on his concept of the Church, adding discipline to its prerogatives in the form of loss of salvation for disobedience. He also added the idea that the apostolic see was an executive office in the Church. Finally, he compared the founder of the apos- tolic see, Saint Peter, with the Celtic father, Columba. Wilfrid used the quotation of Matthew 16:18-19 to show that Peter had greater authority than Columba.

Through the debate, it became obvious that each speaker was emphasizing the strengths of his church as justification for its Easter reckoning. This was particularly valuable since it was a self-evaluation of the two traditions. Close study of these revelations showed the full contrast of

church government in its structure, authority, and discipline. Colman's allusions were all to a church of conservatism, which held in trust the faith passed down from the time of revelation. The generations of saints ranked like an Old Testament geneology, proved the valid transmission to the present age in which a select number of monasteries, abbots, and hermits guarded this heritage. In relation to the level of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon culture this type of concept was predictable. Both cultures were in transition from tribalism to urbanism. This saw beginnings of social distinction without definite class structure and social organization while social institutions were only nascent. Without the idea of law distinct from custom and social institution beyond kinship, Celtic society had no basis to comprehend or appreciate the institutional evolution inherent in the Latin argument.

To Wilfrid, who had been educated on the Continent and had assimilated the more sophisticated concepts of structure, the Celtics were living in simplistic ruralism. Wilfrid based his argument on institutional authority. The decrees of the Apostolic See and the Council of Nicaea, which were the executive office and chief legislature of the Universal Church, were binding to all who called themselves Christian. Such a concept implied a number of related assumptions dealing with internal organization. The development of internal organization meant: bureaucracy, to handle routine affairs efficiently; hierarchy, to establish order; and discipline,

to enforce order. These are auxiliary developments to the evolution of an institution. They systematized and defined the relationships of internal parts, respective roles in decision making, and the division of power in a complex institution. Such developments occur as any group or cause becomes organized and structural ambiguities must be resolved. While this is properly the realm of sociology, this does not negate their historical importance.

Wilfrid and Colman had presented two distinct alternatives of religious expression and Christian organization. The logical assumption based on Oswiu's approval of the Latin church was that Oswiu had found the Latin argument and the Latin assumptions more convincing, and more consistent with his own values. However, Oswiu's background was Celtic. He had spent his sixteen year exile among the Irish, receiving his education and his faith from them. Oswiu and his brother Oswald spoke fluent Irish.[18] There is primary historical evidence that he preferred the Celtic church.

> Oswiu, who had been educated and baptized by the Irish and was well versed in their language, considered that nothing was better than what they had taught.[19]

Also, it was evident from the debate that Oswiu looked to Colman for religious guidance, since at the end of the debate Colman was asked to explain the quote from Matthew to the monarch.

> ...the king said, 'Is it true, Colman, that the Lord said these words to Peter?' Colman answered, 'It is true, O King.' Then the King went on,

> 'Have you anything to show that an equal authority
> was given to your Columba?' Colman answered,
> 'Nothing.' Again the king said, 'Do you both
> agree, without any dispute, that these words were
> addressed primarily to Peter and that the Lord
> gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven?'[20]

In his description of Colman, Bede called him "episcopum
suum Colmanum."[21] This indicates that Colman was the bishop
of the king in the sense of the established royal chaplain.
The grants that established Lindisfarne and the other Celtic
monasteries and abbeys had been made from royal land. Even
the Abbey of Streanæshealh in which they stood was Celtic
and had become a haven for women of the royal line. The es-
tablished nature of the Celtic church in Northumbria, the
disparity between Latin and Anglo-Saxon cultures, Oswiu's
dependence on Colman in religious matters, and Oswiu's Celt-
ic background all combined to make the Latin argument on the
basis of the Universal Church and its authority an unlikely
candidate as the factor that altered Oswiu's own convictions.

Various possibilities for the decisive element have
been examined and discarded such as the strength of the argu-
ment, cultural affinity, and the authority of the Church.
The remaining possibility was that which was stated by Oswiu
as he rendered his judgment at the Synod of Whitby.

> Then, I tell you, since he is the doorkeeper I will
> not contradict him; but I intend to obey his com-
> mands in everything to the best of my knowledge and
> ability, otherwise when I come to the gates of heav-
> en, there may be no one to open them because the
> one who on your own showing holds the keys had
> turned his back on me.[22]

This statement, along with his inquiry to Colman with regard
to Columba's authority, suggested that the king had reason

to seek the favor of such a celestial turnkey. Oswiu indeed had apparent reason to fear for his salvation. In 651 he had planned and ordered the covert murder of his fellow monarch and cousin, Oswine of Diera. This was a crime against a kinsman, albeit distant, and was particularly odious since it was against his society's code of honor to slay a sleeping unarmed enemy. Oswine was later deemed a saint because of his unjust death and virtue, as recorded by Bede.[23]

> King Oswine was tall and handsome, pleasant of
> speech, courteous in manner, and bountiful to
> nobles and commons alike; so it came about that
> he was loved by all because of the royal dignity
> which showed itself in his character,... Among
> all the other graces of virtue and modesty with
> which, if I may say so, he was blessed in a
> special manner, his humility is said to have
> been the greatest...[24]

Oswiu had felt pangs of guilt after the crime. Many of his grants to the Celtic church were meant to expiate this guilt.

> There in after days, to atone for this /Oswiu's/
> crime, a monastery was built in which prayers were
> offered daily to the Lord for the redemption of
> the souls of both kings, the murdered king and
> the one who ordered the murder.[25]

The monarch, having lived at various courts, knew the prerogatives that a petty court chamberlain might assume. In Oswiu's mind Heaven resembled a great Saxon banquet hall. His entry to this Heavenly palace as a sinner was dependent upon the favor he sought of well-placed patrons. What worse situation could exist than for him to approach the gates of Heaven as a supporter of Columba if Peter held the keys? So Oswiu for his own salvation chose to seek the favor

of Saint Peter by following his church, the Latin. Thus, the Latin church scored a victory.

In returning to earlier discrepancies certain difficulties are now resolved. First, the puzzling brevity of the Celtic argument, only 237 words, was the simple declaration of a viewpoint which stood firm in royal esteem. This meant that the Latin argument required greater length for its own justification and to attack the Celtic position. The often insulting tone of the Latin statements, as compared to the restrained quality of the Celtic statements, supports this, since these were open attacks on a stronger opponent. The second discrepancy found in the superior strength of the Celtic arguments is also resolved. Content analysis is a quantitative measurement, but the greater rank of Saint Peter, as compared with Saint Columba, is a distinction of kind, not number, which is a qualitative factor. Therefore, the discrepancies found in the earlier examinations serve to confirm the Petrine statement as decisive.

In a sense, the Petrine statement, as it was understood by Oswiu, had not been intentionally a major them in the argument. The majority of the Latin argument was based on the theme of the Universal Church, which was not conclusive nor necessarily even intelligible to its audience in view of Celtic society. Only inadvertantly had the point of Saint Peter's role as keeper of the keys been raised. It was this role that so stimulated the interest of Oswiu that he intervened in the debate. Due to his guilt in a very foul

crime, only the favor of Saint Peter would guarantee his entry into heaven. Therefore, the quotation of Matthew, in which Saint Peter was granted the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, was the decisive point in the Latin argument.

FOOTNOTES

[1]P. Stone, et al., <u>The General Inquirer: A Computer Approach to Content Analysis</u> (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966), p. 5.

[2]Ibid., p. 135.

[3]Strength of Concept = $\frac{\text{Total Listed Under Tag}}{\text{Total Words in Text}}$ X 100

[4]<u>H.E.</u>, iii, 25, p. 183.

[5]Ibid., p. 184.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 185.

[10]Ibid., p. 186.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p. 186.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., p. 187.

[15]Ibid.

[16]<u>H.E.</u>, iii, 17, p. 161.

[17]<u>H.E.</u>, iii, 25, p. 188.

[18]<u>H.E.</u>, iii, 25, p. 182; <u>H.E.</u>, iii, 3, p. 132.

[19]<u>H.E.</u>, iii, 25, p. 182.

[20]Ibid., p. 188.

[21]Ibid., p. 184.

[22]Ibid., pp. 188-9.

[23]B. Colgrave, ed., "Footnote," in H.E., p. 256.

[24]H.E., iii, 14, pp. 155-6.

[25]Ibid., p. 155.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Celtic Christianity was the product of a historical
development and social adaptation which were unique in west-
ern Christendom. The conversion of the Celtic homelands oc-
curred in a period before uniformity and centralization of
church government had developed. The subsequent loss of
contact with the evolution of the Church in the Mediterrane-
an prevented the imposition of such trends. Additionally,
in no other region did the adaptation of Christianity to a
non-urban folk society achieve such development nor continue
to such a late period as it did in the Celtic church.

The arrival of Latin missions among the Anglo-Saxons
demonstrated clearly the extent of the differences that had
developed between the progressive areas and the insular
Celtic homelands. Latin attempts to assume authority over
the Celtic church aroused resistance that found a cause in
the maintenance of the distinctive practices of the Celtic
church. Since both churches were active in Northumbria
with influential patrons, the conflict became centered there.
The struggle settled on the most visible and aggravating
factor of Celtic independence, the different date for
Easter.

The Synod was called by the royal command of King Oswiu rather than the religious authority of either church. Oswiu desired a debate on the Easter question in his presence, and the method of dating which received his approval was enforced by his authority throughout Northumbria. This placed great importance on the debates which were therefore appeals for survival. Thus, a close study of the arguments is important to determine the decisive point in the Synod.

The examination of the arguments produced several significant results. First, using computer techniques a study of word usage in the debates found that the Celtic speeches, as preserved, were delivered with more force. This means that statistically the Celtic spokesman used more words connoting authority and strength than were found in the much longer Latin statement. Such a test establishes that the Latin victory was not the result of overwhelming strength of presentation. This finding prompts further analysis of the arguments in context. The second phase of the examination reveals not only the consistent themes of each argument, but also illuminates the basic attitudes of the spokesman. A comparison of these attitudes and their inherent social assumptions contributes to a greater understanding of the fundamental conflicts of the churches on such points as the role of the episcopate, modes of authority, and the identity of the church. Lastly, the examination focuses on the responses to determine the reaction to each general statement in the debate. Except for a single topic, the Latin

arguments were inconclusive and ineffectual. The decisive topic was the Petrine authority invoked in the Latin argument in closing. This particular argument had both social and personal factors which facilitated its acceptance by the Celtic adherents.

The final task is to foster some appreciation of the general significance of the Synod of Whitby. Far from being a remote and inconsequential event, the Synod marked the climax of the struggle between the Latin and Celtic churches for control of England, and ended the advance of the Celtic church. The royal decrees against the Celtic Easter in Northumbria prevented the expansion of the Celtic church by restricting it to Wales and Northern Ireland. If Oswiu, in his position as bretwalda of the English, had granted approval to the Celtic church, the Latin church could have been isolated in Kent or completely erased from England. Regarding the inevitable dominance of the Latin church in England, it needs to be pointed out that if the Celtic church had survived with its distinct practices into a later period, reaction against the centralization of the seventh and eighth centuries could have seen full defiance of and schism with the Latin church, much as with the Eastern Orthodox Churches. A brief review of the role played by the English church in the conversion of Germany and Scandanavia confirms the importance of the English church in later Christian development.[1] If a Celtic church had converted these regions as dependent paruchiae, surrounding the North Sea,

such a church in the hands of a powerful leader like Canute could have formed, as it had for Constantine, the spine of a northern empire independent of the Mediterranean. However, this is not the case. The Celtic church declined as an independent tradition and merged with mainstream Christianity serving to enrich, inspire, and reform with its spiritual heritage. Thus, the focus of medieval civilization remained in the Mediterranean due, to some extent, on the fateful quote from Matthew by a Latin monk at Whitby.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The role of Boniface as an English missionary is thoroughly discussed in Whitney, _C.M.H._, II, p. 535-542.

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APPENDIX

GENEOLOGIES OF KINGS

TABLE IV

KINGS OF DEIRA

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                          Yffi
          ┌─────────────────┴──────────────┐
      Aelfric                          AELLA 560-588
        │                     ┌───────────┴──────────────────┐
OSRIC 633-634               EDWIN = (1) Cwenburh             │
        │                   617-633    of Mercia             │
OSWIN 642-651                       (2) Aethelberga          │
                                        of Kent              │
                 (1)            (2)                           │
              ┌───────────────┴──────┐                       │
          Osfrith          Eanflæd = Oswy of                 │
          killed 633                 Bernicia                │
                                                             │
                                     AETHELFRITH  = Acha
                                      of Bernicia
                                      King of all
                                      Northumbria
                                      593-617
```

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TABLE V

KINGS OF BERNICIA

IDA 547-559

AETHELRIC 586-593   Many other sons

Acha of = AETHELFRITH 593-617
Deira   King of all Northumbria

EANFRITH   OSWALD   OSWY = Eanflæd of
King of   King of   Deira
Bernicia   all
633-634   Northumbria
                       633-642

                       AETHELWALD
                       King of Deira
                       651-655

        (1)   (1)
    ALCHFRID   ECGFRITH   ALDFRITH
sub-king in Deira   671-685   (not a son
under his father   of Eanflæd)
                                                      685-705

    OSRIC 718-729   OSRED I
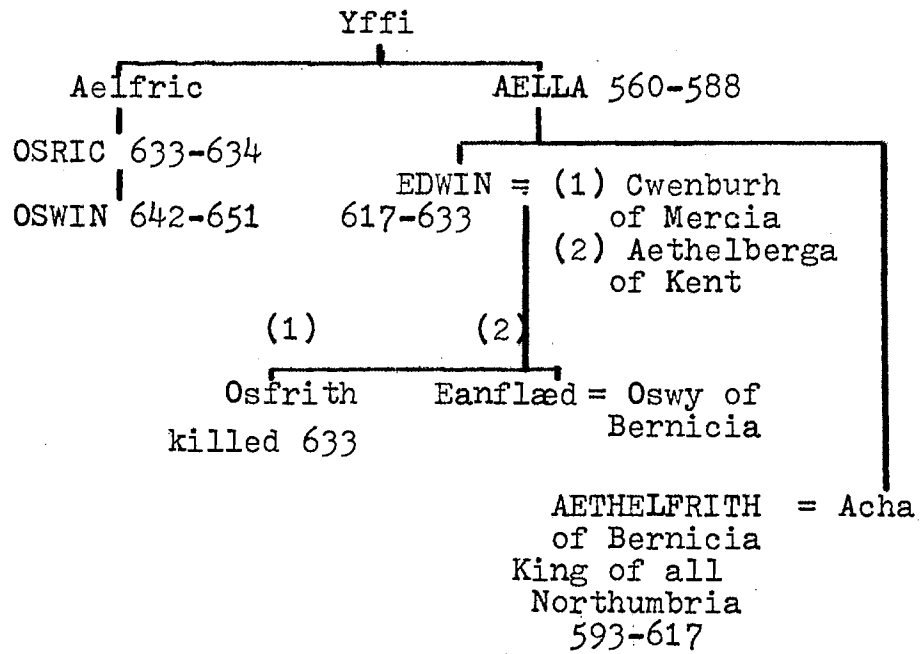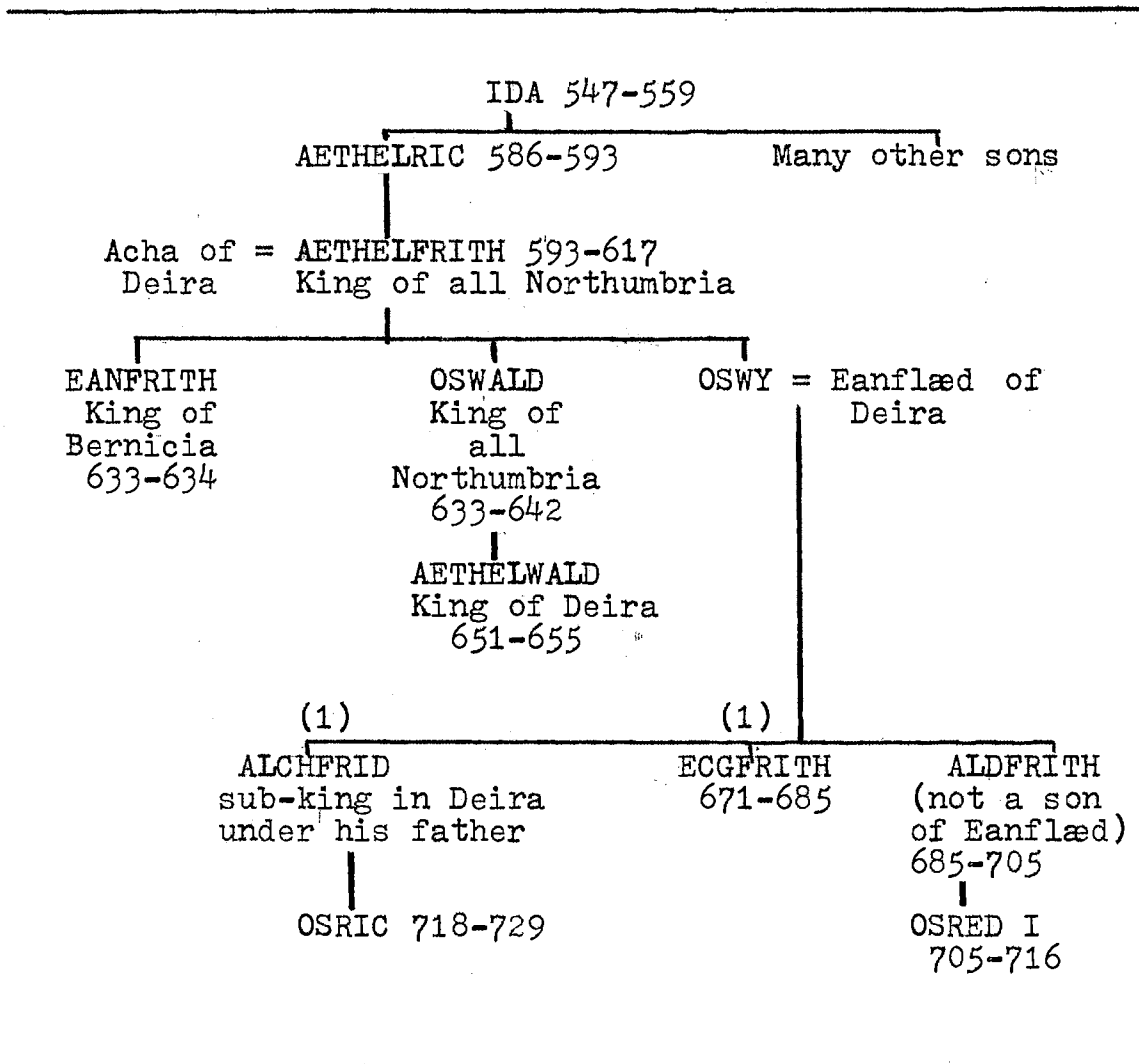   705-716

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