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Early English Religious Literature: The Development of the Genres
of Poetry, Narrative, and Homily

A THESIS

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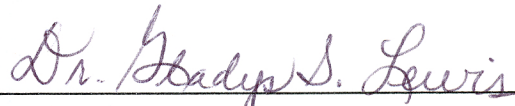
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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

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Early English Religious Literature: The Development of the Genres
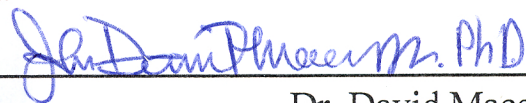of Poetry, Narrative, and Homily
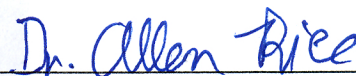

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE OF THESIS: Early English Religious Literature: The Development of
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This thesis contends that during the medieval period, as Anglo-Saxon literature
developed under, at first, the influence of Germanic oral traditions and later, the
authority of continental (and particularly Latin) literary forms, the homily or
sermon was the genre that achieved the most complex and comprehensive
synthesis of these traditions prior to 1066, which in turn assured its survival as a
living vernacular form following the Norman Conquest.

During the course of this thesis, samples of poetry, narrative, and homily will be
examined, illuminating the style, literary techniques, and treatment of content,
progressing through the centuries and revealing the overall development of each
genre. A final comparison of development in each genre will show the Old
English homily to have made the most progress during the Old English period
toward the modern understanding of the genre.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Venerable Bede began his study of church history in the *Historia*

Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (Ecclesiastical History of the English People),

with a reference to the Roman invasion in the year 60 B.C.[1] The early Britons

suffered many violent encroachments upon their way of life throughout the first

ten centuries of the Christian era. Each new foreign influence changed the culture

of the indigenous people as the various conquerors, with their own languages and

heritages, became assimilated into their new country. Although the Roman army

returned to the continent in the early 400s, the Germanic tribes settled into the

indigenous communities and made permanent changes to the culture. Michael

Swanton, in *English Literature Before Chaucer*, explains:

> Those (Germanic tribes) who colonized Britain seem to have done
> so not merely as an invading army but in coherent familial groups,
> […] and in numbers large enough eventually to swamp the
> indigenous population, maintaining their own distinctive linguistic
> identity and, implicitly, albeit as yet undocumented, distinctive
> literature. (2)

The native British element would eventually find it necessary to adopt the

language of their powerful new neighbors. Predominately an oral tradition culture,

the native British voice blended so completely into the Germanic language and

culture, only examples of Celtic language and literature from Wales or Ireland

remain to illustrate pre-Anglo-Saxon culture.

Medieval literature has been examined by scholars "who believed in

keeping learning and scholarship quite distinct from the business of literary

criticism, . . . little concerning themselves with what is now seen as the

unfamiliar and even alien cultural and intellectual background of the period"
(Woolf x). R. D. Fulk states that, while poststructuralist theory is almost
uniformly developed in response to modern text in which historical
contextualization does not seem such a pressing issue, "the interpretation of Old
English texts is profoundly dependent upon our ability to piece together the
historical and cultural circumstances in which they were produced" (232).

To understand the literature of the British people during first thousand
years of the Christian era, we must first understand the situation and circumstance
of the people themselves. Trade with and travel to distant countries became a
common occurrence in early Britain, due in part to the expansion of the Roman
Empire. So, it was not incredible that the new religion of Christianity found its
way to the shore of Britain.[2] Due to great persecution of the Christian church in
Jerusalem, "they (the Jerusalem Christians) were all scattered abroad" (Acts 8:1).
This persecution began during the rule of Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod
the Great who, during the first century, "stretched forth his hands to vex certain of
the church" (Acts 12:1). The chronology of these events can be traced to the early
40s A. D.[3] David Zesmer writes that during the Roman occupation, due in part to
converted Roman soldiers as well as the arrival of displaced Jewish Christians
"many Celts had been Christianized" (9). According to legend, after arriving on
the coast of Britain, some Christian refugees from Jerusalem made the new land
their home and began to preach a new truth to the inhabitants. The legend tells of
the King of Siluria (Wales), Caradoc, who was called Caractacus by the Romans,
befriended the Christians from Jerusalem; several of the King's household

embraced Christianity, including his daughter, Gladys. (Damon ix). In other parts

of the country, churches sprang up throughout all the Great Britain and Ireland.

(Pryor 180). Michael Alexander states that there is an "aspect to the conversion

which is often forgotten, namely that Britain was Christian before the Anglo-

Saxon invasion," and he argues that no subsequent 'conversion' was required in

Wales. He adds that there were British Christian martyrs, like St. Alban, before

Constantine's recognition of Christianity in 313, and three British bishops

attended the Council of Arles in 314 (10). St. Alban's martyrdom, told by Bede

(*HE* 1. 7) and also by John Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, happened on the twenty-

second of June, 287 (Fox 24).

Alexander explains the beginning events that led to the schism between

the British and the European churches:

> There is no evidence of the Christian British having tried to
> convert the heathen Germanic invaders. In consequence, the
> heathen Anglo-Saxons lay as an impermeable barrier between
> Rome and the Welsh and the Irish churches, behind which these
> two different Churches, though pious, learned . . .each grew insular
> and out of step with the universal Church. (10)

From the latter part of the first century, the original Christian church in Britain

began spreading, but the churches in different regions differed slightly due to

internal and external influences. Noting these differences helps to explain the

variations found in the resulting literature of Northumbria, Wessex, and Mercia in

particular. Mark Atherton states that "the language of mother tongue in which a

poet or thinker expresses their ideas inevitably colors their ideas" This influence

is particularly evident "if they are rendered in a conventional meter or verse form,

as part of a poetic tradition with its own culture, its own diction and vocabulary,

its own register of formulaic ideas, motifs and themes" (3). In particular, differences of regional culture influenced both the glosses of *Cædmon's Hymn* and the varying entities of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. These differences are discussed in later chapters.

The churches in Ireland remained "separated and relatively unmolested" by both the Germanic invaders and the Roman Church for "several centuries longer than the mainland churches," developing a security based upon distance (Pryor 175). The Irish churches generated several great missionary endeavors during the sixth and seventh centuries. In *A History of the Christian Church*, Lars Qualban states that "Characteristic of the early British Christians was their zeal and success in missionary work. Among the best known early missionaries were St. Patrick, the 'Apostle of Ireland,' and Columba, the 'Apostle to Scotland'" (141). The Welsh Christians secluded themselves in the hills and produced a great amount of poetry, much of which has not been successfully translated into Modern English.[4] Missionaries of the Roman Church came to Wales in the sixth and seventh centuries with the goal of supplanting the doctrines and practices of the Welsh. Francis Pryor explains that in the years that followed St Augustine's mission, "the newly arrived Roman Church and the indigenous Celtic Churches developed their own liturgical practices, which reflected their different cultural backgrounds." The submission of the Celtic to the Roman church was not begun until "a great assembly of senior clergy of both Churches met at Whitby on Yorkshire coast in 664" (175).

The Welch bishops withstood the proposed alliance for many years, but
eventually most of the original churches agreed to conform to the universal or
"Catholic" church, although not without much violence and bloodshed, as *Anglo-
Saxon Chronicle* entries reveal.[5] In the seventh century, the Germanic tribes of
eastern England also came to the western part of Britain to invade and conquer,
but the Welsh culture "survived" (Atherton 175). Michael Swanton describes the
Anglo-Saxon movement across the country as a long-drawn-out process, only
partially completed in some areas (*English Literature* 2).

The British church suffered greatly during the invasion of the Germanic
tribes (Bede *HE* I.15) as churches were burned and libraries destroyed. But, as the
Roman church gradually assimilated most of the original British Celtic churches,
the bishops of the Roman church also began converting the leaders of the ruling
Germanic tribes who were willing, for the most part, "to align themselves with the
predominant power structure of the country" (Schaff 687). The separate histories
of the Scottish, Welsh, British, and Irish cultures created regional distinctiveness
in the Christian literature. Pryor states that the "Celtic saints did more than just
spread the Word of God; they also took with them the important message that
culture and learning mattered" (189). When Iona became a center of learning,
literacy began to spread eastward and southward. As Augustine's followers
converted and educated the Anglo-Saxons in the other parts of the land, the two
missionary campaigns met and merged. Susan Kelly states that "in southern
England the primary influence was from Rome and the Frankish church, but the
north was effectively evangelized by missionaries from Ireland and Iona and long

retained strong cultural links with these areas" (24). Since the Northumbrian

culture was initially influenced by the Irish missionaries, the literature produced

in this region differed slightly from the Mercian or West Saxon vernacular

writings. Kelly, argues that "Irish scholarship was an enormous inspiration to the

Northumbrian church in the seventh and eighth centuries," but it is difficult to

decide whether this intellectual contact had an effect on the assimilation of the

written word into Northumbrian society. Kelly explains:

> A potentially important point is that the Irish ecclesiastics, […]
> spoke a vernacular which had no basis in Latin, and were therefore
> accustomed to learning the literary language of the church as a
> foreign tongue. It is possible that this experience of bilingualism
> was of value to them in the training of Anglo-Saxon clerics in
> literary skills, and the consequence could have been that literacy
> had a deeper foundation in the Northumbrian church. (25)

Many fine examples of Old English literature remain, such as poems, narratives,

and sermons or homilies. Such writings can be found from the early Christian

churches before the influence of the Roman Church converted the Old English

literary works to the European style of Latin-based literature. These Old English

writings are preserved in the vernacular of the time, showing the scope and range

of the beginning English language, as well as the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon

influence on the developing Christian thought and its reflection in the English

religious literature from the late sixth century to the Norman Conquest. Old

English culture produced beautiful, rich artistry in the infant English language,

while reflecting the deep, pure religious philosophy of the Christian thinkers of

the day.

To illustrate the scope of the emerging literature, this study examines texts written primarily in the vernacular of the people rather than in the scholarly Latin of the period. The purpose of highlighting the history of these works is to expand the reader's understanding of this era of literature while tracing the stylistic and formulaic development of Old English poetry, narrative and homilies. These three genres offer a sampling of the Christian writings of the era. Beginning with poetry, this thesis will examine Cædmon's *Hymn* and Cynewulfian works including the *Dream of the Rood* and *Genesis B* of Alfred's era. These works demonstrate the development of poetry from the oral traditions of Cædmon's *Hymn* to the intricate dream vision of the *Rood*, and the biblical narrative poetry of *Genesis B*. The second segment of this thesis will deal with the narrative qualities *Andreas* in its prose form. Finally, the section on homilies will discuss a sermon by Bede entitled "The Allegory of Mercy and Justice," and the works of Ælfric and Wulfstan. These works offer evidence of styles and techniques that reveal the developing complexities and influences of the literary artifacts of the first thousand years of English Christian literature. Anglo-Saxon literature developed under, at first, the influence of Germanic oral traditions and later, the authority of continental (and particularly Latin) literary forms, the homily or sermon was the genre that achieved the most complex and comprehensive synthesis of these traditions prior to 1066, which in turn assured its survival as a living vernacular form following the Norman Conquest. A final comparison of the scope of development in each genre will show the Old English homily achieved the most complete generic development during the Old English period.

Timeline

Chronological Outline of Prehistoric, Celtic, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon England as modified from Fidel Fajardo-Acostoa.

- Paleolithic & Mesolithic periods from 250,000 to about 5,000 B.C.

- Neolithic period, c. 5000-2000 BC, agriculture, mound tombs

    o Non-Indo-European people

    o Newgrange, Ireland, 3200 B.C., passage grave.

    o Stonehenge I & II (2800-2000 B.C.)

- Bronze Age, 2000-500 B.C.

    o Indo-European language, burial with drinking vessels, flint, metal

    o Stonehenge III & IV (2000 B.C. -1100 B.C.)

    o Farms, circular huts, oblong fields 1200 B.C.

    o Celtic inhabitants arrived around 750 B.C., hill forts

- Iron Age, begins in Europe around 8th century B.C, in England around 500 or 600 B.C.

    o Population growth

    o Celtic people in England: Britons, hence Britannia (The Roman Latin names for these Celtic tribes include Atrebates, Belgae, Brigantes, Catuvellauni, Dumnonii, Ordovices, Silures)

    o Celtic languages: Gaelic, Brythonic (Britannic)

    o Further Celtic (Belgian Gaul) migrations, coins, potter's wheel, practice of cremation, c. 100 B.C.

- Roman Britain

    o Julius Caesar invades Britain, 55/54 B.C.

    o Roman Emperor Claudius, Roman conquest; Romanization/gradual Christianization, Latin, 43/50 A.D.

- o conquest of southern and midland peoples completed, 78-85 A.D., Roman Governor Agricola

- o Roman historian Tacitus, author of *Germania* (98 A.D.), description of life of Germanic tribes, concept of *comitatus*

- o Hadrian's Wall (73 miles long), 121-127 A.D., Fortification against Picts and Scots

- o Germanic tribes (Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Burgundians, Vandals, Lombards, etc.), migrations throughout Europe and raids against Rome (Visigoths sack Rome in 410 A.D.)

- o Roman departure from Britain, 410 A.D.

- Anglo-Saxon Invasions

  - o Britain besieged by Picts, Scots, and Saxons

  - o British leader Vortigern invites Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons, Jutes) into alliance against Picts and Scots; Jute leaders Hengest and Horsa, Jute settlements in Thanet, Kent, and Isle of Wight

  - o Saxons rebel against Britons, 442

  - o Large-scale Germanic invasions (Angles, Saxons, Jutes), 449

  - o Saxon settlements in Sussex and Wessex, 477- 495

  - o British Celts driven into Wales, Cornwall, Ireland, and Brittany (on northwest coast of France)

  - o British resistance, King Arthur, British victory at Mt. Badon, 500

  - o Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae* (The Fall of Britain) (c. 540) , a Latin work describing and lamenting the fall of Britain to the Anglo-Saxons.

  - o Anglo-Saxons in control by sixth century

- Anglo-Saxon England

  - o Angles' settlements in East Anglia, the Midlands, and Northumbria. Angles > English; Angle-lond > Engla-lond > England ("land of the Angles")

  - o Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy: Northumberland, East Anglia, Mercia (Angles); Kent (Jutes); Essex, Sussex, Wessex (Saxons); seventh
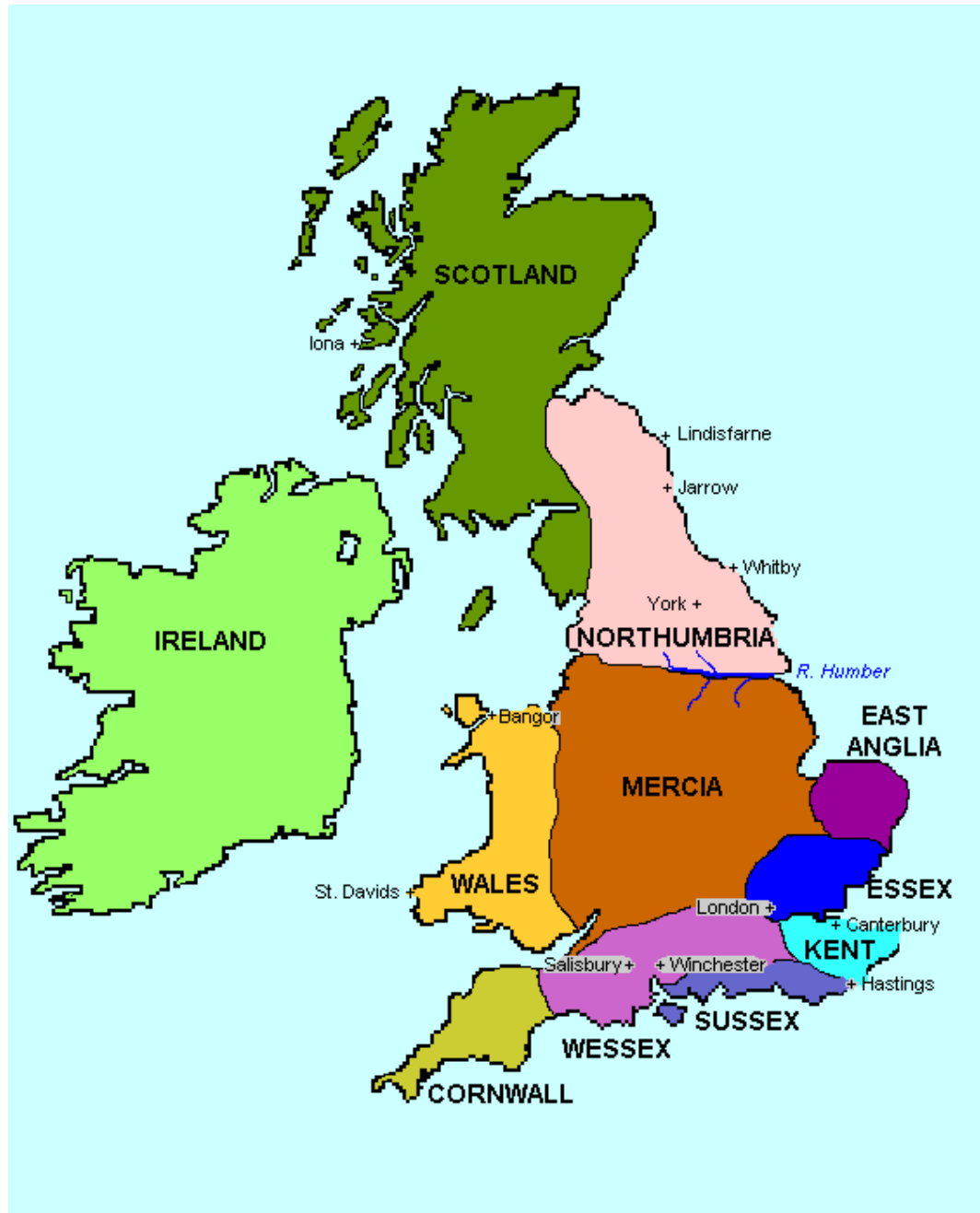
century, Northumbrian dominance; eighth century, Mercian dominance; ninth/tenth century, West Saxon dominance

o Pope Gregory sends St. Augustine (the "Apostle of the English," a Roman Benedictine monk, not the more famous St. Augustine of Hippo who lived 354-430 A.D.) to Kent A.D. 597

o Aethelbert I of Kent (Jutes), converted to Christianity by Augustine, first Christian king of Anglo-Saxon England (*Rex Anglorum*), also compiled law code, c. 600 (definitions and rules of kinship, wergild, slaves and freemen/ceorl, nobles)

o Gradual Christianization of Anglo-Saxons by Roman and Irish missionaries (St. Aidan and others, 635-655); coexistence of Christian and pagan beliefs, Wyrd and Providence

o Persistence of pagan customs, cenotaph of East-Anglian Raedwald at Sutton Hoo, 625

o Cædmon, oldest poetic vernacular work ("Hymn of Creation", c. 670), monastery at Whitby; also one of the earliest works, *Widsith* (c. 650-700), a poem in which a poet named Widsith recounts his own experiences as a wandering minstrel

o *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 698, Latin Vulgate text with interlined Old English paraphrase

o Venerable Bede (673-735), *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*) (731), Latin work; Ruthwell Cross (early 8th c); origins of *Beowulf*?

o Offa, king of Mercia (r. 757-796); Alcuin of York (732-804), high level of scholarship

o first Viking attacks 787, sack of Lindisfarne Priory 793; *Book of Kells*: Irish illuminated manuscript of four gospels (8th c.)

o West Saxon King Egbert (r. 802-839), defeats Mercian king Beornwulf at Battle of Ellendune (825); conquers Mercia (829); loses Mercia to Wiglaf (830-831)

o Cynewulf (c. first half of 9th c.), author of *Juliana*, *Elene*, *Fates of the Apostles, Christ*

o King Alfred (849-899), king of Wessex (r. 871-899), victories over Vikings at Ashdown 871, Edington 878, Treaty of Wedmore 878, Danish king Guthrum forced to accept Christianity and retreat to

Danelaw; 886 Alfred captures London and is recognized as king of all England (except for Danish parts)

o King Alfred's employment of Mercian scholars (Plegmund, Waerferth, Aethelstan, and Werwulf) in educational and literary endeavors (885), revival of learning, beginnings of *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

o West Saxon dialect became literary standard of Old English literature; oral tradition

o Second half of tenth century: Dunstan, Ethelwold, Oswald, monastic reform, copying of manuscripts

o Battle of Brunanburh 937, English army under Aethelstan defeated army of Northmen, Scots, and Welsh allies; poem *Battle of Brunanburh* recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

o Late 10th and early 11th century, renewed Scandinavian invasions, led by Norwegian Olaf Tryggvason and Danish king Svein

o Aethelred II Unraed (r. 978-1016); marries Emma (daughter of Richard II, duke of Normandy); peak of monastic and literary revival: Ælfric (955-1020), *Catholic Homilies*, *Lives of the Saints; Wulfstan* (d. 1023,) *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (1014, "Sermon of the Wolf to the English People") (in Old English with Latin introductory words).

o *Exeter Book* (c. 1000) manuscript containing the *Wanderer* and the *Seafarer, Widsith, The Wife's Lament, Guthlac, Juliana, Christ, €*

o *Junius Manuscript* (c. 1000), containing the Old English *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*

o *Vercelli Book* (c. 1000), manuscript containing *Dream of the Rood, Andreas, Elene, Fates of the Apostles*.

o Battle of Maldon 991; poem *Battle of Maldon* recorded in manuscript *Cotton Otho* (destroyed by fire in 1731), currently known version comes from transcript made in 1724 by John Elphinstone

o *Cotton Vitellius* (c. 1000), manuscript containing *Beowulf, Judith,* partially destroyed by fire in 1731

o Danish Canute (Cnut), King of England (r. 1016-1035), marries Aethelred's widow Emma and fathers Hardecanute, King of England (1040-1042)

- o Edward the Confessor (last Anglo-Saxon king) (r. 1042-1066), son of Aethelred II Unraed and Emma; lived in exile in Normandy, during Danish rule of England, until 1041; conflicts and power sharing with Godwine, earl of Wessex, and his son Harold

- o Norman invasion; William the Conqueror, Battle of Hastings 1066, end of Anglo-Saxon Period

ENGLAND 500 – 700 A.D. [6]

History

Most surviving Old English literature was composed and transmitted by Christian churchmen, so, if we are to understand Old English literature, "we must know something of the circumstances and context in which it was composed" (Greenfield and Calder 5). The early Christian Church developed in England during the same time period in which English written literature was in its infancy. The early church writings consist largely of poems and stories handed down through oral tradition. Through historical texts, such as *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*, a researcher can trace the lives of the authors whose vernacular writings were later transcribed into Latin and eventually, Modern English. Although the application of extra-textual learning is always "subservient to the text itself," the reader can use it to "develop an understanding of period, to dispel readings based on historical ignorance or misunderstanding, and fundamentally, as the soundest basis from which to attempt literary judgments" (Woolf xi).

Monumental or architectural remains of the early Christian church "during the late Roman era are recorded or still exist at Canterbury, Caerleon, Bangor, Glastonbury, Dover, Richborough, Reculver, Lyminge, Brixworth, and other places" (Morgan 116). Roman dominion in Britain ceased about A.D. 410, the Roman troops were withdrawn, and the country was left to govern itself. The first official representative from the Roman church came in 596. This long isolation from European religious culture accounts in part for the differences and the bitter

antagonism between the old British church and the church imported from Rome.

Bede declared that the "Britons are contrary to the whole Roman world and

enemies to the Roman customs." The British bishops maintained, "We cannot

depart from our ancient customs without the consent and leave of our people."

Laurentius, the successor of Augustine, spoke bitterly of the antagonism of the

Scottish Church, saying, "We have found the Scotch bishops worse even than the

British. Dagon, who lately came here, being a bishop of the Scots, refused so

much as to eat at the same table, or sleep one night under the same roof with us"

(Morgan 114). Some differences were not doctrinal, but ritualistic and

disciplinary.[7] The date of Easter was a controversial, as was the tonsure, the

shaved part of the hair on the monks' head. The most important difference,

however, was that the original church of the British Isles preferred autonomy

from the church in Rome, and remained independent in business and doctrinal

matters.

With the coming of the Germanic tribes in the sixth century, the Christian

church faced persecution as the churches and monasteries were destroyed and the

priests were cruelly massacred. The church did survive, though, and Francis

Pryor states that in England "the first and only purely national church in the West

was founded." The English church, which reverenced Rome but did not slavishly

bow down before her, grew with a "distinctly national character and gradually

infused its influence into all the feelings and habits of all the people of Britain,

indigenous and Anglo-Saxon." In *Britain AD*, Pryor also states that the fifth

century may be seen as a "turning point for the character of religious foci in

western Britain. There is no trace of organized paganism in western Britain after the early fifth century, and the main religious foci are now monastic sites and churches" (178). The church completely changed the position of the English nation, both within its own island and in relation to the rest of the world, beginning a foundation of education and literary scholarship upon which the British would build, sending Christian missionaries to bring change into even European countries, and establishing a national sense of pride and a "sense of identity that would last for centuries" (189).

Although David Zesmer reasons that it is "virtually impossible to overestimate the importance of the coming of Christianity to England" (10) for the development of the English language, the many great religious leaders who rose to prominence in this time period left no writings in the vernacular of their day. Columba, of the Culdee church of Iona, wrote little, and that which is accessible is in Latin. Many of St. Patrick's works are in Latin. The treasuries of the Welsh and Irish historical libraries hold volumes of early works, some translated, but many are not yet available; some are attributed, but often they are written by anonymous authors.[8]

The language continued to develop and change, adding the Germanic alphabet and runes of the new rulers to the oral-traditional language of the Britons. Kelly states that "the Anglo-Saxon settlers brought with them from Germany the runic alphabet and there survives a small corpus of runic inscriptions on stones and on portable objects" (24). Zesmer notes that the Old English educators wrote in fluent Latin and Greek, emerging as "international citadels of

learning" and avoided the clumsy English until a few scholars realized the

importance of the education of the common priest, who needed to have an

understanding of the written words of the faith in his own tongue.[9] Then, English,

the common language of the people of Britain, began to accompany the Latin

(Zesmer 11). Often the writer would compose first in Latin and then translate his

own work into the vernacular of the day. Bede, for example, wrote his histories in

Latin, but his sermons and poems were written in both Latin and English. But

then, the "Viking raids of the ninth century destroyed all the kingdoms of England

except Wessex, and when (in 871) Alfred came to the throne, he says, Anglo-

Latin was virtually dead" (Alexander 133). Because of the lack of literacy, "Old

English prose writing was called into being by King Alfred as an act of policy to

fill the gap caused by the Viking destruction of the Latin culture of the kingdoms

north of the Thames" (Alexander 1).

 In different ways, literature began to flourish and the language and literary

devices expanded as the literature became a fluent, pleasing medium for the

thoughts and philosophies of the British people.

Part One: Poetry

In "Old English Verse and Christian Theology," George Brown urges "that we take a fresh look at the best Old English Christian poetry with an eye to how the poets express, incorporate and assimilate the religious matter. We can then perceive better the qualities of its composite art" (15). The nature of Old English poetry, though, "demands delicate handling if rigorous scholarly analysis is not to spoil its effects and dissipate such ephemeral qualities as charm and freshness" (Woolf x).

Three groups of Old English Christian poems have most consistently interested scholars and general readers: first, a number of religious poems associated with the poet Cædmon, whose life is so beautifully described by the Venerable Bede; second, a group of poems written by Cynewulf and his "school"—different in style from the works of the Cædmonian poets; and finally, paraphrased retellings of the stories of the Old Testament. Most extant Old English poetry is contained in four manuscripts, all somewhat damaged, compiled around the year 1000 in the West Saxon dialect:

> 1. *Beowulf* MS (in the Cotton collection of the British Museum, which contains *Beowulf* and *Judith)*
> 2. Junius MS (in the Bodleian Library at Oxford), which has the "Cædmonian" poems (but not Cædmon's *Hymn*, which is quoted in Latin by Bede)
> 3. Exeter Book (in Exeter Cathedral), which includes *Widsith*, riddles, elegies, and some "Cynewulfian" poems
> 4. Vercelli MS (at Vercelli, in northern Italy), which includes *Andreas* and the *Dream of the Rood.* (Zesmer 21)

Zesmer explains that although the manuscripts may date from around 1000, in all probability most of the poems and fragments they contain were composed at a much earlier date. Numerous traces of earlier Anglian dialectal forms exist in the Wessex manuscripts, providing "evidence that the poems may have been originally written in a Mercian or Northumbrian dialect and later translated into West Saxon by scribes who simply left many of the Anglian words undisturbed," which suggests the "Age of Bede," that period around the first quarter of the eighth century when Anglian culture was at its peak (21). *Anglian* or English became the name of the language of Britain. The Angles and Saxons, as well as other conquering tribes, imposed their language and the cultural styles associated with language onto the Britons. The oral tradition of the literature of the Germanic people became part of the evolving culture of Britain. Zesmer states that Early Germanic poetry was "composed and recited by the *scop* ('shaper'), a professional bard. At court feasts, the *scop* would celebrate in song the deeds of real or legendary heroes out of the remote past" (17).

This practice of oral literature is expounded in Bede's account of Cædmon's life. Bede describes the discomfort of Cædmon, who could not participate in an evening of poetry and song due to lack of talent. After receiving his divine gift, however, Cædmon, with the help of Abbess Hild and others, began the transition of poetry from the oral tradition to written literature.[10] George Brown states that "Old English poetic structure eternally itself in the hands of a gifted 'scop' is remarkably suited to representing Christian mysteries in their beauty and paradox." He explains, "There is good reason, inherent in the nature of

the verse, why Old English poets, following the example of Cædmon, could sing

the praise of the Creator so well, turning Scriptural texts, 'into the most melodious

verse'" (26). To explain why Old English poetry is such a fitting way of

presenting the Christian religion, Brown says:

> The creed of Christian faith consists of paradox and an astounding
> resolution of opposites. It holds that the incomprehensible,
> transcendent, spiritual, eternally blissful God beyond history
> became flesh as an historical, mortal, affective, touchable,
> agonized man. It claims the son pre-existed his own creation and
> his mother. The Christian faith affirms these and many more
> naturally irresolvable antitheses. (17)

A specific style of writing is needed to set up these antitheses in a format that can

be readily grasped by the reader. According to Brown, "Germanic verse possesses

the extraordinary qualities to set forth these tenets in a manner that no other

culture can match. It can do so on account of its own nature and basic structure."

Explaining the structure of the Germanic verse, Brown argues that the "Old

English bipartite line, with its two stressed syllables in each half of the line, sets

up an intrinsic opposition that is emphasized by the caesura but resolved by the

linking alliteration." Each line or combination of half-lines, therefore, "can yoke

both similar and disparate elements," using the alliterative binding of the stressed

syllable (18).

The format of the Old English verse is useful in setting up opposing

statements, but Brown contends that it is also useful for "making enumeration and

variation, imagistic and figurative language." For example, in Cædmon's Hymn

we find the combination, '*Meotudes meahte / ond his modethanc,* [sic]' which

shows God's power and intention conjoined (line 2). Not only does the style of

the poetry allow the writer to show relationships between two separate ideas, but it also gives opportunity for an "if A, then B" elaboration of theme. Brown says that the repetition in Old English verse is "not repetitious filler" but instead a "rich, complex, nuanced poetic device in the hands of a true '*scop*'" (19). So, too, James Kugel, in *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, has demonstrated that "Hebrew verse is not really composed of synonymous parallelism, but rather, the second half of the two-part verse adds a further emphasis and point" (qtd. in Brown 18). Old English variation "serves the same function, not as synonymous repetition, but supplementation and refinement, of emphasis and point" (Brown 18).

When considering the quality of imagistic and figurative language, "the *scop* would frequently introduce a kind of metaphor called the *kenning,* a compound of two terms used in place of a common word." The sun, for example, could be referred to as 'world-candle' achieving variety and suggesting an important attribute of his subject (Zesmer19).

Two other rhetorical techniques of Old English verse deserve mention— *variation* and *litotes*. Zesmer explains that *variation* has been defined as 'the use of equivalents for poetic purposes.' *Litotes* may be defined as ironic negative statement or understatement. The *Exodus* poet, exulting over the spectacle of the Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea, tersely observes that they were not very happy: "Less blithe was their boasting" (20). The verse patterns used by Old English poets represented the culmination of centuries of oral tradition. The poetic line, which was really "two half-lines separated by a distinct pause, contained four accented syllables and a varying number of unaccented syllables" (18).

Concerning rhyme and alliteration, Zesmer states, "Old English poets rarely used end rhyme, but they regularly used a system of alliteration. This alliteration involved the initial sounds, whether vowels or consonants, of the four stressed syllables." He explains that as a rule, "three of the stressed syllables were alliterated, and it was the initial sound of the third accented syllable that normally determined the alliteration." The "pounding rhythm," in conjunction with the alliteration, conveys an impression of unrelenting strength (19).

As the oral tradition became the written word, however, the poetry began to change. Inevitably, as the European style of Latin poetry flourished, the English poets began to incorporate European styles and techniques into their writings. Peter Clemoes, in "Symbolic Language in Old English Poetry," states that with increasing Christianization, the "less oral and the more written Old English poetry became—in other words, the less a poem was thought of as an event and the more it became a text—the less organic the traditional socio-cultural expressions became." As the poems were applied to imported, manuscript-based stories, they became a sort of "poeticizing discourse, a kind of rhetoric," serving the concepts of a universal church. (11)

Poets trained in the ways of Latin rhetoric "prised the closed system of poetry apart. They abstracted the binary structure and made it an instrument of two-part thought." The purpose of the original structure was changed as it was applied to Latin based themes. Clemoes also says that the writers made "punchy patterns" out of it, as when Cynewulf, in his poem on the Ascension, sets out every man's choice between heaven and hell:

> either the humiliation of hell   or the glory of heaven,
> either the radiant light   or the loathsome night. [*Christ II* 591-6a]
> (15)

Patterns in poetry changed as the converted Anglo-Saxons began to incorporate biblical themes into more and more of their texts. The Cadmonian poetry with its "most melodious verse" led to the more intricate Cynewulfian school of literature, which incorporates both the heroic language and the theological references of Latin-based church writings. Then, as Alfred renewed translation and critical exegesis of Anglo-Latin verse, paraphrases of the biblical stories produced poetry rich in mindset of the Anglo-Saxon Christians yet spoken in the vocabulary of the West Saxon scribes, who were increasingly influenced by European techniques and texts.

After 1066, the Anglo-Saxon poetic genre failed to progress in its development because it was looking back to days of past glory, using the imagery and vocabulary of the days when the Anglo-Saxon were the conquering heroes, rather than the conquered. The class—the upper class of political and ecclesiastical Anglo-Saxons—for whom it was written was "precisely that class which felt the fullest effects of, and was almost exterminated by, the Conquest" (Wilson 14). R. M. Wilson argues that only a few poems "in the strict alliterative line still remain which seem to post-date the Conquest." One is *The Site of Durham* and the others are copies of earlier poems, *The Grave* and *Worcester Fragments*, which no longer contain the standard West Saxon literary dialect, but rather Middle English (13). Although alliterative verse must have continued to be composed, as is evidenced by the later alliterative revival, "it is very different

from the strict Old English Type" in dialect and audience (14). The Old English

poetry, crafted by and for the valiant Anglo-Saxons found little audience in the

twelfth century subjects of the Norman King.

Cædmon

Cædmon, the first known Christian poet of Anglo-Saxon Britain, lived during the seventh century. Bede spoke of Cædmon as a common laborer, possibly a cow herder near the monastery of Whitby. Although his name seems to imply that he was of Celtic descent, we have no knowledge of the historical Cædmon other than the narrative account found in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* period*,* Book IV, chapter 24 of the *Historia* tells that in the monastery of the abbess Hild at Streoneshalh, a certain brother "specially distinguished and honoured by divine grace" made songs "such as tended to religion and piety." Whatever Cædmon had learned from scholars concerning the Scriptures, "he forthwith decked out in poetic language with the greatest sweetness and fervour," while others, also in England, "imitated him in the composition of religious songs" (Miller 47). In the initial biographical description of Cædmon, Bede shows the poet's life to have been productive and distinguished. Bede continues the story with an explanation of how Cædmon came to be so "honoured by divine grace":

> He had not, indeed, been taught of men, or through men, to
> practice the art of song, but he had received divine aid, and his
> power of song was the gift of God.

Although he does exaggerate the miraculous aspects of the Christian tradition, he does record miracles as accepted occurrences within the parameters of church history. Bede records that, in a dream, Cædmon received the gift of poetry and that he spent the remainder of his life composing oral texts that the priests and other scribes recorded for him:

> The man had lived in the world till the time that he was of advanced age, and had never learnt any poetry. And as he was often at a feast when it was arranged, to promote mirth that they should all in turn sing to the harp, whenever he saw the harp come near him he arose out of shame from the feast and went home to his house.

Bede's description of the meeting hall reflects the Germanic tradition of oral literature put to music. Cædmon, an illiterate cow herder, was unskilled in the tradition of oral literature. One night, after leaving the scene of the entertainment, Cædmon went to the stables. As he slept, a man came to him in a dream and implored him to sing:

> "Cædmon, sing me something." Then he answered and said, "I cannot sing anything, and therefore I came out from this entertainment and retired here, as I know not how to sing." Again he who spoke to him said, "Yet you could sing." (Miller 48)

It is interesting to note that the meaning of this last statement of "Yet you could sing" has been discussed. The Old English here is *Hwæðre ðū meaht mē singan* with *mē* appearing in most but not all manuscripts. Could Cædmon sing before the dream? Or, does the line mean, "Yet, you can sing for me," with the implication, "I will enable you to do so" (McBryde 412-413). Bede continues,

> "What shall I sing?" rejoined he. "Sing the beginning of created beings," said the other. Hereupon he presently began to sing verses to the praise of God, which he had never heard, the purport whereof was thus: We are now to praise the Maker of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and his counsel, the deeds of the Father of glory. How He, being the eternal God, became the author of all miracles, who first, as almighty preserver of the human race, created heaven for the sons of men as the roof of the house, and next the earth.

Bede then tells us that "this is the sense, but not the words in order as he sang them in his sleep; for verses, though never so well composed, cannot be literally

translated out of one language into another, without losing much of their beauty

and loftiness." Cædmon remembered all that he had sung in his dream, and after

singing his song to the abbess, he "soon added much more to the same effect in

verse worthy of the Deity" (Halshall).

The Old English copies of Bede's manuscript from the tenth and eleventh

centuries, which include the *Hymn*, omit the Latin version of the poem and many

of Bede's qualifying remarks (Kiernan 113). However, Bede does give a fuller

understanding of Cædmon's gift:

> He sang the creation of the world, the origin of man, and all the
> history of Genesis : and made many verses on the departure of the
> children of Israel out of Egypt, and their entering into the land of
> promise, with many other histories from holy writ; the incarnation,
> passion, resurrection of our Lord, and his ascension into heaven;
> the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the apostles ;
> also the terror of future judgment, the horror of the pains of hell,
> and the delights of heaven; besides many more about the Divine
> benefits and judgments (Halshall)

According to Bede's *Historia*, Cædmon had no poetic talent until, during a dream,

he was called by name and commanded to sing of creation. In his vision, Cædmon

began to "sing a song of praise which he had never heard before. When he awoke,

however, he remembered the dream and the songs" (Newcomer 21). Although

probably illiterate, Cædmon demonstrated a divine gift for verse, as he began

reciting the poem from his dream. His poem was impressive enough to cause his

superior to bring him to St. Hilda, who encouraged him to sing or create poems

about other biblical stories, drawn from the book of Genesis as well as from other

canonical books. Bede tells us, "His song and his music were so delightful to

hear, that even his teachers wrote down the words from his lips and learnt them,"

explaining how Cædmon's oral composition became written literature. In *Old English Literature*, Michael Alexander explains, "This is a striking account of oral poetry being written down, as well as of the appropriation of Germanic verse for Christian narrative" (5).

Bede indicates that Cædmon composed numerous works, but many scholars agree only on his authorship of his original poem, a manuscript entitled *Genesis A*, and a group of poems that are part of a collection called *Christ and Satan* (Crowne 1). According to the *Cambridge History of English Literature,* however,

> While making due allowance for a possible desire on Bede's part to extol the fame of an earlier contemporary—Bede himself died in 735—we should remember that Bede is one of the most careful and trustworthy of historians, and that he lived not far from the scene of Cædmon's life; it would, therefore, appear that we have not sufficient reason for rejecting as untrue the enumeration of Cædmon's literary achievements. (Smith 49)

To understand the process of transcribing oral poetry as written literature, the reader must understand the position of the scribes who "wrote down the words from his lips and learnt them." Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, in "Orality and Cædmon's *Hymn*," states that "the process of copying manuscripts is rarely simply mechanical. Given the normal medieval practice of reading aloud, the scribe likely 'heard' at least some of his text" (91). She explains that copying was done in blocks of text that required committing words or phrases to short-term memory, which draws upon formulaic possibility. As the scribes copied and recopied Bede's manuscript, variations in the text naturally occurred, but the

variations in the *Hymn* are understandable given the unusual circumstances of the written origin of the poem.

Bede recorded the story of Cædmon and paraphrased the poem not in the vernacular in which it was sung, but in Latin. The earliest vernacular version of the *Hymn* appears as gloss or marginal notes "later appended by scribes to two eighth-century manuscripts of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*" (Kiernan 103). Possibly, sometime after Bede's death in 735, his near contemporaries provided the first extant vernacular version of Cædmon's "Hymn" by adding them to the two eighth-century manuscripts. Although Kevin Kiernan supposes that this version, part of an early Northumbrian manuscript, may be simply a reverse translation of Bede's Latin paraphrase (108), several discrepancies in the translations of the text can be better explained by "the vicissitudes of a living oral tradition" (111). Put simply, the oral tradition of songs and poems gave the scribes of the Northumbrian manuscripts a personal experience with the hymn itself, allowing fro the possibility that the Northumbrian vernacular version of Cædmon's *Hymn* is the closest to the oral original. Kiernan also states, "From its humble start as a marginal, secondary text, the vernacular *Hymn* first worked its way into the central, primary text by means of a tenth-century Old English translation of Bede's entire History" (103).

A single scribe, writing during the years just after Bede's death, produced the Moore *Historia Ecclesiastica*, one of the Northumbrian copies, from which the following version of the *Hymn* is copied. Although Bede stated in his commentary on the poem that he could not translate Cædmon's oral version

exactly, "this version of the poem is nearly a perfect translation, word for word,

from Bede's Latin with the exception of the final two lines, which were

incomplete in the Latin" (Kiernan 110). No one knows the exact meaning of

Bede's comments,[11] whether he meant that Cædmon's original poem was longer,

formulated differently, or contained Germanic phrases that could not be translated

accurately into Latin, but we do have this translation from Moore's *Historia*. The

poem was written at the end of the book, in a smaller script, as if of less

importance:

<div align="center">

Cædmon's *Hymn*

ca. 737

Nu scylun hergan hefaenricaes uard
metudæs maecti end his modgidanc
uerc uuldurfadur sue he uundra gihuaes
eci dryctin or astelidæ
*he aerist scop aelda barnu*m
heben til hrofe haleg scepen.
tha middungeard moncynnæs uard
eci dryctin æfter tiadæ
firum foldu frea allmectig

Modern English Translation

Now let me praise the keeper of Heaven's kingdom,
the might of the Creator, and his thought,
the work of the Father of glory, how each of wonders
the Eternal Lord established in the beginning.
He first created for the sons of men
Heaven as a roof, the holy Creator,
then Middle-earth the keeper of mankind,
the Eternal Lord, afterwards made,
the earth for men, the Almighty Lord. (Crowne 1)

</div>

If we accept the Moore manuscript as closest to Cædmon's original, traditional

oral poem, then we must examine the text itself. According to Kemp Malone,

Cædmon deserves the credit for creating the formula of religious Old English

poetry. He argues, "From Bede's account it would seem reasonably clear that

Cædmon coined the Christian poetic formulas we find in the *Hymn*." Malone

explains that Cædmon followed the traditional technique of the scops, adapting it

to his own purposes with a minimum of change:

> He changed the inherited formulas enough to make them adaptable
> to God, but no more: *e.g. rices weard* 'keeper of the kingdom,' a
> traditional epithet for the king, in Cædmon's mouth became
> *hoefonrices weard* 'keeper of the kingdom of heaven' and was
> applied to God. (194)

The *Hymn* follows a pattern traditional for a eulogy for a prince in the poetry

native to the Anglo-Saxon (Malone 194). Michael Alexander continues to explain

formulas in *Old English Poetry* by noting that "the abundance of parallel and

alternative expressions for given essential ideas is one of the most noticeable

features of Old English verse, and incidentally a problem for the translator" (50).

Cædmon incorporated many epithets for God and man into his poem.

Northumbrian versions differ from West Saxon versions as the scribes tried to be

faithful to Cædmon's creation and yet make sense of the formulaic expressions.

Alexander, explaining this problem, states that "although God is a special case,

and has many names in the Bible and in Latin hymns, it is striking that there is a

periphrasis of His name in eight of these nine lines" of Cædmon's *Hymn*. One

formula (*eci dryctin*) is "repeated within five lines," while other formulas "echo

elements of each other" (51).

As in many of the early poems, the *Hymn* contains a reference to the biblical Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In the tradition of St Patrick, the "Deer's Cry," c. 600, a *lorica* or prayer of protection, names the Trinity as a magic charm or spiritual protection from extreme dangers.[12] However, Cædmon's song of praise follows the Latin tradition of giving aknowledging each person of the Godhead, rather than the Celtic tradition of evoking divine protection. Michael Swanton, author of *English Literature Before Chaucer*, notes that Cædmon refers to the Trinitarian aspects of the Creator in the three parallel epithets: "*metudæs maecti* [the might of God] (the Father), his *modgidanc* [his thought/wisdom] (the Son), and *uerc uuldurfadur* [the work of the glorious father] (the Holy Spirit)" (74).

Concerning the remaining formulas that Cædmon uses to describe humankind, Alexander explains:

> The men for whom heaven is created as a roof are called *aelda barnum*, the children of men. In West Saxon versions this phrase became *eorthan bearnum*, the children of earth. [. . .]The idea of heaven makes little sense without the idea of earth, and the formula 'heaven and earth' is found in the common poetic stock of the Germanic languages. Likewise men were 'the children of men' even if God had just created them. The expression *aelda barnum* […] embodied the traditional Germanic conception of men in terms of their generations on Middle earth[13] and in the order of things; likewise, the Old English *woerold* (world) derives from *wer*, man. (51).

A controversy exists because of the two translations: the children of men and the children of earth. Kevin Kiernan adds that two Northumbian and six late West Saxon manuscripts agree that Bede's Latin cliché, *filiis hominum*, exactly glosses "the sons of men," *aelda barnum* or *ylda bearnum*, coming authentically from

Cædmon, while two Northumbrian and seven West Saxon manuscripts agree that

Cædmon sang an extraordinary phrase, "the sons of the earth," *eorthan bearnum*,

which Bede blandly glossed with a cliché (105). This disagreement as to

Cædmon's original word choice has become the most basic dividing point of all

the interpretations of the text.

Another aspect of the formula of the *Hymn* concerns the modern practice

of writing one verse per line, with a distinct separation between half lines.

Katherine O'Keeffe states that "Old English poetry is copied without exception in

long lines across the writing space." However, Latin verses of the eighth century

are written in a form familiar to modern readers: verses are set out one to a line,

capitals begin each line, and often the lines contain some form of punctuation at

the end. (79). The Moore manuscript has only one capital, the "N" at the

beginning, and only one end mark, after the word "*scepen*." This style conforms

to the Old English model.

O'Keeffe explains the spacing of the words, and the capital and end mark

traditions by stating that the "emphasis, clarity, surprise, and suspense all depend

on the speaker's modulation of his speech in time. When a work is written,

however, its tempo no longer depends on the speaker or writer." Therefore,

spacing between words takes the place of the speaker's pauses; capitals indicate a

"hierarchy of material and meaning." "Dots and marks indicate special status for

portions of text," O'Keeffe concludes, and, "The higher the degree of

conventional spatialization in the manuscripts, the less oral and more literate the

community" (80). Judging by these criteria, Cædmon's *Hymn,* spanning the gap

between oral and written, is placed properly at the beginning of English literature, inscribed in long, unlined verse, with one capital and one end mark. As Bede's manuscript was copied over the centuries, however, scribes changed the spatial format of the original in several ways, reflecting the reception of the poem throughout the Old English period. Latin poems in Bede's manuscript were treated differently from the Old English gloss. O'Keefe notes that the "extralinguistic markers to examine are the location of text on the page, lineation, word division, capitalization and punctuation." These visual clues will "point to differences in expectations about reading Latin, an almost purely textual language, and Old English, a living language only newly being committed to writing" (81). It is interesting to note the placement of the *Hymn* within the copied manuscripts, which reveals the scribes' attitudes toward the vernacular as compared to the scholarly Latin. Five manuscripts of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* written in England in the eighth century survive. Two early Northumbrian manuscripts also are extant. "Cædmon's *Hymn* travels in two textual environments, as a marginal addition to the account of Cædmon's miraculous composition in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and as an integral part of the West-Saxon translation of the History" (O'Keeffe 85).

When the *Hymn* travels as a marginal gloss, the text is subject to little variation. But, in the West-Saxon translation, the *Hymn* shows a high degree of freedom in transmission, as the *Hymn* appears in the body of the text in various formats. In contrast to the Latin format, which mirrors modern structure, the Old English *Hymn*, is "never displayed graphically by metrical line, nor does

punctuation distinguish lines or half-lines or act consistently as a marker of grammatical divisions" (O'Keeffe 95).

Although Cædmon's *Hymn* continues to interest scholars for its stylistic and technical value, Brown also considers the content and diction to be important. "Contained within this narrative of divine inspiration," Brown believes, "lies a natural wonder. For just as the prophecies and psalms are beautifully expressed in the poetic medium of ancient Near Eastern verse forms, so Cædmon, as the first of a noble line of poets to which Cynewulf belongs, expresses the Judaeo-Christian message in the naturally appropriate Germanic medium"(17). Bede's list of Cædmon's writings "covers the biblical and catechetical essentials for instruction in the Christian faith, made available to the Anglo-Saxon audience in assimilable form." Considering the importance of the written word to the Christian religion, Brown argues that God's gift of religious song to Cædmon meant that "the food of spiritual life needed to sustain the young Anglo-Saxon church [...] would not remain entirely a foreign Continental Latin commodity, unpalatable to and indigestible by the English masses." Heroic poetry from the pagan past was "miraculously redirected into a new spiritual life. Just as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, and Amos couched their prophetic messages in traditional Hebrew verse form," Brown explains, the transformed Cædmon "displayed great poetic talent in translating God's message into traditional Old English verse for the needs of the Anglo-Saxon church" (16). But as Anglo-Saxon culture rearticulated the biblical accounts of Christianity, the literature itself was transformed into an even more martial register. Alexander says that the "humane, gentle and orthodox

Bede reveals attitudes in his exegetical writings which are not easily assimilated,"
but when the Germanic barbarians enthusiastically accepted the faith, "it was re-
expressed in a heroic vocabulary which seems at first doubly strange. Patristic
doctrine, which is largely ascetic, monastic and world-denying, was recast in a
social mould not only lay but heroic" (105). By the end of the period, there are
signs of a "fully articulated written tradition" (Scragg 55). Cynewulf, the next
great poet after Cædmon, carries the Old English poetic style into new genres
which include lives of heroic saints, as well as brilliant dream visions.

Cynewulf

Mystery surrounds the poet Cynewulf. Evidently, he was well-educated and fluent in Latin, and although he wrote in the English vernacular, he seems to have been a cultured Anglian cleric of the late eighth or early ninth century. Some scholars speculate that he was a poet who converted to Christianity late in life, but no earlier secular poems have come to light. In an autobiographical section near the end of *Elene*, Cynewulf confesses that "in his youth he was soiled and shackled by sin, ignorant of the Cross, until God, in His infinite grace, granted him in old age the glorious gift of knowledge and sacred song" (Zesmer 56). Michael Swanton records that Cynewulf (fl. 800) is the only Old English poet to sign his works. Although he probably worked during the late eighth or early ninth century, he cannot be identified with any known historical personage, but "if a purportedly 'autobiographical' epilogue to *Elene* be taken at face value, the poet may have lived for a time as a warrior in well-to-do circumstances before experiencing a conviction of sin and religious conversion." Certainly his accomplished writings and his religious preoccupations suggest that he was probably a cleric (322). Conclusive evidence suggests that Cynewulf was not a West Saxon, but probably a "Northumbrian or of Mercian origin, and that he wrote during the end of the eighth century" (Ward 21). Zesmer states that his words reveal a "degree of learning and literary sophistication not usually found among the Cædmonian poets. The most distinctive feature of his verse is its highly intricate use of images" (57).

The poems that Cynewulf definitely wrote include: *Christ, Elene, Juliana* and the *Fates of the Apostles. Christ* is preserved in *The Exeter Book* and is written in three parts: the Advent of Christ, the Ascension, and His second coming. *Juliana* is also recorded in *The Exeter Book* and concerns the martyrdom of St. Juliana (Ward 58). Cynewulf embedded his signature in runic letters in these texts.[14] Jeff Opland states that "Runes had syllabic as well as phonemic values," and Cynewulf worked passages into his poems that "contained the runes whose phonemic values spelt out his name and whose syllabic values allowed them to be read logically in context" (33).

In the *Fates of the Apostles*, Cynewulf accompanied his signature with a request that "whoever read the poem should pray for the safe passage of the poet's soul on its long journey into the unknown. Thus Cynewulf did not sign his poems out of vanity, but rather from a fervent hope that his audience might help him to attain salvation" (Zesmer 56). Several other poems bear sufficient thematic and stylistic resemblance to Cynewulf's four signed poems to have earned the designation "Cynewulfian." The most important unsigned work attributed to Cynewulf or to the Cynewulfian school is the esteemed *Dream of the Rood.* Other possible works include *Guthlac*, the *Phoenix* and certain riddles in *The Exeter Book* (Smith 64). *The Fates of the Apostles,* while not recognized as especially noteworthy,[15] is unique in that "only in this poem does Cynewulf draw the hearer's attention to what he must expect: 'The wiseman . . . may here find who composed this poem'" (Woolf 231). Cynewolf encrypted his name into the text in runes, but he spelled his name Cynwulf in this poem. In other poems he signed his

name with the "e," Cynewolf. The bolded letters in the text show the placement

and meanings of the symbols.

> Wealth (**F**) stands at the end;
> earls enjoy it in earth. Nor may they ever stay tighter,
> dwelling in the world. Joy (**W**) must diminish,
> Ours (**U**) on earth. Afterward the transitory
> adornments of the body will decay, even as water (**L**) spills.
> when the Torch (**C**) and Horn (**Y**) seek strength
> in the narrow night, then Need (**N**) lies on them,
> the service of the King. Now you may know
> who has been made manifest to men in these words. (Boenig 190)

Cynewulf's use of runes shows "some evidence for familiarity with the runic

alphabet among the educated classes of society" (Kelly 4). Although the use of

Latin in early Britain predates the coming of the Germanic tribes, "Latin and the

Roman alphabet were first introduced into the Anglo-Saxon areas of Britain by

foreign missionaries from the later sixth century onwards" (Kelly 8). The poetry

of Cynewulf was composed to be read. Opland explains, "Cynewulf serves as an

exemplar of the kind of English poet who emerged as a result of the Conversion."

His runic signatures can only be interpreted by seeing the runes in the manuscript

and solving the anagram; consequently the medium of communication is writing,

symbols of the spoken word: the appeal is visual, not oral (36).

Cynewulf's writings complete the transformation from oral tradition to

written literature. Poetry, in its Old English form, has developed from verse that

was composed orally for the purpose of oral recitation, to written copies of the

oral presentation, to writings created with the distinct purpose of being read rather

than recited. Opland explains that this distinction gives Cynewulf "time to

deliberate, to improve. His objective is to produce a work that will be as stable as a work of sculpture or a painting" (40). As David Daiches states, "with Cynewulf, Anglo-Saxon religious poetry moves beyond biblical paraphrase into the didactic, the devotional, and the mystical" (17).

The Dream of the Rood[16]

One of the finest examples of religious poetry in the English language,

The Dream of the Rood is inscribed, in part, on the early eighth-century sculpture,

the Ruthwell Cross. The Ruthwell Cross is carved in runes with lines from the

Rood on two of its four sides. The runic excerpts come from the middle part of the

poem, in which the Cross relates the events of the Crucifixion and its own crucial

role in this story. Rosemary Woolf argues that it is evident from the early date of

the *Ruthwell Cross*, the *Dream* must have been "an offshoot of the school of

Biblical poetry begun by Cædmon, but the general feeling and vocabulary of the

Dream suggest affinities with the school of Cynewulf rather that of Cædmon":

> The poem must have been written round about the year 700, and
> that the poet did not simply write a Biblical paraphrase in native
> style must surely be accounted for by the fact that he was steeped
> in the doctrine of the church, and thus gave to his treatment of the
> Crucifixion the full richness and subtlety of its theological
> significance. (48)

The poem is also found, in full, in the tenth-century Vercelli Book, a manuscript

collection of homilies in prose and poetry that may have originated at St.

Augustine's, Canterbury, in about 970 (Thurston 1). Michael Swanton states that

the poem is a "late seventh or early eighth century Northumbrian crucifixion

poem of some hundred and fifty lines." A writing of "considerable theological

sophistication and dramatic ingenuity, its core is an account of Christ's

crucifixion as remembered by means of prosopopoeia, the personified cross"

(*English Literature* 323). This poem is significant because of its unique format as

the first English "Dream Vision." The medieval literary device of the riddle

begins the poem, as the reader must discover who the speaker is. Then the

personified voice of the cross takes over, and the audience experiences the

emotions of the cross as an instrument of death to its creator. Louis Leiter

explains that the poet's genius lies "in his ability to force his syntactical

arrangements, as well as metaphors, similes, and the like, to support, emphasize

and dramatize his themes." In a similar manner, the poet may also "create a strong

thematic dialectic among various syntactical elements, for instance, those

beginning with an initial *on*." The first of these, *on lyft lædan* (5a) and the final,

on godes rice (152b), are "symbolic formulas for the reanimation of the spirit"

(126). [17]

Rich in connotation, the poem contains dimensional aspects using layers

of syntax and symbolism. Elaine Treharne describes the Cross as the main voice

in the poem, as the crucifixion narrative is told by the transformed wood. The

Crucifixion story is told in the words of the Cross of Christ, "an enormous and

shifting beacon that appears as a perplexing symbol to a visionary in the night"

and is "framed initially by the visionary's account of his or her astonishment and

fear at seeing this celestial sign," as the cross is first "lit by beams of light,

bejeweled and glorious," and then shifts "to a simultaneous sign of suffering—

bleeding, oozing moisture, its size extending to the four corners of the earth."

The Cross begins to speak of the Crucifixion, and then the visionary speaks,

expressing hope in Christ's Passion, understanding man's role in salvation,

"eagerly seeking to be reunited with Christ and his angels" (Treharne 2).

The poem is concerned with the religious experience of change or transformation in the human condition. Three main parts of the poem involve the Christ, the Cross and the Dreamer. In "The Dream of the Rood: Patterns of Transformation," Leiter clarifies that the poet casts "the Passion, the drama of the Cross, and the salvation of the Dreamer into a series of three almost identical dramatic metaphors that reinforce each other contrapuntally," but the "metaphors, being dramatic, are also dynamic: they are incremental, varied, and transmuted; they progress through a series of dramatic climaxes." The final resolution projects a new life, a new state of being, for the three performers—Christ, Cross, and Dreamer (93-94).

The poet chose "materials close at hand, experience from a daily life that was animated by memories of a pagan past." So, using the "vocabulary of warfare, the poet constructed three identical dramas that form the poem: the defeat and paradoxical victory of Christ, the hewing down and raising up of the Cross, and the sleep and awakening of the stained and sinful Dreamer" (Leiter 94). In the *Dream*, the three dramatic battle metaphors become symbolic of redemption as the poet "supports, broadens, and strengthens his consistent and cohesive metaphors of battle with a multitude of other images to describe both poles of the transformative process." Using the "strange metabolism of the language of the *Dream,* the poet has created a way of expressing the truth" that is completely different from the dialectical method of earlier poets (125). The *Dream* begins:

> Hear, while I tell of the best of dreams . which came to me at midnight when humankind kept their beds.

> It seemed that I saw the Tree itself . borne on the air, light wound
> round it, brightest of beams, all that beacon was . covered with
> gold, gems stood fair at its foot, and five rubies . set in a crux
> flashed from the crosstree. Around angels of God . all gazed upon
> it, since first fashioning fair . It was not a felon's gallows,
> for holy ones beheld it there . and men, and the whole Making
> shone for it Trophy of Victory .

The glorified tree at its best is beheld by the dreamer at his worst. Shame and sin

have beaten the dreamer in his sinful human condition into a stained and marred,

defeated state. This antithesis and seeming paradox is expressed in part by the use

of the caesura. Donald Scragg explains that the caesura, and the marking of it with

a change of rhythm, "gave many Old English poets the opportunity to create

paradox or antithesis within the poetic line." In the *Dream,* the author captures the

"duality of Christ's crucifixion for the Christian, the horror and the joy, in a series

of lines, where the dreamer-narrator contemplates the changing aspects of the

cross." The poet says that sometimes the dreamer saw the cross bleeding, and

sometimes gilded with jewels:

> hwilum hit wæs mid wætan bestemed,
> beswyled mid swates gange,   hwilum mid since gegyrwed

> [Sometimes it was drenched with moisture, washed with the
> running of blood,   sometimes adorned with treasure.] (68)

The parallels that unite the poem, Carol Braun Pasternack agrues, occur within

"contrasting modes of being and within sections which are divided topically. . .

The 'echoic repetitions' and the 'system of parallels and contrasts' find their

formal complement in the poem's systematic stylistic disjunctions" (406). The

poem continues as the dreamer beholds the changes in the cross:

> I, stained and marred,
> stricken with shame, saw the glory-tree . shine out gaily, sheathed

> in
> decorous gold; and gemstones made . for their Maker's Tree a right mail-coat
> Yet through the masking gold I might perceive .
> what terrible sufferings were there
> It bled from the right side . Ruth in the heart
> Afraid I saw that unstill brightness . change raiment and colour, again clad in gold or again slicked with sweat . spangled with spilling blood.
> I, lying there a long while . beheld, sorrowing, the Healer's Tree till it seemed that I heard how it broke silence, best of wood, and spoke [. . .]

The personified cross begins to tell how, as a tree, it was cut from its place in the woods to become a cross for thieves. Leiter says that "repetition, parallelism, shifting of the verb of action to the semantically (though not rhythmically) important initial position" are deliberate devices for underscoring the significance of the drama. (96) Continuing the drama, the cross tells of seeing the warrior Christ:

> Then I saw, marching toward me, Mankind's brave King . He came to climb upon me. I dared not break nor bend aside . against God's will, though the ground itself shook at my feet. Then the young warrior, Almighty God, mounted the Cross, in the sight of many. He would set free mankind.

Using the rhetorical device of synecdoche, by which the part may be taken for the whole, the Cross stands for redemption (Zesmer 67). Sandra McEntire agrees, stating that "the cross is the vehicle or instrument by which an individual is saved. Inspired by the ark of Noah, the Church Fathers saw a ship as a figure of the Cross, carrying the chosen to salvation" (397). The poet captures this sense in the end of the poem when he says, "the cross. . . shall fetch me away. . . and bring me

then where bliss is great"(402). The *Dream* poet continues to describe how the

cross became an instrument of obedience to the "Warrior Christ":

> I shook when his arms embraced me,
> but I durst not bow to ground,
> stoop to Earth's surface . Stand fast I must.
> I was reared up, a rood . I held the King, Heaven's lord, I dared not
> bow . They drove me through with dark nails: on me are the
> wounds
> Wide-mouthed hate dents. I durst not harm any of them.
> They mocked us together . I was all wet with blood sprung from
> the Man's side . after he sent forth his soul.[. . .]

As the cross became the instrument of Christ's death and mankind's redemption,

the disciples watched and cried. Finally, the cross was lowered and Jesus was

buried. The disciples later found the cross and covered it with gold, silver and

honor. Like the comitatus around a fallen prince, Leiter says, "the warriors, eager

but mournful reinforcements, gather to sing funeral songs. The grief-stricken

mæte weorode 'little band' (69b) remain with their lord . . .until 'the body grew

cold (72b)." The poet enlarges upon the battle metaphor: "now physically

defeated by the enemy, *strange feondas* (30b), but spiritually victorious, the

warrior-hero-prince rises phoenix-like from the flames of death" (95). The poet

constantly "expands the battle metaphor through his use of fairly commonplace

religious material, capturing the emotions of a people to whom warfare was as

familiar as their daily bread." For instance, the word *fyll* 'fall' (56a) is precisely

the one that "enriches his battle metaphor with the necessary spiritual overtones."

Fyll refers to the "disobedience and fall of Adam, the connotation needed at this

juncture to link the death of warrior-Christ in the present drama with the fall of

Adam in that old chaos of the Garden" (98):

> Cold grew the corpse, fair soul house.
> They felled us all . We crashed to ground, cruel Wierd,
> and they delved for us a grave . The Lord's men learnt of it, His
> friends found me. It was they who girt me with silver and gold.
> (Alexander 183)

Alexander explains that "Just as the rood co-operated with its Lord during his great struggle, in could afterwards bend to allow the apostolic 'commanders' to take down the corpse." At this halfway point in the Vercelli text, "the story turns into a sermon" (183). The poem contains the vivid metaphor of "war, capture, execution, and apparent death that leads paradoxically to a purgation and transformation of the protagonist of the metaphorical drama" (Leiter 107). "Parallelism of phraseology, stylization of syntax, and accretion of words of unfamiliar connotations" illustrate the stages of the Dreamer's spiritual transformation (115). Leiter concludes that all these "incidental metaphors, amplifications of the thrice-repeated cohesive one, dramatize a permanent truth, the living, dramatic, transformational paradox that a man must first lose his life to save it" (125). As Michael Swanton states, *The Dream of the Rood* represents a "wholly remarkable achievement in poetic, intellectual, and iconographic terms. A dramatic and original composition, it is quite without parallel; no model is to be found among any of the large number of contemporary Latin cross-poems" (*English Literature* 94). Although the cross as a symbol of Christianity and as the subject of iconical devotion inspired many literary works in the early centuries of the Christian era, the *Dream of the Rood*, written in the language of burgeoning English, through dramatic creativity and skilled use of imagery, demonstrates the flexibility and potential of the Old English language.

Genesis B[18]

The Anglo Saxon *Genesis* is a narrative poem based on the stories found in the Hebrew writings of Genesis. According to Swanton, *Genesis* is an early Old English narrative poem of almost three thousand lines written in the manner of Cædmon. Bede does credit Cædmon with writing poetry concerned with the Old Testament text, as he says, "He sang first of the earth's creation and the beginning of man and all the story of Genesis," so it is possible that *Genesis* is partly Cædmon's work. However, the only extant text, found in the eleventh-century Junius Manuscript, is believed to be a combination of the earlier Genesis text, known as *Genesis A*, and a later work known as *Genesis B*. While *Genesis A* is apparently contemporary with *Beowulf* and is Cædmonian in style and content, the passage from lines 235-857, *Genesis B,* is "markedly different in style and based on a Continental Old Saxon poem incorporated some time in the mid to late ninth century, perhaps translated by one of the continental scholars attracted to the court of King Alfred" (Swanton, *English Literature* 325).[19]

In 1875, a young German scholar, Eduard Sievers, "entitled the West Saxon transcription, *Genesis B*, to distinguish it from the rest of the Anglo-Saxon poem, which then became *Genesis A*." Sievers believed that a later, perhaps eleventh-century scribe copying the *Genesis B*, upon finding gaps in the original manuscripts, may have pieced in part of *Genesis A* to fill in the story. Slight, subtle variations in the text support his theory. This theory was confirmed in 1894 by the discovery of thirty-two leaves of manuscript from a copy of Saxon

Genesis. When comparing the three manuscripts, an overlap of twenty-six lines was discovered. Swanton states that "since the Saxon poem clearly dates from the mid-ninth century, the Old English translation of it (probably made by a continental Saxon in England) cannot be placed any earlier" (*English Literature* 210). Thus, *Genesis B*, although preserved in Old English, is not an Old English poem nor is it a translation, strictly speaking. Rather, the Anglo-Saxon scribe has recopied the Old Saxon text—adding omitting or substituting a word here and there—into the standard written form of tenth-century Anglo-Saxon (David 10). Richard Garnett says, "The *Heliand* ("Saviour") is of course solely concerned with the New Testament, but seems to imply a corresponding poem of the Old, existing at present solely in the Anglo-Saxon fragment known as *Genesis B."* Garnett notes:

> The poet of the Temptation and the Fall, […] shows true original genius in his additions to his text; his pictures of Satan bound in the infernal regions, of the loyalty of the infernal retainer who performs the errand to Eden at his lord's behest, and of the subtlety by which Eve is overcome. (22)

The additions to the plot of the biblical story of Genesis create an atmosphere that allows a view of Satan as a chained fallen monarch who, although defeated, is not yet silenced. The loyal comitatus in rebellion, though outcast and doomed, still does Satan's bidding, while the human creation becomes a pawn in the clever scheme of revenge.

"*Genesis B* contains some fine poetic passages. The character of Satan is admirably conceived, and the familiar theme of a lost paradise is set forth in dignified and dramatic language" (Smith 52). Alexander says that "both the Fall

of the Angels and the Fall of Man are part of *Genesis B*, far more powerful than

Genesis A, but less faithful" (105). Zesmer agrees, saying that "unlike the author

of *Genesis A*, who rather closely paraphrases his Biblical source, the *Genesis B*

poet shows real narrative power. His Satan emerges with much of the magnificent

insolence of Milton's Satan in the initial books of Paradise Lost" (53). There has

been "some speculation that Milton may have known *Genesis B* through his

acquaintance with Junius who had the manuscript in London" (Swanton, *English*

Literature 209).

The poem opens in the middle of a speech by God to Adam and Eve that

corresponds to Genesis 2:16, as God tells them to enjoy the fruits of Paradise, but

not to taste those of the forbidden tree:

> ". . . but make use, you two, of all those others;   leave alone that
> one tree. Guard, both of you, against that fruit.
> There will not be for you any lack of desired things."
> They bowed their heads, then,   to the Heaven-King,
> eagerly together   and said all thanks
> for the knowledge and those laws.   He allowed them to live in
> that land,   wafted himself, then, to heaven
> the Holy Lord, strong-minded King.
> [. . .]   They were dear to God
> as long as they were willing to hold to his holy word.

A long flashback follows, describing the Creation and the Fall of the Angels.

Daiches states that the "poetic vigor and dramatic detail of *Genesis B* is

remarkable; the poem is a rudimentary *Paradise Lost* and, indeed, its finest

passages can bear comparison with parts of Milton's epic." He explains that

Satan's first speech ("Why should I toil? I need have no master; I can work as

many wonders with my hands. . . .Why should I wait upon His favor, bow before

Him with such homage? I can be God as well as He.") displays "tremendous if

primitive verve," while his second and longer speech, made after he has been cast into Hell ("Ah, had I but the strength of my hands."), has something of the "true Miltonic ring" (14).

Although the "imagination of the Anglo-Saxon religious poets, when stirred, is often intense, conjuring up visions grim or lovely with a vividness that has power to startle," Alain Renoir finds that the "vividness may be psychological as well as visual." He agrees with Rosemary Woolf and her psychological approach to the poem,[20] but he states that the "Tempter as well as the tempted can give insight into the artistry of the poet's treatment of the temptation of man" (47). Daiches says that "Satan's rhetoric in Genesis B is the primitive rhetoric of the heroic age compared with the subtler parliamentary rhetoric of Milton's Satan; but there is real poetic imagination at work here, an ability to give vigorous new life to a traditional character" (15). The poem continues, speaking of the creation of angels and the beginning of sinful pride:

> The All-wielder had   of angel-kind
> through handiwork,   Holy Lord,
> ten types trimmed;   them he trusted well,
> knew that they his rule   were designed to follow,
> to work his will,   because he gave them wit
> and with his hands shaped them,   Holy Lord.
> He had set them up so blessedly. [. . .]
> One in particular had he created   so shining   so mighty
> in his thinking;   he let him wield so much power,
> highest next to Him   in Heaven-Kingdom[. .]
> He should have loved the work of the Lord.[. .]
> But he turned himself to a terrible thing;   [. .]
> He did not wish to serve God; [. .] I may be God as well as He.

John Ball describes the writings of Genesis B as "written in the verse-form which the English had inherited from their pagan past, and even the subject-matter is

distorted to conform to Anglo-Saxon experience" (4). Notice the description of

Satan's comitatus of followers. The poet clearly defines an Anglo-Saxon-style

relationship between the Warrior Lord and his army, thus appealing to his

audience. Zesmer states, "enraged at the prospect of humbling himself before a

God whose supremacy he refuses to acknowledge, Satan boasts of his own

strength and rouses his followers to rebellion—much in the manner of a Teutonic

chief rallying his thanes" (53). Genesis B continues as Satan describes his loyal

band of followers who join him in the heavenly war. Note the terminology of the

Germanic tribal lords:

> Strong supporters stand beside me,
> who will not betray me in the strife,
> hard-minded companions.
> They have crowned me as their superior
> the renowned ring-men;
> with such may one take counsel,
> seize the prize with a standing army like this.
> They are my eager friends,
> loyal to death in their forged intentions.
> I may become their high-king,
> rule in this kingdom. [. . .]

Malcolm Godden states that "what clearly inspired the original poet, and

presumably his translator, was the challenge of dramatizing the feelings and

thoughts of the world's first sinner: the fallen angels and Adam and Eve are for

him archetypes of rebels and sinners," (212). It is "common knowledge" in the

Germanic world of warfare that the "separation from his lord and comitatus was

perhaps the worst tragedy that could befall a member of the Germanic comitatus."

Adam's tragedy is much like that of the fallen angels, for they too have become

hopelessly separated from their rightful Lord and comitatus. "The Anglo-Saxons

did not usually take to the notion that one might shift allegiance from one lord to another for the sake of convenience or personal advancement" (Renoir 52). As the High King, the all-powerful learns of the rebellion, he demands just punishment. Notice the word "atoned" is used, although the biblical account offers no mention of atonement in connection with the sins of the angels:

> When the Omnipotent   heard all--
> that his angel began   in his great adrenaline rush
> to rise up against his leader   and to speak haughty words dolt-like,
> feuding against his Lord,   He ordered that deed atoned for,
> the consequences of that striving to be dealt out,
> and that he have his punishment,
> the most misery of all.   So will befall each person
> who against his or her ruler   generates strife
> with wickedness against that Sublime Lord[. . .]

The punishment of "frost fiercely cold" or "spear-frost" would resonate with the Germanic tribes. The poet also describes the ultimate punishment, the loss of *thegnship*. Renoir explains, "Because they have aspired to rule over their Lord they have been paradoxically dealt the fate of the lordless retainer . . . , and they know that they have brought it upon themselves" (54):

> Then comes, in the dawn,   an eastern wind,
> frost fiercely cold.   Feast-fire or spear-frost,
> some hard hardship   they must endure,   because
> they the thegnship of God had cut from their hearts. [. . .]

Satan plots his revenge on God by defiling humans. Revenge is a key motif of the Germanic battle poetry. Alain Renoir "insists that Satan's motivation for the Temptation is revenge for the sake of revenge." In fact, "Satan of *Genesis B* may in a real sense be called the hero of that poem," a view Renoir shared the Charles Kennedy (47).[21] Satan continues his speech from his chained position in hell, lamenting his inability to get revenge:

> Alas!   Had I my hands' power
> and might one time   escape out, [. . .]
> He has now marked out one middle-earth,
> where he has created humans
> after his own likeness.
> With them, he will afterwards populate
> the land of heaven with pure souls.

Satan considers the human's position as God's beloved creation. He plots to create disharmony and to enslave Adam's race:

> We should avidly think upon this—
> how we in Adam,   if we ever may,
> and in his some of his posterity, too,   enclose terror,
> deprive him there of those joys of theirs[. . .]
> Then he will become wrathful in spirit,
> exile them from his loyal band.
> Then shall they seek this Hell   and these grim grounds.
> Then will we have them as our servants
> those progeny, suffering in this fast prison.
> Begin now to think about that campaign! [. . .]

Swanton explains that the Germanic understanding of the nature of Satan is as similar to the "proud and rebellious tyrant-hero of Paradise Lost, a conception of character that both the Old English poet and Milton may owe to the fifth-century *Poematum de Mosaicae Historiae Gestis Libri Quinque* of Avitus." Satan says, "I have great strength to establish a more stately throne," as, even in defeat, he is the "undaunted Germanic warrior, no the lamenting exile of *Christ and Satan,* bound in iron bands in hell as he is, he hurls words if not spears" (*English Literature* 210). The Old Saxon poet moves from "apocryphal story to biblical account with several modifications that are significant. Satan, chained, appoints a disciple as substitute tempter." This tempter approaches Adam first, but Adam rejects the temptation. Notice the old Germanic religious tradition in the line "self-fated of men":

He then fared forth   through fiend's craft
until he Adam found,   on Earth-land,
hand-shaped of God,   prepared,
worked to be wise,   and his wife with him,
the fairest of women, [. . .]
He began then the questioning   with his opening words,
the hateful one,   with lying: "Long you for anything,
Adam, from God?   [. . .]
Adam spoke where he stood   on the earth, self-fated of men: [. . .]
"You are not like any of his angels   that I ever saw,
nor do you show me   any token
that He sends to me   as troth,
my Leader in loyalty.   Therefore I cannot hear you,

Angered by Adam's refusal to be tricked, the devil turns to Eve, the human with a

"weaker mind," who succumbs. the devil tells Eve that if Adam doesn't listen to

him (*Godes engle god*–God's good angel/messenger), "God will be mighty angry

with Adam, and if Eve doesn't persuade Adam to eat the fruit, they and their

children will be sorry forever" (Burchmore 117). Satan's delegated tempter

promises Eve she will be better able to help Adam and her offspring; her eyes will

be opened in a new way. When she finally takes the fruit, he gives her a vision of

heaven:

Ponder in your breast   that you might   from both you two
ward off punishment,   as I you instruct.
Eat this fruit!   Then your eyes will become so light
that you might most widely   over all the world   see afterwards,
even the throne   of your Leader Himself [. . .] (Killings)

Eve then urges Adam, who finally agrees. Once fallen, they both realize their

error, repent and pray for punishment. "There is no hint that they refuse to

acknowledge their guilt, as in biblical and Augustinian versions of the Fall,"

Swanton writes, "nor do they seek to blame God" (*Anglo-Saxon Poetry* 211).

Renoir states that "*Genesis B* remains the story of the temptation of man, but it

also becomes a powerfully effective object lesson on the tragedy of self-deception" (65).

The style and content of *Genesis B* reflect a prevalent attitude in Old English poetry. Ball contends, "Old English poetry as a whole looks, not forward, but—as we see the poet himself doing in *Beowulf*—backward to a dying past" (6). Ball adds that "we owe to Alfred such eighth-century and ninth-century poetry as we have, because it all survives only in West-Saxon versions made under the influence of Alfred" (7). Jeff Opland argues that we are indebted ultimately to the Christian missionaries, who introduced writing to Anglo-Saxon England, for the very existence of those manuscripts. The Christian missionaries "initiated a revolution in taste and attitude unrivalled in the long history of English literature" (43).

The poetry of the era had progressed from a sweet lyrical song to the intricate Dream Vision to the theologically inventive forerunner of *Paradise Lost.* Latin-based ideas and allusions to European works seeped into Anglo-Saxon poetry during the years from Bede to Alfred, but the Norman Conquest put an abrupt halt to the style and formulas so loved by the English. Anglo-Saxon poetry, with its roots in oral tradition, could not make the transition from the caesura-based, alliterative format to the precise lines and rhyme patterns of the evolving European style. Even though, centuries later, the Anglo-Saxon's Satan might provide inspiration for Milton, the complex, ornamental word-play of the Old English could not survive the challenge of clean unadorned Latin.

Many generations would pass before the beauty of Anglo-Saxon poetical

works would again be admired. Although a few works appeared in the interim,

such as *The Alliterative Works of King Arthur*, these were the exceptions that

proved the rule, and most of these works focused on a different hero, a different

audience. Smith says, "It is hard not to regret much that was lost in the acquisition

of the new.

At first, Christianity is seen to be but thin veneer over the old heathen

virtues," but the fusion was nevertheless accomplished, "only what appealed to

the new creed or could be modified by it would be retained or adapted, when the

Teutonic spirit became linked with, and tamed by, that of Rome" (70-71). "The

tradition of 'classical' Old English verse," Scragg says, "with a two-part line, a

strong caesura, alliteration, variation and heavy reliance on traditional diction and

imagery, is lost with the Norman Conquest" (70). Despite the increasing

influence and incorporation of Latin based literature into the genre, the poetry

continued to reference the warrior-based language and the Anglo-Saxon heroic

formulaic style. The development of Old English poetry ceased, and though the

style and techniques of the warrior-based society had developed considerably

since the time of Cædmon, the genre could not make the transition into a courtly

French or Latin format.

Although some alliterative verse did appear in the centuries following the

conquest, the difference between the Old English poetry and the Middle English

alliterative is distinctive. For example, if we compare a portion of Layamon's

Brut, written about 1190 in Middle English with a portion of the *Dream of the*

Rood, the formulaic oral tradition structure and symbolism of the Old English text

is apparent, while Middle English, although also including imagery, reads almost

like versified prose:

> I seemed to see a tree of miracles
> Rising in the sky, a shining cross
> Wrapped in light. And all that beacon
> Was sheathed in gold; (Raffel and Olsen 55)
>
> I dreamed someone had lifted me right on top of some hall
> And I was sitting on the hall, astride, as if I was going riding;
> All the lands which I possess, all of them I was surveying
> (Abrams 122)

Yet, after the Norman Conquest, the poetry did not relate to the problems of the

present or the future of the Anglo-Saxons who soon found themselves the

conquered, rather than conquerors. After 1066, the new regime had no interest

in the Anglo-Saxon techniques, styles, or stories. So, the Old English poetic genre

disappeared for centuries into the dusty corners of time.

Part Two: Narrative

One of the most significant literary achievements of the Anglo-Saxons was the "establishment of vernacular prose as an acceptable medium both for the dissemination of knowledge on a wide range of subjects and for the provision of moral instruction and entertainment" (Bately 71). "English Literary prose," according to Zesmer, "was born in Wessex late in the ninth century when King Alfred the Great determined to bring Latin learning within the grasp of all his subjects" (68). Michael Alexander explains this late development of prose writing. He states that though the "Angles and Saxons had been speaking Old English for centuries, there is little evidence that this speech was cultivated for compositions of an unmetrical form, unlike Old Irish for instance, whose heroic saga is always in prose." However, absence of evidence is not conclusive, and the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard inserted in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 757 is "a significant exception." In the seventh century, for example, thousands of sermons must have been preached and some may have reached written form, but none survives (132).

Helmut Gneuss concludes that "the production of books from the beginning of the ninth century until Alfred's time—mainly before the great Danish invasion—must be considered as fairly insignificant," as fewer than 200 still exist, and moreover, "only ten can be dated earlier than the eighth century with any degree of certainty' (36). The Viking raids of the ninth century destroyed "all the kingdoms of England except Wessex, and when (in 871) Alfred

came to the throne, he says, Anglo-Latin was virtually dead" (Alexander 133). An "Educationalist, lawgiver, translator and forger of a vernacular prose style, and successful military strategist who alone saved England from becoming part of the Norse empire," Kevin Crossly-Holland writes, "Alfred was one of the truly great men in world history" (i). Indeed, Alfred is called the Father of English Prose. Grebanier states that "not until 889, when Alfred wrote his famous preface to Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, does the prose literature contain a noble passage." Grebanier continues, "In this and in other import translations of his reign—Bede's *Ecclesistical History* among others—the scholar king of Wessex greatly increased the flexibility of the Old English with Latin borrowings" (14).

Alfred encouraged the production of many genres of literature, but, "as much as the vernacular poetry had to offer the expression of Christian spirituality, the future lay with prose." Peter Clemoes argues that "the binary verse was made to externalize a schematic antithesis. It had become a framework for abstract thought" (12). While the Anglo-Saxon verse worked well in the parameters of biblical argument and the seafaring warriors, it was not versatile enough to meet the needs of the less cluttered patterns of the new European verse.

Janet Bately states that the "ornaments of style used by the Anglo-Saxon prose writers were many, a significant proportion of them involving patterns of sound":

> Of these the favorite seems to have been alliteration, while verbal parallelisms, such as the repetition of a word-stem or word-ending and the use of balanced phrases or clauses, are also commonplace features, along with the use of word-pairs that are either synonymous or closely related in meaning. (83)

Examples of many of the patterns and styles popular with the Anglo-Saxon writer

are found in the extensive texts of Bede.

Bede, "the greatest jewel in the Northumbrian crown," was the "first

English historian in the modern sense of the word. His *History of the English*

Church and People is so colorful, so decided, so humane, and is the source of so

much of our knowledge about the first three centuries of the Anglo-Saxon world"

(Crossley-Holland i). From his autobiography, the reader can appreciate the

smooth flowing candidness of his narrative. The account of Oswin of Deira, and

his dealings with Bishop Aidan is "a typical narrative," showcasing the Christian

virtues in the life of Aidan, as well as serving as a moral guide for Christian

behavior in the life of the secular King Oswin (Chambers 23).

King Alfred is well known for his ninth-century Preface to *Pastoral Care,*

a work that "employs classical rhetorical figures with ease" (Greenfield and

Calder 44). We can also credit to Alfred the organization of —or at least the

environment that produced—*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* which, "in terse entries,

records great events year by year—the accession of kings, battles, plagues,

failures of harvests, sightings of comets—until it was discontinued in the twelfth

century" (Crossley-Holland i). In the hagiographic tradition that survives from

Anglo-Saxon England, *St. Andrew* is the "most demanding Anglo-Saxon example

of the expressionistic mode" (Calder 133). Surviving in poetic as well as prosaic

form, it has been labeled as a "Christian *Beowulf,*" to its detriment. Since the story

is "non-liturgical and does not follow the conventional form of a saint's life, it is

precisely the sort of text which would have been rejected by Ælfric as heretical"

(Lapidge 260). Still, Calder states that "*Andreas* demands a reading on its own terms," (120) Therefore, *St. Andrew* has been classified, for the purposes of this discussion, as a narrative rather than a sermon, even though it is part of the *Blickling Homilies.*

Through the study of these prose narratives, the development of the styles and influences of Old English prose can be observed. The classes of Christian narrative—autobiography, history, correspondence, legends and hagiography— show the literary scope and techniques of Anglo-Saxon prose. Bede and Alfred's writings overlapped with regard to purpose: to establish a strong Christian nation. Bede used stories of past heroes to inspire leaders to righteousness and honor. Alfred encouraged literacy among the clergy to create teachers who could distribute the truth. Many of the sermons for the common Englishman began with a story of a Saint's life, either a political or an ecclesiastical hero. After the Norman Conquest, the French influence, though "slow to take effect, was eventually deadly" on the Anglo-Saxon prose genre. Much of late eleventh and twelfth century work consists of copies of earlier works, but production of prose declined because, "despite a certain amount of modernization, it [literary prose] gets further and further away from the spoken language and is dependent on a literary tradition." If that tradition is broken, "it can never be recaptured, and a new prose must be developed based on the actual spoken language" (Wilson 19). Eventually, the Old English prose no longer served the post-conquest Anglo-Saxon people except in the homily.

Bede: *Ecclesiastical History of Britain.*

Bede, known as the Venerable, lived from 673 through 735 in the monastery of Jarrow, during turbulent yet exciting years of England's history. According to his own accounts, he went to the monastery as a child,

> . . . from which time, I spent all the days of my life in the said monastery, applying all my study to the meditation of holy scripture: and observing withal the regular discipline, and keeping the daily singing of God's service in the church, the rest of my life I was delighted always to learn of others, and to teach myself or else to write. (Knowles 13)

Indeed, he spent his entire life, sixty-three years, in the vicinity of Jarrow. By all worldly standards, his was an uneventful, undistinguished life. Bede never became a bishop or even an abbot, yet he produced, catalogued, and influenced nearly all the known historical writings of his day (James 89). All that is known about early Britian comes from Bede: the kings, the common man; the battles, the victories; the theologies, the heresies. Frequently called "Father of English Learning," Bede described the Christian conversion of England, he translated gospels, and, although he wrote mostly in Latin, he preserved for us the vibrant lives of the most notable English writers of Britain's early history (Zesmer 51). Although many of Bede's writings survived, much has been lost to time and war. He wrote sermons, as well as lives of saints and poetry in the vernacular of his day, yet few of these survived. Perhaps the best description of Bede's achievements can be found in his own words at the end of the *Ecclesiastical History of Britain.* He begins his autobiographical sketch with a personal history of his childhood and his calling to the ministry[22] :

> Thus much of the Ecclesiastical History of Britain, and more
> especially of the English nation, as far as I could learn either from
> the writings of the ancients, or the tradition of our forefathers, or of
> my own knowledge, with the help of the Lord, I, Bede, the servant
> of Christ, and priest of the monastery of the blessed Apostles, Peter
> and Paul, which is at Wearmouth and Jarrow, have set forth.

Continuing the autobiography, Bede tells of his Northumbrian birth and of his

childhood, when he "was given, by the care of kinsmen, at seven years of age, to

be educated by the most reverend Abbot Benedict, and afterwards by Ceolfrid."

He spent the reminder of his life as a "dweller in that monastery," where he

"wholly applied myself to the study of Scripture." One of his duties was "the

daily charge of singing in the church." He concludes this portion of his narrative

saying:

> I always took delight in learning, or teaching, or writing. In the
> nineteenth year of my age, I received deacon's orders; in the
> thirtieth, those of the priesthood, both of them by the ministry of
> the most reverend Bishop John, and at the bidding of the Abbot
> Ceolfrid [Book V. 24] (Halsall).

Bede gives a detailed account of the books he has written, translated, and

compiled. The massive amount of work he accomplished in his lifetime reflects

his devotion to his calling and his love for the written word. John Ball states that,

"from the modern point of view his masterpiece is the *Ecclesiastical History of*

the English Nation, which he completed in 731." Ball says:

> The *Ecclesiastical History* is modeled to some extent on the work of
> Eusebius which bears the same title, and on the *History of the Franks*
> by Gregory of Tours. His account is on the whole well ordered and
> well informed; it reveals a scholarly grasp of his material and a regard
> for accuracy which are unique among the histories written in that
> period; but it likewise enjoys the advantage of Bede's pure and lucid
> style as well as of his narrative skill. (31)

The *Ecclesiastical History,* "is a work of great ability and of great charm,"

Alexander continues, and "if it did not exist we might know very little of early

England and of that event of much consequence, her conversion to Christianity."

Bede was "authoritatively clear about chronology in an age which had four

different days for beginning the year, and in an England which contained seven

kingdoms, in each of which events were dated by the year of the reign" (94).

Readers will appreciate the "transparency of his style and the clarity of his

narrative, and enjoy his portraits, his stories and set-pieces" (95).   The *History* is

divided into five books of roughly equal length and extends from Julius Caesar's

attempted invasion of Britain in 60 B.C. to A.D. 731, the year in which Bede

finished his work. Stanley B. Greenfield observes that:

> Each of the books has an individual focus:
> (I)   The background to the Augustian mission
> (II)   Gregory the Great and the Augustinian mission, as far as
>   Paulinus' return from Northumbria
> (III)   The subsequent growth of the Northumbrian church under
>   Irish influence
> (IV)   Archbishop Theodore and Cuthbert
> (V)   The present state of the Church in England (21)

Malcolm Godden states that as the Anglo-Saxons were trying to establish

themselves in a "new and hostile land," the similarity between the Hebrews in the

Old Testament and the Anglo-Saxons "may have struck Bede, who is thought to

have modeled his *Ecclesiastical History* on the Book of Samuel" (207). R. W.

Chambers points out that "Bede wrote the *Ecclesiastical History* before there was

any English nation in existence." Bede's *History* was one of the forces "which

made England into a people, long before Normans and Angevins formed the

impossible idea of creating one empire out of England" (50). Most of all, Bede

saw England as a Christian nation, and his stories engraved that ideal onto the

hearts of his countrymen (Foot 59). Chambers argues that the tale of Oswin of

Deira is typical of Bede's *History*. The story of Oswin begins with a description

of the king:

> King Oswin was of a graceful aspect, and tall of stature, affable in
> discourse, and courteous in behavior; and most bountiful, as well
> to the ignoble as the noble; so that he was beloved by all men for
> his qualities of body and mind, and persons of the first rank came
> from almost all provinces to serve him. Among other virtues and
> rare endowments, if I may so express it, humility is said to have
> been the greatest, which it will suffice to prove by one example.

Bede endows the king with physical and spiritual virtues as an appealing example

to the reader of how a Christian should live. A saint's life (or a nationalistic heroic

tale) is also a moral tale that illustrates the virtue of humility. Chambers says that

the story of Oswin is proof that "seventh-century England did produce men with

mildness and gentleness" (68):

> He had given an extraordinarily fine horse to Bishop Aidan, which
> he might either use in Crossing rivers, or in performing a journey
> upon any urgent necessity, though he was wont to travel ordinarily
> on foot. Some short time after, a poor man meeting him, and
> asking alms, he immediately dismounted, and ordered the horse,
> with all his royal furniture, to be given to the beggar; for he was
> very compassionate, a great friend to the poor, and, as is were, the
> father of the wretched.

Bede also wrote several more stories of St. Aidan, extolling his virtues and

miracles. In regard to Bede as a hagiographer and to the tradition of miracles,

Alexander says, "Miracles are not to be explained. Bede records the supernatural

happenings in oral history, but it is noticeable that in the lives of the abbots whom

Bede knew, there are no miracles." The miraculous fits into the *Ecclesiastical*

History, however, "as one element in the pattern of God's providence" (95). As

Bede continues the narrative, King Oswin questions the judgment of the bishop:

> This being told to the king, when they were going in to dinner, he said to the bishop, "Why would you, my lord bishop, give the poor man that royal horse, which was necessary for your use? Had not we many other horses of less value, and of other sorts, which would have been good enough to give to the poor, and not to give that horse, which I had particularly chosen for yourself?" To whom the bishop instantly answered, "What is it you say, O king? Is that foal of a mare more dear to you than the Son of God?" [. . .]

The king was much convicted by this statement, and fell at the feet of Aidan,

begging him to take whatever he wished to give to the countrymen. Bede's gentle

account illustrates the reason the *Ecclesiastical History* survives in hundreds of

manuscripts and was one of the Latin texts translated into Old English at the time

of King Alfred's revival of learning in the late ninth century. Greenfield and

Calder acknowledges that "Bede has told many of the stories so well that they

have become a permanent part of our literary heritage" (21). Alexander states that

Bede lived in a time of "spectacular literacy, indeed bookishness . . . The example

and memory of this literacy was inspiring for subsequent vernacular literature . .

.the English Church was never again to be quite so interested in the Word, and in

words, as it was at the beginning" (32). In *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, Swanton states that

"in a society where every evening will have called for entertainments of the kind

witnessed by Bede in the introduction to his story of Cædmon, the cultivation of a

story-telling art must have flourished, both in verse and prose forms of delivery."

Bede took many of his vivid stories from this body of oral traditions (xiii).

Of this era, Chambers remarks that "Christian gentleness, working upon the

passions of the Heroic Age, produces at once a type which is the rough outline of

what later becomes the medieval ideal of the Knight, or the modern ideal of the

gentlemen" (65). "It is small wonder that King Alfred looked back upon this age

with regret: an age 'when men came from abroad to England in search of wisdom

and learning; and now we have to search for wisdom and learning abroad'" (41).

King Alfred and *Anglo Saxon Chronicles*

King Alfred of Wessex became King of all England in the late ninth century, when he captured London. His reign began while the country was in the midst of a fierce struggle with the Viking invaders. R. D. Fulk notes that "Northumbria fell to the invaders in 865, East Anglia in 867, and most of Mercia by 877." In the south, Wessex, the last remaining kingdom, was "overrun in midwinter 878 by the forces of the Danish king Guthrum; but in the spring the West Saxon king Alfred rallied his forces and soundly defeated Guthrum." The Danes then agreed to baptism and to a treaty confining their people to the Danelaw, a large portion of the country governed by Danish leaders and laws. Alfred then ruled over "all parts of England that were not under Viking control, making him, in effect if not in name, the first of a long dynasty of kings of all England" (21). John Ball states, "Early in life he [Alfred] developed a quality extraordinary in his time: a willingness to place the interests of his people and of his family first, and his own interests second. . . Alfred believed that wisdom could not fail, and that the chief trouble of the English was their ignorance. For this reason he surrounded himself with learned men. . ." (6). In *A History of Old English Literature*, Fulk and Cain state:

> With the destruction of the churches and monasteries, all ecclesiastical structure in much of the north and east was annihilated; even in the south and west there ceased to be any monastic life. Religious communities in the eastern Danelaw are not in evidence again until the middle of the tenth century; the monasteries were not restored in Northumbria during the Anglo-Saxon period. In Wessex, King Alfred was obliged to bring ecclesiastics from abroad to tutor him. (21-22)

Alfred made a thorough study of Latin and also the vernacular of his people.

Believing that purification of the church could only be brought about by making

the scripture available to the lowest priest, he began a program to improve literacy

among his subjects. Seeing that the truth of the gospel would be more easily

comprehended in the common language, and after he had thoroughly studied and

translated Latin with his various teachers, he began to translate the sermons and

scriptures, sending copies to his clergy. It is "generally accepted" that four of the

surviving translations from this period are the work of the king himself: the

Pastoral Care, the *Consolation of Philosophy*, the *Soliloquies*, and the prose

psalms of the Paris Psalter (Fulk 50). The styles of these translations differ

greatly. *Pastoral Care* is a relatively close translation from the original,

"sometimes word for word, sometimes in paraphrase," but his approach to the

works of Boethius and Orosius is very different. By judicious editing and

expansion, "Alfred presents us with what are virtually new books, or at least re-

interpretations of the old as seen through the eyes of a ninth-century Germanic

king" (Swanton *Anglo-Saxon Prose* xvii).

Alfred's aim and his method can best be understood through a letter he

wrote to Bishop Weferth, one of the many men who aided Alfred in his efforts to

translate the scriptures and other important writings into the vernacular of his

subjects. Alfred included this letter as a Preface to a translation of the Latin

Pastoralis:

> King Alfred gives greeting to Bishop Weferth in these
> words, with love and friendship.

> I want you to know that very often I think back on these things: what wise men there were formerly throughout England, both of religious and of secular calling, […] how the Kings who then held rule over this people obeyed God and His messengers; […] and what success was theirs both in battle and in wisdom.
> I have called to mind, too, how eager in those days religious orders were for teaching and for learning and for all the services which were theirs for God; […]
> So utterly has knowledge fallen away in England that when I began to rule there were very few men on this side of the Humber who could understand their (Latin) Mass-books and Offices in English, or even translate a letter from Latin into English; and, I think, not many beyond the Humber.

Fulk and Cain explain that "Alfred describes his plan as a response to his own historical awareness: contemplating the past glories of the Anglo-Saxon church, he was moved to act." Considering his purpose, the historical works of the Alfredian period "may indeed have been essential to Alfred's project of motivating his subjects to recapture what they had lost" (69). Alfred contemplates the fallen state of literacy in England:

> On all this I thought, and I thought also how, before all was destroyed and burned, I saw the churches throughout England standing full of treasures and books. We had then a great multitude of servants of God; but very few of them know what was in their books. Not one whit could they understand of these books, because the books were not written in their own native speech…

Alfred describes the churches as "standing full of treasures and books," justifying the idea that England once was a place of formal education and learning. Alfred, however, does not blame the Danes who destroyed many of the libraries and learning centers of England for the illiteracy of the people. He was concerned because the common priest did not learn to read Latin well enough to translate the Latin books into English. This state of illiteracy seems to be an enigma, but Alfred deduces:

> When I though on all this, I wondered very, very much why
> none of the good and wise men, who were once everywhere in
> England and had thoroughly learned their books, had not translated
> there into their own English. But soon I answered myself and said:
> "These scholars did not suppose that any men would be so careless
> and that learning would so fall away; and so it was their very
> desiring which stayed them from translation, because they wanted
> wisdom in our land to grow in greatness as we learned more of
> languages." (Duckett 115)

Kathleen Davis notes that Alfred very likely viewed translation "not as an unfortunate compromise, but as legitimate interpretation operating within the well-defined parameters of Christian exegesis" (qtd. in Fulk 52). Alfred explains his plan to propagate learning again in England:

> First, I learned to understand the matter of it as clearly as I could,
> and then I turned it into English. And I shall send a copy of this
> translation of mine to every bishop's see in my kingdom. (Duckett
> 115).

Alfred's translation of the *Pastoral Care* was one of the first texts distributed to the bishops under his supervision: "*Pastoral Care* was a translation of Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis*, composed about 590 as a handbook for bishops, explaining the qualities requisite for spiritual leadership" (Fulk and Cain 50). Alfred's remarkable prefatory letter, identifying education as the key to restoring English civilization, is "thematically of a piece with the work, given the design of Gregory's book as a teaching manual" (51).

In the Preface, Alfred composes with a "suppler and more complex syntax [than in the text of *The Shepherd's Book*], defining a prose style that seems exceptionally well suited to the demands of pedagogic discourse." The Preface also displays "a remarkable range of rhetorical, aural effects." It is the "most interesting portion of the work not just for what it tells us about the state of

learning and Alfred's plans to improve it, but also as an illustration of what could be achieved in prose when it was freed entirely from the constraints of translation" (Fulk and Cain 52). Greenfield and Calder state that the *Preface* itself "reveals an ability to employ classical rhetorical figures with ease. Balanced and elaborately structured, Alfred's *Preface* is a long-pondered and highly wrought piece of prose" and is considered "all the more extraordinary because it seems to have been created in a stylistic vacuum" (45). "The most telling phrases of all in the *Preface*," Alexander says, "are 'then, when I had thought about all this, I then thought also how I had seen . . . and 'if we have the peace.'" Alexander argues that Alfred was "a thoughtful man," but his "reign had afforded him more food for thought than leisure. This bent is reflected in later tradition of him as the wisest of kings, an English Solomon" (138).

In the tenth century writings, the standard dialect of Alfred and his contemporaries—Early West Saxon—gave way to Late West Saxon. It was not simply a later version of Alfred's language, but a "national *Schriftsprache* of a slightly different local character, and with a distinctive vocabulary, which was promulgated by Aethelwold and his students" (Fulk and Cain 23). Fulk concludes saying that "this Latin illiteracy that prompted Alfred to initiate his program of translation of what he saw as the most useful works amounted to what has been called the first great flowering of English prose." He also states that "Whether Alfred's educational plan was ever executed we have no way of knowing." Whatever its possible ultimate effect on lay reading, however, "certainly Alfred's program of translation had the consequence of dignifying the vernacular,

legitimizing English as a language of scholarship, which it had never been before"

(22). The decline of Latin or Anglo-Latin resulted in a "rich body of vernacular

literature unparalleled on the Continent" (23). John Ball suggests that "many of

Alfred's sentence-structures are almost exactly like our own, and his words, too,

although their forms appear strange to us, are often our words":

> One finds upon looking into them that English speech in the ninth
> century was developing in the direction of our own speech of today. It
> can therefore be said with substantial truth that in Alfred's prose we
> have the beginnings of English literature. Old English poetry looks
> back, but Old English prose looks forward. (7)

Old English prose looks to the re-education of the priests of England, who keep

the common man attuned to church. Alfred also desired that the prose strengthen

the national government, both against the encroachment of the Danes and to

support the establishment of a sense of heritage.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* began in Alfred's era and are "sets of annalistic writings stretching from the time of Julius Caesar to 1154." Greenfield and Calder explain that "in the late 880s, at least two West Saxon compilers produced the prototype, which was then distributed throughout the kingdom. Subsequent bulletins were dispatched for inclusion, not all of which were incorporated into every version." As local additions to the annals were common, "none of the extant seven versions, which form four distinct groups, is closer to the prototype than two removes. Thus, it is erroneous to speak of a unitary *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for the recensions differ so markedly" (59). The content of the *Chronicles* "though highly uneven [in quality], contains some passages of stirring narrative" (Grebanier 14). The complex of texts that modern scholarship calls the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is "the first continuous national history of any western people in their own language" (Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose* xx). It, along with Bede's *History,* is our chief source of information on Anglo-Saxon history. The degree to which we should connect the *Chronicle* to Alfred "has never been firmly established. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does seem to have originated in Wessex." It is possible that Alfred "directly commissioned the collection of national annals. Also, we know that it was during Alfred's reign that copies were first distributed to various monastic houses, as the surviving manuscripts are in close agreement to the year 892" (Fulk and Cain 67). As a consequence of the method of compilation, the manuscript history is complicated:

> The oldest manuscript, A, is the Parker Chronicle, named for its previous owner, Matthew Parker (1504-75), archbishop of Canterbury. The earliest portion of A was copied during Alfred's reign; it was updated continuously at Winchester until shortly after the Conquest.

The first part of the Parker MS (MS A) was probably written in 891 (where the first hand finishes), this was then continued to 1093. MS A was then probably sent to Abingdon since "Versions B and C are both from Abingdon, and large portions of the former are copied faithfully into the latter, though C relies on other sources, as well." Fulk and Cain argues that "B and C both incorporate a set of 16 or 17 annals imperfectly integrated into the rest, inserted between the entries for 915 and 934 though covering the years 902-24, a section known as the Mercian Register." As the manuscripts appeared to travel northward in England, "the D version also incorporated annals from the Mercian Register. It is a Worcester manuscript copied from a northern exemplar, and it evinces notably Scottish interests." However, the predominant northern influences in the Chronicle appear in MS E, as Fulk and Cain explain:

> The fullest version E, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc 636, copied at Peterborough, also shows strong northern influence, and it continues long after the Conquest, ending with the death of King Stephen (1154), about whose oppressive reign the annalist gives an eloquent and harrowing account. This Peterborough or Laud Chronicle is of particular linguistic interest because it illustrates so well the abandonment of the West Saxon written standard and the evolution of the language into Middle English. (68)

One peculiarity of the records of the tenth century is the "occasional insertion of poems, chief among with are *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Battle of Maldon*" (Cook and Tinker 66)*.* Because of the wide-ranging development of the Chronicles, "the initial compilation must have required extensive research and could not have been completed within a short period" (60). Fulk and Cain further argue, "the Chronicle as a whole is of unique value for grammarians, for it is one of the few prose texts of the Old English period that contain substantial passages uninfluenced by any Latin source, the syntax of which is thus uncontaminated" (68).

Selections from the *Chronicles* shed light on the religious history that actual letters and biographies would supply if they were available to show the conflicts and turbulence of British culture during the first nine hundred years, and as a result the *Chronicles* have "exerted considerable influence on post-Conquest historians such as John of Worcester, William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon" (Fulk and Cain 68). Many of the entries are simply brief notices of the events of a given year, with little or no elaboration. Yet, the later years often include extended narratives. Particularly memorable is the account of Alfred's wars against the Vikings (871-97). Beginning in the mid-tenth century, certain poems of nationalist aim were interspersed among the annals. In some of the better poems the word hēr 'here, in this year' implies that these were composed specifically for inclusion in the *Chronicle* (Fulk and Cain 69). "The continuity of English prose from the Old English period to the Middle English period is demonstrated by the Chronicle more clearly than anywhere else," Daiches affirms, and "its different manuscripts are of prime importance for the student of the English language" (27). The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* preserved not only the history of the Anglo-Saxon era, but also the variety of

dialects, bearing witness to the differences in regional vocabulary and the constant changes in the language of Britain.

St Andrew, Blickling Homily XIX [23]

     The *Blickling Homilies*, so named because the manuscripts are preserved at Blickling Hall, Norfolk, number nineteen in all, with some little more than fragments. The term homily is often synonymous with sermon, but the homily is usually narrative in style and based on legendary sources. These texts date from approximately 775, and are not necessarily the works of one author or presented in a consecutive order. The *Blickling Homilies* are composed in Anglo-Saxon, though an Anglo-Saxon of a "more classic type than the congregation is likely to have generally understood" (Garnett 72). Many religious writers believed that the world would end in the year 1000, and a large number of the early homilies focus on that coming event. According to A.W. Ward, author of *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature,* the style of these homilies stands midway between the style of Alfred and that of Ælfric, more developed than the one, more primitive than the other. The *Blickling Homilies* are often considered "rude, vehement and homely, more indulgent of legend" (126). The Anglo-Saxon love of imagery and poetical structure shows clearly, with frequent use of similes and metaphors.

     Andreas, sometimes called the Christian *Beowulf*, is included in the *Blickling Homily* collection. Daniel Calder states:

> The action of *Andreas* is supernatural, and we accept it only in a controlled, didactic frame of reference. The frame of reference is a sophisticated allegorical and Christian construct. A whole cadre of very recent interpreters has brilliantly demonstrated that behind the 'unrealistic' plot of *Andreas* lies a network of Christian images and

typological identifications which can account for the incongruities
of action. (117)

The hagiographical form of literature was the "dominant narrative in the Old

English period. Not only are the saints' lives more abundant in extant Old English

literature than any other kind of story, but also many other narratives seem to

have been influenced by them" (Woolf 242). *Andreas* is preserved in poetry and

in prose form. The Old English prose version forms part of a special group that

differs from other versions of this legend. Claes Schaar, in *Critical Studies in the*

Cynewulf Group, questions whether the Old English prose legend is based on the

Greek version of the story. Although the Old English prose text "corresponds in

some details" with the Greek text, "deviations and omissions raise questions."

Another theory proposes that an "unknown Latin text, contained a brief

summary of the legend." Schaar notes that Zupitza, pointing out the "similarity of

a Latin sentence that has crept into the Old English prose text" and some other

parallels between the Old English and the Greek text . . . concludes that the source

of the prose text was "a summary of a Latin text very similar to the Greek legend"

(14).[24] The prose version "seems to be an abridgement of the longer narrative." In

one version, "as many miracles and supernatural tales as possible have been

crammed into it so the lengthy dialogical digressions during the voyage have been

produced, unnecessary to the plot of the poem," and in another poem "tradition

dispenses with nearly all the thaumaturgical elements but contains a great deal of

edifying and moralizing matter." The prose version "may be said to form an

intermediate link between these traditions: some of the marvelous details have

been omitted; others are retained" (23). Alexander states that "it is possible to

prefer the simple prose version" of St. Andrew; though the verse *Andreas* has "moments of rich metaphoric life," it can seem, in comparison to the artless prose, "incoherent" (163). "The prose version," Greenfield and Calder state, "often has a lyrical quality and is usually more metaphorical than any of its sources" (73). Although the test was once thought to have been written by Cynewulf, most scholars now agree that Cynewulf was definitely not the writer, and suggest that Bishop Acca of Hexham (660-740) may have been the author (Cook and Tinker 133). Schaar says studies show that *Andreas* may be "an imitation of Cynewulf's work and even more so of *Beowulf*" (99).

"*Andreas* is an example, like the late *Judith*, of the Germanic style absorbing its Christian matter" (Alexander 163). The poem describes the adventures of St. Andrew as he crosses the sea to rescue St. Matthew from a race of cannibals. Matthew is set free, and Andrew, after much suffering, performs a miracle and converts the people. Schaar says the work is "rich in synonyms belonging to a special warlike and heroic character" (318). *Andreas,* in both poetry and prose, is "dominated by the traditional heroic conceptions, and shows a strong inclination for the violent, the revolting and the fantastic" (323). Also, *Andreas* contains "descriptions of scenery not associated with other Cynewulfian writings" (326). However, certain points occur "in the narrative where, in a modern reader's opinion, some link in the chain of events is either omitted or only vaguely hinted at" (319). Schaar concludes that "there is a certain laxity of composition in *Andreas*" (322). However, Calder says the "unity of the poem depends upon the various traditional images of conversion in the early Church,

especially the imagery of baptism, the Harrowing of Hell, and the Last

Judgment." *Andreas*, then, reflects the "process of biblical exegesis in both

content and form" (118). James W. Earl agrees that "Hagiography as a genre begs

for typological interpretation, and the story of Matthew and Andrew is no

exception" (67). The story begins with Matthew traveling to the city of

Mermedonia, a place of cannibals[25]:

> Here it is said that after the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven,
> the apostles were together, and they cast lots among themselves,
> where they should travel to teach. It is said that the blessed
> Matthew's lot fell to the city of Mermedonia; it is then said that the
> men who were in that city did not eat bread or drink water but ate
> the bodies of men and drank their blood. And each person who
> came a stranger to that city, it is said that they immediately took
> him and cast out his eyes and gave him poison to drink that was
> mixed with great magic. And when they drank this drink,
> immediately their heart was loosened and their mind changed.
> Then the blessed Matthew went into that city, and they
> immediately seized him and cast out his eyes and gave him poison
> to drink and sent him into prison.

The "extraordinary" narrative is "abstract, ritualistic, and symbolic, and demands

a reading on its own terms" (Calder 120). Compared to the Latin text, the

vernacular *Andreas* reaches an "especially intense level of energy. Violence is

heightened and increased at every turn" (122). Christ, speaking to Andrew of his

mission, compares Andrew's purpose to Christ's on the cross: to save those who

will believe:

> Only I let you know, Andrew, that they will bring upon you many
> tortures and drag your body through the streets of this city, so that
> your blood will flow over the earth like water. They will want to
> lead you to death, but they may not. Yet they may bring many
> afflictions upon you, but nevertheless endure all, Andrew, and do
> not act according to their disbelief. Remember how I suffered
> many afflictions from the Jews: they scourged my and they spat on
> my face. But I endured it all that I might show you in what way

> you should endure. Listen to me, Andrew, and endure these
> sufferings, because there are many in this city who should believe
> in my name." (Boenig 78-89)

Calder says, "The aesthetic mode which characterizes what goes on in *Andreas* is expressionism. *Andreas* is the most demanding Anglo-Saxon example of the expressionistic mode." But much of Anglo-Saxon literature—and all the Saints' Lives—show a "similar tendency. The dual vision of history which results from seeing a narrative as taking place and also having eternally taken place" is "universally Christian and not restricted to the Anglo-Saxon," but is still, "significantly present" in the hagiography tradition (133). Greenfield and Calder explain that "both theological and literary criticism have often characterized all the anonymous homilies as crude," and while the Blickling collection may not be "entirely consistent in its theology, the compiler had a special interest in gathering homilies that stress gentleness and compassion." Although the writers' emphasis is on repentance, it is also "on the possibility of living a virtuous Christian life. To this end the authors devote considerable attention to stylistic effects which will make their pleadings psychologically effective" (72). Schaar states that the Anglo-Saxon writers "searched the Christian Latin Literature in their endeavors to find new way of molding their thoughts and feelings" (8). Perhaps because sea journeys were a favorite topic of Germanic writers, "the most sustained account of an ocean voyage" in Old English literature, the voyage of St. Andrew to Mermedonia, "combines some of the finest realisms" of the genre (Kennedy, *Earliest English*18). From the existence of detailed legends about famous saints, we can conclude that the Anglo-Saxons used "the tradition of pious themes

logically bound up with the martial theme" to express their struggle as inhabitants of "ravaged monasteries who, as the tormented and imprisoned saints in *Juliana* and *Andreas*, take their refuge with the Lord" (Schaar 7). Although the great majority of vernacular saints' legends are by Ælfric, most of the anonymous works were in fact composed before his day, including *St. Andrew*.

After Ælfric, "there was not much left for other Old English hagiographers to do" (Lapidge 258). Clemoes states that "Ælfric, gifted late Old English writer of prose that he was, well understood the inheritance he received when, as I believe, he adapted the binary structure of poetry to his prose purposes," as for example in his sermon *In Octavis Pentecosten*, where he describes Christ enthroned on the Day of Judgment:

> then the Savior will sit   on his heavenly throne,
> mighty and glorious,   and gentle to the good,
> and all men will see   clearly the Saviour
> in his humanity,   but yet the wretched sinful
> will not be able   to see his divinity;
> the good alone   will see the divinity. (17)

Clemoes explains that "the first three pairs of two-accent phrases concern Christ's appearance outwards and the remaining four pairs humanity's returning vision of him. There is an emanation and a reaction" (12). "Balance and proportion in expression," Clemoes says, "could be made to corroborate analogies and contrasts in a planned sequence of thought and could thus accord aesthetically with general principles of universal validity." He continues by explaining that "with this shift Old English literature had become absorbed into the Christian Middle Ages." The vernacular language "harmonized with the divine order at the centre of all life, now serviced a world-wide religious symbolism, prose-based and intellectually

conceived." Clemoes argues that Old English literature had "outgrown its pre-Christian seed-bed. The transition was complete from the poetry that was the cultural organism of an aristocratic warrior society" (13). Both "Old English verse and Anglo-Latin prose has little to show after the year 1000." The popular sermon was "the medium of Old English literature which had the most active life after the conquest, although much Old English saga material appears in the Norman chroniclers" (Clemoes 36).

Although some of Bede's historical work and much of Alfred's literacy effort survives, no one can guess at the many prose writings, considered as crude and illiterate by the incoming French bishops, were discarded or destroyed. The vernacular prose genre limped on as the only medium available to common man in law and trade, but literary works ceased with the final entry into the *Chronicles*. French historians used verse to chronicles their era. Saints' lives, written in Latin, focused on martyrs and virgins, not warrior leaders and their comitatus. The religious narrative genre, which consists mainly of Saints' Lives, failed to develop after 1066 because the focus of the Anglo-Saxon prose was the heroic ideals of the past: heroes, comitatus, loyalty. The Saints' Lives of the new Latin influence focused on martyrs and virgins. The *Katherine Group*, which includes the legends of three saints, Catherine, Margaret, and Juliana, was popular in medieval times. Anglo-Saxon religious prose, looking to the past heroic tradition, was rejected by the new church hierarchy, and became valued as nothing more than scrap paper. Only the vernacular sermons continued.

Part Three: Homilies and Sermons

Homilies are distinguished from sermons in several ways, according to Fulk and Cain. A homily is "exegetical, comprising exposition of the daily periscope," while a sermon is "catechetical or hortatory, comprising moral instruction of a more general nature, treating of doctrine or non-scriptural narrative, exhorting the congregation to right behavior, or explaining the liturgy and its significance." Homilies usually told a story, often taken from scripture, and application to daily life was made to the audience through the story. Sermons expounded, exhorted, and extolled matters of doctrine or discipleship. In Old English manuscripts the two types of text are "for the most part intermixed, and both types are referred to as homilies." The number of homilies preserved in Old English may be "more than 250, a large portion of the prose corpus," but it is not easy to fix the exact number because it is the "nature of vernacular homilies from soon after their first appearance to incorporate material from prior works, continually recombining it in idiosyncratic ways to form new composition" (71). "Written homilies are set texts" designed for the portion of the Mass or other liturgical rite devoted to preaching. Old English homilies were "uniformly composed for the use of preachers" on Sundays and feast days but were also written either "for private study or for internal use of religious houses," and most of the surviving manuscripts containing homilies were designed for the use of religious houses, a fact which helped insure their survival (70).

Clare A. Lees says, "Fundamental to homiletic writing is its pastoral intent," and she explains that "the pastoral mission informs the didactic aesthetic of religious prose and its use of conventions of time, but aesthetics and salvation history only begin the project of understanding didacticism as a mode of instruction." The main message of the Anglo-Saxon pastor is salvation, both from damnation in the afterlife and from the lure of temptation in this life. As a foundational creed of the Christian church, most Old English sermons focused a central part of the message on this truth. However, in some homilies, which included Saint's Lives, sensationalism overcame scriptural integrity. In the earlier homilies, before Ælfric, the "concern to sift sources and eliminate contradictory teaching is not great, and thus the theology of the Blickling and Vercelli collections displays some internal contradictions" (72). In fact, Woolf says that "Hagiography became a part of the movement to provide sermons in the vernacular for the common people" (221). However, Fulk and Cain state that "new standards for homilies were introduced in the last decade of the tenth century by Ælfric" (77).

The *Catholic Homilies* are Ælfric's first known compositions, and "already in them he has a plan of literary reform fully worked out: the duty of the educated to instruct the ignorant is not simply a matter of translating Lain sources for a monoglot audience but of interpreting those sources." His method is to give "a literal and historical explanation of the Latin lection, translating with a running commentary, and then he will often explain the allegorical and moral significance" (Fulk and Cain 79).

Early Church literature contained homiletic models of exhortation following narration, a sermon to strengthen the audience's response to a story, or the more detailed pattern of the contemporary rhetorical analysis: *exordium, narratio, partitio, confirmatio, reprehensio et conclusio* (Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose* 100). Greenfield and Caulder detail the homiletic chronology as follows:

> While the full flowering of the Benedictine revival came in the works of Ælfric and Wulfstan, it would be misleading to suppose that they were the only writers of vernacular prose in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. In fact, they are preceded by a significant body of prose, comprising mainly anonymous homilies and homiletic fragments, a few saints' lives, and some penitential texts. Two good-sized collection are of special importance—the *Blickling* and the *Vercelli Homilies*. They represent the synthetic tradition of vernacular preaching before the watershed of the monastic revival. (71)

Barbara Raw, for example, argues that "the way in which Christ himself is presented in some of the Old English homilies shows the influence of two traditions, both stemming ultimately from the Bible and the liturgy." Christ's crucifixion is portrayed "both as the culmination of the sufferings he endured for man and as a military victory" (236). The literary diction which heralded Christ as a military hero is one of the attributes of many Anglo-Saxon sermons. Even Bede's hero son in the *Allegory of Mercy and Justice* is attributed with "honor and power everlasting" after he "conquers death" and "ascends on high."

As sermons changed minutely with every proclamation and adapted thoughts from one source while repudiating the ideas of another, homilies gradually left behind the warrior terminology and embraced the Roman ecclesiastical culture even as the English people moved closer to 1066 and the end of the Old English era. However, changes to Anglo-Saxon literary dialects

differed according to locality. Wilson contends that the West Saxon literary dialect in homiletic literature continues in use for some time after the Conquest. One of the most revered Old English writers, Bede, wrote a sermon, reportedly in the vernacular, on the apostolic theme of Mercy and Justice. An allegory, the work stands as a model illustrating the sophistication of the oral tradition. The works of Ælfric and Wulfstan demonstrate the cultural and stylistic changes in the homiletic genre as the influence of Europe was increasingly felt in the Old English culture, yet the sermons made extensive use of the rhythm and alliteration that exists in much of Old English Literature.

The true Old English homiletic tradition consists of "simple, straightforward expositions of the Biblical story," Wilson argues, identifiable by the "almost complete absence of any of the later popular *exempla*" (107). The *exemplum* is an illustrative moral story which provides an acceptable and entertaining way to keep the attention of the audience. These stories, in the Middle ages, were collected into books for preachers to use to insure the appropriate exemplum for every occasion (Wilson 231). Although biblical stories and Saint's Lives were used by Old English preachers, scriptural foundation remained the basis for vernacular homilies. This attention to the simple expounding of the scriptural text characterized the Old English homily.

Bede: The Allegory of Mercy and Justice

The allegory of mercy and justice is reportedly from a sermon by Bede.[26]

Its "rudeness and incompleteness would seem to indicate that it was extempore"

(Neale 14). This suggests that it was delivered and recorded in English rather than

Latin. Elbert Thompson explains that the sermon exists in one of the "older works

of Bede, *Opera Bede Venerabilis*" (1563), and though, along with all of Bede's

sermons, its authenticity is "rejected by Giles, it may be the rude draft of a sermon

by Bede which some monk cared to preserve. A theological poem by bishop

Grosseteste, *Chasteau d'Amour*, presents a similar narrative, though it is predated

by Bede." Both tell of a "Father of a family, a mighty King," who had a Son

equal to him in power, and four daughters, Mercy, Truth, Justice, and Peace. He

had also a favored servant. At this point the preacher (Bede) "identifies the

servant with Adam, explaining the reason for the one restriction placed upon this

servant, and his attempted shifting of the responsibility upon 'the woman' when

called to account for disobedience" (233)

The sermon describes the duties of the four "torturers" to whom the

offender is delivered: the first, according to the order of the test, to imprison; the

second, to behead; the third, to strangle; the fourth to torture (Thompson 234).

The formal allegory illustrates the difference between a work where symbolism

resides solely in the subjects referred to and a work which contains personified

abstraction. Susan Snyder states that "the relationship of justice to mercy is a

divine comedy." One of the best-known literary examples of the drama is "the

celebrated debate of the four daughters of God, in which God finally gives the

preference to Mercy over Justice and allows his son to redeem erring man" (34).

The allegory begins in the classical formula of a short story, exposition first:

> There was a certain father of a family, a powerful king, who had four daughters, of whom one was called Mercy, the second Truth, the third Justice, the fourth Peace; of whom it is said, "Mercy and Truth are met together; Justice and Peace have kissed each other." He had also a certain most wise son, to whom no one could be compared in wisdom. He had, also, a certain servant, whom he had exalted and enriched with great honor: for he had made him after his own likeness and similitude, and that without any preceding merit on the servant's part.

The narrative then introduces the first commandment from the king to the servant, stating that it was the purpose of the commandment to "prudently explore, and to become acquainted with, the character and the faith of his servant, whether he were trustworthy towards himself or not." The king admonished the servant, saying, "If you do what I tell you, I will exalt you to further honors; if not, you shall perish miserably."

Rhetorical questions follow the preacher's plain statement, "the servant without any delay went and broke it." Appealing to his audience, which knows the propensity of man to break God's laws, Bede applies some slight sarcasm to the narrative:

> The servant heard the commandment, and without any delay went and broke it. Why need I say more? Why need I delay you by my words and by my tears? This proud servant, stiff-necked, full of contumely, and puffed up with conceit, sought an excuse for his transgression, and retorted the whole fault on his Lord. For when he said, "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she deceived me," he threw all the fault on his Maker. [. . .]

Bede explains the fate of mankind, as Adam sinned and brought judgment upon all men. But the daughter Mercy intervenes, followed by her sisters, who must reconcile this action of the Father:

> My beloved father, am not I thy daughter Mercy? and art not thou called merciful? If thou art merciful, have mercy upon thy servant; and if thou wilt not have mercy upon him, thou canst not be called merciful; and if thou art not merciful, thou canst not have me, Mercy, for thy daughter.

As Mercy argued with her father, her sister Truth came and demanded why Mercy was weeping. The father explained that Mercy "wishes me to have pity upon that proud transgressor whose punishment I have appointed." Truth was excessively angry and, turning to the father, repeated the same argument as Mercy: "Am not I," said she, "thy daughter Truth? . . . If thou art true, thou wilt follow that which is true; if thou art not true, thou canst not have me, Truth, for thy daughter." Justice enters, and she makes the same argument. Justice assures her father that he must be just and exact the punishment that the law demands. So Truth and Justice are on the one side, and Mercy on the other. Bede interjects the Latin phrase, "*Ultima coelicolum terras Astræa reliqui*" which means "Peace fled into a far distant country. For where there is strife and contention, there is no peace; and by how much greater the contention, by so much further peace is driven away."

The bishop's poetic version gives no explanation as to why Peace leaves (Thompson 233). With Peace gone, and Mercy, Truth and Justice unable to come to an agreement, the Father called the wise son:

> There was great need then of good advice. The father, therefore, called his wise son, and consulted him about the affair. Said the son, "Give me, my father, this present business to manage, and I will both punish the transgressor for thee, and will bring back to

> thee in peace thy four daughters." "These are great promises,"
> replied the father, "if the deed only agrees with the word. If thou
> canst do that which thou sayest, I will act as thou shalt exhort me."

Having received the royal mandate, the son took his sister Mercy along with him, to the prison of the imprisoned servant. The servant is "shut out from the present life, and from the sole of his foot even to the crown there was no soundness in him. He [the son] saw him in the power of death, because through him death entered into the world" The four tormentors are Prison of this present life, Misery of the World, Death, and the Worm (Thompson 233). The reference to the worm alludes the corruption of the body in the grave and to the afterlife in hell.

The Son, seeing his servant subjected to these four tormentors, could not but have mercy upon him, because Mercy was his companion:

> The son, bursting into the prison of death, conquered death, bound
> the strong man, took his goods, and distributed the spoils; and
> ascending up on high, led captivity captive and gave gifts for men,
> and brought back the servant into his country, crowned with
> double honor, and endued with a garment of immortality.

Bede employs strong verbal structures with the words "bursting," "conquered," and "bound," then, "ascending," "brought back," and "crowned," resulting in a high level of energy and vigor in his writing. He concludes with harmony restored among the sisters. Mercy beheld the servant's reinstatement and had no grounds for complaint. Truth found no cause of discontent, because her father was found true: the servant had paid all his penalties. Justice also had no complaint, because "justice had been executed on the transgressor; and thus he who had been lost was found." Peace, when she saw her sisters at concord, "came back and united them." The sermon concludes:

> And now, behold, Mercy and Truth are met together, Justice and
> Peace have kissed each other. Thus, therefore, by the Mediator of
> man and angels, man was purified and reconciled, and the
> hundredth sheep was brought back to the fold of God. To which
> fold Jesus Christ brings us, to whom is honor and power
> everlasting. Amen (Neale 14).

Bede's oral tradition creates a clear soterical image. The heroic picture of the Son,

triumphant, together with the Father's attribute of Mercy, is presented in simple

language the Germanic warrior people could understand and enjoy.

Ælfric and Wulfstan

The ravages of the Danes at the end of the ninth century "wrought havoc with the organization of the English church and, while Alfred's translations represented a remarkable attempt to improve the state of education," it was not until the middle and latter part of the tenth century that Æthelwold's pupil, Ælfric, and Archbishop Wulfstan, Ælfric's friend, led the literary movement of the monastic revival (Daiches 28). Daiches argues, that the vitality of the movement of which Ælfric and Wulfstan were a part extended the range of effective Anglo-Saxon prose (29).

Ælfric's homilies are called *Catholic Homilies* "not for their orthodoxy but as designed to be read by all, lay as well as cleric" (Alexander 196): "The *Catholic Homilies* are naturally more impressive than the narratives of saints' lives," Alexander states, and "there are few more pleasant medieval expositions than those made by Ælfric. He combines homeliness and plain sense with theological grasp and a warm devotion" (199). Though some writings of both men have been printed by modern editors as if they were verse, this is somewhat misleading. Michael Alexander states that "although prose and verse are not distinguished in manuscripts, and there was both in Latin and English a tradition of rhythmical prose, Old English verse had strict rules which the homilists made no attempt to observe" (202).

Ælfric, the foremost representative of English culture in the tenth and early eleventh centuries, was born in about 955 and died after 1020. He began his

Homilies at Winchester, where he was educated (990-994), and there he also

completed his *Grammar* (995) and *Lives of the Saints* (996), as well as several

translations. Ælfric was probably the first abbot of a monastery at Eynsham (in

about 1005), five or six miles northwest of Oxford. He remained in office there

till the end of his life, composing various works. (Cook 149) Concerning the

prose literature of the era, Michael Alexander states, "This is a time of Ælfric, the

most graceful and productive of writers in Old English, and the most

influential"(36). Ælfric's sermons are remarkable for their avoidance of

apocryphal narratives, a popular subject of his day. Richard Garnett, who states

the Ælfric embodies the best traits of the national character, including sturdy

veracity and homely common-sense, gives the following passage on the birth of

the Virgin as characteristic of his mode of thought:

> What shall we say in regard to the time of Mary's birth, save that
> she was begotten by her father and mother like other people, and
> was born on the day that we call *sexta idus Septembris*? Her father
> was called Joachim and her mother Anna, pious people according
> to the ancient law, but we will write no more of them lest we fall
> into some error. The Gospel itself for this day is very hard for
> laymen to understand; it is, for the most part, filled out with the
> names of holy men, and these require a very long explanation of
> the their spiritual meaning. Hence we will leave it unsaid. (60)

Stating just the known facts, Ælfric subtly chastises scholars who speculate or

embellish the simple truths. Alexander states that although Ælfric was "hospitable

to the ideal of Germanic lordship and to romantic miracles, he was also critical of

excesses. He omits the more lurid tortures in his saints' lives just as he omits the

more far-fetched allegorical interpretations in his homilies" (198). Ælfric was one

of Æthelwold's students at Winchester, and "we may suspect that he learned

much of his concern for accuracy and clear exposition from his more flamboyant

teacher" (Greenfield and Calder 28). He acknowledged his sources, "mainly

Gregory the Great, Augustine, Jerome and Bede," but Ælfric was no "mere

translator, despite his characterization of himself as such: he expanded,

condensed, clarified, and embroidered" (77). He used "Old English social,

political, and legal terms to portray biblical relationships and even the smallest

features of daily life." Ælfric also used "similes from spheres of human activity,

and his style is characterized by the absence of complex metaphors and an

insistent simplicity of diction" (78). Ælfric gives his purpose for writing the

Homilies in the following excerpt from the English Preface to *Homilies I:*

> I, Ælfric, monk and priest—though unequal to such offices—was
> sent by Æthelwold's successor, Bishop Ælfheah, [. . .] Then it
> occurred to me, I trust through the grace of God, to translate this
> book from the Latin language unto the English tongue, not through
> confidence of great learning, but because I have seen and heard
> much error in many English books, which, in their innocence,
> unlearned men have considered great wisdom. (Cook 153)

Ælfric regretted that the clergy did not have the evangelical doctrines among their

vernacular writings, and he was disappointed in many of the translations which

contained error, so he "ventured" to write with accuracy and excellence. In *The*

Invention of the Holy Cross, from the second series of *Homilies,* Ælfric's "careful

balance and prose rhythm display a fine virtuosity" (Daiches 28). Notice the

pattern of stress: "Christian men," "certainly bow," "sacred cross," "name of

Jesus":

> Christian men should certainly bow to the sacred cross in the name
> of Jesus, for although we have not the one upon which He suffered,
> yet its image is, nevertheless, holy, and to that we ever bow in
> prayer to the mighty Lord who suffered for men. And the cross is a

> memorial of His great passion, holy through Him, although it grew
> in a forest. We ever honor it to the glory of Christ, who through it
> redeemed us with love, for which we give thanks unto Him,
> evermore, so long as we live. (Cook 177)

Beside the "carefully balanced sentences of Ælfric, we can set the more fiery

eloquence of his contemporary, Wulfstan" (Daiches 28). Wulfstan, the most

considerable Old English preacher next to Ælfric, was Bishop of London as early

as 1001. Wulfstan lived in the third of the three periods of Danish invasion.[27]

Cook states that the "homilies of Wulfstan have not been perfectly distinguished

from those of others," but *Homily 55*, *Sermo Lupi Episcopi* is accepted as his

work. Five manuscripts of the homily have survived, attesting to its popularity.

The sermon abounds in "acoustical effects," such as

> All we have known has been sacking and starvation, burning and
>
> bloodshed. . . stealing and slaughter, plague and pestilence.

Wulfstan uses "little imagery, preferring a starkly realistic style that minces no

words" (Raffel and Olsen 177). Daiches states that Wulfstan's style is "marked by

much alliteration and assonance, and by a decided rhythm, with balanced clauses;

on the other hand, he has almost no tropes or similes." He also explains that

though Wulfstan, like Ælfric, uses "alliteration and antithesis, his prose gives an

impression of breathless passion, of eloquence breaking out through its own force,

which is markedly different from Ælfric's finely chiseled urbanity" (28). Fulk

and Cain remark that "the differences between the two homilists are more striking

than the similarities." Ælfric lived in monkish seclusion, while Wulfstan was a

public figure, "a powerful force in the administration of the Church and in royal

politic of the day." Ælfric's works are often "true homilies—scholarly works of

explication." Wulfstan's sermons, however, "show little interest in exegesis but are chiefly eschatological, catechetical, and monatory pieces designed for dramatic and effective preaching" (82).

Wulfstan's famous *Sermon to the English,* written at a time when the Danes especially persecuted the Anglo-Saxons, "paints a vivid picture of the horrors brought about by the Danish invasions. . . . A desperate sense of imminence of doomsday pervades the whole sermon" (Daiches 28). The "tone and purpose" is suggested by the opening (Alexander 202):

> Dearly beloved, understand the truth: this world is in haste, and drawing nigh the end. Hence is the later in the world ever the worse, so that things must needs wax very evil before the coming of Antichrist. […] Daily has evil been heaped upon evil, and men have worked iniquity and manifold unrighteousness for too generally throughout this whole nation. [. . .]

"Beloved men" is one of Wulfstan's favorite phrases. Alexander states that Wulfstan was much more of an "evangelical preacher than Aelfric, especially in *Sermo Lupi*. His style here is an agitated and emphatically heightened version of Aelfric's" (202). Wulfstan catalogues the horrors of the Danish invasions. His style, with its "repeated use of intensities is better oratory than prose," is remarkably "eloquent and effective and, for a historian, will have more color and fire than Aelfric" (Alexander 203). Notice the balance: "alas for the miser," "alas for the dishonor"; "two or three," "sea to sea"; and the last line of intense colorful verbs:

> Alas for the miser, alas for the dishonor among the nations, which the English now endure; and all because of the wrath of our God! Often two or three Vikings will drive the multitude of Christian men from sea to sea. [. . .] We continually reward them, and they

daily oppress us. They harry and smite, bind and insult, spoil and
raven, and carry away on shipboard. (Cook 199)

Anglo-Saxonists have studied Ælfric's prose style, inevitably comparing and contrasting it to that of Wulfstan. Alexander states that "it can be truthfully said that Æfric's is the only Old English prose that can always be read with some aesthetic pleasure." Alfred and Wulfstan have more "personal moral weight in their writings, but Ælfric is truly sweet to read." Alexander further states that Ælfric is "fluent, measured, has the elegance of learning while being perfectly unpedantic and unpretentious" (196). While Wulfstan writes with power and metaphorical energy, Ælfric, using purity of sentence construction, writes with simplicity and eloquence.

The homily genre did not end or change after Wulfstan and Ælfric. Instead, the gradual changes in style and technique that occurred from Bede through Ælfric and Wulstan, reflected in all the homilies in between, show a progression of the genre. Homiletic prose slowly left its oral beginnings as the influence of the literature of Europeans filtered neatly into the text and affected the style of the pulpits of the era. Certainly vocabulary, style and content changed as they faced not the rampaging Danes bringing the end of the world but the Norman Conquest and the sure end of the Anglo-Saxon era. French and Latin literature then occupied the high places of religion, and church offices were filled with European strangers who held English in distaste. The people in the pews, however, still spoke English, and needed the expository homilies in the vernacular to encourage and enlighten them. The sermons adapted to the people's needs with each oration, keeping the church facing forward, still hopeful for redemption.

Conclusion

Bede's purpose in writing was to create not just a united England but a distinctly Christian people whose strength lay in their religious faith. Percy Shelley wrote, "There must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age" (qtd. in Chambers 72). Writers cannot escape the common influence of the times in which they live. The poems, narratives, and homilies of the Old English era converge on the main point of Bede's and Shelley's argument. The era of Bede, Alfred, and Ælfric produced a literary tradition that perpetuated itself in the hearts and lives of the common people.

Within twenty-one years after the Norman conquest, just "one of the bishops in England, and two of the abbots were English" (Fulk 225). All of the other prominent clergy had been replaced by European clerics. As the newcomers used only Latin in their religious writings, it is not surprising that poetry, with the exception of Cædmon's Hymn, after the Conquest, ceased to be copied, and no typical Old English verse is known to have been composed after 1066.[28] Fulk states that "poetry was an aristocratic genre, and its fate was therefore linked to the fortunes of the aristocracy, from which the ranks of bishops and abbots were drawn" (226). Greenfield and Calder state that the Norman Conquest had as profound an effect on the tradition of Anglo-Latin literature as it did on the literature written in the vernacular: "The Latin learning cultivated so vigorously by Anglo-Saxons did not long survive it." The writings of Aldhelm, for example,

"copied and studied so intensively in the pre-Conquest period, were henceforth neglected." England felt for the first time the influence of the "New School" of Latin poets "with their rhyming, leonine hexameters" and in prose, "the influence of Cicero." With the exception of Bede's words, most pre-conquest Anglo-Latin literature was forgotten (32).

Concerning the poetry of the Old English era, Greenfield and Calder conclude that "in *Durham*, composed more than five centuries after the illustrious Cædmon had uttered his hymn in praise of the Creator, the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition found its last exponent." Old English poetic tradition soon became transformed into the "freer Middle English alliterative poems like Layamon's *Brut* and in the later fourteenth-century poems of the Alliterative Revival" (249). Daiches says that in poetry "there is little extant to show precisely what was happening in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries." Although we have some fragments of "religious and didactic poetry which are sufficient to indicate the Anglo-Saxon alliterative line was continued, though in a looser and more popular form, we soon begin to see the increasing influence of French models" (41).[29] The French writers felt that "Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse was an effective medium for the older heroic poetry; but new kinds of sensibility demanded a lighter and more flexible mode of expression" (45).

The continuity of the Old English tradition can be more easily traced. Daiches explains that "variety and liveliness had made Anglo-Saxon prose remarkable among European literatures of the period: translations, homilies, and didactic, devotional, and informative works of many kinds were to be found in

prose" (47). The final entry of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of historical prose was

made in the *Chronicles* in 1132. Wilson states that "English prose lingers on for

some time but it eventually dies, and centuries have to pass before a new prose

can be evolved for most of the subjects for which it is the natural vehicle." He

does, however, mention an exception in homiletic prose:

> In one subject only does prose retain its position throughout the
> Middle English period. Under special conditions and in a different
> dialect the Old English homiletic prose continues to flourish until
> the prose of Alfred develops into the prose of the Authorized
> Version and so becomes the foundation of the modern prose style.
> (20)

Raffel and Olsen agree, stating that "a substantial amount of Old English prose

has survived, but that with the most literary merit is religious in nature" (139).

The prose writing of sermons and homilies, Fulk and Cain note, "continued to be

copied into manuscripts as late as the thirteenth century in the monastic cathedrals

at Canterbury, Rochester, and Worcester." Some consider these manuscripts as

evidence of "a certain monkish resistance to Norman hegemony." There may have

been more than a little antagonism between Saxon and Norman ecclesiastics, yet,

"a kind of national feeling, looking back nostalgically to an earlier age, is

perceivable in some Latin and Middle English texts of the first two centuries after

the Conquest" (226).

Throughout the Old English period, there is a "fairly continuous stream of

homiletic literature in the Kentish dialect,' which continues in post-conquest

times and is represented in the twelfth century by two groups of homilies known

respectively as "the Cotton Vespasian and the Trinity Homilies" (Wilson 109).

The loss of the homiletic tradition was not felt evenly across England. Wilson explains that "though the Old English homiletic tradition continued to exist in the south-east more or less vigorously until the beginning of the thirteenth century, it was then completely lost and the Old English models replaced by the French." However, in the west, the old traditions retained more of their vigor, and "French influence encounters a stronger resistance" (111). One reason for the difference may be that the west seems to have been less Normanized than the south and east, and it was never systematically ravaged, as was the north. (112). Wilson also states that in homiletic literature the "West Saxon literary dialect continues in use for some time after the conquest. Although it is not easy to be certain that it is in actual use as a language of composition, it is still being used in homilies copied after the middle of the twelfth century" (106).

Even when Old English had been lost, the homiletic prose continued; "though the medium changes, there is no break in the tradition itself" (Wilson 108). Wilson notes that "the works of the great homilists, Aelfric and Wulfstan, together with the homilies of other unknown writers, remained popular." Some of the works exist only in "post-Conquest manuscripts and, long after the West Saxon literary prose has been lost, they are still being modernized and adapted in Middle English" (18). Daiches remarks that "the fact the Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester, retained his see after the conquest until his death in 1095 must have helped to encourage this vernacular prose tradition in the west." After his death his biography was recorded in English by Coleman, a Worcester monk. (47) So, in homiletic and devotional prose, the tradition was not lost; in spite of handicaps,

the work of instructing the people in the vernacular went on after the Conquest.

Daiches explains that the "fall from supremacy of the West Saxon literary

language in favor of different local dialects was less significant, for instruction of

the common people could in any case by most effectively done in their own

dialect." Thus, the Old English homiletic tradition, continuing the work of Ælfric

through the modernizing and augmentation of his sermons flourished, and

"English religious prose prospered side by side with the new French verse

renderings of similar literature" (48).

Alexander writes that "the taste and commonsense in adapting sources in

the direction of credibility is a constant tendency in Bede, Cynewulf and Aelfric,

which may testify to an English moderation and preference for fact" (199).[30] The

adaptation of sources to make their words credible to the new European clergy

may be one of the reasons Old English sermons continued to be read, while poetry

and prose faded from view. Godden says that "the works of both Alfred and

Ælfric preserved the ancient distinction of soul and mind, while associating the

mind at least as much with passion as with intellect" (284). Combining the

intellectual theology of the homilies with the passion of the eschatology-laden

sermons brought a two-fold approach to the didactic works, keeping them fresh

and appealing.

"English became once more an oral language, spoken primarily by the

disempowered," writes Alexandra H. Olsen, but "when it emerged once more as a

literary language, c. 1250, both it and the literature written therein had changed

dramatically" (Raffel xxi). "English literature," Daiches declares, "during the

two and a half centuries after the Norman Conquest, soon began to rise again slowly in the social scale, gradually acquiring an ease, a skill, and a polish which would enable it to hold its own with French" (34). Thus, Old English passed off the scene, and the Germanic oral tradition poetry ended for a few centuries, unappreciated and unread.

The vernacular narratives of great men, saints, and miracles, with the exception of Bede's *History*, were used as scrap paper for the new French verse. Only the sermons and homiletic works continued to circulate, for the people of England—even though they were now the subjects of King William—spoke English, in one dialect or another. No parish priest could minister to his flock in anything but the vernacular, and the lowliest of clergy, not having learned Latin, much less French, could not be taught how to preach properly except in English. Thus, homilies continued to be preached, taught, edited, re-arranged, and re-preached, as the genre moved closer to the modern understanding of the sermon as a written format to be delivered orally in an ecclesiastical setting. The Old English genre of homiletic writings and sermons continued to develop and change, meeting human needs in newer ways, adopting different methods and words, but keeping the same traditional format. Wilson argues that only in the homily does prose retain its position throughout the Middle English period as "the Old English homiletic prose continues to flourish until the prose of Alfred develops into the prose of the authorized version, and so becomes the foundation of the modern prose style" (20).

Bede's sermon is still preached today, in a very similar allegorical style. The homiletic style of exposition and application remains one of the more popular models taught in seminaries. As Solomon says, "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth" (Eccl. 12:10).

Appendix A[31]

Major Persecutions of the Christians and Jews instituted by the Roman Empire

I.   A.D. 66.   Nero: By his orders, Apostle Paul was put to death. Titus besieged Jerusalem. It has been estimated that the Jews lost 1,500,000 lives during this war (Shackelford 41).

II.   A.D. 81.   Domitian: By his orders, "No Christian brought before the Tribunal shall be exempted from death and torture without renouncing his religion" (Fox 6).

III.   A.D. 161   Marcus Aurelius Antonius: It is clear that during the reign of Aurelius the comparative leniency of the legislation of Trajan[32] gave way to a more severe temper. In Southern Gaul, at least, an imperial prescript inaugurated an entirely new and much more violent era of persecution. In Asia Minor and in Syria the blood of Christians flowed in torrents. (Healy).

IV.   A.D. 274   Aurelian: St Alban, of Herefordshire, England, became the first British martyr. Also, during this time, a legion of soldiers, all Christians, consisting of 6666 men called the Theban Legion, was ordered to Gaul to exterminate a the Christians in Gaul. When they refused the order of the Emperor, every tenth man of the legion was slain. When the Theban Legion still remained inflexible, all were put to death (Fox 23)

V.   A.D. 300.   Diocletian: duration: 10 years. An estimated 17,000 Christians were put to death in one month, 150, 000 died from violence in Egypt alone, and 750,000 through banishment or the mines to which they were condemned (Shackelford).

VI.   A.D. 306   Constantine: Persecutions ceased for a time and he gave his influence to the propagation of Christianity. Then, he instituted a series of persecutions against the dissenting churches and denounced them as "heretics." He ordered that all their books be burned (Shackelford).

Appendix B

The Tenets of the Apostolic Christian Church to 300 A.D.
as noted by J. A. Shackelford in *Compendium of Baptist History* (40).

First: Independent in their organic relations, one from
                     another.

Second: Acknowledged no head but Christ, and
                     owned no Lawgiver but Him.

Third: Members were baptized believers.

Fourth: Administered baptism by immersion only.

Fifth: Denied sacramental salvation.

Sixth: Held to equality of membership.

Seventh: Held to freedom of conscience and
                     religious liberty.

Appendix C

The Principal causes of Internal Conflicts of the Apostolic and English Church to 500 A.D. as noted by Lars P. Qualben in *A History of the Christian Church* (108).

(1). Perversions of the Gospel and schisms occasioned by certain orthodox and Jewish groups.

(2). Conflicts and heresies caused by those who sought to harmonize Christianity with pagan philosophy and religion.

(3). Controversies concerning discipline and morality within the church.

(4). Schisms that arose in regard to ecclesiastical order. This area of conflict affected the Celtic Church in that the date of Easter in the East was celebrated at the same time as the non-Christian Jews celebrated the Old Testament Passover, on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month Nisan, so Easter fell on the sixteenth day of Nisan, regardless of the day of the week. The West stressed the fact that Christ arose on Sunday and insisted that Easter should be celebrated on no other day. The matter was finally settled by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. in favor of the Western practice. The practice of re-baptizing converts who had been previously baptized by heretics also caused great dissention.

(5). Disputes regarding Christian doctrine. One dispute concerned the mystery of the Trinity, and the position of the Father and the Son in the Godhead. Origen of Alexandria (185-254) taught of the subordination of the Son. He also taught of the life of probation in the future, leading to the doctrine of "purgatory." The "thousand" controversy contended that Christ's return would coincide with the year 1000 A.D.

Appendix D

St Patrick's Breastplate: *The Deer's Cry*
The translation below, taken from *Celtic Christian Spirituality* by Oliver Davies
and Fiona Bowie, contains stanzas not found in many other modern translations.

I rise today
>> in power's strength, invoking the Trinity,
>> believing in threeness,
>> confessing the oneness,
>> of creation's Creator.

I rise today
>> in the power of Christ's birth and baptism,
>> in the power of his crucifixion and burial,
>> in the power of his rising and ascending,
>> in the power of his descending and judging.

I rise today
>> in the power of the love of cherubim,
>> in the obedience of angels
>> and service of archangels,
>> in hope of rising to receive the reward,
>> in the prayers of patriarchs,
>> in the predictions of prophets,
>> in the preaching of apostles,
>> in the faith of confessors,
>> in the innocence of holy virgins,
>> in the deeds of the righteous.

I rise today
>> in heaven's might,
>> in sun's brightness,
>> in moon's radiance,
>> in fire's glory,
>> in lightning's quickness,
>> in wind's swiftness,
>> in sea's depth,
>> in earth's stability,
>> in rock's fixity.

I rise today
>> with the power of God to pilot me,
>> God's strength o sustain me,
>> God's wisdom to guide me,
>> God's eye to look ahead for me,
>> God's ear to hear me,
>> God's word to speak for me,
>> God's hand to protect me,
>> God's way before me,

God's shield to defend me,
God's host to deliver me:
>   from snares of devils,
>   from evil temptations,
>   from nature's failings,
>   from all who wish to harm me,
>   far or near,
>   alone and in a crowd.

Around me I gather today all these powers
>   against every cruel and merciless force
>   to attack my body and soul,
>   against the charms of false prophets,
>   the black laws of paganism,
>   the false laws of heretics,
>   the deceptions of idolatry,
>   against spells cast by women, smiths and
>   druids,
>   and all unlawful knowledge
>   that harms the body and soul.

May Christ protect me today
>   against poison and burning,
>   against drowning and wounding,
>   so that I may have abundant reward;
>   Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ
>   behind me;
>   Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ
>   above me;
>   Christ to right of me, Christ to left of me;
>   Christ in my lying, Christ in my sitting,
>   Christ in my rising;
>   Christ in the heart of all who think of me,
>   Christ in the tongue of all who speak to me,
>   Christ in the eye of all who see me,
>   Christ in the ear of all who hear me.

I rise today
>   in power's strength, invoking the Trinity,
>   believing in threeness,
>   confessing the oneness,
>   of creation's Creator.
>   For to the Lord belongs salvation,
>   and to the Lord belongs salvation
>   and to Christ belongs salvation.

May your salvation, Lord, be with us always.

Appendix E

Bede: An Autobiographical Account of his works
(Bede *HE*. V.38)

THUS much of the Ecclesiastical History of Britain, and more especially of the English nation, as far as I could learn either from the writings of the ancients, or the tradition of our forefathers, or of my own knowledge, with the help of the Lord, I, Bede, the servant of Christ, and priest of the monastery of the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, which is at Wearmouth and Jarrow, have set forth. Having been born in the territory of that same monastery, I was given, by the care of kinsmen, at seven years of age, to be educated by the most reverend Abbot Benedict, and afterwards by Ceolfrid, and spending all the remaining time of my life a dweller in that monastery, I wholly applied myself to the study of Scripture; and amidst the observance of monastic rule, and the daily charge of singing in the church, I always took delight in learning, or teaching, or writing. In the nineteenth year of my age, I received deacon's orders; in the thirtieth, those of the priesthood, both of them by the ministry of the most reverend Bishop John, and at the bidding of the Abbot Ceolfrid.

From the time when I received priest's orders, till the fifty-ninth year of my age, I have made it my business, for my own needs and those of my brethren, to compile out of the works of the venerable Fathers, the following brief notes on the Holy Scriptures, and also to make some additions after the manner of the meaning and interpretation given by them:

On the Beginning of Genesis, to the birth of Isaac and the casting out of Ishmael, four books.
Concerning the Tabernacle and its Vessels, and of the Vestments of the Priests, three books.
On the first part of Samuel, to the Death of Saul, three books.
Concerning the Building of the Temple, of Allegorical Exposition, and other matters, two books.
Likewise on the Book of Kings, thirty Questions.
On the Proverbs of Solomon, three books.
On the Song of Songs, seven books.
On Isaiah, Daniel, the twelve Prophets, and Part of Jeremiah, Divisions of Chapters, collected from the Treatise of the blessed Jerome.
On Ezra and Nehemiah, three books.
On the song of Habakkuk, one book.

On the Book of the blessed Father Tobias, one Book of Allegorical Explanation concerning Christ and the Church.

Also, Chapters of Readings on the Pentateuch of Moses, Joshua, and Judges;
On the Books of Kings and Chronicles;
On the Book of the blessed Father Job;
On the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs;
On the Prophets Isaiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah.
On the Gospel of Mark, four books.
On the Gospel of Luke, six books.
Of Homilies on the Gospel, two books.

On the Apostle, (ie Paul) whatsoever I have found in the works of St. Augustine I have taken heed to transcribe in order.
On the Acts of the Apostles, two books. On the seven Catholic Epistles, a book on each. On the Revelation of St. John, three books. Likewise, Chapters of Lessons on all the New Testament, except the Gospel.

Likewise a book of Epistles to divers Persons, of which one is of the Six Ages of the world; one of the Halting-places of the Children of Israel; one on the words of Isaiah, "And they shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited" ; one of the Reason of Leap-Year, and one of the Equinox, according to Anatolius. (see III,3)

Likewise concerning the Histories of Saints: I translated the Book of the Life and Passion of St. Felix, Confessor, from the metrical work of Paulinus, into prose; the Book of the Life and Passion of St. Anastasius, which was ill translated from the Greek, and worse amended by some ignorant person, I have corrected as to the sense as far as I could; I have written the Life of the Holy Father Cuthbert, (see IV, 26-32) who was both monk and bishop, first in heroic verse, and afterwards in prose.

The History of the Abbots of this monastery, in which I rejoice to serve the Divine Goodness, to wit, Benedict, Ceolfrid, and Huaetbert, in two books.
The Ecclesiastical History of our Island and Nation, in five books.
The Martyrology of the Festivals of the Holy Martyrs, in which I have carefully endeavoured to set down all whom I could find, and not only on what day, but also by what sort of combat, and under what judge they overcame the world.

A Book of Hymns in divers sorts of metre, or rhythm.
A Book of Epigrams in heroic or elegiac verse.
Of the Nature of Things, and of the Times, one book of each;
likewise, of the Times, one larger book.
A book of Orthography arranged in Alphabetical Order.
Likewise a Book of the Art of Poetry, and to it I have added
another little Book of Figures of
Speech or Tropes; that is, of the Figures and Modes of Speech in
which the Holy Scriptures are written.

And I beseech Thee, good Jesus, that to whom Thou hast
graciously granted sweetly to drink in the words of Thy
knowledge, Thou wilt also vouchsafe in Thy loving-kindness that
he may one day come to Thee, the Fountain of all wisdom, and
appear for ever before Thy face.

Appendix F

The Dream of the Rood
The translation, by Michael Alexander, illustrates patterns of Old English poetical format.

Hear, while I tell of the best of dreams . which came to me at midnight
when humankind kept their beds.
It seemed that I saw the Tree itself . borne on the air, light wound round it,
brightest of beams, all that beacon was . covered with gold, gems stood
fair at its foot, and five rubies . set in a crux flashed
from the crosstree. Around angels of God . all gazed upon it,
since first fashioning fair . It was not a felon's gallows,
for holy ones beheld it there . and men, and the whole Making shone for it
Trophy of Victory . I, stained and marred,
stricken with shame, saw the glory-tree . shine out gaily, sheathed in
decorous gold; and gemstones made . for their Maker's Tree a right mail-coat
Yet through the masking gold I might perceive .
what terrible sufferings were there
It bled from the right side . Ruth in the heart
Afraid I saw that unstill brightness . change raiment and colour,
again clad in gold or again slicked with sweat . spangled with spilling blood.
I, lying there a long while . beheld, sorrowing, the Healer's Tree
till it seemed that I heard how it broke silence, best of wood, and spoke:
'It was long ago-I still remember . back to the holt where I was hewn down;
From my own stock I was struck away . dragged off by strong enemies
wrought into a roadside scaffold . They made me a hoist from wrongdoers.
The soldiers on their shoulders bore me . until on a hill-top they raised me
many enemies made me fast there . Then I saw, marching toward me,
Mankind's brave King . He came to climb upon me. I dared not
break nor bend aside . against God's will, though the ground itself
shook at my feet. Then the young warrior, Almighty God, mounted
the Cross, in the sight of many. He would set free mankind.

I shook when his arms embraced me, but I durst not bow to
ground,
stoop to Earth's surface . Stand fast I must.
I was reared up, a rood . I held the King, Heaven's lord, I dared not
bow . They drove me through with dark nails: on me are the
wounds
Wide-mouthed hate dents. I durst not harm any of them.
They mocked us together . I was all wet with blood sprung from
the Man's side . after he sent forth his soul. Many wry wierds I
underwent . up on that hilltop; saw the Lord of Hosts stretched out
stark . Darkness shrouded the King's corpse.
A shade went out wan under cloud pall . All creation wept,
keened the King's death . Christ was on the Cross.
But there quickly came from afar . many to the Prince .
All that I beheld had grown weak with grief . yet with glad will
bent then
meek to those men's hands . yielded Almighty God.
They lifted Him down from the leaden pain . left me, the
commanders
Standing in blood sweat . I was sorely smitten with sorrow
wounded with shafts . Limb-weary they laid him down.
They stood at his head . They looked on him there .
They set to contrive Him a tomb . within sight of his bane
carved it of bright stone . laid in it the Bringer of Victory
spent from the great struggle . They began to speak the grief song,
sad in the sinking light . then thought to set out homeward;
their most high Prince . they left to rest with scant retinue.
Yet we three, weeping, a good while . stood in that place after the
song
had gone up from the captains' throats . Cold grew the corpse, fair
soul house.
They felled us all . We crashed to ground, cruel Wierd,
and they delved for us a grave . The Lord's men learnt of it, His
friends found me.
It was they who girt me with silver and gold.

Appendix G

Genesis B
The translations, by Douglas B. Killings from the *Online Medieval and Classical Library,* demonstrates patterns and structure of Old English poets.

". . .but make use, you two, of all those others;   leave alone that one tree.
Guard, both of you, against that fruit.   There will not be for you any lack of desired things."
They bowed their heads, then,   to the Heaven-King,
eagerly together   and said all thanks
for the knowledge and those laws.   He allowed them to live in that land,
wafted himself, then, to heaven   the Holy Lord,
strong-minded King.   The work of his hands stood
together on the strand. They did not know anything of sorrow
to mourn about,   only that they the will of God
should always obey.   They were dear to God
as long as they were willing to hold to his holy word.

        The All-wielder had   of angel-kind
through handiwork,   Holy Lord,
ten types trimmed;   them he trusted well,
knew that they his rule   were designed to follow,
to work his will,   because he gave them wit
and with his hands shaped them,   Holy Lord.
He had set them up so blessedly.   One in particular had he created so shining
so mighty in his thinking;   he let him wield so much power,
highest next to Him in Heaven-Kingdom.   He had him so brightly created,
so winsome were his ways in heaven,   that came to him from the Lord's company
that he was like the light of the stars.   He should have loved the work of the Lord.
he should have held dear to himself his joys in heaven and should have thanked his Lord
for those delights that He shared with him in that light; then would He have permitted
him for a long time to wield power.
But he turned himself to a terrible thing;   he began to heave up trouble against Him,
against that highest Heaven's Ruler,   who sits on the saintly throne.
Dear was he to Our Lord;   yet God might not be deluded

that his angel began   to become over-spirited.
He raised himself up against his Superior,   sought hate-speech;
boast-words began.   He did not wish to serve God;
he said that his body was   light and shining,
bright-white and hue-luminous.   Nor might he find in his mind
that he owed God   the duty of an inferior,
to serve as a retainer.   He thought to himself
that he had more   strategy and strength
than the Holy God   could have
in his followers.   Dangerous words spoke
this angel in his adrenaline rush.   He thought about how, through his own efforts,
he a strong-built   throne could establish
higher in Heaven.   He said that his mind spanned so far
that he, west and north,   was beginning to work,
trimming timbers.   He said that he thought it quite doubtful
that he would   become the retainer of God.

       "What, will I gain?"   said he.   "There is no need for me
to have a leader.   I may with my own hands a multitude of wonders work.   I have great capacity
to adorn   a God-like throne,
more impressive in Heaven.   Why shall I follow in the wake of His protection?
shove at Him such subservience?   I may be God as well as He.
Strong supporters stand beside me,   who will not betray me in the strife,
hard-minded companions.   They have crowned me as their superior,
the renowned ring-men;   with such may one take counsel,
seize the prize with a standing army like this.   They are my eager friends,
loyal to death in their forged intentions.   I may become their high-king,
rule in this kingdom.   I think it so right for me,
that I bother to flatter   not a whit more
God for the sake of any good.   Nor will I long be his retainer."

       When the Omnipotent   heard all--
that his angel began   in his great adrenaline rush
to rise up against his leader   and to speak haughty words
dolt-like, feuding against his Lord,   He ordered that deed atoned for,

the consequences of that striving to be dealt out,   and that he have his punishment,
the most misery of all.   So will befall each person
who against his or her ruler   generates strife
with wickedness against that Sublime Lord.   Then was the Mighty One moved to wrath.
The highest Heaven's Ruler   traveled down from that high throne.
Hate he had won from his leader.   Of God's loyalty he was bereft.
He had become an enemy to God in his mind.   Therefore he should seek the pit
of hard hell-punishments   because he strove against Heaven's Ruler.
 God banished him then from His protection   and warped him down to Hell,
into those deep dales   where he morphed into a devil,
the fiend with all his companions.   They fell, then, out of Heaven
for as long as   three nights and days,
those angels, from Heaven into Hell,   and them all the Lord
re-shaped into devils.   Because they His deed and word
would not carry out,   therefore he, the Almighty God
sent them into a worse life,   under the earth, deep beneath,
triumph-less,   into that dark and dreary Hell.
There they experience,   in evenings immoderately long,
every one of the fiends,   fire enough.
Then comes, in the dawn,   an eastern wind,
frost fiercely cold.   Feast-fire or spear-frost,
some hard hardship   they must endure.
The One created it for their punishment   (Their world was transformed)--
a horrid existence---   filled Hell
with those traitors.   The angels held forthrightly
the heights of Heaven,   that before were faithful in their allegiance to God.

        The others, now fiends, lay in that fire,   that before had so many
struggles against their Superior.   They suffer punishment,
hot war-flames   in the midst of Hell,
sword-fiery and hot-breathed flames,   similarly also that bitter smoke,
choking and gloomy,   because they the thegnship
of God had cut from their hearts.   Them their folly betrayed,

the swelled heads of those angels;   they did not wish their All-King's
word to honor.   They had punishment enough,
were then thrown   in fire to the bottom
of that hot Hell,   through faithlessness
and through great excess   sought another land,
that was light-less   though full of flames,
a terrible fiery seeing.   The fiends saw
that they had wrenched themselves   into unnumbered punishments
through their haughtiness   and through the might of God
and through recklessness,   most of all.

         Then spoke that berserker king, he who was before the most shining of angels,
brightest in Heaven   and beloved of his Leader,
dear to the Lord,   until he turned to folly
thinking because of his desires   that he could become God Himself,
mightily depraved in mind.   That evil transforms him within,
sends him down to that netherbed,   and shapes for him afterwards a name.
The Highest ordered that   he should be called
Satan afterwards.   He ordered him to over-see
that dark Hell,   nor ever to strive against God.
Satan mixed words,   spoke desperately,
he that should hold   Hell forthrightly,
the caretaker of that ground.   He was, before, God's angel
radiant in Heaven,   until he overextended his spirit
and through his recklessness   most of all,
so that he refused   to respect the duty of
God's people.   It enraged him inside
his mind around his heart   just as heat surrounded him outside,
wrathlike punishment.   He then spoke words:

         "Is this any angel's place,   so excessively unlike
that other home   that we before knew,
high in Heaven's-Land,   that to me my leader gave,
though we   might not claim it,   because of that all-creator,
or possess our kingdom?   He did not give us our rights
in having thrown us   into the fire—pit,
titling hell to us,   depriving us of heaven-land;
he has ruled   that Heaven with humans
be settled.   That to me is the greatest misery,
that Adam shall,   he that was made from dirt,
hold my   strong-bodied throne,

live in pleasures,   and we suffer this punishment,
harm in this hell.   Alas!   Had I my hands' power
and might one time   escape out,
be out for one winter-time,   then I with this band. . .
But iron-bands   lie around me.
Ropes of chain ride me.   I am kingdom-less;
so hard have hell weeds   me
fast enveloped.   Here is much fire,
above and below.   I have never seen
a more loathsome landscape.   The Flames are never assuaged,
hot throughout Hell.   Me have rings spanned;
savage cords   restrict my movements.
My striding is emasculated;   fettered are my feet,
my hands immobilized.   These hell-doors are
made to stay shut,   so that I may never go
from this bondage.   Around me lie
hard irons   beaten with heat,
great bars.   With these God has me
imprisoned in this dwelling,   so I know that he understands my mind;
and that he knows also,   the Lord of all people,
that we should to Adam   work evil
around that heaven-land,   had I any power of my hands.

        But now we suffer abuse in hell,   (those are darkness and burning),
grim and groundless.   God Himself has
swept us into these dark mists.   Because he may not convict us of any crime,
prove that we against him in that land accomplished any injury, he has tonsured the light for us,
cast us down into the greatest of all punishments.   Nor may we achieve revenge for this,
compensate him with any retaliation   for tonsuring our light.
He has now marked out one middle-earth,   where he has created humans
after his own likeness.   With them, he will afterwards populate
the land of heaven with pure souls.   We should avidly think upon this—
how we in Adam,   if we ever may,
and in his some of his posterity, too,   enclose terror,
deprive him there of those joys of theirs,   if we might think of anything.

I desire no longer that light   that he thinks him long to enjoy,
those joys, with his angel-knowledge.   Nor may we
overcome the fire,
or weaken the resolution of mighty God.   Let us go wrench it
away from the children of men,
that Heaven-land, now that we cannot have it--   make it so
that they betray their duty,
that they undo what God with his word ordered.   Then he will
become wrathful in spirit,
exile them from his loyal band.   Then shall they seek this
Hell
and these grim grounds.   Then will we have them as our
servants
those progeny, suffering in this fast prison.   Begin now to think
about that campaign!

          If I ever before gave   any thegn
treasures,   when we in that good kingdom
were blessedly seated   and had autonomy in our assembly,
then he never at a better time   might compensate me,
repay my gifts.   If any one of my thegns
moreover, desires to give   his consent,
he up from here   might
come through these gates,   and have craft within him
so that he with feather-limbs   might fly,
wind through the firmament   to where stand, created,
Adam and Eve   in Earth-kingdom
bewound with joys,   while we be warped hither
in this deep dale.   Now they are to the Lord
worth much,   and they might gain that inheritance
that we should have   in Heaven-land,
our kingdom, by right.   That bequest is granted
to human kind.   That is in my mind so distressing,
harrowing to my spirit,   that they heaven-kingdom
should gain as inheritance.   If any of you might
achieve with cleverness that they   the word of God's
law abandon,   they will immediately become hateful to
Him.
If they break his commandments,   then He will become irritated
with them.
Their joys afterwards will transform   and turn into a spear-sharp
punishment,
some hard harm's-shearing.   Think of this, all of you,
how you might betray them!   Afterwards, I might
comfortably rest
in these chains,   if he that kingdom loses.

He who makes that happen,   to him will be rewards prepared
ever after,   that we here in might,
 in this fire,   struggle to bring forth.
He will sit idle right by myself,   whoever comes to say
into this hot Hell,   that they have held contemptible
the words, deeds, and laws   of the Heaven-King.
            One began to prepare himself then   for enmity to God,
eager in his disguise,   (He had a deceitful mind),
he set helmet on head   and then bound it full hard.
Spanned with buckles,   he knew many speeches
of false words.   He wound his way up from there,
turned himself out through the Hell-doors,   (He was in a
determined mood).
Light in air   but with a loathly-turned mind,
he struck that fire in two,   through the craft of the fiends.
He wished darkly   the retainers of the Lord,
with crime-deeds,   people, to undo,
mis-lead and mis-teach,   so that they would become hateful
to God.

            He then fared forth   through fiend's craft
until he Adam found,   on Earth-land,
hand-shaped of God,   prepared,
worked to be wise,   and his wife with him,
the fairest of women,   knowing full many
of God's bounties   which to them as his followers
the Creator of humankind,   had granted Himself.
And they between   two trees stood
that were laden about   with fruit,
Clothed with a crop,   as them the good Ruler,
high Heaven-king,   set with his hands
so that there the child of man   must choose
between good and evil,   each man,
between joy and woe.   These fruits were not alike!
One was so joy-like,   brilliant and shining,
grace-filled and lithesome--   that was the tree of life.
He must in eternity   after live,
prospering in the world,   who tasted of that fruit.
Because of that fruit, age after that   would never harm him,
nor heavy disease,   but he must continually be
long in pleasure   and possess his life
in fealty to heaven's king   here in the world,
to have to him, as a covenant,   honor decreed
in that high heaven,   when he went from here.

            Then was the other   entirely dark,

dim and smoky.   That was the tree of death.
It bears many bitter things.   One should recognize them both,
each person,   of evil and good
woven together in this world.   He will in his heart ever
with sweat and with sorrow   afterwards live
who tasted the fruit   of that tree.
Age would bereave him   of strength and valiant
deeds,
of joys and of lordship,   and Death is allotted him.
For a short while only   he enjoys his life,
then seeks that land   darkest in fire,
to serve the fiends there   where there is the greatest
vileness
for people for much longer time.   All that he knew, the hated
one,
dark messenger of the devil   who strove against the Lord.

He cast himself into a worm's body   and wound himself
around
that death-tree,   through demon's craft.
He took there its fruit   and made his way afterwards
there where he knew to be   the handiwork of Heaven's King.
He began then the questioning   with his opening words,
the hateful one, with lying: "Long you for anything,
Adam, from God?   I am on his errand hither
traveled from far.   Nor was it long ago
that I sat by God Himself.   Then he ordered me to go on this
journey
to bid you to eat this fruit.   He said that your ability and
wisdom
and security of mind   would increase
and your body-house   greatly lighten,
your shape become more shining.   He said that for you no need
of treasure
would there be in the world.   Now you have joys
earned by your loyalty,   given from Heaven's
King.
You have served your superior   with thanks.
You have deeds that are secretly known by the Lord.   I
heard him your works and word
praise in His glory   and speak about your life.
With your wonted devotion I know you will carry out
the orders that, into this land, hither,
his messenger brings.   In the world are broad,
green gardens   and God sits
in the highest kingdom   of Heaven,

the all-wielder, above.　　　He did not want the difficulty
of going on this journey　　　Himself,
the Lord of men, but he sent　　　his subordinate
to speak to you.　　　Now he orders you with declarations
to be crafty.　　　Eagerly carry out
his desire.　　　Take you this fruit in hand.
Bite it and taste.　　　Then your mind will widen,
your form be augmented.　　　The good ruler sends to you,
your superior,　　　this help from heaven's kingdom."

　　　　Adam spoke where he stood　on the earth,
self-fated of men:　　　"When I the Victory-Lord,
Mighty God,　　　heard speak,
in a stronger voice,　　　He ordered me standing here
to hold to His decree　　　and granted me this newly-born
white-shining wife　　and ordered me to be wary
that I not be deluded,　　　concerning this death's tree,
betrayed too greatly.　　　He said that that dark Hell
should hold one who　　　by his heart anything
of hate would perform.　　　I know not whether you with lying
come
with a hidden agenda　　　or whether you are the Lord's
messenger from heaven.　　　Listen! I know nothing about your
business
nor your words or knowledge　　　desire to understand more,
nor of your supposed journey.　　　I know what He Himself bid,
our Protector,　　　when I saw Him nearest to me:
he ordered me to revere his word　　and hold to His will,
to listen to his law.　　　You are not like
any of his angels　　　that I ever saw,
nor do you show me　　　any token
that He sends to me　　　as troth,
my Leader in loyalty.　　　Therefore I cannot hear you,
but you must fare forth.　　　I hold myself fast in faith
up to that almighty God　　　that me with his arms wrought,
here with his hands.　　　He may grant to me from his high
kingdom
gifts with all good things　　　without sending a subordinate."

　　　　He slunk away then, wrathful,　　　where he saw that
woman,
Eve, standing　　　on the earth-land,
shaped shiningly.　　　He said that the greatest injuries
on all her offspring　　ever afterwards
would devolve in the world:　　　"I know that at you the good Ruler
will grow angry　　　when I this message to him

myself relate,   that when I from my journey came,
over a long way,   yet I accomplished not well
that errand that   he hither from the east
on this journey sent.   Now shall He himself come
in answer to you.   His errand
could not be carried by his messenger.   Because of that I know
that he will be irritated with you,
mighty in mood.   If you, however, wish,
willing wife,   to obey my words,
you might then his good counsel,   his advice consider.
Ponder in your breast   that you might from both you two
ward off punishment,   as I you instruct.
Eat this fruit!   Then your eyes will become so light
that you might most widely   over all the world
see afterwards,   even the throne
of your Leader Himself,   and have his devotion forthrightly.
You might, then,   Adam direct afterwards,
if you have his affection   and he your words trusts.
If you tell him truly   what you yourself have
in your heart,   that you the bidding of God,
the truth, carry out,   he then the hate-strife
the only present evil,   shall relinquish
from his breast-chest,   as both we two to him
successfully speak.   Envelope him eagerly
so that he carries out your law,   lest the hatred to God
Ruler of you both,   become a habit.
If you accomplish that enterprise,   most shining of women,
I will hide from your Leader those many baleful words that
Adam to me spoke,   slothful words.
He called me untrustworthy, said that I yearned to harm him,
a hostile messenger,   was not God's angel.
But I know so well all the state of the angels,
the high vault of Heaven;   it wasn't that long a while
that I eagerly   served God […]

Appendix H

St. Andrew
The following translation by Robert Boenig taken from *Anglo-Saxon Spirituality*
is incomplete in consideration of length.

Here it is said that after the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, the apostles were together, and they cast lots among themselves, where they should travel to teach. It is said that the blessed Matthew's lot fell to the city of Mermedonia; it is then said that the men who were in that city did not eat bread or drink water but ate the bodies of men and drank their blood. And each person who came a stranger to that city, it is said that they immediately took him and cast out his eyes and gave him poison to drink that was mixed with great magic. And when they drank this drink, immediately their heart was loosened and their mind changed.

Then the blessed Matthew went into that city, and they immediately seized him and cast out his eyes and gave him poison to drink and sent him into prison, and they commanded him to eat the poison, but he would not eat it. Therefore his heart was not dissolved and his spirit was not changed, but he was always praying to the Lord with great weeping, and said to him, "My Lord Jesus Christ, since we left all out kin and followed you, and you are the help of all of us who believe in you, behold now and see what these people do to your servant. And I ask you, Lord, to give me the light of my eyes, that I may see those in this city who begin to do the worst torments; and do not forsake me, my Lord Jesus Christ, nor give me over to the most bitter death."

When the blessed Matthew had prayed and said this, a great and very bright light lit up the prison, and the voice of the Lord materialized for him in the light, saying, "Matthew, my beloved, behold me." The blessed Matthew then looked and saw the Lord Christ, and again the Lord said, "Matthew, be strengthened and do not fear, for I will never forsake you, but I will deliver you and all your brothers from all danger, and all those who believe in me in every age forever. But stay here twenty-seven nights; after that I will send to you your brother Andrew, to lead you out of this prison and all those who are with you." And when he had said this, the Lord spoke to him again, "Peace be with you, Mathew." He then continued in prayers and was singing the Lord's praises in the prison. And then the unjust men came into the prison to bring out the men and eat them. Then the blessed Matthew shut his eyes, lest the killers should see that his eyes were restored, and they said among themselves, "Three days now are left until we want to kill him and make him into our food."

The blessed Matthew then fulfilled the thirty days. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the holy Andrew his apostle, when he was in the land of Achaia and there taught his disciples. He said, "go into the city of Mermedonia and lead your brother Matthew out of the prison, for there are yet three days left until they intend to kill him and turn him into food." The holy Andrew answered him and said, "My Lord Jesus Christ, how may I travel there in three days? I suspect it is better that you send your angel who may travel there more quickly, for, my Lord, you know that I am a fleshly man, and I may not travel there more quickly, for, my Lord, the journey there is too long and I do not know the way." The Lord Christ said to him, "Hear me, Andrew, for I made you and I have established and ordained this journey for you. Go to the shore of the sea with your disciples, and there you will find a ship on the shore. And ascend into it with your disciples."

When he had said this, the Lord Jesus still spoke and said, "Peace with you and with all your disciples." And he ascended into heaven. [Then St. Andrew arose in the morning and went to the sea with his disciples and saw a boat along the shore and sitting inside of it three men.] The holy Andrew then arose in the morning, and he went to the sea with his disciples, and he saw a ship on the shore and three men sitting in it. And he rejoiced with great joy and said to him, "Brother, where do you intend to travel with this small ship?" The Lord Jesus Christ was in the ship as the helmsman, and his two angels with him were changed into the likeness of men. The Lord Christ then said to him, "To the city of Mermedonia." The holy Andrew answered him and said, "Brother, take us with you on the ship and bring us into that city." The Lord said to him, "All men flee from that city; why do you want to go there?" The holy Andrew answered him and said, "We have a small errand there, and we have need to complete it there." The Lord Jesus Christ said to him, "Ascend to us into this ship and give us our travel money."

The holy Andrew answered him, "Listen brother, we do not have the fare, but we are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ whom he chose. And he gave us this commandment and said, 'when you go to preach the gospel, do not take with you bread or money or two cloaks.' If you then will do us mercy, tell us quickly. If you will not, at least tell us the way." The Lord said to him, "If this commandment was given to you from your Lord, ascend here with joy into my ship."

The holy Andrew then ascended into the ship with his disciples, and he sat by the helmsman of the ship, who was the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ said to him, "I see that these brothers are tired of the choppiness of the sea. Ask them whether they want to disembark and await you there, until you

fulfill the service for which you are sent and come again to them." The holy Andrew said to them, "My children, do you want to disembark and await me there?" His disciples answered and said, "If we leave you, then we will be exiles from all the good things that you have prepared for us, so we will be with you wherever you travel."

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to him about them. "If you are truly his disciple who is called Christ, speak to your disciples about the miracles your teacher did, so that their hearts might be cheered and they might forget the terror of the sea." The holy Andrew then said to his disciples, "One time when we were with our Lord, we embarked with him in a ship, and he appeared to us as if he were sleeping in order to tempt us and caused a great choppiness upon the sea from the wind, so that the waves themselves were heaved over the ship. We were very afraid and called to him, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he then arose and commanded the wind to be still. Then a great calmness came upon the sea, and all who saw his work were afraid. Now then, my children, do not be afraid, because our God will not forsake us." And when he said this, the holy Andrew set his head upon one of his disciples and slept.

The Lord Jesus Christ then knew that the holy Andrew was asleep. He said to his angels, "Take Andrew and his disciples and set them before the city of Mermedonia, and when you set them there, come back to me." The angels then did as they were commanded, and he ascended into heaven.

The morning came to the city of Mermedonia and his disciples were there sleeping with him. And he woke them and said, "Arise, my children, and see God's mercy, which has now happened to us. Know that our Lord was with us in the ship and we did not perceive him. He humbled himself as a helmsman, and he appeared to us as a man to tempt us." The holy Andrew then looked into heaven and said, "My Lord Jesus Christ, I know that you are not far from your servants, and I beheld you on the ship, and I spoke to you as to a man. Now then, Lord, I ask you that you reveal yourself to me in this place."

When this was said, the Lord showed his face to him in the likeness of a fair child and said to him. "Andrew, rejoice with your disciples." The holy Andrew then prayed and said, "Forgive me, Lord, that I spoke to you as to a man' I expect I have sinned, because I did not recognize you." The Lord then said to him, "Andrew, you did not in the least sin, but because you said that you could not travel here in three days, I therefore appeared like this, because I am mighty [enough] to do all this with a word and appear to each just as I please. Now then, arise and go into the city to your brother Matthew and then lead him and all who are with him out of the city. Only I let you know, Andrew, that they will

bring upon you many tortures and drag your body through the streets of this city, so that your blood will flow over the earth like water. They will want to lead you to death, but they may not. Yet they may bring many afflictions upon you, but nevertheless endure all, Andrew, and do not act according to their disbelief. Remember how I suffered many afflictions from the Jews: they scourged my and they spat on my face. But I endured it all that I might show you in what way you should endure. Listen to me, Andrew, and endure these sufferings, because there are many in this city who should believe in my name."

When he had said this, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. The holy Andrew then went into the city with his disciples, and no one could see hem. When they came to the door of the prison, they met there seven guards standing. The holy Andrew then prayed in his heart, and quickly they were dead. The holy Andrew then went to the door of the prison, and he made the sign of Christ's cross. And the doors were quickly opened, and he went into that prison with his disciples, and he then saw the blessed Matthew sitting alone, singing. Then the blessed Matthew and the holy Andrew kissed each other. The holy Andrew said to him, "What is it, brother? How did you come to be here? Now there are [only] three days left before they kill you and turn you into food!" The holy Matthew answered him and said, "Brother Andrew, did you not hear the Lord saying, 'I will thus send you as ship among the wolves?" It then happened that when they sent me into this prison that I prayed to our Lord to appear, and he quickly showed himself to me and said, 'Wait here twenty-seven days, and after that I will send you your brother Andrew, and he will release you and all those with you out of this prison.' I now see it just as the Lord said to me. Brother, what shall we do now?"

Then the holy Andrew and the holy Matthew prayed to the Lord, and after the prayer the holy Andrew placed his hand on those people's eyes who were blind, and they received sight. And again he lay his hand on their hearts, and their understanding returned to them. The holy Andrew said to him, "Go to the lower parts of the city, and you will find there a great fig tree. Sit under it, and eat of its fruit until I come back to you." They said to the holy Andrew, "Come now with us, for you are out leader, lest perhaps they take us again and they bring us to the worst torments." The holy Andrew said to them, "Go there, because nothing at all will injure you or distress you."

Then they all went quickly, just as the holy Andrew commanded them. And in the prison there were two hundred and forty-eight men and forty-nine women whom the holy Andrew released. And then he made the blessed Matthew go east with his

disciples, and the holy Andrew set [him]on the hill where the blessed Peter the apostle was. And there he stayed with him.

The holy Andrew then left the prison and began to go out through the middle of the city, and he came to a certain place and there he saw a pillar standing and upon the pillar a brass image. And he sat by the pillar awaiting what should befall him.

Then the unrighteous people went to lead out the people and turn them into food. And they found the doors of the prison open and the seven guards lying dead. When they saw that, they turned back to their leaders and they said, "We have found your prison open, and we went in and found no one there." When the leaders of the priests heard this, they said among themselves, "What can this be? Perhaps some wonder has entered the prison and killed the guards and suddenly [released] those who were locked up there."

After this the Devil appeared to them in the likeness of a child and said to them, "Listen to me and seek out here a certain foreign man whose name is Andrew and kill him. He is the one who released the prisoners from the prison, and now he is in this city. You now know him; hurry, my children, and kill him."

The holy Andrew then said to the Devil, "O you arrow hardened to every unrighteousness, you who always fight against mankind, my Lord Jesus Christ has lowered you into hell!" when the Devil heard this, he said to him, "I hear your voice, but I do not know where you are." The holy Andrew said to him, "Since you are blind you do not see any of God's saints."

Then the Devil said to the people, "Behold and see him, because he is the one who spoke against me." The citizens then ran, and they shut the gates of the city, and they sought the holy Andrew so they might take him.

Then the Lord Jesus appeared to the holy Andrew and said to him, "Arise, Andrew, and reveal yourself so that they might know that my power is in you." The holy Andrew then arose in the sight of the people, and he said, "I am the Andrew whom you seek." The people then ran, and they took him and said, "Because you did this to us, we will pay you back for it!" And they considered how they might kill him.

Appendix I: Bede

The Allegory of Mercy and Justice
The translation is from *Medieval Preachers and Medieval Preaching* by J. M
Neale.

THERE was a certain father of a family, a powerful king, who had
four daughters, of whom one was called Mercy, the second Truth,
the third justice, the fourth Peace; of whom it is said, "Mercy and
Truth are met together; justice and Peace have kissed each other."
He had also a certain most wise son, to whom no one could be
compared in wisdom. He bad, also, a certain servant, whom he had
exalted and enriched with great honor: for he had made him after
his own likeness and similitude, and that without any preceding
merit on the servant's part. But the Lord, as is the custom with such
wise masters, wished prudently to explore, and to become
acquainted with, the character and the faith of his servant, whether
he were trustworthy towards himself or not; so he gave him an
easy commandment, and said, "If you do what I tell you, I will
exalt you to further honors; if not, you shall perish miserably."

The servant heard the commandment, and without any delay went
and broke it. Why need I say more? Why need I delay you by my
words and by my tears? This proud servant, stiff-necked, full of
contumely, and puffed up with conceit, sought an excuse for his
transgression, and retorted the whole fault on his Lord. For when
he said, "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she
deceived me," he threw all the fault on his Maker. His Lord, more
angry for such contumelious conduct than for the transgression of
his command, called four most cruel executioners, and commanded
one of them to east him into prison, another to afflict him with
grievous torments; the third to strangle him, and the fourth to
behead him. By and by, when occasion offers, I will give you the
right name of these tormentors.

These torturers, then, studying how they might carry out their own
cruelty, took the wretched man and began to afflict him with all
manner of punishments. But one of the daughters of the King, by
name Mercy, when she had heard of this punishment of the
servant, ran hastily to the prison, and looking in and seeing the
man given over to the tormentors, could not help having
compassion upon him, for it is the property of Mercy to have pity.
She tore her garments and struck her hands together, and let her
hair fall loose about her neck, and crying and shrieking, ran to her
father, and kneeling before his feet began to say with an earnest
and sorrowful voice: "My beloved father, am not I thy daughter

Mercy? and art not thou called merciful? If thou art merciful, have mercy upon thy servant; and if thou wilt not have mercy upon him, thou canst not be called merciful; and if thou art not merciful, thou canst not have me, Mercy, for thy daughter." While she was thus arguing with her father, her sister Truth came up, and demanded why it was that Mercy was weeping. "Your sister Mercy," replied the father, "wishes me to have pity upon that proud transgressor whose punishment I have appointed." Truth, when she heard this, was excessively angry, and looking sternly at her father, "Am not I," said she, "thy daughter Truth? art not thou called true? Is it not true that thou didst fix a punishment for him, and threaten him with death by torments? If thou art true, thou wilt follow that which is true; if thou art not true, thou canst not have me, Truth, for thy daughter." Here, you see, Mercy and Truth are met together. The third sister, namely, Justice, hearing this strife, contention, quarreling, and pleading, and summoned by the outcry, began to inquire the cause from Truth. And Truth, who could only speak that which was true, said, "This sister of ours, Mercy, if she ought to be called a sister who does not agree with us, desires that our father should have pity on that proud transgressor." Then justice, with an angry countenance, and meditating on a grief which she had not expected, said to her father, "Am not I thy daughter justice? are thou not called just? If thou art just, thou wilt exercise justice on the transgressor; if thou dost not exercise that justice, thou canst not be just; if thou art not just, thou canst not have me, justice, for thy daughter." So here were Truth and justice on the one side, and Mercy on the other. *Ultima coelicolum terras Astræa reliquit;* this means, that Peace fled into a far distant country. For where there is strife and contention, there is no peace; and by how much greater the contention, by so much further peace is driven away.

Peace, therefore, being lost, and his three daughters in warm discussion, the King found it an extremely difficult matter to determine what he should do, or to which side he should lean. For, if he gave ear to Mercy, he would offend Truth and justice; if he gave ear to Truth and Justice, he could not have Mercy for his daughter; and yet it was necessary that he should be both merciful and just, and peaceful and true. There was great need then of good advice. The father, therefore, called his wise son, and consulted him about the affair. Said the son, "Give me, my father, this present business to manage, and I will both punish the transgressor for thee, and will bring back to thee in peace thy four daughters." "These are great promises," replied the father, "if the deed only agrees with the word. If thou canst do that which thou sayest, I will act as thou shalt exhort me."

Having, therefore, received the royal mandate, the son took his sister Mercy along with him, and leaping upon the mountains, passing over the hills, came to the prison, and looking through the windows, looking through the lattice, he beheld the imprisoned servant, shut out from the present life, devoured of affliction, and from the sole of his foot even to the crown there was no soundness in him. He saw him in the power of death, because through him death entered into the world. He saw him devoured, because, when a man is once dead he is eaten of worms. And because I now have the opportunity of telling you, you shall hear the names of the four tormentors. The first, who put him in prison, is the Prison of the Present Life, of which it is said, "Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell in Mesech"; the second, who tormented him, is the Misery of the World, which besets us with all kinds of pain and wretchedness; the third, who was putting him to death, is Death, which destroys and slays all: the fourth, who was devouring him, is the Worm . . .

Therefore the son, beholding his servant given over to these four towmentors, could not but have mercy upon him, because Mercy was his companion, and bursting into the prison of death, conquered death, bound the strong man, took his goods, and distributed the spoils; and ascending up on high, led captivity captive and gave gifts for men, and brought back the servant into his country, crowned with double honor, and endued with a garment of immortality. When Mercy beheld this, she had no grounds for complaint, Truth found no cause of discontent, because her father was found true. The servant had paid all his penalties justice in like manner complained not, because justice had been executed on the transgressor; and thus he who had been lost was found. Peace, therefore, when she saw her sisters at concord, came back and united them. And now, behold, Mercy and Truth are met together, justice and Peace have kissed each other. Thus, therefore, by the Mediator of man and angels, man was purified and reconciled, and the hundredth sheep was brought back to the fold of God. To which fold Jesus Christ brings us, to whom is honor and power everlasting. Amen.

Notes

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[1] Book 1, chapter 2 says: "Britain had never been visited by the Romans, and was, indeed, entirely unknown to them before the time of Caius Julius Caesar . . . (in the) sixtieth year before the incarnation of our Lord . . . sailed over into Britain."

[2] Andrew Gray, author of the *Origin and Early History of Christianity in Britain,* states: "When all the disciples, except the Apostles, were 'scattered abroad,' after the persecution which arose about Stephen, and went 'everywhere preaching the Word,' it is but natural that some of them should go to Britain, the land of the Druids, where the Roman Governors could not persecute, and where the Druids would extend to them religious toleration." (38)

[3] See Appendix A for details of Roman persecution.

[4] See footnote on page 16.

[5] **A.D. 607** This year Ceolwulf fought with the South-Saxons. And Ethelfrith led his army to Chester; where he slew an innumerable host of the Welsh; and so was fulfilled the prophecy of Augustine, wherein he saith "If the Welsh will not have peace with us, they shall perish at the hands of the Saxons." There were also slain two hundred priests, who came thither to pray for the army of the Welsh. Their leader was called Brocmail, who with some fifty men escaped thence.
    A.D. 614 This year Cynegils and Cwichelm fought at Bampton, and slew two thousand and forty-six of the Welsh.

[6] Copied with permission of Shirley Rollinson.

[7] See Appendix B and C concerning the differences between the churches of the Early Britons and the Romans.

[8] *The Red Book of Hergest* is one of the books containing early works of Welsh literature. So called for its red leather binding, which was rebound again in Moroccan leather in 1851, and for the house of Hergest, Herfordshire, where it was compiled, it was presented in 1701 to Jesus College, Oxford, by a Rev. T. Wilkins, of Llanbleithain, Glamorgan in Wales. It is best known as the source of the Mabinogion, and much of its poetry is reproduced in *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* <http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/celtic/ctexts/t01.html>.

[9] See section on Bede and Alfred beginning on page 58.

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[10] See page 24 on Bede and Cædmon for reference.

[11] Bede wrote, "It is not possible to translate verse, however well composed, literally from one language to another without some loss of beauty and dignity" (Kiernan 104).

[12] See Appendix D for the complete *The Deer's Cry.*

[13] Michael Alexander says men are presented as *haeleth under heofenuim*, heroes under the heavens; men of *middangeard*, men on middle-earth, surrounded by water, between the seas. *Middangeard*, usually translated 'middle earth' or 'earth' literally means 'the enclosure in the middle.' The traditional vocabulary and formulas of poetry suggest that *middangeard* was felt to be laterally enclosed by the seas and that man's life was temporally enclosed by an unknown before and after (7-8).

[14] Jeff Opland, in "From Horseback to Monastic Cell," states that Anglo-Saxons had in the runic alphabet a system of writing; its use was never widespread and was restricted to inscriptions. The use of writing to record literature was introduced to the early English by the Christian missionaries. (34)

[15] Charles Kennedy states that, "the miracle of Cynewulf's work is that these poems, with the exception of the *Fates of the Apostles,* are so much more than mere versified translations of their Latin prose originals" (206).

[16] See Appendix F for the complete poem.

[17] Line notations are from *The Dream of the Rood*, taken from *The Vercelli Book*, ed. G. P. Krapp (Anglo-Saxon Poetic records," Vol II [New York, 1932], 61-65.)

[18] See Appendix G for complete poem.

[19] King Alfred "envisioned a system that would make all free men of his kingdom literate in English." Because the Viking invasion had so decimated the learning centers of the kingdom, he brought in scholars from other countries to help translate the "needful works" of Latin into the English language (Swanton, *English Literature* 43).

[20] Rosemary Woolf. "The Fall of Man in *Genesis B*" in *Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, ed. Stanley B Greenfield, 1963, 187.

[21] Charles W. Kennedy originally advanced this viewpoint in *The Cædmon Poems*, New York, 1916.

22 The complete entry in found in Appendix H.

23 See a more complete version in Appendix I.

24 Zupitza, J., *Zur Frage nach der Quelle von Cunewulfs Andreas*. 1886.

25 Earl points out that the *Andreas* poet uses the unique word *sylfætan (*self-eaters) for cannibals. "Where hunger and cannibalism represent spiritual conditions, it is an especially pointed term" (79).

26 See the complete sermon in Appendix J

27 The first (787-835) is that of simple plunder; the second (855-97) that of settlement, while the third (980-1016) was that of political conquest.

28 *Durham*, a poem that strays far from the formal standards of classical Old English verse, is the only poem in the ASPR standard collection edition of Old English verse known to have been composed after 1066.

29 French prose was not developed until comparatively late in the medieval period, and the result was that the French popularizes had to do their work in verse. (Wilson 19)

30 There are of course exceptions, especially regarding virgin martyrs. (Alexander 199)

31 Information is taken from J. A. Shackelford's *Compendium of Baptist History.* The dates and eras of persecution correspond to the beginning and development of the Christian church in Britain. Some rippling effects reached into Britain through the Roman occupation, such as the arrival of Jews who were fleeing Jerusalem.

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